

Aristotle's Theory of Correspondence

Mohammad Bagher Ghomi

mbqomi@gmail.com

A. Correspondence of the three realms

At the very beginning of *On Interpretation* (I, 1, 16a3-14) Aristotle distinguishes four levels and discusses their relationships. From this text, we can infer the following:

1. There are four levels: writing, speaking, mental experience and external world. Since writing and speaking can truly be taken as belonging to the same realm, we can reduce Aristotle's distinction to three realms: language, thought and external world.
 2. The realm of language, in both levels of writing and speaking, is different for different people but both of the other realms of thought and external world are the same for them. By this Aristotle must mean that though people of different languages have different writings and speaking words, the things that are in the world and their affections on people's thought are the same.
 3. The relations both between language and thought and in language itself is symbolization: 'Spoken words are the symbols of mental experience and written words are the symbols of spoken words.'
 4. The relation between external world and thought is similarity: 'Those things of which our mental experiences are similarities (παθήματα τῆς ψυχῆς ... ὁμοιώματα).'
- (OI.,¹ 16a7) In *de Anima* (16a8-9; II, 5, 418a4-5; II, 4, 429a10-11; 429a13-16;

¹ Abbreviations used in this paper:

Cat.	<i>Categories</i>
OI.	<i>On Interpretation</i>
PrA.	<i>Prior Analytics</i>
PsA.	<i>Posterior Analytics</i>
So.	<i>On the Soul</i>

429a23) Aristotle describes thoughts as ‘likenesses of objects.’ Paolo Crivelli² says that in these addresses Aristotle believe that ‘a thought is of an object just if it is a likeness of it’ and ‘to be a likeness of an object is to be the result of a process of likening of which that object is a cause.’ This, Crivelli believes, is indeed the basis of the sameness of the objects of thoughts: they are results of the same processes of likening by the same objects.

5. There is a correspondence between nouns and verbs on the one hand and objects of thought without co-positing and positing away on the other hand: ‘Nouns themselves and verbs are like objects of thought (νοήματι) without co-positing and positing away.’ (OI, I, 1, 16a13-14)

B. Relationship between external world and thought

The following can be inferred from Aristotle’s works about the relationship between thought and external world:

1. ‘The soul is in a way all existing things; for existing things are either sensible or thinkable, and knowledge is in a way what is knowable, and sensation is in a way what is sensible.’ (So., Γ, 8, 431b21-23) In fact, ‘within the soul the faculties of knowledge and sensation are potentially these objects, the one what is knowable, the other what is sensible.’ (So., Γ, 8, 431b26-27)
2. It is the form of the external objects that are in thought (So., Γ, 8, 431b26-29) and the objects of thought are in the sensible forms, viz. both the abstract objects and all the states and affections of sensible things (ἐν τοῖς εἶδεσι τοῖς αἰσθητοῖς τὰ νοητὰ ἐστι, τὰ τε ἐν ἀφαιρέσει λεγόμενα, καὶ ὅσα τῶν αἰσθητῶν ἔξις καὶ πάθη). (So., Γ, 8, 432a3-6)
3. While external objects are perishable, objects of thought seem to be eternal. (PrA., A, 33, 47b21-22)

² Crivelli, Paolo, Aristotle on Signification and Truth, in: Georgias Anagnosto Poulos (ed.), A Companion to Aristotle, Blackwell, 2009, pp. 82

C. Relationship between language and the external world

1. There is a correspondence between the external world and the true statements about them: ‘If it is true to say that a thing is white, it must necessarily be white; if the reverse proposition is true, it will of necessity not be white.’ (OI, I, 9, 18a39-b5)
2. While external objects ‘does seem in some way the cause of’ the truth or falsity of lingual statements, ‘the true statement is in no way the cause of the actual thing’s existence.’ (Cat., 12, 14b18-22; cf. OI, I, 9, 18b36-19a6) Thus, the external objects reciprocate as to implication of existence with the corresponding true statement about them and thus are prior to them.’ (Cat., 12, 14b11-23)
3. The opposition between an affirmation and negation corresponds to an opposition in the external world between the objects underlying those statements. (Cat., 10, 12b6-15)
4. The correspondence of the whole structure of the external world and language for Aristotle is so that in analyzing the language he shows himself as analyzing the external world. It is in fact a very crucial and controversial dispute whether Aristotle’s philosophy in its very decisive parts is theorizing about language or about external world. In most of his important theories, he begins with discussing language. In fact, language is where he enters the discussion and, in many cases, where he finishes it. In these cases, he either does not discuss external world at all or only derives some principles or conclusions about it. In some other cases he begins from language but ends in external world.
 - a) Daniel W. Graham³ thinks that language is Aristotle’s ‘model of the world.’ He refers to ‘subjecthood’ as what formally characterizes primary substance and explains how it bases reality in Aristotle: while to be an absolute subject is equal to be fully real, to be a predicate of a subject is equal to be real. ‘Language is not merely a tool to get around in the world; it reveals the structure of the world ... the deep structure of language is isomorphic with the world... In this word, logic

³ Graham, Daniel W., *Aristotle’s Two Systems*, 1987, Oxford University Press, pp. 45-46

- can reveal connections between elements because language and the world have a form in common. He lists Trendelenburg (1846, 11-13), Gillespie (1925) and (Ackrill (1963, 78-81) as those who have the same idea.
- b) Emphasizing on the force of $\tau\acute{\iota}$ in Aristotle's statement when he says that assertions affirm something ($\tau\acute{\iota}$) of something ($\tau\acute{\iota}$) makes Peter Simpson (p. 85) to stress, in his interpretation of Jacob's theory, on the ontological aspect of Aristotle's philosophy. Jacob says that in his theory of predication, Aristotle focuses on 'things' and not words or concepts and predication is a relationship between extralinguistic entities rather than merely linguistic ones; something extralinguistic and ontological.
 - c) Quoting Ackrill ((1963, 73): 'the categories classify things, not words') and Kahn ((1978, 248): 'Aristotle never regards predication as a grammatical or linguistic relation of word to word, nor does he ever speak of subject and predicate as concepts united in judgment'), Fabio Morales⁴ says that Aristotle is not classifying predication in *Categories* but the attributes or properties these stand for.'
 - d) Graham⁵ thinks that the theory of *synonymity-homonimity* is not purely linguistic, since it is things rather than words that have these properties.

D. Relationship between thought and language

1. To a judgment of the mind, there is a spoken word that corresponds. (OI., II, 14, 23a32-33)
2. To a contrary of a judgment of the mind, there is a spoken affirmation contrary to another affirmation that corresponds to the contrary of the mentioned judgment in thought.' (OI., II, 14, 23a32-35) But if there is not a contrary judgment in thought

⁴ Morales, Fabio, Relational Attributes in Aristotle, *Phronesis*, Vol. 39, No. 3, 1994, p. 257

⁵ Graham, Daniel W., *Aristotle's Two Systems*, 1987, Oxford University Press, p. 40

which pronounces a contrary fact that is the contrary of another, the contrary of affirmation must be found in the corresponding denial.’ (OI., II, 14, 23a36-39)

3. It seems that Aristotle believes, like Plato, that in an internal discourse in thought corresponding to the external discourse in language, ‘all syllogism, and therefore a fortiori demonstration, is addressed not to the spoken word (ἔξω λόγον), but to the discourse within the soul, and though we can always raise objections to the spoken word, to the inward discourse (ἔσω λόγον) we cannot always object.’ (PsA., A, 10, 76b24-27)
4. Aristotle observes kind of similarity between perceiving, speaking and thinking: ‘To perceive then is like bare speaking or thinking (τὸ μὲν οὖν αἰσθάνεσθαι ὁμοιον τῷ φάναι μόνον καὶ νοεῖν).’ (So., Γ, 7, 431a8)
5. Allen Bäck⁶ believes that based on OI. 16a2-3; 16a9-11, each statement signifies one and only one thought. He refers to OI. 6a6-8 based on which he thinks a statement is primarily about the invariant mental language of thought.

⁶ Back, Allen, Aristotle’s Theory of Predication, 2000, Koninklijke Brill NV. P. 100