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SAYING, MEANING AND SIGNIFYING:
ARISTOTLE’S λέγεται πολλαχῶς

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1. Introduction

Being, Aristotle tells us, λέγεται πολλαχῶς (literally, “is said in many ways”). So are the good and many other fundamental things. Fair enough, but what on earth does this mean? What, to narrow the focus to the basic question, does Aristotle mean by λέγεται in phrases such as λέγεται πολλαχῶς and other constructions in which λέγεται is used in the same sense? While scholars have presented us with an array of different translations for this difficult term, not all of them are compatible, and none seem adequate. Yet it is crucial for us to have a clear and precise understanding of what Aristotle means by this term and the constructions in which it appears if we are to have a clear grasp of many fundamental areas of his philosophy.

His argument at Nicomachean Ethics A6: 1062a23-29 to the conclusion that the good is not one thing, notoriously resistant to satisfactory interpretation, illustrates that point in more detail. Translated literally and stated in terms of fundamentals, his argument there is:

The good (τάγαθόν) is said in as many ways as being (ισαχώς λέγεται τφ οντι), for it is said (λέγεται) in all the categories. Therefore, it cannot be one thing; for if it were, then it could not have been said (ού αν έλέγετε) in all the categories but in one only.

The basic problem here lies in understanding just what Aristotle means when he says (or implies) “τάγαθόν is said in as many ways as being, for it is said in all the categories.” [1] How are we to understand τάγαθόν, the subject of ισαχώς λέγεται τφ οντι? Does it refer to a thing—that is, to the good? Or does it refer to a word? If it refers to a word, does it mean “good” or “[a] good” or something else? Clearly, our answers to these questions will have serious implications for how we understand λέγεται, and vice versa. [2] What does “is said in as many ways as being” mean? Although λέγεται in the corresponding Greek phrase no doubt means the same thing as it does in the Greek phrases literally translated as “is said in two ways [διχώς],” “is said in many ways [πολλαχῶς],” “is said in as many ways as ______” and other such constructions, just what does it mean in these constructions? [3] What does it mean to say that τάγαθόν “is said in all the categories”—that is, “is said in the category of substance,” “is said in the category of quality,” and so on? [4] Does λέγεται in the Greek for “the good is said in as many ways as being” mean the same thing as it means in the Greek for “the good is said in all the categories,” or does it mean different things in the two constructions? Finally, [5] why is it supposed to follow that τάγαθόν is said in many ways (as many as being is) if it is said in all the categories? Why can it not “be said” in just one way?²

1 Title inspired by Barnes 1993, “Meaning, Saying and Thinking.”
2 Many interpretations of the NE passage have been offered in the literature over the last nine decades or so. None, however, seem adequate, and none have achieved widespread acceptance. (I discuss the major interpretations that have been offered in 1998 and 2003). In fact, by now the level of frustration over the difficulty we have in finding an acceptable interpretation that would yield a plausible argument for the multivocity of “good” is running so high that the inclination among some commentators is to throw up their hands in despair. Woods is perhaps the best example of this. In commenting on the passage in the
It would be helpful to know the answers to these questions for understanding many other passages in Aristotle as well. Phrases having the form, or phrases having a form like, τὸ ἐλέγεται πολλαχῶς (with ε standing either for some thing or for some word or phrase—which alternative is the correct one, I leave open at this point) are ubiquitous in his works, and they have reference to many or most of the fundamental terms of his philosophy—to substance (οὐσία), nature (φύσις), origin (ἀρχή) and cause (ἀίτιον), for example, as well as to being and the good. When using phrases such as λέγεται πολλαχῶς, Aristotle is asserting some feature or attribute, and the very frequency with which he uses such phrases indicates that he believed himself to be saying something significant in asserting them. The fundamentality of the terms of which these phrases are asserted also implies that he believed himself to be saying something significant in asserting them. It behooves us, therefore, to understand precisely what he means by the phrase λέγεται πολλαχῶς, and its cousins and other relatives, if we are to have a precise understanding of those areas of his philosophy where the terms of which these phrases are asserted have an impact. Moreover, since something “is said in many ways” because it “is said in two or more categories,” at least in some important cases (being and the good most notoriously), then it is equally, or more, important for us to understand what λέγεται means when used in such a construction. Does it mean the same as λέγεται when it appears in phrases such as λέγεται πολλαχῶς, or does it mean something different? If we are to understand precisely what the underlying reason is for something being “said in many ways,” then we must also understand what it means in a construction such as this.

The purpose of this essay is to identify the precise meaning of λέγεται is it appears in constructions such as those considered, as well as the meaning of those constructions themselves. My thesis is that λέγεται means “is uttered signifying something.” If we take this to be correct for the moment, then a construction as τάγαθόν ισαχώς λέγεται τ(ο δντι, γάρ ἐν πάσαις ταῖς κατηγορίαις λέγεται means “'the good' is uttered signifying as many things as 'being' is, for it is uttered signifying something in all the categories”—for example: god

*Eudemian Ethics* that is the counterpart to this one in the *NE* (A8: 1217b25-35, for which I offer a translation below), he asserts: “Whatever may be the correct interpretation of this extremely puzzling passage it is doubtful if a satisfactory argument for the multivocity of ‘good’ can be extracted [from it] ...” (1992, 65. Shields 1999 agrees: see chapter 8.)

3 Understanding the precise meaning of λέγεται πολλαχῶς and phrases like it is no less important than understanding the precise meaning of λέγεται κατά and phrases like it (κατηγορεῖται κατά, for example). In a way, it is even more important, since the concept of λέγεται κατά presupposes the concept of λέγεται as expressed in phrases such as λέγεται πολλαχῶς, as I hope this essay will make clear. However, whereas the importance of λέγεται κατά for understanding both Aristotle’s theory of predication and his ontology is generally recognized, the importance—or at least the degree of importance—of λέγεται πολλαχῶς for understanding Aristotle is not. (I discuss λέγεται κατά and κατηγορεῖται κατά at length in 1988: Chapters VI-VIII. For references to some of the literature on that subject, see the bibliography there and in Barnes 1995: 311-12 [III: D, Logic: Predication].)

4 To me, “the good” seems the preferable translation of τὸ ἀγαθόν here. As the examples Aristotle would give suggest, he means “a thing that is given the name ‘the good’”—in the sense of being, not the good, but one among the things each of which are given the name “the good.” As a group, therefore, they would be labeled “goods” (ἀγαθά), and each of them would be called the good in certain contexts (as health is the good in the case of medicine, victory in the case of generalship and a building in the case of architecture [see *NE* A7: 1097a15-22]). “[A] good” might serve just as well as “the good,” with each of the goods therefore being called “[a] good.” However, if we translate τὸ ἀγαθόν in this way, then we must be careful not to misunderstand what “[a] good” would mean. “[A] good” would not mean “a thing that is good” or “[a] good thing,” with the good involved being some attribute or characteristic that the thing possesses. Rather, the good would be the thing itself. Let me illustrate. If a woman is beautiful, she is a beautiful thing and might be called “a beautiful,” although it would be bad English to do so. She would not be “a
in the category of substance, the virtues in the category of quality, and so on. In other words, for Aristotle, whenever "we Greeks" say τάγαθόν, whenever "we Greeks" produce the sound indicated by τάγαθόν, then we produce a sound which signifies, in turn, something in all the categories. That is, "we" produce a sound that signifies—or is a name for—as many things as "being" is, since it signifies—or is a name for—things in all the categories.5

My procedure in arguing for this thesis will be as follows. First, I will consider some of the translations that other scholars have offered for λέγεται as it appears in the NE passage and elsewhere. I will argue that these translations fall short, either because they are too literal to be of much help or, more seriously, because they are misleading or inaccurate. Second, I will consider the passages in the Categories, the De Interpretatione and the Poetics that provide the textual basis for the thesis offered here. Third, I will apply the translation of λέγεται proposed to other passages in Aristotle’s works, thereby hoping to show that it may be applied widely in the corpus. Fourth, I will briefly reconsider the translations of λέγεται offered by other scholars in the light of the translation proposed here. My aim will be to indicate the extent to which, and the ways in which, the opposing translations yield claims that Aristotle did or would have embraced, and then to measure those claims against what Aristotle must be understood to mean when λέγεται is translated as "is uttered signifying something." In other words, my aim will be to show how the translation of λέγεται proposed here agrees and contrasts with the translations offered by other scholars. My hope is that this will bring its specific meaning into sharper relief. Fifth, and last, I will consider some of the other senses of λέγεται employed by Aristotle, as well as the meaning of various phrases in which λέγεται appears. That will help us to see how all the senses of λέγεται and the phrases using it considered in this essay are related. It will also help us to see that λέγεται in the sense "is uttered signifying something" is fundamental to Aristotle’s theory of predication.

2. Translations of λέγεται in Nicomachean Ethics A6: 1096a23-29 and elsewhere

According to Ross, the Nicomachean Ethics (NE) passage should be translated as follows: “Since ‘good’ has as many senses as ‘being’ (for it is predicated both in the category of substance, as of God and of reason, and in quality, i.e. of the virtues, and in quantity, . . .), clearly

beautiful" if she were not beautiful—the beautiful involved here being the attribute possessed by the woman, not the woman apart from the attribute. If we use “[a] good” for τάγαθόν, then we must be careful not to understand “[a] good” as we would understand “[a] beautiful.” If we translate Aristotle such that he turns out to say that god, for example, is [a] good, then by “[a] good” we must not take him to mean “[a] good thing,” with the good involved here being an attribute that a certain thing (a substance) possesses. God himself, that thing itself, is the good and what “[a] good” signifies—not any attribute. If we translate him in such a way that he turns out to say that virtue is [a] good, then by “[a] good” we must not take him mean “[a] good thing,” with the good involved here being some attribute or characteristic that a certain thing (a quality) possesses. Virtue itself is the good and what “[a] good” signifies—not any attribute or characteristic. Similarly for the things in the other categories. In some cases “goodness” might be a suitable translation for τάγαθόν when used in this sense, but Aristotle does not have this word—at least, he does not use the Greek equivalent for it, ή άγαθωσύνη. However, it would not be a suitable translation for all cases of goods—neither for god nor for Paris or Homer, for example. In any case, Aristotle certainly does not mean the adjective “good” by τάγαθόν here, just as he does not mean an adjective by τό δε (“being”). (I discuss these matters at length in 2003.)

5 The troublesome NE passage alluded to here may be interpreted using this translation of λέγεται as a basis. I do so 2003.
it cannot be something universally present in all cases and single; for then it could not have been
predicated in all the categories but in one only."6 [ἐτι δ’ ἔπει τὰγοδόν ἱσοχώς λέγεται τῷ ὅντι
καὶ γὰρ ἐν τῷ τί λέγεται, οὐν ὁ θεός καὶ ὁ νόμος, καὶ ἐν τῷ ποιήματι ὁ Θεός, καὶ ἐν τῷ ποιήματι
..., δῆλον ὡς οὐκ ἄν εἴη κατά ποιήματι τι καθόλου καὶ ἐν οὐ γὰρ ἄν ἔλεγετ’ ἐν πάσαις ταῖς
cατηγορίαις, ἀλλ’ ἐν μιᾷ μονῇ.] Although “‘good’ has as many senses as ‘being’” has the
great virtue of making good sense, we may wonder whether it is an accurate translation of the
Greek. Literally, and partially translated, the idea expressed in the passage is: “τὰγοδόν is said in
as many ways as τῷ ὅντι, for it is said in all the categories. It therefore cannot be
one thing; for if it were, then it would not be said in all the categories but in one only.”

How does this warrant “‘good’ has as many senses as ‘being’”? Perhaps there are other considerations that might
persuade Ross is right to use “has the sense” or “means” for λέγεται here, and I will pursue them
shortly, but as things stand this translation seems very loose, to say the least. His translation of
λέγεσθαι at its second and third occurrences as “is predicated of” also seems off the mark. “Is
predicated” is one of the narrower meanings of λέγεται, and Aristotle would have been more
likely to use κατηγορεῖται if that is what he had meant to say. More seriously, “is predicated of” suggests the presence of κατά in the Greek and that Aristotle’s examples are in the genitive; but
as a matter of fact there is no κατά, and the examples are in the nominative.

In the recently revised Oxford translation, Ross-Urmson-Barnes have: “Further, since
things are said to be good in as many ways as they are said to be (for things are called good both
in the category of substance, as God and reason, and in quality, e.g. the virtues . . .), clearly the
good cannot be something universally present in all cases and single; for then it would not have
been predicated in all the categories but in one only.”7 I am not convinced this revision is an
improvement upon the old translation. The first clause of this translation takes “things” to be the
understood but unexpressed subject of λέγεται at too high a price: It makes a neuter plural
subject—which is not there—take a singular verb, inserts a “to be” that is not there, uses “good”
to translate τὰγοδόν and “to be” to translate τῷ ὅντι. While all of this is possible, it stretches
credulity. The Greek simply does not say that “things are said to be good in as many ways as they
are said to be.” “[T]hings” is not the subject τὰγοδόν is; nor are they said to be anything, whether
good or anything else. Similar considerations apply to the translation in parentheses. Worse still,
this translation of λέγεται at its first and second occurrences (and at the third, as well) reads a
very problematic interpretation of the passage into Aristotle—the same problematic
interpretation that underlies Ross’s translation.8 “Predicated in” (that is, “predicated of things in

6 1915.
7 Barnes 1984.
8 If things in all the categories are said to be good, as this translation says they are, why—some scholars
have asked—would that mean that “the good cannot be something universally present in all cases and
single”? What would prevent things from being called good in one and the same sense of “good”? As
Irwin remarks (see 1981, 539), “we might as well say that ‘amusing’ or ‘strange’ is multivocal because
both substances and qualities can be amusing or strange.” (For further discussion of the problems other
scholars see in the interpretation underlying Ross’s translation, see Ackrill 1977, Irwin 1981, MacDonald
1989 and Shields 1999.) Unlike these scholars, I would argue that the problem with this translation is that
it gives us the wrong goods (and I have so argued: see 2003). Goods are irreducible, and the good
therefore not one thing, because goods are to be found in all the categories—god in the category of
substance, the virtues in the category of quality, and so on. However, if we take Aristotle to be saying that
the good is not one thing because things in all the categories are called good (just as things in all the
categories are said to be or to exist), then we understand him so be saying that the good is not one thing
because it is predicated attributively of things in all the categories—giving us “god is good,” “courage is
good,” and so on. The good, or goods, would therefore be the things signified by the predicate “is good”
in each of these cases. The problem here is that the thing signified by “is good” in “god is good” does not
All the categories . . . , the translation of λέγεται at its third occurrence, is of course the same as Ross’s.

Ackrill suggests that the first part of the passage should be translated as follows: “since good is spoken of in as many ways as being (for it is said both in the category of substance, as god and reason, and in quality—the virtues, and in quantity—the moderate . . . ).” He thus suggests “is spoken of” and “is said” here for λέγεται at its first and second occurrences, respectively. “Is spoken of” and “is said” are more literal—and therefore perhaps more accurate—translations of λέγεται, but the problem here is understanding what the English is supposed to mean. Just what does it mean to say that good is spoken of in as many ways as being? What does it mean to say that it is said as god and as the virtues, and so on? “Good is spoken of (or said) as courage,” for example, cannot mean (nor does Ackrill take it to mean) that good is called courage, for, if anything, it is rather that courage is called good (or a good); nor does it seem to mean that uttering the word “good” is a “disguised” form of saying courage, or uttering the word “courage,” since Ackrill criticizes Kosman for claiming something much like this, criticizing him for interpreting the NE passage as saying that predicating good, for example, is a disguised way of predicating courage. Perhaps a better sense can be attached to Ackrill’s “is spoken of” or “is said” (this essay argues that there is), but one wishes that the great Oxford Aristotelian had been more forthcoming on this point.12

Irwin, finally, has:

Further, good is spoken of in as many ways as being is spoken of. For it is spoken of in [the category of] what-it-is, as god and mind; in quality, as the virtues . . . . Hence it is clear that the good cannot be some common [nature of good things] that is universal and single; for if it were, it would be spoken of in only one of the categories, not in them all.13

The first part of this translation is much like Ackrill’s, and the translation as a whole raises the same questions14 as Ackrill’s does.15

fall into the category of substance (just as the thing signified by “is white” in “Socrates is white” does not), the thing signified by “is good” in “courage is good” does not fall into the category of quality (just as the thing signified by “is piercing” in “white color is piercing” does not), and so on for the remaining categories. In very few case, therefore, would the things signified by “is good” fall into one or more of the categories: only in those cases where a substance is called good—and even in those cases none would fall into the category of substance, since the good is predicated attributively; in all cases where a nonsubstance is, they will not. Yet they all should, if the good is not one thing because goods fall into all the categories. I alluded to this problem in an earlier note.

9 1977, 17.
10 Shields also uses “is spoken of.” (See 1999, 10n2.)
12 The interpretation of the NE passage that Ackrill proposes on the basis of his translation presents its own problems. See, for example, MacDonald 1989: 157-59. I also have a few things to say on the subject in 2003.
14 Irwin does attempt to explain the meaning of “good is spoken of . . . ” and “as god . . . ”: see 1985, notes on 1096a23 and 24.
15 Dirlmeier 1967 has: “Nacdem ‘gut’ in ebensoviel Bedeutungen ausgesagt wird wie ‘ist’--es wird in der Kategorie der Substanz ausgesagt, z.B. von Gott . . . --kann ‘gut’ unmöglich etwas Übergreifend-allgemeines, und nur Eines sein. Denn sonst könnte es nicht in all en Kategorien ausgesagt werden, sondern nur in einer.” Gauthier-Jolif 1970 have: “En outre, le mot ‘bien’ s’emploie en autant de sens que le mot ‘être’; il peut en effet désigner l’essence (par exemple le dieu . . . ) . . . . Il en résulte que le terme de ‘bien’ ne saurait évidemment être un terme commun, universel et un; car alors il ne s’emploierait pas
We are thus presented with five meanings for λέγεται in the NE passage: [1] Ross’s “has the sense” or “means”16 (where the subject would have to be a word or words) and [2] his “is predicated of” or, equivalently, “is said of” (where the subject seems to be a thing); [3] Ross-Urmson-Barnes’ “are said to be,” where that means “are called” (as in “a, b, . . . n are said to be—are called —ε’); [4] Ackrill’s “is spoken of” (where that is not the equivalent of the “is said of” just listed); and [5] his “is said,” as in “ε is said as a, b, . . . n,” (where “is said” seems to be the equivalent of “is spoken of”). When λέγεται in the sense under discussion appears in Aristotle’s other works, many of the English translations we encounter conform to one or another of these five. Not all, however. A brief survey of some of the volumes in the Clarendon Aristotle Series reveals a few others.

Although λέγεται in the sense under discussion does not appear often in the Categories and De Interpretatione (Aristotle there preferring the construction “a, b, . . . n are called [λέγεται] ε” or “a, b, . . . n are said to be [λέγεται είναι] ε”), Ackrill, when it does occur, uses “is spoken of” in his 1966 translation.17 This is in line with his 1977 suggestion for the NE passage.

Hamlyn, in his 1968 translation of De Anima II and III, uses a translation of λέγεται we have not encountered so far: [6] “is so spoken of”—a translation that, although it builds on Ackrill’s “is spoken of,” is very different indeed. Hamlyn translates B1: 412a22ff, for example, with “actuality is so spoken of in two ways, first as knowledge is and second as contemplation is.” This translation proceeds on the basis of two assumptions: (1) “[it] is actuality . . . itself which is spoken of (or said) in two ways, not the word ‘actuality’”; and (2) the literal “is said” is best translated as “is spoken of,” since “we do not use ‘say’ in this way in English.” Hamlyn then claims, rightly, that (3) “to say merely that actuality is spoken of in different ways would suggest a quite different interpretation from the right one”—namely, it would suggest that actuality is spoken of as “[a] disposition” and “[an] activity.” This would get things the wrong way around, for it is rather the case that both a disposition and an activity are each spoken of as an actuality—that is, that each is called an actuality. Aristotle’s point is not that actuality is called different things but that it is called the same thing, in different ways. Hamlyn therefore goes on to say that, (4) although “[t]here is in fact no ‘so’ in the Greek, . . . it has to be introduced in the English . . . .” Thus we get “actuality is so spoken of in two ways, first as knowledge is and second as contemplation is.”18

While I agree with Hamlyn that “[i]t is the meaning (which is, in Aristotle’s thought, the reference) of the word with which he is concerned . . . .,” I remain unconvinced that his translation is accurate. To say “actuality is so spoken of in two ways, first as knowledge is and second as contemplation is” must mean “actuality is called ‘actuality’ in two ways, first as knowledge is called ‘[an] actuality’ (because knowledge is an actual disposition) and second as contemplation is called ‘[an] actuality’ (because contemplation is the actual exercise of knowledge).” This seems a strange, convoluted way of saying that “actuality” has two meanings or referents, a disposition and the exercise of a disposition. Perhaps, therefore, it would be better if we did not accept Hamlyn’s first two assumptions. Perhaps it is the word, not the thing, that Aristotle is talking about here; and, since there are a very great many meanings for λέγεται (that, in a way, is the problem), perhaps there is some meaning other than “is spoken of” that would work better here.

While recognizing that the expression τὸ δὲ λέγεται πολλαχῶς means “literally, that ‘being’ (the participle of the verb ‘to be’) ‘is said in many ways,’ ” Charlton will, nevertheless, sometimes translate the Greek as “‘things are said to be in many ways.’ ” His reasons: “Aristotle is extremely fond of saying that things like being, nature, cause, are said in a number of ways, and an equivalent English formula is hard to find. To say, e.g., ‘the word ‘cause’ is used in many senses’ is misleading in that it suggests that Aristotle is talking about a word, when he is in fact talking about the things to which a word is applied.” Echoing Hamlyn’s point, he continues with: “To say ‘causes are spoken of in many ways’ is worse, since Aristotle’s point is not that many different expressions are applied to the same thing, but that the same expression is applied to many different things.” He uses translations “varying from . . . ‘things are said to be in many ways,’ i.e. ‘there are many different grounds on which a thing may be said to be a thing which is,’ to ‘many different things can all be called causes’ . . . .” (See 54)

For the opening of Δ1, for example, he has: “We call an origin that point of an actual thing from which someone would move first . . . ; and the point from which each thing would come to be most satisfactorily . . . ; and . . . .” (See also the rest of his translation of Δ.) The problem with this translation has already been indicated: ἀρχή (origin) is the grammatical subject of λέγεται, and the various points and so on are its object, not the reverse. Kirwan, of course, knows this. In his notes on this, he says: “‘We call an origin’ ‘‘: literally ‘origin is called.’ In other words, he takes “ε is called a, b, . . . n [by us]” to be equivalent to “a, b, . . . n are called ε [by us]” (in other words, to be equivalent to “we call a, b, . . . n ε”). It is not. While “a, b, . . . n are called ε” may be closer to what Aristotle believed to be true than “ε is called a, b, . . . n,” it is not an accurate translation; and, while “ε is called a, b, . . . n” may be the more accurate translation if one uses “is called” for λέγεται, that, as Hamlyn correctly pointed out, distorts what Aristotle is saying when he employs this construction.

See his translation of B10: 94a14-16.

She translates τὸ δὲ πολλαχῶς with “‘being’ has many senses”: see her translation of N2: 1089a7-10 and 15-20. Λέγεται, it should be noted, is in ellipsis in both places.

See his translation of B10: 336b29-30.

For A8: 1217b25-26, he has: “For the good is [so] called in many ways, indeed in as many ways as being.” “I . . . have adopted the rendering: ‘is so called in many ways,’ ” he explains, “as it is anachronistic to suppose that Aristotle had in mind a plurality of senses, as we should understand the terms now.” Yet he immediately goes on to say: “But it is convenient, nonetheless, to think of the doctrine [that the good ‘is said in many ways’] in that way. . . .” (See 1992, 65; see also his Glossary entry for λέγεσθαι ὤς ὁ. . . 206.)

See his translation of I4: 204a2-3.

See his translation of I6: 206a14-15.

See his translation of I6: 206a21.

See, for example, his translation of 13: 105a23-24, of Chapter 15, and his commentary on 105a23-24.

Their translation of λέγεσθαι at its first occurrence (and perhaps also the third). For their translation, see the note above.
been helpful. The literal “is said,” one of the more popular translations today, is just like [4] “is spoken of" in every significant way. Of it too, then, we must ask: What on earth does it mean? 

3. Ross’s translation pursued: λέγεται as “means”

The trouble with these translations, then, is the usual with difficult terms--some of them, although accurate, are so literal as to make little sense, while others, although idiomatic and natural, seem inaccurate. Even so, some translation both accurate and idiomatic for this important term should be possible. Ross’s translation of λέγεται at its first occurrence in the NE passage, although very free, seems worth pursuing. After all, Aristotle is here listing what appear to be some of the different senses or meanings of the term “good,” so perhaps λέγεται should be translated by “means.” Ross himself does this for most of its opening occurrences in Metaphysics Δ. Aristotle’s Philosophical Lexicon, where the typical structure of a chapter often is, or seems to be: ε λέγεται a, b, . . . , n (where “ε” is some word or phrase, and a, b, . . . , n are what seem to be the various senses or meanings of ε, the “things” meant by it). If so, then we could translate the NE passage as follows:

Further, since “the good” means as many things as “being” [does] (for it means [things] in [the category of] the “what” . . . and in [the category of] quality . . . and in [the category of] quantity . . . ), it is clear that it cannot be a certain common universal—that is, one thing; for [then] it would not mean [things] in all the categories but in one only. Although this translation perhaps comes close to being both accurate and idiomatic, it is still worrisome. The problem is that this sense is not one of the many standard meanings of λέγεται, nor easily derived from any of them. Liddell-Scott list 15 senses for λέγω, with the most promising candidate among them being: “like Lat. dicere, to speak with a particular sense, to mean . . . .” In this sense of λέγω, both a person and a word can be the subject, but, once the corresponding passive meaning is used for the passive voice, it turns out that it is the thing said or expressed that means something, not the person or the word. The passive construction corresponding to “he means (λέγει) a when he says ‘ε’” is “a is meant (λέγεται) by him when he says ‘ε’,” just as the passive construction corresponding to “‘ε’ means (λέγει) a” is “a is meant (λέγεται) by ‘ε.’” This sense of λέγω, therefore, cannot possibly be the one Aristotle has in mind when the subject is a word or phrase and the verb is in the passive voice, as is the case in the NE passage and elsewhere. Of course, we could argue that Aristotle’s usage indicates that λέγω bears the sense of “means” in the passive voice as well as the active, even though no such sense is listed in Liddell-Scott, but to be conservative in this matter seems the wiser course.

30 I offer some of my own toward that end later in this essay.

31 It is also used by Furth, for example, in his 1985 translation of Metaphysics Z, H, Θ and I and by Kung in her 1986 article, “Aristotle on ‘Being Is Said in Many Ways.’”

32 In addition to “is said,” Smith suggests that λέγεται in the sense under discussion may also mean “is said of” or “is predicated of,” in a sense different from the “is predicated of” that I have listed as translation [2]. (See 1997, 88-89.) While many of Smith’s comments on λέγεται are most helpful, I do not believe that translation is accurate and will have something to say about it near the end of this essay.

33 Although sometimes very useful, such translations are what Furth would call “‘rendering[s] from Aristotle’s Greek, into a vernacular neither English nor Greek, called Eek’ . . . .” (1985, vi)

34 See 1928.

35 See 1968.
“Means”—and its corresponding “meaning”—are terms so philosophically loaded that it seems preferable to stay within already established senses, if possible, and not to coin new ones.36

4. The meaning of λέγεται

I believe that the problem of translating λέγεται can be solved by going back to some of the fundamentals of Aristotle’s view of language. What, after all, is it that “is said,” for Aristotle, when something “is said”? On one level, the answer is not hard to come by: words. Aristotle’s word for words, however, is not λόγοι:37 instead, to refer to the words used in signifying expressions, he typically uses the phrase τα λεγόμενα (“things said”). Thus, in the Categories Aristotle talks of “things said in combination [τα κατά συμπλοκής λεγόμενα]” (“man runs,” “man wins,” for example) and “things said without combination38 [τα άνευ συμπλοκής λεγόμενοι]” (“man,” “ox,” “runs,” “wins”).39 “Things said without combination” are of two kinds,40 according to the Categories and De Interpretatione: “names” (όνομα) and “verbs” (ρήμα). A “name” “is a spoken sound significant by convention [φωνή σημαντική]

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36 To do justice to meaning in Aristotle would take me far beyond the scope of this essay. I intend to say more about this, as well as its relationship to λέγεται and signifying, in a future essay now in preparation. For two recent book-length studies, see Charles 2000 and Modrak 2001.

37 Nor is that surprising. Liddell-Scott inform us that “[λ]όγος never means a word in the grammatical sense, as the mere name of a thing or act (these being expressed by ἐπος, δύνα, ῥῆμα, Lat. vocabulum) . . .” (See 1968: AI, second sense.) Aristotle of course applies the word λόγος to combinations of words, as I indicate below.

38 Better translations here might be “things said intertwined together” and “things said without being intertwined,” given the antecedents for this view. (See note below on its antecedents in Plato.)

39 See 2: lal6-19; also Chapter 4. I follow Ackrill (see 1966, including his commentary on chapters 2 and 4) in taking τα λεγόμενα to signify words—or expressions or utterances—here. Some might argue, however, that τα λεγόμενα should not be understood as referring to words—to the utterances or expressions produced when things are said—but to the things that are said, since it is quite natural to read the Categories as talking about things that are said, it being only in the De Interpretatione that names and verbs are defined. Such a charge would be partly true. It is true that the Categories should be read as talking about things and the De Interpretatione as talking about words, but only if this means that the general focus of the Categories is on things rather than words and that the general focus of the De Interpretatione is on words rather than things. The Categories, for all that, also talks about names (see, for example, Chapter 1 and 5: 2a19-34) and affirmations (see, for example, 4: 2a4-10), just as the De Interpretatione also talks about things (see, for example, 7: 17a38-b3). It is therefore quite possible for τα λεγόμενα to mean words in some passages of the Categories, and my claim is that the term in the passages indicated at the beginning of this note—which are fundamental—illustrate this typical use.

Although it is possible to take τα λεγόμενα in these passages to mean things said, it is more likely to mean words. Chapter 2 deliberately contrasts τα λεγόμενα (in the passage cited, 1a16-19) with τα οντα (in the rest of the chapter). As already indicated, τα λεγόμενα are there divided into two groups: those “said in combination” and those “said without combination.” Τα οντα are divided into the four familiar categories: [1] δινα that are said of but not in an underlyer, [2] δινα that are in but not said of an underlyer, [3] δινα that are both, and [4] δινα that are neither. The context of chapter 2 therefore makes clear that τα λεγόμενα are not δινα but something else—and the most reasonable “something else” to take them to be is words. In chapter 4, Aristotle says that each of “the things said without combination” signifies [σημόται] (see 1b26) either a substance or a quantity or a quality, and so on, and, although he does on occasion say that one thing signifies [σημόται] another thing (see, for example, Metaphysics Δ28: 1024b9-16, translated and discussed in the note below), it seems more likely that he here means that the sounds produced when things are said without combination—that is, that the sounds produced when words are uttered without combination—signify a substance, a quantity and so on. That is especially true
κατά συνθήκην], without [reference to time], no part of which is significant in separation. For in
‘Fairstreet,’ ‘steed’ by itself does not signify [σημάτιζε] anything, as it does in the phrase [λόγος]
‘fair steed’ . . .”⁴¹ A “verb,”⁴² on the other hand, “is the [spoken sound] which in addition
signifies [προσσημάτιζε] time, of which a part separately signifies nothing. It is a sign [σημείον]
for things said of a different [thing]. . . . for example, ‘health’ is a ‘name’, ‘is-healthy’ a ‘verb,’
for it signifies in addition belonging now [τὸ νῦν ὑπάρχειν]. And always it is a sign for things
belonging [to other things], because [it is a sign] of the sort [that is] for things [said] of an
underlyer.”⁴³

The Poetics supplements this account of “things said.” First, it introduces several other
subcategories of “things said without combination”: conjunctions (σύνδεσμος)⁴⁴ and the article,⁴⁵
on the one hand, and inflections of “names” and “verbs,”⁴⁶ on the other.⁴⁷ Conjunctions and the
article are distinguished from “names” and “verbs” by being non-significant sounds
(φωναί ἄσημοι)⁴⁸—that is, sounds that do not signify any thing. This of course does not mean
that they are “meaningless” or “have no significance” in the sense of being “mere sounds,”
useless baggage that merely encumbers speech and had better be eliminated. Although they
signify no thing, for Aristotle, as letters and syllables do not, they have a role or function in
speech and are defined by him accordingly.⁴⁹ Inflections of “names” and “verbs” are still treated

in light of what he says in the closing section of chapter 4, at 2a4-10. When things are said involving
combination, an affirmation comes to be [κατάφασις γίγνεται] (in other words, an affirmation is the
sounds produced when certain things are said involving combination), and every affirmation is either true
or false. However, things said involving no combination, he immediately goes on to say, are neither true
nor false. It is therefore hard not to see “things said involving no combination,” both in this section of
chapter 4 and at 2: 1a16-19, as meaning the sounds produced when they are said—that is, words. In both
chapters, then, “things said in combination” and “things said without combination” must mean words, and,
if so, so must τὰ λεγόμενα in chapter 2. (It is of course true, as I have already indicated, that τὰ λεγόμενα
is ambiguous in Aristotle, sometimes meaning the things that are said, sometimes the utterances produced
when these things are said. The context, naturally, will determine which sense is meant, assuming there is
enough of a context to make a determination.)⁵⁰

To be precise, mainly of two kinds. “Things said without combination” also include the inflected forms of
“names” and “verb,” which Aristotle asserts are not “names” and “verbs.” See the note below.

2: 16a19-22.

2 “Predicate,” in the sense of “predicate-cum-copula,” might be a better—though still imprecise—translation of ῥῆμα, given the definition that follows.

3: 16b6-10.

See 20: 1456b38-57a6 and 1457a7-9. For some additional remarks on conjunctions, see Rhetoric Γ3 and
12.

See 20: 1457a6-10.

See 20: 1457a18-23.

Letters and syllables are also categories of “things said” (sounds uttered), and they and their
subcataegories are also discussed in Poetics, chapter 20 (see 1456b22-38). He considers letters—and their
voiced sounds—to be the ultimate elements of speech, with all other “things said” being various
combinations of these sounds. (See the Poetics, chapters 20 and 21) However, I will confine my
discussion here to those “things said” that are words or combinations of words.

20: 1456b38 and 57a6.

Larkin, referring to the discussion at De Interpretatione 10: 20a7-15, adds distributive pronouns as a third
category (νος, for example). (See 1972, 27-28.) I am not convinced this category should be added, since
distributive pronouns never seem to have assumed the status of a separate category in Aristotle’s mind. He
also singles out the copula for discussion (see De Interpretatione 3: 16b22-25), claiming that it by itself
signifies no actual thing (οὐ σημαίνει ἐστι τοῦ πρίγματος), but the copula never assumes the status of a
separate category.
as categories distinct from “names” and “verbs, as they are in the De Interpretatione. The examples of inflected “names” that he gives are “of-this” and “to-this” [τούτου, τούτῳ], “to-one” and “to-many” [ένι, πολλοις] (for example, “men” or “man” [ἄνθρωποι, ἄνθρωπος]); of inflected “verbs” “walked?” and “walk!” [ἐβάδισεν; βάδιζε]. Like “uninflected” “names” and “verbs” themselves, their inflected forms also have significance, of course, although a significance different from their “uninflected” forms. Second, the Poetics adds several subcategories of “things said involving combination.” It includes statements such as “Cleon walks,” but adds phrases such as “the definition [όρισμός] of man,” which are without a “verb” (“two-footed animal” would presumably be an example), and larger units such as The Iliad. Each is called a λόγος and is defined as “a composite significant spoken sound, some of whose parts signify something by themselves [φωνή συνθέτη σημαντική ης ένια μέρη καθ’ αυτά στμαίνει τι].”

It seems evident from this account of the units of discourse that if a “thing said” is either a “name” or a “verb” (or certain “name” and “verb” phrases), then to say such a thing, for Aristotle, is to produce a sound signifying something. It is the same thing as that—nothing more and nothing less. If it signifies nothing, nothing is said—the sounds made being merely like the bellowing of an ox or the “talking” of a myna bird, without meaning or significance. To put things more technically, if we let “ε” stand for a “name” or a “verb,” then to say “ε” is to produce a certain sound signifying something—the sound indicated by the substitution instance of “ε.” To put it passively, if “ε” is said, then the sound ε is produced signifying something. That

50 These categories are first introduced in the De Interpretatione, but very briefly and almost by the way. The examples of inflected “names” that Aristotle gives there are “of-Philo” and “to-Philo.” He explicitly says that the inflected forms are not “names,” although he also says that they are the same as “names” (the “account” [λόγος] is the same), except that no true or false assertion is made by the addition to them of “is,” “was” or “will be.” (See 2: 16a32-b5.) The examples of inflected “verbs” that he give are “was-healthy” and “will-be-healthy,” and he similarly asserts that they are not “verbs,” reserving that label for words of this sort indicating the present time. (See 3: 16b16-18.)

51 See 20: 1457a18-23.

52 Aristotle’s account in Categories 1 of paronyms—and homonyms and synonyms—is a different discussion. Fundamentally, that account is a classification, not of words themselves, but of actual things (πράγματα) by reference to words.


54 Interestingly, Heidegger has a number of things to say about λόγος and λέγειν and their relationship to his metaphysics in An Introduction to Metaphysics. I owe this observation to my colleague Leo Bostar.


56 Lest we forget, words were not separated in the Greek. That fact is clearly relevant for appreciating this system of classification.

57 For more on this subject, see Larkin 1972, 13-44.

58 In the end, then, λέγειν—in the contexts under discussion—does turn out to be “like Lat. dicere,” not in the sense of “to mean,” but in the sense of “to speak with a particular sense.” Like, but not the same as.

59 In this connection, it is useful to recall that, according to Categories 4, every “thing said without combination” signifies something—either a substance or a quality or a quantity or some other nonsubstance.

60 Although the bellowings of an ox do “indicate something [δηλούσι τι]” in that sense that they “signify” something, they do not rise to the level of “names” since they are not symbols (σύμβολα) of anything. (See De Interpretatione 2: 16a26-29.)

61 It should be noted that Aristotle hardly ever uses the active voice of λέγω in this sense. De Generacione et Corruptione B10: 336b29-30 is one of the rare exceptions; literally translated, he there says: “... in how many ways we say ‘being’ [τό δ’ είναι ποσεχός λέγομεν] has been stated elsewhere...”
is, *λέγεται*—in the contexts under discussion—is a technical expression meaning "is uttered signifying something."\(^2\)

Before moving on, it might be helpful to note the connection between *τὸ λέγεσθαι πολλαχώς* ("being said in many ways") and homonomy—that is, the connection between " *ἐ' seu * is uttered signifying something in many ways" (which, I shall argue, means the same thing as " *ἐ' seu * is uttered signifying many things") and " *a, b, . . . n are homonyms." While they are not identical, they are very closely connected indeed.\(^4\) They are, as it were, corollaries.

Homonomy is defined in the famous passage at Categories 1: 1a1-6:

Those things are called homonyms that have only the name in common—that is, the definition of the being corresponding to the name is different [Ομώνυμα λέγεται ὃν ὀνομα μόνον κοινόν, ὁ δὲ κατὰ τούτομο λόγος τῆς οὐσίας ἐκτέρμον]. For example, both [a] man and the picture [of a man are called] [an] animal, but the definition of the being corresponding to the name is different [in each case]; for if someone gives an account of what it is for each of them to be [an] animal, he will give a different definition of each [ἔὰν γὰρ ἀποδίδῃ τις τί ἐστιν ὀνομα ἐκτέρμο τὸ ζῷον ἐλεύθῃ πράτν τοῦ ἐπιστήμου].

In other words, if someone gives an account of what it is for a man to be an animal (namely, that it is to be a living being of a certain sort) and what it is for the picture of a man to be an animal (namely, that it is to be a picture of a certain sort), he will give a different definition in each case. That is, if you have a case where both a man and a picture of a man are called an animal, the definitions of what it is to be an animal—of what [an] animal is—will be different in the two cases. Thus, the definitions of the beings (οὐσίαι) corresponding to the name "[an] animal" will be different. It is the beings corresponding to—or signified by—the *predicates* in the two cases (the animals) that are homonyms, not—as some scholars sometimes seem to think—the beings signified by the subjects, ([a] man and the picture of a man). Furthermore, also contrary to what some scholars seem to think, this doctrine does not require that two things may have *only* the name in common if they are to be homonyms. In other words, it is not the case that they fail to

\(^2\) Not surprisingly, the antecedents for this view of "names," "verbs" and statements—and for this sense of *λέγεται*—are to be found in Plato, especially at Sophist 261B6-62E2. A "verb" (ῥήμα), for Plato, is "the [spoken sound] that is a means of signifying actions [*τὸ μὲν ἐπὶ τὰς πράξεις οὐν δήλωμα*] (262A3), and a "name" (ὄνομα) is "the spoken sign applied to the things that perform those actions [*τὸ δὲ γὰρ ἐπὶ οἷς ἐκείνας πρᾶττομεν σημείον τῆς πράξεως*] (262A-7). "Things [that is, a "name" and a "verb"] spoken one after another [*τὰ ἐπεξίπτειεις λεγόμενα*] (261D8), or "together [*τὴν συνεχείαν*] (261E1), "and signifying something [*καὶ δηλοῦσαι τί*] (261E1) constitute a "statement [*λόγος*]" (262A10). Put another way, statements are "the sounds produced [*τὰ φωιηθέτατα*] when one "blends [κεράση]" "verbs" together with "names"; when that is done, this "elemental intertwining [*πρώτη συμπλοκή*] straightaway has become a statement and signifies [δηλοί] something. (See 262C2-7). Thus, for Plato, too, "names," "verbs," and statements are "things said," statements "things said in combination" and "names" and "verbs" "things said without combination." All are spoken sounds signifying something, and thus to say any of them is to utter something signifying something. Put passively, if any of them "is said," that *means* that a word or combination of words is uttered signifying something.

\(^4\) Shields holds that the referents of *τὸ λέγεσθαι πολλαχώς*—which he calls multivocity or multivocality—and homonomy are coextensive, and he also seems to believe that multivocity and homonomy are identical (see 1999, 10n2). I cannot agree with him here. Multivocity (*τὸ λέγεσθαι πολλαχώς*) is a feature of words or phrases (being uttered signifying several things), whereas homonomy (at least in its basic sense) is a relationship that obtains among things. Their referents are accordingly different, multivocity referring to linguistic activities ("utterings" of a certain kind), homonomy to instances of a certain relationship among things (being homonymous).

\(^6\) See Ackrill 1966, translation and commentary on Categories 1a1ff.
qualify as true homonyms if they have something in common in addition to the name, however little that may be. All Aristotle’s doctrine requires is that “the definitions corresponding to the name” be different. The very example he gives in the Categories passage to illustrate his definition of homonymy proves this point: the things referred to by the two predicates in question (the two animals—the living creature and the picture of the living creature) are both substances, although “the definitions corresponding to their names” are different.

On this view of homonymy, therefore, if several animals are homonyms, then “[an] animal,” when used as a name for these animals, is uttered signifying several things—that is, as I shall argue shortly, “[an] animal” λέγεται πολλαχώς. Conversely, if “[an] animal” is uttered signifying several animals (that is, is uttered signifying animals that “have only the name in common”), then the several animals signified are homonyms. In general, if e’s are homonyms, then “ε” λέγεται πολλαχώς; and if “ε” λέγεται πολλαχώς, then the e’s are homonyms.

5. The proposed translation of λέγεται applied to other passages

The translation of λέγεται proposed seems to work nicely for the other passages where Aristotle uses the term in the sense under consideration. When we look at those passages, however, we find that he uses four different ways of expressing himself when employing the term, using four different patterns—three of which, at least, are typical or recurring. Which pattern he uses is a function of how he combines λέγεται with three other elements: the adverb of manner modifying λέγεται (πολλαχώς, for example), σημαίνει (“signifies”), and the things signified by the term that “is said,” its significata. In all the passages to be considered where he uses λέγεται in the sense under consideration, he always conjoins it with the significata, but he may combine these two elements with the other two in different ways: [1] He may combine them with both an adverb of manner and σημαίνει; [2] he may combine them only with σημαίνει, omitting the adverb—or he might just as well have; [3] he may combine them only with the adverb, omitting σημαίνει; and [4] he may combine them with neither the adverb nor σημαίνει, omitting both. Four different ways of expressing himself using λέγεται result.

The places where Aristotle explains why τό ῥῆν (“being”) λέγεται πολλαχώς illustrate the first pattern. Take Metaphysics Z1: 1028a10-18, the opening statement of that Book: “‘Being’ is uttered signifying something in many ways, just as we determined earlier in the works dealing with the number of ways in which [things are uttered signifying something] ῥῆν λέγεται πολλαχώς κοσμίστε διελιμέθεα πρόπετον ἐν τοίς περὶ τοῦ ποσαχώς; for, on the one hand, it signifies [σημαίνει] what-it-is (that is, this), on the other, quality or quantity or any one of the others asserted in this way [οὕτω κατηγοροφομένων].” Take Metaphysics N2: 1089a7-10

Irwin, for example, considers this a serious possibility (see 1981, 524). So does Shields 1999 (see section 1.1), although he argues at length against that interpretation (see section 1.2).

The confines of this essay preclude a more detailed discussion of homonymy in Aristotle, a topic that has attracted a large body of literature from ancient times to the present. I intend to deal with this topic more fully in an essay on the unity of the good in Aristotle, now in preparation. For a recent, comprehensive discussion, see Shields 1999.

The reference is to Metaphysics Δ7, part of which is quoted below.

That is, asserted of (κατηγορεῖται κατά) some this. The subject of κατηγορεῖται κατά here is of course a thing in each case, not a word.

Bonitz long ago observed this conjunction of λέγεται and σημαίνει. See 1870, 677a16-20; note also 424b23-25. This conjunction of λέγεται and σημαίνει was, for this investigator, the single most helpful clue for sorting out and identifying the precise meaning of λέγεται. I am very indebted to Bonitz for the research he did more than a century ago in this area (and many others, as well).
(where, admittedly, λέγεται is merely understood, not explicitly stated): “And yet, in the first place, if ‘being’ [is uttered signifying something] in many ways [τὸ ὁν πολλαχώς] (for sometimes it signifies [σημαίνει] substance, sometimes quality, sometimes quantity, and, of course, the other categories), what sort of one are all the beings, if not-being is not to be?”

Take De Anima A5: 410a13-16: “Further, since ‘being’ is uttered signifying something in many ways [πολλαχώς λεγομένου τοῦ ὄντος] (for it signifies [σημαίνει] this, quantity or quality or any of the other categories), will the soul consist of absolutely all [of them] or not?” Take Eudemian Ethics A8:1217b25-35, the passage corresponding to the NE passage quoted earlier. Here Aristotle explains why both “being” and “the good” λέγεται πολλαχώς by conjoining λέγεται and σημαίνει, a fact that is particularly significant for translating the NE passage accurately:

“The good” is uttered signifying something in many ways, indeed in as many ways as “being” [is] [πολλαχώς γὰρ λέγεται καὶ σημαίνει τὸ ὄντα τὸ ἀγαθόν]. For “being” [τὸ ὁν] . . . signifies [σημαίνει] sometimes what-it-is, sometimes quality, sometimes quantity, sometimes time, and, in addition to these, sometimes [things] in the [category of] being-acted-upon, sometimes [things] in the [category of] action. And the good is in each of these categories: in substance, mind—that is, God; in quantity, the just; in quality, the moderate-amoun; in time, the opportune-time; and teaching and being-taught in the sphere of action. Therefore, just as being is not some one thing with regard to the things mentioned, so neither is the good . . . .

The pattern we see emerging here is:

[I] “ε” is uttered signifying something in many ways, for it signifies a, b, . . .  n.

That is, Aristotle explains the way a word signifies by identifying the things that it signifies—how a word signifies by identifying what it signifies.

Metaphysics Δ7, an admittedly difficult chapter, illustrates the second pattern. Aristotle is here making a distinction between being [τὸ ὁν or τὸ ἐίναι] something accidentally and being something in virtue of itself—as, for example, man is skilled-in-music accidentally but an animal in virtue of himself. As I understand him, Aristotle is here making a distinction not between accidental and in-virtue-of-themselves existents (ὄντα), nor between accidental and in-virtue-of-themselves senses of the copula taken by itself, but between accidental and in-virtue-of-themselves senses of the copula-cum-predicate—being-skilled-in-music versus being-a-man, for example. At 1017a22-24, he says: “‘Being [certain things] in virtue of themselves’ is uttered signifying just so many things as the types of category signify [καθ’ αὐτά δε ἐίναι λέγεται διὰ παρα σημαίνει τὰ σχήματα τῆς κατηγορίας], for in as many ways as [the types of category] are uttered signifying something, in so many ways does ‘being [certain things in virtue of themselves]’ signify [something] [ὅσοις γὰρ λέγεται, τοσοστοσι νὰ τὸ ἐίναι σημαίνει].”

Here the pattern is: “ε” is uttered signifying as many things as a, b, . . .  n signify, for in as many ways as “a,” “b,” . . . “n” are uttered signifying something, in so many ways does “ε” signify something. In other words, the pattern is:

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70 I believe the text is corrupt here. Rather than adding ὁν in line 7 with Maier because it appears twice in line 8 (Maier is the only editor to do so, and the addition, according to Ross, “seems to be an emblema from I.8” [see his 1953 commentary on 1089a7]), I think we should go the other way and seclude its two occurrences in line 8 because it occurs neither in line 7 nor when Aristotle refers to the remaining categories. This would also put his manner of expressing himself on this point about “being” in line with the way in which he typically expresses himself when making that point. Naturally, I therefore prefer Annas’s translation here (see 1976) to Ross’s (see 1928).

71 I offer a complete translation and fuller discussion of 1017a7-30 in 1988, 44-50. Now, however, I would modify the translation given there along the lines indicated by the translation just given.
“ε” is uttered signifying as many things as a, b, . . . , n signify, for the number of ways in which in as many ways as “a,” “b,” . . . “n” are uttered signifying something is the same as the number of ways in which “ε” signifies something.

It is true that Aristotle uses an adverb to modify λέγεται in the second clause here (just as he uses an adverb to modify σημαίνει). However, he does not use one in the first, and it seems that he could just as easily have expressed himself in the same manner in the second. The result would be “ε” is uttered signifying as many things as a, b, . . . n signify, for as many things as “a,” “b,” . . . “n” are uttered signifying, so many things does “ε” signify.

Metaphysics E2: 1026a33-b4 illustrates the third pattern:

But since “being”—“being” uttered signifying being in an unqualified manner—is uttered signifying something in many ways [τὸ ὅν τῷ ἀπλῶς λεγόμενον λέγεται πολλοῖς], one of which was [determined to be] accidental being, another being as the true and not-being as the false, and besides these there are the types of category [τὰ σχήματα τῆς κατηγορίας] (for example, the “what,” on the one hand, [and] quality, quantity, place, time, and any other thing [“being”] might signify in this way [ἐὰν τί ἄλλα σημαίνει τῶν τρόπων τῶν], on the other), further, besides all these, potential being and actual being—since, then, “being” is uttered signifying something in many ways, first of all it must be said with regard to accidental being that no scientific treatment of it is possible.

Here the pattern is:

[3] “ε” is uttered signifying something in many ways: a, b, . . . n.72

Metaphysics Δ8: 1017b10-26 illustrates the fourth pattern. This passage is a particularly interesting case in point, on two counts. First, it illustrates not only the use we are now considering but also the one just considered, suggesting that Aristotle will employ these various constructions pretty much indiscriminately; second, it uses λέγεσθαι in two other, very different senses as well: “is called” and “is said” (as in “is said of”).73 I translate the passage as follows:

“Substance” is uttered signifying [Οὐσία λέγεται] both [1] the simple bodies, for example earth and fire and water and all things of that sort, and [2] bodies in general, and [3] the things composed of them, both animals and divine beings, as well as their parts. Every one of these is called “a” substance” [ὑπαντα τούτα λέγεται οὐσία] because they are not said of an underlyer but all other things [are said] of them [οῦ καθ’ ὑποκειμένου λέγεται ἄλλα κατά τούταν τὸ ἄλλα]. In another way [ἄλλον τρόπον], [“substance” is uttered signifying] [4] that which, being in those that are not said of an underlyer, is the cause of their being—for example, the soul of the animal. Further, [5] all the parts [όσα μόρια] of these things . . . Further, [6] the essence [τὸ τί ἐστιν ἐνιαυτῷ]. . . . also this is called the substance [οὐσία λέγεται] of each thing. It follows, then, that “substance” is uttered signifying something in two ways [κατά δύο τρόπους τὴν οὕσιαν λέγεσθαι],

72 Metaphysics Δ18:1022a24-36 is a particularly clear example of this use: “Accordingly also ‘the in-virtue-of-itself must be uttered signifying something in many ways [πολλοῖς ἄνργον λέγεσθαι]. On the one hand, [1] the in-virtue-of-itself is the what-it-is-to-be for each thing . . . . On the other, [2] any thing that belongs in [the formula of] the what-it-is . . . . Further, [3] [the thing another] has received into itself . . . Further, [4] the thing of which another cause does not exist . . . . Further, [5] any thing that belongs to [a thing] alone as [it] alone . . . . “ For some other examples, see: Prior Analytics A13: 32b31-32 (ένδεχεσθαι ὑπάρχειν), B21: 67b3-5 (ἐπίστασθαι), Metaphysics Δ1 (ἀρχή): 1013a16-17, A2 (ἀρχήν): 1013a24-29 and b23-34, and Δ4 (φύσις): 1014b16-18. There are a great many examples illustrating this pattern.

73 Later in this essay I shall have more to say about the connections between “is uttered signifying” (λέγεται), “is called” (λέγεται), “is said to be” (λέγεται ἐνιαυτῷ) and “is said of” (λέγεται κατά).
[signifying] both the ultimate underlyer, [the underlyer] that is no longer said of another thing, and that which, being a this, is also separable (the shape—that is, [the] form—of each thing is such).

The second and third occurrences of λέγεται in the NE passage with which this essay began also illustrate this pattern: “Further, since ‘the good’ is uttered signifying something in as many ways as ‘being’ is—for it is uttered signifying things in the category of the ‘what’ (for example, god—that is, mind) and in the category of quality (the virtues) . . . . it is clear that it cannot be a certain common universal—that is, one thing; for [then] it would not be uttered [signifying things] in all the categories but in one only.” Here, finally, the pattern is:

[4] “ε” is uttered signifying a, b, . . . . n.

Aristotle, in fact, seems to use λέγεται in this sense with or without an adverbial modifier, indiscriminately. As this discussion applying the proposed translation of λέγεται indicates, the particular form that the translation would take in different passages would naturally vary according to the different contexts involved. Sometimes it might be translated as “is uttered signifying something” (as in patterns [1] and [3]), sometimes as “is uttered signifying” (as in patterns [2] and [4]). Sometimes it might even be best to translate it with the literal “is said,” if the specific meaning of this technical expression is kept in mind.

6. Some of the earlier translations of λέγεται reconsidered

At this point, it might be helpful, first, to consider the ways in which, and the extent to which, the translations of λέγεται offered by the scholars considered earlier yield claims that Aristotle did or would have embraced and, second, to measure those claims against what he must be understood to claim when λέγεται is translated as “is uttered signifying something.” The contrasts thereby revealed should bring the meaning of λέγεται proposed here into sharper relief.

74 Note that Aristotle will sometimes use λέγεται and σημαίνει almost indiscriminately: compare the parallel clause in the Eudemian Ethics passage on the good, quoted earlier.
75 The opening clause of Metaphysics Δ7 (1017a7-8) is another example of this use: “‘Being [something]’ is uttered signifying [being something] accidentally and [being something] in virtue of itself [Το δὲ λέγεται τὸ μὲν κατὰ συμβεβηκός τὸ δὲ καθ’ αυτό] . . . .” For some additional examples, see: Metaphysics Δ3 (στοιχείον) and Δ5 (ἀναγκαίον). There are a great many examples illustrating this pattern as well.
76 See, for example, Metaphysics Δ1 (ἀρχή), Δ4 (φύσις) and Δ6 (ἐν).
77 As in Topics A18: 108a18-26, perhaps.
78 The pattern exhibited in Metaphysics Δ28: 1024b9-16 is not quite the same as any of the four just considered. While it does not use an adverb with λέγεται, it does use the preposition κατὰ; and while it does use σημαίνει while indicating the significata, things, as well as words, are said to signify:

Those things are called “other in genus” whose primary underlyers are different [Ετέραν το γενει λέγεται ἀνεντορόν τῷ πρῶτον ὑποκείμενον] and neither analyze the one into the other nor both into the same thing (for example, the form and the matter are other in genus), and all those things that are uttered signifying things across different types of category of being [are called “other in genus”] [ὅσα καθ’ ἑτεραν σχήμα κατηγορίας τοῦ διότι λέγεται] (for some beings signify [σημαίνει] what-it-is, some a certain quality, some as was distinguished earlier), for these analyze neither into one another nor into some one thing.
79 During an earlier phase of working on λέγεται, I thought it preferable, for aesthetic reasons, to eliminate “uttered” from the translating phrase, “uttered” being a very ugly word. Were we to do that, we could
‘ε’ has the sense a, b, ... n” or “‘ε’ means a, b, ... n” (where no distinction is made between “has the sense” and “means”) and [7] “‘ε’ is used in the sense a, b, ... n.” If it is true that “‘ε’” is uttered signifying a, then it is also true that “‘ε’” signifies a, since “‘ε’” can be uttered signifying a only because it already signifies it. If, furthermore, “means” (λέγει) and “signifies” (σημαίνει) come to the same thing for Aristotle (as I believe they do, and I will work on that assumption here), then it will of course also be true that “‘ε’” means a. The converse of these claims will also be true. However, “‘ε’” is uttered signifying a” (“ε λέγεται a”) does not mean either “‘ε’” signifies a” (“ε σημαίνει a”) or “‘ε’” means a” (“ε λέγει a”—a mode of expression Aristotle hardly, if ever, uses, preferring instead to say that a person means a when uttering “‘ε’”). [7] “‘ε’ is used in the sense a, b, ... n” will of course also be true on these suppositions.

[a, b, ... n are said to be ‘ε,” where that means “a, b, ... n are called ‘ε.” If “a, b, ... n are called ‘ε,” in turn, means “a, b, ... n are given the name ‘ε,’’ in the same sense that Socrates is given the name “Socrates” and man (the universal) is given the name “man,” then, if a, b, ... n are each said to be ‘ε (or [an] ‘ε), it will also be true that “‘ε” (or “[an] ‘ε”) is uttered signifying a, b, ... n. In fact, taking a, b, ... n and giving each the name “‘ε” is the fundamental semantic activity involved here. If a, b, ... n are given the name—or called (λέγεται)—“‘ε,” then “‘ε” signifies (and means) a, b, ... n; and if “‘ε” signifies (and means) a, b, ... n, then “‘ε” is uttered signifying a, b, ... n. We first learn what things are called, as Aristotle well knew, and therefore it is no accident that λέγεται in the sense of “is uttered signifying something” occurs only rarely in the early Categories and De Interpretatione, with the construction “a, b, ... n are called (λέγεται) ‘ε” being much more common. For all that, [3] “a, b, ... n are said to be ‘ε”—at least as used by Ross-Urmson-Barnes—does not seem to mean “a, b, ... n are given the name ‘ε.” [3] seems, rather, to reduce to [2] (“‘ε” is predicated of [or is said of] a, b, ... n”), and I will have more to say about [2] shortly.

“is spoken of” or [5] “is said,” and [6] “is so spoken of” or “is so called.” As I have already indicated, I believe that “is spoken of” and “is said” are usable translations—indeed, “is said” may even be the preferable translation, in some cases, if some clear meaning is attached to this phrase (the meaning proposed in this essay, I would of course claim). As for [6], substitution of “is so spoken of” and “is so called” for λέγεται will indeed yield claims that Aristotle considers true. For example, he does hold that being is spoken of as being in many ways, for substance (a being) is spoken of as being, quality (a being) is spoken of as being, and so on; and he holds that actuality is called actuality in two ways, for knowledge (an actual disposition) is

replace it with “said,” it being understood that “said” as it appears in the translating phrase (“is said signifying something”) would be synonymous with “uttered” and not synonymous with “said” as it appears in the literal translation of λέγεται (“is said”). However, I no longer think this a good idea, since to do so seems to mask, or seem to contradict, the precise meaning of λέγεται.

I do not take “logical equivalence” to be a sufficient criterion for identity of meaning.

As Hamlyn himself notes, when “is so spoken of” is taken as the meaning of λέγεται, “it is necessary sometimes to introduce an ‘as’—‘that which is spoken of as . . . .’ ” (1968, 84) Although Hamlyn’s “is spoken of as” therefore may appear to reduce to Ackrill’s “is spoken of as λέγεται ὑπαρχεῖν.” (see his translation of Categories 15: 15b17-27 in 1963) or his “is said as [λέγεται ὑπαρχεῖν]” (see 1977, 17; the relevant translation is quoted earlier), it does not. According to Hamlyn’s phrase, actuality is spoken of as actuality (for example, whereas, according to Ackrill’s, it is said as or is spoken of as knowledge and as contemplation.

When “is so called” is taken as the meaning of λέγεται, it is sometimes necessary to drop the “so.” Although Woods’ “is so called” may therefore seem to reduce to Ross-Urmson-Barnes’s [3] “is called,” it
called “an actuality” and contemplation (the actual exercise of knowledge) is called “an actuality.”

However, “is so spoken of” and “is so called” are not accurate translations of λέγεται when it is used in the sense under consideration.

7. Λέγεται as “is predicated of”

The significance of [2] “‘e’ is predicated of (or is said of) a, b,... n” is such as to merit a section of its own. If [2] meant simply that “e” is applied to a, b,... n, where “is applied to” is taken to mean “is a name for” (again in the sense that “Socrates” is a name for Socrates and “man” a name for man), then the result would be that knowledge (among other things) is given the name “[an] actuality,” courage (among other things) the name “[a] good” and substance (among other things) the name “[a] being.” Conversely, this would of course mean that “[an] actuality” is a name for knowledge (among other things), “[a] good” a name for courage (among other things), and “[a] being” a name for substance (among other things). At this outcome Aristotle would not take offense. Although [2], as so understood, does not translate λέγεται accurately, it does identify what is for him the fundamental linguistic fact underlying a term being uttered signifying something in many ways.

This, however, is not the sense in which [2] is meant. Ross means it in the sense meant when Aristotle says that “white” (or white) is predicated of Socrates (generating “Socrates is white”), and in this sense the result would be “knowledge is actual” and “contemplation is actual;” “God is good,” “courage is good” and “the moderate-amount is good;” and “substance is,” “quality is,” “quantity is,” and so on. At this outcome Aristotle would take offense. Although each of these statements is true, for him, such an interpretation of λέγεται would give us a mistaken view both of the meaning of λέγεται πολλαχώς (as I have already argued) and of Aristotle’s reason for believing that a term λέγεται πολλαχώς. When he says that a term λέγεται πολλαχώς because it λέγεται a, b,... n, he does not mean that it has many senses (as Ross might say) because it is said of a, b,... n—said of a, b,... n in the manner in which “white” is said of Socrates. Aristotle knows perfectly well that a term does not have different senses simply because it is said of different things. “Courage” may be said of both Ajax and Achilles, yet “courage” does not therefore have different senses. Even if the things of which a term is said are different in species, that still would not be enough for it to have different senses for him. As Smith points out, “cows and horses are different in species, but ‘black’ applies to
both in the same way." Even if the things of which a term is said belong to irreducibly different categories, thus being as different from each other as they can possibly be, why, as we asked earlier, must it have different senses? Although it indeed turns out in Aristotle's system that a term has different senses if it is said of things from different categories, this operation—saying one thing of others—is not what he has in mind when he says that something "is said in all the categories," it does not generate the right senses (or things signified), and it is not the reason why something "is said in many ways" when it "is said in all the categories." When he says that a term ("being," for example) λέγεται πολλαχώς because it λέγεται a, b, . . . n (substance, quality, and so on), he means that the term is uttered signifying things in many ways because it is uttered signifying a, b, . . . n—and it is uttered signifying a, b, . . . n because it is a name for—and therefore signifies—a, b, . . . n.

Smith, like Ross, also suggests that λέγεται in the sense under discussion means "is said of." If, he argues, X and Y are called (λέγεται) A in different ways, then A is said of X and Y in different ways, since to do the one is to do the other; and if A is said of X and Y in different ways, then A is said of (other things) in many ways (λέγεται πολλαχώς). In other words, whereas Ross would say that "ε" has many senses (λέγεται πολλαχώς) because it is said of (λέγεται) many things, Smith says that "ε" is said of things in many ways (λέγεται πολλαχώς) because things are called (λέγεται) ε in different ways. In a sense, this is true. As Smith points out, Aristotle says that "justice and courage are called good in one way, the healthful and what produces fitness called good in another way;" that is, when justice and courage are called good, "good" means one thing ("necessary for living well," say); when the healthful and what produces health are called good, it means another ("conducive to the body functioning well," say). Thus, "good," being said of these things in different ways, is said of things in many ways. Similarly, knowledge is called actual in one way, contemplation in another, and so "actual," being said of knowledge and contemplation in different ways, is said of things in many ways. Under this interpretation, [1] it is the adjective ("good," "actual") that is said of things, if the original

85 1997, 95.
86 While it is true that a term is uttered signifying something in many ways (λέγεται πολλαχώς) if it is said of (λέγεται κατά) different things, the sense in which this is true is very qualified. First, it is not enough that the things (P, Q, . . . Z) of which the term (ε) is said are merely different, they must be from different categories. Second, the manner in which ε is said of its "underlyer" (ὑποκείμενον) must be specified. For simplicity's sake, let us say it is in the manner in which white [color] is said of Socrates (generating "Socrates is [colored] white")—not, for example, the manner in which white [color] is said of this particular white color (generating "this white color is [a] white [color]") or the manner in which running is said of the Olympic contestant (generating "the contestant runs"). The piercing, presumably, is said in this manner of white [color], the odd in this manner of three, and similarly for things in the other categories. If, then, ε is said in this manner of things from the different categories, "ε" will be a name for things that are irreducibly different, on the principle that the attributes of things from different categories are themselves irreducibly different. In this sense, at least, it is therefore true for Aristotle that a term is uttered signifying something in many ways if it is said of different things. For all that, he hardly ever talks about how the attributes of things from different categories are predicated or about what such predication would involve, and it is certainly not what he is talking about when he makes statements of the form "ε is uttered signifying something in many ways (λέγεται πολλαχώς), for it is uttered signifying (λέγεται) a, b, . . . n." For some helpful remarks on this matter, see Smith's comments on 106a23-35 [95-96] and 107a3-17 [97-98]. I also have a few more things to say about this in 2003.
87 See 1997, 89.
88 1997, 88.
statement is adjectival, not the noun or adjectival noun ("the good," "actuality"); [2] "is said of" means "is applied to," where "is applied to" simply means the converse of "is called;" and [3] "ε" is said of things in different ways (ε λέγεται πολλαχώς) means "ε is applied to things while having many meanings (or while signifying different things)."

Nevertheless, when Aristotle says that one thing is said of (λέγεται κατά) another, or predicated or asserted of (κατηγορεῖται κατά) another, the converse of "is called" is not usually what he means. When he says this, he usually means it in the sense Ross meant it, and Ross

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89 In his very early thought (in the Categories), Aristotle would have said that "adjectival" entities, as well as the words for them, are predicated of things. To use two less abstract examples examples, he would have said that courageous and runs, as well as "courageous" and "runs," are. At the time, he believed that there were such things (see Categories 1: 1a12-15 and 7: 6b11-14). However, with his analysis of the "verb" (in the De Interpretatione), the need for these creatures is eliminated. On that analysis, "Socrates is courageous" means "courage belongs to Socrates." Here, there is no is, there is no courageous—there is only courage and its belonging to (or belonging in or being in or being combined with) Socrates. In this way, Aristotle eliminates the need for "paronymous" beings and is able to explain the meaning of a statement such as "Socrates is courageous"—as well as "Socrates is a man," "Socrates is three cubits tall," "Socrates runs," and so on—by reference to the relatively simple ontology of universals and particulars and their relationship to each other. (I argue for this interpretation in 1988, chapters VI-VIII.)

90 Although I cannot agree that "ε λέγεται πολλαχώς (is said of things in many ways)" is derived from "things λέγεται (are called) ε in many ways" in the way Smith claims, Aristotle's usage in the Categories, De Interpretatione and Metaphysics Δ does suggest that "ε is uttered signifying something in many ways (λέγεται πολλαχώς)" is a natural outgrowth of "things are called (λέγεται) ε in many ways." In other words, "ε is uttered signifying a, b, ..., n" seems a natural outgrowth of "A, B, ..., N are called ε in many ways"—where the series a, b, ..., n and A, B, ..., N may or may not be identical (the a and B in "'donkey' is uttered signifying an animal of a certain sort and a machine of a certain sort" [see Topics A15: 107a18-21] are not identical with the a and b in "this man and this device are called [a] donkey in different way," for example), and where the meaning of "are called" may vary from one context to another (the "is called" in "Socrates is called courageous" and "courage is called [a] virtue," for example, differ in meaning). (For the sake of simplicity, I omit here the complication introduced by the absence of the indefinite article in Greek, masking the difference between "ε" and "[an] ε.".) As the qualifiers already made to this claim suggest, it is more complex than it might appear, for "A, B, ..., N are called ε" may take different forms identical in meaning and also have very different meanings while assuming the same form. On the one hand, the following forms are all different but may be identical in meaning: "A, B, ..., N are called ε [by us]" and "we call A, B, ..., N ε;" and "A, B, ..., N are said to be ε [by us]" and "we say that A, B, ..., N are ε." They all reduce to: "We say: 'A is ε,' 'we say: 'B is ε,' 'we say: 'N is ε'"—that is, to "we say: 'X is ε.'" On the other hand, the form "A, B, ..., N are called ε"—or "we say: 'X is ε'"—may have very different meanings. The reason, of course, is that "X is ε" may stand for any of the types of predication recognized by Aristotle—whether it is predicating "what some thing is" ("Socrates is a man," "white color is a color," for example), how it is qualified, of what quantity it is, and so on; whether it is an identity statement ("man is two-footed animal," "the in-virtue-of-itself is the what-it-is-to-be for each thing"); even whether it is elliptical for a statement predicating a relationship ("X is prior [to Y]"). "A, B, ..., N are called ε," therefore, will subsume predications of radically different types.

Nevertheless, whatever the type of predication involved, it was by identifying the things asserted in the predicate "ε" in "we say: X is ε" (or in some other verbal form of the predicate, if the predication in natural Greek required it—one, say, where "is" does not appear) that Aristotle identified the things signified by "ε," discovered that they are many, and expressed this with the formula "ε is uttered signifying something in many ways." In other words, it was by paying close attention to the different ways in which his fellow Greeks called things what they called them—by paying close attention to how they actually spoke—that he identified the meanings of the words they used, the things signified by them. In this respect, Aristotle demonstrates his empirical bent from the outset. (For further discussion of this and related matters, see the last section of this essay and 2003.)
meant it in the sense that “white [color]”—or white color—is said of Socrates (generating “Socrates is [colored] white”) and in the sense that “man”—or man—is said of him (generating “Socrates is [a] man”). On this sense of “is said of,” “ε’ is said of X and Y” is obviously true for many substitution instances of “ε,” X and Y. “ε’ is said of X and Y in many ways” is also true, but the “in many ways” (πολλαχώς) here would refer to the many ways in which “ε” is said of X and Y, not to the different ways in which “ε” signifies. To put it in more fundamental terms, it would refer to the many ways in which ε belongs to X and Y when ε is said of them (that is, is stated to belong to them), not to the many things signified by “ε.” Indeed, in “ε’ is said of X and Y in many ways,” “ε’ need not even be “said in many ways,” in the sense of being uttered signifying many things. For example, Aristotle would say that “white [color],” signifying one and the same thing (white color), is said in different ways of Socrates and this white [color]. In the one case, it is said in such a way as to generate “Socrates is [colored] white;” in the other, in such a way as to generate “this white [color] is [a] white color.” In the same way, “virtue,” signifying one and the same thing (virtue), is said in different ways of Socrates and courage, generating “Socrates is virtuous” and “courage is [a] virtue.” Of course, “ε,” signifying different things, may also be said in different ways of X and Y; for example, “good” may be said in different ways of courage and this food, signifying virtue in the one case and the productive of pleasure in the other, generating “courage is [a] good ([a] virtue)” and “this food is good (produces pleasure).” Finally, “ε,” signifying different things, may be said in the same way of X and Y; for example, “good” may be said in the same way of Socrates and this food, signifying virtue in the one case and the productive of pleasure in the other, generating “Socrates is good (virtuous)” and “this food is good (produces pleasure).” Aristotle would have agreed, then, that “ε,” whether signifying one thing or many, may be said of X and Y in one way or many. However, for him the fundamental semantic fact underlying all these linguistic activities is that “ε” is a name for something, for one thing or for several, such that when “ε” is uttered, it is uttered signifying one thing or several or—which comes to the same thing—is uttered signifying things in one way or several.92

91 I discuss more fully the different ways in which one thing is said of another in 1988, chapters VI-VIII.

92 In what we have considered so far, three variables are involved when “ε” is predicated: [1] the things signified by “ε” (that is, a, b, . . . n); [2] the things of which both “ε” and ε are said (X and Y, say); and [3] the manner in which ε is said of (that is, is stated to belong to) them. For Aristotle, at least two other variables are involved. In cases where the thing of which ε is said is a universal (the kind of predication that the Prior Analytics is almost exclusively concerned with), such that a universal is said of a universal, there is [4] the quantitative manner in which ε is said to belong—that is, it is stated to belong either universally (όπως ἐστι καθόλου) or particularly (κατὰ μέρος) or indeterminately (οὐδὲν κατὰ μέρος). If white color is said of man universally, “every man is white” is generated; if particularly, either “some men are white” or “some man is white;” and if indeterminately, then, although it must mean some one of these three assertions, not enough information is provided to determine which. (See De Interpretatione 7: 17a38-b16, 8: 18a13-17, and Prior Analytics A1: 24a16-19. I discuss this matter more fully in 1988, 68-70.) Finally, there is [5] the modality in which ε belongs to X or Y—that is, for any given manner in which ε belongs, it either simply happens to belong (ὑπάρχειν, ὑπάρχει τοῖς συμβεβηκότις, συμβεβηκέναι) or it must belong (ταύτα γεγονότων, εἴ τι γεγονότως) or it possibly belongs (δυνατόν, ἐνδέχεσθαι). (See De Interpretatione 12, Metaphysics Δ7: 1017a8-22, and Prior Analytics A2: 25a1-2 and A8: 29b29-35. For discussion and further references, see Patterson 1995.)
8. Various senses of λέγεται employed by Aristotle, the meaning of phrases in which it appears, and the priority of λέγεται as “is uttered signifying something”

It might be helpful if conclude this essay by considering some of the other senses of λέγεται employed by Aristotle and the meaning of some of the other phrases in which it appears. Aristotle employs all of these senses and phrases very frequently, and we have already encountered all of them in the course of this attempt to identify the meaning of λέγεται πολλαχώς and the λέγεται that appears in that phrase. Nevertheless, a consideration of all these senses and phrases will help us to see their relationship to one another and thereby help us to avoid confusing any one of them with another. It will also help us to see that the sense of λέγεται that appears in phrases such as λέγεται πολλαχώς is very fundamental indeed in Aristotle’s theory of predication.

In a statement such as “the good’ λέγεται πολλαχώς: mind, virtue and the moderate-amount,” the phrase λέγεται πολλαχώς means [A] “is uttered signifying something in many ways” (or “is uttered signifying many things”), and the λέγεται in that phrase [1] “is uttered signifying something.” In statements such as “Socrates λέγεται courageous” and “courage λέγεται [a] virtue,” λέγεται may be translated by [2] “is called.” However, in the first type of statement, λέγεται means “is called” in a sense that requires an adjective or adjectival phrase to complete the statement [2a], whereas in the second type it means “is called” in a sense that requires a noun or noun phrase to complete it [2b]. (This is not surprising, of course, since the first claims that Socrates is characterized in a certain way, the second that courage is subsumed under a certain kind.) In statements such as “Socrates λέγεται είναι courageous” and “courage λέγεται είναι [a] virtue,” λέγεται είναι--the entire phrase—may be translated by [B] “is said to be” (or “is stated to be”). However, paralleling [2a] and [2b] in the two types of statement just considered, λέγεται είναι in “Socrates λέγεται είναι courageous” means “is said to be” in a sense that requires an adjective or adjectival phrase to complete the statement [Ba], whereas in “courage λέγεται είναι [a] virtue,” it means “is said to be” in a sense that requires a noun or noun phrase to complete it [Bb]. There is no difference, as far as I can see, between λέγεται in senses [2a] and [2b], on the one hand, and λέγεται είναι in senses [Ba] and [Bb], on the other. However, the λέγεται in λέγεται είναι by itself of course means [3] “is said” (or “is stated”), and that clearly is not the same as λέγεται in either sense [2a] or [2b]. In statements such as “courage λέγεται κατά Socrates” and “virtue λέγεται κατά courage,” finally, λέγεται κατά means “is said of”—that is, “is said to belong to” (or “is stated to belong to”). In the first type of statement, however, “is said to belong to” is meant in the sense in which an attribute is said to belong to a substance [Ca], while in the second type it is meant in the sense in which a “what-it-is” is said to belong to—or is in—a thing [Cb]. These two senses of λέγεται κατά are of course different from any of the senses of λέγεται just considered, as well as from any of the senses of the phrases in which it appears. However, λέγεται in λέγεται κατά clearly means the same as λέγεται in λέγεται είναι: [3] “is said” (or “is stated”).

At this point it might be helpful to list these different senses and to compare them: λέγεται πολλαχώς means [A] “is uttered signifying something in many ways.”
The λέγεται in λέγεται πολλαχώς means [1] “is uttered signifying something.”
λέγεται may mean [2a] “is called” and be used attributively.
λέγεται may mean [2b] “is called” and be used subsumptively.
λέγεται είναι may mean [Ba] “is said to be” and be used attributively.
λέγεται είναι may mean [Bb] “is said to be” and be used subsumptively.
[2a] and [2b] are the same as [Ba] and [Bb].
The λέγεται in λέγεται είναι means [3] “is said” (or “is stated”).
λέγεται κατά may mean [Ca] “is said to belong to” and be used attributively.
Λέγεται κατά may mean [Cb] "is said to belong to" and be used subsumptively. The λέγεται in λέγεται κατά means the same as the λέγεται in λέγεται είναι: [3] "is said" (or "is stated").

While all the types of predication we have considered are early, appearing in the Categories, the De Interpretatione and Metaphysics Δ, I believe that some of them are earlier than others. Predications such as [1] "Socrates is called courageous" and [2] "courage is called [a] virtue," on the one hand, and [3] "Socrates is said to be courageous" and [4] "courage is said to be [a] virtue," on the other, are among Aristotle’s earliest ways of expressing himself; predications such as [5] "courage is said of Socrates" and [6] "virtue is said of courage" are a bit later or perhaps even concurrent with these; predications such as [7] "'the good' is uttered signifying mind" and "'the good' is uttered signifying virtue" are later than predications such as those in [5] and [6]; and predications such as [8] "'the good' is uttered signifying something in many ways" are among the latest. The first are very natural ways of expressing oneself in Greek, whereas those illustrated by [7] and [8], using a technical expression, are not. These later uses, however, seem to be a natural outgrowth of the earlier ones. Simply by paying attention to how his countrymen spoke (or wrote), Aristotle might learn, for example, that both Alcibiades and Lysander are called proud (giving him statements like [1]) and that both are said to be proud (giving him statements like [3]). If he understood the nature of predication, as he would say he did, then he would know (assuming his theory of predication is true) that both "Alcibiades and Lysander are called proud" and "Alcibiades and Lysander are said to be proud" reduce to "pride is said of Alcibiades and Lysander" (giving him statements like [5]). If he were sensitive to the different senses of words, as he was, then he would know that the implicit "is proud" in "Alcibiades is called proud" and "Lysander is called proud" mean (or signify) different things, that the implicit "is proud" in "Alcibiades is said to be proud" and "Lysander is said to be proud" mean (or signify) different things, and that the "pride" in "pride is said of Alcibiades" and "pride is said of Lysander" mean (or signify) different things. This would tell him that Alcibiades and Lysander are called proud in different ways, that they are said to be proud in different ways, and that pride (and "pride") is said of them in different ways. If, furthermore, he were successful in identifying the different senses of "pride" involved in the two cases (or the different things signified by "pride" in the two cases), then he would know, as he did, that "pride" signifies—and is uttered signifying—the habit of being intolerant to insult, in the one case, and the trait of being indifferent to good and ill fortune alike, in the other (giving him statements like [7]). This, in turn, would tell him that "pride" is uttered signifying something in different ways, or, is uttered signifying different things (giving him statements like [8]). We can trace a similar development for the statements in which something is subsumed under a kind. By paying attention to how his countrymen spoke (or wrote), Aristotle might learn, for example, that both a man and a picture of a man are called [an] animal (giving him statements like [2]) and that both are said to be [an] animal (giving him statements like [4]). If he understood the nature of predication, as he would say he did, then he would know (assuming his theory of predication is true) that both "the man and the picture of the man are called [an] animal" and "the man and the picture of the man are said to be [an] animal" reduce to "[an] animal is said of the man and the picture of the man" (giving him statements like [6]). If he were sensitive to the different senses of words, as he was, then he would know that "[an] animal" in each of the three pairs of statements means (or signifies) different things, and this would tell him that the man and the picture of the man are

93 Note how he typically expresses himself in the Categories and the De Interpretatione.
94 This later usage is very common in Metaphysics Δ, as several quotes and references earlier in this essay indicate.
95 See Aristotle’s discussion at Posterior Analytics B13: 97b7-25.
called [an] animal in different ways, that they are said to be [an] animal in different ways, and that [an] animal (and “[an] animal”) are said of them in different ways. If, furthermore, he were successful in identifying the different senses of (or the different thing signified by) “[an] animal” in each pair, then he would know, as he did, that “[an] animal” signifies—and is uttered signifying—a living being, in the one case, and a picture of a living being, in the other (giving him statements like [7]). That, in turn, would tell him that “[an] animal” is uttered signifying something in different ways, or, is uttered signifying different things (giving him statements like [8]).

While the earlier types of predication are “better known to us” because they are ordinary ways I which Greeks express themselves and among the first types of predication a Greek would encounter, the later ones are “better known by nature” because the earlier ones presuppose the later ones—or, at least, presuppose the type of predication illustrated by “the good” is uttered signifying mind” and “the good” is uttered signifying virtue,” with “the good” is uttered signifying many things” being posterior to two such predications. On Aristotle’s theory of predication, “Socrates is called courageous” and “courage is called [a] virtue” reduce to “we say: ‘courage belongs to Socrates’” (in the sense that a quality belongs to a substance) and to “we say: ‘virtue belongs to courage’” (in the sense that a “what-it-is”—a species or genus—belongs to one of the things falling under it). The same analysis applies to both “Socrates is said to be courageous” and “courage is said to be [a] virtue,” on the one hand, and to “courage is said of Socrates” and “virtue is said of courage,” on the other. These three pairs therefore presuppose that “courage” is uttered signifying (λέγεται) courage and that “virtue” is uttered signifying (λέγεται) courage—in other words, that “ε” is uttered signifying (λέγεται) something. To say that “courage” is uttered signifying courage and that “virtue” is uttered signifying virtue—in general, that “ε” is uttered signifying ε—is of course not to say very much, but, Aristotle would insist, this is where we are supposed to start asking “what” some thing is and to begin framing definitions. If we discover that courage is a virtue and that virtue is a disposition of a certain sort, then we have learned something significant, he would say, and if we grasp what the definition of each is, then we have learned even more. Similarly for “the good.” While it is true that “the good” is uttered signifying the good, for Aristotle, this does not tell us very much. However, if we discover that the good is mind, that it is virtue, and that it is the moderated amount, then we have learned something. We have also learned that “the good” is uttered signifying (λέγεται) each of these things and, therefore, that it is uttered signifying many things (λέγεται πολλαχώς). The same is true for “being” and many other terms. Clearly, then, statements of the form “ε” is uttered signifying (λέγεται) a” (where a many or may not be identical with ε) are “better known by nature” than the earlier ones considered. If so, then λέγεται in the sense of “is uttered signifying” is fundamental in Aristotle’s theory of predication.

\[\text{96}\text{ Aristotle expresses himself in exactly this way when explaining why “the in-virtue-of-itself”}\
\frac{\text{λέγεται πολλαχώς: see Metaphysics Δ18: 1022a24-36, quoted in a note above.}}{
\text{97}\text{I would like to thank James G. Lennox for taking the time to read and comment on an earlier version of}}\
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