

# Aristotle on Relation

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However, there are a few points about what we can call 'relation' in Aristotle's works:

1. Sound is always of something in relation to something and in something and it is impossible for one body only to generate a sound. (So.,<sup>1</sup> B, 8, 419b9-10)
2. Corresponding relation: 'Let then C be to D as A, white, is to B, black; it follows alternado that C:A :: D:B. if then C and A belong to one subject, the case will be the same with them as with D and B...'
3. 'And the case is similar in regard to the states of the soul, all of which (like those of body) exist in virtue of particular relations... In the first place, it is much more true of the possession of knowledge that it depends upon a particular relation. And further, it is evident that there is no becoming of these states. For that which is potentially possessed of knowledge becomes actually possessed of it not by being set in motion at all itself but by reason of the presence of something else; i.e. it is when it meets with the particular object that it knows in a manner the particular through its knowledge of the universal.' (Phy., Z, 3)
4. The negation of a relation must be the negation of that relation and not of its elements: 'For the expression 'it is true' stands on a similar footing to 'it is.' For the negation of 'it is true to call it white' is not 'it is true to call it not-white' but 'it is not true to call it white.' (PsA., A, 46, 52a32-)

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<sup>1</sup> Abbreviations used in this paper:

Phy.	<i>Physics</i>
PsA.	<i>Posterior Analytics</i>
So.	<i>On the Soul</i>

5. The fact that Aristotle does not have any word for relation is taken by some scholars (e.g. Fabio Morales<sup>2</sup>) as an evidence that Aristotle lays emphasis on the relata instead of the relation itself.
6. Knowledge and relation. Aristotle has a very interesting assertion about the relation between knowledge and relation: 'It is much more true of the possession of knowledge that it depends upon a particular relation [instead of alteration]. And further, it is evident that there is no becoming of these states. For that which is potentially possessed of knowledge becomes actually possessed of it not by being set in motion at all itself but by reason of the presence of something else: it is when it meets with the particular object that it knows in a manner the particular through its knowledge of the universal.' (Phy., Z, 3)

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<sup>2</sup> Morales, Fabio, Relational Attributes in Aristotle, *Phronesis*, Vol. 39, No. 3, 1994, pp. 255-274, p. 256