Being according to Aristotle's Metaphysics Delta

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BEING ACCORDING TO ARISTOTLE’S METAPHYSICS DELTA.7
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Aristotle’s Metaphysics, Δ.7 is devoted to “being”. The main purpose of this section is to show that in ordinary language, what is said “being”, is so called in several different ways. In his attempt to clarify this important point, Aristotle introduces distinctions that are not as easily grasped as one might at first believe. For instance, commentators are particularly troubled by what “being per se” means, especially in relation to the “categories”. Some of them are also surprised to see that Aristotle leaves no room for what one might call “Existential being”. And other aspects of Aristotle’s account raise additional problems.

Given the lack of place, I cannot discuss all of the problems that readers of Δ.7 might note. However, I still hope to contribute to a more successful understanding of Aristotle’s general aim in this text. The particular questions I would like to raise regarding Δ.7 are intended to go one step further in this direction.

I. First of all, I will start by addressing the perplexing question of what the “being” which Aristotle refers to is exactly.

1. It is sometimes assumed that Aristotle’s intention in Δ.7 is to provide a set of the uses of the verb “to be”. In this regard, some commentators advance the view that Δ.7 seems to ignore the “existential” use of this verb. And although he gives a casual example of it in 1017 a 18-19 (“the not-white is said to be, because that of which it is an accident is”), Aristotle fails to identify it among the main uses of the verb “to be”. Of course, this alleged deficiency has to be admitted only if Aristotle’s claim is to distinguish different uses of the verb “to be”. Now the verb “to be”, as a linguistic term, has only two different uses: the existential use (to be *simpliciter*) and the copulative one (to be something). Although such uses are very easy to distinguish, they are not recognized in Aristotle’s Δ.7 account and, indeed, do not correspond to any proposed distinction found therein. Therefore, I am inclined to conclude that, since Aristotle does not propose as a differentiation of being in terms of the “copulative-existential” distinction, it is hard to sustain that in Δ.7 he is concerned with the different uses of the verb “to be”.

2. However, if we still ask why Δ.7 does not heed the obvious “copulative-existential” distinction, it may be fair to assume the reason is simply that for Aristotle, “being *simpliciter*” always involves “being something” and vice versa (Cf. Posterior Analytics, Π.1). So, at the bottom, the sentence including “to be” in its existential use and the one including “to be” in its copulative use both involve the two different assumptions. In both cases, the existence of something is equally assumed, as well as the fact that such a being is something. Indeed, while the copulative “to be” indicates that a being is “something”, it also involves the fact that such a thing “is”; likewise, while the existential “to be” indicates that something “is”, it also involves the fact that such a being is “something”. Nevertheless, it really does not matter if, as I believe, Aristotle is not interested in the indications given by different uses of the verb.

3. If both being *simpliciter* (*einai*) and being something (*einai ti*) are involved, whenever the verb “to be” is used, the question that matters is the following: “Is Aristotle interested in differences concerning the thing that is said to be, or is he interested in differences concerning the *existence* of that thing?” Indeed, there is plenty of room for both differences in the way of being of the thing that is supposed to exist, and in the kind of thing that is supposed to be something. In this regard, I would like to suggest that Aristotle’s claim in Δ.7 is to set out different “ways of being”, rather than to register different “kinds” of things (i.e., to divide beings into different classes). I congruently hold that Aristotle tries to reduce the ambiguity attached to all that is supposed to be and concerning the way it is supposed to be, i.e., the ambiguity of existential being or being *simpliciter*. So, if Aristotle seems to ignore existential being in Δ.7, it is simply because it always remains in question
and, furthermore, all the distinctions produced by Aristotle concern precisely what we are used to calling “existence” in one or another (albeit inexact) way. My suggestion will be tested in what follows.

II. It is time now to move to the text and to put into light the main proposals it contains.

II.1. First of all, let us remember that in order to reduce the ambiguity of being Aristotle proceeds by means of only three very general distinctions, namely: 1. (1017 a 7-30) the distinction (D1) between being \textit{per accidens} (D1a) and being \textit{per se} (D1b); 2. (1017 a 31-35) the distinction (D2) between not-being as false (D2a) and being as true (D2b); and 3. (1017 a 35-b 9) the distinction (D3) between being potentially (D3a) and being actually (D3b). Before we proceed further, I believe that it is necessary to focus on these general distinctions themselves. When reading Δ.7, commentators since Brentano (who might well have looked for the different “senses of being” according to Aristotle) immediately pick up four or five items, neglecting D2a and either holding together or taking separately D3a and D3b. They do not seem to be very interested in the above general distinctions by means of which Aristotle identifies these items. Yet, it should be recognized that the way Aristotle proceeds is as noteworthy as the result of his procedure.

Π.2. Aristotle’s criteria are immediately evident. Three couples of distinct concepts serve as criteria to differentiate being. We have to do, in the very fact, with three similar dualities. The “per se” is opposed to and has priority over the “per accidens”, like the “true” is opposed to and has priority over the “false” and like the “actual” is opposed to and has priority over the “potential”. These concepts, considered in themselves, may seem to be rather obscure and ambiguous. Indeed, most of them are clarified elsewhere: the “per se” and the “per accidens” (used in D1) are subject-matter of, respectively, Δ.18 and Δ.30, the “false” (used in D2) is the subject-matter of Δ.29 and the “potentiality” (used in D3) that of Δ.12. Nevertheless, however obscure they are in themselves, they produce perfectly clear oppositions with one another, when contrasted as it is the case in Δ.7. Consequently, we must keep these contrasts in mind if we want to understand what Aristotle means in this chapter.

II.3. If, according to this methodological principle, we take in account the three main distinctions here proposed by means of contrasted concepts, we immediately see one of their common features. Simply put: every distinction seems to have a universal character. In the case of D1, what is not being \textit{per se} is obviously being \textit{per accidens}, and vice versa; in the case of D2, what is not being as true is obviously not-being as false, and vice versa; finally, in the case of D3, what is not being actually is obviously being potentially. In short, Aristotle’s main distinctions are alternatives, the two branches being as sharply opposed as contradictory propositions.

II.4. From this point of view, Aristotle’s distinctions can be compared to Plato’s “divisions”, where some kind of being is often opposed to everything that does not belong to the same kind. But we have to refrain from going further in the comparison. The Platonic scheme of successive divisions is well known: a first large, if not universal, all embracing division is followed by a second less general one, which is indeed a further subdivision of one of the first sections obtained by the initial division; again, a third division, still less general, will take place, which only concerns one of the two sections obtained by the previous subdivision; and so on. This mode of dividing involves, as a starting point, some supreme genus that can be divided into species. It is intended to obtain, at the end, the elements we need in order to define the being that belongs to the ultimate species. I think it would be fruitless to look for the least analogy in Δ.7. Aristotle’s distinctions are strictly parallel. However, unlike Platonic divisions, any distinction could be properly taken for a further subdivision of any section of any other distinction. Therefore, what he suggests is that in terms of Δ.7 we are not dealing with different kinds of beings.

II.5. Let us suppose that D1, D2, and D3 are intended to divide things that are beings into kinds (genus or species). Then, D2, which includes not-being, could not be a subdivision of anything else. It would be, consequently, the first division, and, either D1, or D3 would be the subdivision of D2b. But, in the first case, D3 should be exclusively a
subdivision of either D1a or D1b, and, in the second case, D1 should be exclusively a subdivision of either D3a or D3b. Now, in both cases, this is impossible because both potentiality and actuality, we may assume, are compatible with both being *per se* and being *per accidens*. On the other hand, if one claims that D1, D2, and D3 divide three different supreme genus into kinds that are not subordinate each to another, one faces the same impossibility. Consequently, we may conclude that Aristotle's distinctions are not properly intended to divide into kinds any genus of beings. And, if so then, the aim of these distinctions is rather to put into light different ways of being *simpliciter*.

II.6. What is Aristotle telling us about the possible relationship between D1, D2, and D3? Significantly, he gives us very little information about that, as if it was unthinkable to subordinate one of them to another as a further subdivision of one previous section. In Δ.7, he successively introduces each of them as taking place at the same level and as being three distinctions about the same object: the portion of text corresponding to D2 and the portion of text corresponding to D3 begin with exactly the same statement ("Again, to be still indicates"...: 1017 a 31 and a 35- b 1). In some other passages, Aristotle sharply separates these distinctions. In Θ.1 (1045 b 32-33), D1 and D3 are simply given as different distinctions: "on one hand" (*men* ...) "on the other hand" (*de* ); we have the same linguistic structure in θ.10 (1051 a 34-b 2), where D1b, D3 and D2 are successively restated. In E.2, Aristotle first opposes D1a and D2 as very different distinctions (saying not simply *men - de*, but *hen men - heteron de*: 1026 a 34), and after that, he successively introduces D1b and D3 saying twice "alongside those" (*para tauta*: 1026 a 35 and b 1); the same expression also recurs in Ν.2 (1089 a 27), where D2a (not being as false) and D3a (not being potentially) are introduced after D1b (not being *per se*). Such an expression clearly indicates that according to Aristotle, D1, D2 and D3 are parallel distinctions.

II.6. However, parallelism does not mean incompatibility. For instance, being according to D1a or being according to D1b does not exclude either being according to D3a or being according to D3b. On the contrary, one way of being according to D1 necessarily involves, in parallel, one of the two ways of being according to D3 and can admit as well being according to D3a, as being according to D3b. The compatibility of D3 with D2 and probably with D1 seems to be asserted in 1017 b 2, when Aristotle states that being indicates sometimes being potentially, sometimes being actually "in the cases just mentioned" (*tòn eirèmenòn toutòn*). What are "the cases just mentioned" if they are not being as true and not-being as false (according to D2) and probably the two ways of being according to D1? Consequently, both being potentially (D3a) and being actually (D3b) are compatible with being as true (D2b) and not-being as false (D2a). On the other hand, both being *per se* (D1b) and being *per accidens* (D1a) are probably compatible with being potentially (D3a) and being actually (D3b), since in Θ.10, "being potentially or actually" (D3) is introduced after "being according to the figures of predications" (presumably D1b) and Aristotle tells us that it is said "of them or conversely" (*toutòn è tanantia*: 1051 b 1). Finally, the compatibility of D2 with D1 seems obvious, since the examples produced in order to illustrate being as true (like "Socrates is musician": 1017 a 33) are perfectly similar to the examples Aristotle gives in order to illustrate being *per accidens* (like "The man is musician": 1017 a 9).

II.7. If all these compatibilities are admitted, then, we can easily figure them out in the following manner:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>To be (as true)</th>
<th>Not to be (as false)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D2b</td>
<td>D2a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>potentially actually</td>
<td>+D3a +D3b</td>
<td>potentially actually</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>potentially or per accidens</td>
<td>I       V</td>
<td>IX                XIII</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+D3a or D1a</td>
<td></td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>per accidens or potentiality</th>
<th>D1a or D3a</th>
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<tr>
<td>actually or per se</td>
<td>II         VI       X       XIV</td>
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<tr>
<td>+D3b or D1b</td>
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| potentially or per accidens  | III        VII      XI       XV |
| +D3a or D1a                  |            |                      |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>per se or actuality</th>
<th>D1b or D3b</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>actually or per se</td>
<td>IV         VIII      XII     XVI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+D3b or D1b</td>
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It is, of course, absolutely out of the question to conceive that the compatibilities I-XVI indicate different kinds of beings. Rather, each of them points to a particular case of cumulated ambiguities. In number I, for instance, we assume both being per accidens as being potentially (or some potentiality being per accidens) and being potentially as true. And in number XVI, we assume both being per se as being actually (or some actuality being per se) and not-being actually as false. Numbers IX-XVI put into light different instances of the same eventuality which Aristotle is talking about in 1017 a 32-33, namely that not-being as false can be said of being in some other way, like being as true could be said of not-being in some other way. Numbers I-VIII are less complex instances. In each of them, being as true
is said of being in some other way. On the horizontal side of the above chart being as true can be assumed either as being potentially or as being actually. However, on the vertical side being as in “some other way” (i.e., other than “true”) can be assumed, in certain instances, to be either being potentially or being actually, and, in other instances, to be either as being per se or being per accidens. The alternative comes from the fact that being in some other way (i.e., other than as true) still involves two distinctions: being according to D1 and being according to D3. Now, if being according to D3 can be said of being according to D1 (just like it can be said of being according to D2), being according to D1 can also be said of being according to D3.

III. Thus, the peculiarity of D2 seems to be that such a distinction always involves, so to speak, being according to either D1 or D3. Consequently, it looks like a less basic distinction than D1 and D3. In any case, it seems to require being in some other way. With regard to D3, while it can sometimes be viewed as a basic distinction, it is more frequently seen as a distinction of being according to D3 and even of being according to D2. In other contexts, D3 could certainly be used to classify different kinds of things, such as: things that are only actually (like the unmoved movers of Book Λ6-9), things that are only potentially (like the infinite, according to Physics, IV) and things that are both potentially and actually (like the natural beings). Nevertheless, it should be recognized that D3 is obviously introduced here in order to differentiate between what is simply being (or not-being) in some other way (i.e., according to D1 or D2). It is, I guess, the reason why Aristotle states this distinction only at the end of Δ.7. However, what about D1?

IV. No doubt, it can be viewed as a basic distinction in virtue of its place in Δ.7. Perhaps it could also be used in other contexts to classify different kinds of things: for instance, things that are only per se (like the primary substances, according to Categories, 2 b 5-6), and things that are only per accidens (like the qualities, the quantities and the other effects of substances, according to Book Z.1). However, even if D1 is the first to be described by Aristotle, it is probably introduced also to differentiate what is simply being in some other way (i.e., according to D3), since, as we have seen before (from Θ.10, 1051 b 1), D1b can be said of being potentially or of being actually.

IV.1. Such an eventuality is easy to illustrate by means of examples. For instance, let us suppose that (1) “to be sitting”, (2) “to be a child”, (3) “to be having a position” and (4) “to be a man” are all instances of being actually. Again, let us suppose that we have to distinguish different “ways of being” rather than different “kinds of things” (i.e., genera) that are attributed to some being, substances (2 and 4) or positions (1 and 3). Since all that is said to be something is said to be in the same way, I mean actually, we need some criterion in order to differentiate the same way of being (i.e., actually).

IV.2. Now, if the distinction that D1 is supposed to make concerns various “ways of being”, this does not necessarily imply that such a distinction is made without any regard to different “kinds of things” at all. On the contrary, Aristotle keeps a close eye on them. Being per se and being per accidens cannot be distinguished if the thing that is said to be is not regularly taken for being one and the same thing and for belonging to one and the same “categorial” genus. That is, I believe this is the reason why Aristotle takes into account the “per accidens-per se” distinction, when talking about both the “one” (in Δ.6: 1015 a 16-17, 35-36) and the “same” (in Δ.9: 1017 b 26, 1018 a 5). For Aristotle, Being, One and the Same are strictly correlated.

IV.3. What is then the criterion used by Aristotle to differentiate being per se and being per accidens? In this regard, he does not clearly exhibit his criterion in Δ.7, but only gives some (poorly commented) examples of D1a (1017 a 8-22) and talks about D1b in a rather obscure and elliptic way (1017 a 22-27). As a result, the relationship he seems to state (cf. E.2, 1026 a 35-b 1; Θ.10, 1051 a 34-35:...) between being per se and the “categories” does not appear in full light. However, there is a text (in Topics, I.9) which contains the clue to the puzzle. In this text, Aristotle explains that the “predicables” (genus, proper, definition
and accident) take place in the ten genera of predication. His explanations contain the following statements:

For when a man is set before him and he says that what is set there is a man or an animal, he states what it is and signifies a substance; but when a white colour is set before him and he says that what is set there is white or is a colour, he states what it is and signifies a quality. Likewise, also, if a magnitude of a cubit be set before him and he says that what is set there is a cubit or a magnitude, he will be describing what it is and signifying a quantity. Likewise, also, in the other cases; for each of these kinds of predicate, if either it be asserted of itself, or its genus be asserted of it, signifies what something is; if, on the other hand, one kind of predicate is asserted of another kind, it does not signify what something is, but a quantity or a quality or one of the other kinds of predicate. (103 b 29-39, Pickard-Cambridge’s translation).

At the end of the above text, Aristotle opposes two ways of predicating to each other (refer to the quotations in italics): (i) something either is predicated by itself or has its categorial genus as predicate; and (ii) something is predicated by another kind of categorial predicate. I take for granted that (i) basically defines D1b (being per se) and (ii) D1a (being per accidens).

IV.4. The explanations Aristotle gives in Δ.7 concerning D1a do imply (ii). However, they are only intended to demonstrate that assertions like “the just is musical”, “the musical builds” or “the white is musical” (i.e., where something seems to be predicated to something else of the same categorial kind, say quality) are definitely cross-categorial predications, “because both attributes are accidents of the same thing” (1017 a 15-16), namely some substantial being. Aristotle’s view on “being accidentally” is congruent with his view on “accidental unity” and on “accidental sameness”. In the case of cross-categorial predication, the identity we assert could not obliterate some alterity, nor the unity we suppose some duality (or plurality). That is the reason why Aristotle naturally presents the same examples when talking about being accidentally in Δ.7 as he does when speaking about both accidental unity in Δ.6 and accidental sameness in Δ.9.

IV.5. It is still noteworthy to observe that such a criterion as (ii) presupposes a clear distinction of categorial predications. This last distinction is also implicitly assumed by (i). Consequently, both (i) and (ii) signify quality, quantity and so on. What then pertains strictly or properly to (i)? As one can see from Aristotle’s above-quoted passage, predications of type (i) have two properties: first, they not only signify quality, quantity, and so on, but also state, at the same time, “what it is” (ti esti); secondly, since they state “what it is”, they are also in position to signify a substance. Now these two properties of predications of type (i) are indicated by Aristotle in Δ.7. The second one is identified when he states that are said to be per se “all those things” (hosaper) that are indicated by the figures of predications (1017 a 23). This means: “including the substance”. In addition, the first property is underlined a little bit further when he states that in each of these predications to be indicates “the same thing” (tauto: 1017 a 27). Meaning this time: the “what it is”. — Examples of assertions corresponding to D1b, which are lacking in Δ.7, are found in the passage from Topics, I.9: “This is a man” (or “This is Socrates”), “This is a colour” (or “This is white”), “This is a magnitude” (or “This is a cubist”),...

If we accept the above, then no true difficulty remains in Δ.7 as far as D1 is concerned.

V. The question then becomes: How is it possible for some assertions to associate the indication of either D1a or D1b with the indication of either D3a or D3b? The answer is evident. In the case of the association of D1b with either D3a or D3b, the above-stated example, “This is a man”, can be compared to one of the instances Aristotle gives of substantial being that is said to be per se, either potentially or actually: “It is corn” (1017 b
8). Something can be said to be (potentially) corn, if it is not yet ripe, but also (actually), if it is ripe. Likewise, something can be said to be (potentially) a man, if it is still a very young child, but also (actually), if it is a full-grown person. Similar instances can be figured out even if we have to do with non-substantial beings, like “seeing” (1017 b 2), that can be said to be per se either potentially, if said of the sensitive faculty of seeing, or actually, if said of the perceptive operation of seeing. But seeing and the like are mostly involved in predications that indicate being per accidens: the man can be said to be seeing, either (potentially) if (say) he is not a blind man, or (actually), if he is perceiving something with the eyes. This is an instance of (D1a + D3a) or of (D1a + D3b).

VI. Consequently, how can D1 be used as a criterion to differentiate being according to either D3a or D3b? Again, the answer is evident. For instance, if we take the example of “to be potentially sitting” (or having a position) the same way of being can be differentiated as either being per accidens, if it is said of some man, or as being per se, if it is said of sitting. Similarly, to be per se a man (or sitting), can be differentiated as, either being potentially, if it is said of some child (or of standing), or actually, if it is said of this child (or of sitting itself). On the contrary, being actually (or potentially) a man and being actually (or potentially) having a position cannot be differentiated, if the former is said of Socrates (or some child) and the latter of being sitting (or being standing).

VII. Until now, I have shown what Aristotle has in mind when opposing D1a to D1b and how such a distinction is coupled with being according to D3. But the ambiguity of being still involves being or not-being according to D2. And Aristotle holds from an analytical point of view that assertions corresponding to being according to D1 + D3, either positive or negative, still indicate some other way of being or of not-being. In D2b (being as true) “to be” translated into “It is the case (that)” and in D2a (not-being as false) it is translated into “It is not the case (that)”. In other words (which will be further that clarified later one), the two translations amount to: “I hold for true (that)” and “I hold for false (that)”. However, D2 requires a more detailed explanation.

VII.1. The first clarification concerns negative sentences. Even if it is not evident in ordinary language, there is a difference between D2b (it is the case that) and being according to D1 + D3. There is also a difference between D2a (it is not the case) and not-being according to D1 + D3. As we have seen before, Aristotle himself registers these differences (1017 b 32), observing that both D2a and D2b can be indicated both in the case of negative sentences and in the case of positive sentences. For instance, we can hold for being as true what is not-being according to D1 (Socrates is not white). The differences in question are also manifested by the fact that D3a can be associated with being according to D1 (when D3b is associated with being according to D2) and, similarly, D3b with being according to D1 (when D3a is associated with being according to D2). For instance, we can hold for being actually as true (D2b + D3b) what is being potentially according to D1, meaning: “in the affairs” (as Aristotle says in Θ.10, 1051 b 2; cf. E.4,1027 b 26).

VII.2. We may assume that being as true and not-being as false, if indicated, are mostly taken for being and not-being actually. However, this does not mean that they cannot also be taken for being and not-being potentially. But let us first consider the most current instance. Does it occur whenever I hold for being as true or not-being as false what is being or not-being in some state of affairs? If yes, this would mean that being as true (or not-being as false) is indicated whenever I do (or do not) assent to some state of affairs. Now, Aristotle tells us that I can be wrong in so doing, except in some particular instances. Therefore, I can hold for false what is true and for true what is false, since what is subjectively “in my mind” (E.4, 1027 b 27) true or false can correspond objectively or not to the state of affairs. So, the question is: “Where” do we have to place being as true and not-being as false? In the state of affairs? However, this would be odd since there would be no difference at all between being according to D2 + D3 and being according to D1 + D3. Should it be thought of therefore as “in my mind”? Yet, it is obvious that being as true cannot be said without contradiction of what does not correspond to the state of affairs. Thus, being as true is said
of that which corresponds “in my mind” to the state of affairs. From that, we may certainly conclude: being as true is that state of affairs, but rather that state of affairs as actually known or as actually being in my mind. Consequently, not-being as false also corresponds to some state of affairs in my mind. It is also, in one way, that state of affairs, as actually known or being actually in my mind. However, since that state of affairs involves two things that are incompatible (for instance, the diagonal of the square and the commensurably with the side: 1017 a 35), and since these two things are “separate” (Θ.10, 1051 b 3) in the state of affairs and do not constitute one and the same being (even per accidens), they are thus also separately known. So, there is nothing that is constituted by them in my mind. Not-being actually as false “is”, so to speak, that kind of absence.

VII.3. If being actually as true and not-being actually as false is to understand in such a way, then what about being potentially as true (D2b + D3a) and not-being potentially as false (D2a + D3a)? According to what was stated above, being potentially and not-being potentially as false have to be distinguished from what is potentially true or false. In other words, they are not exactly what I mean when, ignoring the state of affairs, I say: “may be” or “may be not”. For “may be” and “may be not” mean that what I have actually in mind as potentially true could be false and vice versa, i.e., it may have no corresponding part in the state of affairs. But what I have actually in mind is being as true or not-being as false, if and only if it corresponds to some state of affairs. Consequently, being potentially as true and not-being potentially as false rather point to what I have potentially in my mind, which corresponds to some state of affairs. It is, in a certain way, that state of affairs as potentially known or as being potentially in my mind.

To sum up: being according to D2b + D3a is that potential being which is in my mind, corresponds to some state of affairs, and can be actualized to become being according to D2b + D3b. With regard to being according to D2a + D3a, it is that potential not-being which “is” also, so to speak, in my mind, corresponds to some state of affairs, and can be actualized to become being according to D2a + D3b.

VII.4. We are now able to realize that being according to D1 + D3 is a way of being of the state of the world itself, while being according to D2 + D3 is the way of being of that state of affairs in my mind. To recapitulate, let us take an example from the instance given by Aristotle himself: “to be seeing” (einai horôn: 1017 b 2). “Seeing”, as a non substantial thing, can be said to be in the world, either per se, if said of itself (D1b), or per accidens, if said of some other thing (D1a); and in both cases, either potentially, if said of the faculty of seeing (D3a), or actually, if said as the act of seeing (D3b). It is as belonging to the state of the world as the visible, either per accidens (for instance, “the son of Diarès”: De anima, II, 6, 418 a 22), or per se (for instance, the white). The son of Diarès and the white, indeed, are also in the world either actually or potentially (as the seed of Diarès and as the actual black). But, for a visible thing, being in the world is not the same as being visible. The actual white in the world (D1b + D3a) can only be potentially visible, and the potential white in the world (D1b + D3b) can be actually visible, but as black! Now, if being visible is not being in the world, it is then being as true. Consequently the potentially visible and the actually visible are only as true, i.e., as potentially or actually known in my mind.

VIII. We must go further, since what is in my mind is not the thing itself. Aristotle claims that “actual knowledge is identical with its object” (De an., III, 7, 431 a 1; cf. 8, 431 b 20) and that the faculties of knowledge are potentially their objects (8, 431 b 26-27). Now such an identity clearly means that we have in mind the forms of these objects: “it is not the stone which is present in the soul, but its form” (Ibidem). Consequently, the counterpart of some being-in-the-world, which is being as true and belongs to the soul seems to be its form. Let us again take “the visible” as an example. For instance, if the white is some actual being in the world (indicated by either D1a + D3b or D1b + D3b), then it is its visible form, either as potentially seen (D2b + D3a) or as actually seen (D2b + D3b), that is being as true. Consequently, being as true is the way of being that is attributed to the forms of the world when the world is known.
IX. I conclude with a remark about the importance of this way of being. Aristotle seems to have observed the importance of D2b in Θ.10, 1051 b 1, where, introducing being as true, he calls it “being in the strictest sense” (to de kyriōtata on). Commentators are uncomfortable with this statement, if not ready to take it for unauthentic, because, according to E.4, 1027 b 28, being as true is regarded as existing in thought rather than in things. However, form exists in both: it is in things, because form is constitutive of them, and it is in thought, because it is what is known of them. And the reason why being “as true” seems to be “being in the strictest sense”, is presumably that we truly know what is constitutive of things. In the act of knowing, what is known (i.e., actually being as true) is the form of things.

Aristotle’s metaphysical theory probably rests upon such a conviction.