

THE FOUR KINDS OF OPPOSITE - CHAPTER 10

The first three post-predicaments are connected. Opposition is the basis of formal distinction and distinction is before order which consists in a before and after. Since nothing is before or after itself, there is always some distinction between what is before and what is after. Reason therefore always sees some distinction before it sees a before and after.¹ The third post-predicament is the word *together*, what is neither before nor after. And there is the same knowledge of opposites.

The distinction and order of the highest genera has been found in what has gone before. But we also want to see the basis for the distinction and order of genera and species under the highest genera. Genera and species are distinguished by *opposition* and a genus is *before* its species but the species into which a genus is immediately divided are *together*. So the distinction and placing of genera and species are connected with these three post-predicaments. The logic of the *Categories* is giving the basis for this although it will be the work of other forms of reasoned out knowledge to complete this.

This chapter can be divided into three parts. In the first part, Aristotle briefly enumerates or names the four kinds of opposites and exemplifies each. In the second part, he considers each kind of opposite in particular. In the third part, he considers the differences of these opposites not already shown in the particular consideration of them.

In the first part, he names the opposites which are those toward something or relatives, contraries, lack and having, and affirmation and negation. He then exemplifies each.

In the second part, he considers each kind in particular. And first those said toward something. Aristotle here points out something that separates this kind of opposites from the other three kinds. They are said to be of each other or in some other way toward each other. Thus father is the father of his son

¹ We see also in the fifth book of *Wisdom* that Aristotle also takes up *opposition* and *before* together in the same order. Hence, also Anaxagoras attributed to the greater mind both the distinction of things and their order.

and the son is the son of his father. But contraries like virtue and vice are not said to be of each other. A virtue is not the virtue of a vice or a vice, the vice of a virtue. Likewise, sight is not the sight of blindness, or blindness, the blindness of sight. And affirmation is not the affirmation of negation, or negation, the negation of affirmation.

Contraries are not said to be of each other, but one is said to be contrary to the other. Some contraries have something between them and these are contraries where neither necessarily belongs to their subject. But other contraries have nothing in-between them and these are the contraries where one or the other must belong to their subject.

Lack and having are in the same subject, but not at the same time. A thing is said to lack something when it does not have what it should have and when it should have it. To lack and to have are not the same as the lack or the having, but are opposed in the same way.

The opposition of affirmation and negation is in speech, but what they are said of are opposed in the same way. These opposites can also be called *contradictories*.

In the third part of the chapter, Aristotle shows the differences between the four kinds of opposites that have not been shown before. Since he has already shown a difference between relatives and contraries, he needs to show that lack and having are not opposed as relatives or as contraries; and then that affirmation and negation are opposed differently than all the other three.

Aristotle shows that lack and having are not opposed as those toward something in the same way that contraries are not relatives. Sight is not the sight of blindness and blindness is not the blindness of sight.

But that lack and having are not opposed as contraries is shown by Aristotle in two ways.

In the first way, he shows that in contraries that have a middle, one of the contraries does not necessarily belong to its subject while a subject either lacks what it should have or has it. And in the contraries that have no middle, some necessarily have one of the contraries (as fire is hot), which again is not true of lack and having.

The other way that Aristotle shows a difference between contraries and lack & having is that there is change between contraries in both directions (as a man becomes sick and then again healthy) while the man who become blind from seeing does not return to seeing from being blind.

Affirmation and negation are separated from the other three kinds of opposites because one of these is always true and the other false.

We can now consider some of these points at greater length.

In what order does Aristotle enumerate the four kinds of opposites?

Since towards something is one of the ten genera of predicates and has been considered at some length before, he begins from things opposed as relatives.

But this is not the order from what is most opposed to what is least opposed. This latter order would be exactly the reverse. When Aristotle enumerates the four kinds of cause, he begins from the cause most known (matter) and ends with the cause of the causality of all the others (the end or that for the sake of which). He begins in a way with what is least a cause.

Aristotle divides opposites into four kinds. However, it is difficult for our reason to understand fully a division or distinction into more than two or three. A logical and understandable division is usually into two or three.

In one text, Thomas divides the four kinds of opposites into two, dividing relatives against the other three:

Primo enim dicitur quod modis dicuntur opposita; quia quatuor modis; scilicet contradictoria, contraria, privatio et habitus, et ad aliquid.

Aliquid enim contraponitur alteri vel opponitur aut ratione dependentiae, qua dependet ab ipso, et sic sunt opposita relative.

Aut ratione remotionis, quia scilicet unum removet alterum quod quidem contingit tripliciter.

Aut enim totaliter removet nihil relinquens, et sic est negatio.

Aut relinquit subiectum solum, et sic est privatio.

Aut relinquit subiectum et genus, et sic est contrarium. Nam contraria non sunt solum in eodem subiecto, sed etiam in eodem genere.²

Another logical and understandable way to divide the four is into two parts of two each. Thomas, in the this text, divides toward something and contraries against the last two:

...opposita reducuntur in idem genus in quo vel utrumque est per se, ut patet in contrariis et relativis; vel unum est per se et alterum per reductionem, ut patet in privatione et habitu, et affirmatione et negatione; unde habitum est in XXVIII dist. I libri ab Augustino, quod in eodem genere est genitus et non genitus...

...peccatum omissionis non est peccatum originale, sed actuale; nec dicitur actuale quasi in aliquo actu existat, sed quia ad genus actus reducitur cujus negatio est; sicut Augustinus ingenitum in genere relationis ponit, ut habitum est in I libro, dist. XXVIII, et iterum sicut actus est in potestate voluntatis, ita et negatio ejus.³

We could divide contradiction against the other three. One way in which contradiction can be distinguished from the rest is because in it *non importatur aliqua convenientia*. (Aristotle in the text also points out another reason for distinguishing contradiction from the others: one must be true and other false about anything). From this it follows that the opposition of affirmation and negation is the first and greatest opposition and the cause of all opposition and distinction, as Thomas teaches us:

affirmatio et negatio dicuntur maxime opponi, quia in eis non importatur aliqua convenientia: in privative enim oppositis importatur convenientia quantum ad subjectum, quia nata sunt fieri

²In *V Metaphysicorum*, Lectio XII, n. 922

³*Scriptum Super Lib. II Sententiarum*, Distinctio XXXV, Quaest. I, Art. III, Ad 1 & Ad 2

circa idem: in contrariis autem et relativis etiam quantum ad genus, quia scilicet sunt in eodem genere. Unde in utraque oppositione utrumque extremorum significatur per modum entis et naturae cujusdam.

Illud autem in quo invenitur aliquid non permixtum contrario, est maximum et primum in genere illo, et causa omnium aliorum; et ideo oppositio affirmationis et negationis, cui non admiscetur aliqua convenientia, est prima et maxima oppositio, et causa omnis oppositionis et distinctionis; et ideo oportet quod in qualibet alia oppositione includatur affirmatio et negatio, sicut primum in posteriori. Unde plura requiruntur ad alias oppositiones quam ad oppositionem contradictionis, quia se habent ex additione ad ipsam.

Unde non oportet quod, si contrarietas non inveniatur nisi in diversis realiter, quod affirmatio et negatio inveniatur in diversis realiter [in obj.: essentia non est generans, Pater est generans, ergo they are not the same] immo sufficit etiam distinctio rationis ad affirmationem et negationem, cum quaelibet distinctio, ut dictum est, includat affirmationem et negationem: et talis distinctio, scilicet rationis, est inter essentiam et personam. Sed opposita relative aliquando requirunt diversitatem vel distinctionem realem: et talia sunt quae divinas personas distinguunt; aliquando autem distinctionem rationis tantum, ut cum dicitur idem eidem idem.⁴

We could also divide into three by no agreement, agree in subject and agree in subject and genus.

We should also note that affirmation and negation are included in every opposition:

Impossibile quod dicitur secundum nullam potentiam, sed secundum se ipsum, dicitur ratione discoherentiae terminorum. Omnis autem discoherentia terminorum est in ratione alicuius oppositionis; in omni autem oppositione includitur affirmatio et negatio, ut probatur *X Metaph.*; unde in omni tali impossibili implicatur affirmationem et negationem esse simul.⁵

⁴*Scriptum Super Lib. I Sententiarum*, Dist V, Q. I, Art I, Ad 1

⁵Thomas Aquinas, *De Potentia*, Q. I, Art. 3, corpus

And in another text:

contradictio includitur in omnibus aliis tamquam prius et simplicius. Opposita secundum quodcumque oppositionis genus impossibile est simul existere. Quod quidem contingit ex hoc, quod alterum oppositorum de sui ratione habet negationem alterius. Sicut de ratione caeci est quod non sit videns. Et de ratione nigri quod non sit album. Et similiter de ratione filii est quod non sit pater eius cuius est filius.⁶

What is the order of the four kinds of opposite?

Aristotle would seem to order the four kinds of opposites by their likeness and difference. But why begin with relatives rather than contradiction? One reason is because he has already had a chapter on toward something. Again, because one opposite is said to be the opposite of another, there is something like toward something in all opposites. Moreover, this post-predicament is ordered to distinguishing species and genera under the highest genus where they belong, and only relatives and contraries can be species or genera.

Substance and accident were distinguished in chapter two by contradictories. Species are distinguished by contraries more in quality than in quantity and substance where we divide by contradictories:

naturaliter loquendo de genere et differentia, oportet differentias esse contrarias: nam materia super quam fundatur natura generis, est susceptiva contrariorum formarum.

Secundum autem considerationem logicam sufficit qualiscumque oppositio in differentiis; sicut patet in differentiis numerorum, in quibus non est contrarietas; et similiter est in spiritualibus substantiis.⁷

⁶In *X Metaphysicorum*, Lectio VI, n. 2041

⁷Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestio Disputata de Anima*, Art. 7, Ad 18

Appendix

DIVISION OF CHAPTER TEN: THE FOUR KINDS OF OPPOSITE

Brief distinction of four kinds of opposites

Enumeration of the four kinds (Notice tà & one word only in first two)

The four kinds exemplified

Each kind considered in particular

Towards something - said of each other

Contraries

Not said of each other, but one the contrary of the other

Some have an intermediary and some do not

Lack and having

Both in same subject (but not at same time)

When a thing is said to lack in strict sense

To lack and to have not the same as the lack or having, but opposed in same way

As affirmation and negation

(the things?) under affirmation and negation are not aff. and neg. but are opposed in the same way

The differences of the opposites (not already shown)

Lack and having

Not opposed as relatives or towards something (Not said of one another or turned around)

Not opposed as contraries

Shown from contraries having and not having a middle

Shown from change between contraries

Affirmation and negation - shown from one of these always true and other false

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