Aristotle on Definition: Some Texts

Top. I.5, 101\textsuperscript{b}38: “A definition is an account (logos) that signifies the essence.”

Top. VI.4, 141\textsuperscript{a}26: “… we should see whether he has constructed the definition out of things that are prior and better known, without qualification.”

Top. VI.4, 141\textsuperscript{b}26: “… a correct definition must be given through the genus and the differentiae, and these are better known without qualification and prior to the species …”

APo. II.3, 90\textsuperscript{b}25-28: “The principles of demonstrations are definitions, and it has been proved earlier that there will not be demonstrations of these—either the principles will be demonstrable and there will be principles of the principles, and this will go on indefinitely, or the primitives will be non-demonstrable definitions.”

APo. II.7, 92\textsuperscript{b}4-8: “Anyone who knows what a man or anything else is must know too that it is (for of that which is not, no one knows what it is—you may know what the account or the name signifies when I say goatstag, but it is impossible to know what a goatstag is).”

APo. II.7, 92\textsuperscript{b}26-32: “… if a definition has nothing at all to do with what a thing is, it will be an account signifying the same as a name. But that is absurd. For, first, there would be definitions even of non-substances, and of things that are not—for one can signify even things that are not. Again, all accounts would be definitions; for one could posit a name for any account whatever, so that we would all talk definitions and the Iliad would be a definition.”

APo. II.7, 92\textsuperscript{b}35-37: “… it is evident that definition and deduction are not the same, and that deduction and definition are not of the same thing; and in addition that definition neither demonstrates nor proves anything, and that you can become aware of the what-it-is (sc., essence) neither by definition nor by demonstration.”