## Swyneshed, Aristotle and the Rule of Contradictory Pairs

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Roger Swyneshed, in his treatise on insolubles (logical paradoxes), dating from the early 1330s, drew three notorious corollaries of his solution. The third states that there is a contradictory pair of propositions both of which are false. This appears to contradict the Rule of Contradictory Pairs, which requires that in every such pair, one must be true and the other false.

Looking back at Aristotle's treatise *De Interpretatione*, we find that Aristotle himself, immediately after defining the notion of a contradictory pair, gave counterexamples to the rule. Contradictories are often nowadays defined as two propositions, or statements, that cannot both be true and cannot both be false. But that is not how Aristotle defines them. Rather, for him, in a pair of contradictories, one affirms of something what the other denies of it. These definitions are not necessarily equivalent. In his study of Aristotle's *De Interpretatione*, C.W.A.Whitaker argued that immediately after introducing the notion of contradictories in ch.6, Aristotle set out, in effect, to show the inequivalence of the two definitions. In ch.7, Whitaker says, Aristotle gives examples of contradictory pairs each member of which is true; in ch.8, pairs each of which is false; and in the famous ch.9, concerning the future sea-battle, pairs each of which is true or false, but not determinately either. In a recent article, Russell Jones agrees, though he gives a different account of Aristotle’s arguments in chs.7 and 9 from Whitaker.

Thus Swyneshed's solution to the logical paradoxes is not contrary to Aristotle's teaching, as several of Swyneshed's contemporaries claimed.

Bibliography

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