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# ARCHE AS ENERGEIA: A STUDY OF METAPHYSICS THETA

**Jun Su**

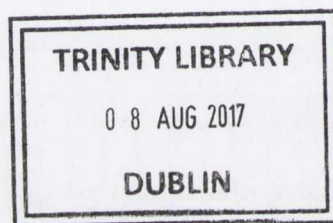
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2017





Thesis 11404

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## Summary

### The central thesis and its significance

My central thesis in this dissertation is this: Aristotle's *Metaphysics* Theta is an argumentative unity, both in itself and within the overall project of the *Metaphysics*. What unifies Theta and links it to the rest of the *Metaphysics* is the project of searching for the *archē* of *ousiai*. This dissertation will defend the above thesis by focusing on some key issues surrounding the argumentative structure of Theta. Through offering solutions to these puzzles, a clearer and more precise picture of Theta will emerge.

It is traditionally supposed by readers and critics of Aristotle that the *Metaphysics*, especially books Zeta, Eta and Theta (the so-called 'Central Books'), is addressed to the question of what it is for something, anything, to be an *ousia*. On this view, Zeta is the 'heart' of the *Metaphysics*, and Eta and Theta are subordinate to it. More specifically, according to this view, after Aristotle has addressed the question of what it is for something, anything, to be an *ousia* in Zeta, what is left to be addressed in Eta and Theta are some issues that remain unresolved in Zeta. On this traditional, *ousia*-based account of the *Metaphysics*, Theta contributes to the overall project of the *Metaphysics* by analysing the concept of *ousia* through two notions, namely, *dunamis* and *energeia*. On this reading, Theta belongs to, and can be understood as a part of, the project that the traditional view ascribes to Aristotle, that is, the project of searching for *ousia*. The aim of this dissertation is to examine some key issues regarding the structure of Theta, and, in particular, to show that the traditional view fails to do justice to the argumentative structure of Theta.

### There is a continuous line of argument in Theta

A major claim of this study is that Theta is an argumentative unity. That is, there is a continuous line of argument in Theta. This is, however, not how Theta is generally read in

the current scholarship. A considerable amount of effort has been dedicated to clarifying the argumentative structure of Theta 1-6 and to addressing some particular issues in Theta 7-9. However, with the exception of Menn (ms.), no other critic carefully examines the unity and coherence of the argumentative structure of Theta. Through a careful reading of the text, and a critical engagement with the current scholarship, this study shows that the line of argument of Theta can be summarized as follows: In Theta 1-6, Aristotle employs the *dunamis-energeia* schema as a means of, first, analysing *dunamis kata kinēsin*, and then, by extending the schema, uses it to analyse the concept of *ousia*. In this way, Theta 1-6 is preparatory for searching for the *archē* of *ousiai*. In Theta 7 and 8, Aristotle searches for the *archē* of *ousiai* in two ways: (1) by searching for the *dunameis* of *ousiai*; and (2) by searching for the *energeiai* of *ousiai*. The first approach, as Aristotle shows in Theta 7, cannot reach the desired *archē*. Eventually, however, in Theta 8, through addressing the priority of *energeia* over *dunamis* in respect of *ousia*, Aristotle demonstrates the possibility of reaching the desired *archē*. In Theta 9, Aristotle further clarifies some important features of the desired *archē* by revealing the teleological dimension that he has already, implicitly, assumed in Theta 7 and 8.

This line of argument is not difficult to state, but it requires considerable effort to defend. This task will be addressed in the individual chapters. Before we go into the detail of each chapter, let me summarily indicate how this line of argument supports the *archē*-based reading of Theta. On the *archē*-based reading of Theta, the central aim of Theta is to examine whether *dunamis* and *energeia* can lead us to the desired *archē*, that is, the *archē* of *ousiai*. Aristotle first invokes the twin notions, *dunamis* and *energeia*, to analyse the concept of *ousia*. He then initiates the search for the desired *archē* by searching for both the *dunameis* of *ousiai* and the *energeiai* of *ousiai*. Finally, Aristotle reveals a way of reaching the desired *archē* by searching for the *energeiai* of *ousiai*.



## Acknowledgements

My first thanks go to Prof. Vasilis Politis, who was my thesis supervisor. Through conversations with him, I learned an enormous amount about Aristotle and Plato. Most importantly, he showed me how to do philosophy by reading Aristotle and Plato.

I thank all the members of The Trinity Plato Centre, in particular, Prof. John Dillon for his encouragement and guidance, and Pauline Sabrier, Peter Larson, Keith Begley, Nilufer Akcay and John Nugent for their friendship. I must also thank Pantazis Tselemanis for not only teaching me Greek but also showing me an exemplary way of doing research.

I thank Prof. Minli Nie, Wei Liu and Lian Zhou at Renmin University of China for their constant support and guidance over many years.

I thank my friends both in China and aboard for their friendship. They include: Li Zhang, Tiegen Sun, Wei Feng and Chen Liang.

I thank the Newman Educational Trust, the Department of Philosophy at Trinity College Dublin, China Scholarship Council and Irish Research Council for making my study financially possible.

Last but not least, I thank my mother and sisters for encouraging me to pursue a scholarly life, and my wife Xinghua for her support, kindness, patient and love.

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Table of Greek Terminology

In this dissertation, I leave some key Greek terms transliterated rather than translated into English. I have two reasons for doing so. First, there are so many different English translations for these terms in current scholarship. To better understand Greek terminology and understand the secondary literature, it is beneficial, in my opinion, to always have the original Greek in mind. Secondly and more importantly, some of the Greek terms cannot be satisfactorily translated into English. For example, ἐνέργεια can be taken to mean either “actuality” or “activity”, and κυρίως can mean either “in a well-established sense” or “strictly”. In these and other cases, instead of giving seemly uncontroversial translations, I give my preferred translations but at the same time I also want readers to decide themselves.

I have collected some of the current translations for these terms in the table below. I hope readers can consult the translations in the table while reading my dissertation.

| Greek terms | Transliteration | English Translations                             |
|-------------|-----------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| ἀρχή        | <i>archē</i>    | principle; origin; beginning; starting-point     |
| αἴτιον      | <i>aition</i>   | explanation; cause                               |
| δύναμις     | <i>dunamis</i>  | capacity; potentiality; power; being-in-capacity |
| ἐνέργεια    | <i>energeia</i> | actuality; activity; being-in- <i>energeia</i>   |
| οὐσία       | <i>ousia</i>    | primary being; substance; entity                 |
| κίνησις     | <i>kinēsis</i>  | change; motion; movement                         |
| κυρίως      | <i>kuriōs</i>   | in a well-established sense; strictly            |



# Introduction

## 1. The aim and central thesis of this dissertation

My central thesis in this dissertation is this:

*Aristotle's Metaphysics Theta is an argumentative unity, both in itself and within the overall project of the Metaphysics. What unifies Theta and links it to the rest of the Metaphysics is the project of searching for the archē of ousiai.*

This dissertation will defend the above thesis by focusing on some key issues surrounding the argumentative structure of Theta. Through offering solutions to these puzzles, a clearer and more precise picture of Theta will emerge.

Let me briefly clarify, at the outset, what I have in mind in claiming that the project of Theta is to search for the *archē of ousiai*. There are three requirements for this project: ultimacy, universality and transitivity. First of all, the concept of *archē* is explanatory, that is, if A is an (the) *archē* of B, then, A is explanatory of B. When Aristotle characterizes the project of the *Metaphysics* as the search for the *archē* of all things (e.g., 982a8-10), the very concept of *archē* is addressed to, precisely, the possibility of an ultimate explanation (i.e., the ultimacy requirement). In other words, searching for the *archē* of all things requires searching for the first principle of all things, i.e., something that is not itself subject to further explanation (cf. 982b2-4). Secondly, since the desired *archē* is the *archē* of all things rather than of one kind of thing as opposed to another, it must also be universally explanatory. That is, each and every thing must be explanatorily related to the desired *archē* (i.e., the universality requirement). Thirdly, if A is an (the) *archē* of B, then, A must explain B in precisely that respect in which A and B are related. It follows from this that

if A is an *archē* of B, in a certain respect, and B is an *archē* of C, in the same respect, then A should be able to explain C in that very respect. In other words, the concept of *archē* that we are looking for must be transitive (i.e., the transitivity requirement). This requirement, I shall argue, emerges out of Aristotle's argument that the *dunameis* of things are *non-transitive* – that is, it is not the case that if A is *dunamei* B and B is *dunamei* C, then A is *dunamei* C – whereas the *energeiai* of things are *transitive*.

After introducing the three requirements for the project of searching for the *archē* of all things, I shall turn to Aristotle's account of the relation between all things and primary things, namely, *ousiai*. Here I shall argue that, for Aristotle, searching for the *archē* of all things is ultimately reducible to searching for the *archē* of *ousiai* (cf. 1071a34-35).

If the view articulated above is correct, then the central aim of Theta, I shall argue, is to examine whether the desired *archē* of *ousiai* can be reached through an analysis of *dunamis* and *energeia*.

## **2. How much unity should be attributed to the *Metaphysics*?**

In this dissertation, especially in the last chapter, I try to clarify the basic project of the *Metaphysics*. In so doing, it seems that I owe readers an account of how much unity I have attributed to the *Metaphysics*. After all, it is by no means clear that all fourteen books of the *Metaphysics* are intended by Aristotle to have been transmitted in the form that we have them today. The clearest examples against a unitarian reading of the fourteen books, one might argue, are little Alpha and Kappa. With regard to the former, it is very unusual to have this book title after Alpha. Indeed, this phenomenon is so unique that no similar title can be found in the rest of ancient Greek literature. Furthermore, Kappa cannot be Aristotle's intended book given the fact that it consists of two parts which repeat, nearly word for word, what he says elsewhere: the first part is a short version of Beta, Gamma,

Epsilon, and the other is a summary of some books of the *Physics*. These two examples are so obvious that any scholar who wants to address ‘the problem’ of the *Metaphysics* owes readers an explanation of how he or she can take the fourteen books of the *Metaphysics* as a unity.

In view of this, I will, in what follows, provide an explanation and a justification for my approach. In my view, two considerations are relevant here: the first is the internal textual references which one book of the *Metaphysics* makes to another; the second is the connection of the thought. Let me clarify a little bit more. My general principles in reading the *Metaphysics* as a unity are two: first, I will show that all books of the *Metaphysics* except little Alpha and Kappa belong together based on a careful examination of the internal textual references. The second principle concerns the unity and coherence of thought. Suppose that not all the books of the *Metaphysics* belong to a single piece of work, still I think that we can reasonably talk about the basic project of the *Metaphysics* if there is sufficient evidence to establish such a project, and if there are no other texts that are incompatible with the established basic project. On the second principle, I think that even if little Alpha and Kappa are not part of the *Metaphysics*, they are still compatible with what Aristotle says in the other books.

Based on these two principles, I will argue that a basic project of the fourteen books can indeed be established. In this section, I will only address the first principle. The justification of second principle will be carried out in detail in the last chapter of my dissertation. To argue that the fourteen books of the *Metaphysics* except little Alpha and Kappa have some textual unity, I gather some textual evidence. It should be clear, however, that what I will do in what follows cannot do justice to all of the complexities of the question at issue. For I will not provide a complete and systematic account of all the internal references Aristotle makes in those books. I will only list some of them which I



take to be sufficient for my task. Before doing so, let me briefly anticipate what I will argue in Chapter Six.

### **The argumentative unity of the *Metaphysics***

In my view, even though Aristotle gives several different descriptions of what the basic project of the *Metaphysics* is about, all those descriptions are reducible to two projects: searching for *ousia* and searching for the *archē* of *ousiai*. The former project can be understood as a preparation for, and hence a part of, the latter project. What unifies these two projects is Aristotle's search for *archē*, or more specifically, the *archē* of *ousiai*. It is fair to say that the term, *archē*, for Aristotle, has at least two meanings. When *archē* is construed in terms of ontological dependence, to ask what *archē* is amounts to asking what *ousia* is, whereas when *archē* is construed in terms of explanatory dependence, to ask what *archē* is amounts to asking what is the ultimate explanatory *archē* among *ousiai*. In other words, it is precisely the twofold meaning of the term *archē* that allows Aristotle to unify these two projects into a single project. In this way, it lays the foundation for the argumentative unity of the *Metaphysics*.

### **The textual unity of the *Metaphysics***

1. Alpha is an introduction of the subject matter which Aristotle wants to address in the subsequent books, that is, a study of *archē*. This is clear even from the first two chapters of Alpha. At the end of the second chapter, Aristotle says: 'we have stated, then, the nature of the science we are seeking, and the aim of our concern and of our entire inquiry'.

2. Little Alpha refers to no other books, and is not referred to in any other books. The authenticity of Little Alpha is accepted by all critics.



3. Beta refers back to Alpha at 995b4-6 ('the objects discussed in our introduction'), 996b8-10 ('our previous description of the sciences') and 997b3-5 ['in our first discussion of them (sc. form as being both causes and substances)'].

Before moving on to Gamma, I would like to make a very short comment: Beta and Delta are particularly important in our understanding of the textual unity of the *Metaphysics* in the sense that the later books rely heavily on them. Beta provides the difficulties (*aporiai*) that are addressed in the later books; Delta provides initial analyses of some key notions on which the relevant discussion of the later books is based. In this way, these two books represent a sign of the unity of the *Metaphysics*. However, not all later books refer to these two books explicitly. Later books that clearly refer to Beta are:

4. Gamma refers back to Beta at 1004a31-34 ('this was one of the problems we listed').

5. Iota refers to Beta at 1053b10 ('as we did in the discussion of difficulties').

6. Mu refers back to Beta at 1076a39-b1 ('in our discussion of difficulties'), 1076b39-1077a1 ('to solve the difficulties raised in our list of problem') and 1086b15-16 ('in the discussion of the difficulties').

Up to now, five books are linked by internal reference: Alpha, Beta, Gamma, Iota and Mu.

7. Epsilon contains no formal reference to the problems of Beta. However, as Ross points out, the connexion between 'Epsilon and Alpha, Beta and Gamma is set at rest by the fact that the first part of Kappa, which is certainly very old and may well be a pupil's notes of a course of lectures by Aristotle himself, is a continuous parallel treatment of the topics discussed in Beta, Gamma and Epsilon' (1924, p. xviii).

Like Beta, Delta is also referred to in many other books. In general, there are two ways to refer to Delta in the *Metaphysics*: the first way of referring to Delta is 'the various senses of terms (*pari tou posachōs*)' (e.g., Epsilon 1028a4-5; Zeta 1028a11; Iota 1052a15-

16); and the other is 'we have determined elsewhere (*en allois*)' (e.g., Theta 1046a5-6; Iota 1055a2; 1055b6-7; 1056b34-1057a1). Later books that clearly refer to Delta are:

8. Zeta refers back to Delta at 1028a10-11; Theta refers back to Delta at 1046a5-6 and 1049b4; Iota refers back to Delta at 1052a15-16.

After listing the references to Beta and Delta, we have one continuous group of books: Zeta, Eta, Theta. They are considered by all critics to be continuous. Two signs can support this claim. First, there are connecting particles at the beginning of Eta and Theta which indicate that these three books should be read continuously. Secondly, Zeta refers forward to Eta (1037a20), Eta begins with a summary of Zeta, and Theta refers back to Zeta in language that implies a close connexion (e.g., 1049b27-28: 'we have stated in our discussion of substance that everything which is being generated is being generated from something and by something'). Furthermore, Iota also refers back to Zeta at 1053b17 ('in our discussion of substance and of being').

Up to now, we have ten books linked by internal references: Alpha, Beta, Gamma, Delta, Epsilon, Zeta, Eta, Theta, Iota and Mu.

9. Lambda refers back to Theta 8 at 1072a4. However, some critics disagree with this view. For example, Ross (1924, p. xxvii) thinks that 'now to regard potency as prior to actuality is in one sense right and in another sense not right; and we have already stated how this is so'. In his view, 1072a4 refers back to Lambda at 1071b22-26 rather than to Theta 8. On this reading, Lambda refers to no other books of the *Metaphysics*. This reading, however, is not convincing: 1071b22-26 does not say in which sense potentiality is prior to actuality and in which it is not; rather, this topic is addressed in detail in Theta 8.

10. Nu 2 1090a13-15 and 1090a28 refer back to Mu 3.

The upshot of the above textual examination is that the twelve books of the *Metaphysics* can be read as a unity. Lastly, let me say a few words about little Alpha and Kappa. As mentioned before, the authenticity of little Alpha is accepted by all critics, and

more importantly, it can be read, as has been pointed out by many critics, as an alternative introduction, though no better than Alpha, to the subject of the *Metaphysics*. Like little Alpha, Kappa is not referred to in any other books (see also Ross, 1924, p. xxv). However, unlike little Alpha, the authenticity of Kappa is controversial. The textual status of Kappa, however, does not undermine my unitarian reading of the *Metaphysics*. For Kappa is heavily based on some other Aristotelian texts. Its first part, 1059sa18-1065a26, is a shorter version of Beta, Gamma and Epsilon; and its second part, 1065a26-1069a14, contains some extracts from *Physics* Beta, Gamma, Epsilon.

To conclude, there are only two books in the *Metaphysics* which do not refer to, and are not referred to in, any other books. Other books of the *Metaphysics* can be read as a unity based on a careful examination of the internal textual references. Furthermore, if we take a philosophical approach, even these two books can be read as part of the basic project, if these two books do not contradict what Aristotle says regarding the question of what the basic project of the *Metaphysics* is.

### **3. Is the concept of *archē* essentially explanatory?**

Critics might get the impression that my reading of Aristotle's conception of *archē* needs some further clarification. For some critics might wonder whether this conception is essentially explanatory or not; after all, one basic meaning of *archē* is beginning, and a beginning, one might argue, does not necessarily have any explanatory force. To respond to this question, one passage of the *Metaphysics* needs to be carefully examined. For in this passage Aristotle takes the concept of *archē* as extensionally overlapping with that of *aition*, and this seems to imply that the concept of *archē* is essentially explanatory. In this passage, we read:



[Text 1] Causes (*aitia*) are also called in the same number of ways; for every cause is an origin. (*Metaphysics* Delta, 1013a16-17; trans. Kirwan)  
ἰσαχῶς δὲ καὶ τὰ αἷτια λέγεται· πάντα γὰρ τὰ αἷτια ἀρχαί.

After listing six senses of *archē* and before concluding this chapter, Aristotle adds the above comment. It seems that this text confirms my reading, that is, the concept of *archē* is essentially explanatory. For these two concepts have, to use a modern terminology, the same denotation. As Apostle puts it, ‘the two terms have the same denotation; that is, what is a cause is a principle, and conversely’ (1966, p. 296).

There are, however, some critics who do not read the text in the same way as I do. Basically, they think that every *aition* is an *archē*, but it might not be the case that every *archē* is also an *aition*. It is clear that these two different readings hinge on different readings of the Greek particle, γάρ. On my reading, γάρ is explicative rather than justificative. The other reading, however, takes it to be the other way round. The other reading is clear from Kirwan’s commentary on this passage. He writes: ‘even so, from the fact that every cause is an origin it does not follow that two words apply to the same things, and in fact nothing under “cause” in Delta 2 corresponds with e.g. the second sense of “origin”’ (1993, p. 123). Two things need to be considered here:

With regard to his reading of [Text 1], were the first sentence of the text not there, his reading might be worth considering. However, given Aristotle has explicitly said that *aition* are said in the exact same number of ways, the alternative reading is not plausible. For if γάρ is used justificatorily as Kirwan thinks it is, then the second sentence would contradict the first sentence. Hence, the use of the particle, γάρ, should be understood explicatively.

With regard to his comment on how the senses of *archē* correspond to those of *aition*, his comment is not convincing, either. The second sense of *archē* can be interpreted

as ‘the final cause’ (‘the point from which each thing would come to be most satisfactorily’, trans. Kirwan).

In a similar way, Ross also questions the correspondence between the senses of *archē* in Chapter One and the senses of *aition* in Chapter Two. As he points out, ‘only the fourth sense (sc. the efficient cause) here recognized coincides with one of those recognized in A.3. The material, formal, and final principles, however, find a place in the rough list he gives at the end of the chapter (1013a20, 21)’ (1924, p. 290). It is worth pointing out that even though Ross doubts the correspondence, he does not question the extensional overlap of the two concepts, namely, *archē* and *aition*. As he writes, ‘sometimes Aristotle distinguishes *archē* from *aition* as being the first in a series of causes (*De Gen. et Corr.* 324a27, a. 994a1) but much more often they are treated as synonymous’ (p. 290).

In my view, however, all the senses of *archē* that Aristotle listed in the first chapter of Delta can be analysed through his more famous four classifications of the causes (cf. Alexander, p. 16). Below is how I read the examples of Delta 1.

The first example belongs to the formal cause (‘That part of a thing from which one would first move; for example, of a line or a road, there is a principle from which one moves in one direction, also another principle from which one moves in the contrary direction’). The second example corresponds to the final cause (‘It means that from which each thing would best be generated; for example, in learning, sometimes we should not begin from what is first and the principle of a thing, but from what one would learn most easily’). The third example is an example of the material cause (‘That from which as a first constituent a thing is generated’). The fourth example is an example of the efficient cause (‘The first from which, not as a constituent, a thing is generated, or the first from which motion or change by nature begins; for example, a baby is generated from its father and mother, and a fight from abuse’). The fifth also is an example of the efficient cause (‘That

in accordance with whose choice that which is in motion moves or that which is changing changes'). The sixth is an example of the material cause ('That from which a thing is first knowable is also said to be a principle of the thing, for example, the hypotheses in demonstrations').

Some critics might ask: If these two terms can be used interchangeably, then why does Aristotle even bother to have two separate chapters, one on *archē*, the other on *aition*? Ross thinks 'that the chapter (sc. chapter two) belongs originally to the *Physics* is suggested by the fact that the classification of the senses of *aition* does not follow that of the sense of *archē*, though Aristotle has said in ch. 1 that ἰσαχῶς ... λέγεται (1013a16). Bz. (Bonitz) thinks that the reference to *aitia* in ch. 1 makes ch. 2 superfluous, and that it is an interpolation from the *Physics*' (p. 292).

Ross' comment, however, is misleading. In my view, these two chapters differ only in terms of the divisions. This is related to the fact that those two terms, *archē* and *aition*, have different meanings, even though they have the same denotation. In fact, Aristotle does provide some reasons for analysing these two concepts differently. One passage in Gamma is especially important for us to understand their difference. In this passage, we read:

**[Text 2]** Suppose it true, then, that that which is and that which is one are the same thing – i.e. one nature – in that each follows from the other as origin and cause do, not as being indicated by one formula. (*Metaphysics* Gamma, 1003b22-25; trans. Kirwan)

εἰ δὴ τὸ ὄν καὶ τὸ ἓν ταὐτὸν καὶ μία φύσις τῷ ἀκολουθεῖν ἀλλήλοις ὥσπερ ἀρχὴ καὶ αἷτιον, ἀλλ' οὐχ ὡς ἐνὶ λόγῳ δηλούμενα.

In this passage, Aristotle thinks that *archē* and *aition* are not 'indicated by one formula' (1003b24-25). Before addressing this phrase, it is also worth noting that **[Text 1]** can also support our view that *archē* and *aition* can be used interchangeably since Aristotle



says that *archē* and *aition* are the same and are of one nature in the sense that they follow each other.

What does Aristotle mean by saying that these two notions are not ‘indicated by one formula’? Clearly, here *logos* does not mean definition. For according to Aristotle, being and unity have no definition (cf. also Apostle, 1966, p. 282). To understand Aristotle’s view, Alexander’s and Aquinas’ commentaries are crucially relevant.

[Text 3] Principle is spoken of insofar as it is primary relative to that whose principle it is, and insofar as the things whose principle it is proceed from it, while cause is spoken of insofar as that whose cause it is is no account of it; that from which (τὸ ἐξ οὗ) is different from that on account of which (τὸ δι’ οὗ). (Alexander’s Commentary on the *Metaphysics*, 247.13-15; trans. Dooley)

ἡ μὲν γὰρ ἀρχὴ καθὼ πρῶτόν ἐστι τοῦ οὗ ἐστὶν ἀρχή, καὶ καθὼ ἐξ αὐτοῦ τὰ ὧν ἐστὶν ἀρχή, τὸ δὲ αἴτιον καθὼ ἐστὶ δι’ αὐτὸ τὸ οὗ αἴτιον· ἄλλο δὲ τὸ ἐξ οὗ ἐστὶ καὶ ἄλλο τὸ δι’ οὗ)

[Text 4] Now it should be noted that, although a principle and a cause are the same in subject, they nevertheless differ in meaning; for the term principle implies an order or sequence, whereas the term cause implies some influence on the being of the thing caused. (Aquinas’ Commentary on the *Metaphysics*, Section 751)

In [Text 3], the difference between *archē* and *aition* is formulated as the difference between ‘from which’ (τὸ ἐξ οὗ) and ‘on account of which’ (τὸ δι’ οὗ). It is worth noting that even though these two terms have different meanings, their denotations, according both Alexander and Aquinas, are the same.

The above discussion shows that Aristotle uses these two concepts, *archē* and *aition*, interchangeably, and the concept of *archē* is essentially explanatory. That is, if A is an (the) *archē* of B, then A is explanatory of B in some respect. With regard to our initial question, that is, that one meaning of *archē* is beginning, and a beginning does not necessarily imply explanation, I would like to say that this may sound strange to our

modern ears, but may well be what Aristotle believes. Thoroughly addressing this question goes beyond the scope of the present study, but I think that enough has been said for now and this is sufficient for my task.

#### **4. Why is the study of *ousia* subordinated to the study of *archē*?**

Some critics might ask why I take the study of *ousia* to be subordinated to the study of *archē*. After all, it might be the case that Aristotle is pursuing both ontology, i.e., the study of *ousia*, and the search for the *archē* simultaneously, and of equal standing, rather than subordinating one of these aims to the other.

Let me clarify what I mean by the phrase ‘the study of *ousia* being subordinated to the study of *archē*’. It means that the latter, ‘the study of *archē*’, is a conceptually wider notion than the former, ‘the study of *ousia*’. The term, *archē*, for Aristotle, has at least two meanings: it can refer to what is ontologically independent; it can also refer to, more generally, what is explanatorily independent. Since the latter concept is a broader notion, it includes, but is not equivalent to, the former notion. It should be noted that, this phrase, ‘the study of *ousia* being subordinated to the study of *archē*’, does not imply that the study of *ousia* is any less important; it only means that this study is not self-standing but, ultimately, serves a wider purpose.

There are two textual reasons and one philosophical reason for my claim. The philosophical reason will be provided in Chapter 6. The two textual reasons are as follows: the first textual reason is to better understand Aristotle’s description of his project in the *Metaphysics*; the second one is to consider how he describes the project of the *Metaphysics* in his other works.

With regard to the first, it is worth noting how often Aristotle talks about the study of being *qua* being or the study of *ousia* in the *Metaphysics*. It turns out to be very surprising to many critics that Aristotle speaks of the study of being *qua* being or the study

of *ousia* very rarely outside Gamma. In fact, there are only few places where Aristotle speaks of the study of being *qua* being or the study of *ousia*: they are Epsilon 1 and Zeta 1 respectively (and in the short version of Gamma and Epsilon in Kappa). In contrast, Aristotle talks about a science of *archē* repeatedly. This should give us some reason to reconsider the traditional, *ousia*-based reading of the *Metaphysics*.

Historically, since Brentano published his well-known book, *On the Many Senses of Being in Aristotle*, in 1862, most modern critics attempt to understand the basic project of the *Metaphysics* by analysing the first sentences of Gamma, where Aristotle says that ‘there is a science which investigates being *qua* being and what belongs essentially to it’ (1003a21-22). It should be noted, however, that Aristotle does not begin his discussion of the science he is searching for there, but, on the contrary, much earlier. It is worth noting that at the end of the second chapter of the first book of the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle already says that: ‘we have stated, then, the nature of the science we are seeking, and the aim of our concern and of our entire inquiry (983a21-23)’. It is clear from these two chapters that this science is exclusively about *archē* and *aition*.

With regard to the second textual reason, it should be noted that, outside the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle never describes the subject matter of wisdom as being *qua* being, he always describes it as a study of eternal, divine, unmoved and immaterial beings, which is the subject matter of the study of *archē*. The following texts are relevant in this regard: *Physics* Alpha 1, 192a34-b2; *Physics* Beta 2, 194B9-15; *Physics* Beta 7, 198a27-31; *De Caelo* Gamma 1, 298b19-20; *On Generation and Corruption* Alpha 3, 318a5-6; *De Anima* Alpha 1, 403b11-16; *De Motu Animalium* 6, 700b8-9; *Nicomachean Ethics* Zeta 7, 1141a34-b7; *Magna Moralia* Alpha 34, 1197b7.

These two textual observations, in conjunction with a philosophical analysis of the basic project of the *Metaphysics*, which will be carried out in Chapter 6, should provide us



sufficient reason to think that an *archē*-based reading of the *Metaphysics* is on the right track, and the study of being or of *ousia* is subordinated to the study of *archē*.

## 5. The traditional, *ousia*-based account of Theta and its shortcomings

It is traditionally supposed by readers and critics of Aristotle that the *Metaphysics*, especially books Zeta, Eta and Theta (the so-called ‘Central Books’), is addressed to the question of what it is for something, anything, to be an *ousia*. On this view, Zeta is the ‘heart’ of the *Metaphysics*, and Eta and Theta are subordinate to it. More specifically, according to this view, after Aristotle has addressed the question of what it is for something, anything, to be an *ousia* in Zeta, what is left to be addressed in Eta and Theta are some issues that remain unresolved in Zeta.

On this traditional, *ousia*-based account of the *Metaphysics*, Theta contributes to the overall project of the *Metaphysics* by analysing the concept of *ousia* through two notions, namely, *dunamis* and *energeia*. It is for this reason that Theta is taken to be a *further* contribution to the science of *ousia*. For example, most critics think that by introducing these twin notions in Theta, Aristotle is primarily concerned with resolving the difficulty of the unity of *ousia*, since *ousia* has been understood as consisting of two elements, namely, matter and form. On this reading, Theta belongs to, and can be understood as a part of, the project that the traditional view ascribes to Aristotle, that is, the project of searching for *ousia*.

The aim of this dissertation is to examine some key issues regarding the structure of Theta, and, in particular, to show that the traditional view fails to do justice to the argumentative structure of Theta. There are both philosophical and textual reasons to question the traditional, *ousia*-based account of the *Metaphysics*, in general, and of Theta, in particular.

One thing that needs to be clarified is whether Aristotle is only or primarily concerned with searching for *ousia*, given that he also describes the project of the *Metaphysics* as searching for *archē* and *aition*. Generally speaking, to ask what an *ousia* is is to ask what is ontologically independent, whereas to ask what an *archē* or *aition* is is to ask, more generally, what is explanatorily independent. It is not immediately clear whether these two searches are equivalent, and, if so, how they are related. Critics who are committed to the traditional view, I shall argue, owe us a satisfactory explanation of this.

It is not clear that the traditional view can accommodate certain parts of Theta. This is especially true of Theta 8 and 9. In Theta 8, Aristotle argues that *energeia* is prior to *dunamis* in three respects – namely, in *logos*, in time and in *ousia*. It is clear that this priority claim contributes to the search for *archē*, because if X is prior to Y in *ousia*, then X is an (the) *archē* of Y. It is not clear, however, that it contributes to the search for *ousia*, because it is possible to understand the priority as, precisely, an explanatory priority between two *ousiai*. This, I shall argue, is indeed the correct interpretation. Given that Theta 8 is the longest passage in Theta, it seems that we have to take Aristotle's priority claim into account when we consider the overall structure of Theta. In Theta 9, Aristotle argues that *energeia* is more valuable than *dunamis*, and this discussion ends with the conclusion that the things that 'are from the *archē* and eternal' are not a source of anything bad (1051a19-21). I shall argue that this discussion serves to clarify some important features of *archē* rather than of *ousia*.

These considerations should already provide us with a basis for questioning whether the traditional, *ousia*-based account can fit the *Metaphysics*, in general, and Theta, in particular. Why have critics been so confident about the *ousia*-based reading of Theta? It seems to me that this confidence is not based on a close study of Theta, but rather on general considerations about the place of Theta in the overall argument of the *Metaphysics*. One source of this confidence is Delta 7. In Delta 7, Aristotle claims that being is said in

four ways: accidental being, *per se* being, potential-actual being, and being in the sense of true and false. Without being sufficiently careful, proponents of the traditional view take *per se* being, which is based on Aristotle's theory of categories, to be the most important, and accordingly, take the study of potential and actual being to be subordinate to that of *per se* being. This assumption, however, is grounded in their categories-based, and ultimately, *ousia*-based reading of the project of the *Metaphysics*.

By arguing against the traditional, *ousia*-based account of Theta, I propose an *archē*-based reading of Theta which fits much better with the text. To further understand the aim and the argumentative structure of Theta, I also consider, at the end of the present study, how my reading of Theta is linked to the *Metaphysics* as a whole. I argue that what unifies Theta and links it to the rest of the *Metaphysics* is the project of searching for the *archē* of *ousiai*. In so doing, my interpretation of *Metaphysics* Theta has far-reaching and radical consequences for the interpretation of the aim of the text as a whole.

## 6. Is there a continuous line of argument in Theta?

A major claim of this study is that Theta is an argumentative unity. That is, there is a continuous line of argument in Theta. This is, however, not how Theta is generally read in the current scholarship. A considerable amount of effort has been dedicated to clarifying the argumentative structure of Theta 1-6 and to addressing some particular issues in Theta 7-9. However, with the exception of Menn (ms.), no other critic carefully examines the unity and coherence of the argumentative structure of Theta. Through a careful reading of the text, and a critical engagement with the current scholarship, this study shows that the line of argument of Theta can be summarized as follows:

**Step One:** In Theta 1-6, Aristotle employs the *dunamis-energeia* schema as a means of, first, analysing *dunamis kata kinēsin*, and then, by extending the schema, uses it



to analyse the concept of *ousia*. In this way, Theta 1-6 is preparatory for searching for the *archē* of *ousiai*.

**Step Two:** In Theta 7 and 8, Aristotle searches for the *archē* of *ousiai* in two ways: (1) by searching for the *dunameis* of *ousiai*; and (2) by searching for the *energeiai* of *ousiai*. The first approach, as Aristotle shows in Theta 7, cannot reach the desired *archē*. Eventually, however, in Theta 8, through addressing the priority of *energeia* over *dunamis* in respect of *ousia*, Aristotle demonstrates the possibility of reaching the desired *archē*.

**Step Three:** In Theta 9, Aristotle further clarifies some important features of the desired *archē* by revealing the teleological dimension that he has already, implicitly, assumed in Theta 7 and 8.

This line of argument is not difficult to state, but it requires considerable effort to defend. This task will be addressed in the individual chapters. Before we go into the detail of each chapter, let me summarily indicate how this line of argument supports the *archē*-based reading of Theta. On the *archē*-based reading of Theta, the central aim of Theta is to examine whether *dunamis* and *energeia* can lead us to the desired *archē*, that is, the *archē* of *ousiai*. Aristotle first invokes the twin notions, *dunamis* and *energeia*, to analyse the concept of *ousia*. He then initiates the search for the desired *archē* by searching for both the *dunameis* of *ousiai* and the *energeiai* of *ousiai*. Finally, Aristotle reveals a way of reaching the desired *archē* by searching for the *energeiai* of *ousiai*.

## **7. The task of each chapter, and how it contributes to the overall project**

**Chapter one:** In this chapter, I show that one's interpretation of the argumentative structure of Theta 1-6 bears crucially on the way in which one interprets the overall aim of Theta, and how one understands the relation between Theta and the overall project of the *Metaphysics*. By analysing some programmatic statements, and other related passages in

Theta 1 and Theta 6, I argue that ‘the most useful sense’ of *dunamis-energeia* refers to matter-*ousia*, rather than to potential-actual being or to *dunamis-energeia* in the strict sense. I also suggest that the reason why *ousia*, in the sense of *energeia*, is the most useful sense is because Aristotle’s project in Theta is to search for the *archē* of *ousiai*. Only by first introducing the twin notions, *energeia-dunamis*, as a means of analysing the concept of *ousia*, can the study of the *archē* of *ousiai* be initiated.

This chapter contributes to the overall aim of this study in the following way. By arguing that ‘the most useful sense’ of *dunamis-energeia* refers to matter-*ousia*, I reveal that Theta 1-6 is preparatory for searching for the *archē* of *ousiai*. In so doing, I argue against two influential readings, according to which Theta 1-6, in particular, and Theta, in general, have different aims. One of these two readings argues that the most useful sense of *dunamis-energeia* is used to modify the concept of being, and accordingly, the general aim of Theta is to study being from two new perspectives – namely, from *dunamis* and *energeia*. What this means, with regard to the question of the overall argumentative structure of Theta, and of its place in the *Metaphysics*, is that Theta is concerned with the question of what it is for something, anything, to be potentially a being. This reading, therefore, is associated with a general view of the *Metaphysics*, according to which Aristotle’s central project in this work is to investigate being *qua* being, and to investigate *ousia* as a means to this end.

The other reading relies on Aristotle’s distinction between *kinēsis* and *energeia*. Critics who defend this reading think that the relation between matter and form is analogous to the relation between the ability to see (i.e., *dunamis*) and the actual activity of seeing (i.e., *energeia*). So understood, matter and form are one. For form is nothing more than the activity of that which is in potentiality. On this reading, the general aim of Theta is to address an unresolved problem in Zeta and Eta, namely, the problem of the unity of matter and form. Since it is commonly thought that Zeta and Eta are addressed to



the investigation of *ousia* for the purpose of, and as part of, the investigation into being *qua* being, this reading is more likely to be associated with a general view of the *Metaphysics*, according to which Aristotle's central project in this work is to investigate being *qua* being, and to investigate *ousia* as a means to this end.

I suppose, quite generally, that there are, at least, two views of the overall project of the *Metaphysics*, and that these two views are such that we have to choose between them and cannot either have both at once or simply remain neutral. The two views are as follows. The first holds that the basic project of the *Metaphysics* is to investigate being *qua* being, and to investigate *ousia* as a means to this end. The second view, in contrast, holds that the basic project of the *Metaphysics*, is to investigate the *archē* of all things, and, consequently, of *ousiai*, and that the investigation of being *qua* being, and of *ousia* as a means to that end, is only a necessary part of this project. It is evident that the only reading of the phrase 'the most useful *dunamis-energeia*' that is compatible with the second view of Aristotle's overall project in the *Metaphysics* is the reading that I defend in this chapter.

**Chapter two:** In this chapter, I argue for the thesis that whether an event is a *kinēsis* or an *energeia* in the strict sense depends on the perspective we take. When viewed from the point of view of *the efficient cause*, all *energeiai* are *kinēseis*, whereas when viewed from the point of view of *the formal cause*, only some *kinēseis*, those that have completeness in respect of their forms, are *energeiai* in the strict sense. As a crucial step towards this overall conclusion, I argue that *kinēsis* should be understood more broadly to include both ordinary alteration and special alteration, whereas *energeia* in the strict sense should be interpreted as only focusing on *the formal cause* of the event. The upshot of my interpretation is that seeing, as well as many other events, can, simultaneously, be called both *kinēsis* and *energeia* in the strict sense.

This chapter contributes to the overall aim of this study in the following ways. First of all, by arguing, against most critics, that Aristotle, deliberately and without



inconsistency, characterizes a number of events, including seeing, both as a *kinēsis* and as an *energeia* in the strict sense, I provide significant support for my overall thesis, which says that book Theta is a continuous and coherent argument. In particular, it is an upshot of my reading that in Theta 1-5 Aristotle is focusing on *the kinetic aspects* (or *the efficient cause*) of *energeiai*, namely, action and passion. In this sense, I think it is fair to say that the efficient cause is already highlighted at the beginning of Theta. This also explains why Aristotle includes seeing in his examples of *kinēseis*. In contrast to this, when *the formal cause* is emphasized in the second half of Theta 6, seeing meets the criterion for being an *energeia* in the strict sense because it has completeness in respect of its form.

It is worth adding that my reading also provides a solution to the vexed question of the textual status of Theta 6, 1048b18-35. Irrespective of whether this passage originally belongs here, in this place in Theta, it follows from my reading that the passage is indeed well placed as it is, and contributes to the overall argument of Aristotle chapter.

This chapter also contributes to my overall claim that Theta is not primarily concerned with the project of *ousia*, that is, the project distinctive of Zeta and Eta. Many critics argue that the *kinēsis–energeia* distinction in Theta 6 is addressed to the issue of the unity of matter and form; an issue which, certainly, belongs to the project of *ousia* as developed in Zeta and Eta. If my argument in this chapter is correct, then this reading cannot be right. This reading supposes that the *kinēsis–energeia* distinction is addressed to a single thing, in the sense of substance, and that it corresponds to a distinction between two elements in that thing, namely, matter and form. But, if my argument is correct, then the *kinēsis–energeia* distinction is addressed, rather, to events – not substances – and to two ways of considering an event, from two different explanatory angles.

**Chapter three:** On a very common reading, Theta 7 and 8 are addressed to the study of being as such. I argue that this reading is questionable, because the aim of these two chapters is to search for the *archē* of *ousiai* rather than to address *ousia per se* or being in

general. In Theta 7, Aristotle argues that the *dunameis* of *ousiai* are *non-transitive*; that is, it is not the case that, if A is *dunamei* B and B is *dunamei* C, then A is *dunamei* C. By contrast, in Theta 8, Aristotle argues that the *energeiai* of *ousiai* can be *transitive*. It follows from these considerations that we cannot find the *archē* of *ousiai* along the line of searching for the *dunameis* of *ousiai*, and only by searching for the *energeiai* of things, can we have a chance of arriving at the *archē* of *ousiai*. Furthermore, I point out that in these two chapters Aristotle has already assumed a teleological dimension. This topic, as I shall argue in Chapter 5, will be taken up properly in Theta 9.

This chapter contributes to the overall aim of this study in the following ways. First, Theta 7 and 8 introduce a new dimension to Aristotle's metaphysical searching, namely, his searching for the *archē* of *ousiai*, and this is also related to the overall project of the *Metaphysics*, which, in many places, is characterized by Aristotle to be searching for the *archē* of *ousiai* (e.g., 1003b18 and 1069a18-19). Secondly, it clarifies the way in which the desired *archē* can be found by revealing that the concept of *archē* that we are looking for should meet the transitivity requirement.

**Chapter four:** In the current scholarship, there are two ways of reading Aristotle's priority in *ousia* claim in Theta 8. Most critics adopt the 'modal-existence reading'; that is, X is prior to Y in *ousia* if and only if X can exist without Y existing, but not *vice versa*. It is crucial to recognize here that this reading is non-explanatory; that is, on this reading, the existence of X *does not explain* the existence of Y. Other critics adopt the 'explanation-essence reading'; that is, X is prior to Y in *ousia* if and only if Y is what it is (i.e., Y's essence) *because of* its relation to X, but not *vice versa*. Clearly, this reading is explanatory. Against these two readings, I argue for the 'explanation-being reading' of the priority claim. By 'the explanation-being reading', I mean the following: X is prior to Y in *ousia* if and only if X's being (i.e., existence or essence, or both) explains Y's being, but not *vice versa*.



In this chapter, I argue that: First, by considering one example Aristotle cites in *Metaphysics* Delta 11, ‘priority in *ousia*’ should be understood through the explanation-being reading. Secondly, if we carefully take into account the relevant passages in the *Categories* and the *Physics*, it seems clear that ‘priority in *ousia*’ can never be understood through the modal-existence reading; this leads me to conclude that ‘priority in *ousia*’ can only be understood through the explanation-being reading. Thirdly, in the case of Theta 8, I argue that Aristotle provides two reasons for the priority of *energeia*: on the one hand, it is because the concept of *energeia* provides a teleological explanation that a priority relation is established; on the other hand, it is because eternal things provide a sufficient reason, or explanation, for the being of the perishable things that another priority relation is established. The priority claim, construed through the explanation-being reading, allows these two priority claims to be brought under the same label, namely, ‘priority in *ousia*’.

This chapter contributes to the overall aim of this study by offering an alternative reading of Aristotle’s priority claim (i.e., priority of *energeia* over *dunamis* in *ousia*). I defend a reading, which is distinctive in its being explanatory, rather than modal, and in its being neutral with regard to existence and essence. Furthermore, on this reading, if X is prior to Y in *ousia*, then, X is an (the) *archē* of Y. Clearly, this reading confirms my general reading of Theta, which says that the general aim of Theta is to search for the *archē* of *ousiai*.

**Chapter five:** In this chapter I argue that the first half of Theta 9 has two related aims. One is to clarify the teleological dimension, which Aristotle has implicitly assumed in Theta 7 and 8; that is, all *dunamis* are directed at good ends. In this sense and for this reason, bad *energeiai* are understood as merely resulting from some obstruction of good *dunamis*. To put it differently, bad *energeiai* need further clarification, whereas good *energeiai* do not. All these considerations support the idea that the first half of Theta 9 is not a new beginning. It is, rather, a further clarification of what was implied in Theta 7 and



8. Another related aim of the first half of Theta 9 is to clarify one crucial feature of the desired *archē*, namely, the desired *archē* as Goodness. In so doing, Aristotle is also preparing for the climax of the *Metaphysics*, namely, book Lambda.

This chapter contributes to the overall aim of this study in the following ways. First, I argue that Theta 9, by further clarifying the teleological dimension implied in Theta 7 and 8, is closely connected with Theta 7 and 8. This provides significant support for my overall thesis, which says that book Theta is a continuous and coherent argument. Secondly, Theta 9 also clarifies one feature of the desired *archē*, namely, that the desired *archē* is Goodness and contains nothing bad. In this sense, and for this reason, this reading also lends some support to my central claim, which says that the project of Theta is to search for the *archē* of *ousiai*.

**Chapter six:** In this chapter I argue that Aristotle's *Metaphysics* has two projects – searching for *ousia* and searching for the *archē* of *ousiai* – as its subject matter. The former project can be understood as a preparation for, and hence a part of, the latter project. What unifies these two projects is Aristotle's search for *archē*, or more specifically, the *archē* of *ousiai*. It is fair to say, I think, that the term, *archē*, for Aristotle, has at least two meanings. When *archē* is construed in terms of ontological dependence, to ask what *archē* is amounts to asking what *ousia* is, whereas when *archē* is construed in terms of explanatory dependence, to ask what *archē* is amounts to asking what is the ultimate explanatory *archē* among *ousiai*, and this is exactly what Aristotle does in Theta and Lambda. In other words, it is precisely the twofold meaning of the term *archē* that allows Aristotle to unify these two projects into a single project.

Meanwhile, I also clarify the distinction between 'archē of *ousiai*' and 'stoicheia of *ousiai*'. It is only through understanding this distinction that the Aristotelian *archē* can be substantially differentiated from that of the physicists, mathematicians and Platonists. In Aristotle's view, their approaches to searching for the *archē* of *ousiai* are on the wrong

track; for what they are searching for are ‘*stoicheia of ousiai*’ rather than ‘*archē of ousiai*’. Of these three approaches, the Platonists’ understanding of *archē* is the most relevant to Aristotle’s enquiry: both Aristotle and the Platonists think of form as *ousia* (even though they have different views with regard to how this should be understood). For Plato, finding the *archē* of *ousia* is accomplished through searching for the dialectical elements of form and, accordingly, Plato’s ultimate *archē* will be the most abstract dialectical elements of form, namely, *being* and *one*. For Aristotle, on the other hand, finding the *archē* of *ousiai* is accomplished through searching for the *energeiai* of *ousiai*.

Finally, by arguing against Frede’s and Patzig’s interpretations of the *Metaphysics*, in general, and of Theta, in particular, I show how my interpretation is preferable to theirs in some crucial respects. The crucial difference between our interpretations is as follows: Whereas Frede and Patzig take the basic project of the *Metaphysics* to be addressed to what it is for something, anything, to be a being (or an *ousia*), I take the basic project to be a search for the *archē* of *ousiai*. Through a critical analysis of the difficulties that Frede’s and Patzig’s interpretations face, a clearer and more precise picture of Theta emerges.

This chapter contributes to the overall aim of this study in the following ways. First, I locate my interpretation of Theta within the context of the *Metaphysics*, as a whole. I argue that searching for the *archē* of *ousiai* is not only the basic project of Theta, but also the basic project of the *Metaphysics*. At a more general level, I point out that searching for the *archē* of *ousiai* is the shared project of a variety of philosophers as Aristotle understands them – these include the Physicists, Platonists and mathematicians. Secondly, by arguing against a highly influential unitarian reading of the *Metaphysics*, I show why the *archē*-based account of the *Metaphysics*, in general, and of Theta, in particular, is preferable to the traditional, *ousia*-based account.

## Chapter 1

### What Does ‘The Most Useful Sense of *Dunamis-Energeia*’

#### Refer to?

In interpreting the *Metaphysics*, it is often the case that critics disagree over not only particular arguments within a single book, but also over the argumentative structure of each book, and, more generally, over how each book is related to the overall project of the *Metaphysics*. This is true, no less, of Theta. The current scholarship concerning the argumentative structure of Theta centres on questions surrounding Theta 1-6.<sup>1</sup> As I will show in this chapter, one’s interpretation of the argumentative structure of Theta 1-6 has a crucial bearing on the way in which one interprets the overall aim of Theta, and of its place in the *Metaphysics*, more generally. The aim of this chapter is to consider the argumentative structure of Theta 1-6 by analysing some programmatic statements and other related passages in Theta 1 and Theta 6.<sup>2</sup>

The most controversial issue concerning these programmatic statements is what Aristotle has in mind when he speaks of ‘the most useful sense (*chrēsimōtatē*) of *dunamis*’ (1045b35). Let me explain this in more detail. In Theta 1, Aristotle claims that he will not give a direct account of *dunamis*, but will first address *dunamis* in respect of change

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<sup>1</sup> One major finding of this thesis is that we cannot have a proper understanding of the general aim of Theta unless we also take Theta 7-9 into consideration. I will come back to this point later.

<sup>2</sup> Most critics agree that Theta 1, 2 and 5 are closely related. Theta 1 inaugurates the topic by introducing *dunamis kata kinēsin*, and Theta 2 and Theta 5 are further clarifications of this concept. Theta 3 and 4 are often taken to be a digression (cf. Menn ms., IIIa2, p. 1 and p. 4) in which Aristotle defends the existence of *dunamis* and clarifies some logical aspects of *dunamis*. In view of this, in considering the argumentative structure of Theta 1-6, I will not address Theta 2-5.



(*dunamis kata kinēsin*), which he takes to be ‘the most *kuriōs* sense of *dunamis*’.<sup>3</sup> Later in Theta 6, Aristotle seems to fulfil his promise, arguing that the sense of *dunamis* and *energeia* that we are interested in can be clarified by an analogy between two sets of examples: one is *kinēsis-dunamis*, the other *ousia-hulē*. The analogy, he argues, is that in some cases *energeia* is to *dunamis* as *kinēsis* is to *dunamis*, whereas in other cases *energeia* is to *dunamis* as *ousia* is to a certain *hulē*. Critics take this analogy to be addressing ‘the most useful sense’ of the *dunamis-energeia* distinction although they disagree about how this analogy should be understood.

Thus, Aristotle’s strategy seems to be to move from ‘the most *kuriōs* sense of *dunamis*’ (1045b35-36) to ‘the most useful sense of *dunamis*’ (1045b35). It is clear that the most *kuriōs* sense of *dunamis* is an *archē* that has an external origin of change (1046a9-11).<sup>4</sup> For example, in the case of house-building, the capacity of building (i.e., *dunamis*) is external to the final product, namely, a house. It is not, however, clear what Aristotle means by ‘the most useful sense of *dunamis*’. This is a controversial issue and three competing readings are available in the current scholarship.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> I leave the word *kuriōs* untranslated; for it is controversial whether *kuriōs* means ‘the strict sense’ or ‘the well-established sense’. I am inclined to think that the latter is more plausible.

<sup>4</sup> Aristotle thinks that this kind of *dunamis* includes active *dunamis* (1046a10-11), passive *dunamis* (1046a11-13), *dunamis* to resist being changed (1046a13-14) and *dunamis* to change something well, or be changed by something well (1046a17). But, of these *dunameis*, active *dunamis* is the primary one. As Aristotle says, ‘[the potentialities that are said] with reference to the same form are all origins of some kind, and are said with reference to one primary [potentiality], namely, *origin of change in another or [in itself] qua other*.’ ὅσαι δὲ πρὸς τὸ αὐτὸ εἶδος, πᾶσαι ἀρχαί τινές εἰσι, καὶ πρὸς πρώτην μίαν λέγονται, ἥ ἐστὶν ἀρχὴ μεταβολῆς ἐν ἄλλῳ ἢ ἢ ἄλλο (*Metaphysics* Theta, 1046a9-11; trans. Furth). To avoid undue complexity, in this chapter, I will only discuss the primary sense of *dunamis kata kinēsin*, namely, active *dunamis*.

<sup>5</sup> It is worth noting that Ross takes ‘the most useful sense of *dunamis*’ as referring to a kind of *archē* whose origin of change is internal. Ross says the following: ‘Power he (sc. Aristotle) explains as primarily a power in A to produce a change in B, or in A, considered in one respect, to produce change in itself in another respect (1046a11). Potentiality on the other hand is a potentiality in A of passing

Before we go into the details of these readings, let me indicate summarily how critics read the transition from ‘the most *kuriōs* sense of *dunamis*’ to ‘the most useful sense of *dunamis*’, and why the reading that one adopts matters for one’s interpretation of the overall argumentative structure of Theta, and of its place in the *Metaphysics*, more generally.

The first reading takes Aristotle’s strategy to be a transition from ‘*dunamis kata kinēsin*’ to ‘*dunamis kata to on*’ (being). According to this reading, the most useful sense of *dunamis-energeia* is used to modify the concept of being, and accordingly, the general aim of Theta is to study being from two new perspectives – namely, from *dunamis* and *energeia*. What this means, with regard to the question of the overall argumentative structure of Theta, and of its place in the *Metaphysics*, is that Theta is concerned with the question of what it is for something, anything, to be potentially a being. This reading, therefore, is associated with a general view of the *Metaphysics*, according to which Aristotle’s central project in this work is to investigate being *qua* being, and to investigate *ousia* as a means to this end.

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into some new state or engaging in some new activity (1048a32). This activity may be the production of a change in B but the notion of a B to be acted on is not necessarily implied in the notion of potentiality, as it is in that of power’ (1924, p. 240; also cf. cxxiv). I will set this view aside in the following discussion; for it does not bear close scrutiny. Many critics have criticized this view. For example, Menn argues: ‘Ross thought that Aristotle was here contrasting the criterion for when X is *dunamei* Y in the case where Y is an artefact (or where X becomes Y through art) from the criterion in the case where Y is a natural being (or where X becomes Y through a natural process). In the first case (1049a3-12 and a17-18), Ross thinks the criterion is a conjunction of two clauses (that (a) X will become Y if the artisan wishes and if nothing external prevents, and (b) nothing internal to X prevents it from becoming Y), whereas in the second case (1049a13-17) the criterion is just a single clause (that X will become Y if nothing external prevents). But closer attention to the structure of the passage shows that Aristotle intends no such contrast. His stress is rather that just as in the first case, so too in the second case’ (ms., IIIα3, p. 3). For a similar criticism of Ross’ view, see also Beere (2009, pp. 243-234 n.21).



The second reading takes Aristotle's strategy to be a transition from *dunamis kata kinēsin* to *dunamis* as matter in relation to *ousia*. According to this reading, the 'most useful sense of *dunamis-energeia*' is not used to modify the concept of being, in general, but to modify a very specific relation, that is, the relation between matter and *ousia*. This reading makes room for the view that I shall defend in this thesis; and it is, we shall see, the only reading that does so. According to my overall reading of Theta, and its place in the *Metaphysics*, the reason why Aristotle adopts this particular strategy is that introducing these twin notions, *energeia-dunamis*, is a useful first step in analysing the concept of *ousia*, and the study of the *archē* of *ousiai*, he thinks, ought to begin in this way. Why this is so will become apparent later, especially in Chapter 3; and it has been indicated also in the Introduction.

The third reading takes Aristotle's strategy to be a transition from *dunamis kata kinēsin* to *dunamis kata energeian* in the strict sense. This reading relies on Aristotle's distinction between *kinēsis* and *energeia*. The reason why I call it *energeia* in the strict sense is because sometimes Aristotle takes *kinēsis* and *energeia* to be equivalent (e.g., in Theta 1-5). However, when they are contrasted (in 1048b18-35), *energeia* in the strict sense is different from *kinēsis* in that it has an internal end, whereas *kinēsis* has an external end. For example, house-building is a *kinēsis* whereas seeing is an *energeia* in the strict sense; for, according to Aristotle, house-building aims at an external end, namely, a house, whereas seeing does not aim at an external end. Critics who defend this reading think that the relation between matter and form is analogous to the relation between the ability to see (*dunamis*) and the actual activity of seeing (*energeia* in the strict sense). In this way, matter and form are one. For form is nothing more than the activity of that which is in potentiality. On this reading, the general aim of Theta is to address an unresolved problem in Zeta and Eta – namely, the unity of matter and form. Since it is commonly thought that Zeta and Eta are addressed to the investigation of *ousia* for the purpose of, and as part of, the



investigation of being *qua* being, this reading is more likely to be associated with a general view of the *Metaphysics*, according to which Aristotle's central project in this work is to investigate being *qua* being, and to investigate *ousia* as a means to this end.

I will be supposing, quite generally, that there are (at least) two views of the overall project of the *Metaphysics*; and that these two views are such that we have to choose between them and cannot either have both at once or simply remain neutral. I will defend this supposition in Chapter 6. The two views are as follows. The first view holds that the basic project of the *Metaphysics* is to investigate being *qua* being, and to investigate *ousia* as a means to this end. The second view, in contrast, holds that the basic project of the *Metaphysics*, is to investigate the *archē* of all things, and, consequently, of *ousiai*, and that the investigation of being *qua* being, and of *ousia* as a means to that end, is only a necessary part of this project. It is evident that the only reading of the issue at the opening of Theta that is compatible with the second view of Aristotle's overall project in the *Metaphysics* is that which I have referred to above (pp. 16-17) as the second reading.

In this chapter, I will defend the view that 'the most useful sense' of *dunamis-energeia* refers to matter-*ousia* (i.e., the second reading), rather than to potential-actual being (i.e., the first reading) or to *dunamis-energeia* in the strict sense (i.e., the third reading). In order to do this, I will first give a detailed account of these three readings so as to identify the issues that need to be addressed. Then, by analysing some programmatic statements and other related passages in Theta 1 and 6, I will argue that only the second reading can fit these texts. Finally, I will point out another shortcoming of the first and the third readings.

## 1. Three Readings in Detail

The first reading (Frede 1994, Witt 2003, Makin 2006 and Beere 2009) takes Aristotle's strategy to be a transition from '*dunamis kata kinēsin*' to '*dunamis kata to on* (being)'.

Those critics who are committed to this reading share what Anagnostopoulos (2011, p. 393) calls the ‘Terminological Principle’; that is, ‘to call something a *dunamei on* (potential being) by employing the adverbial dative construction is to employ the “useful” sense of *dunamis*’. To put the matter differently, the first reading of ‘the most useful sense of *dunamis*’ relies on a syntactic feature of the word *dunamis*.<sup>6</sup> Critics who defend this reading think that, by using the adverbial-dative form of *dunamis* – namely, *dunamei on* – Aristotle intends to modify the concept of ‘being’, for example, in the phrase, *dunamei on*. In this sense and for this reason, Witt (2003, p. 46) refers to this use of *dunamis* as the ‘ontological sense of *dunamis*’.<sup>7</sup> This reading is supported by the following observation.

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<sup>6</sup> As Anagnostopoulos says, ‘the terminological principle specifies the useful sense of *dunamis* by reference merely to a certain syntactic use of the word *dunamis*. It does not imply any distinctive semantics for *dunamis* in its useful sense’ (2011, p. 394).

<sup>7</sup> It is worth pointing out that among the critics who are committed to the first reading, Witt’s view is slightly different from the other three (Frede, Makin and Beere). On Witt’s view, all the other critics hold a unitarian reading of these two senses of *dunamis*, which she rejects. Witt argues that the unitarian reading derives the second sense of *dunamis*, i.e., potentiality, simply from a new way of understanding the first sense of *dunamis*; that is, by understanding *dunamis* as conferring a certain degree of reality to its bearer. But she thinks that the second sense of *dunamis*, i.e., what she calls ‘the ontological sense of *dunamis*’, is not derived from this new way of understanding the first sense of *dunamis*. As she says, ‘Unitarians like Frede read book IX as exploring the ontological consequences for substances of their possession of a range of causal powers. In contrast, I read book IX as introducing the distinction between being X potentially and being X actually as the necessary ontological underpinnings of causal powers themselves. An inactive causal power exists potentially, and an active one exists actually’ (2003, p. 11). However, I think that Witt misunderstands Frede’s view. Let me explain. On Frede’s view, even something with a capacity for change can be described by using the term *dunamis* in the second sense. As Frede says, ‘to attribute a doing to something is to attribute a degree of reality to it’ (1994, p. 184; cf. p. 182). For similar remarks, see also Beere (2009, p. 24). In other words, positing the second sense of *dunamis* does not require the introduction of any new capacity in addition to capacity for change. Rather, the second sense of *dunamis* ‘ranges over’ both the first sense of *dunamis* and other cases (cf. Frede 1994, pp. 179-180, p. 182 and p. 184). But, this does not show that Frede derives the second sense of *dunamis* simply from a new way of understanding the first sense of *dunamis*. It only shows that the second sense can cover both the first sense and other cases.



In Theta 6, where Aristotle starts to talk about the most useful sense of *dunamis*, the adverbial-dative use of *dunamis* appears after a near total absence in Theta 1-5, where *dunamis kata kinēsin* is addressed.

It is worth noting that almost all of the critics who hold this view are also committed to the view that Theta is mainly concerned with the study of being.<sup>8</sup> They think that, by invoking these two notions, Aristotle is now viewing being from a different perspective – namely, from *dunamis* and *energeia*. In other words, Theta is concerned with the question of what it is for something, anything, to be potentially a being.<sup>9</sup> On this reading, the most useful sense of *dunamis* is the concept of *dunamis* when used to modify the concept of being, whereas the most *kuriōs* sense of *dunamis* is understood as a capacity to initiate a change. (In Frede’s terminology, the former is ‘potentiality’, whereas the latter ‘capacity’.)

Other critics (Anagnostopoulos 2011 and Menn ms.) hold that in Theta 1-6 Aristotle’s strategy is a transition from *dunamis kata kinēsin* to *dunamis* as matter in relation to *ousia* (or, as Aristotle puts it: from *kinēsis pros dunamin* to *ousia pros tina hulēn*; 1048b8-9). These critics argue that the most useful sense of *dunamis* is the capacity of

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<sup>8</sup> As Frede says, ‘Aristotle thinks that we can not only make claims of the form “A is F” or “A is an F” in the sense that A is F actually or that A is an actual F. It also matters greatly to him that we can make claims of the form “A is F potentially” or “A is a potential F”’ (1994, p. 173).

<sup>9</sup> Among those critics who are committed to the first reading, Witt is an exception. She thinks that the task of Theta is not to ask what it is for something, anything, to be potentially a being (or an *ousia*). Cf. Witt: ‘In this book I argue that book IX has an ontological task different from the one guiding the investigation of substance, and that the picture of reality which emerges is also importantly different. Roughly, the difference in purpose is between an analysis of being into its kinds or categories, and an analysis of being into ways of being. The development of the idea that there are ways of being as well as kinds of being allows Aristotle to construct a developmental, hierarchical, and intrinsically normative conception of being. If I am right then it is a mistake to equate Aristotle’s metaphysics or ontology exclusively, or perhaps even primarily, with his answer to the question: What is substance?’ (2003, p. 2).



matter in relation to *ousia*.<sup>10</sup> Against the first reading, Anagnostopoulos argues that in discussing ‘the most useful sense of *dunamis*’, Aristotle is not giving a distinct sense of *dunamis* as potentiality – derived from the adverbial-dative use for modifying the concept of being – in contrast to capacity.<sup>11</sup> Rather, on this reading, the adverbial-dative construal of *dunamis* is implicit from the beginning of Theta; that is to say, it is not achieved in the transition from the most *kuriōs* sense of *dunamis* to the most useful sense of *dunamis*, but is present all along.<sup>12</sup> In other words, the adverbial-dative use of *dunamis* is not only applicable to the most useful sense of *dunamis*, but is also assumed in discussing the most *kuriōs* sense of *dunamis*.

Based on this reading, Menn (ms.) interprets the general aim of Theta differently. He thinks that Theta serves the overall project of the *Metaphysics*, which, on his reading, is the study of the *archē* of being, or, more precisely, the *archē* of *ousiai*.<sup>13</sup> According to

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<sup>10</sup> As Anagnostopoulos says, ‘The term *dunamis* in its useful sense (paradigmatically) picks out the kind of capacity characteristic of the pre-existent matter for a substance, the matter that is to be generated into a substance’ (2011, p. 390; cf. also p. 411). See also Menn, who says, ‘some are related as *kinēsis pros dunamin*, others as *ousia* to some matter (1048b8-9): this makes it clear that the kind of *dunamis* that is not *pros kinēsin* is *pros ousian*, and that the “most useful” kind of *dunamis* will thus be *dunamis pros ousian*’ (ms., IIIα2, pp. 2-3).

<sup>11</sup> As Anagnostopoulos says, ‘while the term *dunamis* can, of course, be used to talk about being potentially, this use appears to be taken for granted in *Metaphysics* Theta, and does not involve a distinct sense of *dunamis* as potentiality in contrast to capacity’ (2011, pp. 389-390). And ‘The adverbial dative *dunamei* does not involve any special meaning of the word *dunamis* beyond what is needed to refer to the capacity involved’ (p. 403).

<sup>12</sup> As Anagnostopoulos says, ‘Still, although the philosophical innovation of using *δύναμις* to talk about a mode of being is a substantive one, it is not achieved in the move from the *κόριος* to the useful sense of *δύναμις*’ (2011, p. 404).

<sup>13</sup> This is also one of my major theses which I will argue for in the following chapters. Cf. Menn: ‘Thus Aristotle’s procedure in Theta is to begin from his predecessors’ discourse about *dunamis*, and then to extend it, recapitulating his own discovery of the “more useful” concepts – “more useful” not just because somehow ontologically deeper, but because more useful for getting at the *archai*’ (ms., IIIα2, p. 3; cf. also IIIα3, p. 1).

Menn, by analysing the concept of *ousia* through the concepts of *dunamis* and *energeia* in Theta 6, Aristotle is preparing for the discussion of the *archē* of *ousiai* in Theta 7-8.

A further group of critics (Blair 1967; Kosman 1984, 1994, 2013 and Gill 1989, 2004) take Aristotle's strategy to be a transition from *dunamis kata kinēsin* to *dunamis kata energeian* in the strict sense.<sup>14</sup> They think that the most useful sense of *dunamis* that Aristotle is at pains to point out is *dunamis* as it is involved in a particular kind of activity – namely, *energeia* in the strict sense. According to the distinction between *kinēsis* and *energeia*, *kinēsis* has an external end, whereas *energeia* in the strict sense has an internal end. For example, house-building is a *kinēsis*, while seeing is an *energeia* in the strict sense.<sup>15</sup> On this reading, Aristotle, by adopting this strategy, is contrasting two kinds of activity – namely, *kinēsis* and *energeia* in the strict sense. In arguing for this, these critics think that Aristotle solves a difficult problem to which he has tentatively given a solution in Eta 6; that is, the difficulty of how form (i.e., *ousia*) and matter can be united as one thing.<sup>16</sup> For example, Kosman claims that 'the problem of Theta' is 'the problem of explaining (the very possibility of) the unity of substance-being' (1984, p. 144; 1994, pp. 200-201; cf. also Gill 2004, p. 7; emphasis added). According to this view, Aristotle solves the difficulty by introducing the concept of *energeia* in the strict sense. Let me explain this in more detail.

According to these critics, in the case of *kinēsis*, one *dunamis* has to be replaced by another, whereas in the case of *energeia* in the strict sense, things are actively expressing

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<sup>14</sup> Cf. also Randall (1960, pp. 129-133) and Chen's 2011 dissertation for a similar view.

<sup>15</sup> In 1048b18-35, Aristotle gives a clear account of the distinction between *kinēsis* and *energeia* in the strict sense. I will clarify the philosophical significance of this distinction in Chapter 2.

<sup>16</sup> It is worth noting that critics who are committed to other readings can also hold this view. For example, Frede (1994, p. 175) thinks one aim of Theta is to explain the unity of form and matter.



what they already are.<sup>17</sup> For example, in the case of house-building, the timbers have to be transformed properly so as to form a house, whereas in the case of seeing, the ability to see is most manifest when we are engaged in the actual activity of seeing. These critics think that the relation between matter and form is analogous to the relation between the ability to see (*dunamis*) and the activity of seeing (*energeia* in the strict sense). Or to put it differently, they take the relation between matter and form to be analogous to that between Aristotle's first and second levels of actuality as formulated in the *De Anima*.<sup>18</sup> In this way, matter and form are one.<sup>19</sup> For form is nothing more than the activity of that which is in

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<sup>17</sup> As Kosman says, 'In the actualization of the potentiality that an entity has in this sense, then, in an entity's manifesting forth its being, the potentiality is not consumed; it is precisely preserved and made manifest, is called forth into the full and active presentation of its being, so that actuality does not replace potentiality, but is potentiality, and is the occasion for the fullest and most real expression of the potentiality that it is' (1984, p. 134; cf. also p. 121). Similarly, Gill says, 'the first (sc. *kinēsis*) is a transition to a state other than the one that the subject is presently in; the second (sc. *energeia* in the strict sense) is a transition to the same state that the subject is already in' (1989, p. 223).

<sup>18</sup> However, Kosman also thinks that this analogy could be misleading. As he says, 'In this respect, to be sure, substance may be said to be more like a second-level realization than like first, more, in other words, like the activity of seeing than like being able to see. But this way of speaking is misleading in suggesting that substantial activity is to be understood only as second-level realization. In the activity of seeing, however, the ability to see is still present, as the ability to think is in the activity of thinking; indeed those abilities are in their exercise most fully present. Activities such as seeing and thinking, activities to which Aristotle applies the term *energeia* in the strictest sense, are as activities the most complete expressions of their abilities. Seeing, after all, just is being able to see in operation and therefore most fully active. It will therefore be mistaken to characterize substance as a mode of second-level realization if by that characterization we are led to suppose that it was not at the same time a first-level realization' (2013, p. 177). Kosman also says: 'for where ability and exercise are always and of necessity together, the distinction itself becomes otiose' (1994, p. 209). Cf. also Kosman (1994, pp. 207-208).

<sup>19</sup> According to Kosman: 'The analysis of activity in book Theta, however, seems to point us in the other direction. For it reads the relationship between *dunamis* and *energeia*, which is meant to explain the unity of matter and form, as a relationship between first- and second-grade realization, that is, between *energeia* as a form of *dunamis* (which is the realization of a prior of ability) and *energeia* in the full sense of activity, *energeia* as the exercise of such an ability. We should therefore read our master



potentiality.<sup>20</sup> As we can see, one aim of this reading is to deepen our understanding of *ousia*, and even more generally, our understanding of being. On this reading, the concepts of *ousia* and being should be understood in the active sense, i.e., in the sense of *energeia* in the strict sense.<sup>21</sup>

## 2. Aristotle's Programmatic Statement in Theta 1

To see which of these three readings fits the text of Theta, let us first read Aristotle's programmatic statement in Theta 1. After saying that the discussion of *ousia* from the categorical point of view is complete, Aristotle starts to advance an apparently new project which studies being through two notions: *dunamis* and *energeia*. It seems that this project echoes the four classifications of being in Delta 7 – namely, the accidental being (τὸ ὄν κατὰ συμβεβηκός), the *per se* being (τὸ ὄν καθ' αὐτό), the potential-actual being, and finally, being in the sense of true and false. As we know, Aristotle briefly discusses the accidental being in Epsilon and he discusses the *per se* being at length in Zeta and Eta.

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text – “as *ousia* in relation to some matter” – to mean “as some mode of second-grade realization – activity – in relation to something analogous to first-grade realization – ability”. On this view, substantial being – *ousia* – is an activity in exercise; what Aristotle clearly has in mind is, specially, the activity of an entity's being what it is' (1994, p. 207). Cf. also Gill (1989, p. 218; 2004, pp. 10-11).

<sup>20</sup> Gill claims that: 'An organism's activity is much more than an expression of what it is' (1989, p. 219; cf. also 2004, p. 12). One might wonder whether this is only true of organisms; for it seems that only organisms are capable of self-moving, but it seems that, according to this reading, this is also true of inanimate things. As Gill says, 'When the house performs its function of protecting goods and bodies, the composite house has a second-level actuality: it is actively being what it is' (2004, p. 13). Cf. also Blair: 'This means that matter is “power” not in the passive sense of ability to receive a form, but rather in the sense of the ability to “do” form'. And 'The form of a thing is really a special kind of activity of its matter' (1967, p. 109).

<sup>21</sup> As Kosman says, 'A proper understanding of the connection between substance and activity makes clear the sense in which Aristotle's ontology is finally a theory of being in its full verbal activeness, a theory, that is, of the activity of things being that they are' (1994, p. 205).

Hence, it seems that, at the beginning of Theta, Aristotle suggests that we should turn to the third classification of being.<sup>22</sup> As he says:

[Text 1] And since that which is in one way said by being *what* or *something* and qualified and quantified, but in another way with respect to potentiality and completeness, and with respect to function, let us now make determination concerning potentiality and completeness; and first concerning potentiality in its strictest sense, even though it is not the sense that is most useful for what we are now after; for potentiality and actuality are said in more cases than those regarding change alone. But when we have talked about the sense, we shall then, in the determination of actuality, shed light on the others also. (*Metaphysics* Theta, 1045b32-1046a4; trans. Furth)

ἐπεὶ δὲ λέγεται τὸ ὄν τὸ μὲν τὸ τί ἢ ποιὸν ἢ ποσόν, τὸ δὲ κατὰ δύναμιν καὶ ἐντελέχειαν καὶ κατὰ τὸ ἔργον, διορίσωμεν καὶ περὶ δυνάμεως καὶ ἐντελεχείας, καὶ πρῶτον περὶ δυνάμεως ἣ λέγεται μὲν μάλιστα κυρίως, οὐ μὴν χρησιμωτάτη γέ ἐστι πρὸς ὃ βουλόμεθα νῦν· ἐπὶ πλεον γάρ ἐστιν ἡ δύναμις καὶ ἡ ἐνέργεια τῶν μόνον λεγομένων κατὰ κίνησιν. ἀλλ' εἰπόντες περὶ ταύτης, ἐν τοῖς περὶ τῆς ἐνεργείας διορισμοῖς δηλώσομεν καὶ περὶ τῶν ἄλλων.<sup>23</sup>

As mentioned earlier, the most puzzling and controversial issue in interpreting [Text 1] is determining what 'the most useful sense of *dunamis*' refers to. With regard to this issue, we already have three competing views, summarized above. However, apart from this major issue, there are also some more particular issues with regard to how to read

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<sup>22</sup> Cf. Menn: 'It is obvious that the beginning of Theta 1 is not describing the investigation of potentiality and actuality as part of a continuing investigation of *ousia* (though many scholars persist in interpreting these lines in this way), but rather is passing from one branch of the investigation announced in Epsilon 2, the study of being as said of the categories, to another, the study of being as actuality and potentiality' (ms., IIIa1, pp. 3-4).

<sup>23</sup> There are two readings with regard to how 'useful' should be read in the manuscripts: *χρησιμωτάτη* (A<sup>b</sup>) or *χρησίμη* (E and J). It seems, however, that nothing important hinges on the distinction between these two readings. In view of this, I follow Jaeger's and Ross' reading in adopting *χρησιμωτάτη*.

[Text 1]. In the current scholarship, only the first reading and the second reading address this text in a detailed way. As we will see, different readings of these particular issues are also strongly in favour of different interpretations of ‘the most useful sense of *dunamis*’. For this reason, a proper understanding of these particular issues is called for.

The first reading (Frede 1994, Witt 2003, Makin 2006 and Beere 2009) takes the most useful sense of *dunamis* to be derived from the adverbial-dative use of the term. To recall, critics who defend this reading think that when *dunamis* is used in the adverbial-dative form, *dunamei*, it is used as an adverb to modify the concept of being, for example, in the phrase, *dunamei on*. However, they also disagree with each other over some particular issues in [Text 1].

There are two related points of contention. The first issue concerns how to read 1046a1-2 in which Aristotle claims that *dunamis* and *energeia* are said in more cases than those in respect of *kinēsis*. In other words, this issue concerns the extension of the concept *dunamis*. The second issue concerns what ‘the rest’ refers to in the phrase *peri tōn allōn* at 1046a4.

With regard to the first issue, Frede (1994, p. 181 and pp. 183-184) and Makin (2006, p. 19) think that in 1046a1-2 Aristotle is claiming that the most useful sense, i.e., potentiality as used to modify the concept of being, is broader than the most *kuriōs* sense of *dunamis*, i.e., capacity for initiating a change.<sup>24</sup> In contrast, Beere (2009, pp. 23-24 and p. 27) thinks that *dunamis* at 1046a1 only refers to capacity in general, including both the capacity for initiating a change and other capacities, i.e., capacities that do not have ‘the

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<sup>24</sup> As Frede says: ‘In Theta 1, 1046a1-2: *dunamis* extends beyond the kind of *dunamis* which is so-called with reference to some change. Again, *dunamis* in its first occurrence here should refer to *dunamis* in the sense in which we speak of potential beings’ (1994, pp. 183-184).



usual agent-patient structure' (i.e., natural change) and 'capacities for doings that are not changes' (e.g., 'exercising one's knowledge to understand a geometric diagram').<sup>25</sup>

With regard to the second issue, the question is why Aristotle uses the plural form here (*peri tōn allōn*) and what 'the rest' refers to. Consistent with their readings of 1046a1-2, Frede (1994, p. 180) takes 'the rest' to refer to the most useful sense of *dunamis-energeia* – namely, potentiality and actuality (in Frede's terminology) – as used to modify the concept of being,<sup>26</sup> whereas Beere (2009, pp. 23-24) thinks that 'the rest' only refers to other capacities.

The second reading interprets these two issues differently. To recall, Anagnostopoulos (2011) thinks that Aristotle in Theta 1-6 is arguing for two kinds of capacity: the first is a capacity to change, and the second is the substantial matter's capacity for becoming a substance. He argues against the first reading (2011, pp. 396-397). The most serious criticism of the first reading is that it is very unnatural; that is, if we accept this reading, Aristotle's readers will be asked to change the meaning of these terms in the same passage. For example, it appears that at 1045b35 Aristotle uses *dunamis* in its general sense, and if Aristotle uses the same word, *dunamis*, to refer not to its general sense, but only to the most useful sense at 1046a1, we would expect an indication of this change from him.

In contrast to the first reading, Anagnostopoulos thinks that Theta does not involve a distinct sense of *dunamis* – understood as potentiality – in contrast to capacity. Rather,

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<sup>25</sup> For a different view, see Anagnostopoulos: 'I will argue in section 2 that the *kuriōs* sense also includes capacities for certain end-containing activities, such as seeing and contemplating, which are elsewhere contrasted with change, as well as an agent's capacity to generate substance, but excludes substantial matter's capacity to become a substance' (2011, p. 392). I will discuss these two views in Chapter 2.

<sup>26</sup> However, it is very unnatural to read 'the rest' as referring to 'potentiality' since 'the rest' is plural. For a similar criticism, see Anagnostopoulos (2011, p. 398).

he thinks that the sense of potentiality is what Aristotle has assumed from the very beginning of Theta. Based on this reading, he (2011, p. 396) thinks that *dunamis* and *energeia* at 1046a1-2 refer to the words themselves ('blank kinds', as he puts it), they do not exclusively refer to potentiality, as Frede understands it.<sup>27</sup> Consistent with this reading, Anagnostopoulos (2011, p. 399) takes 'the rest' to refer both to other capacities and to the most useful sense of *dunamis*.

When taken together, this evidence strongly supports the second reading as Anagnostopoulos defends it; for it accommodates the text and is the most natural reading of [Text 1]. On this reading, the notions of *dunamis* and *energeia* at 1046a1-2 are used generally. Aristotle starts to analyse these two notions by first addressing *dunamis kata kinēsin*, and then through an analogy he introduces the most useful sense of *dunamis* – namely, *dunamis* as matter in relation to *ousia*.

### 3. Aristotle's Programmatic Statement in Theta 6

Having analysed the programmatic statement in Theta 1, let us now turn to Theta 6. It appears that the beginning of Theta 6 echoes Theta 1. In Theta 6, we read:

[Text 2] Since potentiality with respect to movement has been discussed, let us now determine of actuality, both what actuality is, and what kind of thing. In fact the potential too will at the same time become clear as our analysis proceeds, in that we do not call potential only that whose nature is to move another, or to be moved by agency of another, either *simpliciter* or in some particular way, but also in the other sense; and it is on account of this [other sense of potentiality] that in

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<sup>27</sup> As Anagnostopoulos says: 'Aristotle motivates the idea that there is a sense of *dunamis* besides the *kuriōs* sense by stressing that *dunamis* is "broader than" (*eti pleon*) (1046a1) the *kuriōs* sense. Aristotle later uses language that suggests this extensional difference' (2011, p. 410).

the course of our inquiry we have discussed these [cases of potentiality for movement] as well. (*Metaphysics* Theta, 1048a25-30; trans. Furth)

Ἐπεὶ δὲ περὶ τῆς κατὰ κίνησιν λεγομένης δυνάμεως εἴρηται, περὶ ἐνεργείας διορίσωμεν τί τέ ἐστιν ἡ ἐνέργεια καὶ ποῖόν τι. καὶ γὰρ τὸ δυνατόν ἅμα δῆλον ἔσται διαιροῦσιν, ὅτι οὐ μόνον τοῦτο λέγομεν δυνατόν ὃ πέφυκε κινεῖν ἄλλο ἢ κινεῖσθαι ὑπ' ἄλλου ἢ ἀπλῶς ἢ τρόπον τινά, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἑτέρως, διὸ ζητοῦντες καὶ περὶ τούτων διήλθομεν.

Clearly, [Text 2] refers back to [Text 1]. Different readings of this passage hinge on the different understandings of the following two issues: first, what ‘*to dunaton*’ at 1048a28 refers to; secondly, how to understand ‘*heterōs*’ at 1048a30. Again, it appears that only the first reading addresses these issues in a detailed way. Hence, let us take a close look at how this reading addresses these two issues.

Consistent with his interpretation of Theta 1, Frede (1994, p. 182 and p. 185) thinks that *to dunaton* at 1048a28 refers to the most useful sense, while ‘in another way (*heterōs*)’ refers to both the capacities other than the capacities for change’, i.e., *energeia* in the strict sense, and other forms of actuality, e.g., substantial forms (1048b9).<sup>28</sup>

This reading, however, should be rejected, because it conflicts with the sentence that immediately follows. At 1048a30, Aristotle claims that ‘it is on account of this [other sense of potentiality] that in the course of our inquiry we have discussed these [cases of potentiality for movement as well]’. Here Aristotle thinks that the reason why we need to discuss *dunamis kata kinēsin* is because it holds out promise of leading us to the most useful sense of *dunamis*. If this is so, then, *dunamis* understood in another way (*heterōs*)

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<sup>28</sup> Frede says: ‘So if we follow the intuition that anything which is actually doing something or other must as such be real and, what is more, actual, it is evident that the term “actuality” in its relevant use extends beyond mere changes to items like seeing, intellectually grasping, there are yet other forms or kinds of actuality in the relevant sense: for instance, substantial forms (cf. 1048b9)’ (1994, p. 182).



must refer to the most useful sense. As Anagnostopoulos rightly points out, ‘this “other way” appears to be the useful sense. But in that case, *dunaton* at 1048a28, which is said both of things capable of change and in this “other way”, cannot (*contra* Frede) be an instance of, or refer to, the useful sense’ (2011, p. 401).

In contrast to this view, Beere thinks: ‘*dunaton* at 1048a28 spans both the *kuriōs* and the useful senses, while “in another way” refers to the useful sense’ (2009, p. 26 and pp. 170-171). However, like Frede, Beere also takes the useful sense to refer to the adverbial-dative construal of *dunamis*.

Hence, it seems that even though we can reject Frede’s reading based on a natural reading of [Text 2], it is not easy to see whether Beere’s reading is plausible. In view of this, I will, in the next section, proffer some additional evidence against the first reading.

#### **4. Crucial Evidence against the First Reading**

As mentioned in the previous section, in order to reject the first reading, more evidence is required. Suppose that one accepts all of the criticisms of the first reading as indicated above, still one can find a way to avoid these criticisms while still holding that the most useful sense of *dunamis* is the adverbial-dative construal of *dunamis*. For example, one might argue that *dunamis* and *energeia* at 1046a1-2 are ‘blank kinds’ (as Anagnostopoulos has), and that in Theta 6, ‘another way’ only refers to the adverbial-dative construal of *dunamis-energeia* (as Beere has). Hence, it seems that critics who are committed to the first reading can, after all, find a way to defend their view. For this reason, I think that some more substantial reasons against the first reading are called for. I shall put forward two pieces of crucial evidence presently.

First, it appears that from the beginning of Theta, Aristotle already thinks that *dunamis* is related to the concept of being. Hence, it seems that there is no need for Aristotle to argue for the most useful sense of *dunamis*, understood as modifying the

concept of being. As Aristotle says at the beginning of Theta, ‘And since that which is (*to on*) is in one way said by being what or something and qualified and quantified, but in another way with respect to potentiality (*kata dunamin*) and completedness, and with respect to function, let us now make determination concerning potentiality (*dunameōs*) and completedness (*entelecheias*)’ (1045b32-35).

Secondly, it is true that Aristotle frequently uses the adverbial-dative form of *dunamis* in Theta 6. For example, he says: ‘in fact, actuality is the belonging of the thing, not in the manner we call “potentially (*dunamei*)”’ (1048a30-32). A close reading of the text of Theta shows, however, that he already used the adverbial-dative form of *dunamis* in Theta 1-5. For example, Aristotle says in Theta 3: ‘for of things that are not, some are, potentially (*dunamei*); but [still] they *are* not, because they are not in completedness (*entelecheiai*)’ (1047b1-2). Furthermore, the word, *dunaton*, is used both in Theta 1-5 (e.g., Theta 3, 1047a20ff.) and in Theta 6 (e.g., 1048a27ff.). In the former, it is related to *dunamis* (i.e., the nominative case), whereas in the latter, it is related to *dunamei* (i.e., the adverbial-dative form). Hence, it seems that we cannot derive a different sense of *dunamis* simply from different syntactic uses of the term.<sup>29</sup>

Taking these two pieces of evidence into consideration, it seems that the first reading should be rejected. That is to say, we cannot take the useful sense of *dunamis* as simply derived from the adverbial-dative use of that term. In my view, this evidence is already sufficient for rejecting the first reading. However, I think that Aristotle’s analogical examples in Theta 6, when properly understood, also strongly support the second reading and, therefore, give us an additional reason against the first reading. These examples,

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<sup>29</sup> For the statistics of the use of these terms, see Burnyeat et al. (1984, p. 49).

however, are quite controversial and subject to a variety of interpretations. Let us now turn to these examples.

## 5. Aristotle's Account of *Dunamis* and *Energeia* in Theta 6

Having argued that the first reading should be rejected, we still need to address the third reading, which takes the most useful sense of *dunamis-energeia* to be equivalent to *dunamis-energeia* in the strict sense. Since the following passage is crucial for the third reading, let me quote it in full. In this passage, Aristotle says:

[Text 3] In fact, actuality is the belonging of the thing, not in the manner we call 'potentially'; we speak of 'potentially', e.g., (1) 'a Hermes in the wood', and (2) the 'half-line in the whole', i.e., it could be separated out, and (3) [we call] 'knowledgeable' even him who is not theorizing, if he's capable of theorizing. On the other hand, [there is the manner we call] 'actuality'. What we mean to say will be clear from the particular cases by induction; and one must not look for a definition of every thing, but must survey the analogy: that as (4) what is house-building is to what can build, and (5) as what is awake is to what is asleep, and (6) as what is seeing is to what has its eyes shut but has sight, and (7) as what has been shaped out of the matter is to the matter, and (8) as the wrought is to the unwrought – of this difference let one member be defined as the actuality the other as the potential. 'Actually' is not said in every case in the same way, but by analogy: 'as this is in this or in reference to this, so that is in that or in reference to that'. *In some cases [=actuality] is as movement in relation to potentiality; in other cases it is as substance in relation to some particular matter.* (*Metaphysics* Theta 6, 1048a30-1048b9; trans. Furth)

ἔστι δὲ ἐνέργεια τὸ ὑπάρχειν τὸ πρᾶγμα μὴ οὕτως ὥσπερ λέγομεν δυνάμει· λέγομεν δὲ δυνάμει οἷον ἐν τῷ ξύλῳ Ἑρμῆν καὶ ἐν τῇ ὅλῃ τὴν ἡμίσειαν, ὅτι ἀφαιρεθεῖν ἂν, καὶ ἐπιστήμονα καὶ τὸν μὴ θεωροῦντα, ἂν δυνατὸς ᾗ θεωρῆσαι· τὸ δὲ ἐνεργεία. δῆλον δ' ἐπὶ τῶν καθ' ἕκαστα τῇ ἐπαγωγῇ ὃ βουλόμεθα λέγειν, καὶ οὐ δεῖ παντὸς ὅρον ζητεῖν ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ ἀνάλογον συννοῶν, ὅτι ὡς τὸ οἰκοδομοῦν πρὸς τὸ οἰκοδομικόν, καὶ τὸ ἐγρηγορὸς πρὸς τὸ καθεῦδον, καὶ τὸ ὄρῳ πρὸς τὸ μῦνον μὲν



ὄψιν δὲ ἔχον, καὶ τὸ ἀποκεκριμένον ἐκ τῆς ὕλης πρὸς τὴν ὕλην, καὶ τὸ ἀπειργασμένον πρὸς τὸ ἀνέργαστον. ταύτης δὲ τῆς διαφορᾶς θατέρῳ μορίῳ ἔστω ἡ ἐνέργεια ἀφωρισμένη θατέρῳ δὲ τὸ δυνατόν. λέγεται δὲ ἐνεργεία οὐ πάντα ὁμοίως ἀλλ' ἢ τῷ ἀνάλογον, ὡς τοῦτο ἐν τούτῳ ἢ πρὸς τοῦτο, τόδ' ἐν τῷδε ἢ πρὸς τόδε· τὰ μὲν γὰρ ὡς κίνησις πρὸς δύναμιν τὰ δ' ὡς οὐσία πρὸς τινα ὕλην.

The most controversial issue in interpreting [Text 3] is how to classify and interpret these eight numbered examples (first three examples at 1048a32-35, the other five examples at 1048a37-1048b4). My aim in this section is to argue against the third reading of the argumentative structure of Theta 1-6 – namely, the reading famously defended by Kosman and Gill.

Before I address this reading, let us also consider how the other two readings address these examples. The first reading (Frede 1994, Witt 2003, Makin 2006 and Beere 2009) maintains that all these examples illustrate the most useful sense of *dunamis*, that is, the adverbial-dative construal of *dunamis* as used to modify the concept of being.<sup>30</sup> I have argued against this view in the previous section. However, apart from the reasons that I have already mentioned, a natural reading of these examples in Theta 6 also gives us an additional reason for rejecting this reading. For, at 1048b9-10, Aristotle clearly indicates that all these examples can be understood under two models: the first is *dunamis-kinēsis*, which is the subject matter of Theta 1-5; the second is *hulē-ousia*. On my view, a natural reading of the second model – namely, *hulē-ousia* – is the most useful sense of *dunamis-energeia*, which Aristotle is at pains to introduce.

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<sup>30</sup> Of those who are committed to the first reading, Witt's view is representative: 'In the view I develop here all five examples (n.b. Witt only discusses the five examples at 1048a37-1048b4) are intended to illustrate the relationship between being X actually and being X potentially. They are all examples of different ways of being: as an active *dunamis* is in relation to an inactive *dunamis*; so is a complete (or perfected) substance in relation to an incomplete (or imperfect) substance' (2003, p. 40).

In my view, the most natural reading of these examples is the second reading, which divides them into two groups, one is *dunamis-kinēsis* and the other *hulē-ousia*. As Anagnostopoulos rightly points out: ‘I claim that the *change-dunamis* heading is meant to capture the *kuriōs* sense, and the substance-matter heading the useful sense’ (2011, p. 407).

Let us now turn to the third reading. The critics who are committed to this view (Blair 1967; Kosman 1984, 1994, 2013 and Gill 1989, 2004) accept the second model – namely, *hulē-ousia* – as instantiating the model of *dunamis-energeia* in the strict sense.

To recall this view, first, both Kosman and Gill think that, in the case of *dunamis-energeia* in the strict sense, a thing is actively expressing what it already is. More precisely, the form (or the *ousia*) is actively what it already is. They take the relation as analogous to Aristotle’s first and second levels of actuality as formulated in the *De Anima*. For example, knowledge is a first *energeia*, whereas theorizing a second *energeia*. It is in the activity of theorizing that the ability of knowing is most manifest.<sup>31</sup> Secondly, Kosman and Gill think that the *dunamis-energeia* aims at solving the problem of the unity of form and matter.

With regard to their interpretation of [Text 3], their views are exemplified in their classification and interpretation of the eight examples. To avoid undue complexity, let us concentrate on the five examples at 1048a37-1048b4 (the first three examples can also be classified accordingly). There are, however, some differences between Kosman’s and Gill’s classification of these examples.

Kosman (1984, 1994 and 2013) thinks that, of these five examples, the first three belong to the second model – namely, *dunamis-energeia* in the strict sense – whereas the last two belong to the first model – namely, *dunamis-kinēsis*. He claims that, by the

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<sup>31</sup> As Kosman says: ‘matter is related to form as the eye is to (the power of) sight; but both of these relationship may be understood in terms of the relation between that power and its active exercise in seeing’ (2013, Chapter 3, pp. 74-75, *esp.* p. 81). Kosman: ‘matter is form in the same way that (the power of) sight is seeing’ (1984, p. 145).



formulation ‘substance to matter’, Aristotle has the second model in mind. It is crucial to recognize, however, here that in order to hold this view, Kosman (1994, pp. 208-209, p. 211; 1984, p. 136; 2013, p. 178) has to take ‘matter’ here as referring to concurrent matter, as opposed to pre-existing matter; for otherwise the matter will still need to be transformed by a *kinēsis*. To put the issue differently, only concurrent matter can be involved in the second model.

Gill takes all five of the examples as indicating the second model, that is, *dunamis-energeia* in the strict sense,<sup>32</sup> although she admits that there are some difficulties in classifying the examples.<sup>33</sup> In contrast to Kosman, Gill (1989, p. 215) does not think the last two examples belong to the first model. She thinks that all the examples belong to the second model.<sup>34</sup> But in order to hold this view, Gill, like Kosman, also has to take the matter in these examples to refer to what she calls ‘functional matter’ (i.e., concurrent matter), that is, a distinction needs to be drawn between pre-existing matter and functional matter. She thinks that pre-existing matter is involved in the model of *dunamis-kinēsis*,

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<sup>32</sup> As Gill says, ‘I propose that Aristotle clarifies his second model by giving a series of examples, all of which belong to the second scheme. He then points out that, like the first model, some of the actualities are related to potentiality as change to potentiality, and some as substance to a certain matter’ (1989, p. 217).

<sup>33</sup> One difficulty is as follows. As Gill says, ‘but among the first three examples...only the first seems to mention an actuality that is proper change. The so-called changes listed in examples (2) and (3) (sc. the fifth and sixth examples) are paradigmatic activities...Although building is listed later in the chapter as a paradigmatic change, on one occasion in *De Anima* II.5 building itself seems to count as an activity. It seems possible, then, that all three examples that display the relation of change to potentiality illustrate the second system (sc. *energeia* in the strict sense) rather than the first’ (1989, p. 215).

<sup>34</sup> As Gill says, ‘Although some of the examples resist an easy interpretation, it may be that all five examples exhibit the second scheme’ (1989, p. 216).



whereas functional matter is involved in the model of *dunamis-energeia* in the strict sense.<sup>35</sup>

It is also worth noting that Gill admits that her reading of those examples is not the only plausible reading, but she thinks that her view is also supported by Theta 8.<sup>36</sup> In fact, she takes Theta 8 as independent evidence in support of her reading. Thus, Gill's reading depends heavily on a particular understanding of the concept of nature. Let me explain this in more detail. In Theta 8, Aristotle introduces the concept of nature by saying: 'I mean by potentiality not only that definite kind which is called "origin of change in another or [in itself] *qua* other"', but quite generally, every origin, movemental or static. For nature is in the same genus as potentiality; for it is a movemental origin, only not in another, but in [the thing] itself *qua* itself' (1049b5-10; trans. Furth).<sup>37</sup> Gill holds that: '*Metaphysics* Theta 8 describes a *dunamis* that Aristotle contrasts with the active potentiality familiar from Theta 1' (1989, p. 218). She thinks that in the case of nature, things are expressing what they already are (i.e., their natures), whereas in the case of *kinēsis*, one thing has to be replaced by another.

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<sup>35</sup> As Gill says: 'On the first scheme, some of the actualities stand to potentiality as change to potentiality (*kinēsis pros dunamin*) and some as substance (the product) to a certain (preexisting) matter (*ousia pros tina hulēn*)...like the first model, the second too involves two sorts of actualities – one related to a potentiality as change to potentiality (e.g., what is seeing to what has its eyes shut but has sight), the other as substance to a certain (generic or functional) matter (e.g., what has been separated out of the matter to its [generic] matter)' (1989, pp. 216-217; also Kosman 1984, p. 136).

<sup>36</sup> As Gill says: 'This is not the only possible interpretation of the analogy passage, and fortunately my proposal concerning Aristotle's second potentiality-actuality model need not rely on this text. In *Metaphysics* Theta 8 Aristotle offers the key to his second system (sc. *dunamis-energeia* in the strict sense)' (1989, pp. 217-218).

<sup>37</sup> λέγω δὲ δυνάμει οὐ μόνον τῆς ὀρισμένης ἢ λέγεται ἀρχὴ μεταβλητικὴ ἐν ἄλλῳ ἢ ἢ ἄλλο, ἀλλ' ὅπως πάσης ἀρχῆς κινητικῆς ἢ στατικῆς. καὶ γὰρ ἡ φύσις ἐν ταύτῳ [γίνεται· ἐν ταύτῳ γὰρ] γένει τῇ δυνάμει· ἀρχὴ γὰρ κινητικὴ, ἀλλ' οὐκ ἐν ἄλλῳ ἀλλ' ἐν αὐτῷ ἢ αὐτό.

## 6. Against Kosman's and Gill's Interpretations of Text 3

As mentioned earlier, I think that the only natural reading of [Text 3] is the second reading. In this section, I will argue that both Kosman and Gill are mistaken in identifying *hulē-ousia* with *dunamis-energeia* in the strict sense. Here are some reasons.

First, methodologically speaking, Kosman and Gill use a later text (the second half of Theta 6, namely, 1048b18-35 and the concept of nature in Theta 8) to explain the earlier text. One might think that this is not a serious criticism; for if we take Aristotle's thought as unitarian and systematic, it does not matter very much whether we use what comes first to explain what comes later in the text or the other way around. However, this, I think, is not true of Theta 6. For some examples in the earlier text (the first half of Theta 6) are taken as *kinēseis*, whereas in 1048b18-35 (the second half of Theta 6) they are taken as *energeiai* in the strict sense.<sup>38</sup> If we, like Kosman and Gill, use the second half of Theta 6 to explain the first half of Theta 6, we have to think that Aristotle is not consistent in his use of terminology, or worse, that he simply confuses these two concepts.

Secondly, I will give a detailed analysis of 1048b18-35 in Chapter 2, but it is important to recognize here that Aristotle says explicitly that this passage is concerned with *praxis* (1048b18). Hence, it is very likely that the two halves of Theta 6 address two different questions.<sup>39</sup> If 1048b18-35 is exclusively concerned with *praxis*, then Aristotle's distinction between *kinēsis* and *energeia* in the strict sense seems to be a distinction

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<sup>38</sup> Furthermore, Kosman cannot explain the fact that in Theta 1-5 Aristotle has already used the examples of perception (at 1047a5-8 and at 1047b32), which, according to the *kinēsis-energeia* distinction in Theta 6, belong to *energeiai* in the strict sense, but in Theta 1-5, those examples are considered as *kinēseis*.

<sup>39</sup> Note that in Kosman's early papers (1984 and 1994), he did not acknowledge the troubled textual situation of this passage, namely, 1048b18-35.

between two kinds of activity (*praxis*). When Kosman argues that *ousia* should be understood as *energeia* in the strict sense, a confusion seems to arise: an *ousia* can be involved in a *praxis* but is not itself a *praxis*.

Thirdly, it seems that both Kosman and Gill unnecessarily distinguish between two kinds of matter in interpreting the examples of Theta 6. However, as Gill (1989, p. 215) admits, this is not the only possible reading of Aristotle's examples.<sup>40</sup> In other words, the concept of matter as used in the seventh and the eighth examples can be interpreted in two ways: either one can take them as pre-existing matter, or, one can take them as concurrent or functional matter (cf. also Makin 2006, pp. 139-140). Based on the text, we have no good reason to choose one view rather than the other.

Fourthly, Gill argues that in the model of *dunamis-kinēsis*, Aristotle is thinking of the relation between the pre-existing matter and *ousia*. However, it seems that the first model does not concern matter-*ousia* at all; of course, an active capacity needs to act on some matter, but matter is not Aristotle's primary concern there. Rather, the first model only concerns two concepts: *dunamis* and its exercise – namely, *kinēsis*.

Fifthly, Gill uses the concept of nature in Theta 8 (1049b5-10) in contrast with the concept of *dunamis* in Theta 1-5. I will argue in an Appendix that the reason why Aristotle does not mention the concept of nature in Theta 1-6 is not because he tries to contrast these two concepts, as Gill thinks, but because the concept of nature is less easily accessible: in the case of artefacts and other similar things, the external *archai* (i.e., the efficient causes) are easily recognizable, whereas in the case of nature, this is not so.

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<sup>40</sup> As Gill says: 'Example (4) (sc. the seventh example) could specify either the preexisting or the generic matter; there was some preexisting matter out of which the product was separated, but there is also, now that the product has been separated, some generic matter, which modifies the product. Example (5) (sc. the eighth example), on the other hand, especially if translated as it usually is, as "the worked-up to the unworked", seems to refer to the preexisting material' (1989, p. 215).



Finally, both Kosman's and Gill's classifications of the examples of Theta 6 are very unnatural. This is especially true of Kosman's classification. It seems that Kosman's classification is just the opposite of Aristotle's classification. According to Kosman's account of Aristotle's examples (in his 1984 paper, pp. 135–136), what Aristotle intends is:

Examples of *Kinēsis*, understood as a process of change by which a potentiality is replaced by an actuality which is its contrary: (Example 1) Hermes in the wood; (Example 2) half-line in the whole; (Example 7) the shaped; (Example 8) the wrought.

Examples of *Energeia*, understood as the preservation by which an unmanifest potentiality is made manifest: (Example 3) the potential knower; (Example 4) building; (Example 5) being awake; (Example 6) seeing.

The problem with this account is that, according to Aristotle's express words in Theta 6, examples 1, 2, 7 and 8 are of *ousiai* rather than of *kinēseis*, whereas examples 3–6 are of *kinēseis* rather than of *ousiai*.<sup>41</sup> It appears, therefore, that Aristotle's classification of examples is opposite to that in Kosman's account.

These criticisms, taken together, render the third reading highly implausible. Hence, it seems that the only reasonable reading of the argumentative structure of Theta 1–6 is the second reading.

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<sup>41</sup> A clear piece of evidence against Kosman's classification of the examples comes from Delta 7, where Aristotle first gives the examples of seeing, knowing, and resting, and then says 'equally in the case of *ousiai* also; for both Hermes in the stone and the half of a line and the grain which is not yet ripe we assert to be' (Delta 1017b6–8; trans. Kirwan, slightly modified). Clearly, in this text, Aristotle takes the examples of Herms and half-line as examples of *ousiai*; it would, therefore, be reasonable to think that he also does so in Theta 6. Cf. Menn, (ms., IIIa2, p. 36).

## 7. Another Shortcoming of the First and the Third Readings

Before concluding this chapter, let me, finally and briefly, re-emphasize how one's interpretation of the argumentative structure of Theta 1-6 bears crucially on the way in which one interprets the overall aim of Theta, and point out another related shortcoming of the first and the third readings.

As mentioned, the first reading, in arguing that the most useful sense of *dunamis-energeia* is used to modify the concept of being, holds that the general aim of Theta is to study being from two new perspectives – namely, from *dunamis* and *energeia*. In other words, Theta is primarily concerned with the question of what it is for something, anything, to be potentially a being. The second reading suggests that the concept of *ousia*, as analysed through the two concepts, *dunamis* and *energeia*, is what we are looking for. It is considered to be 'the most useful' in the sense that only by first introducing these twin notions, *energeia-dunamis*, as a means of analysing *ousia*, can the study of the *archē* of *ousiai* be initiated.<sup>42</sup> The third reading takes the most useful sense of *energeia* to be *energeia* in the strict sense. This reading thus takes Theta as addressing an unresolved problem in Zeta and Eta – namely, the unity of matter and form.<sup>43</sup>

In addition to the inability of the first and the third readings to accommodate the text of Theta 1-6, there is another shortcoming of these two readings. Both of these readings focus exclusively on the argumentative structure of Theta 1-6 and do not consider

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<sup>42</sup> Cf. Menn: 'Aristotle is studying *dunamis* and *energeia* in Theta, not as a means to ousiaology, but as a means to archeology' (ms., IIIa2, p. 37).

<sup>43</sup> Menn doubts whether the unity of form and matter is a real question after Eta. As he says: 'Although Kosman takes Eta 6 passages about matter as *dunamis* and form as *energeia* as indicating a further topic that must be explored in Theta in order to solve the *aporia* of the unity of a substance, Aristotle seems instead to be saying that for us, who take as matter for X what is *dunamei* X and as the form the *energeia* of that *dunamis*, there is no *aporia* and no need to look for a further explanation of unity' (ms., IIIa2, p. 37). For a similar view, also see Beere (2009, p. 311 n.38).

Theta as a whole. In support of this, let me provide two striking examples. In his classic 1994 paper, Frede scarcely mentions Theta 7-9 and in his 1984 paper Kosman makes no mention of Theta 8.<sup>44</sup> This neglect is particularly striking if we note that the number of lines in Theta 8 – the longest chapter in Theta – is almost twice that of the second longest chapter. If this signifies anything, it would be that Theta 8 might be a very important chapter for understanding the general aim of Theta. As we shall see, however, the subject matter of Theta 8 is not primarily *ousia* or being in general, but is the priority of *energeia* over *dunamis*.<sup>45</sup> Furthermore, in Theta 9, Aristotle argues that *energeia* is more valuable than *dunamis*, and this discussion ends with the conclusion that the things that ‘are from the *archē* and eternal’ are not a source of anything bad (1051a19-21). It seems clear that this discussion serves to clarify some important features of *archē*. This indicates that we may not be able to properly understand Theta if we ignore the other chapters. One major finding of this thesis is that we cannot have a proper understanding of the general aim of Theta unless we also take Theta 7-9 into consideration.

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<sup>44</sup> Gill does mention Theta 8, but she takes it to be still addressed to the issue of ‘the most useful sense of *dunamis-energeia*’ as she understands it. As she says, ‘Theta then divides into two main sections. Theta 1-5 investigate potentiality and actuality as they apply to change. Here Aristotle is particularly interested in the potency (casual power) of the agent, which brings about a change, and the potency of the patient, which can be changed, and the conditions under which their potencies are actualized. If the change is successful, the patient comes to be in a state other than the one in which it began. Theta 6-8 then turn to the second potentiality-actuality model, which (on his view) tackles the outstanding problems of Zeta and Eta, showing how material composites are unified according to the frame work of Eta 6’ (2005, p. 244).

<sup>45</sup> It is worth noting that in Theta 8 Aristotle refers to Zeta as a book dedicated to the discussion about *ousia* (περὶ τῆς οὐσίας λόγοις, 1049b27-28) and he seems to think that that discussion has finished.



## Conclusion

In this chapter, I have shown that one's interpretation of the argumentative structure of Theta 1-6 bears crucially on the way in which one interprets the overall aim of Theta, and how Theta is related to the overall project of the *Metaphysics*. By analysing some programmatic statements and other related passages in Theta 1 and Theta 6, I have argued that 'the most useful sense' of *dunamis-energeia* refers to matter-*ousia*, rather than to potential-actual being or to *dunamis-energeia* in the strict sense. I have also suggested that the reason why *ousia*, in the sense of *energeia*, is the most useful sense is because Aristotle's project in Theta is to search for the *archē* of *ousiai*. Only by first introducing these twin notions, *energeia-dunamis*, as a means of analysing the concept of *ousia*, can the study of the *archē* of *ousiai* be initiated. Besides, in arguing against the reading put forward by Kosman and Gill, I have also suggested that the second part of Theta 6, 1048b18-35, does not contribute directly to our understating of *ousia*. There are, however, some remaining puzzles concerning this passage. For example, why does Aristotle at times call some examples *kinēseis*, while, at other times, he calls the same examples *energeiai* in the strict sense? I will clarify this passage and dispel some misunderstandings in Chapter 2.

## Appendix: Why Does Aristotle Start with *Dunamis kata Kinēsin*?

It is still very puzzling why Aristotle, in discussing *dunamis kata kinēsin*, chooses a particular kind of *kinēsis*, which has an external origin of change. On the surface, the term, *dunamis kata kinēsin*, is quite general; it should include both the aforementioned *kinēsis* – namely, *kinēsis* whose origin of change is external – and the other kind of *kinēsis* – namely, *kinēsis* whose origin of change is internal, i.e., Aristotle’s concept of nature. But *dunamis kata kinēsin* in Theta 1-6 only refers to the former kind of *kinēsis* and Aristotle only officially introduces the latter kind of *kinēsis* – namely, nature – in Theta 8 (1049b8-9) (he implicitly mentions the concept of nature in Theta 7 at 1049a13-14). One question naturally arises: why does Aristotle start with a kind of *kinēsis* whose origin of change is external rather than internal?

Aristotle’s strategy reminds us of his two exemplary changes: one is natural change, the other is manufactured change (*technē*). In many places, a comparison is made between these two changes. Here are two examples. In *Metaphysics* Lambda, Aristotle says: ‘art is the principle in a thing other than that which is generated, nature is a principle in the thing itself; ἡ μὲν οὖν τέχνη ἀρχὴ ἐν ἄλλῳ, ἡ δὲ φύσις ἀρχὴ ἐν αὐτῷ’ (1070a7-8; trans. Apostle). In *Generation of Animals* Beta, Aristotle says: ‘For the art is the starting-point and form of the product; only it exists in something else, whereas the movement of nature exists in the product itself, issuing from another nature which has the form in actuality; ἡ γὰρ τέχνη ἀρχὴ καὶ εἶδος τοῦ γιγνομένου, ἀλλ’ ἐν ἐτέρῳ· ἡ δὲ τῆς φύσεως κίνησις ἐν αὐτῷ ἀφ’ ἐτέρας οὐσα φύσεως τῆς ἐχούσης τὸ εἶδος ἐνεργείᾳ’ (735a2-4; trans. Platt).

The comparison between art and nature also reminds us of another famous text, where the so-called ‘art-nature analogy’ is addressed. In *Physics* Beta, Aristotle points out that: First, for art, the origin of change is external, whereas for nature it is internal (192b13-19). Secondly, for art, the final cause is easily recognizable. At the beginning of an art, the final cause exists first in the mind of a craftsman, then, in the product, whereas for nature,

the final cause is less recognizable. For this reason, in 199a8-20, Aristotle argues that ‘if, therefore, artificial products are for the sake of an end, so clearly also are natural products; εἰ οὖν τὰ κατὰ τέχνην ἕνεκά του, δῆλον ὅτι καὶ τὰ κατὰ φύσιν’ (199a17-18; trans. Hardie and Gaye). It is through the ‘art-nature analogy’ that we understand the concept of nature better. For the concept of art is more accessible to us. In art, the four causes are clearly distinguished, whereas in nature, as Aristotle says, three of the causes – formal, efficient and final cause – often coincide (198a22-25).

One might ask: does Aristotle also use *dunamis kata kinēsin*, as opposed to *dunamis* as involved in the concept of nature, as a more accessible concept in Theta? I think that the answer should be affirmative.

From the point of view of the efficient cause, *dunamis kata kinēsin* is more accessible. In the case of art, the origin of change is external to the product, we can easily recognize how a *dunamis* moves other things, whereas in the case of nature, this is less clear.

From the point of view of the final cause, *dunamis kata kinēsin* is also more accessible. In the case of art, the final cause is easily recognizable, whereas in the case of nature, this is less so. To better understand this point, let us consider another analogy that Aristotle uses in Theta 6. In Theta 6, Aristotle thinks that we can grasp the concept of *dunamis-energeia* by an analogy. This analogy tells us that *dunamis-energeia* can be instantiated into two more concrete models: the one is *dunamis-kinēsis*, the other *hulē-ousia*. I think that Aristotle gives us a clue for understanding this analogy. As he says latter in Theta 8, ‘the actualization is the completion, and it is for the sake of this that potentiality is acquired; τέλος δ' ἡ ἐνέργεια, καὶ τούτου χάριν ἡ δύναμις λαμβάνεται’ (1050a9-10; trans. Furth). Hence, it is the relationship to the end that determines which one can be considered to be an *energeia*. Compared to *dunamis*, *kinēsis* is closer to the end, compared to *hulē-ousia* is closer to the end. The same relation holds between all the analogues of these two



models, and for this reason, they deserve to be classified under the more general model – namely, *dunamis-energeia*. If my reading of the analogy of Theta is plausible, then, it seems, again, that, like the ‘art-nature’ analogy, *dunamis kata kinēsin* is more accessible to us and allows us to grasp the teleological dimension of the concept of *energeia*. Hence, the reason why Aristotle chooses *dunamis kata kinēsin* rather than *dunamis* as involved in the concept of nature is that the former is more accessible to us than the latter.

## Chapter 2

### Seeing as *Kinēsis* and Seeing as *Energeia* in *Metaphysics* Theta

#### 6

In the previous chapter, I argued that ‘the most useful sense’ of the *dunamis-energeia* distinction refers to the *hulē-ousia* distinction and, in so doing, I also argued against the interpretation put forward by Kosman and Gill, according to which the most useful sense of *dunamis-energeia* is in contrast with *dunamis-kinēsis*. Furthermore, I have indicated that there are, indeed, some oddities in Aristotle’s use of terminology. For instance, he characterizes the same example both as a *kinēsis* and an *energeia* in the strict sense. In *Metaphysics* Theta 6, 1048b18-35, however, Aristotle distinguishes between *kinēsis* and *energeia* in the strict sense, suggesting that these two concepts are mutually exclusive. There is, therefore, an apparent tension that calls for explanation and clarification. We must explain how Aristotle can use two concepts that he considers to be exclusive in nature to characterize the same example. Providing this explanation will also allow me to shed more light on the criticism of Kosman’s and Gill’s interpretations of Theta 1-6.

The aim of this chapter is to explain what this distinction between *kinēsis* and *energeia* amounts to. I shall do this by considering one example in which Aristotle deploys the distinction, namely, seeing. My purpose is to explain why Aristotle at times characterizes seeing as a *kinēsis*, while, at other times, takes it to be an *energeia* in the strict sense. I will argue that, for Aristotle, whether an event is a *kinēsis* or an *energeia* in the strict sense depends on the perspective we take. When viewed from the point of view of the *efficient cause*, all *energeiai* are *kinēseis*; whereas when viewed from the point of view of the *formal cause*, only some *kinēseis* – those that have completeness in respect of

their forms – are *energeiai* in the strict sense. On this reading, characterizing a single event as both a *kinēsis* and an *energeia* in the strict sense does not lead to a contradiction.

## 1. The Puzzle

In the first half of *Metaphysics* Theta 6 (1048a25-b9), seeing, which Aristotle includes in a set of examples of *energeiai* in the loose sense, is characterized as a *kinēsis* (1048b2). However, just a few lines later Aristotle considers seeing to be an *energeia* in the strict sense (1048b23). Taken together, these lines are perplexing, for by referring to seeing as an *energeia* in the strict sense Aristotle implies that it is not a *kinēsis* at all. This is because, if understood as an *energeia* in the strict sense, seeing would have an internal end, whereas a *kinēsis*, for Aristotle, aims at an external end.<sup>1</sup> An illustrative example of Aristotle's concept of *kinēsis* is house-building (1048b29-31 and 1050a26-29; cf. also *Physics* 201a18 and 201b7-14). Unlike seeing, house-building is clearly a *kinēsis*, for it has an external end, namely, a house. It would seem, therefore, that, on the face of it, one event cannot be both a *kinēsis* and an *energeia* in the strict sense, since Aristotle takes these to be mutually exclusive concepts. We must ask, therefore, if there is an incoherence here. Can Aristotle consistently hold that seeing is both a *kinēsis* and an *energeia* in the strict sense? If he cannot, then we must consider how he could have contradicted himself in the same

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<sup>1</sup> Here I use the phrase '*energeia* in the strict sense' to distinguish it from '*energeia* in the loose sense', which includes both *kinēsis* and substance in the first half of Theta 6 (see section 2). But substances as *energeiai* are not part of our present discussion (except at the beginning of section 2) since I will focus on Aristotle's distinction between two kinds of events, namely, *kinēseis* and *energeiai*, rather than on his discussion of substances. For sense-perception as a *kinēsis*, see also *Physics* 244b10-12; *De Anima* 408b1-4, 428b27-429a2; *De Somno* 454a8-10, etc. For seeing as an *energeia* in the strict sense, see also *Nicomachean Ethics* 1174a14-15, 1174b27-30, etc.



chapter?<sup>2</sup> Some possible answers can be found in the current scholarship addressed to this puzzle.

(1) Aristotle is speaking *loosely* (Menn ms., IIIa2, p. 25, pp. 33-34; also cf. Gill 1989, p. 217; Menn 1994, p. 76, pp. 106-107 and Anagnostopoulos 2011, p. 409) in categorizing seeing as a *kinēsis* in the first half of Theta 6. Here seeing *should* be viewed, as it is in the second half of Theta 6, as an *energeia* in the strict sense (note that Menn holds that this is Aristotle's earlier view, i.e., all *energeiai* are *kinēseis*). According to Menn, this is 'Aristotle's earlier view' *versus* 'His mature view'.<sup>3</sup>

(2) Aristotle thinks that seeing is a *kinēsis* in the first half of Theta 6, but he changes his mind *abruptly and without further explanation* (as Beere 2009, p. 228 thinks) and then takes seeing as an *energeia* in the strict sense later.

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<sup>2</sup> With regard to the question of whether they belong to the same chapter, see section 3.

<sup>3</sup> As Menn says: 'It is possible (though in my view very unlikely) that when Aristotle wrote Θa (sc. the first half of Theta 6) he still believed that sensation was a *kinēsis*, but it is also possible that here he was just speaking *loosely*, in accord with his *own earlier views* and with general philosophical opinion (as we will see, he would have had a good reason for choosing to speak in this loose way here). Either way, in Θb (sc. the second half of Theta 6) he is saying that, at least when we are using language strictly, we ought to restrict what range of activities we call *kinēseis*, and, in particular, we ought not to call sensation (or being awake) a *kinēsis*' (ms., IIIa2, p. 25; emphasis added). Also cf. Anagnostopoulos: 'What we should conclude from the fact that Aristotle mentions seeing and contemplating is that the *kuriōs* sense of *dunamis* invokes a notion of *kinēsis* that is in one way broader than we might expect. The *kuriōs* sense of *dunamis* covers certain capacities for (effecting, suffering, resisting, *etc.*) both end-exclusive change and certain activities that contain their ends, which may reasonably be taken not to be changes in the strictest sense' (2011, p. 409; also cf. p. 411).

(3) Both *kinēsis* and *energeia* have a generic use for Aristotle, as Burnyeat (2008, p. 263) says.<sup>4</sup>

(4) Contrary to Aristotle's wording, Frede (1994, p. 182, p. 185) writes that seeing in Theta 6 is not a *kinēsis* at all.<sup>5</sup>

It is very hard to take (4) as a possible answer to our puzzle unless we think that Aristotle is careless, or even incorrect, in characterizing seeing as a *kinēsis*. If this is the case, then (4) becomes close to (1), according to which Aristotle is speaking loosely when writing Theta 1-5 and the first half of Theta 6. Both (2) and (3) are more like reformulations of our puzzle rather than real explanations. This is clearly true of (2), but it seems to me that it is also true of (3), i.e., Burnyeat's suggestion, because it still does not tell us how exactly these two concepts, *kinēsis* and *energeia*, differ from and are related to each other. It seems, therefore, that, of the four possible answers, (1) is the most plausible answer to our puzzling question. Like many commentators, Menn, who supports (1), is committed to a developmentalist reading of Aristotle's distinction between *kinēsis* and *energeia* (cf. Rist 1989, pp. 105-120).

Whatever the merits of that reading, I will not follow that approach in this chapter. Quite the opposite, I assume a unitarian stance as opposed to a developmentalist attitude in reading Theta, as well as several relevant passages elsewhere in the corpus with which

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<sup>4</sup> Ross in his commentary on *Metaphysics* Theta 6 writes that 'At one time Aristotle includes *energeia* in *kinēsis* (*Rhet.* 1412a9); at another he includes *kinēsis* in *energeia* (*Phys.* 201b31, *De An.* 431a6, *E.N.* 1154b27); at another he speaks of the two as mutually exclusive (1048b28). *Kinēsis* is said to be an *energeia* but *atelēs* (*Phys.* 201b31), or to differ from *energeia* because it is *atelēs* (1048b29). The variations of language need not disturb us. *Kinēsis* and *energeia* are species of something wider for which Aristotle has no name, and for which he uses now the name of one species, now that of the other' (1924, p. 251). Burnyeat disagrees with Ross concerning the relation in which these two generic uses stand to one another (cf. Burnyeat 2008, pp. 263-265). But, for present purposes, I take their views to be similar in the sense that both of them hold that *kinēsis* and *energeia* have a generic use.

<sup>5</sup> Frede (1994, p. 185) puts both *kinēsis* and seeing under a more general concept: doing.

I will deal in this chapter. I adopt this attitude on the grounds that, as I shall argue, in Theta Aristotle has good reasons for treating seeing first as a *kinēsis* and later as an *energeia* in the strict sense. If my approach succeeds, then I think that we should not adopt the developmentalist reading of *energeia*. For this purpose, I will argue (section 2) that when seeing is considered from the point of view of *the efficient cause*, it is a *kinēsis*, whereas (section 4) when considered from the point of view of *the formal cause*, seeing is an *energeia* in the strict sense. In arguing for my position, a deeper understanding of Aristotle's concept of sense-perception and of the *kinēsis-energeia* distinction, in general, which is of major significance in Aristotle's philosophy, will emerge.

Before we begin our investigation, I should clarify at the outset why I have chosen seeing, rather than any of Aristotle's other examples of *energeiai* in Theta, such as understanding, thinking, etc., as my prime example. First, seeing is the only shared example in the two halves of Theta 6.<sup>6</sup> Secondly, seeing is also an example of sense-perception, which is used in Theta 1-5 (specifically, at 1047a5-8 and 1047b32) as part of Aristotle's discussion of *dunamis kata kinēsin* (1046a2). By examining Theta 1-5 and 6 together, we can arrive at a better grasp of Aristotle's strategy in writing Theta, and this, as we shall see, will, in turn, shed some light on our puzzle. Thirdly, seeing is also Aristotle's favourite example and it is, as one of the five sense modalities, at the centre of current debates about Aristotle's theory of sense-perception. This last point allows us to use a number of other texts and to take advantage of the scholarly literature on this topic in explicating Aristotle's distinction.

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<sup>6</sup> Note that in the first half of Theta 6 the example of contemplation (θεωρία) as a *kinēsis* is mentioned (1048a34), while in the second half of Theta 6 Aristotle gives us the examples of 'understands' (φρονεῖ) and 'thinks' (νοεῖ) as *energeiai* in the strict sense (1048b23-24). Although there might be a close internal connection among these three concepts, I leave them aside for the moment and focus exclusively on the example of seeing.



## 2. Seeing as a *Kinēsis*

To begin with, let us recall our puzzle. Does Aristotle *carelessly* confuse the *kinēsis-energeia* distinction in writing Theta 1-5 and the first half of Theta 6, and thereby take seeing as a *kinēsis* in these passages? To answer this question, we must take a closer look at a related question, that is, whether Aristotle, in one way or another, distinguishes *kinēsis* from *energeia* in these passages. As mentioned earlier, the difference between *kinēsis* and *energeia* in the strict sense consists in their differing relationships to ends. For *kinēsis* has an external end, whereas *energeia* in the strict sense has an internal end. Or to put it in Aristotelian terms, *kinēsis* is incomplete (ἄτελής) *energeia*. Whatever this means, the claim itself, i.e., that *kinēsis* is incomplete *energeia*, is frequently mentioned in Aristotle's writings (e.g., *Physics* 201b31-32, 257b8-9; *De Anima* 417a16-17, 431a6-7; *Metaphysics* 1048b18-22; *Nicomachean Ethics* 1174a19ff., etc.). Thus, on the face of it, there is nothing special about this claim. Our present task, however, is to consider whether Aristotle has this claim in mind when writing Theta 1-5 and the first half of Theta 6. I will argue that Aristotle provides a *prima facie* similar, though ultimately quite different, distinction in both Theta 1 and Theta 3. For simplicity, let us now focus on Theta 3. In one passage of Theta 3, we read: 'that which is named "actuality" (ἐνέργεια), which is connected to "completedness" (ἐντελέχεια), has been extended, from chiefly [applying to] the movements (κίνησις), to other things too; for it seems that actuality is especially (μάλιστα) movement (κίνησις)' (Theta 3 1047a30-32, also cf. Theta 1 1046a1-2; trans. Furth).<sup>7</sup> The relevant question for our puzzle is: Is Aristotle's reference to *energeia* here, which he has

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<sup>7</sup> ἐλήλυθε δ' ἡ ἐνέργεια τοῦνομα, ἡ πρὸς τὴν ἐντελέχειαν συντιθεμένη, καὶ ἐπὶ τὰ ἄλλα ἐκ τῶν κινήσεων μάλιστα· δοκεῖ γὰρ ἡ ἐνέργεια μάλιστα ἡ κίνησις εἶναι.

disconnected (ἐλήλυθε) from *kinēsis*, a reference to *energeia* in the strict sense? If it is, then the *kinēsis-energeia* distinction is already presupposed before its use in Theta 6.

However, the matter is not so straightforward. For the extended use of the term *energeia* is most likely to cover, as we shall see, the concept of substance (οὐσία) in Theta 6 (1048b9). In other words, by extending the concept of *energeia* Aristotle proposes that the general *dunamis-energeia* schema should be capable of instantiation in two more concrete sub-schemata: *dunamis-kinēsis*, on the one hand, and *matter-substance*, on the other.<sup>8</sup> Confirmation of this interpretation comes in Theta 6, where Aristotle says, ‘some (sc. *energeiai*) are as movement to potentiality (κίνησις πρὸς δύναμιν), and the others as substance to some sort of matter (οὐσία πρὸς τινα ὕλην)’ (1048b8-9).<sup>9</sup> For this reason, both *kinēsis* and substance are *energeiai*. If this is the case, then the most plausible candidate for the extended notion of *energeia* is substance, rather than *energeia* as contrasted with *kinēsis*. If this is correct, then Menn (ms., IIIa2, pp. 25-26) is quite right to point out that in Theta 1-5 and first half of Theta 6 Aristotle presupposes that *kinēseis* and *energeiai* are identical, or, at any rate, that there is no significant distinction between them.

Having clarified this point, let us return to our initial puzzle. If seeing, considered strictly as an *energeia*, is characterized as a *kinēsis* in Theta 1-5 and in the first half of Theta 6, how should we explain this apparent contradiction? To answer this question, let us first break the puzzle down into the following two questions, which I shall address in this section and the next sections respectively: (1) In what sense is seeing a *kinesis*? (2) In what sense is seeing an *energeia* in the strict sense? It is fairly clear, I think, that a proper

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<sup>8</sup> I have argued for this reading of extension in Chapter 1.

<sup>9</sup> τὰ μὲν γὰρ ὡς κίνησις πρὸς δύναμιν τὰ δ' ὡς οὐσία πρὸς τινα ὕλην.

answer to our puzzle depends on whether we can give a coherent response to these questions. Let us first take up question (1).<sup>10</sup>

In the *Physics* and the *De Somno*, we read:

[Text 1] For in a way even the senses undergo alteration, since actual perception is a motion through the body in the course of which the sense is affected in a certain way. (*Physics* Eta, 244b10-12; trans. Hardie and Gaye)

ἀλλοιοῦνται γὰρ πῶς καὶ αἱ αἰσθήσεις· ἡ γὰρ αἴσθησις ἢ κατ' ἐνέργειαν κίνησις ἐστὶ διὰ τοῦ σώματος, πασχούσης τι τῆς αἰσθήσεως.

[Text 2] The subject of actuality is identical with that of potentiality, and what is called sense-perception, as actuality, is a movement of the soul through the body. (*De Somno* 454a8-10; trans. Beare)

οὗ γὰρ ἡ δύναμις, τούτου καὶ ἡ ἐνέργεια· ἡ δὲ λεγομένη αἴσθησις ὡς ἐνέργεια κίνησις τις διὰ τοῦ σώματος τῆς ψυχῆς ἐστὶ.

In these two passages, Aristotle says explicitly that sense-perception is a *kinēsis* understood in a certain way (as indicated by the Greek words: πῶς, τι and τις). Now we cannot help but ask again: In what sense is sense-perception a *kinēsis*? Indeed, Aristotle already hints at the answer to this question in [Text 1], in which he says that the senses ‘undergo alteration (ἀλλοιοῦνται) in a way (πῶς)’ and sense-perception ‘is affected in a certain way (πασχούσης τι)’. Before we go into the detailed analysis of what these two expressions mean, it is worth noting that, contrary to Aristotle’s striking thesis here that sense-perception is a *kinēsis*, commentators conventionally take sense-perception to be an *energeia* in the strict sense rather than a *kinēsis* (cf. Frede 1994, p. 185). But we might ask: What prevents us from taking seeing as a *kinēsis*? The obstacle, I think, is the fact that

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<sup>10</sup> Note that the *Metaphysics* is not the place for a detailed analysis of seeing and sense-perception in general. It is necessary, therefore, to consider some passages outside the *Metaphysics* in order to develop a more detailed analysis of Aristotle’s account of sense-perception.



*kinēsis*, as classically defined and analyzed in the *Physics*, takes place in just three categories, that is, quality (ποιόν), quantity (ποσόν), and place (πού) (e.g., 226a23-b1).<sup>11</sup> Since it is by no means clear that the *kinēsis* in sense-perception could belong to any of these categories, sense-perception is not usually considered to be a *kinēsis*. It is called ἀλλοίωσις τις (*a kind of qualitative change*), rather than ἀλλοίωσις simpliciter (*De Anima* 416b34). In order to understand the way in which sense-perception is a *kinēsis*, we must read further in Aristotle. Note, however, that it would be better to read *kinēsis*-relevant passages in the *De Anima*, rather than Aristotle's other works; for, as we shall see, the concept of *kinēsis* seems to be more clearly expounded and further refined in the *De Anima*. In one passage of the *De Anima*, we read:

[Text 3] If it is true that the movement, i.e. the acting, and the being acted upon, is to be found in that which is acted upon, both the sound and the hearing so far as it is actual must be found in that which has the faculty of hearing. (*De Anima* Gamma, 426a2-4; trans. Smith)

εἰ δὲ ἔστιν ἡ κίνησις καὶ ἡ ποίησις καὶ τὸ πάθος ἐν τῷ κινουμένῳ, ἀνάγκη καὶ τὸν ψόφον καὶ τὴν ἀκοὴν τὴν κατ' ἐνέργειαν ἐν τῷ κατὰ δύναμιν εἶναι.

If we read the first occurrence of the conjunction 'καί' in the phrase 'ἡ κίνησις καὶ ἡ ποίησις καὶ τὸ πάθος' exexegetically,<sup>12</sup> then the concept of *kinēsis* is here explained in

<sup>11</sup> Aristotle sometimes refers to the processes of coming-to-be (γένεσις) and passing-away (φθορά) as *kinēseis* (e.g., *Physics* Gamma 1), but in the more exact analysis of *kinēsis*, they are not considered as *kinēseis* (e.g., *Physics* Eta). Cf. also Ross (1936, pp. 7-8 and pp. 45-48).

<sup>12</sup> Ross, however, does not take 'the being acted upon' as concerning *kinēsis*. He reformulates the passage as follows, 'If, then, the causing of movement (i.e. the acting) and the being acted on take place in that which is acted on, then (as a particular case of this) actual sound and actual hearing take place in that which is in a state of potentiality' (1961, pp. 275-276). But I am not convinced by Ross' interpretation; he does not provide us with a solid argument for reading the passage in this way.

terms of action (ἡ ποίησις), and passion (τὸ πάθος) (cf. also 417a14ff.).<sup>13</sup> Construed in this way, it seems that to say that sense-perception is a *kinēsis*, as it is said to be in the above example of hearing, amounts to claiming that (1) sense-perception is affected by sensible objects, and (2) it undergoes alteration *in a way* or it is affected *in a certain way* (as indicated in [Text 1] and [Text 2]). Indeed, even in the *Physics*, a close relationship between the concept of *kinēsis* and that of action and passion has been established (e.g., 202a22-24, 202b26-27).<sup>14</sup>

Provided that *kinēsis* is understood in this way, we are naturally led to ask: Does Aristotle change or extend the concept of *kinēsis* in the *De Anima*? For in the *Physics*, *kinēsis*, as classically analyzed, can take place only in three categories as we have mentioned. But in the *De Anima*, *kinēsis* is understood in terms of two more general concepts, action and passion (ἡ ποίησις καὶ τὸ πάθος), albeit action and passion of such a restricted sort as to be understood only *in a certain way*. Thus we may infer that *kinēsis* may have some wider applications than those attributed to it in the *Physics*. I think this point is further confirmed by the following passage.

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<sup>13</sup> In [Text 1] and [Text 4] (see below), Aristotle uses the term ‘τὸ πάσχειν’ instead of ‘τὸ πάθος’ to express the idea of ‘being acted upon’. And since these two terms (and also ‘τὸ ποιεῖν’ and ‘ἡ ποίησις’) are directly related, I take them to be equivalent in this chapter (except when ποίησις is used in a technical sense, i.e., in the sense of production). For convenience, I translate ‘ἡ ποίησις’ and ‘τὸ πάθος’ as ‘action’ and ‘passion’ respectively, and take them to be the standard translations when I want to express the ideas of ‘acting’ and ‘being acted upon’ hereafter in this chapter.

<sup>14</sup> Plotinus (*Enneads* VI. 3.28) equates the concepts of action and passion with that of *kinēsis*. As he puts it: ‘τὸ ποιεῖν καὶ τὸ πάσχειν κινήσεις λεκτέον’ (action and passion are to be called movements). But note that *kinēsis* does not simply amount to action and passion. As Broadie (2007a) points out, action and passion are necessary but not sufficient conditions for *kinēsis*. Consider, for instance, a tennis ball held in one’s hand. In this case, the tennis ball is not in *kinēsis* even though the hand is, actively, holding the ball and the ball is, passively, being held.



[Text 4] Also the expression ‘to be acted upon’ has more than one meaning; it may mean either the extinction of one of two contraries by the other, or the maintenance of what is potential by the agency of what is actual and already like what is acted upon, as actual to potential. For what possesses knowledge becomes an actual knower by a transition which is either not an alteration of it at all (being in reality a development into its true self or actuality) or at least an alteration in a quite different sense. (*De Anima* Beta, 417b2-7; trans. Smith)

οὐκ ἔστι δ' ἀπλοῦν οὐδὲ τὸ πάσχειν, ἀλλὰ τὸ μὲν φθορά τις ὑπὸ τοῦ ἐναντίου, τὸ δὲ σωτηρία μᾶλλον ὑπὸ τοῦ ἐντελέχεια ὄντος τοῦ δυνάμει ὄντος καὶ ὁμοίου οὕτως ὡς δύναμις ἔχει πρὸς ἐντελέχειαν· θεωροῦν γὰρ γίνεται τὸ ἔχον τὴν ἐπιστήμην, ὅπερ ἢ οὐκ ἔστιν ἀλλοιοῦσθαι, (εἰς αὐτὸ γὰρ ἢ ἐπίδοσις καὶ εἰς ἐντελέχειαν) ἢ ἕτερον γένος ἀλλοιώσεως.

As [Text 4] clearly shows, Aristotle extends his concept of ‘to be acted upon’ (τὸ πάσχειν) to cover another case, in which ‘to be acted upon’ is not ‘the extinction of one of two contraries by the other’, but rather, ‘the maintenance of what is potential by the agency of what is actual and already like what is acted upon, as actual to potential’. Aristotle’s example of the knower in [Text 4] serves to illustrate this extension (also cf. 417a21-b2). As he says, the transition from possessing knowledge to using knowledge, or contemplation (θεωρία), is a *special alteration*, i.e., special in the sense that it is a transition from the acquisition of a natural disposition or faculty (the so-called ‘first *energeia*’) to its exercise (the so-called ‘second *energeia*’).<sup>15</sup> Transitions of this sort cannot be captured by the concept of alteration as laid down in the *Physics*, in which alterations as qualitative *kinēseis* are typically characterized as happening between two contraries (e.g., 226a25-32, 226b1-8; let us call this *ordinary alteration*). Burnyeat (1992, 2002) is right to infer from

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<sup>15</sup> Bowin (2011) has argued convincingly that (1) this special alteration is identical with the transition from the first *energeia* to the second *energeia*; (2) this special alteration is a subset of (but not identical with) the preservative alteration. For an excellent analysis of these two alterations, see Bowin (2011, 2012).



this that this kind of special alteration is exactly what happens in sense-perception. The well-known disagreement between Burnyeat and Sorabji (1992, 2001), as I see it, centres on whether or not this special alteration is literal, but not about the special alteration *per se* (cf. also Caston 2005, pp. 265-269).<sup>16</sup> Commentators expand this debate beyond the domain of sense-perception to the domain of the higher cognitive capacity, thinking (νοῦς).<sup>17</sup> Just as in the debate about sense-perception, there is no consensus among scholars as to whether literal alterations (or physiological alterations) are necessarily involved in thinking (νοῦς) (cf. Sisko 1995). But whatever kind of alteration is involved in thinking (νοῦς), it is still different from ordinary alteration. For it may be thought that the alteration in thinking happens not between two contraries, as in the example of contemplation (θεωρία) in [Text 4]. The example of contemplation (θεωρία), as we will show later, is characterized by Aristotle as a *kinēsis* in Theta 6 (at 1048a34). This further confirms, it seems to me, that in the *De Anima*, Aristotle is using a wider concept of *kinēsis*, which includes both ordinary alteration and special alteration. To understand this point better, I will now address three problems in Aristotelian scholarship, which are closely related to these two types of alteration. I think that these three problems all stem from some confusion about these two alterations, in one way or another. Since these confusions play

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<sup>16</sup> As to what this affection is, we have mainly two different interpretations, the ‘spiritualist interpretation’ *versus* the ‘literalist interpretation’. Burnyeat (1997, 2002) is a representative of the spiritualist interpretation, holding that this affection is not the affection as described in the *Physics* because there is no physiological process underlying this alteration. Against this interpretation, Sorabji (1997) argues that what happens in sense-perception must involve a physiological alteration. For more discussions and criticisms of these two interpretations, see also Everson (1997), Magge (2000), Caston (2005), Heineman (2007), Lorenz (2007).

<sup>17</sup> If I understand him correctly, Sorabji, like Burnyeat, also does not think that there is any physiological alteration necessary for contemplation (θεωρία). As Sorabji puts it: ‘every mental process, *with the possible exception of intellectual thought*, requires a physiological process’ (1992, p. 211; emphasis added). So, it seems to me that the famous disagreement between Burnyeat and Sorabji lies in their different interpretations of sense-perception, but not of other activities such as contemplation (θεωρία).

a key role in our proper understanding of the sense in which seeing and other events are *kinēseis*, they deserve special attention here.

(i) Some commentators such as Gill (1980, p. 136; 1989, p. 222; 2004, p. 8, p. 11), Waterlow (1982, pp. 183-186), Hagen (1984, p. 278) and Kosman (1984, p. 136 n.32; 2013, pp. 65-66) identify ordinary alteration in the patient with *kinēsis*, while holding that what happens in the agent is (or ‘resembles’, as Waterlow puts it) an *energeia* in the strict sense.<sup>18</sup> We may use Aristotle’s favourite example, teaching (*esp.* in *Physics* Gamma 3), to illustrate this point. Teaching, as an event, is classified by Aristotle as a *kinēsis*. What happens in the teacher (the agent), however, is puzzling, given that, according to Aristotle’s classical doctrine, a *kinēsis* happens in the patient (the student, in this case). We can see that the student, in this example, goes from being uneducated to being educated. These commentators think that what happens in the teacher is an *energeia* in the strict sense because it appears that in the event of teaching the teacher does not change at all. Instead, as expounded in *Physics* Gamma 3, change (*kinēsis*) happens in the student. Following this line of reasoning, they hold that the teacher’s goal is internal to himself or herself, namely, teaching, and for *just* this reason, it is an *energeia* in the strict sense (since *energeia* in the strict sense is said to have an internal end).

However, it seems to me that this view cannot be right.<sup>19</sup> Having stated the reasons for thinking this, I shall argue for a different account, according to which *energeia* in the

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<sup>18</sup> For instance, Gill says that ‘the transition from a first-level potentiality to a first-level actuality is a change; but the transition from a second-level potentiality to a second-level actuality is not a change. This transition is simply a switch from inactivity to activity, just as the beginning of a change is a switch from rest to motion’ (2004, p. 8).

<sup>19</sup> Heinaman (1985, p. 150) has argued against this interpretation. He maintains that if teaching is an *energeia* in the strict sense, then walking will be an *energeia* too, on the grounds that walking, like teaching, is an ability we must acquire before we perform that very ability. Moreover, for Aristotle, an event or an activity is individuated by its end. This is why Aristotle holds that the *energeia* of the agent is the same as that of the patient (cf. *Physics* Gamma 3). If this interpretation is right, then teaching,



strict sense should be considered from a *quite different perspective*, that is, from *the point of view of the formal cause* of an event.<sup>20</sup> First, it seems to me that critics who defend the view I am objecting to confuse *energeia as an event* with *energeia as involved in an event* – regardless of whether it is in the agent or in the patient.<sup>21</sup> In the example of teaching, the

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being an *energeia* in the strict sense, will have a different end, such as to enjoy one's knowledge. Consequently, there will be two ends of this event: to exhibit the teacher's nature (or to enjoy one's knowledge) and to teach the knowledge to the student. This interpretation must be wrong. My own view is that for Aristotle there is only one end for any event, which means that the teacher is just changed from not-teaching to teaching, whatever this change may consist in. But the end of the teacher in this *kinēsis* is the same as that of the student taught, that is, to transmit knowledge from the teacher to the student. This is also the reason why Aristotle says that the *energeia* of the agent and the patient is the same (*Physics* 202a13-21). On this issue, also cf. Coope (2004, pp. 208-209).

<sup>20</sup> For the purpose of brevity, I will not mention this point in (ii) and (iii) (see below).

<sup>21</sup> Their confusion can be nicely illustrated by the following passage. In *Metaphysics* Theta, Aristotle writes: 'And while in some cases the exercise is the final thing (e.g. for sight, the seeing, and nothing else besides this comes-to-be from sight), in other cases something does come-to-be (e.g. from the house-building, a house, besides the house-building), all the same, [the exercise] is in the former case no less the completion, and in the latter case more completion than is the potentiality; for [the act of] house-building is [realized] in that which is being house-built, and comes-to-be, and is, at the same time as the house.' ἐπεὶ δ' ἐστὶ τῶν μὲν ἔσχατον ἢ χρῆσις (οἷον ὄψεως ἢ ὄρασις, καὶ οὐθὲν γίγνεται παρὰ ταύτην ἕτερον ἀπὸ τῆς ὄψεως), ἀπ' ἐνίων δὲ γίγνεται τι (οἷον ἀπὸ τῆς οἰκοδομικῆς οἰκία παρὰ τὴν οἰκοδόμησιν), ὅμως οὐθὲν ἥττον ἔνθα μὲν τέλος, ἔνθα δὲ μᾶλλον τέλος τῆς δυνάμεώς ἐστιν· ἢ γὰρ οἰκοδόμησις ἐν τῷ οἰκοδομουμένῳ, καὶ ἅμα γίγνεται καὶ ἔστι τῇ οἰκίᾳ (1050a23-29; trans. Furth). As is clear, building, as Aristotle's paradigmatic example of *kinēsis*, could involve an *energeia* in the thing being built, namely, a house. This is because building aims at an external end outside the activity of building itself. Contrary to building, seeing has no external end, and therefore 'the actualization is present in them [= the agents], e.g. the seeing is in the seer.' ἐν αὐτοῖς ὑπάρχει ἡ ἐνέργεια οἷον ἢ ὄρασις ἐν τῷ ὁρῶντι (1050a35-36; trans. Furth). According to the above passages, an *energeia* could be *involved in an event*, be it a *kinēsis* or an *energeia*, but note that, according to this doctrine, an *energeia* is located in the patient of a *kinēsis* and the agent of an *energeia* respectively. As a result, those commentators cannot be right in simply identifying what happens in the teacher in the activity of teaching with an *energeia*; for the *energeia*, on this view, is located in the patient (cf. also Broadie 2010) – given that teaching is a *kinēsis* (*contra* Ackrill 1965, pp. 140-141). (We may also note that, if we take Aristotle's theory articulated in the *De Anima* Beta 5 into consideration, then it seems that there will be two *energeiai* involved in a *kinēsis*, e.g., in the case of building, both the builder and the house are said to be *energeiai*.) But, at any rate, from the claim that an *energeia* is involved in a *kinēsis*, it



teacher is entitled to be called ‘in *energeiai*’ whenever his or her ability of teaching is exercised (cf. *De Anima* Beta 5), but this by no means renders what happens in the teacher an *energeia* in the strict sense. For, the concept of an *energeia* in the strict sense only concerns an event as a whole, rather than what is involved in an event. Secondly, like Aristotle’s example of contemplation (θεωρία), teaching, on its own, does not involve an ordinary alteration in the teacher, but it does not follow from this that teaching is an *energeia* in the strict sense. For *kinēsis* in teaching could be understood simply as involving an alteration or an affection, regardless of whether it is special or ordinary. The upshot of our argument, then, is that, generally speaking, to say that one event is a *kinēsis* amounts to claiming that it always involves: (1) both the agent and the patient, and (2) either a quantitative *kinēsis*, or a spatial *kinesis*, or an alteration (whether special or ordinary).

(ii) In contrast with our interpretation above, Heinaman (1990, p. 92), Everson (1997, p. 255) and Chen (2011, *esp.* pp. 120-125) claim that there are two alterations involved in sense-perception, identifying ordinary alteration with *kinēsis*, and special alteration with *energeia* in the strict sense.<sup>22</sup> In their view, special alteration supervenes on ordinary alteration. They constitute the formal and material elements in sense-perception respectively. This view is not convincing for the following two reasons. First, directly against Everson, Magee (2000) has argued that sense-perception does not necessarily

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does not follow that the event as a whole is an *energeia*; for there is, it seems to me, a significant difference between *energeia as an event* and *energeia as involved in an event*.

<sup>22</sup> In fact, Heinaman holds a more general view which says that in all psychic events except thought (sc. νοῦς) a composite of activity (*energeia*) and change (*kinēsis*) is involved: ‘The activity (form) takes place in the soul of a living thing and the change (matter) occurs in its body’ (1990, p. 92). However, it seems to me that Heinaman cannot explain Aristotle’s example of learning as a *kinēsis*, which is a psychic event but not an *energeia* in the strict sense. On this issue, also cf. Polansky. Unlike Heinaman, Polansky limits the scope of *energeia* to include ‘only certain psychical activities of animals’ (1983, p. 165).

involve an ordinary alteration.<sup>23</sup> We may disagree with Magee on this particular issue, for it still needs close scrutiny, but the conclusion I would like to draw from this on-going debate – as famously initiated by Burnyeat and Sorabji – is that it would be better if we do not simply base our understanding of the *kinēsis-energeia* distinction on a most controversial thesis regarding the nature of sense-perception. Secondly, granted that an ordinary alteration is involved in sense-perception, the relation between ordinary alteration and special alteration, such as whether the ordinary alteration is a necessary or a sufficient condition for the special alteration, still needs to be clarified (cf. Caston 2005, *esp.* pp. 248-256).

(iii) Different still from the view just outlined, Bowin (2011, p. 157; 2012, p. 88, pp. 90-91, p. 103) distinguishes activation from activity in his discussion of sense-perception, claiming that, strictly speaking, sense-perception in *De Anima* Beta 5 only refers to the activation of the sense faculty rather than the activity of sense-perception itself (cf. also Blair 1967, p. 106 and Bowin 2012, p. 88 n.3). For instance, it refers to the transition from not-seeing to seeing, rather than seeing itself. Bowin thinks that on Aristotle's considered view (such as the view he articulates in the *kinēsis-energeia* distinction passage of Theta 6), only the activation is a *kinēsis*, whereas the activity of sense-perception is an *energeia* in the strict sense. This view is untenable for at least two reasons. First, it is not clear that the distinction between activation and activity is relevant to the mechanics of sense-perception; for if sense-perception essentially involves being affected by sensible objects, as Aristotle thinks it does, then this affection will relate both

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<sup>23</sup> Magee argues against Everson, but he also thinks special alteration is *energeia* in the strict sense (2000, pp. 318-319).



to the activation and to the activity.<sup>24</sup> Therefore, if the affection is a *kinēsis*, the same will be true of both the activation and the activity. Secondly, further evidence that Aristotle thinks this can be derived from his discussion of sense-perception (*De Anima* Beta 5), in which, as Bowin (2011, p. 157; 2012, p. 91) has argued, he conflates the activation with the activity of sense-perception.

Let us summarize the conclusions that can be drawn from the discussion in this section. First, *kinēsis* in the *Physics* can be distinguished into three kinds: qualitative, quantitative, or spatial *kinēsis*. Secondly, *kinēsis* in the *De Anima* covers a further kind, that is, special alteration.<sup>25</sup> It is worth noting, however, that *kinēsis*, thus understood, can still be explained by the definition of *kinēsis* as laid down in the *Physics* (e.g., ‘ἡ τοῦ δυνάμει ὄντος ἐντελέχεια ἣ τοιοῦτον κίνησις ἐστίν’: the fulfillment of what is potentially, as such, is motion, 201a10-11). In other words, the definition of *kinēsis* is still applicable

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<sup>24</sup> A confirmation of this claim comes in the second book of the *De Anima*, where Aristotle says, ‘To begin with let us speak as if there were *no difference* between being moved (τοῦ κινεῖσθαι) or affected (τοῦ πάσχειν), and being active (τοῦ ἐνεργεῖν)’ (417a14-16; trans. Smith, emphasis added).

<sup>25</sup> This is also supported by a passage in *De Anima* Gamma, in which Aristotle writes: ‘In the case of sense clearly the sensitive faculty already was potentially what the object makes it to be actually; the faculty is not affected or altered. This must therefore be *a different kind of movement*; for movement is an activity of what is imperfect, activity in the unqualified sense, i.e. that of what has been perfected, is different.’ φαίνεται δὲ τὸ μὲν αἰσθητὸν ἐκ δυνάμει ὄντος τοῦ αἰσθητικοῦ ἐνεργείᾳ ποιοῦν· οὐ γὰρ πάσχει οὐδ’ ἀλλοιοῦται. διὸ ἄλλο εἶδος τοῦτο κινήσεως· ἡ γὰρ κίνησις τοῦ ἀτελοῦς ἐνέργεια, ἡ δ’ ἀπλῶς ἐνέργεια ἑτέρα, ἡ τοῦ τετελεσμένου (431a4-7; trans. Smith, emphasis added). Similar to the above translation, Hett translates ‘ἄλλο εἶδος τοῦτο κινήσεως’ as ‘it is motion of a distinct kind’ (1957, p. 175). However, Ross (1961, p. 301), Ackrill (1965, p. 140), Hamlyn (1978, p. 63, p. 145), Owens (1978b, pp. 127-128) and Polansky (2007, pp. 482-483) take ‘ἄλλο εἶδος τοῦτο κινήσεως’ as implying that ‘this is different *from* movement (sc. not a different kind *of* movement)’. As we see, a seeming inconsistency arises here, namely, whether the so-called *energeia*, which involves special alterations, is a sub-species of *kinēsis* or is completely different from *kinēsis*. But, grammatically speaking, I think that Smith’s and Hett’s readings are more reasonable. Therefore, I take the so-called *energeia* as a sub-species of *kinēsis*, rather than as different from *kinēsis*.



to this special *kinēsis* (or more precisely, special alteration).<sup>26</sup> Thirdly, one might ask: Why does Aristotle need to develop further his concept of *kinēsis*? One possible reason is that the description of *kinēsis* in the *Physics* is derived from his analysis of a simple model as spelt out in *Physics* Alpha 7, whereas in the *De Anima* a complex psychic model is developed, and, as a result, Aristotle adapts the account of *kinēsis* from his physical works to meet the needs of his psychology (cf. Burnyeat 2002; 2008, p. 273). I suspect that this is also at least one reason why Aristotle, at the opening passage of the *De Anima*, claims that the study of the soul contributes (συμβάλλει) to our understanding of nature (402a5-6). Clearly, one benefit of studying the soul is that it deepens our understanding of a more complex kind of *kinēsis*, as shown in the *De Anima*.<sup>27</sup> Fourthly, *kinēsis* only concerns the two concepts of action and passion (ἡ ποίησις καὶ τὸ πάθος). In this sense, if action and passion are involved in an event, along with a quantitative *kinēsis*, a spatial *kinesis*, or an alteration (whether special or ordinary), both the agent and the patient can properly be said to be ‘in *kinēsis*’. Thus understood, *kinēsis* is considered from the point of view of *the efficient cause* of the event.

### 3. Seeing as an *Energeia* in Theta 6

Having clarified the sense in which seeing is a *kinēsis*, I now wish to explain in what sense seeing is an *energeia*, as opposed to *kinēsis*. Let us first read the well-known *kinēsis-energeia* distinction passage in Theta 6.

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<sup>26</sup> A related question is this: Is this also the reason why Aristotle uses the same terms, *dunamis* and *energeia* (or *entelecheia*), which are the definiens of *kinēsis* in the *Physics*, to describe this special *kinēsis* in *De Anima* Beta 5? I leave this as an open question.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Burnyeat thinks that ‘biology often requires more refined notions of alteration than were needed for the elemental level of *De Generatione et Corruptione* I.7 and the very general discussion of *Physics* III.1-3’ (2002, *esp.* p. 65).

[Text 5] Since among actions (τῶν πράξεων) that have a limit, none is a completion (τέλος), but each is the sort of thing relating to the completion, – as e.g. slimming is to slimness; the [bodily parts] themselves, when they are slimming, in that respect are in movement (ἐν κινήσει), though those things which the movement is for the sake of [whose presence constitutes slimness] do not yet belong to them – these things are not action, or at least not complete, just because it is not a completion. But that [sort of action] in which its completion is contained is a [real] action. E.g. in the same moment one is seeing (ὁρᾷ) and has seen (έώρακε), is understanding (φρονεῖ) and has understood (πεφρόνηκε), is thinking (νοεῖ) and has thought (νενόηκεν). But if you are learning (μανθάνει), it's not the case that in the same moment you have learned (μεμάθηκεν), nor if you are being cured (ὑγιάζεται), that in the same moment you have been cured (ὑγιάσται). However, someone who is living well (εὖ ζῇ), at the same time has lived well (εὖ ἔζηκεν), and someone who is happy (εὐδαιμονεῖ), has been happy (εὐδαιμόνηκεν). If that were not so, [the living well, e.g.] would have had to come to an end at some time, as is the case with slimming. But in fact it does not; you are living and have lived. Of these [actions], then, one group should be called movements, and the other, actualizations (ἐνεργείας). For every movement is incomplete (ἄτελής) – slimming, learning, walking, house-building; these are movements and are incomplete. For one cannot in the same moment both be taking a walk (βαδίζει) and have taken it (βεβάδικεν), nor be house-building (οικοδομεῖ) and have house-built (ὠκοδόμηκεν), nor be coming-to-be and have come-to-be, nor being moved (κινεῖται) and have been moved (κεκίνηται); they are different, as [in general] are moving (κινεῖ) and having moved (κεκίνηκεν). But at the same moment the same thing has seen and is seeing, and is thinking and has thought. This sort of thing, then, I call an actualization, the other sort, a movement. (*Metaphysics* Theta, 1048b18-35; trans. Furth, slightly modified)

In the above passage, through the distinction he draws between *kinēsis* and *energeia*, Aristotle groups several examples of action (τῶν πράξεων) into two camps: seeing, understanding, thinking, living well and happiness are examples of *energeiai*, and slimming, learning, curing, walking and building are examples of *kinēseis*. Their

difference consists in the fact that *kinēsis* is incomplete (ἄτελής) *energeia*, i.e., incomplete in the sense that the ends are external in the examples of *kinēseis*, whereas they are internal in *energeiai* in the strict sense.<sup>28</sup> As mentioned earlier, the claim that *kinēsis* is incomplete *energeia* is very common in Aristotle's writings. However, what lesson we should draw from this claim, in particular, and the *kinēsis-energeia* distinction, in general, is open to dispute.

Before analysing this passage, we must face a difficulty concerning its textual status. According to Burnyeat (2008), this passage does not belong to Theta 6, but was a later marginal annotation, which was eventually incorporated into the main text.<sup>29</sup> Despite thinking that this passage was not originally written as part of Theta, Burnyeat still maintains that the doctrine it expresses is genuinely Aristotelian (also cf. Ross 1924, p. 253). As he says: 'My argument has not tried to deny that they are the Philosopher's (sc. Aristotle's) thoughts. Only to affirm that they derive from some very, very special context about which we can only speculate' (2008, p. 279). Following Burnyeat's lead, Makin (2006) and Beere (2009), in their respective commentaries on Theta, also hold that this passage does not fit well with its context, and does not contribute to the main arguments

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<sup>28</sup> For similar distinctions between *kinēsis* and *energeia*, see also *Topics* 146bff.; *Sophistici Elenchi* 178a9ff.; *De sensu* 446b2ff.

<sup>29</sup> As Burnyeat puts it: 'Ignoring context is usually a fault. But not here, for the good reason that the passage does not fit into the overall programme of Theta, was not written for Theta, and should not be printed in the place we read it today' (2008, p. 220, also cf. p. 253).



of Theta.<sup>30</sup> Nevertheless, no commentator, as far as I know, questions the authenticity of this passage. In light of this, I think that, regardless of where the passage is placed, we must at least explain, if at all possible, the seeming contradiction already pointed out at the beginning of this chapter. In this respect, I think that Menn (ms., IIIa2, p. 23) is quite right in arguing that the more important question is to ask ‘why’, rather than ‘when’, Aristotle (or some latter editors) put this passage in its current place. It is to the philosophical implications of this distinction that I now turn.

Since 1965 when Ackrill published his seminal paper on this passage, it has drawn much attention and has been the subject of intense study and debate. In that paper, Ackrill argues that Aristotle’s *kinēsis-energeia* distinction in this passage is not successful, and he accuses Aristotle of creating a serious confusion through this distinction (1965, p. 135).

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<sup>30</sup> See Makin (2006, pp. 150-154) and Beere (2009, pp. 227-228). In his commentary, Beere gives several philosophical reasons for downplaying the importance of this passage. I do not, however, think his reasons are defensible. Let us analyze his views one by one. (1) Beere claims that ‘it (sc. 1048b18-35) specifies which putative actions are in fact actions strictly speaking. But *Metaphysics* Theta shows no concern of any kind with action in this sense’. And, ‘This is part of the inquiry into being, not part of an inquiry into actions’. These two reasons are untenable because, as we know, the essence of God is characterized by Aristotle as a kind of action (activity). So, for Aristotle, the inquiry into being and the study of action are completely compatible. (2) The second reason Beere gives is that, as we have said, Aristotle in Theta takes seeing first as a *kinēsis* and later as an *energeia* in the strict sense. Beere thinks that Aristotle changes his mind abruptly without explaining why he does so. But, as I have said at the opening of this chapter, and will argue in the rest of this chapter, Aristotle has good reasons to change his mind. So, it is fair to say that Aristotle *does* change his mind, but *not abruptly*! (3) Beere says that ‘Theta 8 is important for another reason, as well. It seems to draw the same distinction as the passage between events that are identical with their own end and events that are not (1050a23–b2). But Theta 8 blithely ignores the terminological restriction central to the passage: that only complete events are *energeiai*. Theta 8 treats the distinction between complete and incomplete events as a distinction between complete and incomplete *energeiai*, as if this were no problem at all’. According to Beere, Aristotle’s other similar distinction in Theta 8 is between complete and incomplete *energeiai*, rather than between *kinēseis* and *energeiai*. But the question is: Are these two claims incompatible? As I see it, they do not contradict each other at all, especially when Aristotle has already clarified that *kinēsis* is incomplete *energeia* in Theta 6.

Ackrill uses the examples of walking and enjoying, to illustrate this confusion. If walking, as Aristotle's example of *kinēsis*, is always from place<sub>A</sub> to place<sub>Z</sub>, then likewise, enjoying, understood by Aristotle as an *energeia* in the strict sense, can also be characterized as enjoying, for instance, from the first movement of Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony* to its fourth movement. Thus construed, the *kinēsis-energeia* distinction seems doomed to collapse. For there appears to be no clear-cut distinction between those activities that have external ends and those that have internal ends. Furthermore, this calls the so-called 'tense-test' into question. According to the 'tense-test', if the present tense of some verbs entails the perfect tense of these verbs, they designate *energeiai*; if not, they designate *kinēseis*.<sup>31</sup> In the case of enjoying as *energeia* in the strict sense, Aristotle holds that it is compatible to say 'enjoys' (or 'is enjoying') and 'has enjoyed' at the same time. However, if there is no such clear-cut criterion for distinguishing *kinēsis* from *energeia*, as noted above, then it seems that the 'tense-test' is, at the very least, not a sufficient condition for the *kinēsis-energeia* distinction. In view of this, some commentators question the 'tense-test' approach, holding that the *kinēsis-energeia* distinction is grounded in some other consideration, rather than simply in linguistic considerations.<sup>32</sup> My own view on this issue is close to this approach. But at the moment, I take the *kinēsis-energeia* distinction at its face value, that is, two kinds of action (τῶν πράξεων) differ only in terms of their relationship to the end (τέλος), as [Text 5] explicitly shows. I will give a detailed explanation of what exactly this means in the next section. For the moment, let us simply keep in mind that through the

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<sup>31</sup> As noted by Burnyeat (2008, p. 246), the present tense and the perfect tense could be mutually entailing. For at 1048b33-34, Aristotle claims that 'one has seen' (έώρακε) entails 'one sees' (ὁρᾷ). It is not the case that the present tense entails the perfect tense, but the other way around.

<sup>32</sup> See e.g., Mamo (1970), Pickering (1977), White (1980), Polansky (1983), Hagen (1984), Stone (1985), Heinaman (1995), Cleary (1998) and Menn (ms., IIIa2, pp. 31-33). For those who think that the *kinēsis-energeia* distinction is based on the 'tense-test', see e.g., Kenny (1963, Chapter 8; 2003, pp. 120-130), Penner (1970, p. 393), Graham (1980) and Mourelatos (1993).



*kinēsis-energeia* distinction, seeing is taken to be an *energeia* in the strict sense. Before we move on to the next section, let us remind ourselves of the initial problem: If seeing is viewed as a *kinēsis* in Theta 1-5 and in the first half of Theta 6, then we must explain why Aristotle, in the second half of Theta 6, takes seeing as an *energeia* in the strict sense.

#### 4. Seeing as *kinēsis* and Seeing *as such*: A Tentative Solution

Having pointed out the difficulty, it is now the time to put forward our solution. My tentative proposal is based on a certain distinction between seeing as a *kinēsis* and seeing as an *energeia* in the strict sense. Their difference consists in the fact that seeing as a *kinēsis* focuses on the *kinetic dimension* of seeing. What I mean is that, if action and passion (ἡ ποίησις καὶ τὸ πάθος) are involved in the event of seeing, and if sense-perception consists in being affected in a certain way, then this event can be properly called a *kinēsis*. In other words, seeing is viewed from the point of view of *the efficient cause* of the event. In contrast to this, seeing as an *energeia* in the strict sense focuses on the seeing *as such*, i.e., it only concerns its relation to its end (τέλος), or more precisely, to the completeness of its form. Simply put, it is viewed from the point of view of *the formal cause* of the event. Thus construed, seeing as an *energeia* in the strict sense does not concern the particular contents of the event. Of course, I am not saying that we can see without any particular sensible objects, but rather, we can consider seeing *as such*, the event itself, without its particular contents. Confirmation that this proposal is on the right track comes from the following passage.

[Text 6] For seeing seems to be complete at any time, since it has no need for anything else *to complete its form* by coming to be at a later time. And pleasure is also like this. (*Nicomachean Ethics* Kappa, 1174a14-17; trans. Irwin, emphasis added)



δοκεῖ γὰρ ἡ μὲν ὄρασις καθ' ὄντινον χρόνον τελεία εἶναι· οὐ γάρ ἐστιν ἐνδεὴς οὐδενὸς ὃ εἰς ὕστερον γινόμενον τελειώσει αὐτῆς τὸ εἶδος· τοιούτῳ δ' ἔοικε καὶ ἡ ἡδονή.

In this passage, Aristotle thinks that pleasure is analogous to seeing in that it has a *complete form*. As such, it has completeness in respect of its form (αὐτῆς τὸ εἶδος). Thus understood, to claim that seeing is complete amounts to claiming that seeing *as such* has complete form. On this point, Urmson (1995) provides us with a very illuminating distinction, which, unfortunately, has not drawn enough attention in Aristotelian scholarship.<sup>33</sup> In that paper, Urmson distinguishes the internal end from the external end of an event.<sup>34</sup> Their differences are as follows.

First, the internal end of an action has nothing to do with the agent's intention, but is determinable *a priori* (p. 524). Urmson's example is tennis. As he puts it: 'Anyone with

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<sup>33</sup> However, I disagree with him on the following issue. According to Urmson, whether an event is called a *kinēsis* or an *energeia* in the strict sense depends on how we describe the event. As he puts it: 'I doubt whether there is any bit of doing or making that could not be described as either a process or an activity at will. For instance, "drinking wine" is an activity, whereas "drinking down a glass of wine" is a process' (1995, p. 527). But this view cannot be right for at least two reasons. First, as I will show, Aristotle never focuses on the different objects, such as 'wine' and 'a glass of wine', in order to distinguish *energeia* from *kinēsis*. In fact, he never uses any objects in the *kinēsis-energeia* passage of Theta 6. Secondly, Aristotle's classifications of *kinēsis*-verbs and *energeia*-verbs are independent of how we describe the objects that modify the verbs (cf. also Heinaman 1995, pp. 199-200). For instance, according to Urmson, building, as Aristotle's example of *kinesis*, could be an *energeia* in the strict sense if we describe it as 'building something' rather than 'building a particular house'. But this is unacceptable because Aristotle never takes building as an *energeia* in the strict sense. Rather, he takes it as a *kinēsis* without exception. Similarly, Kosman (1984, p. 127; 1994, p. 211 and 2013, p. 180) wants to distinguish walking from strolling. He thinks that the former is a *kinesis* whereas the latter is an *energeia* in the strict sense. However, Aristotle does not have such a distinction, and he also takes walking as a *kinesis*.

<sup>34</sup> This is similar to the Stoics' distinction between τέλος, virtuous activity, and σκοπός, the external object of this activity. On this issue, see Long (1967, pp. 78ff.) and Burnyeat et al. (1984, p. 129).

a command of the concepts applicable to the game of tennis knows that success in playing a rally consists in being the last to hit the ball into his opponent's court. Such a success is, in my terminology, the internal end of playing a rally at tennis. Any persons on a tennis court not aiming at this success may be practicing, or giving or taking instruction, or many other things; but they are not playing a rally' (p. 524). In other words, the end of playing tennis is internally determined by the very nature of the event. In this sense, its end is determinable *a priori* (cf. also Ackrill 1965, p. 138; Heinaman 1985, p. 151; 1987, p. 318, p. 322; 1996, p. 95).

Second, the external end of an action is whatever the agent wishes to achieve by performing that action (p. 524).

As we see, Urmson's use of the terminology is, *prima facie*, quite different from ours. From the beginning of this chapter, I have been using internal and external end as a means of distinguishing *energeia* from *kinēsis*. As mentioned earlier, *kinēsis* has an external end, whereas *energeia* in the strict sense has an internal end. But if *energeia* in the strict sense is said to be complete only in respect of its form, as indicated by the example of seeing in [Text 6] above, then the distinction between *kinēsis* and *energeia* in fact falls under Urmson's distinction of the internal end of an action. It has nothing to do with the agent's intentions, and, in this sense, it is determinable *a priori*. Construed in this way, let us now go back to the *kinēsis-energeia* distinction passage of Theta 6, and some other relevant texts, to see whether these passages can justify our interpretation of *energeia*. I think that there are at least four good reasons in support of our interpretation.

First, the concept of end (τέλος) in Theta 6 by itself is at least compatible with the idea of completeness. The end of an event could mean the completeness of that event itself. It has nothing to do with the event's particular contents, much less the intentions of the agent. This point is, I think, also supported by Aristotle's examples. Slimming, learning, curing, walking and building are the examples of *kinēseis*. Of these examples, building, as



one kind of art (τέχνη), is a classic example of production (ποίησις). But, as we can see, other examples are also similar to Aristotle's concept of production (ποίησις), which are *a priori* determined by their very nature to have external ends (cf. *Nicomachean Ethics* Zeta 4 and *Metaphysics* Theta 1050a23-29). In contrast to these, the ends of other activities such as seeing and thinking are not conceptually determined and, in this sense, they have complete form and, therefore, qualify as *energeiai* in the strict sense. For example, unlike building, which by its very nature is determined to have an end, namely, a house, there is nothing about seeing, *as such*, that determines a particular end for it.

Secondly, in addition to [Text 6] and the above examples, a particular grammatical phenomenon also lends some support to our proposal. It is worth noting that in the passage in which Aristotle makes the *kinēsis-energeia* distinction, there are no objects after the verbs that he uses; for instance, he says *to see*, rather than *to see some particular thing*.<sup>35</sup> This may suggest that Aristotle is considering seeing *as such*, namely, the very nature of the event in so far as it is an event of, precisely, seeing. As we have said, seeing, thus understood, does not concern its particular contents. In this sense, I think that Burnyeat (2008, p. 252) may be wrong in adding the objects, though in brackets, in his translation of the passage.

Thirdly, if seeing *as such* is understood as the very form of that activity, then it makes perfect sense to claim that two adverbs, 'quickly' and 'slowly' – another criterion for specifying *kinēsis*-verbs (cf. Heinaman 1985, p. 146) – are not applicable to the description of *energeiai* in the strict sense (*Nicomachean Ethics* Kappa 3). For, as is well-known to the student of Aristotle, form is not subject to generation and destruction (cf.

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<sup>35</sup> In fact, in *Sophistici Elenchi*, Aristotle does add predications after verbs. As he says, 'it is surely possible to be seeing and to have seen *the same thing* (τὸ αὐτὸ) at the same time and in the same respect' (178a10-11; emphasis added). But clearly, Aristotle is not emphasizing the content of seeing, but seeing itself.



*Metaphysics* Zeta 8). Furthermore, our interpretation is compatible with the thesis that *energeia* in the strict sense has homogeneous parts, whereas *kinēsis* has heterogeneous parts (cf. Polansky 1983, p. 166; Hagen 1984, p. 270, p. 272; Stone 1985, p. 15, p. 17). The reason is that the form of *kinēsis* will be determined by what comes to be *later* in that very *kinēsis*, most importantly, by its end-point (cf. 1174a19-23), whereas the form of *energeia* in the strict sense will not, because it has completeness in respect of form.

Finally, the perfect tense in the ‘tense-test’, as many commentators on Theta 6 have noted (e.g., Penner 1970; Pickering 1977; White 1980; Stone 1985) should be interpreted *aspectually* rather than *temporally*. For instance, according to the temporal interpretation of the Greek perfect (cf. Ackrill 1965, pp. 126-127), ‘Socrates has drunk the hemlock’ is true if and only if there was a time *t* anterior to the present such that ‘Socrates drinks (is drinking) the hemlock’ was true at *t*; whereas according to the aspectual interpretation, if ‘Socrates has drunk the hemlock’ is true, all that follows is that this event is complete or finished *in the now*. As we can see, our interpretation of the ‘tense-test’ as focusing on the form of the event can perfectly capture this characteristic of the perfect tense; for *energeiai* in the strict sense, on our interpretation, have completeness with reference to their forms *at any time* during their existence.

The arguments presented so far have aimed at clarifying the sense in which seeing is an *energeia* in the strict sense. In my view, seeing *as such* concerns only the form of the activity, it is not concerned with its concrete contents. It is called a *kinēsis* only when considered from the point of view of the efficient cause, as we have argued in the second section of this chapter. Equipped with this distinction, let us now go back to the several difficulties stemming from the *kinēsis-energeia* distinction to see whether our interpretation can successfully obviate them.

Recall Ackrill’s examples of walking and enjoying. If we try to complete these two activities by adding more concrete descriptions after the verbs ‘walk’ and ‘enjoy’, then we

will very probably find that the *kinēsis-energeia* distinction collapses.<sup>36</sup> If walking understood as a *kinēsis* is walking from place<sub>A</sub> to place<sub>Z</sub>, then I cannot reasonably say that I have finished my walking before I arrive at place<sub>Z</sub>; by parity of reasoning, if enjoying is described as a particular event, say, enjoying a symphony, then I cannot say that I have enjoyed the symphony when the symphony is still playing. Enjoying, thus understood, is no longer an *energeia* in the strict sense, as Aristotle takes it to be, but a *kinēsis*. The difficulty, therefore, seems to be that there is no strict criterion for us to take walking as a *kinēsis*, while at the same time taking enjoying as an *energeia* in the strict sense.

One might argue, as Ackrill suggested, that we can remove the difficulty by showing that Aristotle had in mind only such cases as enjoying a scent, hearing a single sound, dwelling on a single truth, not things as complex as a symphony (1965, pp. 132-133). In response to this suggestion, Ackrill himself replies that ‘such a restriction on the meaning of the terms would be utterly alien to ordinary Greek usage and not supported by Aristotle’s usage elsewhere. Indeed, the point about enjoyment in the *Ethics* is embedded in a discussion which assumes – of course – that one can enjoy all sorts of complex activities and experience’ (1965, p. 133). So, it appears that we cannot save Aristotle’s *kinēsis-energeia* distinction by limiting the content of *energeia*. Alternatively, Pickering (1977, p. 42) proposes that whether an event is an *energeia* in the strict sense or not depends on the nature of its object. For instance, enjoying a pleasant smell and seeing a cat will be *energeiai* in the strict sense, whereas other unpleasant activities are *kinēseis*. However, this cannot be right. For Aristotle never postulates that his concept of *energeia* depends on the nature of its objects. Also, it seems to me that Pickering confuses the

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<sup>36</sup> Mamo also has a similar view. He says that ‘The real difficulty is that if we insist on a complete description (sc. adding the contents or the objects after the verbs) then we must include the what, the object of activities which seemed limitless to Aristotle, and the *kinēsis-energeia* distinction would collapse’ (1970, p. 30).

internal and external end of an action (as Urmson's distinction suggests). For if our interpretation is right, the concept of *energeia* in the strict sense has nothing to do with the preferences or the intentions of the agent.

Let us now say a few more words about pleasure (ἡδονή), and I think this will further confirm our interpretation of *energeia*. Pleasure is a standard example of *energeiai* in the strict sense (as in [Text 6]), but can also be found in *kinēsis*, as Aristotle claims in the following passage.

[Text 7] That is why the god always enjoys one simple pleasure. For activity belongs not only to change but also to unchangingness, and indeed there is pleasure in rest more than in change. (*Nicomachean Ethics* Eta, 1154b26–28; trans. Irwin, slightly modified)

διὸ ὁ θεὸς αἰεὶ μίαν καὶ ἀπλὴν χαίρει ἡδονήν· οὐ γὰρ μόνον κινήσεώς ἐστὶν ἐνέργεια ἀλλὰ καὶ ἀκινήσιας, καὶ ἡδονὴ μᾶλλον ἐν ἡρεμίᾳ ἐστὶν ἢ ἐν κινήσει.

Though found less in *kinēsis* than in rest, still there is some pleasure in *kinēsis*. What does this mean? It seems to me that Burnyeat's vivid example (2008, p. 271) can nicely illustrate this point: a crossword puzzle offers people pleasure – until you have completed it! Like Ackrill's example of enjoying a symphony, pleasure, thus understood, is a *kinēsis*. Only when considered as pleasure *as such* does it have complete form and, therefore, meet the criterion for being an *energeia* in the strict sense.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> It is worth noting that pleasure (ἡδονή) can also be characterized as a *kinēsis* (e.g., *Rhetoric* 1369b33–35; cf. also *De Anima* 408b1–18 and *Magna Moralia* 1204b20–28). So, it seems that whether ἡδονή is a *kinēsis* or an *energeia* in the strict sense also depends on the perspective we take, viz., when considered from the point of view of the *efficient* cause, ἡδονή is a *kinēsis*, whereas when viewed from the point of view of the *formal* cause, it is an *energeia* in the strict sense. Clearly, this also confirms our interpretation.



As mentioned earlier, Ackrill (1965) takes the difficulty of offering a coherent interpretation of the concept of *energeia* as indicating some confusion in Aristotle's thinking. As I have shown, however, if we can distinguish, for instance, in the case of seeing, seeing *particular things* and seeing *as such*, then this difficulty is avoided. For as I have argued, when Aristotle takes seeing as an *energeia* in the strict sense, he is claiming that seeing *as such* has complete form, independent of its particular contents.

To sum up, I would like to draw several conclusions. First, from the point of view of *the efficient cause*, all *energeiai* are *kinēseis*.<sup>38</sup> Secondly, from the point of view of *the formal cause* – i.e., considering all *energeiai as such* – not all *kinēseis* are *energeiai* in the strict sense. Only those *kinēseis* that have completeness in respect of their forms are *energeiai* in the strict sense. Thirdly, the above two conclusions, I would like to propose, are also applicable to other cases of *energeiai* in Theta 6, such as 'understands' (φρονεῖ), 'thinks' (νοεῖ), 'lives well' (εὖ ζῆν) and 'is happy' (εὐδαιμονεῖ). For the purpose of brevity, I will now give particular attention to the examples of 'understands' (φρονεῖ) and 'thinks' (νοεῖ). It is worth noting that contemplation (θεωρία) in the first half of Theta 6 (1048a34) is considered as a *kinēsis*, while in the second half of Theta 6 Aristotle takes 'understands' (φρονεῖ) and 'thinks' (νοεῖ) (at 1048b23-24) to be examples of *energeiai* in the strict sense. This is puzzling for Beere, who argues that 'This is worrisome enough, but contemplation is particularly important, since it (sc. θεωρία) is God's essence (οὐσία; Lambda 6 1071b19-20). If contemplation (sc. θεωρία) is a change, then the very essence of God would be change' (2009, p. 227) (cf. also Burnyeat 2008, p. 243). (Also note that in *Nicomachean Ethics* 1177a19-21 Aristotle describes θεωρία as the most significant of human *energeiai*.) But as we have seen, the puzzle emerges only when Aristotle's concept of *kinēsis* is not

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<sup>38</sup> Like Menn, Rist (1989) also holds that, in Aristotle's early writings, all *energeiai* are *kinēseis*. As we said earlier, both of them adopt a developmentalist reading on this problem. But, if my interpretation succeeds, we have no reason to adopt such a strategy in reading Theta.

properly understood. If contemplation also involves action and passion (ἡ ποίησις καὶ τὸ πάθος) between objects and subjects of thought, and the subject of thought is affected in a certain way (as indicated in section 2), then in a broader sense contemplation is a *kinēsis*.<sup>39</sup> However, like other similar cases, once contemplation is considered from the point of view of the formal cause, it is an *energeia* in the strict sense.<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, our interpretation, as we might expect, is also compatible with the famous Aristotelian doctrine that God thinks nothing but himself (*Metaphysics* 1074b33-35; also cf. Politis 2004, pp. 281-288).

Before concluding this section, I would like to raise a further question to which I think no easy answer can be found at the moment. The example of building as a *kinēsis* is not hard to understand; for without referring to an external end, we cannot know the nature of the activity that a craftsman is engaged in, because it is a kind of production (ποίησις). There remain, however, some puzzles as to what exactly makes some events, and not others, *energeiai* in the strict sense. We can illustrate this if we consider the examples of seeing and walking. Seeing is, according to Aristotle, an *energeia* in the strict sense, whereas walking is just a *kinēsis*. What renders them different? For, on the face of it, these two activities could be seen to have the same structure.

**Seeing as such:** Without a reference to a particular external end, we can understand what the activity of seeing is. For example, seeing *as such*, rather than seeing a long painting.

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<sup>39</sup> Note that the *kinēsis* of mind is thinking (νοῦ μὲν γὰρ κίνησις νόησις, *De Anima* 407a20), and mind is said to be moved by the object of thought (νοῦς δὲ ὑπὸ τοῦ νοητοῦ κινεῖται, *Metaphysics* 1072a30). Also cf. Wedin (1989).

<sup>40</sup> White (1980, pp. 258-263) raises the question as to how to reconcile the *kinetic* aspect of θεωρία with the non-*kinetic* aspect of θεωρία. He provides us with a good summary of what has been proposed for resolving this difficulty and puts forward a proposal of his own. As I have argued thus far, however, the difficulty arises only when the *kinēsis-energeia* distinction has not yet been properly understood.



**Walking as such:** Without a reference to a particular external end, we can understand what the activity of walking is. For instance, I am just strolling without any further purpose.

Unlike the example of building, which is, by its very nature, the activity of building a particular thing, we can conceive of walking as having only an internal end, that is, walking for the sake of walking, or walking aimlessly. Now it may be thought that, for Aristotle at any rate, walking is always for some external end, for instance, walking after dinner is for health (*Metaphysics* 1013a33-34). Or, like Aristotle claims, walking is always from some place to some other place. The ‘whence’ and ‘whither’ will constitute the form of walking (‘τὸ πόθεν ποῖ εἰδοποιόν’, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1174b5).

Accordingly, we might wonder: Is Aristotle’s distinction of *kinēsis-energeia* ultimately based on his particular views concerning the nature of each activity? Or, as Mamo (1970, p. 31) puts it, does the *kinēsis-energeia* distinction presuppose a distinction between activities *in need of explanation* and activities that are *self-explanatory*? This reminds us that Aristotle’s preference for seeing as an *energeia* in the strict sense is probably grounded in some other consideration, as suggested in the well-known opening passage (980a24-27) of the *Metaphysics*, ‘We prefer, as the saying goes, seeing to the other sensations. The cause of this is the fact that, of all the sensations, seeing makes us know in the highest degree and makes clear many differences in things’ (trans. Apostle).<sup>41</sup>

## Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued for the thesis that whether an event is a *kinēsis* or an *energeia* in the strict sense depends on the perspective we take. When viewed from the point of view of *the efficient cause*, all *energeiai* are *kinēseis*; whereas when viewed from the point of

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<sup>41</sup> For a more detailed analysis of Aristotle’s preference for seeing, see Cambino (2012, pp. 4-5).



view of *the formal cause*, only some *kinēseis*, which have completeness in respect of their forms, are *energeiai* in the strict sense. As a crucial step towards this overall conclusion, I have argued that *kinēsis* should be understood more broadly to include both ordinary alteration and special alteration, whereas, *energeia* in the strict sense should be interpreted as only focusing on *the formal cause* of the event. The upshot of my interpretation is that seeing, as well as many other events, can, simultaneously, be called both *kinēsis* and *energeia* in the strict sense.

Let me, finally and briefly, point to the textual context of the *kinēsis-energeia* distinction; for this also confirms our interpretation. In Theta 1-6, Aristotle embarks on his discussion of *dunamis* and *energeia* by first tackling *dunamis kata kinēsin* (1046a2). Indeed he distinguishes between active *dunamis* and passive *dunamis* and also their corresponding *kinēseis* in Theta 1 (1046a9-13).<sup>42</sup> That is to say, Aristotle in Theta 1-5 is focusing on *the kinetic aspects* (or *the efficient cause*) of *energeiai*, namely, action and passion (ἡ ποίησις καὶ τὸ πάθος). In this sense, I think it is fair to say that the efficient cause is already highlighted at the beginning of Theta. This explains why Aristotle includes seeing in his examples of *kinēseis*. In contrast to this, when *the formal cause* is emphasized in the second half of Theta 6, seeing meets the criterion for being an *energeia* in the strict sense because it has completeness in respect of its form.

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<sup>42</sup> Aristotle also distinguishes another *dunamis*, i.e., *dunamis* for resistance (1046a13-15). But, of all these *dunameis*, active *dunamis* is thought to be the prime one.

### Chapter 3

#### Searching for the *Archē* of *Ousiai*: Theta 7 and 8

Most of the current scholarship on *Metaphysics* Theta, as I have shown in the previous two chapters, centres on Theta 1-6. Critics disagree about how Theta 1-5 are related to Theta 6 and how Aristotle distinguishes *energeia* from *kinēsis* in Theta 6. Unlike Theta 1-6, the subject matter of Theta 7 and 8 is not very controversial in the current scholarship. These chapters are commonly thought to be addressed to *dunamis* and the priority of *energeia* over *dunamis*.<sup>1</sup> Several papers and book chapters have been written on Theta 7 and 8, almost all of which deal with some particular issue in these two chapters. For example, a lot of effort has been dedicated to clarifying the sort of priority Aristotle has in mind when he attributes the privileged status to *energeia* over *dunamis* in respect of *ousia* in Theta 8.<sup>2</sup> Valuable as these contributions are, it seems that most of these critics do not present the whole picture of the argumentative structure of Theta 7 and 8, and how these chapters are related to the rest of Theta. To understand Theta 7 and 8 better, I think, a comprehensive study of these two chapters is called for.

In this chapter, I want to answer the following three questions. First, what does the argument of Theta 7 and 8 amount to? Secondly, what is the relationship between Theta 1-6 and Theta 7-8? Thirdly, what does the argument of Theta 7 and 8 contribute to *Metaphysics* Theta, and even to the whole of the *Metaphysics*? By analysing the

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<sup>1</sup> For example, Frede says: 'For chapter 1-5 deal with *dunamis* in the basic sense. In chapter 6 Aristotle turns to actuality and, in the course of this discussion, begins to talk about potentiality. In fact, chapter 7 is devoted to the question of when something can be said to be something or other potentially, and chapters 8-9 are devoted to a discussion of the priority and great worthiness of actuality over *dunamis*' (1994, p. 180).

<sup>2</sup> I will address this issue in Chapter 4.

argumentative structure of Theta 7 and 8, I want to argue that, first, the argument of Theta 7 and 8 aims to show that the *archē* of *ousiai* can only be found through searching for the *energeiai* of *ousiai* rather than the *dunamis* of *ousiai*. Secondly, Theta 1-6 prepares for the discussion of Theta 7 and 8; that is, it is through Theta 1-6 that the two concepts, *dunamis* and *energeia*, are invoked in analysing matter and *ousia*, which is crucial in the discussion of Theta 7 and 8. Thirdly, Theta 7 and 8 extend and deepen the discussion of Theta 1-6; that is, Theta 7 and 8 introduce a new dimension to Aristotle's metaphysical searching, namely, his searching for the *archē* of *ousiai*, and this is also related to the overall project of the *Metaphysics*, which, in many places, is taken by Aristotle to be the search for the *archē* of *ousiai* (e.g., 1003b18 and 1069a18-19). In defending these theses, I will also argue against the dominant reading which takes Theta 7 and 8 to be concerned with the study of being (or ultimately, of *ousia*) as such, rather than with the study of the *archē* of *ousiai*.

## 1. Theta 7: Searching for the *Archē* of *Ousiai*

In this section, I will argue for the following claim: the project of Theta 7 is to search for the *archē* of *ousiai*.<sup>3</sup> In doing so, I will argue against the 'Dominant Reading'. By 'Dominant Reading', I mean the following:

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<sup>3</sup> In fact, Aristotle does not ask what it is for something to be potentially an *ousia* in Theta 7; rather, he asks what it is for something to be potentially an individual (ἐκαστον, 1048b37). I take these to be the same question in view of the fact that Aristotle has argued that an individual is identical with its *ousia* in Zeta 6. On this issue, I agree with some representative views in the current scholarship. As Makin says, 'the capacity-change relation has received a good deal of attention in the first part of *Metaphysics* Theta. Aristotle now clarifies the more difficult and novel application of the schema: *matter-substance relation*' (2003, p. 155; emphasis added; also cf. p. 158). Also, as Beere says: 'the example (sc. being a human being) suggests, and the chapter as a whole bears out, that Aristotle is especially interested in *substance predicates*, such as "human being", and in quasi-substance predicates, such as "house" and "box"' (2009, p. 233; emphasis added).



[**Dominant Reading**]: the project of Theta 7 is to search for what it is for something, anything, to be a potential *ousia*.<sup>4</sup>

The problem with the Dominant Reading is not that this reading is simply mistaken, but that it is misleading because, by itself, it cannot distinguish the following two readings:

[**Dominant Reading-Qualified**]: The project of Theta 7 is to search for what it is for something, anything, to be a potential *ousia*, if this search is understood as merely searching for the proximate matter.

[**Dominant Reading-Unqualified**]: The project of Theta 7 is to search for what it is for something, anything, to be a potential *ousia*, if this search is understood broadly to include both searching for the proximate matter and searching for the remote matter.

I take it that the Dominant Reading-Unqualified is the same as my reading, but the Dominant Reading-Qualified is not. Of course, the Dominant Reading-Qualified is compatible with my reading in the sense that searching for what it is for something, anything, to be a potential *ousia* can be understood as searching for an *archē* of an *ousia*. For example, if the wood, as the proximate matter for a box, is potentially a box (an *ousia*), then, the wood can be understood as an *archē* of a box.<sup>5</sup>

However, my reading *may not* be compatible with the Dominant Reading-Qualified in the sense that searching for the *archē* of *ousiai* is not limited to the search for what it is for something, anything, to be a potential *ousia*, if this search is understood as merely searching for the proximate matter. For example, if the wood is the proximate matter for a box (an *ousia*), then, the wood is potentially a box. This, however, may not be a satisfactory answer if someone is searching for the *archē* of a box, for he or she might think that the

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<sup>4</sup> Beere takes the subject matter of Theta 7 to be more general. As he says, ‘the goal of Theta 7 is to give roughly this kind of criterion (sc. the criterion of determining when things are potentially F) for all cases of being-in-capacity’ (2009, p. 240).

<sup>5</sup> Matter is taken as a kind of *archē* in Theta 1 (καὶ εἶναι καὶ τὴν ὅλην ἀρχὴν τινα, 1046a23).

wood is not the ultimate *archē* of a box. The ultimate *archē* of a box, one might argue, is not the proximate matter of a box (in this case, it is the wood), but some remote matter (say, fire, as Aristotle suggests later at 1049a27).

One might wonder why the distinction between proximate matter and the ultimate matter is relevant here. It is relevant because searching for the ultimate matter is related to searching for *the archē* of *ousiai*, whereas searching for the proximate matter is only related to searching for *an archē* of an *ousia*. The point is that, quite generally, searching for the *archē* of *ousiai* is searching for the ultimate *archē*, whereas, even if the proximate matter is an *archē*, it is not an ultimate *archē*.

It is crucial to recognize here that the Dominant Reading-Qualified is closely related to a general view concerning the question of what the basic project of the *Metaphysics* is. What lies behind the Dominant Reading-Qualified is that the basic project of the *Metaphysics* is the study of *ousia*. It is only with regard to this project that we need to address the question of what it is for something, anything, to be a potential *ousia*.<sup>6</sup> If

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<sup>6</sup> If we take Theta 7 as addressed to the question of what it is for something, anything, to be a potential *ousia* (or a potential being in general; i.e., Dominant Reading-Qualified), we will have many difficulties in understanding the line of reasoning in Theta 7 and will miss the continuity between Theta 6 and 7, and will ignore the guiding question to which Theta 7 is addressed. To my knowledge, this reading goes back to Frede's seminal paper from 1994. More generally, Frede thinks that one of the reasons that Aristotle is led to a study of *dunamis-energeia* is this: 'Aristotle in the *Metaphysics* is concerned with the question what it is to be a being. And since he thinks that there are also, ineliminably, potential beings, he naturally thinks that a complete answer to the question, what it is to be a being, will also have to involve an answer to the question what it is to be a potential being, as opposed to an actual being, and hence his theory requires some elucidation of the notions of potentiality and actuality' (1994, p. 171). With regard to Theta 7, Frede thinks that 'in fact, chapter 7 (sc. Theta 7) is devoted to the question of when something can be said to be something or other potentially' (1994, p. 180; also cf. p. 187). Other representative views in the current literature are as follows. Beere says: 'In Theta 7, Aristotle *shifts* the focus of his discussion from being-in-energeia to being-in-capacity. The mere fact that being-in-capacity receives a separate discussion is noteworthy. We *might not* have expected this ... Nothing Aristotle has said thus far, commits him to giving a further separate discussion of being-in-capacity'



this is so, then the Dominant Reading-Qualified of Theta 7 is all we need; for, as we will see shortly, Aristotle argues that only the proximate matter is potentially an *ousia*. In other words, to find the proximate matter of a particular thing is sufficient to answer the question raised by the Dominant Reading-Qualified of Theta 7.

However, in what follows, I will show that this reading should be rejected, for this reading cannot accommodate the text of Theta 7. In contrast, I propose that the project of Theta 7 is to search for the *archē* of *ousiai* (or the Dominant Reading-Unqualified). If this is correct, then it will also lend some support to the overall claim of this thesis – namely, that the basic project of Theta is the study of what the *archē* of *ousiai* is, rather than the study of what a potential *ousia* is.

At the opening of Theta 7, Aristotle claims that the aim of this chapter is to discuss when each thing is potentially, and when not (1048b37; and at the end of Theta 7, namely, 1049b2-3, he thinks that he has finished this discussion). On the surface, we might take this claim as simply concerned with what it is for something, anything, to be a potential *ousia* (Dominant Reading-Qualified) rather than as concerned with what the *archē* of *ousiai* is. Furthermore, one might argue that this impression is immediately confirmed by what follows in the text.

After setting up the project of Theta 7, Aristotle draws a distinction between things that have external moving causes (ἐξωθεν ἡ ἀρχὴ τῆς γενέσεως; 1049a12) and things that have internal moving causes ([sc. ἡ ἀρχὴ τῆς γενέσεως] ἐν αὐτῷ τῷ ἔχοντι; 1049a13).

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(2009, p. 231; emphasis added). Also Beere: ‘there is an indeterminacy about being in capacity an F that does not occur for being in *energeia* an F. This explains why being-in-capacity requires an extra discussion, whereas being-in-*energeia* does not’ (2009, p. 236). Beere’s reading is not convincing; as I will argue later, Aristotle is not considering being-in-capacity *as such*. Certainly, Menn is an exception to these readings. As he says, ‘the function of the chapter, in the ongoing argument of Theta, is to criticize the claim of *dunamis* to be an *archē*, and to prepare for the positive account of *energeia* as a prior *archē*’ (ms., IIIa3, p. 6; also cf. p. 2).



Accordingly, he argues that what it is for something, anything, to be a potential *ousia* should be understood in these two different ways.

(1) **[Things that have external moving causes]**: Aristotle argues that, in the case of artefacts, A is potentially B if and only if (a) A will become B if the artisan wishes and if nothing external hinders, and (b) nothing internal to A hinders its coming-to-be B;<sup>7</sup> [Aristotle's examples: a house (1049a9) and a statue (1049a17)].<sup>8</sup>

(2) **[Things that have internal moving causes]**: Aristotle argues that A is potentially B if and only if (a) A can become B through itself ( $\delta\iota'$  αὐτοῦ)<sup>9</sup> and (b) nothing prevents it ( $\epsilon\mu\pi\omicron\delta\iota\zeta\omicron\nu\tau\omicron\varsigma$ ); [Aristotle's examples: a human being (1049a1; 1049a14)].<sup>10</sup>

From Aristotle's reasoning here, we can derive the following principle:

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<sup>7</sup> How to understand the relationship between *a* and *b* is controversial. Beere argues against the traditional view which takes *a* and *b* as two independent and complementary conditions for being-in-dunamis. The reason why Beere thinks this is that, on his view, *b* is redundant. As he argues: 'suppose *b* is, in some particular case, false, i.e., suppose that something in A does prevent its becoming B. Then it is also false that A becomes B if an artisan wants to make it B and nothing external to him or A prevents him' (2009, pp. 243-246) (to be consistent with my formulation, I use my own terminology in this quotation). Also note that in the example of a house (1049a9), which clearly falls under the cases of 'these that have external moving causes', Aristotle formulates the conditions for being a potential house as follows: (c) nothing in A hinders its coming-to-be B and (d) there is nothing that has to be added ( $\pi\rho\omicron\sigma\gamma\epsilon\nu\acute{\epsilon}\sigma\theta\alpha\iota$ ), or taken away ( $\acute{\alpha}\pi\omicron\gamma\epsilon\nu\acute{\epsilon}\sigma\theta\alpha\iota$ ), or changed ( $\mu\epsilon\tau\alpha\beta\alpha\lambda\epsilon\acute{\iota}\nu$ ). Menn (ms., IIIa3, p. 4) takes both conditions, *c* and *d*, as equivalent to *b* (as we formulated above); that is, Aristotle, in the example of a house, does not mention condition *a*.

<sup>8</sup> Note that Aristotle also introduces the example of being healthy at 1049a3. It seems that in this example Aristotle is not interested in the *archē* of *ousiai*; for being healthy is an attribute of *ousia*, rather than an *archē* of *ousia*. But given the fact that this example is introduced by the  $\acute{\omega}\sigma\pi\epsilon\rho$ , it seems that Aristotle takes this to be a mere example. Nothing substantial hinges on this example.

<sup>9</sup> Here I follow Jaeger and Ross' reading ( $\delta\iota'$  αὐτοῦ; A<sup>b</sup> Al.<sup>c</sup>) rather than the alternative reading ( $\delta\iota'$  αὐτοῦ; EJ).

<sup>10</sup> One thing to be noted: in the second case – namely, in the case of these that have internal moving causes – if A is potentially B, A is not the matter for B as it is in the first case. It seems to me that Aristotle clearly recognizes this; for he avoids using the concept, matter, in the second case, whereas he uses it in the first case (1049a10).

[Non-Transitive Principle of *Dunamis*]: It is not the case that: If A is potentially (*dunamei*) B and B is potentially C, then A is potentially C.<sup>11</sup>

To borrow Aristotle's examples to illustrate this principle: if earth is potentially bronze and bronze is potentially a statue, then, it does not follow that earth is potentially a statue; for the earth needs to be changed; that is, the earth needs to be changed into bronze. The same principle is also true of the example whose moving cause is internal (e.g., a human being). As Aristotle puts it:

[Text 1] But the former (sc. semen; Aristotle's example) is in need of another origin, just as earth is not yet potentially a statue – for it's got to change over, and it will [first] be bronze. (*Metaphysics* Theta, 1049a16-18; trans. Furth)

ἐκεῖνο δὲ ἐτέρας ἀρχῆς δεῖται, ὥσπερ ἡ γῆ οὐπω ἀνδριᾶς δυνάμει (μεταβαλοῦσα γὰρ ἔσται χαλκός).

It is crucial to recognize that Aristotle thinks here that what underlies the Non-Transitive Principle is the lack of another *archē*; that is, an *archē* by which a thing should be changed into a proper state. This is important, for from this it follows that we cannot find the *archē* of an *ousia* along a single line of searching for the *dunamis* of that *ousia*. In Aristotle's example, earth is not potentially a statue, because it needs another *archē* that can change it into bronze.

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<sup>11</sup> But one might ask: can we think of at least one case in which *dunamis* is transitive? Beere (2009, p. 274) offers an example: a small child and an adult who has learned (but is not using) geometry are both in capacity geometrizing. He thinks that this is the only case in which the being-in-capacity is transitive. This, however, is not a proper example, for Aristotle here is mainly concerned with the matter-*ousia* relation.

If, as many critics assume, Theta 7 is concerned only with the question what it is for something, anything, to be a potential *ousia* (i.e., Dominant Reading-Qualified), then, it seems that what Aristotle has argued up to now is sufficient (textually, it is from 1048b37 to 1049a18). That is to say, as Aristotle has argued, to search for what it is for something, anything, to be a potential *ousia* is to search for some relevant potential beings that can meet either requirement (1) or (2). But it appears that, as we will see shortly, Aristotle in the remainder of Theta 7 has more to say. He seems to have some further issues in mind beyond merely the question of what it is for something, anything, to be a potential *ousia* (i.e., Dominant Reading-Qualified).

I will argue in what follows that, in the remainder of Theta 7, Aristotle's aim is to argue against the view which says that the *archē* of *ousiai* is the prime matter.<sup>12</sup> Aristotle argues against this claim by arguing that:

**[Thesis of the Remainder of Theta 7]:** The prime matter is not an *ousia*.<sup>13</sup>

Let us now return to the text. From 1049a18 onwards, Aristotle appeals to some linguistic phenomena to support the above thesis.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Beere thinks that 'in the latter part of Theta 7 (sc. what I refer to as "the remainder of Theta 7"), Aristotle uses the notion of being-in-capacity to make two contributions to the science of being. First, he shows, in part how generated substances are possible...second, Aristotle presents a definition of ultimate matter on which ultimate matter need not be anything over and above ordinary perceptible stuff' (2009, p. 283). This reading is not simply mistaken, but is misleading in the sense that it misses the continuity between the two parts of Theta 7 and ignores the guiding question to which Theta 7 is addressed.

<sup>13</sup> This shows that Aristotle is clearly against some physicists who take the prime matter to be *ousia*.

<sup>14</sup> Of course, the linguistic phenomena that Aristotle invokes here is not essential for us to grasp what it is for something to be a potential thing. As Makin says, 'the metaphysics (that the immediate matter of an *F* is potentially an *F*) could be explicated independently of the linguistics' (2006, p. 175).



[Text 2] it seems that what we call not ‘this’ but ‘thaten’ – e.g., the box is not wood but wooden, and the wood is not earth but earthen, and once again if earth is likewise not another [that] but *thaten* – [it seems, then, that] always the *that* is, put *simpliciter*, potentially the adjacent thing up in the sequence. (*Metaphysics* Theta, 1049a18-22; trans. Furth)<sup>15</sup>

ἔοικε δὲ ὁ λέγομεν εἶναι οὐ τόδε ἀλλ' ἐκεῖνιν – οἷον τὸ κιβώτιον οὐ ξύλον ἀλλὰ ξύλινον, οὐδὲ τὸ ξύλον γῆ ἀλλὰ γῆϊνον, πάλιν ἢ γῆ εἰ οὕτως μὴ ἄλλο ἀλλὰ ἐκεῖνιν – αἰὲ ἐκεῖνο δυνάμει ἀπλῶς τὸ ὕστερόν ἐστιν.

It appears that, in the text quoted above, Aristotle is not only interested in searching for what it is for something, anything, to be a potential *ousia* (Dominant Reading-Qualified), but is also interested in searching for what a potential *ousia* is within the context of a sequence: a sequence of being potentially something, e.g., earth is potentially wood, and wood is potentially a box. If we follow this sequence, we will ultimately arrive at the prime matter.<sup>16</sup> This is exactly what Aristotle does in what follows. As he says:

[Text 3] But if there's something primary, which is not yet called ‘thaten’ with respect to another thing [‘that’], then this is a prime matter; e.g.: if *earth* is [not *air* but] *air-y*, then *air* is not *fire* but *fiery*, and *fire* is prime matter, since it is not an individual ‘this’. (*Metaphysics* Theta, 1049a24-27; trans. Furth)

εἰ δέ τί ἐστι πρῶτον ὃ μηκέτι κατ' ἄλλο λέγεται ἐκεῖνιν, τοῦτο πρώτη ὕλη· οἷον εἰ ἡ γῆ ἀερίνη, ὃ δ' ἀήρ μὴ πῦρ ἀλλὰ πύρινος, τὸ πῦρ ὕλη πρώτη οὐ τόδε τι οὕσα.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Another passage in which Aristotle argues the same point is Zeta 7, 1033a5-7.

<sup>16</sup> Makin (2003, p. 167) thinks that in 1049a18-24 Aristotle is concerned with the idea that the matter composing an F is also potentially F, for example, the wood is still potentially a box when it has been made into a box. This is not convincing, given that in the following passage Aristotle is interested in finding the prime matter.

<sup>17</sup> An alternative reading is suggested by Ross. He thinks that ‘we should read *ou tode ti ousa* or *ou tode ti kai ousia*’ (1924, p. 257). But, as far as I can see, nothing substantial hinges on the choice.

As we know, matter, for Aristotle, is a kind of *archē* (e.g., 1046a23). To search for the prime matter is to search for the ultimate *archē* or, more specifically, the *archē* of *ousiai*. If we clearly recognize such a move, i.e., a move from simply searching for the proximate matter to searching for the prime matter, it strongly suggests that in Theta Aristotle is not only interested in the question of what it is for something, anything, to be a potential being (Dominant Reading-Qualified), but is also interested in the question of what the *archē* of *ousiai* is.

Aristotle's claim that πρώτη ὕλη is not *tode ti* (1049a27) is significant, if we recall what he argues elsewhere in the *Metaphysics*. In Zeta 3, Aristotle claims that a necessary condition for something to be an *ousia* is to be *tode ti* (1029a28).<sup>18</sup> In other words, to say that πρώτη ὕλη is not *tode ti* amounts to saying that prime matter is not an *ousia*. This is significant if we also consider what Aristotle says at the end of Theta 7.

**[Text 4]** So it turns out to be the right result that ‘thaten’ is said with respect to both the matter and the afflictions; for they’re both [in contrast to the substance] in-definite. (*Metaphysics* Theta, 1049a36-b2; trans. Furth)

καὶ ὁρθῶς δὴ συμβαίνει τὸ ἐκείνινον λέγεσθαι κατὰ τὴν ὕλην καὶ τὰ πάθη· ἄμφω γὰρ ἀόριστα.

In **[Text 4]**, Aristotle claims that both matter and afflictions (τὰ πάθη, 1049b1) are indefinite (ἀόριστα, 1049b2). This suggests that matter cannot be the desired *archē* and that the desired *archē* should itself be an *ousia*. Let me explain this in more detail. Just as afflictions themselves, being indefinite, have to depend on something definite – namely, *ousia* – so too matter, being indefinite, has to depend on something definite – namely,

<sup>18</sup> In Zeta 3, Aristotle says: ‘for in fact “separate” and “this” seem to belong above all to substance.’ καὶ γὰρ τὸ χωριστὸν καὶ τὸ τόδε τι ὑπάρχειν δοκεῖ μάλιστα τῇ οὐσίᾳ (1029a27-28).

*ousia*. If this is the case, then, *ousia* itself seems to be a more proper *archē* than matter. In other words, the desired *archē* should itself be an *ousia*.

The upshot of this section is the following. First, since the *dunamis* of *ousiai* is non-transitive, we cannot find the desired *archē* of *ousiai* along the line of searching for the *dunamis* of *ousiai*. Secondly, prime matter is itself not definite, and, therefore, cannot be the desired *archē*. These I take as the most important conclusions that Aristotle wants to draw in Theta 7.

## 2. Theta 8: Searching for the *Archē* of *Ousiai*

It is worth noting that Theta 8 is the longest passage in Theta (even though the division into chapters was not made by Aristotle himself). As I have pointed out in Chapter 1, the number of lines in Theta 8 is almost twice that of the second longest chapter of Theta.<sup>19</sup> If this signifies anything, it would seem to be that we should take the central claim of Theta 8 seriously when we consider the argumentative structure of Theta, as a whole. As I will show in this section, the central claim of Theta 8 is not primarily about *ousia*, but about the priority of *energeia* over *dunamis*. It appears, however, that the discussion of priority can be easily translated into the language of *archē*; that is, if there is a priority and posterity between two things, then the prior thing *may be* understood as an (the) *archē*.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> *Metaphysics* Theta is divided as follows: Theta 1: 45 lines; Theta 2: 30 lines; Theta 3: 46 lines; Theta 4: 28 lines; Theta 5: 29 lines; Theta 6: 30/49 lines; Theta 7: 40 lines; Theta 8: 108 lines; Theta 9: 30 lines; Theta 10: 48 lines.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Menn: '*Metaphysics* Theta 7-9 draw the conclusions from the clarificatory work of Theta 1-6. Theta 7-9 generally avoid speaking explicitly of *archai*; instead, these chapters frame their main conclusions in terms of priority, including the main conclusion of Theta, namely, the *energeia* is prior to *dunamis*. But these conclusions about priority can be almost immediately converted into conclusions about the *archai*, and they are so converted in Lambda' (ms., IIIa3, p. 1).



As I have argued in the previous section, the subject matter of Theta 7 is to argue that the *dunameis* of *ousiai* are *non-transitive*; that is, it is not the case that, if A is *dunamei* B and B is *dunamei* C, then A is *dunamei* C. It follows from this that we cannot find the *archē* of *ousiai* along the line of searching for the *dunameis* of *ousiai*. By contrast, in Theta 8, as I will argue in this section, Aristotle argues that the *energeiai* of *ousiai* can be *transitive*. We might, therefore, arrive at the *archē* of *ousiai* in this way, that is, by searching for the ultimate *energeiai* of *ousiai*.

In one sense, the central claim of Theta 8 is quite straightforward. As Aristotle puts it in the opening line of Theta 8: ‘actuality is prior to potentiality’ (πρότερον ἐνέργεια δυνάμεως ἐστίν; 1049b5). Aristotle thinks that *energeia* is prior to *dunamis* in three respects. As he continues:

[Text 5] To all this sort of [potentiality], then, actuality is prior, both in formula, and in substance; but in time, [it is prior] in one sense, but in another not. (*Metaphysics* Theta, 1049b11-12; trans. Furth)

πάσης δὴ τῆς τοιαύτης προτέρα ἐστὶν ἡ ἐνέργεια καὶ λόγῳ καὶ τῇ οὐσίᾳ· χρόνῳ δ' ἔστι μὲν ὥς, ἔστι δὲ ὡς οὐ.

By analysing these three kinds of priority, I will argue in what follows that in Theta 8 Aristotle is examining whether there is a path through which we can arrive at the *archē* of *ousiai*. To anticipate, Aristotle thinks that there is, indeed, such a path; that is, only by examining the priority of *energeia* over *dunamis* in respect of *ousia*, can we have a chance of arriving at the *archē* of *ousiai*.

## 2.1 Priority of *Energeia* over *Dunamis* in *Logos* and in Time

Let us now turn to Aristotle’s discussion of the priority of *energeia* over *dunamis* in *logos* and in time. I will treat these two kinds of priority somewhat cursorily because they are

quite straightforward. I will give a detailed account of the priority in *ousia* in Chapter 4, but I will also discuss this kind of priority – namely, the priority in *ousia* – in this chapter, insofar as it is related to the study of the *archē* of *ousiai*. Another more important reason for a brief treatment of the priority in *logos* and in time is that they are not, as I will argue, the most important kinds of priority for Aristotle’s project in the *Metaphysics*; for these two kinds of priority cannot lead us to the desired *archē* of *ousiai*.

Aristotle takes the priority in *logos* as quite obvious (as indicated by δῆλον, 1049b13). As he says:

[Text 6] For what’s potential in the primary sense is potential because it admits becoming active. (*Metaphysics* Theta, 1049b13-14; trans. Furth)  
τῷ γὰρ ἐνδέχεσθαι ἐνεργῆσαι δυνατόν ἐστὶ τὸ πρῶτως δυνατόν.

Aristotle gives several examples to illustrate this kind of priority (house-building at 1049b14; seeing at 1049b15; visible at 1049b15).<sup>21</sup> To borrow one example from Aristotle: when we say ‘capable of house-building’ (*dunamis*), we already have an understanding of what house-building means (*energeia*). Clearly, this kind of priority cannot lead us to the *archē* of *ousiai*. First, this kind of priority is related to how we know things rather than how things are prioritized in themselves. Secondly, this kind of priority is restricted to one particular thing, whereas the desired *archē* should be of any and every *ousia* and, hence, should be of all *ousiai*.

Let us now turn to Aristotle’s argument for the priority in time.

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<sup>21</sup> One might ask: why is it that Aristotle does not use *ousia* as an example? For example, a potential desk already includes an understanding of what it is to be an actual desk. On this issue, Makin thinks: ‘all Aristotle’s illustrations concern capacities and their exercise. But it would be easy to provide examples to cover a broader range of cases: we define grain as wheat seed, whereas we do not define the mature wheat as sprouted grain’ (2006, p. 183).

[Text 7] In time, it is prior in the following sense: that which is active, which is identical in species, though not in number, is prior. (*Metaphysics* Theta, 1049b17-19; trans. Furth)<sup>22</sup>

τῷ δὲ χρόνῳ πρότερον ὥδε· τὸ τῷ εἶδει τὸ αὐτὸ ἐνεργοῦν πρότερον, ἀριθμῷ δ' οὐ.

In this passage, Aristotle claims that *energeia* is prior to *dunamis* in time. But it is worth noting that the phrase, ‘τῷ εἶδει τὸ αὐτό’ (also τοῦτο τῷ εἶδει τὸ αὐτό at 1049b29), indicates a restriction. That is, this kind of priority should be limited to the same species; it is the priority between two different items of the same species. This also explains why Aristotle said earlier that: ‘but in time, [it is prior] in one sense, but in another not (χρόνῳ δ' ἔστι μὲν ὥς, ἔστι δὲ ὡς οὐ, 1049b11-12)’. It seems quite obvious that this kind of priority cannot lead us to the desired *archē* either, for this kind of priority is restricted within a particular species. This is also clearly shown by Aristotle’s examples (an individual man at 1049b19; wheat at 1049b20; seeing at 1049b20). Let me borrow two examples from Aristotle.

[Text 8] For always out of that which is potentially, that which is actually comes-to-be, by agency of that which is actually, e.g. man out of man, musician by agency of musician, always when some thing is moving first; and the mover already is actually. (*Metaphysics* Theta 8, 1049b24-27; trans. Furth)

ἀεὶ γὰρ ἐκ τοῦ δυνάμει ὄντος γίγνεται τὸ ἐνεργείᾳ ὄν ὑπὸ ἐνεργείᾳ ὄντος, οἷον ἄνθρωπος ἐξ ἀνθρώπου, μουσικὸς ὑπὸ μουσικοῦ, ἀεὶ κινουντός τινος πρώτου· τὸ δὲ κινοῦν ἐνεργείᾳ ἤδη ἔστιν.

Two things are worth noting in the above passage: First, Aristotle’s examples seem further to confirm my claim: that is, the priority in time is within a particular species. For

<sup>22</sup> Cf. *Metaphysics* Delta’s discussion of priority in time at 1018b14-21 and also *Physics* Delta 223a4ff.



example, ‘man out of man’ (ἄνθρωπος ἐξ ἀνθρώπου at 1049b25-26) and ‘musician by agency of musician’ (μουσικὸς ὑπὸ μουσικοῦ at 1049b26). That is, if we follow the line of priority in time, we will never arrive at the *archē* of *ousiai*, all we get is a prior *energeia* that belongs to the same species as the corresponding *dunamis*. In the case of ‘man out of man’, it seems that by tracing back in time, we are searching along the line of ancestry within a species. More importantly, we know from elsewhere that, for Aristotle, species is eternal (e.g., *Generation of Animal* 731a30ff.). It follows that there is no first member even within the same species. To put the matter differently, we cannot find the *archē* even within the same species.

Secondly, it is also worth noting that in this priority relation, two related items must be related in one process. For example, we do not need an actual corpse in order to have a potential corpse, for an actual corpse cannot generate a potential corpse. This is confirmed by the following passage:

**[Text 9]** But then, in this too it is clear that actuality is also in this sense prior to potentiality, i.e. in respect of coming-to-be and time. (*Metaphysics* Theta 8, 1050a2-3; trans. Furth)

ἀλλ' οὖν καὶ ταύτῃ γε δῆλον ὅτι ἡ ἐνέργεια καὶ οὕτω προτέρα τῆς δυνάμεως κατὰ γένεσιν καὶ χρόνον.

In **[Text 9]**, it seems that Aristotle takes the priority in time (κατὰ χρόνον) and priority in generation (κατὰ γένεσιν) to be equivalent (cf. ‘ἐξ ὧν ταῦτα ἐγένετο’ at 1049b24, 1049b25, 1049b28 and 1049b35). This indicates that there is an ordered process, indeed a teleological process, involved in Aristotle’s discussion of priority in time. Recall the example of a corpse. In Eta 5, Aristotle argues that a human being is not potentially a corpse (1044a29-1045a6). If this is so, it implies that even in Theta 7 Aristotle has already

assumed a teleological dimension (cf. Beere 2009, p. 234). I will argue in Chapter 5 that in Theta 9 Aristotle takes up, clarifies, and develops this notion.

Suffice it to say here that, along these lines, we cannot find the desired *archē*, understood as the *archē* of *ousiai*. The reason is that this priority is within the same species (at 1049b18 and b29). In other words, the priority of *energeia* over *dunamis* in respect of time is transitive but only within a particular species.<sup>23</sup>

One might wonder why, if these two kinds of priority cannot lead us to the desired *archē*, Aristotle even bothers to talk about them. On this issue, Menn's comment is acute:

Aristotle has good reasons for discussing priority in time and in *logos* as well. The physicists justify their *archai* by arguing that they are prior in time to everything else, and Platonist dialecticians justify their *archai* by arguing that they are prior in *logos*. (ms., IIIa3, p. 7)<sup>24</sup>

Since both of these approaches fail to arrive at the desired *archē* of *ousiai*, let us now turn to the third kind of priority to see if this kind of priority can lead us to the *archē*.

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<sup>23</sup> Cf. Witt: 'just as an actual human being generates an embryo so, too, the pure actuality of the Prime Mover is the origin of all change in the sublunar realm. If this analogy can stand, it seems that by examining the priority in time we can arrive at the *archē*. Unfortunately, however, this analogy does not work' (1994, p. 216).

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Mu 2, 1077b1-4 where Aristotle says: 'but it is not always the case that what is prior in formula is also prior in substance. For A is prior in substance to B if A surpasses B in existing separately, but A is prior in formula to B if the formula of A is a part of the formula of B; and the two priorities do not belong to the same thing together.' ἀλλ' οὐ πάντα ὅσα τῷ λόγῳ πρότερα καὶ τῇ οὐσίᾳ πρότερα. τῇ μὲν γὰρ οὐσίᾳ πρότερα ὅσα χωριζόμενα τῷ εἶναι ὑπερβάλλει, τῷ λόγῳ δὲ ὅσων οἱ λόγοι ἐκ τῶν λόγων· ταῦτα δὲ οὐχ ἅμα ὑπάρχει (trans. Apostle).

## 2.2 Priority of *Energeia* over *Dunamis* in *Ousia*

In this section, I shall argue that, of the three kinds of priority, the priority in *ousia* is the most important for Aristotle, for only this kind of priority can lead us to the desired *archē* of *ousiai*.<sup>25</sup> However, as it will emerge, there are two kinds of priority under this label: the priority of *energeia* over *dunamis* within perishable things; and the priority of *energeia* over *dunamis* between eternal things and perishable things. I will argue that only the second kind of priority can lead us to the desired *archē*. Critics disagree about how to understand these two kinds of priority. For example, one controversial issue is whether these two kinds of priority are the same and, if not, how they can both be brought under the same label, that is, priority in *ousia*. I will address these issues at length in Chapter 4. For present purposes, I will address this kind of priority only insofar as it is related to the study of the *archē*.

In my view, the first kind of priority in *ousia*, like the priority in time, can only lead us to a restricted *archē*, that is, an *archē* within a species. Only the second kind of priority in *ousia* can lead us to eternal things; for according to this kind of priority, eternal things will be *archai* of perishable things. Let me provide a preliminary clarification of what Aristotle means by priority in *ousia* and how this priority is related to the study of *archē*.

To begin with, we must cite two passages from Delta, since Aristotle in Theta 8 does not provide an account of what he means by ‘priority in *ousia*’ and of what it is to be an *archē*.

[Text 10] Besides things called prior and posterior in this way, a thing is prior in respect of its nature and substance when it is possible for it to *be* without other

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<sup>25</sup> The importance of this kind of priority is even reflected in the length of the passage: 6 lines for ‘priority in *logos*’; 23 lines for ‘priority in time’; 71 lines for ‘priority in *ousia*’.



things but not them without it: this division was used by Plato. (*Metaphysics* Delta, 1019a1-4; trans. Kirwan)

τὰ μὲν δὴ οὕτω λέγεται πρότερα καὶ ὕστερα, τὰ δὲ κατὰ φύσιν καὶ οὐσίαν, ὅσα ἐνδέχεται εἶναι ἄνευ ἄλλων, ἐκεῖνα δὲ ἄνευ ἐκείνων μή· ἥ διαιρέσει ἐχρήσατο Πλάτων.

[Text 11] It is common to all principles, then, to be the first from which a thing is a being or is generated or is known. (*Metaphysics* Delta, 1013a17-19; trans. Kirwan, slightly modified)

πασῶν μὲν οὖν κοινὸν τῶν ἀρχῶν τὸ πρῶτον εἶναι ὅθεν ἢ ἔστιν ἢ γίγνεται ἢ γινώσκεται.

In [Text 10], Aristotle's formulation of 'priority in *ousia*' can be characterized in the following way: if A's being implies B's being but not *vice versa*, then, A is taken to be prior to B in nature and in *ousia*. In [Text 11], Aristotle thinks that to be an *archē* is to be first in being or in generation or in knowledge. From these two passages, it follows that if A's being implies B's being but not *vice versa*, then, A is taken to be an (the) *archē* of B.

Two important things should be clarified here. First, I translate the verb εἶναι (or ἔστιν in [Text 11]) as 'to be', leaving as an open question whether it is used existentially or predicatively, or both. I will address the ambiguity of the verb εἶναι in Chapter 4. Secondly, it seems that Aristotle's concept of *archē* is explanatory; that is, if A is an *archē* of B, then, A is explanatory of B.<sup>26</sup> I think that in [Text 11], Aristotle is clearly aware of this crucial feature of the concept of *archē*. This awareness is indicated by his use of the word ὅθεν. If this is correct, it seems that in order to argue that priority in *ousia* is related to the study of *archē*, we have to take this concept of priority as explanatory. This is exactly

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<sup>26</sup> It seems that the two concepts, *archē* and *aition*, are closely related. As Aristotle says: 'If now, being and unity are the same and are one nature in the sense that they follow each other in the same way in which a principle and a cause do...' εἰ δὴ τὸ ὄν καὶ τὸ ἐν ταὐτὸν καὶ μία φύσις τῷ ἀκολουθεῖν ἀλλήλοις ὥσπερ ἀρχὴ καὶ αἷτιον (*Metaphysics* Gamma, 1003b22-24; trans. Apostle).

what I will argue in Chapter 4. For present purposes, without going into the detailed argument, let us merely assume that the concept of priority in *ousia* is explanatory.

For lack of a better name, let me, for the time being, call the priority in *ousia* an ontic-explanatory relation (since it is related to the verb, εἶναι, and hence to the noun, ‘to on’). In [Text 10] and [Text 11], Aristotle argues that if we can establish an ontic-explanatory relation between two items, then, the one that is prior is an (the) *archē* of the other.

As we will see, there is indeed such an ontic-explanatory relation through which we can arrive at the *archē*; that is, an ontic-explanatory relation between eternal things and perishable things. According to Aristotle’s argument in Theta 8, eternal things are prior to perishable things in *ousia*. This means that eternal things, taken together, are the *archē* of perishable things. This is a crucial move, for it allows us to find the *archē* of perishable things among the eternal things. Further, if we can establish an explanatory relation within eternal things, then we may have another chance of arriving at some even higher *archai*, and probably, the desired *archē* of *ousiai*. I propose that this is exactly what Aristotle will do in Lambda; by establishing a further kind of explanatory relation, Aristotle finally gets to the *archē* of *ousiai* – namely, the Unmoved Mover.

This is crucial for our proper understanding of Aristotle’s concept of *archē*. However, this chapter has a more limited aim. In this section, I want to dispel some misunderstandings surrounding the first kind of priority in *ousia*, and briefly show that the second kind of priority in *ousia*, on my reading, can lead us to the desired *archē*.

It is clear that the first kind of priority in *ousia* cannot lead us to the *archē* of *ousiai*. One crucial argument that Aristotle offers for this kind of priority is as follows: What comes later in a developmental process is prior in *ousia* to what comes earlier, because

what comes earlier aims what comes later.<sup>27</sup> Given this argument, it follows that, like the priority in time, the first kind of priority in *ousia* is also limited within a particular species. For example, the adult is prior to the child in *ousia*, because the former is a (the) *telos* of the latter.<sup>28</sup>

However, one passage located at the end of the argument raises some controversy.

[Text 12] So that it is evident that the substance and the form are actuality. Indeed, according to this argument it's evident that actuality is prior to potentiality in substance, and as we have said, in time one actuality always precedes another, one before another until the [actuality] of that which firstly and always causes movement. (*Metaphysics* Theta, 1050b2-6; trans. Furth)

ὥστε φανερόν ὅτι ἡ οὐσία καὶ τὸ εἶδος ἐνέργειά ἐστιν. κατὰ τε δὴ τοῦτον τὸν λόγον φανερόν ὅτι πρότερον τῇ οὐσίᾳ ἐνέργεια δυνάμεως, καὶ ὥσπερ εἵπομεν, τοῦ χρόνου ἀεὶ προλαμβάνει ἐνέργεια ἑτέρα πρὸ ἑτέρας ἕως τῆς τοῦ ἀεὶ κινουντος πρώτως.

In this passage, after concluding that *energeia* is prior to *dunamis* in *ousia*, Aristotle thinks that, through tracing a chain of actuality back in time, we can, ultimately, arrive at a mover. Two related questions arise here. The one is what kind of priority Aristotle has in mind when he claims that the priority can lead us to a mover; the other is what exactly ‘τὸ ἀεὶ κινουῖν πρώτως’ refers to.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Peramatzis: ‘the relevant types of child, seed, or matter, their being what they are, are ontologically dependent on what it is to be an adult, a human, or a form respectively. This point should be understood on the basis of considerations about processes of coming-to-be, teleology, and hypothetical necessity’ (2011, p. 285).

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Menn: ‘clearly the claim that “the things that are posterior in coming-to-be are prior in form and *ousia*” needs some restriction: decaying tooth is not prior in *ousia* to healthy tooth, and flute-playing man is not prior in *ousia* to man. But Aristotle seems to be restricting his attention to cases of the natural coming-to-be of something in its normal mature state’ (ms., IIIa3, p. 14). Clearly, Aristotle here also implies some teleological notion.



Two different readings are available in the current scholarship. Some critics (Furth 1985, p. 74; Makin 2006, pp. 203-204; Beere 2009, p. 313) think that this priority repeats Aristotle's discussion of the priority in time (as indicated by 'τοῦ χρόνου' at 1050b4);<sup>29</sup> if this is so, it seems that 'τὸ ἀεὶ κινεῖν πρῶτως' refers to a prior *energeia* within a species. But other critics think that 'τὸ ἀεὶ κινεῖν πρῶτως' refers to eternal things – either to immaterial movers (Apostle 1966, p. 360; Reale 1980, p. 223 and pp. 242-243 n.134) or to heavenly bodies (cf. Menn ms., IIIa3, p. 10).<sup>30</sup>

These two readings are incompatible. On the one hand, if Aristotle has in mind the priority of *energeia* over *dunamis* in time, then all we get is the priority relation within a species, we cannot have either immaterial movers or heavenly bodies in this picture. Furthermore, as I have pointed out earlier, if Aristotle is also committed to the doctrine of eternal species, then it seems that there is no *archē* even within a species, for there is no first member within a species. On the other hand, it seems that the phrase, 'τὸ ἀεὶ κινεῖν πρῶτως', strongly suggests that Aristotle refers to some eternal movers.<sup>31</sup> In what follows, I will argue for the former reading by proposing an alternative reading of the phrase, 'τὸ ἀεὶ κινεῖν πρῶτως'.

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<sup>29</sup> As Beere says: 'Last, he reiterates, in new terms, the conclusion he has already argued for, that being-in-*energeia* has priority in time' (2009, p. 313).

<sup>30</sup> As Menn says: 'In Aristotle's view the last phrase should really refer to an immaterial mover of the heavens, but apparently nothing in Theta 8 rules out the possibility that the first heaven is itself the first mover. What matters for Aristotle's argument is that there is an eternal efficient cause regulating the cycle of generations: whether this is simply the heavens (or one particular heavenly body), or something beyond the heavens that regulates the sublunar world by means of the heavens, can be left to be determined later' (ms., IIIa3, p. 10 n.19).

<sup>31</sup> In view of the incompatibility of these two readings, Dancy says: 'I cannot bring myself to believe that all of these words (sc. 1050b4-6) are Aristotle's. If the reference is to the earlier discussion of priority in time, as it should be, the fact is that "we" said nothing of the kind' (1980, p. 94). Also, cf. Ross: 'ὥσπερ εἶπομεν, 1049b17-29. That passage, however, contained no explicit reference to the *primum movens*' (1924, p. 264).

There are two readings of Aristotle's use of the adverb, *aei* in the current scholarship. The dominant reading translates it as 'eternal' (Ross, Apostle and Reale). This reading is clearly in favour of the view which takes the phrase 'τὸ ἀεὶ κινεῖν πρῶτως' to refer to some eternal movers. In contrast to the dominant reading, Burnyeat et al. (1984, p. 144), Makin (2006, p. 12) and Beere (2009, p. 313) translate it as 'in each case'.<sup>32</sup>

Given that Aristotle is clearly discussing the priority of *energeia* over *dunamis* in time in [Text 12], I think that Burnyeat's reading is more plausible.<sup>33</sup> Furthermore, I think that 'πρῶτως' at 1050b6 need not refer to 'the first mover', but can be read as referring to 'an earlier mover' that moves in a primary way. If this reading is correct, then, the difficulties surrounding [Text 12] disappear.

One might object to my reading on the grounds that it seems that, in some cases, by tracing the efficient cause (or the moving cause), we can find, at least, an eternal mover, for example, the sun. Let me explain this objection in more detail. In one passage of the *Physics*, we read:

[Text 13] For a man and the sun generate a man. (*Physics* Beta, 194b14; my translation)

ἄνθρωπος γὰρ ἄνθρωπον γεννᾷ καὶ ἥλιος.

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<sup>32</sup> As Burnyeat et al. says: '1050b6 *aei*: "eternal" according to Alexander, Ross, Reale, Apostle, but better "in each case". See 1049b26 for the exact parallel. This removes the supposed reference to the Prime Mover, whose activity should in any case not be temporally prior' (1984, p. 144). Cf. 1049b24-27: 'For always out of that which is potentially, that which is actually comes-to-be, by agency of that which is actually... always when some thing is moving first; and the mover already is actually' (trans. Furth).

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Dancy: 'There is certainly no temporal chain that leads back through Socrates to his ancestors eventually to arrive at that Unmoved Mover' (1980, p. 95).



In this passage, Aristotle thinks that a man is generated by another man in conjunction with the sun. We know from elsewhere that Aristotle takes the father as the efficient cause of the child (e.g., Delta 2, 1013a31). Hence, presumably, Aristotle in [Text 13] is claiming that both the father and the sun are the efficient causes of the child. It seems that the sun is simultaneously working with other causes, in this example, the father.<sup>34</sup> In this sense and for this reason, the sun is also an *archē* of the child.

I agree with the above analysis, but it is clear that this kind of priority has nothing to do with the priority of *energeia* over *dunamis* in time. In time, the sun may be prior to a particular man, but the sun is not prior to man as a species. More importantly, the sun is working *simultaneously* with the father (i.e., an *energeia*). Given that Aristotle in [Text 12] clearly claims that his topic is ‘priority in time’, this objection is not convincing.

Having argued that the first kind of priority in *ousia* cannot lead us to the *archē* of *ousiai*, let us now turn to the second kind of priority in *ousia*. I will propose, in what follows, that, first, Aristotle thinks that, of the two kinds of priority in *ousia*, only this kind of priority can lead us to the desired *archē*, and secondly, that this is also the reason why Aristotle takes it to be in the stricter sense (*kurioterōs*, 1050b6).

With regard to the latter issue, two readings have been proposed.<sup>35</sup> The dominant reading (e.g., Ross 1924; Dancy 1980, p. 97; Panayides 1999, p. 341; Makin 2003, p. 237

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Menn: ‘since each corruptible living thing is generated by a temporally prior conspecific corruptible living thing, and so back *ad infinitum*, there is no hope of reaching an *archē* by going further back in time; “the first eternal mover” – more literally, the thing which is always primarily moving (something else) ([*ἡ ἐνέργεια*] τοῦ ἀεὶ κινουμένου πρώτως) – will be found not as a first in the series of ancestors, but as a cause which operates simultaneously with the entire series, and which is a primary cause sustaining the existence and operation of the series of corruptible causes’ (ms., IIIa3, p. 17). I do not agree with Menn’s interpretation of *aei*, but I agree with him in thinking that there might be some causes that operate simultaneously with the sublunary things.

<sup>35</sup> Aquinas takes the priority in *ousia* to refer to different degrees of value, and he thinks that this is clearer in the relation between eternal things and perishable things. As he says: ‘he (sc. Aristotle) says



and 2006, p. 208) takes it that because the modal-existence reading is more applicable to the priority between eternal things and perishable things, this kind of priority is taken to be stricter.<sup>36</sup> By ‘the modal-existence reading of the priority claim’, I mean the following: X is prior to Y in *ousia* if and only if X can exist without Y existing, but not *vice versa*. In the case of eternal things and perishable things, these critics think that eternal things can exist without perishable things existing, but perishable things cannot exist without eternal things existing. Other critics think that it is because this priority is related to the study of *archē* that Aristotle takes it to be ‘in a stricter sense’.<sup>37</sup>

It should be noted that these two readings are not compatible. For it seems that the modal-existence reading cannot lead us to the *archē* at all. This is because being an *archē*,

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that his thesis is proved in a more proper way by this argument, because actuality and potency are not considered in the same subject but in different ones, and this makes the proof more evident’ (1961, p. 619). However, as I will argue in Chapter 4, this reading does not hold up under close scrutiny. Hence, I will set this reading aside for present purposes.

<sup>36</sup> Ross says: ‘now the eternal can exist without the perishable and the perishable cannot exist without the eternal, and though Aristotle does not explicitly put the matter in this way (except incidentally in I. 19), it seems that this is the “stricter” sense of “prior in substance” which he has in mind’ (1924, p. 265). Dancy says: ‘the previous argument(s) for priority “in substance”, that took off from the Principle of the Priority of Ends, made no explicit mention of substantial priority; we had to fill that in if we wanted to see it there, and it was a tenuous business. This one is different: in 1050b19 we shall be told outright that necessary beings are “primary, for if they were not, nothing would be”. It is in that sense that we are here proving that actuality is prior “more strictly”’ (1980, p. 97). Makin also thinks that two kinds of ontological dependence relation are involved in Theta 8: ‘but when the issue is the priority of eternal to perishable things (1050b6 onwards), it is not appropriate to think about the way in which an actual outcome could come about (there is no coming about for eternal things), and so the distinction between possibility *kata genesin* and *kata phthoran* does not arise; thus [IC] (sc. what I call the modal-existence reading) will apply to those cases in a more straightforward way (as signalled at 1050b19)’ (2003, p. 237).

<sup>37</sup> Menn says: ‘there remains the claim that *energeia* is absolutely [*κυριωτέρας*, 1050b6] prior to *dunamis* in *ousia*, that is, prior with the priority of an eternal individual to temporal things and not merely with the priority of one eternal type, instantiated by temporal things, to another. Only this “absolute” priority leads to the *archē* of first philosophy’ (ms., IIIa3, p. 17).

it must be explanatory, whereas the modal-existence reading is not. I shall return to and defend this point in Chapter 4. It is crucial to recognize that the modal-existence reading is non-explanatory, i.e., the existence of X does not explain the existence of Y. In my view, the reason why the priority of *energeia* over *dunamis* between eternal things and perishable things is considered to be ‘in a stricter sense’ is that it provides us a way of arriving at the *archē* of perishable things. In other words, one group of things is ontic-explanatory of the other.

## Conclusion

The dominant reading takes Theta 7 and 8 to be addressed to the study of being as such. I have argued that this reading is questionable, because the subject matter of these two chapters is to search for the *archē* of *ousiai* rather than to address *ousia per se* or being in general. In Theta 7, Aristotle argues that the *dunamis* of *ousiai* are *non-transitive*; that is, it is not the case that, if A is *dunamis* B and B is *dunamis* C, then A is *dunamis* C. By contrast, in Theta 8, Aristotle argues that the *energeiai* of *ousiai* can be *transitive*. It follows from these considerations that we cannot find the *archē* of *ousiai* along the line of searching for the *dunamis* of *ousiai*, and only by searching for the *energeiai* of things, can we have a chance of arriving at the *archē* of *ousiai*.<sup>38</sup> Furthermore, as I have pointed out briefly, in these two chapters Aristotle has already assumed a teleological dimension. This topic, as I will argue in Chapter 5, will be taken up in Theta 9. One issue that I have

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<sup>38</sup> As Beere says: ‘the crucial assumption is thus not that there are eternal things, but that if there are, then they are the principles of the perishable things’ (2009, p. 315). This seems to be tending in the right direction. However, Beere also says: ‘Theta 8 is the culmination of Aristotle’s discussion of being-in-capacity and being-in-*energeia*, where he draws conclusions that constitute a contribution to the science of being’ (2009, p. 285). It seems that these two views are not consistent with each other, for one says that Theta 8 is related to searching for the *archē* of *ousiai*, whereas the other says that Theta 8 is related to the study of being (and ultimately, of *ousia*).

not addressed properly in this chapter is what exactly Aristotle means by ‘priority in *ousia*’.

Let us now move on to this controversial issue in the next chapter.



## Chapter 4

### What Does Aristotle Mean by ‘Priority in *Ousia*’?

The central aim of Theta 8 is to argue that *energeia* is prior to *dunamis* in three respects: in *logos*, in time and in *ousia*. As most critics have recognized, the first two kinds of priority are straightforward. As Aristotle himself says, it seems clear (*dēlon*; 1049b13) that in order to give an account (*logos*) of what a potential thing is, we must invoke an account of what the corresponding actual thing is, e.g., to give an account of what potential seeing is, we already invoke the corresponding actuality, namely, seeing (1049b15). It also seems obvious that, within a species, an actual thing is prior to a potential thing (priority in time), e.g., a child always comes from an adult (1049b19).

However, the third kind of priority – namely, ‘priority in *ousia*’ – is still exercising most critics, and, accordingly, is subject to a wide variety of interpretations. The objective of this chapter is to clarify what Aristotle means by ‘priority in *ousia*’ (‘the priority claim’, hereafter). What still puzzles most critics is that in Theta 8 Aristotle argues for ‘priority in *ousia*’ in two passages, and it seems that two kinds of priority, rather than one, are involved. The relevant passages that concern us here are 1050a4-1050b6 and 1050b6-1051a3 respectively. In the first passage, Aristotle argues for the priority of *energeia* over *dunamis* with respect to perishable things (‘priority within perishable things’, for short), whereas in the second passage he argues for a priority claim between eternal things and perishable things (‘priority between eternal things and perishable things’, for short). Deciding whether in these two passages Aristotle argues for one and the same kind of priority, or two, and if so, how they differ from and are related to each other, is of major importance for a proper understanding of Aristotle’s concept of ‘priority in *ousia*’.

A close survey of the secondary literature reveals that there are, generally, two different views on this issue. The dominant interpretation (Ross 1924, pp. 262-265; Dancy 1980, pp. 88-89 and p. 97; Burnyeat 1984, pp. 133-134 and p. 144; Panayides 1999, pp. 335-343; Beere 2008 and 2009, pp. 294-294) adopts a splitting reading of the two passages, claiming that Aristotle invokes two different kinds of priority in these passages.<sup>1</sup> Other critics (Aquinas 1961, pp. 615-619; Witt 1994 and 2003, pp. 77-78, p. 79, pp. 81-82, pp. 92-93; Makin 2003 and 2006, pp. 192-215; Peramatzis 2008 and 2011, pp. 278-300) hold that one and the same kind of priority is employed in the two passages.<sup>2</sup>

For those critics who are committed to the splitting reading, it is clear that Aristotle is employing the modal-existence reading (in Kit Fine's terminology) of the priority claim in arguing for the priority between eternal things and perishable things.<sup>3</sup> By 'the modal-existence reading of the priority claim', I mean the following: X is prior to Y in *ousia* if and only if X can exist without Y existing, but not *vice versa*. It is crucial to recognize here that this reading is non-explanatory, that is, the existence of X *does not explain* the existence of Y.

When it comes to the priority within perishable things, however, these critics think that Aristotle is employing a different kind of priority. Given the fact that Aristotle uses teleological language to argue for this priority, most critics attempt to make sense of it by

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<sup>1</sup> Beere's view is representative of those who are committed to a splitting reading: 'I will argue that two distinct but related criteria for priority in being are used in Theta 8. One is used to compare the class of eternal things with the class of perishable things, and one is used to compare perishable things with perishable things. The former comparison relies on a criterion for priority in being that Aristotle states explicitly in several passages. But this criterion is not applicable to perishable things among themselves, so we have to work out for ourselves what he means by priority in being for perishable things' (2009, pp. 293-294).

<sup>2</sup> Makin (2003 and 2006) claims that his reading is non-splitting, but, as I will point out later, by refining the priority relation in the relevant passages, he is in fact committed to a splitting reading.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Kit Fine (1995); Lowe (1998, Chapter 6; 2010).



appealing to a goal-directed process, e.g., a child normally grows up to be an adult if nothing external hinders it (1049a12-14), and, adults, *for this very reason*, are prior to children. By invoking teleological language to argue for this priority, these critics are committed to an explanatory reading; that is, X is prior to Y precisely *because* X is a (the) *telos* of Y. The reason why this reading is called ‘splitting’ is clear; for, according to this reading, two different relations – one non-explanatory, the other explanatory – are involved.

For those who are committed to a non-splitting reading, two approaches have been proposed so far in the current literature.<sup>4</sup> One approach aims to interpret both kinds of priority in terms of the modal-existence reading (e.g., Witt 1994 and 2003; Makin 2003 and 2006), consequently, this approach attempts to read both kinds of priority in a non-explanatory way. In contrast, the other approach tries to interpret both kinds of priority through the explanation-essence reading (Peramatzis 2008 and 2011). By the ‘explanation-essence reading of priority’, I mean the following: X is prior to Y in *ousia* if and only if Y is what it is (i.e., Y’s essence) *because of* its relation to X but not *vice versa*.<sup>5</sup> Clearly, this reading is explanatory.

In this chapter, I will argue against the splitting reading and argue for a different non-splitting reading of Aristotle’s priority claim. My position, while similar to that of Peramatzis, is also substantially different from his in the following three ways. First, Peramatzis claims that Aristotle’s priority claim, in its own right, is neutral between the modal-existence reading and the explanation-essence reading, and that only by invoking Aristotle’s examples in the relevant contexts can we arrive at the explanation-essence reading of Aristotle’s priority claim. By contrast, I will argue that the priority claim, even

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<sup>4</sup> Aquinas also holds a non-splitting reading of Theta 8. However, I do not think his reading is convincing. So I set his approach aside here, but will come back to his view later.

<sup>5</sup> This is not Peramatzis’ own terminology, but, as it will become clear later, ‘the explanation-essence reading’ is a more proper label for his view.



in its own right, is not neutral between these two readings, for it can never be understood through the modal-existence reading. Secondly, Peramatzis argues that the reason why eternal things in Theta 8 are considered to be prior is in virtue of their role as those things that fix the essences of perishable things. Against this, I will argue that the way in which eternal things are taken to be prior is that eternal things provide a sufficient reason for perishable things to be as they are. Thirdly, and related to the previous point, it seems to me that Peramatzis' formulation of the priority claim is overly hasty, when he supposes that the explanatory relation it involves concerns essence, and essence as opposed to existence. I will show later that a significant distinction can be drawn between the explanation-essence reading of the priority claim and what I call the explanation-existence reading of that claim. I will show that in order to argue against the modal-existence reading of the priority claim, all we need is an explanatory reading, whether it is the explanation-essence reading or the explanation-existence reading. An explanatory reading, thus understood, leaves room for the explanation-existence reading. In my view, the difference between these two readings is as follows. Whereas the explanation-essence reading attempts to establish an essence-fixing relation between two items, the explanation-existence reading focuses on only the explanatory relation between two items in respect of their existence. That is to say, if X explains the existence of Y, then, X is taken to be prior to Y in *ousia*, regardless of how these two items are related in respect of essence. Terminologically speaking, the concept of being is more general, including both the concepts of essence and existence. Hence, I shall avoid all unnecessarily misleading formulations by calling my reading of the priority claim, the explanation-being reading; that is, a reading that is neutral between explanation regarding *existence* and explanation regarding *essence*.

In general, I will argue in this chapter that what unifies the priority claims in the two passages is the explanation-being reading of the priority claim. In 1050a4-1050b6,

Aristotle argues for the priority of *energeia* over *dunamis* within perishable things by appealing to a teleological explanation; in 1050b6-1051a3, on the other hand, he argues for the same priority claim between eternal things and perishable things by appealing to a sufficient reason. In both arguments, an explanation regarding *existence* or *essence* is called for, and precisely for this reason, they deserve to be brought under the same label, namely, ‘priority in *ousia*’.

## 1. Aristotle’s Formulation of ‘Priority in *Ousia*’ in Delta 11

To begin with, let us first analyse one controversial passage identified by most critics as directly relevant to Aristotle’s priority claim in Theta 8. Most critics think that it is this passage to which Aristotle refers at the beginning of Theta 8 (1049b4), since this is the only passage in the *Metaphysics* where Aristotle gives an account of what ‘priority in *ousia*’ means. In this passage, Aristotle writes:

[Text 1] Besides things called prior and posterior in this way, a thing is prior in respect of its nature and substance when it is possible for it to *be* without other things but not them without it: this division was used by Plato. (*Metaphysics* Delta, 1019a1-4; trans. Kirwan)

τὰ μὲν δὴ οὕτω λέγεται πρότερα καὶ ὕστερα, τὰ δὲ κατὰ φύσιν καὶ οὐσίαν, ὅσα ἐνδέχεται εἶναι ἄνευ ἄλλων, ἐκεῖνα δὲ ἄνευ ἐκείνων μή· ἢ διαιρέσει ἐχρήσατο Πλάτων.

The major problem in interpreting this passage is partly due to the ambiguity of the verb, *einai*, and partly due to the unclarity of the preposition, *aneu*. With regard to the verb *einai*, it is not clear whether it is used existentially or predicatively, or both;<sup>6</sup> with regard

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<sup>6</sup> As Fine (1995, p. 274) says: ‘For it does not seem right to identify the “being” of an object, its being what it is, with its existence. In one respect, existence is too weak; for there is more to what an object

to the proposition *aneu*, it is not clear whether these two items are related non-explanatorily or explanatorily.

Without, it seems to me, being sufficiently sensitive to these distinctions, the dominant interpretation adopts the modal-existence reading of [Text 1] (Ross 1924, vol. 1: pp. 317-318 and vol. 2: p. 265; Owen 1960/1986, p. 171/p. 186; Kirwan 1971, pp. 155-156; Dancy 1980, p. 88; Burnyeat 1984, p. 133; Cleary 1988, p. 45, p. 48 and p. 50; Witt 1994 and 2003, p. 81 [p. 13, pp. 77-78, p. 138 n.2]; Panayides 1999, p. 328; Makin 2006, p. 192; Beere 2008 and 2009, p. 294; Frey 2015, p. 91 n.7 and p. 93; Menn ms. IIIa3, p. 11). As [Text 1] clearly necessitates, critics who are committed to the modal-existence reading of [Text 1] also have to attribute this distinction (*διαίρεσις*) to Plato, that is, the distinction based on the modal-existence relation (e.g., Menn: 'Plato's Test'; Beere and Frey: 'Plato's Criterion'). But it should be noted that no critic, so far as I know, has successfully identified a single text in Plato to support this claim.<sup>7</sup> The lack of textual evidence renders their reference to Plato conjectural. We might say that this already

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is than its mere existence. In another respect, existence is too strong; for what an object is, its nature, need not include existence as a part'. Also cf. Cleary (1988, p. 50): 'the trouble with using "existence" as a translation of *to einai* is that it gives a false impression of univocity and thus tends to mislead us in interpreting Aristotle. It is for this reason that I prefer to talk about "being" and "modes of being" rather than "existence"'. Unfortunately, Cleary did not spell out what he means by the ambiguous phrase, 'modes of being'. For an excellent analysis of the ambiguity of the Greek *einai*, see Brown (1994). It is also worth noting that even though the verb *einai* can be used predicatively, only the essential predication is of philosophical significance here. As Peramatzis says: 'In the first instance, "to be" (*einai*) is open between its existential and is *predicative* uses. In its predicative use "to be" signifies "being thus-and-so" but not straightforwardly "being what something (essentially) is". However, the merely predicative use would yield philosophically uninteresting results if applied to the notion of ontological priority' (2011, p. 205).

<sup>7</sup> For example, Ross cannot find the textual evidence in Plato and he, therefore, has to attribute this view to Plato's oral teachings. As he says, 'Aristotle is thinking doubtless of an oral utterance of his master' (1924, p. 317). Also cf. Kirwan (1971, p. 155) and Panayides (1999, p. 328).



renders their reference questionable, unless there really is a reason to attribute this distinction to Plato.

Now, it seems that we do indeed have reason to think that Plato is clearly aware of the modal-existence distinction. The question, however, is whether Plato is himself satisfied with this distinction and prepared to use it. It seems that, on the contrary, he immediately recognizes a weakness in this distinction. In *Euthyphro* 9-11, Socrates asks Euthyphro, to think hard about the following question: if, necessarily, things that are pious are desired by the gods, and things that are desired by the gods are pious, is it *because of* things' being pious that they are desired by the gods or is it *because of* things' being desired by the gods that they are pious (cf. Politis 2004, p. 46 and p. 202; Politis 2015, pp. 52-55)? In this passage, it appears that Plato carefully distinguishes between the modal-existence reading and the explanation-being reading, and he clearly recognizes the weakness of the former reading and asks for the latter reading.<sup>8</sup> Let me explain this in more detail. In this example, things being pious and things being desired by the gods imply the existence of each other. Clearly, the modal-existence reading of this example cannot offer us an answer as to which one is explanatorily prior. Socrates is not satisfied with this non-explanatory reading and asks for an explanatory reading.

In addition to the dominant reading of the passage, there are two other readings available in the current scholarship: Peramatzis (2008 and 2011, pp. 204-205) argues that in Delta 11, Aristotle's formulation of the priority claim is neutral between the modal-

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<sup>8</sup> A similar passage appears in the *Republic*, where Plato says: 'Therefore, you should also say that not only do the objects of knowledge owe their being known to the good, but their being *is also due to it*, although the good is not being, but superior to it in rank and power'. Καὶ τοῖς γινωσκομένοις τοῖνυν μὴ μόνον τὸ γινώσκεισθαι φάναι ὑπὸ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ παρεῖναι, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ εἶναι τε καὶ τὴν οὐσίαν ὑπ' ἐκείνου αὐτοῖς προσεῖναι, οὐκ οὐσίας ὄντος τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ, ἀλλ' ἔτι ἐπέκεινα τῆς οὐσίας πρεσβεῖα καὶ δυνάμει ὑπερέχοντος (*Republic* 509b6-10; trans. Grube, rev. Reeve, emphasis added).

existence reading and the explanation-essence reading.<sup>9</sup> However, Peramatzis (2011, pp. 219-228) also thinks that Aristotle’s examples lend some support to the explanation-essence reading. In contrast to Peramatzis, Owens (1978a, p. 320) holds that the Platonic priority should be understood *only* through the explanation-essence reading.<sup>10</sup>

On this issue, my view is similar to that of Owens, for we both think that the priority claim as formulated in [Text 1], even in its own right, is not neutral between the modal-existence reading and the explanation-essence reading. However, as I have suggested earlier, I am also sensitive to the existence-essence distinction, for I think that the priority claim as formulated in [Text 1] can be understood through either the explanation-essence or the explanation-existence reading, or both, and that, for present purposes at any rate, we do not have to choose. In view of this, I think that a more general label is needed here, and for this reason, I call my reading of the priority claim the explanation-being reading.

In this section, by invoking one of Aristotle’s examples in Delta 11, I want to show that the priority claim should be understood through the explanation-being reading; and that, indeed, the label, ‘the explanation-being reading’, is less misleading than the explanation-essence reading. The example we are going to focus on comes immediately

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<sup>9</sup> For example, Peramatzis says that ‘the formulation of 1019a3-4, by itself, is open as to what the exact ontological relation between A and B is (sc. two items which are ontologically related)’ (2011, p. 204).

<sup>10</sup> As Owens says: ‘The third type of priority sketched in Book *Delta* (sc. 1019a1-4) is said to follow Platonic lines. The prior in this sense is what can be without the other. The posterior is that which cannot be without the prior. Since the setting is Platonic, Aristotle should be thinking in terms of notions or definitions, for he considers that the Platonic philosophy proceeds from *logoi*. In such a background, this priority corresponds quite exactly to the priority in definition or notion (*logōi*) of Book *Zeta*. The notion of accident cannot be had without the notion of Entity, but the notion of Entity is not dependent upon that of accident. The definition of an accident presupposes the notion of Entity’ (1978a, p. 320).



after [Text 1]. As Peramatzis rightly recognizes, in this example Aristotle seems to be committed to an explanatory reading of the priority claim.<sup>11</sup> In this passage, he says:

[Text 2] Since there are many ways of being, firstly, the subject is prior, and for that reason the substance is prior. (*Metaphysics* Delta, 1019a4-6; trans. Kirwan)  
ἐπεὶ δὲ τὸ εἶναι πολλαχῶς, πρῶτον μὲν τὸ ὑποκείμενον πρότερον, διὸ ἡ οὐσία πρότερον.

First, it is worth noting that Aristotle in [Text 2] clearly recognizes the ambiguity of the verb *einai* ('to be') since, as he says, 'it is said in many ways'. This has to be important given that in [Text 1], which immediately precedes this text, the verb has been crucially used in his argument (1019a3). This also suggests that those critics who are committed to the modal-existence reading of [Text 1] are too quick to assume that, by using the verb '*einai*', Aristotle must take '*einai*' to mean 'to exist'.

Secondly, it is also worth noting that in [Text 2] Aristotle does not merely assume or assert the priority of *ousia* but argues for it (as suggested by the particle *dio*). However, the reason Aristotle offers here suggests that he is not considering the modal-existence reading of the priority claim, for he claims that it is *because* the subject is prior that *ousia* obtains its priority.<sup>12</sup> Clearly, he is endorsing an explanatory reading of that claim. Moreover, the reason Aristotle provides, in its own right, has nothing to do with the modal-

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<sup>11</sup> Makin thinks that Aristotle, by invoking these examples, is merely refining the modal-existence reading. I will come back to his reading later.

<sup>12</sup> Recall Aristotle's account of what *ousia* is in the *Categories*: 'Thus all the other things are either said of the primary substances as subjects or are in them as subjects. So if the primary substances were not, it would be impossible for any of the other things to be.' ὥστε τὰ ἄλλα πάντα ἥτοι καθ' ὑποκειμένων τῶν πρώτων οὐσιῶν λέγεται ἢ ἐν ὑποκειμέναις αὐταῖς ἐστίν. μὴ οὐσῶν οὖν τῶν πρώτων οὐσιῶν ἀδύνατον τῶν ἄλλων τι εἶναι (*Categories* 2b3-6; trans. Ackrill). It is also worth noting that, in Zeta 3, Aristotle does not reject the notion of subject, rather, he thinks that simply being a subject is not sufficient (ικανόν; 1029a9) for being an *ousia*.



existence reading of the priority claim. Let me explain this point in more detail. Suppose we assume the modal-existence reading of the priority claim. It will then seem that we must assume that the existence of the attributes implies the existence of *ousia*, whereas the *ousia*'s existence does not imply the existence of attributes. But this is impossible since it will commit us to the view that *ousia* can exist without attributes existing.

Thirdly, it also seems misleading to interpret the priority of *ousia* through the explanation-essence reading, for the essences of the attributes have nothing to do with the essence of the subject. For example, just as a thing's being a human being seems to be independent of a thing's being white, so too the essence of white (a certain kind of colour) seems to be independent of the essence of a thing's being a human being.<sup>13</sup> One might argue against this point by supposing that Aristotle is thinking of some kinds of particularized properties (cf. Peramatzis 2008, p. 202). For example, if Aristotle thinks that properties must be particularized by the subject to which they belong, then it seems that properties cannot be independent of the essence of the subject. But I think that we cannot, without conclusive argument, appeal to this very controversial reading of the *Categories*. Based on [Text 2] itself, I think that we have to interpret Aristotle's priority claim through

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<sup>13</sup> However, Peramatzis attempts to make sense of the priority claim by appealing to the explanation-essence reading. This renders his view less convincing. He says: 'in my view, by contrast, particular substances operate in a "generic" causal or grounding mode of identity-fixing. For their ontological priority over non-substances does not consist in the claim that a specific particular substance makes a given non-substance the determinate kind of being that it is. It is not true that (e.g.) Socrates is prior to being red in that he (or his essence) makes red the specific type of colour that it is. Not even determinable non-substance attributes, such as being coloured or being a quality, seem to have their nature in virtue of what a concrete particular substance, such as Socrates is. Rather, the view is that particular substance, in general, or any particular substance whatsoever makes non-substance attributes the general kinds of being that they are. The generic nature of particular substance (some or other), its being in the primary, subject-mode, grounds the generic nature of non-substance entities as derivative, qualifying-beings belonging to some subject or other of this sort' (2011, p. 246; also cf. p. 241 and p. 248).

the explanation-existence reading; that is, it is the subject that explains the existence of attributes. To put the matter differently, the subject-attribute model provides the explanatory device for explaining the priority of *ousia*.

The upshot of this section is as follows. First, it is likely that Aristotle is sensitive to the ambiguity in his use of the verb *einai*, which does not have to mean 'to exist'. Secondly, the example we analysed shows that two items may mutually imply each other's existence, in which case the supposition of a priority of the one item over the other cannot be understood modally in terms of an existential dependence, but may be understood if it is supposed that the existence of the one item explains the existence of the other item (e.g., in the case of subject and attributes, it is *because of* a subject that attributes exist). This shows that if we take into account Aristotle's examples in Delta 11, we cannot read the priority claim in the modal-existence way. It also shows that in arguing for the priority of *ousia* over attributes, Aristotle has the explanation-existence reading in mind rather than the explanation-essence reading. In view of this, I think, to repeat, that the priority claim should be understood either through the explanation-existence reading or, as I shall go on to argue, through a more general reading, that is, through the explanation-being reading, which is explanatory, rather than modal, and is neutral with regard to existence and essence.

There might be some doubts as to whether merely invoking Aristotle's examples is sufficient to determine that the priority claim should be understood in terms of the explanation-being reading. In what follows, I attempt to silence these doubts by arguing, further, that Aristotle's priority claim, even in its own right, is not neutral between the modal-existence reading and the explanation-being reading (*contra* Peramatzis 2008 and 2011); that is to say, when Aristotle says that X is prior to Y in *ousia* (or in nature), he always has some version of the explanation-being reading in mind.



## 2. Aristotle's Formulation of 'Priority in *Ousia*' in the *Categories* and in the *Physics*

To clarify further what Aristotle means by 'priority in *ousia*', I will argue for the following claims in this section. First, I will show that Aristotle himself is clearly aware of the difference between the modal-existence reading and the explanation-being reading of the priority claim. I shall do this by considering two passages from the *Categories*. Secondly, I will argue that the two formulations, 'priority in *ousia*' and 'priority in nature', are equivalent,<sup>14</sup> and that both of them can only be understood through the explanation-being reading. Thirdly, I will dispel some misunderstandings concerning one passage in the *Physics*, which could be taken as potentially undermining my overall argument.

Let us first read two passages in *Categories* 12; I quote them here in full due to their importance for my argument.

[Text 3] Secondly, what does not reciprocate as to implication of existence. For example, one is prior to two because if there are two it follows at once that there is one, whereas if there is one there are not necessarily two, so that the implication of the other's existence does not hold reciprocally from one; and that from which the implication of existence does not hold reciprocally is thought to be prior. (*Categories* 14a29-35; trans. Ackrill)

Δεύτερον δὲ τὸ μὴ ἀντιστρέφον κατὰ τὴν τοῦ εἶναι ἀκολουθήσιν, οἷον τὸ ἐν τῶν δύο πρότερον· δυεῖν μὲν γὰρ ὄντων ἀκολουθεῖ εὐθὺς τὸ ἐν εἶναι, ἐνὸς δὲ ὄντος οὐκ ἀναγκαῖον δύο εἶναι, ὥστε οὐκ ἀντιστρέφει ἀπὸ τοῦ ἐνὸς ἢ ἀκολουθήσιν τοῦ εἶναι τὸ λοιπόν, πρότερον δὲ δοκεῖ τὸ τοιοῦτον εἶναι ἀφ' οὗ μὴ ἀντιστρέφει ἢ τοῦ εἶναι ἀκολουθήσιν.

[Text 4] There would seem, however, to be another manner of priority besides those mentioned. For of things which reciprocate as to implication of existence,

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<sup>14</sup> Recall that in Delta 11 at 1019a2-3 Aristotle mentions 'priority in *ousia*' together with 'priority in nature', treating them as the same.



that which is in some way the cause of the other's existence might reasonably be called prior by nature. And that there are some such cases is clear. For there being a man reciprocates as to implication of existence with the true statement about it: if there is a man, the statement whereby we say that there is a man is true, and reciprocally – since if the statement whereby we say that there is a man is true, there is a man. And whereas the true statement is in no way the cause of the actual thing's existence, the actual thing does seem in some way the cause of the statement's being true: it is because the actual thing exists or does not that the statement is called true or false. (*Categories* 14b10-22; trans. Ackrill)

δόξειε δ' ἂν καὶ παρὰ τοὺς εἰρημένους ἕτερος εἶναι προτέρου τρόπος· τῶν γὰρ ἀντιστρέφόντων κατὰ τὴν τοῦ εἶναι ἀκολουθήσιν τὸ αἴτιον ὅπως οὖν θατέρῳ τοῦ εἶναι πρότερον εἰκότως φύσει λέγοιτ' ἂν. ὅτι δ' ἔστι τινὰ τοιαῦτα, δῆλον· τὸ γὰρ εἶναι ἄνθρωπον ἀντιστρέφει κατὰ τὴν τοῦ εἶναι ἀκολουθήσιν πρὸς τὸν ἀληθεῖ περὶ αὐτοῦ λόγον· εἰ γὰρ ἔστιν ἄνθρωπος, ἀληθὴς ὁ λόγος ᾧ λέγομεν ὅτι ἔστιν ἄνθρωπος· καὶ ἀντιστρέφει γε, – εἰ γὰρ ἀληθὴς ὁ λόγος ᾧ λέγομεν ὅτι ἔστιν ἄνθρωπος, ἔστιν ἄνθρωπος· – ἔστι δὲ ὁ μὲν ἀληθεὺς λόγος οὐδαμῶς αἴτιος τοῦ εἶναι τὸ πρᾶγμα, τὸ μέντοι πρᾶγμα φαίνεται πως αἴτιον τοῦ εἶναι ἀληθεῖ τὸν λόγον· τῷ γὰρ εἶναι τὸ πρᾶγμα ἢ μὴ ἀληθεὺς ὁ λόγος ἢ ψευδὴς λέγεται.

In these two passages, Aristotle distinguishes two kinds of priority relation. In the first case, two items do not imply each other's existence reciprocally, but the one does imply the existence of the other, ([Text 3]). In a case such as this, the item that does not imply the other's existence is thought to be prior.<sup>15</sup> In the second case, two items imply each other's existence ([Text 4]). In a case such as this, the item that can explain the other is thought to be prior (cf. Menn ms., IIIa3, p. 11).<sup>16</sup> In my view, these two kinds of relation

<sup>15</sup> Ross (1924, p. 317; also cf. Kirwan 1971, p. 153) takes this priority (i.e., in the case where two items are non-reciprocal as to implication of existence; [Text 3]) as the same as that of Delta 11 ([Text 1]). I will show below that this correspondence cannot be correct: the priority claim in Delta 11 is the same as the priority in [Text 4] rather than [Text 3].

<sup>16</sup> Witt takes this priority as priority in time. She says: 'if we use this text (sc. [Text 4]) to explain priority in being of actuality, Aristotle would be claiming that potentialities and actualities mutually

correspond exactly to the modal-existence reading and the explanation-being reading of the priority claim. If this is correct, then these two passages indicate that Aristotle is clearly aware of this distinction.

It is worth noting here that the formulation of the priority in [Text 4] is called ‘priority in nature’ (14b13). I have suggested in section 1 that ‘priority in *ousia*’ should *only* be understood through the explanation-being reading. Remarkably, ‘priority in nature’ in [Text 4] is also interpreted by Aristotle through the explanation-being reading (as indicated by the word *aition*). If there is textual evidence suggesting that these two kinds of priority are indeed the same priority, then this lends additional support to my view. A brief survey of some Aristotelian texts reveals that there is indeed some strong evidence suggesting that ‘priority in *ousia*’ and ‘priority in nature’ are equivalent.

First, these two priorities are treated together in Delta 11 (κατὰ φύσιν καὶ οὐσίαν), indicating that they are the same (if we take the *kai* as explicative). Secondly, in some passages, Aristotle contrasts ‘priority in nature’ with ‘priority in generation’ (*Metaphysics* 989a15-16; *Physics* 261a14).<sup>17</sup> He claims that what is posterior in generation is prior in nature.<sup>18</sup> But in other passages, he contrasts ‘priority in *ousia*’ with ‘priority in generation’ (*Metaphysics* 1050a4-5, 1077a18-20 and 1077a26-27; *Generation of Animals* 742a20-22).

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imply the existence of each other, and that actualities cause the existence of potentialities. We cannot, however, use this text to explain the priority in being of actuality because it conflates priority in being and priority in time instead of providing an independent explanation of priority in being’ (1994, p. 271 n.3; also cf. 2003, p. 138 n.3). This is incorrect due to her narrow understanding of the causal relation; for she thinks that two casually related items must be in a temporal order, whereas Aristotle has a more general understanding of causation.

<sup>17</sup> Panayides (1999, p. 338) thinks that in *Physics* 261a13-20 Aristotle takes the expressions ‘priority in *ousia*’ and ‘priority in nature’ to be equivalent. Also cf. Beere (2009, p. 332).

<sup>18</sup> For example, ‘what is posterior in the order of becoming is prior in the order of nature.’ ὥστε τὸ τῇ γενέσει ὕστερον τῇ φύσει πρότερον εἶναι (*Physics* 261a14; trans. Hardie and Gaye).



He claims that what is posterior in generation is prior in *ousia*.<sup>19</sup> These two contrasts indicate strongly that priority in nature and priority in *ousia* are the same.

If these two priorities are equivalent, then *Categories* 12 confirms my interpretation of the priority claim in Delta 11, which argues that the priority in *ousia* should be understood through the explanation-being reading and cannot be understood through the modal-existence reading. Further to support my argument, let us now turn to one passage in the *Physics*. This passage is interpreted by some critics (e.g., Panayides 1999) in a way that would potentially undermine my overall argument.

[Text 5] Furthermore, from the following observations too it will also be apparent that locomotion is primary. For the primary in the case of motion as well as of other things is said in many ways. For that is said to be prior without which other things will not exist, while it can exist without them, and there is also priority in time and priority in *ousia*. (*Physics* Theta, 260b15-19; trans. Graham)

ἔτι καὶ ἐντεῦθεν ἐπισκοποῦσιν ἔσται φανερόν ὅτι ἡ φορὰ πρώτη. τὸ γὰρ πρῶτον, ὥσπερ ἐφ' ἐτέρων, οὕτω καὶ ἐπὶ κινήσεως ἂν λέγοιτο πλεοναχῶς. λέγεται δὲ πρότερον οὐ τε μὴ ὄντος οὐκ ἔσται τᾶλλα, ἐκεῖνο δὲ ἄνευ τῶν ἄλλων, καὶ τὸ τῷ χρόνῳ, καὶ τὸ κατ' οὐσίαν.

The issue in interpreting [Text 5] lies in the fact that the formulation of the priority claim in this passage bears some similarity to the priority claim as formulated in Delta 11 ([Text 1]), but in addition to this kind of priority, Aristotle suggests in [Text 5] that there are other kinds of priority, such as priority in time and priority in *ousia*. Accordingly, some critics (e.g., Panayides 1999, p. 336) think that priority in *ousia* must be different from the

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<sup>19</sup> For example, 'For there is a difference between the end or final cause and that which exists for the sake of it; the latter is prior in order of development, and former is prior in essence.' τό τε γὰρ οὐ ἔνεκα καὶ τὸ τούτου ἔνεκα διαφέρει, καὶ τὸ μὲν τῇ γενέσει πρότερον αὐτῶν ἐστὶ τὸ δὲ τῇ οὐσίᾳ (*Generation of Animals* 742a20-22; trans. Platt).



priority claim as formulated in Delta 11.<sup>20</sup> Let us consider Panayides' view (1999) as an example. For the sake of clarity, I will summarize his view as follows.

**[Premise 1]** He reads the priority claim in Delta 11 (i.e., in **[Text 1]**) through the modal-existence reading.

**[Premise 2]** He also reads the formulated priority in **[Text 5]** through the modal-existence reading.

**[Premise 3]** Aristotle in **[Text 5]** distinguishes the formulated priority from priority in *ousia*.

**[Conclusion]** Priority in *ousia* must be different from the formulated priority in **[Text 5]**, namely, the priority claim understood through the modal-existence reading.

I agree with Panayides' conclusion, for I do not think that priority in *ousia* can be understood through the modal-existence reading, but, since I do not accept the modal-existence reading of Delta 11 (**[Premise 1]**), I do not think that the priority in *ousia* of **[Text 5]** must be different from that of Delta 11. As an argument against Panayides' reading, I will mention just one difficulty with it. There is good reason to think that if we accept Panayides' interpretation, it will commit us to the view that Aristotle is inconsistent in his use of terminology (Panayides 1999, p. 342; also cf. Dancy 1980, p. 88; Beere 2009, p. 298 n.21; Witt 2003, p. 138 n.2), for on his interpretation, Aristotle is using the same formulation to refer to two different kinds of priority.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> As Panayides says: 'it is fair to claim that in *Meta.* 1050a4-11, as in *Phys.* 260b15ff., Aristotle takes it that priority in substance is not ontological priority (sc. the modal-existence reading of the priority claim)' (1999, p. 340).

<sup>21</sup> As Panayides says: 'it is clear that Stagirite is not very consistent with his terminology. There are places, like *Meta.* IX 8, where he is prepared to use 'priority in substance' as a label for both ontological priority, as well as the priority of the end over its corresponding end-directed entity' (1999, p. 342).

If I do not agree with Panayides's reading (in particular, **[Premise 1]**), then the burden of explanation falls upon me. I need to explain why the formulation of the priority claim is so similar to that of Delta 11, while nevertheless maintaining that, for Aristotle, there is still another priority in addition to this one, such as priority in *ousia*.

The solution to this difficulty, which I propose, is as follows: when the priority claim formulated by the verb *einai* is contrasted with priority in *ousia*, the former is understood through the modal-existence reading whereas the latter is understood through the explanation-being reading. In other words, we need to contextualize these two kinds of priority. It seems to me that in **[Text 5]** Aristotle is simply arguing that other kinds of motion imply the existence of locomotion, whereas the reverse is not the case. If this is so, it seems obvious that this is not priority in *ousia* (i.e., the explanation-being reading), since this kind of priority has nothing to do with explanation regarding either existence or essence, or both. Read along these lines, it is fair to say that, in **[Text 5]**, Aristotle is also aware of the difference between the modal-existence reading and the explanation-being reading of the priority claim (i.e., priority in *ousia*). The conclusion of this section is that Aristotle is clearly aware of the distinction between these two readings, and by 'priority in *ousia*', he is thinking of the explanation-being reading.

### 3. Aristotle's Formulation of 'Priority in *Ousia*' in Theta 8

Having argued that 'priority in *ousia*', as this notion is introduced in Delta 11, can only be understood through the explanation-being reading, I think that we are ready to go back to Theta 8. Let us see whether my interpretation of the priority claim can successfully avoid all of the difficulties that have puzzled critics. Aristotle begins his discussion of priority in *ousia* by saying:

[Text 6] however, [actuality is also prior] in its very substance, (1) first because the things that are posterior in coming-to-be are prior in form and in substance...(2) and because everything that comes-to-be goes toward a first principle and a completion (for the for-the-sake-of-which [of something] is a first principle, and the coming-to-be is for the sake of the completion), and the actualization is the completion, and it is for the sake of this that the potentiality is acquired. (*Metaphysics* Theta, 1050a4-10; trans. Furth)

Ἀλλὰ μὴν καὶ οὐσία γε, (1) πρῶτον μὲν ὅτι τὰ τῇ γενέσει ὕστερα τῷ εἶδει καὶ τῇ οὐσίᾳ πρότερα...(2) καὶ ὅτι ἅπαν ἐπ' ἀρχὴν βαδίζει τὸ γιγνόμενον καὶ τέλος (ἀρχὴ γὰρ τὸ οὗ ἔνεκα, τοῦ τέλους δὲ ἔνεκα ἡ γένεσις), τέλος δ' ἡ ἐνέργεια, καὶ τούτου χάριν ἡ δύναμις λαμβάνεται.

This is Aristotle's statement of the priority of *energeia* over *dunamis* in *ousia* within perishable things. Aristotle first claims that what comes later in a developmental process is prior in *ousia* to what comes earlier, and, then, he relates this statement to the concepts of *energeia* and *dunamis*, claiming that what comes later is *energeia* understood as the completion (*telos*) and what comes earlier, *dunamis*, is for the sake of it. For present purposes, let us not go into the details of Aristotle's controversial argument for these two claims.<sup>22</sup> Suffice it to say here that in arguing for the priority of *energeia* over *dunamis* in

<sup>22</sup> Here I follow Menn's reading of [Text 6]. For a summary of an alternative reading, see Menn: 'Bonitz, following the pseudo-Alexander, thinks that 1050a4-7 are a complete short argument for the main conclusion that *energeia* is prior to *dunamis* in *ousia*, so that 1050a7-b6 would be a much longer but formally parallel argument for the same conclusion; in support of this reading, "and because" [καὶ ὅτι] in a7 seems to pick up "first, because" [πρῶτον μὲν ὅτι] at the beginning of the passage in a4, so that they would naturally introduce two parallel arguments'. Menn argues against this reading. As he says, 'The first part, 1050a4-9, says nothing about *energeia*, but argues for the thesis that the developmentally later stage (the *telos*) is the *archē* of the developmentally earlier stages, i.e., is prior to them in *ousia*, since it is that for the sake of which they come about; then 1050a9-10 states the thesis that the *energeia* is the *telos* for the sake of which the *dunamis* is acquired, and 1050a10-b3 argues for this thesis, both in substance and in non-substance cases; and then Aristotle puts the two theses together to conclude that the *energeia*, since it is the *telos*, is prior to the *dunamis* in *ousia*' (ms., IIIa3, p. 13; emphasis added). There are other readings. For example, Aquinas' reading of Theta 8: 'and since to be prior in



respect of *ousia*, Aristotle appeals to a certain kind of explanation, namely, teleological explanation; that is, to repeat, it is because *dunamis* is for the sake of the *telos* that *energeia* obtains its priority over *dunamis*.

As many critics have recognized, it seems impossible to interpret this passage through the modal-existence reading. For, it seems clear that, conceptually, the child and the adult mutually entail each other's existence; there is no priority or posterity between them. This is puzzling for critics who are committed to the modal-existence reading of the priority claim. In the current literature, they have proposed three ways of avoiding this difficulty. However, I will show that none of these readings is plausible, for they either revise the modal-existence reading in such a way that they are, in fact, proposing the explanation-being reading of the priority claim, or they do not do so, in which case their approaches will face even greater challenges.

The dominant reading of [Text 6] (Dancy 1980, pp. 88-95; Cleary 1988, p. 59; Irwin 1988, p. 237; Beere 2008 and 2009, pp. 304-313; Menn ms., IIIα3, p. 11 and p. 14) interprets this passage from a teleological point of view. According to this view, the teleological order explains the priority of *energeia*. Of those critics who endorse this view, Menn and Beere clearly hold that, by appealing to teleology, Aristotle is thinking of the priority claim in *Categories* 12 as formulated in [Text 4] – namely, the explanation-being of the priority claim.<sup>23</sup> Other critics like Ross (1924, p. 262) and Aquinas (1961, p. 615)

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substance is to be prior in perfection, and since perfection is attributed to two things, namely, to the form and to the goal [or end], therefore in the first part he uses two arguments to prove his thesis. The first of these pertains to the form, and the second to the goal, given at the words, “and because” (1961, p. 615). I will come back to this reading later.

<sup>23</sup> As Menn says: ‘Aristotle’s argument at Theta 8 1050a4-b6 seems to apply this test (sc. the causal test) to show that actual-X is more properly the cause of being to potential-X than vice versa’, and ‘The argument of 1050a7-9 is causal, that is, it applies the causal test to break the tie left by Plato’s test: neither the mature nor the immature state can exist without the other, but the mature state is the final

appeal to the concept of degrees of perfection; they think that compared to *dunamis*, the corresponding *energeia* is more real or perfect.<sup>24</sup> Despite the variety in their modes of expression, I think that, generally speaking, all these critics belong to the same camp.

It is worth noting that Panayides (1999) distinguishes ‘priority in substance’ from ‘ontological priority’ (what I call the modal-existence reading of the priority claim), and he thinks that priority in substance should be interpreted by appealing to teleology. As I have pointed out earlier, he is, therefore, committed to thinking that the concept of priority in *ousia* in Aristotle is not consistent (Panayides 1999, p. 342; also cf. Dancy 1980, p. 88; Beere 2009, p. 298 n.21). When Aristotle uses the priority in *ousia* to argue for the priority of *energeia* within perishable things, he is endorsing a teleological reading of the priority claim rather than the modal-existence reading. I have shown that this approach does not do justice to Aristotle’s careful distinction between the modal-existence reading and the explanation-being reading. In fact, this is a serious problem for all splitting readings.

Some other critics try to revise the modal-existence reading, aiming to accommodate Aristotle’s examples in Theta 8. Of these critics, Makin (2003 and 2006 pp. 192-204) is representative. I think, however, that by revising the modal-existence reading

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cause of the existence of the immature state’ (ms., IIIa3, pp. 11-12 and p. 14). Also cf. Beere (2008 and 2009, pp. 298-299).

<sup>24</sup> As Aquinas says: ‘Those things which are subsequent in generation are “prior in substance and form”, i.e., in perfection, because the process of generation always goes from what is imperfect to what is perfect; for example, in the process of generation man is subsequent to boy, because man comes from boy; and human being already has a perfect form, whereas boy and seed do not yet have such a form. Hence, since in numerically one and the same subject actuality is subsequent to potency both in generation and in time, as is evident from the above, it follows that actuality is prior to potency in substance and in intelligibility’ (1961, p. 615).



of Delta 11, he is in fact committed to the explanation-being reading, for he has to appeal to teleological explanation.<sup>25</sup>

In contrast to Makin, Witt (1994, 2003, pp. 82-85) attempts to accommodate Aristotle's examples in Theta 8 in two steps. First, she thinks that individuals are existentially dependent on their corresponding species, e.g., an individual man is dependent on human being (the species). Secondly, an individual man is ultimately dependent on other individuals since human being (the species) is also dependent on its particular members.<sup>26</sup> It is worth noting here that Witt also argues against the explanation-being reading of the priority claim. Witt suggests that we might construe priority in substance as explanatory priority (1994; 2003, p. 82 and pp. 87-88). She thinks, however, that there is no textual evidence supporting this interpretation. She argues that when Aristotle defines priority in substance, viz., in *Metaphysics* Delta 11, 1019a1-4, he describes it as ontological and not as explanatory priority. As she says, 'Further, where he explicitly describes the priority of explanations of natural changes in terms of ends, form, and definitions over material explanations, he connects explanatory priority with priority

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<sup>25</sup> Makin, by analysing Aristotle's examples, revises the modal-existence reading as follows: 'Fs are prior in substance to Gs so long as it is possible for there to be Fs without Gs, but not vice versa: that constitutes the connection between priority in substance and [IC] (sc. the Independent Condition). What establishes the possibility of there being Fs without Gs is that there is some process which in normal conditions results in Fs and not in Gs – a process of which the unhindered outcome is Fs and not Gs; whereas in contrast the way to get Gs and not Fs is to interfere with, interrupt, or hinder that process' (2003, p. 229; cf. also 2006, p. 195).

<sup>26</sup> As Witt says: 'The mature Sally is just one way of filling the teleological blank, and it is not the most perspicuous formulation of Aristotle's position. What is important for Aristotle is not a particular *telos* – Sally as an adult – but rather the idea that the child exists for the sake of being a mature person. Sally's *telos* is the type of species which she will realize, and not the token or individual she will become. On this view, the end or actuality in question is the species...Species are existentially dependent on the existence of their individual members...Ultimately, then, the existence of young Sally, or any other potential human being, is dependent on the existence of individual actual, adult human beings' (1994, pp. 224–226).



in time and definition' (1994, p. 220). In my view, her argument is questionable because it is based on a narrow understanding of the causal relation. She thinks that, for Aristotle, a causal relation has to be temporal; but this is certainly questionable. Apart from this narrow understanding of Aristotle's notion of causal relation, there are two additional reasons to argue against Witt's reading of the priority claim within perishable things. First, as Beere observes: 'I do not see how this view can give a satisfactory account of the argument Aristotle gives for his view. That argument hinges on the teleological relation of capacities and *energeiai*, which has nothing to do with the existence-conditions for universals' (2009, p. 298).<sup>27</sup> Secondly, it seems that Aristotle here is dealing with the relation between types (between children and adults) not between token and type (between a particular child and human being; cf. Menn ms., IIIa3, p. 11).

Burnyeat (1984, p. 144) also endorses an explanatory reading of the passage, but he goes so far as to claim that this is not priority in *ousia*.<sup>28</sup> Owen has a similar suggestion, claiming that 'the opening, 1050a4-7, which includes the examples on which much of my discussion focuses, may be no more than a conjunction of priority *logōi* and priority *chronōi*' (Burnyeat 1984, p. 134).

Finally, we come to Peramatzis' reading. He holds an explanation-essence reading of the passage (2011, pp. 278-291). He thinks that the *energeia* explains why the

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<sup>27</sup> Cf. Witt: 'Aristotle explains the priority in being of actuality in relation to potentiality not in terms of ontological priority, but rather in terms of a teleological relationship between the two. And there is no obvious connection between the teleological relationship which unites potentiality and actuality, and the idea that potentialities are ontologically dependent upon actualities' (1994, p. 218). But this is due to her narrow understanding of the priority claim. She understands it through the modal-existence reading.

<sup>28</sup> As he says: 'The trouble is that the emphasis of the section (sc. 1050a4-b2) is on ways in which form as τέλος is prior in explanation, not prior τῇ οὐσίᾳ in the sense at issue 6 ff. (sc. the priority of eternal things over perishable things), viz. that X must exist if Y is to exist but not *vice versa* (50b 19, Ross *ad loc.*)'.

corresponding *dunamis* is as it is. Moreover, he thinks that even though Aristotle's formulation of the priority claim, in its own right, is open to both the modal-existence reading and the explanation-being reading, Aristotle's examples suggest that he is endorsing the latter reading rather than the former.

My view is similar to that of Peramatzis, for we both think that it is the teleology that provides an explanatory device to explain the priority of *energeia*. Potential things are what they are (i.e., their essences) *because of* their relation to the corresponding actual things; this is a version of the explanation-being reading of the priority claim. All other approaches fail to do justice to Aristotle's texts both in Theta 8 and elsewhere. But, unlike Peramatzis, I do not think that the formulation of the priority claim is neutral between these two readings. As I have argued, priority in *ousia* can only be understood through the explanation-being reading.

Having examined the priority claim within perishable things, let us now turn to Aristotle's argument for the priority claim between eternal things and perishable things.<sup>29</sup> All critics take the following text as a clear statement of the priority claim, but they disagree about what this priority amounts to.

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<sup>29</sup> It should be noted that here Aristotle's strategy of arguing for the priority of *energeia* over *dunamis* is as follows. He first argues that eternal things are prior to perishable things; then he claims that the attributes of prior things – namely, *energeiai* – are prior to *dunameis*, which belongs to perishable things. As Menn says: 'Aristotle's main argument in this section (1050b6-34) is as follows: "eternal things are prior to corruptible things in *ousia*" (1050b6-7); "but nothing *dunamei* is eternal" (b7-8, and then supported further down), so that eternal things are not *dunamei* but purely *energeiai*; so *energeia* is an attribute of things that are prior to the things of which *dunamis* is an attribute, and therefore *energeia* is prior to *dunamis* (using the sense of priority at Delta 11 1018b37-1019a1)' (ms., IIIa3, p. 17). (Cf. 1018b37-1019a1; trans. Apostle: 'Again, the attributes of prior things are called 'prior'; for example, straightness is prior to planeness. For the first is an essential attribute of a line, the second of a surface'). In view of this strategy, I will focus only on Aristotle's argument for the priority of eternal things over perishable things.



[Text 7] But then, [actuality is prior] in a stricter sense also;<sup>30</sup> for eternal things are prior in substance to perishable things, and nothing potentially is eternal. ἀλλὰ μὴν καὶ κυριωτέρως· τὰ μὲν γὰρ αἰδία πρότερα τῇ οὐσίᾳ τῶν φθαρτῶν, ἔστι δ' οὐθὲν δυνάμει αἰδιον...Nor can any of the things [be potentially] that are of necessity. These are primary; for if these were not, nothing could be. οὐδὲ τῶν ἐξ ἀνάγκης ὄντων (καίτοι ταῦτα πρῶτα· εἰ γὰρ ταῦτα μὴ ἦν, οὐθὲν ἂν ἦν). (*Metaphysics* Theta, 1050b6-8 and b18-19; trans. Furth)

In the current scholarship, there are four readings of the above priority claim.<sup>31</sup>

First, most critics (Makin 2003; 2006, p. 209; Beere 2009, p. 296; Witt 1994; 2003, p. 82 and pp. 90-92; Ross 1924, p. 265; Dancy 1980, p. 89; Burnyeat 1984, p. 144; Panayides 1999, p. 341; Frey 2005, p. 91 n.7 and p. 93 n.10) take the modal-existence reading of [Text 7]; that is, if the eternal things do not exist, the perishable things cannot exist, but not *vice versa*.

Secondly, Peramatzis (2011, pp. 291-300) interprets this priority claim through the explanation-essence reading. He also thinks, however, that the formulation, in its own right, is open between the modal-existence reading and the explanation-essence reading. Only by invoking Aristotle's examples can we endorse conclusively the explanation-essence reading.

<sup>30</sup> In my view, in order to understand why Aristotle takes this kind of priority to be 'in a stricter sense', we have to have a proper understanding of what project Aristotle is carrying out in Theta. I suggested in Chapter 3 that it is because this priority can lead us to the desired *archē* of *ousiai* that Aristotle takes it to be 'priority in a stricter sense'.

<sup>31</sup> Judson argues: 'I take premise (2) (sc. eternal things are prior to perishable things, because without the former the latter would not be) to be concerned, instead, with dependence involving efficient causation' (2016, p. 150). He, therefore, takes [Text 7] to be about the causal dependence relation (cf. p. 151). I think, however, that his view is unconvincing, for Aristotle here is concerned with explanation regarding *existence* or *essence* rather than with explanation regarding efficient causation. I will come back to this issue in Chapter 6.



Thirdly, pseudo-Alexander reads the priority claim in terms of degrees of value. That is, it is because eternal things are more valuable than perishable things that the former are prior to the latter.<sup>32</sup> This, however, cannot be right, for Aristotle does not say anything like this. He does think *energeiai* are more valuable, a topic that he explicitly addresses only in Theta 9.

Lastly, it is worth mentioning that Aquinas draws a distinction between eternal things and necessary things. He thinks that the modal-existence reading is only applicable to necessary things. Aquinas' view is a little bit complex: first, he thinks that eternal things are prior to perishable things in perfection. Secondly, by introducing a distinction between eternal things and necessary things, he thinks that the modal-existence reading of the priority claim only explains the priority of necessary things rather than eternal things.<sup>33</sup> No other critic, so far as I know, draws such a distinction. All other critics take the necessary things and eternal things in this passage to be equivalent.<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, it would be strange if Aristotle were abruptly to change topic from eternal things to necessary things in a continuous argument. However, even setting aside Aquinas' distinction, I do think

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<sup>32</sup> Pseudo-Alexander thinks that Aristotle is committed to a fourth sort of priority here (in *Met.* 591.12-14): 'having shown that actuality is prior to potentiality in account, in time, and in substance, he now shows how it is prior not just in those ways, but also "more importantly", or more worthily (*alla kai kuriōterōs ētoi timiōterōs*)'.

<sup>33</sup> As Aquinas says: 'second, he comes to the same conclusion about necessary things as he did about eternal things, because even in corruptible things there are certain necessary aspects; for example, man is an animal, and every whole is greater than its part. Hence, he says that nothing necessary is potential; for necessary things are always actual and incapable of being or not being. And those things which are necessary are the first of all things, because if they ceased to exist, none of the others would exist; for example, if essential predicates, which can be present and not present in some subject, could not be present in any subject. It follows, then, that actuality is prior to potency' (1961, p. 620).

<sup>34</sup> As Gill says: '*Metaphysics* Theta 8 contrast perishable sublunary bodies with the celestial bodies in the superlunary sphere' (1989, p. 235). For a similar view, see also, Witt (2003, p.92), Ross (1924, p. 265) and Frey (2015, p. 91 n.7).

there are some oddities in Aristotle’s use of terminology. It seems that the concept of eternal things is wider than the concept of non-sublunary things, for Aristotle does think that there are some eternal things within the sublunary sphere, e.g., species (*Generation of Animals* 731a30ff.).<sup>35</sup> But it seems that here Aristotle treats sublunary things as a group, setting them against heavenly things (e.g., 1050b23).<sup>36</sup>

After a brief analysis, it seems clear that, of these four readings, the last two do not bear close scrutiny. In what follows, I will argue against the modal-existence reading of [Text 7] and advance a version of the explanation-being reading. But first let me explain why the dominant reading is not convincing.

According to the modal-existence reading of priority, it follows that all things will be ultimately dependent on eternal things (cf. Peramatzis 2011, p. 234). For example, if X is an eternal thing, then, for any other thing, Y, its existence must imply X’s existence. As I have mentioned, the concept of eternal things is wider than the concept of non-sublunary things, for Aristotle does think that there are some eternal things within the sublunary sphere. Hence, it seems to me that we have some good reasons to suppose that Aristotle’s perishable world as a whole is eternal, even though each and every perishable individual is not (cf. *De Generatione et Corruptione* Beta, 338b11ff.). If this is the case, then eternal things and perishable things will be on a par in terms of ontological priority.

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<sup>35</sup> According to Aristotle, many of the attributes possessed by perishable things are eternal. For example, Aristotle says: ‘the equality of angles to two right angles so belongs to a triangle. And such accidents [attributes] may be eternal’ (1025a33; trans. Apostle). Also cf. ‘now all causes must be eternal, and these most of all; for these are the causes of what is visible among things divine’ (1026a17; trans. Apostle).

<sup>36</sup> As Beere says, ‘rather than consider the eternal things and the perishable things severally, he considers them as groups’ (2008, p. 431).



If the modal-existence reading of priority is not convincing, one might wonder: what kind of priority does Aristotle have in mind? Let us now see what argument Aristotle provides.<sup>37</sup>

[Text 8] Here is the reason: every potentiality is at the same time [a potentiality] of the contradictory; for whereas that which is not capable of belonging can't belong to anything, yet everything that is potential still admits of not being actual. Therefore, being capable admits both [actually] being, and [actually] not being; therefore, the same thing is capable of both being and not being. (*Metaphysics* Theta, 1050b8-12; trans. Furth)

λόγος δὲ ὅδε· πᾶσα δύναμις ἅμα τῆς ἀντιφάσεώς ἐστιν· τὸ μὲν γὰρ μὴ δυνατόν ὑπάρχειν οὐκ ἂν ὑπάρξειεν οὐθενί, τὸ δυνατόν δὲ πᾶν ἐνδέχεται μὴ ἐνεργεῖν. τὸ ἄρα δυνατόν εἶναι ἐνδέχεται καὶ εἶναι καὶ μὴ εἶναι· τὸ αὐτὸ ἄρα δυνατόν καὶ εἶναι καὶ μὴ εἶναι.

[Text 9] Yet there is a difficulty; for it seems that whatever is in actuality also has the potency for it, but that whatever has a potency need not actualize it, and so potency seems to be prior to actuality. But if this is so, nothing will be; for something may have the potency to be and still not be. (*Metaphysics* Lambda, 1071b22-26; trans. Apostle, slightly modified; cf. also, *Metaphysics* Beta, 1003a2-3)

καίτοι ἀπορία· δοκεῖ γὰρ τὸ μὲν ἐνεργοῦν πᾶν δύνασθαι τὸ δὲ δυνάμενον οὐ πᾶν ἐνεργεῖν, ὥστε πρότερον εἶναι τὴν δύναμιν. ἀλλὰ μὴν εἰ τοῦτο, οὐθὲν ἔσται τῶν ὄντων· ἐνδέχεται γὰρ δύνασθαι μὲν εἶναι μήπω δ' εἶναι.

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<sup>37</sup> Frey thinks that: 'Aristotle does not defend this claim (eternal things are prior in substance to perishable things) in Theta 8' (2015, p. 91). I do not agree with him, since I think that Aristotle does provide an argument. Also, Menn thinks that 'that there must be such a cause (sc. an eternal mover) is not argued here, but elsewhere, notably in *Physics* VIII 6, Aristotle does make the argument that an eternal cycle of generation requires an eternal sustaining cause, and he will draw on this argument in *Metaphysics* Lambda' (ms., IIIa3, pp. 17-18). I think, however, that Aristotle does argue for the existence of eternal things in Theta 8, and this argument is compatible with that of *Physics* VIII 6, where the argument is based on an analysis of the eternity of motion.



It appears that in [Text 8] Aristotle does provide some reason for the priority claim (as indicated by *logos* at 1050b8). He thinks that perishable things (or potential things) are capable of both being and not being actual. If we take [Text 8] together with [Text 9], it seems that Aristotle is proposing some version of sufficient reason: we might think that perishable things are capable of both being and not being actual. This is a 'brute fact', and this is all we need, but Aristotle seems to think that if this were so, it might be the case that everything is merely in capacity and nothing will be in actuality ([Text 9]); that is, it is possible that there is nothing at all!<sup>38</sup> But the perishable world as we experience it is not like this; there is something rather than nothing. Hence, an explanation is needed here. That is, a sufficient reason must be provided to account for why the perishable world is as it is. It seems that Aristotle thinks that eternal things can provide such an explanation.

One might wonder how exactly eternal things are related to perishable things. Peramatzis (2011) thinks eternal things determine the essences of perishable things, more specifically, he thinks that it is through the final cause and the efficient cause that eternal things fix the essences of perishable things.<sup>39</sup> But, as Peramatzis (2011, p. 296) also recognizes, it seems nonsensical to think that eternal things can determine the specific essence of each individual perishable thing. In view of this, Peramatzis proposes that eternal things only fix the generic identity of sublunary species insofar as they are species.

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<sup>38</sup> For a similar reading, see Elders (1972, p. 146) and Aquinas (1961, p. 798).

<sup>39</sup> As Peramatzis says, 'moreover, it is possible to conceive this modal claim as being based on the notion of identity-fixing or making something what it essentially is. Because eternal actual beings somehow determine the nature of perishable beings (but not conversely), they can be what they are without them but not the other way around...Without some underlying real-world relation of the efficient, final, or material grounding causation eternal actual being could not play the identity-fixing role' (2011, p. 295 and p. 298).

That is, it is in virtue of eternal things that every sublunary species is eternal ‘as it cannot fail to be constantly replenished with new members’ (2011, p. 297).<sup>40</sup>

However, the text of Theta 8, in its own right, does not tell us anything about how such a supposed essence-fixing function might work. It only provides, in my view, a version of sufficient reason to account for the priority of eternal things over perishable things. Lacking further evidence, I do not have a conclusive view with regard to how this sufficient reason should be understood. Hence, in interpreting Theta 8, I disagree with Peramatzis on the following issue: whereas Peramatzis thinks that it is in virtue of essence-fixing that eternal things explain the being of the perishable things (the explanation-essence reading),<sup>41</sup> I think that it is in virtue of a sufficient reason, whether it is understood through the explanation-essence reading or the explanation-existence reading, or both.

## Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued for the following conclusions. First, by considering one example Aristotle cites in *Metaphysics* Delta 11, ‘priority in *ousia*’ should be understood through the explanation-being reading. Secondly, if we carefully take into account the relevant passages in the *Categories* and the *Physics*, it seems clear that ‘priority in *ousia*’ can never be understood through the modal-existence reading. This leads me to conclude

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<sup>40</sup> Peramatzis (2011, pp. 297-298) thinks that the text of Theta 1050b28-30 supports his argument since in this passage Aristotle claims that sublunary elements imitate the eternal things. More specifically, he thinks that the eternal transformation of elements depends on the eternal things. However, this is not convincing for two reasons: first, this passage is itself controversial, e.g., it is not clear whether Aristotle here is thinking of the constant transformation or the natural movement of elements (cf. Ross 1924, pp. 265-266); secondly, Aristotle does not argue for the priority claim in this passage, rather, he argues for it earlier.

<sup>41</sup> Again, it seems to me that Peramatzis’ terminology is misleading; for ‘the explanation-essence reading’ might lead us to think that eternal things could determine the essences of perishable things, which, as I have pointed out, might not be so.

that 'priority in *ousia*' can only be understood through the explanation-being reading. Thirdly, in the case of Theta 8, I argued that Aristotle provides two reasons for the priority of *energeia*: on the one hand, it is because the concept of *energeia* provides a teleological explanation that a priority relation is established; on the other hand, it is because eternal things provide a sufficient reason for the being of the perishable things that another priority relation is established. The priority claim, construed through the explanation-being reading, allows these two priority claims to be brought under the same label, namely, 'priority in *ousia*'. To put the matter differently, the explanation-being reading of the priority claim has many versions, and it is this flexibility that unites the two parts of Theta 8.



## Chapter 5

### The Further Clarification of *Archē* in Theta 9

In the previous four chapters, I have argued for the following four theses. First, Theta 1-6 should be read as preparing for the discussion of *archē*, which will be taken up in Theta 7 and 8, by introducing the twin notions, *energeia-dunamis*, as a means of analysing the concept of *ousia*; for it emerges in Theta 7 and 8 that the *archē* in question is, precisely, the *archē* of *ousiai*. Secondly, Theta 7 and 8 take up the search for the *archē* of *ousiai*. Aristotle argues here that the desired *archē* can only be found within the context of the search for the *energeiai* of *ousiai*, and it can only be found within the sphere of eternal things (i.e., eternal *energeiai*). Thirdly, Theta 7 and 8 already assume a teleological dimension; that is, the concept of *genesis* should be understood as coming-to-be-towards-good-ends. Fourthly, I have argued that the priority in *ousia* should be understood through the explanation-being reading: X is prior to Y if and only if X explains the being of Y, meaning either the existence of Y, or the essence of Y, or both; but not *vice versa*. This reading, as we shall see in this chapter, is also crucial for our understanding of one important claim in Theta 9, according to which the bad is posterior to *dunamis* in nature (*phusei*).

Theta 9 is usually read as consisting of two parts: the first half of Theta 9, 1051a4-21, centres on the evaluative priority of *energeia* over *dunamis*, and the second half of Theta 9, 1051a21-33, concerns the epistemic priority of *energeia* over *dunamis*. In this chapter, I will discuss only the first part of Theta 9.

With regard to the first part of Theta 9, several issues still need to be addressed. First, how is the first half of Theta 9 related to Theta 7 and 8? Is the first half of Theta 9 a new topic (as many critics think; e.g., Ross 1924, Makin 2006, Beere 2009), or is it

continuous with Theta 7 and 8 (or more properly, is it a further clarification of what is implied in Theta 7 and 8, namely, the teleological dimension)? Secondly, how does the first half of Theta 9 contribute to the overall aim of the *Metaphysics*?

To begin with, let us take up the first question. As I have summarized at the opening of this chapter, it seems that the answer to the first question is quite straightforward. Recall that Theta 7 and 8, as I have pointed out in Chapter 3, have already presupposed a teleological dimension; that is, *dunamis* and *energeia* as involved in *genesis* are always directed toward good ends.<sup>1</sup> Since the first part of Theta 9 is about the evaluative priority of *energeia* over *dunamis*, it seems that Theta 9 is, in an obvious sense, continuous with Theta 8 in this respect.

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<sup>1</sup> Let me explain this in more detail. At the beginning of Zeta 7, Aristotle distinguishes three modes of generation – namely, by nature, by art, and by chance ('of things which are generated, some are generated by nature, others by art, still other by chance.' *Tῶν δὲ γιγνομένων τὰ μὲν φύσει γίγνεται τὰ δὲ τέχνη τὰ δὲ ἀπὸ ταυτομάτου*. 1032a12-13; trans. Apostle; cf. also *On the Part of Animals*, 640a27-33). Let us now analyse these three modes of generation one by one. First, nature seems always to be directed toward good ends as Aristotle argues in *Physics*, Beta 8. Secondly, it seems that art is also directed toward good ends. Let me explain. In Theta 2, Aristotle claims that rational *dunamis* (αἱ μετὰ λόγου) are of contrary results, but there is an asymmetry between them; that is, of the two results, one is in its own right (καθ' αὐτό), whereas the other is not in its own right (μὴ καθ' αὐτό). For example, the medical art can produce both disease and health. Of the two results, to heal is καθ' αὐτό, whereas to harm is μὴ καθ' αὐτό. One question arises: what makes one art always incline to one of the two results, rather than to the other? After all, art is considered as value-neutral in *Nicomachean Ethics* (1140b21-25). In Theta 5, Aristotle claims that the inclination of an art is determined by the desire (ὄρεξις) or choice (προαίρεσις). I think that Broadie (2007b, p. 98) is right in arguing that art will not occur alone, the practice of arts is accompanied by the practical wisdom (*phronēsis*). That is to say, behind every art is practical wisdom. It is precisely because of practical wisdom that the direction of an art is determined. Also, cf. Beere: 'there is some reason to think that Aristotle presupposes all arts have good ends (see, e.g., the first sentence of the *Nicomachean Ethics*)' (2009, p. 342 n.26). Lastly, Aristotle argues that chance is posterior to nature (*Physics*, 198a10). I will clarify what 'posterior to nature' means later in this chapter. Suffice to say here that the concept of chance is understood through the concept of nature. Taking all these considerations into account, it seems that generation is always directed toward good ends.



There are also two additional points in favour of the above claim. First, Theta 9 begins with the conjunction ‘ὅτι δέ’ (1051a4), which probably signifies at least some grammatical connection with ‘ὅτι μὲν’, which is located in the last sentence of Theta 8 (1051a2-3). This connection may suggest a continuity between these two chapters. Secondly, at 1051a19-21 of Theta 9, Aristotle discusses eternal things, which is also a central topic of Theta 8. More importantly, it is worth noting that the argument in Theta 9 is based on a conclusion that Aristotle draws in Theta 8. The argument runs as follows: (i) the bad is posterior in nature to *dunamis*; (ii) eternal things are not *dunameis* but *energeiai* (note that this claim is the conclusion that Aristotle draws at 1050b7-8 and 1050b16-18 in Theta 8);<sup>2</sup> the conclusion being that there are no bad things in eternal beings. Again, this argument shows that there might be a close connection between these two chapters.

All this evidence taken together strongly suggests that Theta 9 is a further clarification of the implications made in Theta 7 and 8. However, in the current scholarship, this is not the dominant view, and the topic is subject to many interpretations. To the best of my knowledge, only Katz and Polansky (2006) and Menn (ms.) claim explicitly that Theta 9 and Theta 8 have a close connection (but they do not argue for it and do not mention Theta 7 in their argument). The dominant reading of Theta 9 (Ross 1924, Makin 2006 and Beere 2009) takes it to be raising and considering a new topic. For example, Ross (1924, p. 268) is representative, he holds that whereas Theta 8 is about the priority of *energeia* over *dunamis* in *logos*, in time and in *ousia*, Theta 9 is a new beginning, which addresses the priority of *energeia* over *dunamis* in value.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Strictly speaking, it means that there is no unexercised *dunamis* in the case of eternal things. As Frey says: ‘Aristotle’s conclusion is that it is necessary that eternal things have no unexercised capacities’ (2015, e.g. p. 90, p. 92, p. 115; also cf. Menn ms., IIIa3, p. 19).

<sup>3</sup> Further, Ross accuses Aristotle of confusing the priority in *ousia* and the priority in value. I will come back to this point later. Makin takes Theta 9 as a ‘folder’ because he thinks Theta 9 is relatively unintegrated with the preceding chapters of Theta. As he puts it, ‘The reason to think of Theta 9 as a



In this chapter, I will argue against the dominant reading of the first part of Theta 9. I will argue that Theta 9, by further clarifying the teleological dimension implied in Theta 7 and 8, is closely connected with Theta 7 and 8. Theta 9 also clarifies one feature of the desired *archē*; namely, that the desired *archē* is Goodness, and that it contains nothing bad.<sup>4</sup> In this sense, and for this reason, this reading also lends some support to my central claim, according to which, the project of Theta is to search for the *archē* of *ousiai*.

## 1. Different Readings of Theta 9 1051a4-21

To resolve the controversy concerning the problem of whether the first half of Theta 9 is a new beginning, a careful reading of it is called for. In one sense, the aim of the first half of Theta 9 is straightforward; for even a quick reading of it will allow us to recognize immediately what Aristotle wants to establish in this chapter; that is, to ascribe priority to *energeia* over *dunamis* in worth. But due to Aristotle's terse style, it is difficult to grasp precisely what his argument is for this claim. Consequently, many controversies have arisen in the scholarship. These controversies are centred on three claims. The first claim

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folder is that it lacks an overarching internal structure, and it does not continue the line of argument from the preceding chapters: we would not be able to tell that something was missing from Theta if the book ended with Chapter 8' (2006, p. 232). Beere holds that 'they (sc. the conclusions in the first half of Theta 9) extend the results of Theta 8 into the realm of the metaphysics of value, and thereby make a *further* direct contribution to the science of wisdom' (2009, p. 325; emphasis added).

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Menn: 'this (sc. The first half of Theta 9) does not immediately sound like a thesis about the *archai*, and indeed it may sound like a digression from the more serious discussion of the logical and metaphysical priority of *energeia* to a looser priority in value. But the point becomes clear from the consequences Aristotle draws at the end of the section, that "that there is no evil *para ta pragmata*, for the evil is posterior in nature to the *dunamis*, therefore, in the things which are *ek archēs* and eternal, there is no evil or anything which has gone wrong or been corrupted" (1051a17-21). This is clearly a thesis about the *archai*, namely that there are no evil *archai* (whether an evil-itself or something else which happens to be bad)' (ms., IIIa3, p. 22).

is that *energeia* is better than *dunamis*. Such a claim, on the surface, seems neither clear nor accurate; for, on closer analysis (Makin 2006), this claim can be broken down into two related claims, each of which is concerned with a more concrete issue:

(a) Good *energeia* is better than good *dunamis*.

(b) Bad *energeia* is worse than bad *dunamis*.

If we invoke Makin's terminology, then, the claim, '*energeia* is always better than *dunamis*' can be referred to as 'the *unqualified* claim'; whereas the above two propositions, (a) and (b), can be referred to as 'the *qualified* claims'. Critics dispute which of the two claims Aristotle is making in Theta 9. Witt (2003, p. 94), Katz and Polansky (2006), Beere (2009) and Menn (ms.) think that Aristotle argues for the unqualified claim, whereas Ross (1924, pp. 266ff.) holds that the qualified claims are Aristotle's position.<sup>5</sup>

The tension between these two views is that if the qualified claims (a) and (b) can both stand, then it seems that we cannot have a general claim that says that *energeia* is always better than *dunamis*; for, obviously, bad *energeia*, on the qualified claims, is worse than bad *dunamis*.<sup>6</sup>

To decide which of the two claims Aristotle has in mind, or whether Aristotle is simply confused (as Ross argues), a careful reading of the text is called for. According to Makin (2006, p. 222), Aristotle advocates claim (a) at 1051a4-5 and 1051a15 and he

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<sup>5</sup> Beere does not clearly say that he endorses the unqualified claim, but as I will show later, this is in fact his view.

<sup>6</sup> As Beere puts it, 'these two claims are in grave tension with one another. For the restricted claim (sc. the qualified claim) strongly suggests that some capacities have bad *energeiai*. And it says that, if so, then the *energeiai* are worse than the corresponding capacities. But the unrestricted claim (sc. the unqualified claim) denies that the *energeia* of a capacity is ever worse than the capacity' (2009, p. 330).

defends this view at 1051a10-15; Aristotle states claim (b) at 1051a15-16, and the argument for it is at 1051a16-17. There is no statement of the unqualified claim and the only support for this claim is found at 1051a17-19. However, this is controversial; some critics (e.g., Katz and Polansky) think that Aristotle never holds the qualified reading, whereas others (e.g., Ross) think that Aristotle holds the qualified claims, and that when Aristotle argues for the unqualified claim, he is confused.

In this chapter, I will defend the unqualified claim. Let me begin by considering the details of these texts to determine whether they support the qualified claims or the unqualified claim.

## 2. Textual Evidence in support of the Qualified Claims?

Against Makin, Beere (2009, pp. 330-331) does not think the texts that Makin mentions support the qualified claims; for, in these texts, 1051a4-5, 1051a15 and 1051a15-16, Aristotle does not claim explicitly that good *energeia* is better than good *dunamis* and that bad *energeia* is worse than bad *dunamis*.

In these texts, we read:

[Text 1] *a* That the actuality is also better and more valuable than the good potentiality, is clear from the following considerations.

Ὅτι δὲ καὶ βελτίων καὶ τιμιωτέρα τῆς σπουδαίας δυνάμεως ἢ ἐνέργεια, ἐκ τῶνδε δῆλον (1051a4-5)

*b* Therefore the actuality is better.

ἢ ἄρα ἐνέργεια βελτίων. (1051a15)

*c* Necessarily also in the case of bad things, the completion and the actuality are worse than the capacity; for the same thing is ‘capable’ of both contraries alike.

ἀνάγκη δὲ καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν κακῶν τὸ τέλος καὶ τὴν ἐνέργειαν εἶναι χειρόν τῆς δυνάμεως· τὸ γὰρ δυνάμενον ταὐτὸ ἄμφοι τὰναντία. (*Metaphysics* Theta, 1051a15-17; trans. Furth)



As Beere rightly observes, Aristotle does not explicitly claim that good *energeia* is better than good *dunamis* and bad *energeia* is worse than bad *dunamis*; for Aristotle does not use either the adjective ‘good’ or ‘bad’ to describe *energeia* in these passages. He simply refers to the term, *energeia*, in these texts.

Hence, in order to understand these passages, we have to read these texts in their context. After a careful analysis of these texts, it seems that although Aristotle does not describe *energeia* as either good or bad in (a) and (c), the only adjective that could be used in (a) is ‘good’, and the only adjective that could be used to describe *energeia* in (c) is ‘bad’. The reason for this is simple. This is the only way to make sense of these two sentences, i.e., if the bad *energeia* is better than the good *dunamis* or the good *energeia* is worse than the bad *dunamis*, then those two claims would not make sense at all. With respect to (b), we should read it in its surrounding context. In its context, we read:

[Text 2] The being-capable of contraries, then, is present at the same time; but the contraries at the same time is impossible, and the actualities belonging at the same time is also impossible, e.g. being healthy and sick, so that necessarily the good is one or the other of these, but the being-capable is of both alike, or neither; therefore the actuality is better. (*Metaphysics* Theta, 1051a10-15; trans. Furth)

τὸ μὲν οὖν δύνασθαι τάναντία ἅμα ὑπάρχει· τὰ δ' ἐναντία ἅμα ἀδύνατον, καὶ τὰς ἐνεργείας δὲ ἅμα ἀδύνατον ὑπάρχειν (οἷον ὑγιαίνειν καὶ κάμνειν), ὥστ' ἀνάγκη τούτων θάτερον εἶναι τἀγαθόν, τὸ δὲ δύνασθαι ὁμοίως ἀμφοτέρων ἢ οὐδέτερον· ἢ ἄρα ἐνέργεια βελτίων.

This is the passage that immediately precedes *b*. From this passage, we can infer that when Aristotle comes to the conclusion that *energeia* is better, he is thinking that ‘the good is one or the other of these’. Hence, presumably, he is also thinking of the ‘good’ *energeia*.

Hence, it seems that the three sentences I quoted above lend some support to the qualified claims. But the matter is not so straightforward; for the important question, as we shall see, is not which of the two adjectives, ‘good’ or ‘bad’, we can put before *energeia*, but rather which of the two adjectives can be used to describe *dunamis*. As is clear, the only adjective that Aristotle uses, throughout the whole of Theta 9, to describe *dunamis* is σπουδαῖος (excellent, at 1051a4). Whereas it is easy to infer, from the texts quoted above, which adjective is used to describe *energeia*, it is not obvious whether Aristotle thinks only of good *dunamis*, or whether he also thinks of bad *dunamis* in writing this text. This is crucial; for those critics who are committed to the unqualified claim think that there is no bad *dunamis per se* for Aristotle.

There are, roughly, three different readings related to this problem in the current scholarship. First Reading: Ross (1924) and Makin (2006) think that Aristotle has the concepts of both good *dunamis* and bad *dunamis* in mind, on the grounds that, strictly speaking, *dunamis*, on their reading, is neutral in worth.<sup>7</sup> Both Ross and Makin think that 1051a10-15 lends some support to their view. In this passage, Aristotle claims that *dunamis* is of contraries. It can be toward either good or bad ends. Hence, it seems that the qualified claims are more convincing; that is, a good *energeia* is better than a *dunamis* or a good *dunamis* (in the loose sense; for they would argue that *dunamis* is neutral in worth), and this is also the case with bad *energeia*. But the matter is more complex than these critics think. On an alternative interpretation, which I favour, 1051a13-14 does not say anything about *dunamis* being neutral in worth, it only says that *dunamis* could be of contrary results. Hence, on this reading, 1051a13-14 does not immediately lend support to the qualified

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<sup>7</sup> As Ross puts it, ‘the only mistake is in calling one thing better than another when the other is strictly speaking not good at all but neutral’ (1924, p. 268). Makin (2006, p. 226) does not use the word ‘neutral’, but he thinks that in these passages the results of actualization of *dunamis* are produced ‘symmetrically’ between good and bad results.



claims. Makin (2006, p. 227) also argues that ‘the symmetry considerations’ between good *dunamis* and bad *dunamis* are suggested by 1051a13-14, where Aristotle claims that ‘necessarily the good is one or the other of these, but the being-capable is of both alike, or neither’.<sup>8</sup> But a careful reading of the text shows that Aristotle does not employ ‘the symmetry considerations’ in this text. The text says only that ‘being capable is equally both or neither’, not ‘being capable is symmetrical between good and bad *dunamis*’.<sup>9</sup>

It should also be noted that although both Ross (1924) and Makin (2006) hold the same view, namely, that *dunamis*, strictly speaking, is neutral in worth, they have different views with regard to which of the two claims, unqualified or qualified, Aristotle has in mind. According to Ross, Aristotle is simply confused when he tries to establish the priority of *energeia* over *dunamis* in worth (the unqualified claim). On Ross’ interpretation, Aristotle establishes the unqualified claim at 1051a18-19 when he says that ‘The bad is posterior in nature to the potentiality’.<sup>10</sup> Ross thinks that at 1051a17-19, Aristotle commits a fallacy of equivocation. As he puts it:

For actuality is prior to potentiality, according to Aristotle’s view, in reality or substantiality (this was what was argued in 1050a4-1051a3), while potentiality is prior to the bad in worth (this was what was argued in 1051a15-17). When the bad is shown to be posterior to the potentiality (in worth), it is treated as one of the contrary actualizations of the potentiality. But then it must be prior to the potentiality in reality, according to the argument of 1050a4-1051a3. (1924, p. 268)<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> ὥστ’ ἀνάγκη τούτων θάτερον εἶναι τἀγαθόν, τὸ δὲ δύνασθαι ὁμοίως ἀμφοτέρων ἢ οὐδέτερον.

<sup>9</sup> As Katz and Polansky say: ‘in fact Aristotle says here that potentiality is similarly both contraries, e.g. healthy or sick, of which it is the potentiality, or neither of the contraries (cf. 1051a16-17). He is not saying that potentiality is similarly both good or bad or neither’ (2006, p. 239 n.15).

<sup>10</sup> ὥστερον γὰρ τῇ φύσει τὸ κακὸν τῆς δυνάμεως. I will come back to this claim later.

<sup>11</sup> For a similar view, see Burnyeat (1984, p. 150).



In contrast to Ross' view, Makin thinks that Aristotle holds different views in different places. As I have mentioned, on his view, Aristotle argues for the qualified claims at 1051a4-17, whereas he holds an unqualified claim at 1051a17-19.

A second reading, which differs from that of both Ross and Makin, is put forward by Katz and Polansky (2006; also cf. Menn ms.). They think that *dunamis*, for Aristotle, is not neutral in worth at all. It always aims at good ends, and this is so even in its first occurrence at the very beginning of Theta 9.<sup>12</sup> In fact, they think that this is Aristotle's position throughout his philosophical work. Accordingly, for Katz and Polansky, the bad things are only the results of bad actualizations of some good *dunamis*. This, I think, is also supported by the fact that Aristotle uses only one adjective, 'excellent' (σπουδαῖος), to describe *dunamis* throughout Theta 9.<sup>13</sup> So, according to their view, Aristotle only argues for the unqualified claim, and nowhere does Aristotle argue for the qualified claims. On this reading, 1051a17-19 is merely a natural conclusion that Aristotle draws; it is not a different argument for the unqualified claim.<sup>14</sup>

A third reading, posited by Beere is also worth noting. According to Beere (2009, p. 334), there is not one, but two meanings of the word 'bad'. Its first meaning is similar

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<sup>12</sup> As Katz and Polansky say: 'a potentiality capable of contraries is directed primarily towards one of its contraries, the better one...thus none of the potentialities for any possibly good end seems merely neutral, and potentialities for bad ends, such as vice, crime, sickness, vomiting, etc., seem either deformations, privations, or correlatives of the potentialities for good ends' (2006, p. 239).

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Katz and Polansky say: 'to prevent confusion about this, Aristotle speaks of the *good* or *serious* potentiality (τῆς σπουδαίας δυνάμεως)' (2006, p. 234).

<sup>14</sup> One might argue against this reading. The difficulty for this approach is how to interpret the word 'τέλος' (end) in 1051a15-16 where Aristotle says that τέλος could be worse than *dunamis*. This passage might be in tension with Katz and Polansky's interpretation because only the good τέλος, as their interpretation implies, is strictly qualified as τέλος; for the excellent *dunamis* only aims at good τέλος. To this objection, I propose that τέλος does not have to be good. It can simply refer to the end of a process. See *Metaphysics* Delta 16 for the multiple meanings of τέλος.

to Katz and Polansky's (2006) interpretation. On this interpretation, to claim that something is bad is merely to say that it is a bad actualization of a good *dunamis*. To invoke Beere's example: 'what it is to be engaged in bad doctoring derives from what it is to have the art of medicine, a capacity whose end is health, not sickness...for these cases, at least, I think that Aristotle's claim that the bad is posterior in being to capacity (sc. the unqualified claim) is attractive' (2009, p. 340). The second meaning of bad is not a bad actualization of a good *dunamis*, but simply an actualization of a bad *dunamis*. Beere (2009) thinks that this view is supported by 1051a15-17. In this passage, as quoted above, Aristotle says: 'the end and *energeia* is worse than the *dunamis*'. On Beere's view, this implies that, in contrast to the first meaning of bad, some bad *energeiai* are simply the actualizations of some bad *dunameis*. Examples of the kind meaning of bad *dunameis* that Beere offers are: 'instruments of torture and deception; the things in question have to have torture and deception as their ends (pp. 340-341)'. Further, Beere thinks that, of these examples, 'perhaps the most interesting cases are vices' (2006, p. 341). Vices, on Beere's interpretation, are *dunameis* that aim exclusively at bad ends. As Beere puts it, 'The vicious person acts according to their decision, and must thus be committed to the pursuit of some ends that are bad' (2009, p. 341). Beere also traces these vices back in time. As he puts it:

The newborn had a so-called first potentiality for virtue: a capacity to undergo a change (the acquisition of virtue), whose end is in a way the state of being virtuous and in a way the *energeia* of that state (the living of a virtuous life). Because this is a capacity for undergoing a change that results in a capacity, and because the change can go badly wrong, there is the possibility for the product of the change having a bad end. This is the key to seeing how the badness of vice is posterior to capacity. (2006, p. 342)

In view of the above argument, however, I think that Beere's view is similar to Katz and Polansky's; for, taken sufficiently widely, even bad *dunameis* are derived from good *dunameis*. To put it differently, there is no bad *dunamis per se*. As Beere concludes: 'every case of badness derives (directly or indirectly) from a capacity whose end is good' (2009, p. 345; also cf. p. 29).

To sum up, the tension among these three different views can be summarized as follows: In what sense do we think that some *energeiai* are bad? Are these *energeiai* only of good *dunamis* (as Katz and Polansky, Beere and Menn think)? Or, are these *energeiai* also of bad *dunamis* (as Ross and Makin think)? On Katz and Polansky's and Beere's interpretations, we do not need a further argument for the unqualified claim at 1051a17-19, whereas on Ross' and Makin's interpretations, Aristotle only argues for the unqualified claim at 1051a17-19.

It seems that, based on the text of 1051a4-17, we cannot produce a conclusive argument for either the unqualified claim or the qualified claims; the text is open to these two readings. Hence, in order to determine which claim(s), unqualified or qualified, Aristotle has in mind, we also need to provide a careful reading of 1051a17-19, which is taken by some critics (e.g., Ross and Makin) as the only passage in which Aristotle argues for the unqualified claim.

### 3. An Analysis of 1051a17-19

In 1051a17-19, we read,

[Text 3] It is clear therefore that there is no bad apart from the [bad] things; for the bad is by its nature posterior to the capability. (*Metaphysics* Theta, 1051a17-19; trans. Furth)

δηλον ἄρα ὅτι οὐκ ἔστι τὸ κακὸν παρὰ τὰ πράγματα· ὕστερον γὰρ τῇ φύσει τὸ κακὸν τῆς δυνάμεως.



There are two issues involved in interpreting [Text 3]. The first issue concerns the sense in which we should take the phrase ‘posterior in nature (ὕστερον τῇ φύσει)’. The second issue concerns whether [Text 3] is the only place in Theta 9 where Aristotle argues for the unqualified claim.

Let us take up the first question. Katz and Polansky (2006, p. 237 n.12), Makin (2006, p. 229) and Beere (2009, p. 332) think that ‘in nature’ (φύσει) has the same meaning as ‘in *ousia*’; that is, they think that ‘priority in nature’ and ‘priority in *ousia*’ are equivalent.<sup>15</sup> Recall that in Chapter 4 I argued that X is prior to Y in *ousia* if and only if X can explain the being of Y but not *vice versa*. In [Text 3], Aristotle argues that the bad is nothing other than the actual bad results (τὰ πράγματα) of *dunameis*.<sup>16</sup> To put it differently, in the order of explanation, *dunamis* is prior to the bad. For example, a foetus (a *dunamis*) is directed at becoming an adult (an *energeia*). If it fails, the unsuccessful foetus (the bad result) is still understood as a not-yet-fully-developed foetus (a *dunamis*) and this, in turn, can be understood as a potentially non-successful human being (an *energeia*). If this is the case, then it seems that we can only understand a bad result through a *dunamis* that itself

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<sup>15</sup> The passages they provide as evidence for this are: 1019a2-3, 1077a36-b4, 14a29-35, 1014b35-6 and 1015a11-13. It is also worth noting that although Makin thinks that *ousia* and *phusis* are equivalent, he thinks that this argument is defensible only for the irrational *dunameis*, but not for the rational *dunameis* (2006, pp. 230-231). Let me explain. Makin thinks that in the case of irrational *dunameis*, it might be that bad *energeiai* are merely due to interference. In the absence of interference, only good *energeiai* result. Makin thinks that if this is the case, then, it lends some support to the unqualified claim. But Makin thinks that this is different in the case of rational *dunameis* because they are of contraries and the bad results of rational *dunameis* can be simply actualizations of bad *dunameis*. However, as I have suggested in footnote 1 of this chapter, this might not be so.

<sup>16</sup> Here I take πράγματα to refer to actual bad results. On this reading, bad things are only in the results of *dunameis*.

is in turn understood through its corresponding *energeia*. If this reading is correct, it also lends some support to my reading of the priority in *ousia* in the previous chapter.<sup>17</sup>

The second issue concerns whether [Text 3] is the only place in Theta 9 where Aristotle argues for the unqualified claim. Or, to put it differently, is this passage an independent argument for the unqualified claim, or a conclusion of the preceding argument, which starts at the very beginning of Theta 9? This is crucial for a proper understanding of the first part of Theta 9. Let us take a closer look at the structure of this argument.

- (1) The bad does not exist in addition to bad things (δῆλον ἄρα ὅτι οὐκ ἔστι τὸ κακὸν παρὰ τὰ πράγματα.) (1051a17-18).
- (2) The bad is posterior in nature to the potentiality (ὕστερον γὰρ τῇ φύσει τὸ κακὸν τῆς δυνάμεως.) (1051a18-19)

The first thing we need to consider is how these two sentences are related to the previous discussion (1051a4-17). Does ἄρα at 1051a17 introduce a conclusion drawn from the previous discussion? As is clear, the above dispute is immediately related to the question of whether (1) and (2) are the conclusion of an earlier argument, or whether they constitute a new argument.

- (1) If we, like Ross and Makin, think that Aristotle only argues for the unqualified claim in this passage, then we have to take (1) and (2) as a new argument.
- (2) If we, like Beere and Katz and Polansky, think that Aristotle supposes the

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<sup>17</sup> An alternative reading comes from Aquinas. He explains that ‘evil itself is subsequent in nature to potency, because it is worse and is farther removed from perfection. Hence, since a potency cannot be something existing apart from a thing, much less can evil itself be something apart from a thing’ (1961, p. 623).

unqualified claim from the very beginning of Theta 9, then (1) and (2) only clarify what Aristotle said before.

A natural reading of the text favours the Beere and the Katz and Polansky reading; that is Aristotle intends these two sentences to conclude the first part of Theta 9. If this is correct, then it seems that the unqualified claim is more convincing.

The second thing we need to take note of is the conjunction ‘γάρ’ between the two sentences. There are two readings of the function that γάρ plays in this passage.

- (i) Beere takes this γάρ as justificative, not as explicative. As he puts it, ‘There is no need to take the *gar* in 1051a18 as explicative, as Makin suggests. It introduces a justification, as it usually does’ (2009, p. 333 n.16). If we take the γάρ as justificative, as Beere does, then it implies that (1) is justified by (2).
- (ii) If we take the γάρ as explicative, as Makin (2006) does<sup>18</sup>, then it implies that (1) is not justified by (2). Quite the opposite; (2) can be taken merely as a further clarification of what is implied by (1).

However, this issue is less important if these two sentences, taken together, are thought of as a continuation and conclusion of 1051a4-17. In that case, nothing substantial hinges on which reading of γάρ we choose.

After taking all these disputes into consideration, it is now time to propose an answer to the question. It seems to me that, of all the readings of the first half of Theta 9 on offer, Katz and Polansky’s is the most consistent with the text. If we take the first half

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<sup>18</sup> As Makin says, ‘claim [5] (sc. 1051a18-19) is intended to confirm [4] (sc. 1051a17-18): “for” at 1051a18 is explicative’ (2006, p. 228).



of Theta 9 as a whole, it seems that Katz and Polansky's interpretation is more reasonable for at least two reasons.

First, the meaning of the concept of *dunamis*, on their view, can have a consistent interpretation. We do not need to assume that Aristotle changes the meaning of *dunamis* in this short passage, whereas according to the alternative interpretation, *dunamis* is first taken by Aristotle as value neutral (1051a4-17), but later as not value neutral (1051a17-19).

Secondly, considering this passage in conjunction with Theta 7 and 8 provides further support for Katz and Polansky's reading.<sup>19</sup> As we have argued in the previous chapter, *dunamis* is not neutral in worth even in Theta 7 and 8; for *genesis* is directed at good ends rather than bad ones. In this sense, the first half of Theta 9 is continuous with Theta 7 and 8.

Hence, we may conclude that the debates over this topic are generated by the failure of those critics who are committed to the qualified claims to reach an in-depth understanding of a crucial dimension of Aristotle's metaphysics – namely, his teleology. For the concept of *dunamis*, in Aristotle's view, is always end-directed. Take a tree, a natural substance, as an example. A growing tree has two possible outcomes – to be a healthy tree (a good *energeia*), or to be an ill tree (a bad *energeia*). These outcomes, however, are not of equal status, one is a *per se* outcome for a tree, while the other is not

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<sup>19</sup> Katz and Polansky recognize the continuity between Theta 8 and 9. As they say, 'chapter 9 does not introduce a new sense of priority useful for equivocation, but rather, as indicated, it clarifies that priority in *ousia* of actuality to potentiality applies just for good actuality and not for bad actuality' (2006, p. 240). Also cf. Menn: 'A consequence of this analysis is that there are no bad *dunameis*, but only bad *energeiai* of *dunameis* which are naturally directed toward good *energeiai*, but which are sometimes obstructed from reaching their natural *telos*. A further consequence is that all the types of priority of *energeia* to *dunamis* which were described in Theta 8, in *logos* and in *ousia* and (in a sense) in time, apply only to the good *energeia*' (ms., IIIa3, pp. 22-23).

a *per se* outcome for a tree. In the example of a tree, to be a healthy tree is to be a tree *per se* whereas to be an ill tree is not. In this sense, and for this reason, only the healthy tree can properly be called an *energeia*. It seems that this also clarifies a puzzling passage in the *Physics*, where Aristotle claims ‘for the end should not be just any last thing, but the best’ (194a32-33).<sup>20</sup>

#### 4. Why does Aristotle Need to Discuss Goodness?

Having argued for the unqualified claim, let us now turn to the following question. Why does Aristotle need to discuss Goodness in Theta 9? One might answer this question by merely pointing out what I have argued; that is, that the discussion of Goodness in Theta 9 is just a further clarification of what is implied in Theta 7 and 8. But this can hardly be considered a satisfactory answer, because it does not get to the bottom of the question. For the question is not about what the first half of Theta 9 actually does, but about why the theme of the first half of Theta 9 – namely, the discussion of the Goodness – must come into view and be addressed in its current place. This question can, obviously, be broken down into two questions, with which I will deal sequentially in what follows. (1) Why do we need a discussion of Goodness in the *Metaphysics*? (2) Why do we need this discussion here (i.e., in Theta 9)?

With regard to question (1), two answers come immediately to mind: the reason why we need a discussion of Goodness is, first, to meet the requirements of Aristotle’s own philosophy; and secondly, to argue against his rivals, for example, Plato. There are many passages in the other books of the *Metaphysics* that may be cited in support of the first answer. As Menn (ms.) and Beere (2009) have pointed out, the discussion of Goodness

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<sup>20</sup> βούλεται γὰρ οὐ πᾶν εἶναι τὸ ἔσχατον τέλος, ἀλλὰ τὸ βέλτιστον.

is intrinsically required by the science that Aristotle is searching for. For example, in book Alpha of the *Metaphysics*, we read:

[Text 4] And that which is knowable in the highest degree is that which is first or the causes, for it is because of these and from these that other things are known, and not these because of the underlying subjects. Finally, the supreme science, and superior to any subordinate science, is the one which knows that for the sake of which each thing must be done, and this is in each case, and, in general, the highest good in the whole of nature. From all that has been said, then, it is evident that the name which is sought applies to the same science; for it is this science which must investigate the first principles and causes, and or final cause is one of causes. (*Metaphysics* Alpha, 982b2-10; trans. Apostle)

μάλιστα δ' ἐπιστητὰ τὰ πρῶτα καὶ τὰ αἷτια· διὰ γὰρ ταῦτα καὶ ἐκ τούτων τᾶλλα γνωρίζεται ἀλλ' οὐ ταῦτα διὰ τῶν ὑποκειμένων, ἀρχικωτάτη δὲ τῶν ἐπιστημῶν, καὶ μᾶλλον ἀρχικὴ τῆς ὑπηρετούσης, ἢ γνωρίζουσα τίνος ἕνεκέν ἐστι πρακτέον ἕκαστον· τοῦτο δ' ἐστὶ τἀγαθὸν ἑκάστου, ὅλως δὲ τὸ ἄριστον ἐν τῇ φύσει πάση. ἐξ ἀπάντων οὖν τῶν εἰρημένων ἐπὶ τὴν αὐτὴν ἐπιστήμην πίπτει τὸ ζητούμενον ὄνομα· δεῖ γὰρ ταύτην τῶν πρώτων ἀρχῶν καὶ αἰτιῶν εἶναι θεωρητικὴν· καὶ γὰρ τἀγαθὸν καὶ τὸ οὗ ἕνεκα ἐν τῶν αἰτίων ἐστίν.

In [Text 4], Aristotle emphasizes the importance of the knowledge of Goodness for his inquiry.<sup>21</sup> Similar remarks can easily be found elsewhere in the *Metaphysics*.<sup>22</sup> Hence, it seems that the discussion of Goodness constitutes a necessary or even an essential part of Aristotle's metaphysical project. Indeed, as is familiar to readers of the *Metaphysics*,

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<sup>21</sup> As Menn says, 'Aristotle infers that the good-itself has no contrary evil *archē*, agreeing with Anaxagoras against Empedocles and Plato, and preserving both *the promise of Alpha 2* that the good will be an *archē* and the claim of Theta 9 that there is no evil *para ta pragmata*' (ms., IIIγ3, p. 1; emphasis added).

<sup>22</sup> For example, in the first *aporia* of Beta, Aristotle considers seriously how one science can deal with the four causes – namely, material, formal, efficient, and final causes.



in Book Alpha Aristotle is at pains to convince his readers that the discovery of Goodness as a principle, or a cause is his own contribution to philosophy (cf. Alpha 7).

Now we come to the second answer. According to Ross (1924, p. 268), Aristotle takes Plato's theory of the Bad as his rival, and refutes Plato's principle of the Bad on two grounds: first, the Bad does not exist apart from individual bad things; secondly, there is nothing bad among the eternal principles of the universe.<sup>23</sup> It is also worth noting that Aristotle does not explicitly discuss or refute the principle of the Bad in the so-called 'climax of the *Metaphysics*', namely, Book Lambda. Why is this so? Beere (2009, p. 328) gives us an illuminating answer. In his view, the reason why, in Book Lambda, Aristotle does not deny that the bad is a principle is because he has accomplished this task in Theta 9.<sup>24</sup>

Having addressed question (1), let us now turn to question (2); that is: why do we need a discussion of Goodness in Theta 9? Recall my interpretation of Theta 7 and 8 in Chapter 3. According to my interpretation of Theta, its aim is to grasp *archai* in two different ways. One way is to search for the *archē* of *ousiai* by investigating the ultimate *dunamis* of *ousiai* (in Theta 7). The second way is by studying the ultimate *energeiai* of *ousiai* (in Theta 8). Given that the search for the ultimate *dunamis*, as I have shown, cannot reach the desired *archē*, Aristotle must consider whether the *energeiai* of *ousiai* can lead us to the desired *archē*. After he has already found a way to grasp the ultimate *archē* of

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<sup>23</sup> Cf. Ross: 'The former contention (1) is directly against the Platonic belief in an Idea of evil (*Rep.* 476a, cf. 402c, *Theaet.* 176e); the latter contention (2) is directed against the Platonic belief that the first principles of the universe, the one and the indefinite dyad, are good and bad respectively (A. 988a14, A. 1075a35, N. 1091b31); Aristotle may have the bad world-soul of the *Laws* (896e, 898c) especially in mind' (1924, p. 268, also cf. 984b32-985a7).

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Menn: 'And the asymmetry between good and evil, leading in Lambda 10 to the posting of a separately existing good *archē* without an evil contrary, will be a crucial part of his resolution of the disputes and difficulties about the good as an *archē* raised already in *Metaphysics* Alpha' (ms., IIIa3, p. 23).

*ousiai*, in Theta 8, it seems appropriate to clarify some further features of the desired *archē*. Furthermore, this echoes Aristotle's requirements for the science he is searching for; because the science, according to Aristotle's expectations in book Alpha and other books of the *Metaphysics*, should take Goodness into account. This, I submit, explains why Aristotle's discussion of Goodness is located immediately after Theta 8. This reading is also supported by the following passage.

[Text 5] Therefore, in the things that are from the beginning and eternal, there is nothing either bad or failed or destroyed – for destruction is a bad. (*Metaphysics* Theta, 1051a19-21; trans. Furth)

οὐκ ἄρα οὐδ' ἐν τοῖς ἐξ ἀρχῆς καὶ τοῖς αἰδίοις οὐθὲν ἔστιν οὔτε κακὸν οὔτε ἀμάρτημα οὔτε διεφθαρμένον (καὶ γὰρ ἡ διαφθορὰ τῶν κακῶν ἐστίν)

It is worth noting that in [Text 5] Aristotle concludes that the things that 'are from the *archē* and eternal' are not a source of anything bad.<sup>25</sup> This amounts to saying that the desired *archē* must be good. By clarifying this crucial feature of the desired *archē*, Aristotle is concluding Theta and preparing for the discussion of Lambda.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, I have argued that the first half of Theta 9 has two related aims. One is to clarify the teleological dimension, which Aristotle has implicitly assumed in Theta 7 and 8; that is, all *dunameis* are directed at good ends. In this sense and for this reason, bad *energeiai* are understood as merely resulting from the obstruction of good *dunameis*. To put it differently, bad *energeiai* need further clarification, whereas good *energeiai* do not.

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<sup>25</sup> If we take the *kai* as explicative (cf. Katz and Polansky 2006, p. 236), then, presumably, eternal things are considered by Aristotle to be *archai*; if so, this also confirms my reading of Theta 8, defended in Chapter 3. There I argued for the same point; namely, that eternal things are *archai* of perishable things.

All these considerations support the idea that the first half of Theta 9 is not a new beginning; it is, rather, a further clarification of what was implied in Theta 7 and 8. Another related aim of the first half of Theta 9 is to clarify one crucial feature of the desired *archē*, namely, the desired *archē* as Goodness. In so doing, Aristotle is also preparing for the climax of the *Metaphysics*, namely, book Lambda. In the next chapter, I will situate the thesis of Theta within the wider context of the *Metaphysics* as a whole. I will highlight the importance of Theta for the basic project of the *Metaphysics*. To anticipate, I will argue that Theta, by introducing two notions, *dunamis* and *energeia*, allows Aristotle to find a path that can lead to the desired *archē*.



# Chapter 6

## The Basic Project of the *Metaphysics* and How Theta Relates to This Project

My aim in the previous five chapters has been to argue that the basic project of Theta is to search for the *archē* of *ousiai*. In this chapter, I want to consider my interpretation of Theta within the context of the *Metaphysics*, as a whole. I shall argue that searching for the *archē* of *ousiai* is not only the basic project of Theta, but is also the basic project of the *Metaphysics*. At an even more general level, I shall argue that searching for the *archē* of *ousiai* is the shared project of a variety of philosophers as Aristotle understands them – these include the Physicists, Platonists and mathematicians. Finally, by arguing against a highly influential unitarian reading of the *Metaphysics* – namely, Frede’s and Patzig’s reading – I attempt to show how my reading of the basic project of the *Metaphysics* is preferable to theirs in some crucial respects.

Let us begin by considering some influential interpretations of the basic project of the *Metaphysics*.

### 1. Interpretations of the Basic Project of the *Metaphysics*

Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*, as it has come down to us, consists of fourteen books. Critics have proposed a variety of possibilities to clarify the nature of these books, e.g., whether they are lecture notes, and what the chronological order of these books is.<sup>1</sup> Without going into

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<sup>1</sup> For a chronological study of the *Metaphysics*, see, e.g., Jaeger (1948, Chapter VII and VIII) and Rist (1989, Chapter 12); and also cf. Owens’s summary (1957, pp. 39-47) of many critics’ views (e.g., Jaeger, H. v. Arnim, Nuyen and Oggioni). For an overview of Aristotle’s philosophical development, see Wians, ed. (1996).

the details of these controversial issues, it seems fair, I think, to say that there is general agreement among all critics that the fourteen books of the *Metaphysics*, as we now have them, do not have an easily recognizable theme. This naturally prompts the question, which is all-important for a proper understanding of these fourteen books, what the basic project of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* is.

Traditionally, Aristotelian scholars have identified two themes in the *Metaphysics*, namely, *metaphysica specialis* and *metaphysica generalis*. *Metaphysica specialis* studies a special part of being (i.e., a departmental discipline), namely, God, and in this sense and for this reason, it could be properly labeled as 'theology'. *Metaphysica generalis*, on the other hand, studies being in general (i.e., a universal discipline), and in this sense, to borrow a seventeenth century term, it could be labeled as 'ontology'.<sup>2</sup> As many critics have suggested, there seems to be a tension in unifying these two themes in the *Metaphysics*; for, clearly, theology and ontology have subject matters of two different kinds: the one departmental and the other universal. And no one science, at least on the surface, can have both as its subject matter. The question of how to reconcile these two themes has been hotly debated since critics fully recognised this problem in the nineteenth century.<sup>3</sup> There are three main interpretations in the current literature, all aiming at resolving this tension.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> See e.g., Frede (1987a, p. 83); also cf. Loux (2006, Introduction) for a brief account of the history of the subject matter of metaphysics.

<sup>3</sup> For some more comprehensive and detailed accounts of how critics deal with this problem in the history of Aristotelian scholarship, see Owens (1957, Chapter 1), Leszl (1975, Chapter 1), Chen (1976, Chapter 1) and Reale (1980, Introduction and Appendix C).

<sup>4</sup> There are also other readings: e.g., Chen (1976, *esp.* pp. 367-369) thinks these two themes are irreconcilable because there is no connection between them in Aristotle's philosophy; Aubenque (1962; reported by Leszl 1975, pp. 25-26) thinks that *metaphysica specialis* and *metaphysica generalis* focus on different subject matters: the former studies the supersensible (to some extent also stars) whereas the latter studies the sublunary world; Shields (2012) holds that *metaphysica generalis* studies the *per se* features of being, i.e., the features that belong to all beings in so far as they are beings, and, only as a consequence, *metaphysica generalis* studies *ousia* in general and the Unmoved Mover in particular.

Natorp, considered by critics as the first modern scholar who fully recognizes the importance of this issue, holds that ontology and theology are two incompatible elements in Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. He conjectures that the theological part of the *Metaphysics* was inserted later by early Peripatetics. He, therefore, excises these parts of the text on the grounds that they do not belong to the real theme of the *Metaphysics*, which, according to him, is ontology.

Some other critics rightly recognize that there might be some potential conflict between Aristotle's theology and ontology. They think, however, that, in order to make sense of this conflict, we must take these two subject matters – namely, theology and ontology – as belonging to two different stages in the development of Aristotle's philosophy. Accordingly, they suggest several accounts of this development. There are two representative readings of this development in the current scholarship. Jaeger (1948) uses a developmentalist reading to reconcile the potential conflict between these two themes. He thinks that the theological part of the *Metaphysics* belongs to Aristotle's early period, when he was still under the influence of Plato, whereas Aristotle's mature view, according to Jaeger, takes ontology to be the subject matter of *Metaphysics*.<sup>5</sup> Another influential developmentalist reading comes from Owen (1960). Owen claims that Aristotle first takes

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However, it seems to me that their views cannot bear close scrutiny. Besides, also for the reason that their views are not influential in the current literature, I will not discuss their views in my thesis.

<sup>5</sup> Jaeger says: 'at first he (sc. Aristotle) proceeded strictly in the direction indicated by Plato, that is, he retained the supersensible world as the object of first philosophy, as we learn from the manifesto *On Philosophy*, and merely replaced the transcendental Ideas with the first mover, which being unmoved, eternal, and transcendent, possessed the properties that being must have according to Plato. This, his earliest, metaphysics was exclusively a science of the being that is unmoved and transcendent, i.e., theology. It was not the science of being as such' (1948, p. 219). And latter, Aristotle 'treats being not as a sort of object separate and distinct from others, but as the common point of reference for all states, properties, and relations, that are connected with the problem of reality' (p. 215). See Randall (1960, Chapter VI) for a similar view.



theology as the subject matter of the *Metaphysics*, but he gradually becomes sympathetic to Plato's philosophy, and, eventually, he takes ontology as the subject matter of the *Metaphysics*. Owen argues that what causes Aristotle to change his view is his recognition of the 'focal meaning' (as Owen terms it; I will call it the 'focal structure' hereafter) in book Gamma of the *Metaphysics*.<sup>6</sup> It is worth noting that both Jaeger and Owen take Aristotle's thought to have developed from theology to ontology, but they have different views as to how this development is to be construed. For Jaeger Aristotle's development is a departure from Plato, whereas, for Owen, it is a return to Plato.<sup>7</sup>

In addition to developmentalist readings, there are also two influential unitarian readings in the current literature.<sup>8</sup> One unitarian reading (e.g., Patzig, 1979, Frede, 1987a and Owens, 1957) takes theology and ontology in Aristotle as completely reconcilable.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Owen says: 'It seems to show that when Aristotle wrote *Metaphysics* IV he had returned to, or newly arrived at, a belief in the possibility of a general metaphysics after a period in which he had denounced any such project as logically indefensible and castigated Plato and the Academy for pursuing it. It was in this period that for reasons of logic he confined his interest to the special sciences (of which theology was one)' (1979, p. 13).

However, 'focal meaning', is not a good term since it may suggest a semantic connotation; therefore, throughout this chapter, I will translate '*pros hen*' as 'focal structure' instead of 'focal meaning'. On this issue, see Politis (2004, p. 105).

<sup>7</sup> As Owen says: 'Seen in this perspective the kind of inquiry that is introduced in the fourth book of the *Metaphysics* (sc. 'focal structure') looks more like a revival of sympathy with Plato's aims (or what Aristotle took to be these aims) than like a new departure from them' (1979, p. 14).

<sup>8</sup> Reale (1980) also holds a unitarian reading; he identifies four basic components in Aristotle's *Metaphysics*: aetiology, theology, ousiology and ontology. Reale argues that ontology is reducible to ousiology and theology can be understood as a kind of aetiology. Although Reale takes a unitarian stance towards the interpretation of the *Metaphysics*, I think that Reale does not clearly address the relation between aetiology and ousiology, so, I will not discuss Reale's reading here.

<sup>9</sup> Their readings are not exactly the same, but they are similar to each other in one crucial respect; that is, all of them appeal to a double *pros hen* structure in interpreting Aristotle's *Metaphysics*.

Basically, they appeal to not one, but two ‘*pros hen*’ structures to unify these two themes.<sup>10</sup> They claim that just as *ousia* is the focal structure of being – which is famously introduced by Aristotle in *Metaphysics* Gamma 2 – so too the Unmoved Mover is the focal structure of *ousiai*; or more specifically, just as all other categories of being depend on *ousia* for their being, so too other *ousiai* depend on the Unmoved Mover for their being.<sup>11</sup> As we can see, according to this reading, the project of the *Metaphysics* will be to analyse the concept of *ousia*,<sup>12</sup> and since *ousia* is the focal structure of being, by analysing the concept of *ousia*, we can eventually grasp what it is for something, anything, to be a being.

In contrast to the above unitarian reading, Menn’s reading (ms.) does not appeal to the *double* ‘*pros hen*’ structure. He thinks that what unifies these two themes in the *Metaphysics* is Aristotle’s project of searching for the *archē* of *ousiai*. Construed in this way, theology will be the basic subject matter of the *Metaphysics*, and ontology, which

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<sup>10</sup> But, it is important to note that Aristotle only formulates one *pros hen* structure, not two, in Gamma 2; this, as I shall argue later in this chapter, is crucial.

<sup>11</sup> For example, Patzig says: ‘he (sc. Aristotle) must plainly be able to say that theology, properly and rigorously understood, is at the same time nothing but the study of being *qua* being, or ontology. And “the only possible basis of demonstration” for such an assertion must, according to our previous reflections, lie in the proof that God is the first substance among substances, the genuine substance, the *ousia ousiōn*, on which all other substances rely for their being and which preserves their being just as substance itself is the “first being”, on which all other beings that are not substances depend as the basis of their being. We should therefore postulate a relation of paronymy on two levels as far as being is concerned: first, the relation of substance to the other beings (qualities, relations, *etc.*), which rest upon it, and secondly the relation of the unmoved and independent substance of God to other substances. Ontology is therefore a doubly paronymous science’ (1979, pp. 41-42). Cf. also Frede (1987a and 2000), Owens (1957) and Veatch (1974).

<sup>12</sup> I will take up this reading again in the section 5 of this chapter and give a more detailed analysis.



focuses on the study of *ousia*, is subordinate to, and can be understood as a part of, theology (or the study of *archē*).<sup>13</sup>

My aim in this chapter is to propose and tentatively defend a unitarian reading of the subject matter of the *Metaphysics*. My reading will be similar to Menn's, though significantly different on one crucial point (section 2). Compared with Menn's interpretation, my reading has the following advantages. First, methodologically speaking, my approach to dealing with the issue will be more systematic and philosophical. As far as I am aware, no critic has systematically identified and developed these ideas in the way in which I will do so here. Secondly, to further support my reading, I will offer a more comprehensive account of Aristotle's project in the *Metaphysics*, including how Aristotle understands the related projects of other philosophers.

After giving a general account of Aristotle's project in the *Metaphysics*, I will relate my unitarian reading of the *Metaphysics* to the theme of my thesis – namely, the argumentative structure of Theta. I will compare my reading with that of Frede and Patzig, who also offer a unitarian reading of the basic project of the *Metaphysics*, in order to show that my reading is preferable to theirs in some crucial respects. I shall also clarify how my reading of Theta contributes to the basic project of the *Metaphysics*.

## 2. What is the Basic Project of the *Metaphysics*?

In the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle gives several descriptions of what his project is. These descriptions can be summarized as the following six projects:<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Cf. Menn: 'Lambda will always be disappointing if it is read as a contribution to ousiology or ontology. But it is very interesting when it is read as what it is, a contribution to archeology' (ms., IIIβ1, p. 11).

<sup>14</sup> Cf. also Owens (1957, p. 6) for a similar summary of the different descriptions of what Aristotle's *Metaphysics* is about.



1. First causes and principles of all things (Alpha 981b28, 982a8-10, 982b9)
2. Being *qua* being (Gamma 1003a21; Epsilon 1025b3; Kappa 1060b31, 1061b4, 1061b26, 1061b31)
3. First causes and principles of being *qua* being (Gamma 1003a31; Epsilon 1028a3-4)
4. A certain part (but not all parts) of reality, namely, the Unmoved Mover (as we know in Lambda) (Epsilon 1026a15; Kappa 1064b4; Lambda 1069b1; cf. *Physics* 192a34, 194b14; *De Anima* 403b15)
5. *Ousia* (Zeta 1028b4)
6. First principles and causes of *ousiai* (αἱ ἀρχαὶ καὶ τὰ αἷτια τῶν οὐσιῶν) (Gamma 1003b18; Lambda 1069a18-19)<sup>15</sup>

Based on this, critics have wondered: If Aristotle's *Metaphysics* has a unified project, then how should we reconcile these six seemingly different descriptions, so as to fit them together? A purely conceptual reflection reveals the following conclusions:

1 and 3 are reducible to 6 via the concept of ontological dependence.<sup>16</sup>

Likewise, 2 is reducible to 5 via the concept of ontological dependence.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> One might wonder why the first causes and principles should be *of ousiai*. The reason is that, according to Aristotle, the causes and principles of *ousiai* are, in one sense, the causes and the principles of all things. As he puts it, 'in another sense, the causes of substances are in some manner the causes of all, in view of the fact that when substances are destroyed all other things are destroyed.' ὡδὲ τὰ τῶν οὐσιῶν αἷτια ὡς αἷτια πάντων, ὅτι ἀναιρεῖται ἀναιρουμένων (1071a34-35; trans. Apostle). Cf. also 1071b5-6.

<sup>16</sup> I take 'all things' and 'being *qua* being' here as equivalent: the concept of Being *qua* being denotes the scope of generality; it covers everything in so far as it is a being; hence, in this sense and for this reason, it covers all things.

<sup>17</sup> Owens (1957, e.g., p. 153) takes 'being *qua* being' to be directly equivalent to *ousia*. This cannot be right since *ousia* is only one part of being.

4 seems to be equivalent to 6. (As we know from Lambda, Aristotle claims that he is searching for the *archē* of *ousiai*, and the Unmoved Mover is taken to be the *archē* of *ousiai*.)

Hence, ultimately, it seems that we have two projects left: 5 and 6.

As we can see, projects 5 and 6 correspond to ontology and theology respectively. The long-standing debate over what the subject matter of the *Metaphysics* is can be reformulated as the potential conflict between projects 5 and 6. Hence, if we want to defend a unitarian reading of the subject matter of the *Metaphysics*, all we need to do is to reconcile the potential conflict between these two projects. This requires a systematic analysis of all possible ways of reconciling projects 5 and 6. We need to proceed carefully, based on philosophical reflection and Aristotle's texts, so that we may make our interpretation as exhaustive as possible. Simply on conceptual reflection, it appears that to say that the *Metaphysics* is about both projects 5 and 6 is puzzling. Here is the reason:

The concept of *ousia* itself can be understood as a kind of *archē* (Delta 1013a21; Zeta 1041a9 and 1041b31).<sup>18</sup>

If this is correct, then, to say '*archē* of *ousiai*' seems to be saying '*archē* of *archai*', which is a puzzling phrase.<sup>19</sup>

As we know, in Lambda the ultimate *archē* is the Unmoved Mover, which is also itself an *ousia*, indeed, the most divine and the best living thing as Aristotle puts it (1074b16 and 1072b28-9 respectively).

If so, then, to say '*archē* of *ousiai*' seems to be saying '*ousia* of *ousiai*', which is also a puzzling phrase.

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<sup>18</sup> In Delta 1, Aristotle explains several meanings of *archē*; it is precisely that *archē* is ambiguous with regard to these meanings that allows Aristotle to call *ousia* a kind of *archē*.

<sup>19</sup> For simplicity, I will use a single term, *archē*, as a short way of saying '*archē* and *aition*' hereafter; for *archē* and *aition* are used interchangeably.

These puzzles naturally invite us to consider what, exactly, Aristotle has in mind when he formulates his project as both a search for *ousia* and a search for the *archē* of *ousiai*. In my view, properly to understand this apparent puzzle is precisely the key to grasping what, exactly, Aristotle's *Metaphysics* is about.<sup>20</sup> Let me explain this.

As we know, the concept of *ousia* is essentially related to the notion of ontological independence. *Ousia* is precisely the notion that designates what is ontologically independent. In this sense and for this reason, to say that *ousia* is a kind of *archē* is equivalent to saying that this very thing is ontologically independent.<sup>21</sup> To be clear, what I mean by 'ontological independence' is the following:

**[Ontological Independence]** X is ontologically independent if and only if X is a being simply *because of itself* and not *because of* its relation to any other thing, Y.<sup>22</sup>

It is easy to see that the difficulty for interpreting the two phrases, '*ousia* of *ousiai*' and '*archē* of *archai*', lies in the ambiguity of the genitive preposition, 'of' (τῶν). Conceptually speaking, there are three possibilities for interpreting these two phrases.

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<sup>20</sup> Reale proposes that these two puzzling phrases might indicate a tension between concrete substance (*ousia* in the weak sense) and form (*ousia* in the strong sense). As he says: 'the signification of "ousiology" will also be twofold due to this twofold signification of the term *ousia*. Ousiology will be either the inquiry concerning *substance as cause* or the inquiry concerning the *causes of substance*' (1980, p. 31; emphasis added). But this way of understanding the difference between *ousia* and the *archē* of *ousiai* is not convincing; for, strictly speaking, concrete substance is not *ousia* for Aristotle.

<sup>21</sup> This is precisely what Aristotle calls a '*pros hen*' structure (cf. Gamma 2).

<sup>22</sup> On the notion of 'ontological dependence', see also K. Fine (1994 and 1995) and Lowe (1994; 1998, Chapter 6; 2006, Chapter 3; 2010); with regard to how this notion is invoked in Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, see Politis (2004, pp. 198-203), Corkum (2008) and Peramatzis (2011, Part II). There are also other influential readings of Aristotle's notion of 'ontological dependence', which, I think, are not true of Aristotle; see e.g., G. Fine (1984) and Morrison (1985).



First possibility: ‘*archē* of *archai*’ or ‘*ousia* of *ousiai*’ could mean that there is a two-tier relation of ontological dependence;<sup>23</sup> that is, just as the very concept of *ousia* itself designates what is ontologically independent, so too the phrase ‘*ousia* of *ousiai*’ signifies further what is ontologically independent among *ousiai*. In other words, there is a relation of ontological dependence between the highest *ousia* (let us for present purposes suppose that there is one<sup>24</sup>) and other *ousiai*; that is, all the other *ousiai* are ontologically dependent on the highest *ousia* for their being.

The second possibility for interpreting these two phrases is that there is no two-tier relation of ontological dependence. Instead, there is just a one-tier relation of ontological dependence; that is, a relation of ontological dependence between things other than *ousia* and *ousia*. If this is the case, then these two phrases, ‘*ousia* of *ousiai*’ and ‘*archē* of *archai*’, would not signify that which is ontologically independent among *ousiai*, but some other relation. Recall what I have pointed out in Chapter 4: if X is an *archē* of Y, then, X is explanatory of Y. In view of this, the second possibility for interpreting these two phrases holds that there is not a relation of ontological dependence between the highest *ousia* and other *ousiai*; rather, the highest *ousia* is explanatory of other *ousiai* through some relation other than the relation of ontological dependence.

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<sup>23</sup> Tahko is not fully aware of the ambiguity of the genitive proposition, ‘of’ (τῶν). According to his interpretation, the reason why Aristotle takes metaphysics to be the first philosophy is because Aristotle is searching for what is ultimately ontologically independent. As he says, ‘In what sense could metaphysics be the first philosophy? Let me take the liberty of applying the technical jargon of contemporary metaphysics to answer: The first philosophy is an account of what is, or what it means to be, *fundamental*. Things that are the most fundamental are not *grounded in* anything more fundamental, they are ontologically independent’ (2013, p. 49). On this topic, cf. also Schaffer (2009).

<sup>24</sup> As we know, in Lambda 8 Aristotle calculates how many Unmoved Movers we should postulate. It is not clear how these Unmoved movers are related to each other (cf. Frede 2000, p. 37). But it seems clear that Aristotle thinks that, ultimately, there is a final Unmoved Mover, which is the final *archē*. In view of this, let us suppose that there is just one highest *ousia* in Aristotle’s philosophy.

The third possibility for interpreting these two phrases lies in between; that is, it is not clear whether there is a relation of ontological dependence between the highest *ousia* and other *ousiai*, but nevertheless the highest *ousia* is still explanatory of other *ousiai*.

Given that these two phrases, ‘*ousia* of *ousiai*’ and ‘*archē* of *archai*’, can be interpreted in these three ways, there are correspondingly three ways to reconcile the potential conflict between ontology (project 5) and theology (project 6).

If there is a two-tier ontological independence relation existing between the Unmoved Mover (understood as *archē*) and other *ousiai*, then, project 5 – namely, searching for what it is for something, anything, to be an *ousia* – will necessarily lead us forward to project 6. For, on this reading, only the Unmoved Mover is, strictly speaking, ontologically independent.

Alternatively, we might think that there is no relation of ontological dependence between the Unmoved Mover and other *ousiai* in Aristotle. But this view needs to be refined in light of what I have argued in the Chapter 4. Let me explain this in more detail. In my view, there is a relation of ontological dependence between eternal things and perishable things; that is, perishable things are dependent on eternal things for their being. In this sense and for this reason, eternal things are taken to be the *archai* of perishable things. But this still leaves the relation between the Unmoved Mover and other eternal *ousiai* unexplained; that is, it is not clear whether there is a relation of ontological dependence between the final *archē* – namely, the Unmoved Mover – and other eternal *ousiai*. Hence, strictly speaking, this view holds that there is not a relation of ontological dependence between the Unmoved Mover and other eternal *ousiai*. Nevertheless, on this reading, project 6 – namely, the search for the *archē* of *ousiai* – will also include project 5 as a necessary part; for, as Aristotle clearly states, the *archē* that we are looking for is the *archē* of *ousiai*. In this case, the analysis of what *ousia* is (project 5) will naturally leads us to project 6, if there are some other explanatory relations existing between the Unmoved



Mover and other *ousiai*. For, strictly speaking, only the Unmoved Mover is explanatorily independent.

Finally, we might think that it is not clear whether there is a relation of ontological dependence between the Unmoved Mover and other *ousiai* in Aristotle. Nevertheless, project 6 will also include project 5 as a necessary part; for the *archē* that we are looking for is the *archē of ousiai*. Again, a clarification of what *ousia* is (project 5) will also naturally lead us to project 6, if there is an explanatory relation existing between the Unmoved Mover and other *ousiai*, irrespective of whether this is a relation of ontological dependence or some other relation, or both. For, strictly speaking, only the Unmoved Mover is explanatorily independent.

Taking these three possibilities into consideration, it seems that, philosophically speaking, we do not have to accept the developmentalist readings (e.g., Natorp's, Jaeger's and Owen's readings) of the two subject matters (i.e., ontology and theology) of the *Metaphysics*; for these two themes are completely compatible and we do not have to appeal to a particular chronological ordering to make sense of the two subject matters. On the other hand, if we adhere to the text of the *Metaphysics*, as we now have it, it seems that it is necessary that we accept a unitarian reading, in one way or another; after all, Aristotle clearly claims in many places that what he is looking for is the *archē of ousiai*.

The two different unitarian approaches (as I formulated them in section 1) to reconciling the potential conflicts between ontology (project 5) and theology (project 6) can be reformulated as follows:

One unitarian approach (e.g., Patzig 1979, Frede 1987a and Owen 1957) claims that there is an ontological independence relation between the Unmoved Mover and other *ousiai*;<sup>25</sup> in other words, according to this reading, there is a two-tier ontological

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<sup>25</sup>Cf. also, Peramatzis (2011, pp. 291-299).



independence relation (a ‘double *pros hen* structure’ in their terminology ) in Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*. It is this two-tier ontological independence relation that unifies Aristotle’s ontology and theology.

Another unitarian approach (Menn ms.) strongly suggests that there is no two-tier ontological independence relation existing between the Unmoved Mover and other *ousiai*;<sup>26</sup> according to this reading, it is true to say that, when Aristotle asks what *ousia* is (e.g., in a memorable sentence at 1028b4 of Zeta), he is asking what is ontologically independent; whereas when he asks what the *archē* of *ousiai* is, his question does not imply that one *ousia* can be ontologically independent of other *ousiai*, rather, he is simply asking whether there is an *ousia* which is explanatorily independent of all other *ousiai*.<sup>27</sup> On this reading, it is the searching for the *archē* of *ousiai* that unifies Aristotle’s ontology and theology.

This leads naturally to the question of how exactly the Unmoved Mover is related to the other *ousiai*. Again, given that I have argued that perishable things are ontologically dependent on eternal things for their being, the Unmoved Mover, as a member of the class

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<sup>26</sup> Menn says that ‘it (sc. Lambda) argues that efficient causes of being-as-*energeia* lead to the *archē*, and that other kinds of causes, of being in other senses, do not’ (ms., IIIβ1, p. 11; cf. also 2001, p. 95). Also: ‘To find such an *archē* we have to proceed through extrinsic causes, i.e. efficient causes, and more particularly through efficient causes which are not conspecific with their effects’ (IIIβ1, p. 26; cf. IIIβ1, p. 36, p. 38, p. 42, and IIIβ2, p. 1, etc.). Also: ‘it (sc. the Unmoved Mover) does not seem to be a substance or a being in any stronger sense than other substances are’ (2012, p. 423; cf. also 2005, p. 276). Also: ‘But Lambda does not in fact draw on Zeta’s discussion of the status of immanent forms as *ousia* (in arguing, say, that immaterial forms are *ousiai* in a yet stronger sense – but Lambda breathes no hint that God is *ousia* in any different sense from other *ousiai*)’ (2001, p. 93; cf. also p. 126 and p. 134).

<sup>27</sup> Menn: ‘it says nothing about a special sense of being or of *ousia* that would apply only to these immaterial things (let alone about how other things’ ways-of-being might be understood as derived from this primary sense)’ (ms., IIα1, p. 4). Also, ‘good-itself in Lambda 10 are not the *ousiai* of the manifest things, but are entirely different *ousiai*, and are causes of the manifest things only as causes of motion and actuality’ (p. 11).

of eternal things, may, therefore, be ontologically related to perishable things. But, for present purposes, let us concentrate on the relation between the Unmoved Mover and all other *ousiai*, not merely perishable *ousiai*.

As we know from Lambda, the Unmoved Mover is sometimes characterized by Aristotle as the final cause (e.g., 1072b1-4, 1074a20) and sometimes as the efficient cause (e.g., 1071b11, 1075b31). Critics have been engaged in a long-standing debate about whether the Unmoved Mover is the efficient cause or the final cause, or both.<sup>28</sup> However, more relevant to our discussion here is that it is not clear whether there is a relation of ontological dependence between the Unmoved Mover and other *ousiai*.<sup>29</sup> More generally, it is not clear whether there is a relation of ontological dependence between two items which are related by the efficient cause or the final cause: we may think that the efficient cause is not necessarily related to a relation of ontological dependence at all; and clearly, not all items, which are related by the final cause, have a relation of ontological dependence.

In my view, Aristotle in Lambda does not explicitly tell us whether there is an ontological dependence relation existing between the Unmoved Mover and other *ousiai*. However, it seems that we cannot immediately rule out that possibility. That there exists a

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<sup>28</sup> As Miller says, 'this gives rise to a further question: if Aristotle's prime mover is both an efficient and final cause, how are these two modes of causation related? ... if Aristotle believes that his divine cause is both efficient and final, which is more fundamental: Is it an efficient cause because it is final, or a final cause because it is efficient?' (2013, p. 279). Also, see Miller's excellent summary of several possible interpretations of this issue. Also see Owens (1979); he thinks that the Unmoved Mover is the final cause of other *ousiai*. Cf. also Ross (1937, p. 181); he thinks that the Unmoved Mover is the efficient cause by being the final cause.

<sup>29</sup> There are also some other interpretations of how the Unmoved Mover relates to other *ousiai*. Sorabji (1988, pp. 249-285) (Chapter Fifteen: Infinite Power Impressed: The Neoplatonist Transformation of Aristotle) provides an account of Neo-platonists' interpretation of Aristotle's Unmoved Mover; they take it as both the sustainer (preservation of their existence) and the mover of the universe. Also cf. Menn's summary of the views of Avicenna and Thomas Aquinas: 'God is a cause of being, to what would otherwise be a non-existing essence, of the fact that it exists' (ms., IIIβ1, p. 3).



relation of ontological dependence between the Unmoved Mover and other *ousiai* is not simply a logical possibility; after all, textually speaking, the Unmoved Mover is taken to be the final cause of other *ousiai*.<sup>30</sup> One might think that some version of the final cause will necessarily imply a relation of ontological dependence. For example, through the final cause, the Unmoved Mover may determine the being (i.e., the essences) of other *ousiai*.<sup>31</sup> Hence, unlike Menn, I think that there might be a two-tier relation of ontological dependence between the Unmoved Mover and other *ousiai*.

Let us summarize the results of our discussion so far. In this section I have shown that Aristotle's *Metaphysics* carries out both projects – namely, searching for *ousia* and searching for the *archē* of *ousiai*. As I have argued, however, the project of searching for *ousia* is subordinate to, and can be understood as a necessary part of, the project of searching for the *archē* of *ousiai*; for in order to address the latter project, we must first consider what is ontologically independent. Only after giving a proper answer to the project of *ousia*, can we proceed to ask whether there is an *ousia* which is explanatorily independent of other *ousiai*. In this sense and for this reason, searching for the *archē* of *ousiai* should be taken to be the basic project of the *Metaphysics*.

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<sup>30</sup> Aristotle claims that all corruptible things imitate the incorruptible, (Theta 8, 1050b28) and that all sensible things, both corruptible and incorruptible, depend upon the Unmoved Mover as upon their final cause (Lambda 7, 1072b13-14). However, Charles (2012) argues for a more complex view of Aristotle's teleology. According to Charles, even though sometimes Aristotle uses the language of teleology to explain some phenomena (e.g., elemental cycles and global teleology), it is not necessarily that he takes those phenomena as requiring the presence of genuine Aristotelian teleological causation. It seems to me that whether there is an ontological independence relation existing between the Unmoved Mover and other *ousiai* is partly dependent on how Aristotle's final cause is understood. Since I do not have a clear view on this issue, I shall leave this issue unresolved for now.

<sup>31</sup> E.g., Peramatzis says: 'The goodness of the Prime Mover's essence, then, can be conceived as the moving and final cause which determines the *nature* of the Heavenly Intelligences as eternal actual beings' (2011, p. 298; emphasis added).



### 3. Searching for ‘the *Archē* of *Ousiai*’ as A Shared Project

In the previous section I argued that searching for the *archē* of *ousiai* is the basic project of the *Metaphysics*. In this section, to further strengthen this conclusion, I will show that this basic project is not Aristotle’s invention, but, is a shared project for a variety of philosophers as Aristotle understands them – these philosophers include the Physicists, Platonists and mathematicians.

#### 3.1 Plato’s Approach of Searching for the *Archē* of *Ousia*

[Text 1] Since the Forms are the causes of all other things, he (sc. Plato) thought the elements of Forms are the elements of all things. As matter, the *Great* and the *Small* are the principles; as *substance*, it is the *One*. For from the *Great* and the *Small*, by participation in the *One* come the Forms, and there are Numbers. (trans. Apostle, 987b18-22)<sup>32</sup>

[Text 2] Further, the most difficult of all and containing the most *aporia*, whether one and being are, as Pythagoreans and Plato used to say, not something different but rather the substance of beings, or not, but the subject is something else, as Empedocles asserts it is friendship, someone else fire, someone else water or air. (trans. Madigan, 996a5-9)<sup>33</sup>

[Text 3] For the Forms are causes of the essence of the other things, and the cause of the essence of the Forms is the *One*. (trans. Ross, 988a10-11, slightly modified; cf. also 988b4-6)<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> ἐπεὶ δ' αἰτία τὰ εἶδη τοῖς ἄλλοις, τάκείνων στοιχεῖα πάντων ᾤθηται τῶν ὄντων εἶναι στοιχεῖα. ὥς μὲν οὖν ὕλην τὸ μέγα καὶ τὸ μικρὸν εἶναι ἀρχάς, ὥς δ' οὐσίαν τὸ ἓν· ἐξ ἐκείνων γὰρ κατὰ μέθεξιν τοῦ ἐνὸς [τὰ εἶδη] εἶναι τοὺς ἀριθμούς.

<sup>33</sup> ἔτι δὲ τὸ πάντων χαλεπώτατον καὶ πλείστην ἀπορίαν ἔχον, πότερον τὸ ἓν καὶ τὸ ὄν, καθάπερ οἱ Πυθαγόρειοι καὶ Πλάτων ἔλεγεν, οὐχ ἕτερόν τι ἐστὶν ἀλλ' οὐσία τῶν ὄντων; ἢ οὐ, ἀλλ' ἕτερόν τι τὸ ὑποκείμενον, ὥσπερ Ἐμπεδοκλῆς φησὶ φιλίαν ἄλλος δέ τις πῦρ ὁ δὲ ὕδωρ ἢ ἀέρα·

<sup>34</sup> τὰ γὰρ εἶδη τοῦ τί ἐστὶν αἰτία τοῖς ἄλλοις, τοῖς δ' εἶδεσι τὸ ἓν.

[Text 4] But because it is the One that they (sc. Platonists) posit as a principle, and a principle in the sense of an element. (trans. Apostle, 1091b2-3; cf. 1092a6-7)<sup>35</sup>

From these texts, we can draw the following conclusions: (1) Plato is searching for the elements (στοιχεῖα) of forms ([Text 1]); (2) We know from other texts that form is precisely *ousia* for Plato (e.g., 991b1-3); (3) Hence, Plato is searching for the elements of *ousiai* [from (1) and (2)]; (4) Plato takes the One to be the *archē* ([Text 1] and [Text 4]);<sup>36</sup> In particular, Plato thinks that the One is the *archē* of forms and forms are the *archai* of other things ([Text 3]) (*aitia* and *to ti ēn einai* are *archai* according to Delta 2); (5) Plato is searching for the *archē* of *ousiai*. ([Text 1] and [Text 4]); (6) the One is also itself an *ousia* ([Text 1], [Text 2] and also cf. 1053b16); (7) the One is the *archē* understood as an element ([Text 4]).

Hence, to summarize, Plato is searching for the *archē* of *ousiai* – namely, the *archē* of forms; and Plato is searching for the elements of *ousiai* – namely, the elements of forms.

### 3.2 The Physicists' Approach of Searching for the *Archē* of *Ousiai*

[Text 1] That is why, though most thinkers and the earlier thinkers thought that substance and being were body and other things were modifications of body, so that the principles of bodies were also the principles of being. (trans. Madigan, 1002a8-11; cf. 1001b29-1002a4, 1002a26-28)<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> ἀλλὰ διὰ τὸ τὸ ἓν ἀρχὴν καὶ ἀρχὴν ὡς στοιχεῖον.

<sup>36</sup> One might ask: Why does Plato think that the One and Being are elements? Aristotle thinks that Plato takes the One and Being as belonging to “many or to all or to most” (1014b6-9) and as intelligible elements in our process of understanding (1070b7-8).

<sup>37</sup> διόπερ οἱ μὲν πολλοὶ καὶ οἱ πρότερον τὴν οὐσίαν καὶ τὸ ὄν ᾤοντο τὸ σῶμα εἶναι τὰ δὲ ἄλλα τούτου πάθη, ὥστε καὶ τὰς ἀρχὰς τὰς τῶν σωμάτων τῶν ὄντων εἶναι ἀρχάς.

[Text 2] From what has been said, then, and from the wise men whose account concerning these matter has by now been considered, we gather this much: the first philosophers posit a corporeal principle (for water and fire and such things are bodies) (trans. Apostle, 987a2-5)<sup>38</sup>

[Text 3] Those who say that the universe is one and posit as matter some one nature which is corporeal and magnitude clearly err in many ways; for they (sc. Physicists) posit the elements of bodies only, not of incorporeal things, even though incorporeal things exist (trans. Apostle, 988b22-25; cf. 988a28-32, 985a29-b3).<sup>39</sup>

From these texts, we can draw the following conclusions: (1) The physicists take body as *ousia* ([Text 1]); (2) The physicists are searching for the *archē* of body ([Text 1]); (3) The physicists are searching for the *archē* of *ousiai* ([Text 1]); (4) The physicists take *archē* as corporeal ([Text 1] and [Text 2]); (5) Like Plato, the physicists are also searching for the elements of *ousiai* ([Text 3]).

Hence, to summarize, the physicists are searching for the *archē* of *ousiai* – namely, the *archē* of bodies; and the physicists are searching for the elements of *ousiai* – namely, the elements of bodies.

### 3.3 The Mathematical Approach of Searching for the *Archē* of *Ousiai*

[Text 1] They came to the belief that the elements of numbers are the elements of all things (trans. Apostle, 986a1-2).<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> ἐκ μὲν οὖν τῶν εἰρημένων καὶ παρὰ τῶν συνηδρευκότων ἤδη τῷ λόγῳ σοφῶν ταῦτα παρελήφαμεν, παρὰ μὲν τῶν πρώτων σωματικὴν τε τὴν ἀρχήν (ὕδωρ γὰρ καὶ πῦρ καὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα σώματά ἐστιν).

<sup>39</sup> Ὅσοι μὲν οὖν ἐν τε τὸ πᾶν καὶ μίαν τινὰ φύσιν ὡς ὕλην τιθέασι, καὶ ταύτην σωματικὴν καὶ μέγεθος ἔχουσιν, δῆλον ὅτι πολλαχῶς ἀμαρτάνουσιν. τῶν γὰρ σωμάτων τὰ στοιχεῖα τιθέασι μόνον, τῶν δ' ἁσωμάτων οὐ.

<sup>40</sup> τὰ τῶν ἀριθμῶν στοιχεῖα τῶν ὄντων στοιχεῖα πάντων ὑπέλαβον εἶναι.



[Text 2] Contemporaneously with these thinkers and even before them, the so-called Pythagoreans, who were engaged in the study of mathematical objects, were the first to advance this study, and having been brought up in it, they regarded the principles of mathematical objects as the principles of all things (trans. Apostle, 985b23-27).<sup>41</sup>

[Text 3] The Pythagoreans, however, spoke of two principles in the same manner but added this much (which is peculiar to them), that the *Finite* and the *Infinite* and the *One* are not to be regarded as being other natures, such as fire or earth or some other things of this sort, but that the *Infinite* itself and the *One* itself are the *substances* of the things of which they are predicated, and hence that numbers are the *substances* of all things. (trans. Apostle, 987a13-19)<sup>42</sup>

[Text 4] [sc. Plato agrees with the Pythagoreans] in believing that the Numbers are the causes of the *substance* of all other things... (trans. Apostle, slightly modified, 987b24-25)<sup>43</sup>

[Text 5] Since, then, some thinkers say that Ideas and the Numbers are such substances, and that the elements of these are the elements and principles of things, we must inquire what these thinkers say and how they say it. (trans. Apostle, 1086a26-29)<sup>44</sup>

From these texts, we can draw the following conclusions: (1) The elements of numbers are the elements of all things ([Text 1]). (2) The principles of mathematics are the principles of all things ([Text 2]). (3) The elements of numbers are the elements and

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<sup>41</sup> Ἐν δὲ τοῖτοις καὶ πρὸ τούτων οἱ καλούμενοι Πυθαγόρειοι τῶν μαθημάτων ἀψάμενοι πρῶτοι ταῦτά τε προήγαγον, καὶ ἐντραφέντες ἐν αὐτοῖς τὰς τούτων ἀρχὰς τῶν ὄντων ἀρχὰς ᾤθησαν εἶναι πάντων.

<sup>42</sup> οἱ δὲ Πυθαγόρειοι δύο μὲν τὰς ἀρχὰς κατὰ τὸν αὐτὸν εἰρήκασιν τρόπον, τοσοῦτον δὲ προσεπέθεσαν ὃ καὶ ἰδίον ἐστὶν αὐτῶν, ὅτι τὸ πεπερασμένον καὶ τὸ ἄπειρον [καὶ τὸ ἐν] οὐχ ἑτέρας τινὰς ᾤθησαν εἶναι φύσεις, οἷον πῦρ ἢ γῆν ἢ τι τοιοῦτον ἕτερον, ἀλλ' αὐτὸ τὸ ἄπειρον καὶ αὐτὸ τὸ ἐν οὐσίαν εἶναι τούτων ὧν κατηγοροῦνται, διὸ καὶ ἀριθμὸν εἶναι τὴν οὐσίαν πάντων.

<sup>43</sup> καὶ τὸ τοῖς ἀριθμοῦς αἰτίους εἶναι τοῖς ἄλλοις τῆς οὐσίας ὡσαύτως ἐκείνοις

<sup>44</sup> ἐπεὶ οὖν λέγουσί τινες τοιαύτας εἶναι τὰς ιδέας καὶ τοὺς ἀριθμούς, καὶ τὰ τούτων στοιχεῖα τῶν ὄντων εἶναι στοιχεῖα καὶ ἀρχὰς, σκεπτέον περὶ τούτων τί λέγουσι καὶ πῶς λέγουσιν.

principles of being ([Text 5]). (4) Numbers are the *ousiai* of other things ([Text 3] and [Text 4]).

Hence, to summarize, the mathematicians are searching for the *archē* of *ousiai* – namely, the *archē* of numbers; and the mathematicians are searching for the elements of *ousiai* – namely, the elements of numbers.

The upshot of this analysis of Aristotle's understanding of the projects of other philosophers is as follows. First, Plato, the physicists and the mathematicians are all searching for the *archē* of *ousiai*. And this, as I have argued in the second section of this chapter, is also the basic project that Aristotle carries out in the *Metaphysics*. Hence, in Aristotle's view, the project of searching for the *archē* of *ousiai* is not his invention, but is a project shared by a variety of philosophers. Secondly, these other philosophers have different understandings of what *ousia* is: for Plato, it is form; for the physicists, it is body; and for the mathematicians, it is number. Thirdly, these other philosophers have a shared assumption, that is, searching for the *archē* of *ousiai* amounts to searching for the *stoicheia* of *ousiai*.

In the next section, I will show that this shared assumption is exactly what Aristotle will argue against. As we shall see, Aristotle will argue against this shared assumption by drawing a distinction between *archē* and *stoicheion*. This shows that the Aristotelian conception of *archē* is crucially different from *archē* as conceived of by other philosophers, in particular: Platonists, physicists and mathematicians.

#### **4. The Distinction between *Archē* and *Stoicheion* and Aristotle's**

##### **Account of the *Archē* of *Ousiai***

As I have argued, searching for the *archē* of *ousiai* is, for Aristotle, a project shared by a variety of philosophers. We shall now see that, unlike the Platonists, physicists and

mathematicians, Aristotle does not think that *archē* can be found in the elements of things, whether understood as physical, dialectical or mathematical. In fact, he clearly distinguishes *archē* from *stoicheion*. As he says:

[Text 1] The *substance* of these would appear to be this nature, which is not an element but a principle. (trans. Apostle, 1041b30-31)<sup>45</sup>

[Text 2] From our inquiry it appears that the constituents of a syllable are not its letters plus their combination, nor, in the case of a house, are they bricks and combination. And this is right; for a combination or blend does not consist of those objects of which it is the combination or the blend. And in the other cases, it is similar; for example, if a threshold exists by virtue of its position, the position does not consist of the threshold, but it is rather the threshold which is composed of the position. Nor is a man animal plus two-footedness, but there must be something which exists besides these, if these are matter, and this something is neither an element, nor does it consist of elements, but is the substance; and it is this that some thinkers leave out and state only the matter. So if this is the cause of the existence and of the substance, then it is this that they should be calling a 'a substance'. (trans. Apostle, 1043b4-14)<sup>46</sup>

In these texts, Aristotle clearly contrasts *ousia* (and *archē*) with *stoicheion*. Aristotle argues that *ousia* should be understood as *archē* rather than *stoicheion*; for *stoicheia* themselves need to be united and *ousia* is the cause of that unity.

<sup>45</sup> φανείη ἂν [καὶ] αὕτη ἡ φύσις οὐσία, ἣ ἐστὶν οὐ στοιχεῖον ἀλλ' ἀρχή.

<sup>46</sup> οὐ φαίνεται δὲ ζητοῦσιν ἡ συλλαβὴ ἐκ τῶν στοιχείων οὔσα καὶ συνθέσεως, οὐδ' ἡ οἰκία πλίνθοι τε καὶ σύνθεσις. καὶ τοῦτο ὀρθῶς· οὐ γάρ ἐστιν ἡ σύνθεσις οὐδ' ἡ μῖξις ἐκ τούτων ὧν ἐστὶ σύνθεσις ἡ μῖξις. ὁμοίως δὲ οὐδὲ τῶν ἄλλων οὐθέν, οἷον εἰ ὁ οὐδὸς θέσει, οὐκ ἐκ τοῦ οὐδοῦ ἡ θέσις ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον οὗτος ἐξ ἐκείνης. οὐδὲ δὴ ὁ ἀνθρωπὸς ἐστὶ τὸ ζῶον καὶ δίπουν, ἀλλὰ τι δεῖ εἶναι ὃ παρὰ ταῦτά ἐστιν, εἰ ταῦθ' ὕλη, οὔτε δὲ στοιχεῖον οὗτ' ἐκ στοιχείου, ἀλλ' ἡ οὐσία· ὃ ἐξαιροῦντες τὴν ὕλην λέγουσιν. εἰ οὖν τοῦτ' αἴτιον τοῦ εἶναι, καὶ οὐσία τοῦτο, αὐτὴν ἂν τὴν οὐσίαν λέγοιεν.



It is worth noting that Aristotle in the sixth *aporia* of Beta articulates a difficulty in choosing between a physical account of the elements of *ousia* and a dialectical account of the elements of *ousia*. This *aporia* will be taken up in Zeta 10-16. In those lines, Aristotle argues that essences (*ousiai*) are not reducible to their elements.<sup>47</sup> This argument is clearly expressed in Zeta 17. Moreover, in Zeta 13 and 16, Aristotle also argues, more generally, that *ousia* cannot be composed of *ousiai*.<sup>48</sup> This amounts to claiming that *ousia* cannot be composed of elements which are themselves understood as *ousiai*. In addition to this general argument against the *stoicheia* approach to the *archē* of *ousiai*, Aristotle also thinks that the approaches of the Platonists' and mathematicians' are untenable because they have an incorrect concept of *ousia*.

On the surface, like Aristotle, Plato is also searching for the *archē* of forms; for both Aristotle and Plato take form to be *ousia*. However, they have different views of what form is.<sup>49</sup> In Aristotle's view, Plato's forms are not *ousiai* at all (cf. Z 13; and in 1059b3 Aristotle claims boldly that Platonic forms do not exist at all). Hence, for Aristotle, our

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<sup>47</sup> It is worth noting that Aristotle uses the term 'part' rather than 'elements', almost exclusively. In this context, however, I think they are used interchangeably.

<sup>48</sup> As Aristotle puts it, 'But further, the following is also clear. Namely, it is impossible that substance be [composed] "out of" substances that are present in it as in completedness; for things that are in completedness two in this way are never in completedness one, though if they are potentially two they can be one (as the double is "out of" two halves, only potentially, for the completedness [of the halves] separates [the double, i.e., destroys it]). So that if substance is one, it can't be [composed] "out of" substances that are present in it and [present] in this sort of way, which Democritus correctly formulates; for he says it is impossible that there "come-to-be, out of two, one, or out of one, two" – he's identifying the substances with his "atomic magnitudes". Moreover, it is clear that it will hold likewise in the case of number also, at least if number is a "synthesis of units", as is said by some; for either the dyad is not one, or else there is no "unit", in completedness, within it' (1039a3-14; trans. Furth; also cf. Zeta 16).

<sup>49</sup> According to one wide-spread interpretation (e.g., Frede, 1987b), Aristotle, unlike Plato, does not take form as universal. But, according to another wide-spread interpretation (e.g., Woods, 1967, 1974 and 1991), Aristotle does take the *infinima species*, which is universal, as form. Cf. also Yu's (2003, Chapter 5) summary of different views on this issue.

search for the *archē* of *ousiai* cannot begin from these forms. Furthermore, Aristotle thinks that objects of mathematics cannot exist in their own right (e.g., 1078a21-23). This amounts to the claim that mathematical objects are not *ousiai*.<sup>50</sup> Hence, we cannot start here in the search for the *archē* of *ousiai*, either.

## 5. Against Frede's and Patzig's Interpretations

### 5.1 Against Frede and Patzig on the *Metaphysics* as a whole

My interpretation of the basic project of the *Metaphysics* is not uncontroversial. In order to defend my interpretation, I must set it against a standard interpretation, that is, the interpretation famously defended by Frede (1987a) and Patzig (1979).<sup>51</sup>

In what follows, I will argue that: first, philosophically speaking, Frede's and Patzig's interpretations fails to recognize two potentially different independence relations, the one ontological independence, the other explanatory independence in general. Secondly, textually speaking, Frede's and Patzig's interpretations fail to accommodate Aristotle's texts; for example, there is no textual evidence for one of their major claims, according to which Lambda should also contribute to our understanding of what it is for something, anything, to be an *ousia*. Thirdly, their interpretations (*esp.* Frede's interpretation) fail to do justice to the argumentative structure of Theta. In particular, they fail to recognize the philosophical significance of Theta 8 and the transition from Theta 1-6 to Theta 7-8. As I have argued in the previous chapters, Theta 1-6 should be read as preparing for the discussion of *archē*, which will be taken up in Theta 7 and 8, by introducing the twin notions, *energeia-dunamis*, as a means of analysing the concept of

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<sup>50</sup> For a detailed account of Aristotle's philosophy of mathematics, see Bostock (2012).

<sup>51</sup> I have ignored the developmentalist readings of the basic project of the *Metaphysics* because I have shown in section 2 of this chapter that, philosophically speaking, these two projects are fully compatible.



*ousia*; for it emerges in Theta 7 and 8 that the *archē* in question is, precisely, the *archē* of *ousiai*. Theta 7 and 8 take up the search for the *archē* of *ousiai*. Aristotle argues in Theta 8 that the desired *archē* can only be found within the context of the search for the *energeiai* of *ousiai*, and it can only be found within the sphere of eternal things (i.e., eternal *energeiai*). If my approach succeeds, then my interpretation of the basic project of the *Metaphysics* will be preferable to that of Frede and Patzig in these crucial respects.

Frede and Patzig think that Aristotle's overall project in the *Metaphysics* is concerned with searching for *ousia*, understood as, the study of what it is for something, anything, to be an *ousia*. Accordingly, they interpret Aristotle's theory of the Unmoved Mover in Lambda as also concerned with the same project. They think that a proper understanding of the Unmoved Mover should also contribute to our understanding of what it is for something, anything, to be an *ousia*.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> As Frede says: 'We shall achieve a full understanding of the substantiality of sensible substances only when we have understood the substantiality of non-sensible substances' (1987a, p. 88). Duarte (2007) also claims that to understand the Unmoved Mover is necessary for us to understand what it is for something to be a being, but he gives different reasons. As he says, 'since scientific understanding of an object requires an understanding of its causes, both proximate and remote, the science that studies these first things will be universal in the sense that an understanding of them will be involved in the understanding of *any* being – either because that being *is* one of the first beings or because it is causally dependent on them' (p. 313; cf. also p. 315). However, Duarte does not offer a clear picture of how the Unmoved Mover relates to other *ousiai*. This makes his argument less convincing. For, suppose that the relation between the Unmoved Mover and other *ousiai* is not a relation of ontological dependence. I cannot see why the understanding of the Unmoved Mover is necessary for understanding what it is for something to be a being. So, it seems to me that until we have a clear picture of how the Unmoved Mover relates to other *ousiai*, we cannot think generally that to understand the Unmoved Mover is necessary for us to understand what it is for something to be a being (or an *ousia*).



Based on this reading, they think that in one passage of Epsilon, which is arguably the most important passage for all unitarian readings, Aristotle has a double *pros hen* structure in mind.<sup>53</sup>

[Text 1] One might raise the question whether first philosophy is in any way universal or is concerned merely with some genus and some one nature; ...Accordingly, if there were no substances other than those formed by nature, physics would be the first science; but if there is an immovable substance, this would be prior, and the science of it would be first philosophy and would be universal in this manner, in view of the fact it is first. (trans. Apostle, 1026a23-31)<sup>54</sup>

As we have pointed out in section 1 of this chapter, both Patzig and Frede think that there is a double *pros hen* structure in Aristotle's *Metaphysics*.<sup>55</sup> That is to say: just as

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<sup>53</sup> Clearly, Aristotle is fully aware of the potential conflict between ontology and theology and he tries to reconcile these two subject matters.

<sup>54</sup> ἀπορήσειε γὰρ ἂν τις πότερόν ποθ' ἡ πρώτη φιλοσοφία καθόλου ἐστὶν ἢ περὶ τι γένος καὶ φύσιν τινὰ μίαν... εἰ μὲν οὖν μὴ ἔστι τις ἑτέρα οὐσία παρὰ τὰς φύσει συνεστηκυίας, ἡ φυσικὴ ἂν εἴη πρώτη ἐπιστήμη· εἰ δ' ἔστι τις οὐσία ἀκίνητος, αὕτη προτέρα καὶ φιλοσοφία πρώτη, καὶ καθόλου οὕτως ὅτι πρώτη·

<sup>55</sup> I have quoted Patzig's view on this issue in section 1 (see footnote 11). Here is what Frede says about the *pros hen* structure: 'it would seem to be part of the essence of separate substances that all other ways of being depend on their way of being, just as it seems to be essential to natural substances that the way of being of accidents depend on their way of being' (1987a, p. 92; cf. also p. 87 and p. 88). Veatch holds a similar view. As he says, 'Analogously, we can now begin to see how Aristotle's theology, in turn, is entirely reconcilable with his ontology in terms of this same sort of *pros hen* equivocation'; 'the being of all things other than god can only be and be understood with reference to god' (1974, pp. 160-161).

It is notable that when Aristotle argues for the *pros hen* structure in Gamma (1003a33-b19), it is the ontological independence relation between all attributes and their corresponding *ousiai* that he has in mind; there is no textual evidence whatever for supporting a double *pros hen* structure in Aristotle, i.e., there is no textual evidence for supporting the claim that there is also a *pros hen* structure between the Unmoved Mover and the other *ousiai*.

all other non-substantial entities are dependent on their corresponding *ousia* for their being, so too all other *ousiai* are dependent on the Unmoved Mover for their being. It is precisely this double *pro hen* structure that is supposed to unify the two projects.<sup>56</sup> Accordingly, in interpreting 1026a29-31, Frede and Patzig think that the reason why the separate *ousia* is said to be first is because all other *ousiai* are ontologically dependent on it. To put the matter differently, all other *ousiai* are derived, in regard to their substancehood (in Frede's terminology), from the highest *ousia*, namely, the Unmoved Mover. It is this relation – namely, the ontological independence relation between the Unmoved Mover and other *ousiai* – that unifies the two projects; for, according to their reading, the project of searching for the *archē* of *ousiai* also contributes to project of searching for *ousia*.

It is worth noting here, as Patzig (1979, p. 45) does, that Aristotle uses the same word, 'depend' (*ērtētai*), to describe the two kinds of dependence relation in Gamma and Lambda: in 1003b17, Aristotle argues that attributes are dependent on their corresponding *ousia*; in 1072b14, Aristotle claims that heavens and nature are dependent on the Unmoved Mover.<sup>57</sup> As I have argued in section 2 of this chapter, these two relations are not necessarily the same, but Patzig does not distinguish between these two potentially different kinds of dependence. Both Patzig and Frede (Patzig 1979, p. 41; Frede 1987a, p. 92) take these two kinds of dependence as identical. But as I have argued in section 2 of

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<sup>56</sup> Based on this understanding, Patzig holds that: 'the so-called "books on substance" of the *Metaphysics* (vii-ix) cannot be fitted into the account of a doubly paronymous ontology that I have outlined. It is true that in these books beings in the other categories are still related to substance as the "first being"; but there is no trace of an essential reference in the analysis of natural substances to the doctrine of the "prime mover". The artificial unity of theology and ontology appears to be ruptured; at any rate we see no more of it. This fact is, of course, open to various interpretations. We might incline to the view that VII-IX, which are, as a literary whole, linked closely with each other and scarcely at all with the other books of the *Metaphysics*, are also distinct in content from the rest of the *Metaphysics*: as an analysis of natural substance, they really belong to the *Physics*' (1979, p. 46).

<sup>57</sup> According to Patzig (1979, p. 45), Aristotle uses this word only twice in the *Metaphysics*.



this chapter, this is not necessarily so; for one is the ontological independence relation and the other can be read as the explanatory independence relation, in general. I think, it is precisely because of this potential confusion that both Frede and Patzig take Aristotle's *Metaphysics* to be concerned only with the project of searching for *ousia*, and not with the project of searching for the *archē* of *ousiai*.

As Frede specifies, the Unmoved Mover is first also in the sense that, compared to other *ousiai*, the Unmoved Mover is exemplary in its being an *ousia*. However, this is a controversial issue, i.e., what exactly the exemplary status of the Unmoved Mover is, is subject to very different interpretations.<sup>58</sup> To some extent, it seems to me, that the

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<sup>58</sup> Frede (1987a, pp. 89-91) thinks that the Unmoved Mover is exemplary as an *ousia* in the following respects: (1) There is a scale of perfection and all other things imitate the Unmoved Mover since it, alone, is perfect. (2) The Unmoved Mover is without potentiality whereas sensible *ousiai* must have potentiality and are, thus, less real than the Unmoved Mover. (3) Separate substances do not, in any sense, need matter and non-substantial characteristics (in this sense, separate substances exist for their own right, which is the most important characteristic for being an *ousia*). (4) The second most important condition of substances is that they should be particular or individual and only the Unmoved Mover satisfies this condition straightforwardly. (5) The Unmoved Mover is eternal whereas the objects of physics do not exist eternally, but go in and out of existence instantaneously. (6) In the case of separate substances, form and essence are straightforwardly identical.

Like Frede and Patzig, Owens (1957) also thinks that there is a double *pro hen* structure in Aristotle's *Metaphysics*; that is to say, there is a two-tier ontological independence relation in Aristotle. As he says: 'Being in the *Metaphysics* is expressed in many ways according to the *pros hen* manner. Its nature is the nature of its primary instance, Entity. But Entity has also primary and secondary instances. The primary instance of Entity in sensible things is the form. The absolutely separate form is also referred to as the primary Entity' (p. 290). Also, 'The philosophy is a science of *pros hen* equivocals, and so studies the nature of the primary instance, which is expressed in all the others' (p. 298). But, unlike Frede, Owens' interpretation of how the Unmoved Mover is related to the world is slightly different. According to Owens's reading: 'When sensible things are called by their own names, their proper nature is expressed. When they are called Being, it is not their own nature, but the nature of the separate Entities which is primarily designated, just as the health in the body is expressed when medicine is called healthy. Separate form is Being and is universal to all Beings. It is the cause of Being, it is the Entity to all, by way of final causality. Because it is the highest type of reality it is the most universal' (p. 295). There are also other relations existing between the Unmoved Mover and other *ousiai*: (1) 'all



interpretation of how the Unmoved Mover is exemplary in so far as it is an *ousia* runs the risk of being arbitrary; critics, based on their different understandings of this relation, can correspondingly ascribe whatever characteristics they like to the Unmoved Mover, and claim accordingly that the Unmoved Mover is exemplary in these respects. In this way, they run the risk of attributing some unnecessary attributes to the Unmoved Mover.

The issues just enumerated are only the philosophical problems that Frede's and Patzig's interpretations face. What is more, this way of interpreting the Unmoved Mover does not fit well with Aristotle's text in Lambda, as Frede and Patzig themselves observe.<sup>59</sup>

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sensible things, both corruptible and incorruptible, depend upon a separate Entity as upon their final cause. The goal sought by all things, and the purpose of all natural actions, is the "eternal and the divine". The two terms seem employed synonymously and explicatively' (p. 293); (2) 'being - the divine - eternal duration - life - act, all these in their highest expression are synonymous with separate Entity' (p. 294) (form is act: e.g., impart knowability to the composite sensible things; p. 291).

<sup>59</sup> Frede says: 'there would, of course, be something missing in the execution of the programme the central books of the *Metaphysics* seem to envisage for their inquiry into substance. The central books begin their inquiry into substance with a consideration of sensible, material substances, but give us to understand that, on the basis of this, we are going to proceed to a discussion of non-sensible, immaterial substances, to fully understand what is to count as a substance and what it is to be a substance (cf. 1028b13-15; 28-31; 1029b3-12; 1037a10-14)' (2000, pp. 1-2). 'And this discussion of non-sensible, immaterial substances we would never get in the *Metaphysics*, unless there was book Lambda. But it cannot be said that Lambda precisely fills the gap which we would have, if Lambda had been removed, or separated, from the *Metaphysics*. For Lambda in many ways does not provide the kind of discussion of separate substances the central books seem to promise'. Also 'But there is no indication in Lambda that Aristotle himself, on the basis of this, means to give an account of what it is to be a substance or what it is to be a being. *A fortiori* there is no indication that he conceives of his enterprise as an attempt to set out what can be said about beings quite generally, about beings in so far as they are beings. What is conspicuously missing from Lambda is a doctrine concerning the systematic ambiguity of the term "being", let alone the conception of focal meaning which would allow Aristotle to give a unified account of substancehood or of being as such' (p. 50).

Cf. Owens: 'Lambda shows no interest in setting up a science of separate Entity which treats universally of all Beings. It makes no attempt to show how separate Entity is expressed in every predication of Being, as the science outlined in Epsilon 1 would seem to require' (1957, p. 287; cf. also p. 289). On this issue, also cf. Frede (1994, p. 175) and Gill (2005, p. 246).

Frede (2000), therefore, takes Lambda as an independent, and self-contained, text and they, Frede and Patzig, expect a text in which Aristotle will explain how the Unmoved Mover is an exemplary *ousia* in so far as it is an *ousia* and how other *ousiai* derive their substancehood (in Frede's terminology) from the Unmoved Mover. This text, however, is nowhere to be found in the Aristotelian corpus as we now have it.<sup>60</sup>

These two unsatisfactory aspects of Frede's and Patzig's interpretations call for a new interpretation of what the basic project of the *Metaphysics* is, and of how we should read 1026a29-31 in particular. My reading of 1026a29-31 is as follows: the reason why the Unmoved Mover is called 'first' is because the Unmoved Mover is explanatorily independent; that is, each and every *ousia* is explanatorily related to the Unmoved Mover; the Unmoved Mover has, therefore, the widest explanatory power. It is, in this sense and for this reason, that the study of it is also universal.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> The following is what Frede expects Lambda to do: 'We might then explain substancehood and being as in the first place a matter of being a pure actuality, an actuality not based on potentiality and matter, then go on to explain the substancehood of items whose actuality does presuppose potentiality and matter, and finally turn to the substancehood of items composed of matter and form'. 'But Lambda does not do any of these things. It is concerned with what kinds of substances we should postulate, but *not with the question of what it is to be a substance or being*, nor does it explain that being a substance is matter of being a certain kind of actuality, and that there are radically different kinds of substances because there are radically different forms of actuality' (2000, p. 2; emphasis added).

<sup>61</sup> Cf. Menn: 'the highest cause will be the causes of the most universal effects' (ms., Iβ2, p. 8). Cf. also Duarte: 'according to Aristotle, then, there are two senses in which a cause can be universal. In one sense, a cause (e.g., matter) can be universal because it is itself a universal under which various species of cause (e.g., the matter of a horse, the matter of a human being) are subsumed. In another sense, a cause can be universal with respect to some domain, not because it is itself a universal, but because of its position in some order of causes (e.g., prime matter, which is first in the order of sublunary materials and thus a more or less remote material cause of all perishable substances) – and this despite the fact that such a cause will invariably be a universal, at least if it qualifies as an explanation in the context of scientific inquiry' (2007, p. 278).



It seems that my interpretation of how Aristotle carries out both projects in general and how we should read 1026a29-31 in particular has at least one crucial advantage over Frede's and Patzig's interpretations; that is, we can coherently explain both why Aristotle does not mention the exemplary status of the Unmoved Mover in so far as it is an *ousia* in Lambda, and also why Aristotle does search for what it is for something, anything, to be an *ousia* in Zeta. The reason is simply that there are two projects involved: when Aristotle was thinking of the Unmoved Mover in Lambda, he was thinking of the project of searching for the *archē* of *ousiai*, not the project of searching for *ousia* to explain what being is; that is, he was thinking of the Unmoved Mover as explanatorily independent of other *ousiai* (there is no need for him to argue for the exemplary status of its being an *ousia*). Of course, the Unmoved Mover is itself ontologically independent in so far as it is an *ousia*; for the very concept of *ousia* designates that which is ontologically independent. But, given this fact, we are still not clear whether there is an ontological independence relation existing between the Unmoved Mover and the other *ousiai*.

## 5.2 Against Frede and Patzig on *Metaphysics* Theta

Frede's and Patzig's interpretations are not only subject to both philosophical and textual difficulties concerning the reconciliation of Aristotle's discussion of *ousia* (i.e., Aristotle's ontology) with the Unmoved Mover (i.e., Aristotle's theology), but they also fail to explain the argumentative structure of Theta and its function in the *Metaphysics*.

Frede (1994) takes Theta as addressing the question of what it is for something, anything, to be a being – namely, the project of searching for *ousia*<sup>62</sup> (cf. also Makin 2006 and Beere 2009). Let me explain in more detail. First, on Frede's interpretation, after

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<sup>62</sup> For the reason we have pointed out – namely, that the question of what it is for something, anything, to be a being can be reduced to the question of what it is for something, anything, to be an *ousia*.



Aristotle has treated *ousia* in Zeta, he is now dealing with not only what it is (actually) for something, anything, to be a being, but also with what it is (potentially) for something, anything, to be a being.<sup>63</sup> So, according to Frede, the only difference between Zeta and Theta is the difference between that which explains what it is for something, anything, actually to be a being, and, that which explains what it is for something, anything, potentially to be a being. Secondly, Frede (1994, p. 175) also holds that another function of Theta is to argue for the unity of substance, in so far as substance is understood as consisting of two elements, namely, form and matter. The relation between form and matter needs to be explained in terms of potentiality and actuality: Aristotle uses *dunamis-energeia* to explicate these two concepts, i.e., form and matter are actuality and potentiality respectively (cf. also Kosman 1984, p. 144; Gill 1989, p. 171 and 2004, p. 7).<sup>64</sup> Thirdly,

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<sup>63</sup> As Frede says, ‘Aristotle in the *Metaphysics* is concerned with the question what it is to be a being. And since he thinks that there are also, ineliminably, potential beings, he naturally thinks that a complete answer to the question, what it is to be a being, will also have to involve an answer to the question what it is to be a potential, as opposed to an actual, being’ (1994, p. 174).

<sup>64</sup> As Kosman says, ‘if we are to sustain the notion that substance-being is *kath’ hauto* in this sense, and consequently sustain the analysis which avoids the separational pitfalls of Platonism, we will need to be able to give a proper account of how in substance, matter and form, subject and being, are one. This, then, is what I have called “the problem of the *Metaphysics* Theta”, the problem of explaining (the very possibility of) the unity of substance-being’. And Gill (1989, p. 171): ‘Although Zeta and most of Eta regard forms alone as primary substances because they alone are definable unities, Eta 6 suggests that the solution for forms can be extended to material composites if their matter is viewed as potential and their form as actual. The problem in such cases is to determine the cause of unity. *Metaphysics* Theta takes up the topic of potentiality and actuality, giving special attention to the role of potentiality as active cause, in order to explain the being and persistence of sensible substances’ (1984, p. 144). Also ‘what precisely does Aristotle mean when he says that the proximate matter and the form are the same and one, the one in potentiality, the other in actuality? One main task of *Metaphysics* Theta is to flesh out this statement through its analysis of potentiality and actuality’ (2004, p. 7).

But the question of this approach is this: Does Aristotle have to address the unity of substance in Theta? Or is it rather, as Menn suggests, that Aristotle simply takes the unity of substance for granted after he has pointed out a solution to this problem in Eta 6; to put the matter differently, the unity of matter and form will no longer seem to be an *aporia*. On this issue, see Menn (ms., IIIa1, p. 2).

Frede (1994, pp. 175-176) also thinks that Theta is a preparation for the study of immaterial substances, which, according to Aristotle, are *energeiai* in nature.

This interpretation, even if it is plausible, can only, at its best, explain Theta 1-7.<sup>65</sup>

What is worse, this interpretation cannot explain very well the connection between Theta 1-5 and Theta 6-8, and, in particular, it cannot explain the argumentative force that Theta 8 has in the overall picture of Theta. It is striking that Frede, in his classic paper (1994), barely addresses the content of Theta 8 at all. This is especially striking given Theta 8 is the longest passage in Theta, and, more importantly, as Menn (ms.) has acutely observed, Theta 8 has strong argumentative force even considered in its own right: in Theta 8, Aristotle argues that *energeia* has a priority over *dunamis* in three respects; and this can be understood as arguing that the desired *archē* should be an *energeia* rather than a *dunamis*. I shall come back to this matter presently.

All these unsatisfactory aspects of Frede's interpretation of Theta and Lambda come from his misconception of the project that Aristotle has in mind when writing Theta and Lambda. As I have shown, if we take Aristotle's project in Theta and Lambda as belonging to the project of searching for the *archē* of *ousiai* rather than to the project of searching for *ousia*, a clearer and more precise picture of the overall argumentative structure of Theta emerges.

## 6. A Clearer and more Precise Picture of Theta

Having pointed out the unsatisfactory aspects of Frede's and Patzig's interpretations of the *Metaphysics*, in general, and of Theta, in particular, let me spell out, finally and briefly, what I take to be a better interpretation of Theta.

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<sup>65</sup> As we have seen in the previous chapters, it does so in an unsatisfactory manner.



As I understand the argumentative structure of Theta, Aristotle starts from the discussion of *dunamis-energeia* as related to *kinēsis* in Theta 1-5 and moves to that of *dunamis-energeia* as related to *ousia* in Theta 6. The reason why Aristotle employs this strategy when moving from Theta 1-5 to Theta 6 is that *dunamis-energeia*, as it relates to *kinēsis*, is a more accessible way for us to understand these two concepts (for it is familiar from its ordinary use). Furthermore, and more importantly, it is because Aristotle's project in Theta is to search for the *archē* of *ousiai* that Aristotle has to apply these two concepts, *dunamis* and *energeia*, to the case of *ousia*, i.e., *ousia* understood as *energeia* and matter understood as *dunamis*.<sup>66</sup> After this, Aristotle has two ways available for searching for the *archē* of *ousiai*. One approach is to search for the *archē* through searching for the *dunamis* of *ousiai*, and this is exactly what Aristotle does in Theta 7.<sup>67</sup> But, this approach fails because matter as *dunamis* is not transitive; that is, if we suppose that A is the matter of B and B is the matter of C, we will find that A is not necessarily the matter of C (e.g., the matter of the wood, say, some basic elements, is not the matter of the table). Following this way of searching for the *archē*, we cannot find the desired *archē*. Another approach available for searching for the *archē* is through searching for the *energeiai* of *ousiai*, and this is exactly what Aristotle does in Theta 8. And, this approach, as we have seen, succeeds; that is to say, the desired *archē* should itself be an *energeia*. This approach will ultimately lead us to search for the final *archē* – namely, the Unmoved Mover – as we know from Lambda, whether understood as an efficient cause or a final cause, or both. Theta 9 is just a further clarification of a teleological dimension already implied in Theta 7 and Theta 8.

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<sup>66</sup> I have addressed the famous *kinēsis-energeia* distinction in Theta 6 and argued against Kosman's interpretation in Chapter 2; Kosman takes this distinction to be a contribution to the study of *ousia* whereas I think it is not. On this issue, cf. Kosman (2013) and Politis & Su (2015).

<sup>67</sup> Reale takes Theta 8 as concerning *archē*, but he does not notice that Aristotle's search for the *archē* begins in Theta 7. See Reale (1980, pp. 221-224).



Hence, if the interpretation laid out above is on the right lines, then Theta is not primarily addressed to the project of searching for *ousia* or being, in general, as Frede and other critics (e.g., Makin 2006 and Beere 2009) claim; rather, Theta is concerned with the project of searching for what the *archē* of *ousiai* is.

## Conclusions

To conclude, I have argued in this chapter that Aristotle's *Metaphysics* has two projects – searching for *ousia* and searching for the *archē* of *ousiai* – as its subject matter. The former project can be understood as a preparation for, and hence a part of, the latter project. What unifies these two projects is Aristotle's search for *archē*, or more specifically, the *archē* of *ousiai*. It is fair to say, I think, that the term, *archē*, for Aristotle, has at least two meanings. When *archē* is construed in terms of ontological dependence, to ask what *archē* is amounts to asking what *ousia* is; whereas when *archē* is construed in terms of explanatory dependence, to ask what *archē* is amounts to asking what is the ultimate explanatory *archē* among *ousiai*, and this, as I have shown, is exactly what Aristotle does in Theta and Lambda (he does this in Theta in a preparatory way, whereas he does this in Lambda in a detailed and comprehensive way). In other words, it is precisely the twofold meaning of the term, *archē*, that allows Aristotle to unify these two projects into a single project.

Meanwhile, I have also clarified the distinction between 'archē of *ousiai*' and 'stoicheia of *ousiai*'. It is only through understanding this distinction that the Aristotelian *archē* can be substantially differentiated from that of the physicists, the mathematicians and the Platonists. In Aristotle's view, their approaches to searching for the *archē* of *ousiai* are on the wrong track; for what they are searching for are 'stoicheia of *ousiai*' rather than 'archē of *ousiai*'. Of these three approaches, the Platonists' understanding of *archē* is of more relevance for Aristotle: they both think of form as *ousia* (even though they have different views with regard to how this should be understood). For Plato, however, finding

the *archē* of *ousiai* is accomplished by searching for the dialectical elements of form and, in this way, Plato's ultimate *archē* will be the most abstract dialectical elements of form – namely, being and one – whereas for Aristotle, finding the *archē* of *ousiai* is accomplished by searching for the *energeiai* of *ousiai*.

Finally, by arguing against Frede's and Patzig's interpretations of the *Metaphysics*, in general, and of Theta, in particular, I have shown how my interpretation is preferable to theirs in some crucial respects. The crucial difference between our interpretations is as follows: Whereas Frede and Patzig take the basic project of the *Metaphysics* as addressing what it is for something, anything, to be a being (or an *ousia*), I take the basic project to be a search for the *archē* of *ousiai*. Through a critical analysis of the difficulties that Frede's and Patzig's interpretations face, a clearer and more precise picture of Theta has emerged.

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