

# Philosophy of language (PHIL UA-9085)

## Aristotle's *De Interpretatione* 1-7

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# Plan for today

Aristotle's *DI* 1-7

# Aristotle's *De Interpretatione*

1.

Written marks are signs of spoken sounds.

Spoken sounds are signs of affections of the soul, which are likenesses of actual things. While written marks or spoken sounds differ among men, affections of the soul and actual things don't.

You can't say whether a noun like "man", or the concept this is associated to, by itself, is true or false. You have to put the word in a sentence! And not all sentences are true or false.

2.

No name is a name naturally.

4. the single syllables of 'animal', on the other hand, signify nothing. Nor is the 'ice' in 'mice' significant; here it is simply a spoken sound.

Every sentence is significant... [but] There is not truth and falsity in all sentences.

# Discussion

- Is the world put together in the same way that our descriptions of it are assembled? According to Aristotle, the world (what is the case) is made out of substance and properties. And in language, or at least in Greek (and English), sentences are made out of subjects (noun phrases) and predicates (verb phrases).

5.

The simple statement is a significant spoken sound about whether something does or does not hold (in one of the divisions of time).

- For any affirmation we can construct, there is a negation we can construct (and vice-versa).

6.

Affirmation is a statement affirming sth of sth. Negation is a statement denying something of sth.

## Discussion (cont.1)

- With our sentences we can say what is (not) the case:

6.

Falsity : It is possible to state of what does hold that it does not hold, of what does not hold that it does hold.

Truth : ...of what does hold that it does hold, and of what does not hold that it does not hold

- Accidental vs. essential properties.

A thing has a property accidentally if it could possibly not have had that property.

- Contingent vs. necessary truth (falsity).

Some of the statements we make are contingently true/false, some are necessarily true, some are necessarily false.

- But with language we can do more! We can construct sentences that are neither true nor false.

## Discussion (cont.2)

- We can make claims about particulars or about universals:

7.

I call universal that which is by its nature predicated of a number of things, and particular that which is not

- Claims stand in different sorts of opposition...

# What's next?

Session 17: Thursday 28 March 2024

Topic: Locke on words 1

Reading: John Locke [1690], Book III and Borges [1942]

Secondary sources: Hanna (1991), Morris (2007) ch. 1

Film: François Truffaut (1970)

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