

The Sense of 'in' in Aristotle's Philosophy

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A. Senses of something in something

In *Physics* (Δ , 3, 210a14-24) Aristotle distinguishes eight senses in which one thing is said to be in another thing:

1. Part in whole; e.g. finger in hand
2. The whole in its parts: 'For there is no whole over and above the parts.'
3. Species in genus; e.g. man in animal
4. Genus in species (generally: the part of the specific form in the definition of the specific form)
5. Form in matter; e.g. health in the hot and the cold
6. Event in its primary motive agent; e.g. the affairs of Greece center in the king
7. Existence of a thing centers in its end (in 'that for the sake of which' it exists)
8. A thing in place, e.g. a thing in a vessel ('the strictest sense of all')

Also in *Physics* (Δ , 3, 210b22-27) he distinguishes between three senses of 'being in' one of which is not among the above mentioned list: being in place (sense 8 above), as health is in the hot as a positive determination of it (sense 2 above) and an affection in a body. Since an affection in a body is neither a part in whole, nor a whole in part, nor a species in genus, nor a genus in species, nor a form in matter, nor an event in its motive agent, nor a thing in its end, nor a thing in place, we must consider it the 9th sense:

9. An affection in its subject

It is too strange, however, how this third sense is not among those eight senses while both are in the same page of *Physics*. It becomes even more strange when we read *Categories*

where we see the crucial role of this last sense in Aristotle's philosophy. There Aristotle distinguishes between two factors based on which he classifies beings to four classes: 'being in' and 'being said of.' The only thing he distincts this sense of 'being in' from is the first sense of our list, i.e. the sense of a part in a whole. He even does not distinguish it there from being in place, a differentiation he asserts in *Physics* (Δ , 3, 210b22-27). Nonetheless, we have implications there that:

- a) It must be differentiated from the sense (4) because it is repeatedly asserted that secondary substances are not in a subject. (Cat.,¹ 2 and 5) Thus the fourth sense in which a genus, a secondary substance, is in a species must be other than the ninth sense.
- b) It must also be different from the second sense because a quality or a quantity or generally an accident in a subject, if we are assumedly allowed to say so, is not a whole in its parts.
- c) It must also be differentiated from the senses (3), (5), (6) and (7) because no accident is either a species, a form, an event in its primary motive agent or a thing in its end.

The origin of the problem of being non-comprehensive of the senses of 'being in' in *Physics* must be somewhere in the difference between Aristotle's view in *Categories* and *Physics*: while in *Categories* he does not consider the 'being in' of quality in its subject as a part that is in, he considers it so in *Physics*: 'It is from these, which are 'parts' (in the sense at least of being 'in' the man), that the man is called white So when there are parts, a thing will be in itself, as 'white' is in man because it is in body.' (Phy., Δ , 3, 210b1-8) Whereas in *Physics* 'white,' a quality, is considered a part and its being in body is considered 'being in' of a part, it is not a part in *Categories*. (refer to *Categories*; cf. Cat.,

¹ Abbreviations used in this paper:

Cat.	<i>Categories</i>
Met.	<i>Metaphysics</i>
Phy.	<i>Physics</i>
PrA.	<i>Prior Analytics</i>
PsA.	<i>Posterior Analytics</i>

5,3a29-32) If I am right in my interpretation, we must say that the ninth sense is indeed the same as the first sense and, thus, *Physics*' eight partite classification somehow includes the sense mentioned in *Categories*.

The case is not, however, so simple. What is 'in its subject as its part in *Physics* is not the same as what is in its subject but not as its part in *Categories*. What is said to be in its subject in *Physics* is indeed the surface and not the white: 'When there are parts of a whole- the one that in which a thing is, the other the thing which is in it- the whole will be described as being in itself. For a thing is described in terms of its parts, as well as in terms of the thing as a whole, e.g. a man is said to be white because his visible surface is white; or he is said to be scientific because his thinking faculty has been trained.... In this sense, then, but not primarily, a thing can be in itself, namely, as 'white' is in body (for the visible surface is in body), and science is in the mind.' (Phy., Δ, 3, 210a30-b1)

B. Things excludes of being 'in' a subject

The following items are excluded from the things that can 'be in' a subject:

1. Primary substances.
2. Secondary substances. (e.g. Cat., 5, 3a9-13)
3. Differentia. (e.g. Cat., 5, 3a21-24)

C. Aristotle's applications of 'in'

Aristotle uses 'being in' for the following cases:

1. Qualities. (e.g. cf. Cat.)
2. Coincidents: 'For the subjects of which coincidents (συμβεβηκότα) are predicated are as many as those that are in (ἐν) the substance of each.' (PsA., A, 22, 83b26-27)
3. Elements of syllogism: 'I call that term middle which is contained in another (ἐν ἄλλῳ) and contains another in itself (ἐν τούτῳ).' (PsA., A, 4, 25b35-36) The same is said about extremes: 'By extremes I mean both that term which is itself contained in another (ἐν

ἄλλω) and that in which (ἐν ᾧ) another is contained.’ (PrA., A, 24b36-37) Thus, the relations between elements are described by ‘being in.’ As an example, Aristotle speaks such: ‘The inclusion or non-inclusion of one term in another as a whole (τὸ ἐν ὅλῳ εἶναι ἢ μὴ εἶναι τὸ δε τῷδε).’ (PrA., A, 24a13-14)

4. Verb: ‘A verb is always a sign of something said of something else. i.e. of something either predicable of or present in a subject (ἐν ὑποκειμένῳ).’
5. ‘Knowledge of the theory without experience and knowing the universal without knowing the individual included in this (το δ’ ἐν ταύτῳ καθ’ ἕκαστον ἀνονή) fail to cure.’ (Met., A, 981a21-23)
6. ‘All contraries must either be in (ἐν) the same genus or in (ἐν) contrary genera, ... good and bad are not in (ἐν) a genus but are themselves actually genera of certain things.’ (Cat., 11, 14a19-25)

D. Being in itself

A thing, Aristotle believes, cannot be in itself primarily, mainly because ‘two things would be at the same time in the same thing.’ (Phy., Δ, 3, 210b) The only case in which Aristotle agrees with ‘being in itself’ is when a thing has parts and a quality is in the part but not as a part. For example, a surface is a part of a body and white is in the surface but not as its part. It is only in such a case that we can say white is in body as in itself: ‘When there are parts, a thing will be in itself, as ‘white’ is in man because it is in body, and in body because it resides in the visible surface. We cannot go farther and say that it is in surface in virtue of something other than itself. (Yet it is not in itself though these are in a way the same thing) they differ in essence, each having a special nature and capacity, ‘surface’ and ‘white.’ (Phy., Δ, 3, 210b1-8) This is indeed the problem about the ninth sense of ‘being in’ we discuss.