This introductory chapter of the study examines Aristotle's articulation of the question of being on the basis of a reading of book Zeta of the *Metaphysics*. Of the disparate texts collated under the title of *Metaphysics*, book Zeta is the first of what are held to be the three central books; central not only according to their situation within the text of the *Metaphysics*, but also, and much more significantly, in that they constitute one of the keystones of Aristotle's ontology. In reading book Zeta in relation to another of these keystones, namely the text of the *Categories*, the aim is to examine Aristotle's approach to the question of being with regard to Heidegger's attempts to destroy the traditional content of ancient ontology.

The first section of the chapter is concerned with Aristotle's establishing of the form of thought that we have come to term 'ontology' and with his reduction of the question of ontology to that of the nature of *ousia*, beingness. Particular attention will be paid to the morphology and to the everyday, pre-philosophical senses of this Greek term, since it is to these that Heidegger appeals within his concern to overturn traditional readings of Aristotle. In tracing the argument of Zeta, and with reference to the *Categories*, the second section of the chapter brings into relief the impasse Aristotle reaches with the attempt to determine beingness as *to hupokeimenon* or 'the subject' in the third chapter of the book. The section shows how the impasse is a function of the two different approaches that Aristotle adopts to the idea of subjectivity and beingness itself: the categorial determination of being, on the one hand, and the technical or physical determination of being, on the other. Examining the problem of subjectivity in this way enables us at the end of the section to assess fully Heidegger's attempts to interpret the sense of both *to hupokeimenon* and *ousia* in a manner that allows Aristotle to be understood...
as something other than a thinker of ‘subjectivity’ and ‘substance’. The third and final section of the chapter develops these arguments in showing how Aristotle’s two different approaches to the question of subjectivity and beingness are in fact a function of the problematic, explicitly discussed elsewhere in the *Metaphysics*, of ‘the manifold ways’ in which ‘being is said’. This is a problem that famously motivated Heidegger’s philosophical thinking at the beginning of his career, and it is on the basis of delineating his approach to it that it will be possible, in the following chapters of the study, to examine how fundamental ontology takes up the development of Aristotle’s questioning of being in the second and third of the central books of the *Metaphysics*, namely books Eta and Theta.

1.1 Ontology and ousia

α. Ontology

In the first chapter of *Metaphysics* Zeta, Aristotle poses the guiding question that animates the collection of texts in its entirety: τί τὸ ὄν [1028b4]? The Greek ὄν is a participle form of the verb ‘be’, ἐστιν, and literally translated the question reads *What is the being*. Yet here to ὄν has, in one sense, the significance of a collective noun in denominating everything that is, that which exists, the existent. In this manner, it is equivalent to the plural participle form τὰ ὄντα, ‘beings’. To ὄν names beings, just as, for example, ὁ καλόν, the beautiful, denominates all beautiful things. On these grounds, one might hope to provide an adequate response to the question τί τὸ ὄν by pointing to particular beings, just as the interlocutor of Socrates in the *Greater Hippias* [287c–d] responds to the question τί τὸ καλόν – What is the beautiful? – by referring to particular beautiful things.

These participle forms have, however, a further and more profound sense that is presupposed by their use as a collective noun. What distinguishes something beautiful, what allows particular beautiful things to be the beautiful things that they are, is the beautiful, beauty. We can meaningfully describe something as beautiful, only if we somehow have access to, only if we somehow understand what beauty itself is. Now beauty itself must in some way be other than particular beautiful things given that it is common to them all. Of course, how we are to conceive the beautiful in its identity with and difference from beautiful things remains to be philosophically determined, but underlying the use of τὸ καλόν as a collective noun is its sense as naming what allows beautiful things to be the sort of things that they are. The same applies to τὸ ὄν.