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A pursuit of ontological truth in Aristotle's philosophy

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Chapter One

The Traditional Interpretation of Truth in Aristotle

The journey of seeking ontological truth begins with an investigation of the familiar. In this chapter, I investigate the traditional interpretation of Aristotle's view of truth, viz. a correspondence theory of truth. I shall begin by introducing various discussions about the concept of truth, including how Aristotle deals with the topic of truth more generally. Although the correspondence theory of truth is still open to various interpretations, there are common elements that most of the literature agrees on. For instance, in general, the correspondence relation between assertions and realities is the key point of the correspondence theory of truth. However, there is more than one way to interpret the notion of reality – which can be considered as things, facts, or states of affairs.⁹ We shall refer to the terms of truth-bearers and truth-makers to describe the correspondence relationship between assertions and realities. Furthermore, we shall examine the position of the correspondence theory of truth in the account of truth found in Aristotle.

With the support of several important passages from *Metaphysics* Θ.10, we may be able not only to interpret Aristotle's view of truth in term of the correspondence theory of truth, but also to investigate whether there is an additional view of truth in Aristotle that is being in the strictest sense as truth, or truth in the ontological sense. However, that does not mean I deny the correspondence theory of truth. Actually, in my reading, we can still find room for a correspondence theory of truth in Aristotle which has its ultimate base in the ontological reading of truth.

Therefore, following Aristotle's perspective, let us first investigate what we are familiar with, that is the correspondence theory of truth which is the traditional interpretation of truth in Aristotle.

1. Various discussions about truth

Certain philosophers argue that it is a mistake to define the concept of truth.¹⁰ For instance, A. J. Ayer (1968) sets forth the opinion that theories of truth do not focus on the definition of “true” and “false”, but merely explore conditions of truth. The correspondence, coherence, and pragmatic theories of truth would fall in this camp.¹¹ He points out that what these philosophers, who have been puzzled about truth, are seeking is not a definition of truth—nor an explanation of the use of truth—but rather a criterion of validity. The question then asked is not what we mean by truth, but rather, what is it that makes a statement true? It might then

⁹ The question of understanding states of affair will be dealt with in chapter Three. Summarily, there are at least two ways to interpret “states of affairs”: one of them is states of affairs thought or believed; while the other claims they are part of the world. These two interpretations will be later discussed in light of the relation between thoughts and things in the world.

¹⁰ Davidson, 2005, 55; Soames, 1984, 411-429; Ayer, 1963.

¹¹ Ayer, 1963, 167.

be construed as a request for the conditions of truth.¹²

Nevertheless, the concept of truth has been connected with a very wide range of issues. Many of them are related to other areas of inquiry that have been of special concern to philosophy. For instance, ethics, which can be directed towards truth,¹³ or logic, which concerns what kind of statements are logically true or false and makes sciences possible,¹⁴ as well as metaphysics.¹⁵ The different approaches and changes mentioned can all be gleaned from the following passage offered by J. L. Austin (1950):

T3:“What is truth?” said jesting Pilate, and would not stay for an answer. Pilate was in advance of his time. For “truth” itself is an abstract noun, a camel, that is, of a logical construction, which cannot get past the eye even of a grammarian. We approach it cap and categories in hand: we ask ourselves whether Truth is a substance (the Truth, the Body of Knowledge), or a quality (something like the colour red, inhering in truths), or a relation (“correspondence”). But philosophers should take something more nearly their own size to strain at. What needs discussing rather is the use, or certain uses, of the word ‘true’.¹⁶

As we can see from this passage, the notion of truth has been approached in different ways.¹⁷ For now, the truth as truth-values of assertions, tested and approved by a relation with reality, is the object of my investigation.¹⁸ In this regard, this kind of truth is generally restricted to words or sentences, rather than modes of being. Considering the key role played by the concept of truth as truth-values of assertions, the correspondence theory of truth could become a typical example that shows how the concept of truth as truth-values of assertions can logically be explained and specified by most modern scholars. Meanwhile, those modern theories hold the view of truth in the logical sense connected with objectivity,¹⁹ reliability,²⁰ accuracy,²¹ validity,²² right of assertions and statements,²³ or justifiability,²⁴ which are mainly topics about how to use the power of predication to say something correct by words. Therefore, the next topic of my investigation in this chapter is to explore the primary nature of

¹² Ayer, 1963, 167.

¹³ Schroeder, 2018.

¹⁴ Chakravartty, 2018.

¹⁵ Shieh, 2018.

¹⁶ Austin, 1950, 111–28.

¹⁷ For example, the *Oxford Handbook of Truth* offers an interesting map detailing the landscape of the theories of truth, introducing various theories in different times and from different perspectives. Apart from taking truth as a logical truth of assertions, it also discusses various ways of regarding truth as a property. As for truth as a property—excepting theories in different historical periods—it also introduces several classical theories of truth, including the identity, correspondence, coherence, and pragmatist theories. Of course, such classical theories are often modified over time, and they can be formulated in many ways.

¹⁸ I need to clarify the meaning of these terms, such as: statement truth, logical truth, and linguistic truth. Generally, statement truths are regarded as truth-value of statements. And the logical truth has more content, not just as truth-value of assertions, but also certain characters of thoughts or expressions of thoughts, such as the validity of argument and rightness of judgement. (This view can be found in Hanson, 2014, 327-339.) As long as the argument follows the criterion of logic, then this argument could be logical truth.

¹⁹ Lynch, 2009, 8.

²⁰ Williams, 1986.

²¹ Wheeler, 2019a, 12, 249, 281

²² O'Connor, 1975, 18.

²³ Alston, 1996, 241.

²⁴ Künne, 2003, 375-452; Alston, 1996, 242-244; and Williams, 1986.

the classical correspondence theory of truth.

2. Aristotle and the classical correspondence theory of truth

How is Aristotle's definition of truth explained in the light of the correspondence theory of truth? In order to deal with this question fully, we need to take a closer look at some of the fundamental passages concerning Aristotle's view of truth. As we can see, this traditional view on truth as truth-values can be found in *Metaphysics* Γ.7, Δ.7, E.4, and also in large parts of *Metaphysics* Θ.10. Meanwhile, some parts of *Metaphysics* Θ.10 imply an additional interpretation of the concept of truth which can be further clarified in terms of 'being in the strictest sense' – as we shall discuss in the next chapter. Nevertheless, the first step of our exploration begins with an investigation into the traditional interpretation of the concept of truth.

2.1 The account of truth and falsity in *Metaphysics* Γ.7

In *Metaphysics* Γ.7, Aristotle introduces the definitions of truth and falsity as such:

T4: This is clear, in the first place, if we define what the true and the false are. To say of what is that it is not, or of what is not that it is, is false, while to say of what is that it is, and of what is not that it is not, is true; so that he who says of anything that it is, or that it is not, will say either what is true or what is false; but neither what is nor what is not is said to be or not to be. (*Met.* Γ.7, 1011b24-1011b29)

According to the traditional account of truth in Aristotle, this passage introduces the idea of a true assertion matching the way things are and a false one failing to match, without making clear what feature or aspect of the world it is that an assertion either succeeds in matching or fails to match. As well, we can glean its performance from the context of the principle of non-contradiction where the opponent always asserts one and only one of the simple assertions involved in a contradictory pair of assertions.²⁵

The definition of truth reported by this passage is widely accepted as a standard definition of truth in Aristotle by most scholars. For instance, Michael Devitt (1984)²⁶ proposes that a sentence is true if and only if it corresponds to facts or reality. This is as such a plausible reading of *Metaphysics* Γ.7. Instead of the fact-based correspondence theory of truth mentioned by Michael Devitt, Wolfgang Kühne (2003) proposes that Aristotle paves the way for 'Object-based correspondence theory.' Based on *Metaphysics* Γ.7, Wolfgang Kühne explicitly argues that Aristotle presents an explanation of truth and falsity as a correspondence theory. In this case, it is obvious that on the one side, there is a belief expressed by statements, a thing which has various attributes. On the other side, whether their relations actually correspond or not, the belief is completely determined by those things.²⁷ According to the

²⁵ Wheeler approaches this passage in terms of language perspective and studies all distinguished translations, such as Ross and Owen. Wheeler has argued that these concepts are tightly linked. Some conceptions of truth and falsehood are, thus, presupposed by Aristotle's constructive arguments concerning the attributes possessed by LNC. (Wheeler, 2019a, 111.) The issue of the principle of non-contradiction will be discussed in chapter Six.

²⁶ Devitt, 1984, 27.

²⁷ Cf. Kühne, 2003, 93ff.

traditional interpretation of the view of truth in Aristotle, the correspondence theory of truth requires ‘objective and mind-independent’ facts or objects which are truth-makers that make sentences true or false. They apparently presuppose a relation of some sort between the intentional content of assertions and their real correlates, but the nature of this relation is left unspecified.

2.2 The account of truth and falsity in *Metaphysics* Δ.7

In order to fully explain the view discussed in *Metaphysics* Γ.7, Aristotle further provides some examples in *Metaphysics* Δ.7 to support his definition of truth and falsity as truth-values of statements which in turn have been widely accepted by modern commentators:

T5: ‘Being’ and ‘is’ mean that a statement is true, ‘not being’ that it is not true but false,—and this alike in affirmation and negation; e.g. ‘Socrates is musical’ means that this is true, or ‘Socrates is not-white’ means that this is true; but ‘the diagonal of the square is not commensurate with the side’ means that it is false to say it is. (*Met.* Δ.7, 1017a31-1017a35)

In this passage, we can see that Aristotle applies the notion of “is true” to describe “being”, while he uses “not true” to describe “not being”. This relationship of being and truth²⁸ is clearly presented in several statements about modes of being by means of either affirmations or negations in this passage. Moreover, Aristotle introduces the famous example that “Socrates is musical” to illustrate his view of truth as the truth-value of statements, which is the standard interpretation of the concept of truth offered by modern theorists. Following this view, truth should be seen as truth-value and focuses mainly on terms, sentences, assertions, and statements. Based on this interpretation, the question about truth and falsity in terms of being in T5 would be a logical question²⁹ rather than an ontological question.

Actually, there is more than one way to interpret T5. For instance, Mark Wheeler (2019b) introduces two different readings of this passage. The first one is an “assertion reading” and the second one is an “objectual reading.” He summarizes that the different readings each have their own supporters and supporting reasons separately. According to the assertion reading, the passage is about the use of ‘being’ equivalent to a use of “truth” that denotes an attribute of linguistic and mental affirmation and denial. Proponents of this assertion reading are Alexander of Aphrodisias, Thomas Aquinas, David Ross, Bertus de Rijk, and David Charles and Michael Peramatzis.

This linguistic interpretation has been recently criticized by a number of commentators, such as Edward Halper (2009), C.W.A. Whitaker (2019a), and Paolo Crivelli (2004). These scholars claim that Aristotle posits an objective kind of truth among the four kinds of being in his ontology.³⁰ Specifically, they claim that the whole structure of *Metaphysics* Δ.7 reveals the fundamental formulation of beings, which comprises coincidental being, being in-itself,

²⁸ Questions about the relationship between being and truth will be discussed in the chapter Two.

²⁹ Based on opinions of modern scholars, in a narrow sense, “in the logical sense” means something performed in thoughts or expression of thoughts, such as items, sentences, statements, or arguments.

³⁰ Wheeler, 2019a, 116.

being true, and potential and actual being. According to this objectual reading, the use of “being” found at T5 is equivalent to a use of “truth” that is a kind of being true predicated of mind and language independent objects. Language independent objects are real objects in the world, which have been expressed in terms of attributes by Aristotle in e.g. *Metaphysics* Δ.29 and *Metaphysics* Θ.10.

Based on his analysis of T5, Mark Wheeler has understood the term of truth as a kind of being in *Metaphysics* Δ.7. However, he still holds that Aristotle also identifies the kind of truth that belongs to assertions. Based on this view, Mark Wheeler explains that through the notions of truth or false in *Metaphysics* Δ.7, Aristotle identifies a use of “to be” that is logically equivalent to a predicate “to be true” that takes assertions as subjects. This use of “to be T” denotes an attribute of assertions, namely the one defined by Aristotle in *Metaphysics* Γ.7, the attribute of asserting that which is or of asserting that which is not. Ultimately, at least in *Metaphysics* Δ.7, true and false in terms of being can still be regarded as truth-values of assertions.³¹ Nevertheless, various explanations remain regarding how to explain this view.³²

Regardless of the position we take, it is reasonable to assume that Aristotle is concerned with a use of “being” in *Metaphysics* Δ.7 that signifies that something is true and a use of “not-being” that signifies that something is false. At the very least, it establishes a form of equivalence between “being” and “true” and between “not-being” and “false.” In this sense, Aristotle acknowledges in *Metaphysics* Δ.7 a use of “being true” which is logically equivalent to the nominal definition of truth presented in *Metaphysics* Γ.7 observed earlier.

2.3 The account of truth and falsity in *Metaphysics* E.4

After discussing the standard account of truth in *Metaphysics* Γ.7 and the formulation of truth according to *Metaphysics* Δ.7, Aristotle continues to deepen his investigation by discussing the distinction between “truth in thoughts” and “truth in things” through the use of combinations offered in *Metaphysics* E.4.

T6: But since that which is in the sense of being true, or is not in the sense of being false, depends on combination and separation, and truth and falsehood together are concerned with the apportionment of a contradiction (for truth has the affirmation in the case of what is compounded and the negation in the case of what is divided, while falsity has the contradictory of this apportionment—it is another question, how it happens that we think things together or apart; by ‘together’ and ‘apart’ I mean thinking them so that there is no succession in the thoughts but they become a unity; for falsity and truth are not in things—it is not as if the good were true, and the bad was in itself false—but in thought; while with regard to simple things and essences falsity and truth do not exist even in thought):—we must consider later what has to be discussed with regard to that which is or is not in this sense; but since the combination and the separation are in thought and not in the things, and that which is in this sense is a different sort of being from the things that are in the full sense (for the thought attaches or removes either the ‘what’ or quality or quantity or one of the other categories), that which is accidentally and that which is in the sense of being true must be dismissed.

³¹ Wheeler, 2019a, 117 -118.

³² Wheeler, 2019a, 119-120.

For the cause of the former is indeterminate, and that of the latter is some affection of the thought, and both are related to the remaining genus of being and do not indicate any separate class of being. Therefore let these be dismissed, and let us consider the causes and the principles of being itself, qua being. [It was clear in our discussion of the various meanings of terms, that ‘being’ has several meanings.] (*Met.* E.4, 1027b18-1028a8)

According to this passage, Aristotle makes two related claims: 1) “being” in the sense of being true and “not-being” in the sense of being false are about combination and separation; and 2) taken together, being true and being false are about the apportionment of a contradiction. To decipher this, we can see that, in the first place, Aristotle repeats the corresponding relation of truth with combinations and falsity with separations. Specifically speaking, truth can be reduced to combinations of terms, while falsity can be attributed to a division of terms.³³ He goes on to state that in the case of something combined, the affirmation is true and the negation is false – while in the case of something divided, the negation is true and the affirmation false. It is clear that Aristotle restricts the scope of truth and falsity under contradiction by pointing out that truth in a logical sense is the opposite of false in logical sense.

The most important statement that Aristotle further makes here is a division of truth into “truth in thoughts” and “truth in things”³⁴ by indicating that truth and falsehood are not in *things* as properties, as if e.g. the good as such were true, and the bad false, but in *thought*. We shall see later that in *Metaphysics* Θ.10 Aristotle will *affirm* that truth and falsehood are in things—apparently in a different way which requires further scrutiny. Furthermore, Aristotle postpones discussion of how true and false apply to simple things and essences to a later discussion, which we shall also find in *Metaphysics* Θ.10.. In T6, then, ‘truth in thoughts’ remains, which is logical truth that belongs to thoughts. Because this notion of truth is connected to thoughts, and ultimately depends on substance, as does accidental being, both are dismissed from the ongoing search for *primary* being that Aristotle is conducting here.

According to my interpretation, truth in things can similarly be discussed in terms of combinations. On Aristotle’s view, a true affirmation corresponds to a combination of things in the world, which are things combined in a certain way. In this case, true affirmation asserts truly that they are so combined while a false affirmation asserts a combination of things which are in fact divided. If things are divided, a true statement about them will become a negation, asserting that it is separated, while a false statement which falsely asserts the combination is the affirmation. Therefore, the concept of truth consists in correctly matching combinations and divisions in thought or utterance with combinations and divisions in things.³⁵

Moreover, Aristotle sets forth that the relevant differences among the relations of combinations and divisions introduced by a predicative assertion have to do not only with the assertion’s quantity – rather, the categories used to argue certain predicative assertions are

³³ This topic will be investigated in chapter Two concentrating on the relation of truth with reference to being in terms of combinations or separations.

³⁴ “Truth in things” can also be understood with regard to “false in things” provided by Aristotle in *Met.* Δ.29.

³⁵ Whitaker, 1996, 27.

combinations or divisions corresponding to the categories of substances and other accidents. Due to this reason, “truth in thoughts” are dependent on a thinkers’ ability to combine and divide objects in thought, while truth in things does not.³⁶ On these grounds, Aristotle distinguishes between a mode of being which does not depend on our thoughts and another mode one of being whereby true or false are truth-values of statements. Because of this, Aristotle charts a direction for future investigation that we should go –a direction revealed in the study of causes and principles of being itself, qua being. For this reason, it is said that his optimistic attitudes to modes of being as external objects which does not depend on our thoughts reflects his commitment to realism.

3. The classical correspondence theory of truth³⁷

Generally speaking, the correspondence theory of truth can be expressed by assenting to the slogan “what somebody thought or said is true if and only if it agrees with reality.”³⁸ However, how one should define the notion of “reality” remains questionable. I would like to put this question of definitions aside for now and refer to the term “truth-bearers”³⁹ and “truth-makers”⁴⁰ to describe this relationship of agreement. In this way, the correspondence theory of truth has understood truth as a relational property.⁴¹

It is worthwhile to bear in mind that there is more than one candidate to explain the content of “truth-makers” and “truth-bearers”. truth-bearers have been analyzed as sentences and assertions⁴² both in words and in mental states, while truth-makers have been studied as objects, things, states of affairs, or facts. David Charles and Michail Peramatzis⁴³ (2016) have further suggested various contents of truth-bearers and truth-makers. They argued that the primary truth-bearers are items such as statements, affirmations, denials, and assertions, or mental states such as beliefs, judgments, and thoughts. An item is therefore only characterized by the entire disjunctive phrase ‘true or false’. States of affairs or other similar external, non-mental, or mind-independent items are themselves truth-makers.

The correspondence theory of truth has experienced an internal development in which it has been analyzed and specified in a myriad of ways. Here, I would like to take the classical correspondence theory of truth as an example. Michael Devitt has summarized features of the classical correspondence theory of truth to be: (1) it holds of a sentence or proposition partly in virtue of the structure of the sentence; (2) it holds of a sentence partly in virtue of a relation

³⁶ How to interpret ‘truth in thoughts’ itself is itself a tough question, with multiple explanations. For example, Modrak identifies a propositional structure to explain “truth in thoughts”. (Modrak, 2009, 66.)

³⁷ David, 2005.

³⁸ Künne, 2003, 93.

³⁹ Alston, 1996, 7-8.

⁴⁰ Lowe, 2009.

⁴¹ Lynch, 2009, 21; Blackburn, 1984; Vision 2004.

⁴² I deal with assertions as an identical expression of propositions as statements with truth-values, which is a product of thought and is expressed by language, including written letters. See further chapter Three. There is nevertheless more than one theory about propositions. Those discussions can be found in Jeffrey; Soames, and Jeff, 2004. Nuchelmans also discussed of the theory of propositions as bearers of truth and falsity. In his opinion, understanding propositions is key. He has investigated various scholars with different views on proposition – for example, propositions divided into different levels: vocal proposition, written proposition, mental proposition and proposition in things including things as such and things as being. (Nuchelmans, 1973, 273.)

⁴³ Charles and Peramatzis, 2016.

the sentence has to reality; (3) it holds of a sentence partly in virtue of the objective, mind-independent nature of reality. This last feature is intended to capture the typical view of correspondence theorists, that a sentence is ‘made true by independent reality’.⁴⁴ These features can be used interchangeably with the terms “truth-bearers” and “truth-makers”.

With the help of the term of “truth-bearers” and “truth-makers”, there is a “truth-making” between truth bearers and truth makers.⁴⁵ A theory of truth-making is generally a theory of the relationship where “X makes Y true”.⁴⁶ It is said that traditional realist theories of truth regard truth as grounded in a relation of agreement between truth-bearers and truth-makers. However, there is more than one candidate serving as truth-makers and truth-bearers. For instance, David Armstrong (2004) argues concerning objects or entities as truth-makers by stating that:

T7: Every truth has a truth maker. The truth maker for a particular truth is that object or entity in the world in virtue of which that truth is true. [...] The truth maker is the ‘correspondent’ in the correspondence theory of truth, but with the repudiation of the view that the correspondence involved is always one-one. ⁴⁷

That which renders a truth-candidate true is prone to being called a “truth-maker.” According to this theory, no truth-maker is a fact, and all truth-makers for empirical truths are parts of the natural order.⁴⁸

Apart from the view that truth has been determined by a correspondence relation between “truth-bearers” and “truth-makers”, Trenton Merricks (2007) proposes the term of “being true” to support the correspondence theory of truth.⁴⁹ According to his view, the correspondence theory’s competitors share the same false implication, viz. that each truth is true in virtue of how it is related to some existing entity or entities.⁵⁰ We know this is false because there are some truths which are not true in virtue of being related to some existing thing which that truth is about.⁵¹ In order to resolve this false implication, he proposes the term of “being true” to describe the relation of truth and ontology, which he states is a primitive monadic property which avoids this false implication.

Confronted with this complicated situation that the correspondence theory of truth has been examined and detailed in different ways, the next step of our inquiry is to turn to the original textual foundations where we can find primary sources for the classical correspondence theory of truth that have been used to interpret Aristotle’s view of truth.

3.1 The account of truth and falsity in *Metaphysics* Θ.10

⁴⁴ Devitt, 1984, 27.

⁴⁵ This ontological implication of the “truth-maker” theory also has been observed by Horwich. 2008, 272.

⁴⁶ Horwich, 2008, 259.

⁴⁷ Armstrong, 2004, 15.

⁴⁸ Armstrong, 2004, 16.

⁴⁹ Merricks, 2007, 175.

⁵⁰ Merricks, 2007, 170.

⁵¹ Merricks makes an example that “there is no existing thing that is what that hobbits do not exist is about (in any good sense of ‘about’), and is such that being appropriately related to it is what it is for that hobbits do not exist to be true; and so it goes generally for true negative existentials.” (Merricks, 2007, 174.)

Except for the traditional account of Aristotle's view of truth as truth-value of assertions in *Metaphysics* Γ.7, Δ.7, and E.4 as investigated before, Aristotle also applies another expression in *Metaphysics* Θ.10 to express his view of truth concerning "being and non-being in the strictest sense as truth and falsity":

T8: The terms 'being' and 'non-being' are employed firstly with reference to the categories, and secondly with reference to the potentiality or actuality of these or their opposites, while being and non-being in the strictest sense are truth and falsity. In the objects (*pragmata*) is their being combined or separated, so that he who thinks the separated to be separated and the combined to be combined has the truth (*aletheia*), while he whose thought is in a state contrary to that of the things is in error. This being so, when is what is called truth or falsity present, and when is it not? We must consider what we mean by these terms. It is not because we think that you are white, that you are white, but because you are white we who say this have the truth. (*Met.* Θ.10, 1051a34-1051b10)

It is worthwhile to notice that there is more than one way to interpret the structure of this passage.⁵² Stephen Makin (2006), for instance, firstly translates it as "and third as what is in the most proper way true or false".⁵³ According to this translation, he commented that *Metaphysics* Θ.10 is concerned with a new topic: truth and falsity.⁵⁴ In his discussions, Makin accounts for this passage from the perspective of the Standard Account of truth in Aristotle. Notably, Stephen Makin interprets the concept of "being and non-being in the strictest sense are truth and falsity" as "being right."⁵⁵ According to the Standard Account of truth in Aristotle, it is affirmations and negations which are truth-bearers: the first affirming something of something, the second denying something of something.⁵⁶ Furthermore, he uses the terms "truth makers" and "truth bearers" to describe the relationship of being and truth in Aristotle.⁵⁷

Many scholars who accept the Standard Account of truth in Aristotle which reduces truth to the truth-value of assertions rely on this or a similar translation. As we have seen before, David Ross,⁵⁸ C.D.C. Reeve (2015),⁵⁹ David Charles and Michael Peramatzis (2016),⁶⁰ and Mark Wheeler (2019),⁶¹ should be counted as supporters of this reading. In this case, this priority of truth in the external world as truth-makers reported by modern theories of truth is mirrored in the truth-making role that external things hold and how their modes of being are combined or being divided. In other words, it implies that being true or false as truth-values of assertions requires or depends on modes of being that are combined or divided at the world level. Finding out how Aristotle talks about the external world and its contents will be among

⁵² My reading of this passage will be discussed in chapter Two.

⁵³ Makin, 2006, 14.

⁵⁴ Wheeler, 2019a, 214.

⁵⁵ Makin, 2006, 254.

⁵⁶ Makin, 2006, 254.

⁵⁷ Makin, 2006, 254.

⁵⁸ Ross, 1924.

⁵⁹ Reeve, 2016.

⁶⁰ Charles and Peramatzis, 2016, 101-141.

⁶¹ Wheeler, 2019a.

our following tasks.

3.2 How to interpret the term “correspondence”

Given the complications with the various interpretations of Aristotle’s view of truth as well as the task of our inquiry, let us to begin the challenge by observing how to deal with the different opinions and explanations regarding the relation between the traditional account of truth in Aristotle and the classical correspondence theory of truth.

It is widely accepted that Aristotle’s theory of truth is considered both an origin and an example of a classical correspondence theory of truth. In this regard, the truth as truth-value of assertions ‘follows’ or depends on that of the corresponding things. This kind of traditional interpretation of Aristotle’s view of truth has been applied by more than one scholar to support and specify the correspondence theory of truth. Nevertheless, Aristotle does not use the term “correspondence” in his definition. Wolfgang Künne (2003) seeks to answer this conundrum by asserting a key role played by Thomas Aquinas in this story. Aquinas explained ‘truth’ in terms of his favorite formula: ‘truth is the agreement between intellect and objects.’⁶² Aquinas was surely the most influential propagator of the correspondence formula and, more specifically, took the relation to be to the object that true thought is about. In addition, immediately after having explained truth in terms of an agreement, he goes on to define the correspondence formula with the help of Aristotle’s definitions of ‘true’ in *Metaphysics*, Γ.7 by means of the concept of “the truth of the intellect.” Here, Aquinas states that the truth of the intellect is the agreement between intellect and things⁶³, insofar as the intellect “says of that which is that it is or of that which is not that it is not.”⁶⁴

Meanwhile, that Aristotle does not apply the term of “correspondence” to his view of truth has also been observed by Mark Wheeler (2011). Wheeler implies that it is obvious that Aristotle’s definitions make no explicit mention of a correspondence relation.⁶⁵ This is confirmed not only by in *Metaphysics* Γ.7,⁶⁶ but also by *Metaphysics* E.4⁶⁷ and *Metaphysics* Θ.10.⁶⁸ The Aristotelian explanations of ‘true’ contain no word or phrase which could be translated by ‘corresponds to’, ‘squares with’, ‘agrees with’, or ‘fits.’ In order to settle this question that no proper words or phrases can be translated as ‘correspond to’, Mark Wheeler sets forth that the definition presupposes a relation of some sort between the intentional contents of assertions and their ontological correlates, but the nature of this relation is left unspecified.

“Correspondence theory” is a modern term. The issue is whether Aristotle’s theory of truth can be interpreted in terms of the modern correspondence theory. So, indeed, the fact that Aristotle does not use the actual term correspondence theory need not bother modern scholars.

⁶² Künne, 2003, 102.

⁶³ Aquinas, Truth, q.1a.1; Summa Contra Gentiles I, C.59.

⁶⁴ *Met.* Γ.7, 1011b26-1011b27.

⁶⁵ Wheeler, 2011, 67–90.

⁶⁶ *Met.* Γ.7, 1011b26-1011b27.

⁶⁷ *Met.* E.4, 1027b20-1027b3.

⁶⁸ *Met.* Θ.10, 1051b1-1051b5.

For instance, Richard Kirkham (1992) honestly admits that the correspondence theory of truth has been rooted in Aristotle's theory. Kirkham claims that there are two types of correspondence theory of truth.⁶⁹ The first of them is correspondence as correlation, while the second is correspondence as congruence.⁷⁰ Correspondence as correlation states that every truth-bearer is correlated to a state of affairs while correspondence as congruence claims that there is a structural isomorphism⁷¹ between truth-bearers and the facts to which they correspond when the truth-bearer is true. It is precisely because of this isomorphism, the defenders of correspondence as congruence argue, that the fact and the truth-bearer can be said to correspond with each other. The structure of beliefs—such as propositions, sentences, or whatever is taken to be the truth-bearer,—mirrors or pictures the structure of facts much in the way in which a map mirrors the structure of that portion of the world of which it is a map. Defenders of correspondence as correlation, however, deny that there is anything natural about the correlation between beliefs and facts. The correlation is a result of linguistic conventions, which are themselves the result of the historical development of the language.⁷²

By contrast, Mark Wheeler clearly disagrees with this view by arguing that Aristotle's definitions do not suggest anything like an isomorphism. He further points out that perhaps a more complete account of the relation between Aristotelian truth-bearers and Aristotelian truth-makers would reveal that the intentional contents of assertions and their ontological correlates are related isomorphically – however, this explanation would induce materials extrinsic to the definitions at *Metaphysics* Δ.7 where truth and falsity presuppose that the intentional content of an assertion is correlated either with what exists as an F or what does not exist as an F.⁷³

3.3 The correspondence theory- interpretation criticized

While there are many scholars who support the correspondence interpretation of the view of truth in Aristotle, certain scholars propose opposite opinions. Notably, these scholars are of the opinion that the correspondence theory of truth is not an acceptable interpretation of Aristotle's view of truth. For instance, Donald Davidson (1996) argues Aristotle does not provide entities as truth-makers to truth-bearers as required by the correspondence theory of truth.⁷⁴ Hence, Aristotle ought not to be considered as giving comfort to serious partisans of correspondence theories.⁷⁵ According to his interpretation, it is obvious that states of affairs or facts must be presupposed by a correspondence conception of truth. However, if Aristotle's definitions do not presuppose these nor rule them out, then they are not correspondence conceptions.

Blake Hestir (2013) first summarizes a standard view on Aristotle's theory of truth, which

⁶⁹ Kirkham, 1992, 119-120.

⁷⁰ Kirkham, 1992, 119.

⁷¹ Crivelli, 2004, 23. Pitcher, 1964, 10. In which Pitcher uses an example to clarify the meaning of isomorphism: like the two halves of a torn piece of paper, the parts of the truth bearer fit with the parts of the fact.

⁷² Kirkham, 1992, 119.

⁷³ Wheeler, 2011, 67–90; cf. Crivelli, 2004, 137.

⁷⁴ Davidson, 2005, 38, 47-48.

⁷⁵ Davidson, 1996, 268.

he considers to be world-dependent truth, a completely plausible way to understand truth.⁷⁶ However, the correspondence theory of truth as the standard view of truth in Aristotle, thus Hestir, faces various challenges.⁷⁷ He suggests that truth directly depends on beings by means of a likeness in the soul.⁷⁸ A likeness in the soul suggests a correspondence between external objects and mind-dependent objects. As such, the correspondence relation is not necessary.⁷⁹ Moreover, he claims that Aristotle's conception of truth does not rest upon two conditions. The first one is that there must be some ontological entity in the world like a fact to which true thoughts or statements correspond, and the second one is that there must be a specific universal dependence relation holding between truths and ontological entities.⁸⁰ Hestir argues that there is an alternative case to be made that Aristotle's conception of truth does not depend on correspondence in thoughts, statements, judgments – nor on simple, primary thoughts of in-composites like essences where truth seems to be identity of intelligible form, nor on likenesses if the content of thought is a likeness of the universal.⁸¹ According to this explanation, he concludes that Aristotle is not committed to a correspondence theory in the way some think about correspondence.⁸²

Hestir's discussion is helpful to understanding Aristotle's view of truth, since while adhering to the traditional interpretation of truth in Aristotle, he claims that there is an alternative notion of truth to be found in Aristotle, which will be further discussed in the following chapter Two. However, as I have different view of this alternative notion of truth, I am going to take a different approach from his when examining truth in Aristotle.

In light of the above considerations, it is clear that a number of contemporary philosophers have explained Aristotle from different perspectives; moreover, the correspondence theory of truth has experienced various reforms resulting from different presuppositions.⁸³ For instance, modern terms such as truth-bearers or truth-makers are used to explain Aristotle's view on truth in the light of the classical correspondence theory of truth. Of course, there are still disagreements on this traditional interpretation of the relation between Aristotle's view of truth and the classical correspondence theory of truth. In this sense, if we pick up the traditional interpretation on Aristotle's view of truth in the light of the classical correspondence theory of truth as our standpoint, then we are offered with truth as truth-values of statements, which has been investigated fully by modern theories. However, those modern theories almost never specify the contents of truth-makers that render truth-bearers true. I shall not only investigate the specific content of truth-makers in relation to truth as being in the strictest sense, so as to provide a metaphysical foundation for the correspondence theory of truth, but to also explore whether there is in Aristotle an ontological truth that is 'truth in things' over and above truth as truth-value.⁸⁴

⁷⁶ Hestir, 2013, 193-219.

⁷⁷ Hestir, 2013, 194.

⁷⁸ The relation between truth and soul will be discussed in chapter Three.

⁷⁹ Hestir, 2013, 217.

⁸⁰ Hestir, 2013, 195.

⁸¹ *Int.* 1.

⁸² Hestir's standpoint and argument will be discussed in chapter Two.

⁸³ David, 2005, 42-47.

⁸⁴ This line of argument will be further discussed in chapter Two.

4. Conclusion: the truth of statements as truth-values

Even though some scholars disapprove of this traditional account of Aristotle's view of truth that has been explained as a classical corresponding theory of truth, Aristotle's view of truth could still be in some sense a root of the classical correspondence theory of truth. The connection between the traditional explanation on the truth offered by modern philosophers, and the traditional account of truth in Aristotle, can still be positively ascertained in some sense. As we can see, the correspondence theory of truth is mainly about considering the correspondence relation between truth-makers and truth-bearers, similarly reflecting on the relation of language and things as things are. The theories about truth-makers provided by modern scholars mainly focus on correspondence relations between truth-makers and truth-bearers, instead of on things as things are. By contrast, I want to concentrate on what things are in virtue of themselves, apart from the relations between words and things.

As for why Aristotle's view of truth could be traditionally considered as a classical correspondence theory of truth by many scholars, Wolfgang Künne takes Aquinas as an example to explain why scholars are so fond of the correspondence formula. He argues that Aquinas believes the correspondence formula to be applicable to truth in what is said or thought as well as to what he calls "truth in things." Understanding this "truth in things" is a purpose of this project. To get there, it is necessary to take an alternative interpretation of the view of truth in Aristotle into account, which argues that 'truth in things' is true in an ontological sense, rather than just as truth-makers to make truth-bearers true as truth-value of assertions. After all, the most fundamental thing that Aristotle explicitly states about truth is that it is ultimately a type of being. In this case, this ontological reading of truth in Aristotle would be completely different from those modern theories considering truth as truth-values of statements, since this reading points directly to being in the strictest sense as truth.

Aristotle states in *Metaphysics* E.4 (T6): "while with regard to simple things and essences falsity and truth do not exist even in thought — we must consider later what has to be discussed with regard to that which is or is not in this sense."⁸⁵ So Aristotle himself already suggests that there is a limitation to the truth-in-assertions-and-thought-only approach. If so, there is more to say about truth than the thought-related truth just dismissed from the context of the purpose of the search of primary being. Reeve and Makin explicitly takes this as an announcement of *Metaphysics* Θ.10 and a discussion of a kind of truth not touched upon so far.⁸⁶ So we shall turn to *Metaphysics* Θ.10 in the following chapter.

In conclusion, we can note that Aristotle does not only establish a framework of statement truth in the logical sense, but also paved a way towards ontological truth. What I would like to do, based on other relevant passages considering Aristotle's alternative view of truth as being in the strictest sense, is to seek an alternative way of understanding the concept of truth in an ontological sense and further reveal the novel relation between being in the strictest sense as truth to other topics. Based on this understanding, this ontological reading of truth in some sense cannot only play the role of truth-maker that renders truth-values of assertions true, but

⁸⁵ *Met.* E.4, 1027b25-1027b27= T6 above

⁸⁶ Reeve, 2015, 392-393, Makin, 2006, 247.

also to explore whether there is any “truth in things” that has been stated as ‘being in the strictest sense as truth’.