

What Does ὑπαρχειν Mean in Aristotle?

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Aristotle says that ὑπαρχειν has as many senses as ‘to be true’ (PrA.¹, A, 36, 48b2-9) and as many ways as there are different categories. (PrA., A, 37, 49a6-9) This may mean that for every ‘is’ there is a ὑπαρχειν. The reason is that Aristotle uses ὑπαρχειν in converse direction of ‘is’. The equal statement of ‘A is B’ with ὑπαρχειν is ‘B ὑπαρχει to A.’ Allen Bäck² points to the difference between the use of the verb with dative case and its use with a subject alone in Greek language. When it is used with the dative, it retains its basic meaning, that is, ‘be already present’ or ‘exist really.’ ‘So to say that P belongs to S is to say that P exists in S, or, if you like, that P has its being in S.’ He believes that Aristotle uses this construction to insist that primary substances alone are the fundamental being and all other things only are ‘in’ substances. Thus, when the verb is used with the dative, it expresses dependent substance relation. But when it is used with a subject alone, e.g. in ‘S ὑπάρχει,’ it expresses that the subject really exists. (OI., 17a24 and 17b2) Thus, while it is the subject which is said to be the predicate, it is the predicate which ὑπάρχει to the subject. The formula of ‘τὸ A ὑπάρχει τῷ B’ is equivalent to ‘τὸ B ἐστὶ A.’ He uses the word for the predication of a category on substance (e.g. Met., α, 993b24-25; Met., Z, 1029a15-16; Cat., 5, 3b24-25), the predication of secondary substance on primary substance (e.g. Met., Z, 1038b21-23; Cat., 5, 2a14-19), the predication of primary substance on nothing else but

¹ Abbreviations used in this paper:

Cat	<i>Categories</i>
Met.	<i>Metaphysics</i>
OI.	<i>On Interpretation</i>
PrA.	<i>Prior Analytics</i>
PsA	<i>Posterior Analytics</i>
So	<i>On the Soul</i>
Cael	<i>De Caelo</i>

² Back, Allen, Aristotle’s Theory of Predication, 2000, Koninklijke Brill NV, pp. 127-128

itself (e.g. Met., Z, 1040b23-24), the belonging of a verb to the subject, the belonging of axioms to a single science (Met., 1005a22-23), the belonging of PNC to all things that are (Met., IV, 3), in the sense of really existing (Cael. 297b22, Met., 1041b4. Cf. B503, 125-126) or merely in the sense of the predication of a predicate on a subject (e.g. OI., I, 5, 17a22-24) and especially and much more repeatedly than anywhere else in his discussion of syllogism. (e.g. PrA., A, 36, 48a40-b2; PrA., B, 22, 67b28-30; PrA., A, 24a26-28) It is also used in some related senses like mere belonging (e.g. Met., A, 989a10-14; K, 1060a9-10) or to be there. (So., B, 5, 417b23-26)

Some of its derived forms are also used by Aristotle. For example, ἐνυπαρχον in the sense of the thing that is 'in' something; (e.g. Met., A, 991a13-16; Met., Z, 1038b29-33 and 1039a3-5) ὑπερέχον in the sense of that which contains and ὑπερεχόμενον in the sense of that which is contained in something else. (e.g. Met., Δ, 1020b26-28)

In a sense, the extent of the application of ὑπαρχειν is wider than 'is' since it is not restricted to the nominative form in which 'is' is used but is applicable to other cases as well: 'For 'That does not belong to this' does not always mean that 'This is not that' but sometimes that 'this is not of that' or 'for that.' (PsA., A, 36, 48b28-33)

Allen Bäck (B503, 124) points that in the *Prior Analytics* Aristotle uses 'ὑπάρχει τῷ' and 'κατηγορεῖσθαι κατά' interchangeably. (e.g. at 25b37-26a4) Referring to its converse construction in respect of μετέχει (if A belongs to B, then B participates in A) as a probable reason that it may have Platonist foundations.

But the question is: why does Aristotle use this construction (B belongs to A) instead of simply saying A is B? Alexander of Aphrodisias (Apr 54.21-29)³ wonders why Aristotle had to adhere to such artificial language, entirely unnatural for ordinary speakers of Greek.

³ Quoted from: Abed, Shukri B., *Aristotelian Logic and the Arabic Language in Alfarabi*, State University of New York Press, 1991, p. 140 where Abed refers to Patzig 1968, 10-12, nn.22-24

As Jonathan Barnes⁴ points out, all the three formulas of ‘τὸ Α ὑπάρχει τῷ Β,’ ‘τὸ Α κατηγορεῖται κατὰ τοῦ Β’ and ‘τὸ Α λέγεται κατὰ τοῦ Β’ are artificial in the sense that no Greek who wanted to say that pleasure was good would normally have expressed himself by way of any of them.’ Bäck⁵ thinks Aristotle may have used it ‘to stress the primacy of primary substances as the ultimate subjects.’ He also mentions the probability that it may be to emphasize that the terms are being coupled in predication without any existence condition, a suggestion he is not himself inclined with.

Robin Smith⁶ notes for Aristotle that ‘belonging to’ construction is wider than ‘predicated of’ construction because it can be used for cases that cannot easily be treated as categorical sentences. While predication is restricted to cases in which the subject term is in the nominative case, belonging can indicate, as he quotes Mignucci (480-481), ‘any possible grammatical construction for a predicative relation’

⁴ Barnes, Jonathan, *Logical Matters: Essays in Ancient philosophy II*, 2012, Oxford, pp. 155-156

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 124-125

⁶ Smith, Robin, Aristotle: *Prior Analytics*, 1989, Hackett Publishing Company, p. 165