CHAPTER 2

SUBJECT AND PREDICATE: COOK WILSON'S THEORY
In this Chapter we shall discuss, in brief, the traditional account of the distinction of subject and predicate and try to elucidate it following John Cook Wilson. Traditionally, propositions or judgements are analysed into subject, predicate and copula. In the traditional logic, the subject-predicate distinction has usually been associated with this theory of analysis. Thus all propositions, for logical purpose, are to be reduced in the general form symbolized by 'S is P', where S is the subject, P the predicate and the verb 'is' is called copula, as a link between the subject and the predicate.

Traditional logic claims that every proposition has a subject and a predicate, i.e. every proposition is basically of subject-predicate form. Traditionally, the subject is defined as that about which something is asserted and predicate as that which is being asserted about it. In other words, subject is that which is being talked about in the sentence, while what is said of it is the predicate. For instance, in the proposition 'Socrates is wise', 'Socrates' is the subject as something is being asserted about him in the proposition; whereas

25. H.W.B. Joseph, 'An Introduction to Logic' pp. 161
what is being asserted is the adjective 'wise', so 'wise' is the predicate. Aristotle distinguished within the proposition what is said of something and that about which it is said. But he never defined the distinction clearly. For this lack of clear account, his writing suffered variously which we shall try to point out afterwords. Cook Wilson states that the earliest known definition seems to be given by Boethius. He said that the parts of simple enunciation were subject and predicate, the subject was what supported the predicate locution and predicate was what was said concerning the subject.

Cook Wilson espouses the view that the above formulae are both inaccurate and ambiguous. He points out at first that if we consider the predicate of a proposition, it can be noticed that given definitions can not be applied to it correctly. In the sentence, namely, 'Socrates is wise', it is absurd to say that it is 'wise' which is asserted about 'Socrates'. When we ask the question "what was said of Socrates?" the answer would not be simply 'wise', rather 'that he is wise'. Cook Wilson tries to explain this difficulty by considering the negative judgement as 'S is not P'. Here what is stated about the subject 'S' is 'that it is not P'. We can not say it is 'P' what is being asserted of the subject. To avoid this problem, traditional logicians might have tried to reduce the above negative judgement to the subsequent affirmative form 'S is not-P' and thereby tried to keep their position consistent. But, for Cook Wilson, this reduction is fallacious. So he thinks that the traditional

26. Boethius, 'Introductio ad Categoricos Syllogismos'. P. 562 (Referred to by Cook Wilson)
account was formulated with the affirmative sentences alone in view.

Another inaccuracy, pointed out by him, can be stated as follows. In the statement 'Snow is white', 'Snow' is the subject and 'white' is the predicate. But in the statement what is predicated of snow is whiteness. Thus 'What is predicated' is not actually same as 'the predicate'. In the ordinary use of language, the whole sentence 'S is P' is that which is 'what is asserted about S'. So, after all, the phrase 'what is asserted about' is not an ordinary usage, but a technical phrase. Thus to explain a technical term 'predicate', another technical term has been introduced which itself seeks for explanation.

The accurate description of predicate may be then stated as not that what is asserted of the subject, but that what the subject is asserted to be. But if we take this account, the question arises that would be the predicate in 'John walks fast'. If the predicate is 'Walks fast', we can not say, as has been pointed out before, that the predicate is what is asserted of the subject. For, what is asserted of John is 'that John walks fast'. As in the sentence 'Socrates is wise', the predicate is, in the accurate sense, what the subject is asserted to be, so in 'John walks fast', the supposed predicate would be what the subject is asserted to do. But we thus obtain a different account of predicate for each of the two sentences, whereas we seek for one and the same account. For Cook Wilson, the reason underlying this divergence of accounts is that, whereas the proposition is
traditionally analysed into subject, copula, and predicate, in the traditional account of subject-predicate distinction the copula has been overlooked.

To speak of the ambiguity, Cook Wilson says that if the above definitions are the only guide for the distinction of subject and predicate it is difficult to point out the subject and the predicate in the statement 'Wheatly is further than Headington from Oxford'. It may be said that Wheatly is the subject, since it is that what we are thinking and speaking about, but we are also thinking and speaking about Headington and Oxford.

Cook Wilson upholds that a distinction of subject and predicate may be recognized in particular examples, though we can not formulate a clear general account of this distinction. He offers us some examples in support of his view. When a statement is made about the property of glass like 'glass is elastic', what is being talked about is 'glass' and what is said of it is that 'it is elastic'. Thus 'glass' is the subject and 'elastic' is the predicate. When the statement is uttered, we find a peculiar stress on 'elastic', which is absent from 'glass'. We notice that the stress accent is conferred upon the part of the sentence which supplies the new information and it is absent from that part which corresponds to the subject. From this example, he tries to derive a distinction which seems to be the rationale of traditional definition. The subject of a statement is what we are thinking of before forming the statement, while the predicate is the new fact we come to know about it.
He thinks that this account agrees also with the ordinary definition of predicate. Traditionally, predicate has been defined as that what is asserted of the subject and clearly the purpose of this assertion is to tell something new and not what is already conceived in the subject.

According to Cook Wilson, the grammatical analysis of a sentence into subject and predicate does not agree with the above principle. When there is an enquiry about the nature of glass, it is answered 'glass is elastic'. Again, if the question is what substance possesses the property of elastic, the answer would be the same, 'glass is elastic', but with a different stress accent. In the first, the stress is on 'elastic', whereas in the second the stress is on 'glass'. In both cases the stress falls upon the word which conveys new information. But the grammatical analysis makes no distinction between the two cases. In both cases, the nominative case to the verb, i.e. 'glass' is treated as the logical subject and 'elastic' as the predicate.

Now in the sentence 'glass is elastic', where glass is both grammatical and true logical subject, 'elastic', is the predicate. But the word 'elastic' does not by itself convey the new information. What is asserted of subject is not the word 'elastic', rather the fact, the elasticity of glass. 'Elastic' is the word which relates to the supposed new fact about glass. Cook Wilson thinks that we may offer as rationale of the ordinary account, where the word 'elastic' is regarded as the predicate, that the predicate is confined to the word which
-specifies the new property of the subject. But when stress falls upon 'glass' in 'glass' is elastic', there is no word specifying the actual subject elasticity. The word 'elastic' refers to what is already known of the subject and the 'glass' refers to the supposed new fact in the nature of elasticity that it is found in glass. But the ordinary analysis never admits that 'glass' is the predicate and elasticity is the subject, or that anything is asserted of elasticity in the given sentence. So for him, it is impossible to find out a rationale for the ordinary procedure on the method proposed, if subjects and predicates are regarded as words in the sentence. Besides, there is another difficulty. In the sentence 'glass is elastic', where elasticity is the true subject, there is no word in the sentence denoting it.

So Cook Wilson assumes that the subject and the predicate are neither words, nor even something denoted by the words in the sentence. In the sentence 'glass is elastic' where 'glass' is the subject, it is the fact of elasticity what is predicated of glass. For Cook Wilson that 'elasticity' should be the property of elasticity in general, so a universal. This agrees with the word 'elastic', since it refers to elasticity in general. It agrees also with the meaning of 'being predicated of', for that expression is equivalent to 'being asserted to belong to glass'. So if the elasticity as the predicate stands for special elasticity of glass we will have the tautologous statement that elasticity of glass belongs to glass.
Thus generally, it can be said that the subject is an object as conceived before the information given about it in the statement, while predicate is that which is asserted to belong to the object in the given statement. This general principle also applies to the statement where the word following 'is' is not an adjective but a common noun, as in 'that building is the Bodleian'. As in 'glass is elastic', the predicate is 'being elastic', so also here the predicate should be 'being the Bodleian'.

Accordingly, Cook Wilson tends to generalize from the above examples that the subject being the object as originally conceived by us, the new information conveyed in the statement is that the object has a certain being other than that which we thought it to have. This being is the predicate and it may be either universal or particular. He states that the words in the sentences which relate to the predicate obtain a peculiar stress and they may be called the predicative words, though they may not always denote the actual predicate. In the statement 'glass is elastic', the predicate is not denoted by the adjective 'elastic', rather by the noun 'elasticity'. When in the same sentence elasticity is the subject, the predicate is 'being in glass', which is not denoted by the predicate word 'glass'. The subject 'elasticity' is not also denoted by any word in the sentence. Here 'elastic' may be called the subject word, but neither the subject, nor the predicate is denoted by the words in the sentence.
So, according to Cook Wilson, the distinction of subject and predicate is not of words but of what is meant by the verbal expression. He calls this the strict logical analysis and the distinction of words into 'subject word' and 'predicative word', the grammatical analysis.

He also maintains that the distinction between the logical subject and predicate can not be expressed by the grammatical form. It is the stress only which marks the predicate. If we ask 'what sort of a skater Smith is?' and the answer is 'Smith is a good skater', the stress is on 'good', not on 'skater'. The reason for this is that 'Smith is already conceived as a skater', so 'skater' belongs to subject. Smith's goodness of skating is the new information, so it has the predicative stress. On the other hand, when the same sentence is an answer to the question 'What can Smith do well ?', stress will be on 'skater', not on 'good', since it already belongs to the conception of the subject and 'skater' refers to the new information about Smith. Again, if we ask 'Whether it is Jones who is rowing badly', the answer would be 'It is Jones who is rowing badly'. Here Jones and the man who is rowing badly are related to one another and stands for the complex subject, as they are elements about which we require information. In the above statement it is the verb 'is' which brings new information, and so is the predicative word and has the stress.

Thus, according to Cook Wilson, in a sentence like 'S is P', the stress may fall either upon S, or on P, or on 'is'. So analysis of the sentence into subject and predicate is
different in each case. Only the common principle is this that predicative word has the stress. For him, we can not determine the logical subject and predicate in a given statement, unless we have its context or know where the stress falls upon.

In the traditional theory of the analysis of proposition, any given proposition is always reduced to the form 'S is P' in order to determine its subject and predicate. Cook Wilson holds that this is not consistent with the view taken for the rationale of ordinary definition. Because, according to this view, subject and predicate should not be fixed. In 'S is P', S may sometimes be the predicate and P the subject and vice versa. Moreover, the ordinary theory is also inconsistent with itself. When a statement is reduced to the form 'S is P', it can be done in variant ways, e.g. 'A exceeds B' may be reduced to 'A is greater than B' or to 'B is less than A'. The ordinary theory can not guide to decide which of the reduction is right. So we fail to determine the subject and the predicate, as there must be at most one predicate and one subject in a given proposition.

This theory gives rise to another difficulty. If this reduction is inevitable, the statements which are not of this form can not have a subject and a predicate. Then it cannot be said that every proposition has a subject and a predicate, but only that the meaning of every proposition can be expressed in a certain verbal form which has a subject and a predicate, and the distinction would be merely a verbal one. Cook Wilson points out that this contradicts the ordinary definition. If a statement like 'Jones plays well' has to be reduced to 'Jones is a good
player' to find its subject and predicate then the former statement can not be thought of to contain the distinction of something about which an assertion is made and what is asserted about it. This results in absurdity that nothing is asserted about anything in the above assertion. If we like to stick to the reduction theory we have to change the definition of subject and predicate for avoiding the above mentioned absurdity. Analysis of the proposition, then, would be merely a grammatical exercise. The nominative to the verb would be the subject, 'is' the copula and the rest of the statement, the predicate. And why these terms are applied to the different parts of statement would remain unexplained. But the ordinary theory for the definition of subject and predicate does not merely define the grammatical distinctions. According to Cook Wilson, this contradiction of the ordinary theory of analysis to the ordinary definition of subject and predicate seems to be overlooked by traditional logicians.

He thinks that the reason for this oversight is that this part of logic has grown up uncritically. Otherwise, we could have find an important discussion about above problem in the work of Aristotle and subsequent traditional logicians. In the early period of logic attention was mainly directed to the propositions of the form 'A is B' and so the distinction of subject and predicate was applied to them. Because the main doctrine of logic was theory of syllogism and the premises and the conclusion always were given in the form 'S is P'. All
propositions were reduced for logical purpose to this form and it was regarded as the only form for logical analysis. The distinction of subject and predicate was associated to this form without any reflection and as a result, subjects and predicates were identified with grammatical members. In the syllogism: 'B is C, A is B;' . A is C'; A represents the subject about which information is wanted and C is the new information given about A. So in the conclusion A is the subject and C, the predicate. Here, the logical distinction coincides with the distinction of grammatical members. But this being the only form before early logicians, Cook Wilson thinks, they made a mistake by assuming without reflection that the subject and the predicate were just the members of this form.

The syllogism is a form of argument in which a relation between two terms is inferred from their relation to the third. This relation is regarded as the relation of predication and valid argument is concerned with this kind of relation. According to Cook Wilson, if Aristotle based his study of valid argument on scientific reasoning, like geometry, he could have recognized two essential features of it. Firstly, in geometry also two terms A and B are being related by their relation to a third term, but that relation is constantly not that of A's being B, i.e., of predication. If Aristotle noticed this feature, it could have prevented him from regarding the form 'A is B' as the only way to represent reasoning accurately. The second feature he could have recognized is that the propositions in geometry are not being reduced to the form 'A is B' and reasoning is
simpler without this form. Aristotle did not base his theory of inference on scientific method, rather on the characteristics of philosophic and rhetorical arguments of the age. Socrates preached that the main aim of knowledge would be to enquire into the nature of things. Naturally the form of statements 'A is B' was in the discourse of Socrates the main and normal form. The same kind of search for definitions are often found in the dialogues of Plato and in the teachings of Sophists. Cook Wilson holds that probably Aristotle was influenced by this trend of his age. So he treated the relation between A and B in the proposition 'A is B' as the fundamental one with which reasoning is concerned.

The symbolic terms are generally distinguished as the subject and the predicate. In the form 'A is B', A and B coincide with the subject and the predicate. Cook Wilson states that this distinction of A and B as the subject and the predicate can not be made unless the relation between them is not only of coincidence, but also identical with that of subject and predicate. But, for him, these two relations are not identical.

Cook Wilson maintains that in the traditional account of subject and predicate, the subject and the predicate, though are objects of apprehension, have been conceived in themselves as apart from the order of our apprehension. The subject and the predicate are objects in the strict sense, as they are independent of our modes of apprehension. But, while the subject and the predicate are objects in themselves and devoid of anything subjective, the distinction of them as the subject and the
predicate depends entirely on our mode of conceiving them. For the distinction exists not in their objective nature, but in their relation to our apprehension of them. So though the subject and the predicate are objects, their distinction depends on our subjective attitude. According to Cook Wilson, this difference of relation to our subjective attitude, by virtue of which we distinguish the subject and the predicate, can not be expressed in verbal statements or in the grammatical form. This distinction is indicated only by the stress of the spoken word. Moreover, this distinction even does not coincide with any verbal distinction. So in the standard form of sentence of syllogistic logic as 'A is B', it is not true that A must be the subject and B the predicate. Even A and B are not necessarily the subject word and the predicative word respectively. So, according to him, the usual method of reducing any statement to the form 'A is B' in order to determine the subject and the predicate is erroneous. As the distinction of subject and predicate does not coincide with the relation between A and B in 'A is B', the two relations can not be identical.

Thus Cook Wilson denies the identity of two relations, which has been held by the traditional logicians. He holds that it is evident from what the statement really means. To avoid ambiguity we must not confuse what a statement means with what a statement expresses. The statement 'glass is elastic' expresses the knowledge or opinion of the person making it. But the statement itself does not mean anything about anybody's opinion and contains no subjective reference. It means an
objective fact that the glass has the property of elasticity. A statement always depicts an objective fact. As the distinction of subject and predicate is not an objective fact, it can not be identified with any relation which is meant by a sentence. Thus in the form of statement 'A is B', A means a certain object and B refers to certain property which A contains and the relation between A and B is an objective relation of A's having the property denoted by B. So it has nothing to do with our subjective mode of apprehension and, therefore, the identification of the relation between A and B with that of predication is an obvious fallacy.

Cook Wilson points out that this fallacious identification of a subjective distinction with an objective distinction has been reinforced in the traditional theory of syllogism. Syllogisms are given at first in ordinary language expressing particular arguments. The reflection on particular syllogism shows that two things are related to one another through their relation to a third element and these things appear in the argument as an inseparable whole, inspite of their complexities. Each of these elements thus recognized as a unit, is represented by one symbol and hence arises the form of statement 'A is B'. Now, we find in the theory of syllogism, major, minor and middle terms are usually distinguished by the relation of subject and predicate. Again the distinction of the figures of syllogism is made in accordance with the different positions of the middle term in the premises, whether it is the subject or the predicate. As the terms are to be distinguished by their respective
essential features the above distinction is only justified if the relation between terms is identical with the relation of predication. But this can not be. In a syllogism a fact expressed in the conclusion is necessitated by two other facts represented by the premises. It is not concerned at all with our subjective attitude to the facts. On the other hand, we have seen earlier, the relation of subject and predicate is a subjective one. The description of syllogistic terms by their supposed predicational position may be merely a convenience. But it can not be supported, since this description by non-essential is absurd in logic. According to Cook Wilson, it is even not convenient. Because, it is based on an assumption that the subject and the predicate have a fixed position in the sentence, which has been proved to be false.

It may be said that the description of terms in syllogistic theory is really given by the help of the distinction between verbal forms within the sentence and it does not matter with what names verbal forms are really called. The words 'subject' and 'predicate' are used only as the technical names for A and B in the form A is B. The distinctions of A and B can, as well, be maintained by grammatical description without the misuse of the terms 'subject' and 'predicate'. But there are two difficulties. The grammatical description nearest to the subject is 'nominative case to the verb'. But it is not sufficient, since something more explicit is required. Again, for the word corresponding to B there is no convenient grammatical form. B may
be either adjective or noun. The fact, Cook Wilson suggests, is that the logical term 'predicate' has been falsely used for the lack of a proper grammatical designation of B. Jean Van Heijenoort also makes this point when he maintains that the use of 'subject' is much less frequent in Aristotle's logical writings than translations would suggest. A commonly used English translation of 'Prior Analytics' gives 'about some subject' while the Greek is 'nataiuous'; the same translation gives 'the affirmation or negation of some predicate of some subject' for 'nataigaois'. Although English translations are replete with unjustified occurrences of 'subject' (and 'predicate') the fact remains that Aristotle occasionally uses 'nataiopicavo' for the first term of a statement. He needs a convenient expression to distinguish first term from the second in his atomic sentences ( Αυν, Ευν, Συν, and Ων ). According to Cook Wilson the distinction of the parts of the sentence by symbolic analysis saves the ordinary description of terms from confusion. So it is more legitimate to define the terms solely by use of the symbolism and without any names such as 'subject' and 'predicate'.

Cook Wilson points out that another false identification of the relation of subject and predicate with an objective relation is sometimes found in the discussion about the relation of universal and particular. The problem of the unity of universal in the plurality of its particulars is a question about objective facts, while the relation of predication is dependent on something subjective. It is sometime said that in the theory of

27. 'Subject & Predicate in Western Logic' p. 253.
Idea Plato’s problem was concerning the predication of the universal of many particulars. The representation of the problem of the relation of universal and particular as that of predication is wrong and it is evident from the replacement of the technical term 'predication' by what it means. If predication means simply assertion, the metaphysical difficulty of the inherence of the universal in the particular can not be described as a problem of assertion. If predication means the special relation of some members of a certain form of assertion, the verbal relation is not relevant unless it is the expression of the relation which is in question. The relation of predication may be regarded as the verbal expression of the relation of universal and particular. But, according to Cook Wilson, it is also absurd, since the problem of the relation of objective facts can not be described as the problem of their verbal expressions.

Thus, according to Cook Wilson, in Grammar sentences can not be analysed into the subject and the predicate, since it is inconsistent with his interpretation of the subject and the predicate. In logic, the use of the form 'A is B' as the proper way to analyse statements is erroneous and it leads to the confusion of expressing an objective distinction in a terminology applicable only to the subjective distinction of subject and predicate.

It has been aforesaid that the attempt of traditional logicians to find out the distinction of subject and predicate
within the forms of the sentence, has confused it with an objective relation. According to Cook Wilson, one such a distinction is the distinction of substance and attribute or more generally that of subject and attribute.

In ordinary and popular thinking, as well as in the philosophy of Aristotle and Locke, we find a trend to regard certain existences or realities independent and certain others dependent on those independent realities. For example, it is conceived that a body is an independent existence, whereas its movement, weight etc. can not exist by themselves as apart from the body. Such an independent reality is called thing in a special sense and conceived as a unity of real elements which are totally dependent for their existence on this unit. Moreover, things are related to one another and this mutual relations belong to its being. The absolute or relatively independent reality, on which some other existences depend, is called in philosophy 'subject of attributes' and the corresponding dependent existence is called 'attribute' or 'attribute-elements'.

Subject as distinguished from the attributes may be supposed to be 'what the thing is in itself'. Yet if we try to describe the nature of a subject, we can do it only in terms of its attributes. But a subject is neither its attribute elements, nor the sum of these elements. A subject is a unity which unites in itself various aspects and which is not something beyond them, but their unified existence. These elements can not exist apart from this unity and their unified existence
constitutes a reality or part of the reality. Now 'attribute-elements' are the elements of a whole and the 'subject' of them is this whole itself as a unity.

According to Cook Wilson, the distinction of subject and attribute is a distinction in the objects of our apprehension and does not concern our mode of apprehending them. Hence this is totally distinct from the distinction of logical subject and predicate which is by nature subjective. The subject in this objective sense is called 'metaphysical subject' or more precisely as the correlate of attribute.

Cook Wilson tends to contrast the position of a logical subject with that of a metaphysical subject. The subject of attributes in a sentence is not necessarily the logical subject. For instance, in 'glass is elastic', glass is a subject of attribute, but it is not the logical subject of the statement. Moreover, a statement can have only one logical subject, but different subjects of attributes. Thus in 'A walks fast', A's walking as well as A are subjects of attributes. According to him, the relation of logical subject and predicate is mutual in a certain sense, as, we have noticed, what is the subject of a predicate in one context may be the predicate of that predicate in another and vice versa. But the relation between a subject and its attributes is not mutual. No subject can be the attribute of its attributes in any case.

Now Cook Wilson turns to consider the doctrine of Aristotle in which he confuses the distinction of subject and
attribute which is objective with that of subject and predicate which is totally subjective. He has remarked earlier that in the writings of Aristotle, we find a vague distinction of 'what is predicated' and 'of which it is predicated' in a sentence, but he had made no reflection upon this distinction. As a result he had to face the various difficulties of using the distinction without defining it clearly.

According to Aristotle, substance is subject in the sense of 'substrate', i.e. as the correlate of attribute. In *Metaphysics* he defines substrate as what can not itself be predicate, while everything else is predicated of it. For Aristotle, the substrate can not appear as predicate but must be the subject of which predicates are affirmed. And 'first substance' is that which is subject to all else and in which all else inhere.

In *Posterior Analytics*, Aristotle holds that the substrate must always be the subject in a proper predication, though he does not say explicitly that the subject of predication must always be a substrate. Comparing the two sentences, 'the white object is a piece of wood' and 'the piece of wood is white', he regards latter as the expression of proper predication, since in it substrate is the subject and attribute or accident is the predicate. But in the former, the piece of wood which is the subject appears in the predicate position. So it is called by Aristotle improper predication or accidental predication. According to Aristotle an accident or attribute is always predicated of a subject and never of an accident. If an accident is a subject of predication, either it can have a substrate for
its predicate, which is absurd, or it can have another accident as its predicate, which is also, for Aristotle, impossible. So an accident can never be the subject of a predication. Thus it is implicitly stated that the subject of predication must always be the substrate.

Cook Wilson points out that the confusion lies at that point. Predicating is a subjective act of statement and the distinction of subject and predicate is a subjective one which should not be confused with the objective relation of substance and attribute. Cook Wilson thinks that we can not suppose that Aristotle has consciously identified these two relations. We may try to interpret Aristotle as signifying that, while the subjective distinction of subject and predicate is different from that of subject and attribute the substrate must always be the subject of a statement.

But then it gives rise to another serious defect that Aristotle tries to define the objective relation through the subjective one and he may be charged of providing a circular definition. He defines the substrate or subject in the terminology of relation of predication and defines predication through the concept of subject. For he has distinguished proper from improper predication as that in a proper predication substrate is the subject, while improper predication has a substrate as its predicate.

According to Cook Wilson, Aristotle's doctrine may be interpreted as that in predication proper the object signified
by the predicate word must stand in a certain objective relation to the object signified by the subject word. But, he thinks, to maintain such a doctrine it is necessary to define the subject and the predicate, and the substance and the attribute apart and then from these definitions, it can be shown that a substrate could only be a subject. As Aristotle has failed to do this, his doctrine suffers from confusion.

If Aristotle is supposed to imply by the definition that subject is that about which a statement is made and the predicate is that what is stated of subject, Cook Wilson says that his doctrine is false obviously. Because anything may be the subject or the predicate in this sense. In the form 'All A is B', A stands for the subject and B for the predicate. But in this form a substrate may easily take either the place of A or of B. Moreover, as it is implied by the predicational form that the element what stands as the subject and the element what stands as the predicate must stand in a certain objective relation, in an improper predication this relation would be absent. So improper predication has to be called either false or nonsense. Then, Cook Wilson urges, neither Aristotle's formula nor his example is appropriate. In his formula the 'improper' has been misapplied, since it does not correspond to false. Again, his example of improper predication: 'that white object is a piece of wood' is neither nonsense, nor necessarily false.

According to Aristotle, it is implied in a predicational form that the predicate is an attribute of the subject. For him,
in improper predication, the substrate appearing as a predicate is represented as an attribute of something else. But the example, offered by Aristotle, does not answer to this fact. In 'The white thing is wood' the logical subject is not whiteness but the white object and it does not mean that wood is an attribute of white. Rather wood is identified with the substrate which has the attribute of whiteness. Hence wood is also treated as a substrate. Cook Wilson suggests that while taking this proposition as an example of improper predication, Aristotle perhaps thinks that though by the above statement we intend to mean that the object which is white is wood also, the verbal expression actually means that the white as such is the subject which wood is the attribute of. But, in fact, this statement naturally means what Aristotle says we want to mean and in some context it is the only correct form of expression. If the question is 'what is that white thing yonder? ', the answer will be 'that white thing yonder is wood'. The 'wood is white' will be entirely wrong here. Cook Wilson holds that if Aristotle could have found out the relevant context in which such a statement was made, he would not regard it as a piece of improper predication. For Cook Wilson, Aristotle's doctrine of improper predication can only be justified, if the assertion 'the white (thing) is wood' actually meant that wood is being predicated of the attribute white. But we have seen that it is not so, for here predicate is not attached to white as such but to the substrate which possesses whiteness in the sense of being identified with it. So we cannot exclude substrate from the predicate position.
Cook Wilson assumes that in propounding the doctrine that substrate can not properly be a predicate, Aristotle was perhaps affected by a form of language. In the earlier stage of language, there was a tendency to designate the thing by a noun and regard it as the grammatical subject of the sentence and to express its attributes in their relation to the thing by verbs or adjectives coupled with verbs. Thus the expressions of attributes were associated with non-nominal forms peculiar to them. Moreover, Aristotle regarded the grammatical subject also as the logical subject of the statement and the remainder portion as the predicate. Thus the dependence of attributes on the substrate seems to be associated in his mind with the nature of predicate. Therefore, Cook Wilson maintains that when Aristotle defines metaphysical subject as that which is the subject and never a predicate in a statement, he confuses an objective distinction with a subjective one.

Cook Wilson further points out that the same kind of confusion underlies the modern doctrine that the true subject of every existential judgement is the ultimate reality. This doctrine implies not that all propositions are about reality, but that existential propositions are about ultimate reality. In this doctrine the term 'real' has been used in a special sense, i.e. it means self existent and the complete reality. It is superfluous to say that ultimate reality is not the grammatical subject of existential judgement. In another meaning of the subject, which has been taken as the rationale of traditional doctrine, the term 'subject' becomes entirely relative. Because
in this sense any element of a statement of knowledge or apprehension can be regarded as the subject in turn according as our mode of apprehending them. So in this sense ultimate reality, as interpreted here, can not be regarded as the subject. In logic, by the 'subject of a judgement' we mean the logical subject as the correlate of a predicate. According to the traditional definition the subject is the conception of the object which we start with and the predicate is a further aspect of reality of the same object which we arrive at. But the ultimate reality can not be a starting point of a judgement, awaiting for further determination. No one can start judging with the general conception of an ultimate reality unless he starts with particular realities. So most of our judgements include particular reality as the starting point. Hence, we can not say that the only subject of an existential judgement is the ultimate reality.

In the metaphysical sense 'subject' means any reality as comparatively independent vis-a-vis to those elements dependent upon it. Here the term 'subject' stands as the correlate to 'attribute'. In this sense, for Aristotle individual things are ultimate realities. But in modern philosophy individual things are not treated as ultimate realities, since they enter in to the same whole of reality in relation to each other. And this total reality is the only independent and self-existent reality. So it may be called the ultimate reality, as understood, If the term 'subject' means the independent and self-existent, then this ultimate reality can be regarded as the true subject. But it is
a metaphysical concept and can not be treated as the true subject of a judgement. To do this is to confuse the conception of metaphysical subject with that of logical subject which is dependent on our subjective act of judgement. Finally, Cook Wilson states that this modern doctrine also represents the same confusion which is found in the doctrine of Aristotle that in predication proper subject must be the substrate. Inspite of certain modifications, the two doctrines are essentially same.

From the above discussion, it is clear that Cook Wilson has distinguished between three criteria for the distinction of the subject and the predicate of a proposition. According to grammatical criterion, nominative case to the verb is the subject and the word following the verb is the predicative. In Grammar usually substantives occupy the place of subject and the adjectives of the predicate. According to traditional logicians, the subject is that which we speak and think about and the predicate is that what is asserted or said of the subject. Cook Wilson, criticising the traditional account of subject and predicate, says that traditional logicians identify the logical subject and predicate with the grammatical subject and predicate. In the traditional analysis of a proposition, say, 'glass is elastic', 'glass' is always the subject and 'elastic' is the predicate. But, for Cook Wilson, the distinction of subject and predicate can not thus be fixed to a certain form. He urges that to determine the subject and the predicate of a certain sentence, we have to take into account the context of its use. In the sentence 'glass is elastic', 'glass' may sometimes be the subject.

28. We have discussed grammatical criterion in detail in the next chapter (Chapter-III).
and 'elastic' the predicate and vice versa, according as the very context of its use permits. According to him, subject is an object as conceived before any information given about it in a statement and predicate is the new information which we arrive at and it is indicated only by the stress of the spoken word. So, for him, the distinction of subject and predicate is not of words, but of what is meant by the verbal expressions. It is dependent on our mode of apprehension. He further points out that, while identifying the grammatical subject and predicate with the logical subject and predicate, traditional logicians make another confusion. They confuse between the subject and the predicate on the one hand and the substance and the attribute on the other, which are purely metaphysical entities. The relation between a substance and its attribute are objective, which does not concern our subjective mode of knowledge, whereas the relation between the subject and the predicate is purely subjective one. Hence, the traditional account has been charged by Cook Wilson as mistakenly identifying an objective relation with a subjective one.