

Aristotle on Opposition

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A. Four ways of opposition

There are four ways in which things are said to oppose (ἀντικεῖσθαι) each other: as relatives (τὰ πρὸς τι), as contraries (τὰ ἐναντία), as privation and possession (στρέσις καὶ ἔξις) and as affirmation and negation (κατάφασις καὶ ἀπόφασις). (Cat.¹, 10, 11b15-23) Aristotle's examples are: double and half for relatives, good and bad for contraries, blindness and sight for privation and possession and 'He is sitting' and 'he is not sitting' for affirmation and negation. We discussed relatives separately thus we ignore it here.

B. Contraries

Contraries (ἐναντία) have the following features:

- 1) They are not said of each other (οὐδαμῶς πρὸς ἄλληλα λέγεται) as relatives are said of each other. (Cat., 10, 11b15-23)
- 2) Contraries are of two kinds:
 - a) Non-intermediates: Those that it is necessary for one or the other of them to belong to the things they naturally occur in or predicated of and accept no intermediate between themselves. Since it is necessary for one of e.g. health and sickness to occur in an animal's body or odd and even to belong to a number, there is no intermediate between health and sickness or odd and even. (Cat., 10, 11b38-12a9; 12b28-34)

¹ Abbreviations used in this paper:

Cat.	<i>Categories</i>
Met.	<i>Metaphysics</i>
OI.	<i>On Interpretation</i>

- b) Intermediates: Those that it is not necessary for one of them to belong to the things they naturally occur in or predicated of and accept intermediates between themselves. It is not necessary for one of e.g. black and white to belong to a body and there may be some intermediates between them. (Cat., 10, 12a9-25; 12b34-40)
- 3) Contraries can change to one another when the thing capable of receiving them is there. (Cat., 13a18-21) The only exception is when one of the contraries belongs to something by nature. In such cases, change is not possible as the hotness of fire cannot change to coldness while fire is still there.
- 4) Contraries belong to the same thing, either the same in species or in genus as e.g. sickness and health in an animal's body or whiteness and blackness in body simply. (Cat., 10, 14a15-) In *Metaphysics* (I, 1058a8-10) Aristotle asserts that contraries are in the same genus.
- 5) There are three possibilities about the genera of contraries: they either are in the same genus, e.g. black and white, or in the contrary genera, e.g. justice and injustice, or are themselves genera, e.g. good and bad. (Cat., 11, 14a19-25)
- 6) Doing and being affected admit of contrariety, e.g. heating is contrary to cooling. (Cat., 9, 11b1-4)
- 7) Substances only are able to receive contraries. (Cat., 5, 4a10-17)
- 8) There is nothing contrary to a substance, whether primary or secondary. (Cat., 5, 3b24-27) Thus, neither man nor an individual man has a contrary.
- 9) There is no contrary to a quantity: e.g. four-foot or ten has no contrary. (Cat., 5, 3b27-32)
- 10) Otherness in species means to be contraries. (Met., I, 1058a17-20)
- 11) Contrariety is complete difference. Two things that have the same genus but are different in species are other than one another in the highest degree and their difference is complete, i.e. they cannot be present along with one another. (Met., I, 1058a10-16)

12) One of the contraries is a privation, which is a denial of a predicate to a determinate genus. (Met., Γ, 1011b18-20)

13) 'Neither true judgments nor true propositions can be contrary the one to the other.'
(OI., II, 14, 24b6-7)

C. Privation and possession

Privation and possession are said in connection with the same thing in which the possession naturally occurs. Only that thing which is capable of receiving a possession and only when it is entirely absent from that which naturally has it and only at the time when it is natural for it to have it, is called to be deprived of it. (Cat., 10, 12a26-30) A thing is not called e.g. blind if it has never had or was not supposed to have sight. That privation and possession are not relatives is obvious from the fact that none is called just what it is, of its opposite. (Cat., 10, 12b16-21) Moreover, while relatives reciprocate, they do not. (Cat., 10, 12b21-25) That they are not contraries is explained by the classification of contraries to intermediable and non-intermediable contraries. The latter are different from privation and possession because it is necessary for one of such contraries to be predicated of absolutely everything while it is not the case about privation and possession because they are necessary only in things naturally capable of their predication. Intermediable contraries are different from privation and possession because while the former are not necessary the latter are necessary in their subject matters. (Cat., 13a3-17) Unlike contraries for each of which it is possible to change to the other, change in privation and possession is allowed only from possession to privation and not vice versa: neither a blind man gets sight nor a bald man regain his hair. (Cat., 13a18-36)

D. Affirmation and negation

Aristotle regards the reception of truth and falsity as the main difference affirmation and negation opposition has in respect of other three kinds of opposition: it is only affirmation and negation that it is always necessary for one of them to be true and the other to be false (Cat., 13a37-b26), no matter the subject of affirmation or negation exists or not. (Cat., 10,

13b27-35) 'It is impossible that contradictory propositions should both be true of the same subject.' (OI., II, 12, 21b17-18) It is evident both about relatives and those contraries that include no co-positing, e.g. health and sickness. The only cases that resemble affirmation and negation are those contraries that are said with co-positing, e.g. 'Socrates is well' and 'Socrates is sick.' Yet, Aristotle points, not even with these is it necessary always for one to be true and the other false because if Socrates does not exist, neither will be true. (Cat., 10, 13b12-19) This is true also about privation and possession: neither 'Socrates has sight' nor 'Socrates is blind' are true if he does not exist. Moreover, it is not necessary for one or the other of them to be true or false even if he exists because until the time when it is natural for Socrates to have sight, both are false. (Cat., 10, 13b20-26)