

THE EMERGENCE OF BEING AND TIME AS 'NEPTEIA: HEIDEGGER'S UNFINISHED CONFRONTATION WITH ARISTOTLE'S *METAPHYSICS*

Aristotle is simply attempting, though to be sure in a radically philosophical way, to make ontologically understandable only what lies in the phenomenon of motion itself

[GA 22, 329/240]¹

One of the most noteworthy albeit unappreciated aspects of Heidegger's sustained engagement with Aristotle's philosophy is the Stagirite's constitutively ambiguous place in the history of being.² For instance, Heidegger clearly outlines this view in the following passage from sec. 126 of *Mindfulness*, "1. Aristotle as the completion [*Vollendung*] of what was earlier still strange [*Befremdlichen*]: φύσις grasped as ἐντελέχεια. 2. Aristotle as the commencement [*Beginn*] of what becomes subsequently conventional [*Geläufigen*] for a long time" (GA 66, 397/351).³ As illustrated by this passage, Heidegger understands Aristotle as a transitional figure within the history of metaphysics. On the one hand, Aristotle brings the originary experience of being found in the fragments and sayings of

¹ Martin Heidegger, *Basic Concepts of Ancient Philosophy*, trans. Richard Rojcewicz (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008); *Die Grundbegriffe der antiken Philosophie* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1993).

² The constitutive ambiguity of Heidegger's interpretation of Aristotle has received greater attention in the current scholarship. For a well-argued discussion of the ambiguity or duplicity of Aristotle's position in the history of philosophy, see Christopher P. Long, "The Duplicity of Beginning: Schürmann, Aristotle, and the Origins of Metaphysics," *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal* 29, no. 2 (2008): 145–59. In this text, Long challenges Reiner Schürmann's interpretation of Aristotle in *Heidegger on Being and Acting: From Principles to Anarchy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987). According to Long, what Schürmann fails to recognize in this early text and somewhat begins to appreciate in a later text – *Broken Hegemonies*, trans. Reginald Lilly (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003) – is the way in which Aristotle's text resists being reduced simply to the founder of the great metaphysical tradition of Western philosophy. For a similar approach to the one suggested by Long, see also Pierre Aubenque, *Faut-il déconstruire la métaphysique?* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2009).

³ Martin Heidegger, *Mindfulness*, trans. Parvis Emad and Thomas Kalary (New York: Continuum, 2006); M. Heidegger, *Besinnung*, ed. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Hermann (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1997).

Anaximander, Parmenides, and Heraclitus to a completion. But, on the other hand, Aristotle also establishes the foundations of the conventional constitution of the metaphysical tradition.

How, then, can we begin approaching this crucial tension in Heidegger's interpretation of Aristotle? While Aristotle's texts have frequently been contextualized within the conventional understanding of metaphysics, one could argue that there remains the accompanying possibility of recovering the faint echo of the vitality of the first or even a potential other beginning that appears in his writings.⁴ One of the most well-known attempts to carry out this nuanced approach to Aristotle's texts can be found in Heidegger's 1939 essay, "On the Essence and Concept of φύσις in Aristotle's *Physics* B, 1." Heidegger's attempt to retrieve the faint echo of the originary sense of φύσις in Aristotle's writings as it appears in Heraclitus is widely known. Thus, I will not be focusing on it in the present essay. Instead, my interest here lies in the way in which Aristotle aims to retrieve the originary experience of being of his predecessors in his own terms, which primarily takes the form of the word ἐντελέχεια.

There is no term more difficult to comprehend in Aristotle's texts than ἐντελέχεια. In order to illustrate this point, it is worth recalling the apocryphal tale mentioned by Heidegger in his 1928 Summer Semester lecture course, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*:

In the Renaissance, Hermolaus Barbarus (1454-93) translated and commented on Aristotle and on the commentary of Themistos, and he did so in order to restore the Greek Aristotle against medieval Scholasticism. Naturally his task harbored considerable difficulties. The story goes that, compelled by his difficulty and embarrassment [*Not und Verlegenheit*] over the philosophical meaning of the term ἐντελέχεια, he invoked the Devil to provide him with instruction. (Today we are in the same situation.) (GA 26, 105/84; trans. modified)⁵

Our situation remains the same because, as Heidegger notes in his 1939 essay, Aristotle never truly explains the meaning of ἐντελέχεια throughout his writings (GA 9, 352/216). Even though the term appears as the fundamental word of his thinking, Aristotle nonetheless leaves the term, in a deep and meaningful sense, undefined.⁶

⁴ For a well-argued account of how Heidegger's interpretation of the ancient Greeks opens up the possibility for an original repetition of the first beginning as another beginning, see Claudia Baracchi, "Contributions to the Coming-to-Be of Greek Beginnings: Heidegger's Inceptive Thinking," in *Heidegger and the Greeks: Interpretive Essays*, ed. John Panteleimon Manoussakis and Drew A. Hyland (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 23-42.

⁵ Martin Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, trans. Michael Heim (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992); M. Heidegger, *Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Logik im Ausgang von Leibniz*, ed. Klaus Held (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1978).

⁶ A casual survey of the various books, essays, and even translations of Aristotle's texts would show that the question concerning how exactly to translate ἐνέργεια and ἐντελέχεια in order to capture the complexity of its neologic meaning remains a debated issue in Aristotelian scholarship. For an excellent philological account of the difficulties and perplexities surrounding this debate, see George A. Blair, *Energeia and Entelecheia: "Act" in Aristotle* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1992). Although the issue is mentioned somewhat briefly in various

Given this situation, how are we supposed to make sense of Aristotle's claim that οὐσία is a kind of φύσις, that is, an ἐντελέχεια? Although such a question might simply appear to be a matter of philological speculation, Heidegger introduces the philosophical stakes of such an investigation in the following manner: "'Ἐντελέχεια' comprises the basic concept [*Grundbegriff*] of Western metaphysics in whose changes of meaning we can best estimate, and indeed must see, the distance between Greek thought in the beginning and the metaphysics as followed" (GA 9, 352-3/216).⁷ In the later essay, "Metaphysics as History of Being," Heidegger provides a thought-provoking account of the way in which ἐντελέχεια through its related term, ἐνέργεια, has been at the center of the development of the history of being. According to Heidegger, the term ἐντελέχεια, which is often translated as "actuality" (*Wirklichkeit*), is at the foundation of the ordinary understanding of being as "that which is simply actual." The reduction of being to actuality should, at this point in the history of being, be something quite familiar to us. In fact, this experience of being as actuality is precisely what characterizes the everyday comportment and leveling of experience and existence. Constantly, throughout our everyday engagement with beings and the world, there is nothing more apparent and obvious than the fact that being is only what is actual – that is to say, what is limited both to presence and to what is present.

As a result, Aristotle's understanding of being as ἐντελέχεια provides the fundamental groundwork for such a reduction of being to actuality and presence. The traditional interpretation and reception of Aristotle's writings have established his understanding of being as ἐντελέχεια as the most perfect illustration of how being only is when it is truly actual. And yet I suggest, following Heidegger, that there is something else at stake in Aristotle's thinking. While translating οὐσία as "enduring" (*Verweilens*), Heidegger nonetheless recognizes that Aristotle's understanding of being can and perhaps should be understood in the sense of "presencing" (*Anwesens*) understood in a verbal sense as bringing-forth [*Her-vor-bringen*] (GA 6.2, 403/4).⁸ Among the many ways in which Aristotle brings this notion to bear in his attempt to think being in connection with movement (κίνησις), Heidegger identifies the term ἐνέργεια as the single most important term in Aristotle's thinking alongside ἐντελέχεια. Hence, if we were to formulate this point in a more polemical tone, then one could say that the very meaning of ἐνέργεια and ἐντελέχεια for Aristotle's understanding of being lies ahead of us as something to be developed more fully.

To enter further into the enigma of the terms ἐνέργεια and ἐντελέχεια, we should recall that we are dealing with Aristotelian neologisms. Both ἐντελέχεια and ἐνέργεια

translations of Aristotle's writings, Joe Sachs's translations of these texts offer many insightful comments and remarks on the difficulty and importance of translating these two terms. See Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, trans. Joe Sachs (Santa Fe, NM: Green Lion Press, 2002); Aristotle, *On the Soul and On Memory and Recollection*, trans. Joe Sachs (Santa Fe, NM: Green Lion Press, 2004); Aristotle, *Physics: A Guided Study*, trans. Joe Sachs (New Brunswick, N. J.: Rutgers University Press, 1995); Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Joe Sachs (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, 2002).

⁷ Martin Heidegger, *Pathmarks*, ed. William McNeill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); M. Heidegger, *Wegmarken*, ed. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Hermann (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1976).

⁸ Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche: Zweiter Band*, ed. Brigitte Schillbach (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1997); M. Heidegger, *The End of Philosophy*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1973).

were coined by Aristotle to give expression to something that the existing philosophical Greek vocabulary of his time did not and could not express.⁹ Even though the notion of ἔργον provides a hint into the way in which being is understood as a “work” or “deed,” the attempt to think being as ἐνέργεια or ἐντελέχεια, according to Heidegger, means thinking being as “presence-as-work (presence understood verbally) in the work of work-ness [*im Werk als-Werk-Wesen (Wesen verbal begriffen) oder die Werkheit*]” (GA 6.2, 404/5). While Heidegger’s attempt to remain faithful to the ontological meaning of ἐνέργεια as presencing (*Anwesens*) risks being understood simply as a tautological formula,¹⁰ there are profound reasons for adopting this strategy. Aristotle’s use of the term ἐνέργεια to describe the way in which beings show themselves in their being can be understood as nothing short of a protophenomenological attempt to get at the meaning of being. Heidegger seems to recognize this alethic or disclosing aspect of ἐνέργεια, for instance, when he writes the following gloss on the meaning of the term: “That something is [*Daß-sein*] and what something is [*Was-sein*] are revealed [*enthüllen*] as modes of presencing [*Weisen des Anwesens*] whose fundamental characteristic [*Grundzug*] is *energeia*” (GA 6.2, 407/8). Expanding on this protophenomenological role of ἐνέργεια, we could add that this unconcealing aspect of Aristotle’s understanding of being as what discloses itself from itself as a result of its being-at-work is perhaps nothing short of a primordial echo or trace of the originary experience of being found in those inceptual thinkers when they attempted to think the meaning of being as ἀλήθεια.¹¹

⁹ The claim that the terms ἐνέργεια and ἐντελέχεια were coined by Aristotle are, by now, a mainstream assumption of contemporary Aristotelian scholarship. However, a survey of the literature on these terms would reveal that the neologicistic origin seems to have had little effect on the translation and interpretation of their meaning. See Daniel W. Graham, “The Etymology of ENTELEXIA,” *The American Journal of Philology* 110, no. 1 (1989): 73-80; Stephen Menn, “The Origins of Aristotle’s Concept of Ἐνέργεια: Ἐνέργεια and Δύναμις,” *Ancient Philosophy* 14, no. 1 (1994): 73-114. One of the few studies that tries to do justice to the strangeness of Aristotle’s invention of two terms to give expression to the way in which being manifests itself can be found in Blair, *Energeia and Entelecheia*.

¹⁰ This passage provides us with a clear illustration of how Heidegger interprets Aristotle’s use of ἐνέργεια and ἐντελέχεια in a phenomenological or even protophenomenological manner. As illustrated in the passage cited above, these terms express the coming-into-presence of being in its disclosedness and emergence. Hence, there are good reasons for drawing a strong connection between Aristotle’s ἐνέργεια and ἐντελέχεια and Heidegger’s later guiding-word for being, namely, *Ereignis*. Thomas Sheehan has suggested this connection in a couple of essays. See Thomas Sheehan, “Heidegger’s Interpretation of Aristotle: *Dynamis* and *Ereignis*,” *Philosophy Research Archives* 4, no. 1258 (1978): 278-314; T. Sheehan, “On the Way to *Ereignis*: Heidegger’s Interpretation of *Physis*,” in *Continental Philosophy in America*, ed. H. Silverman, J. Sallis, and T. Seeborn (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 1983), 131-64. See also Achim Oberst, “Heidegger’s Appropriation of Aristotle’s Δύναμις/Ἐνέργεια Distinction,” *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 78, no. 1 (2004): 25-51.

¹¹ One of the outstanding aspects of Heidegger’s interpretation of Aristotle (although outside the scope of the present essay) was a more precise and detailed account of the relationship between two of the major themes in his thinking – namely, ἐνέργεια and ἀλήθεια. In his earliest interpretations of Aristotle’s writings, Heidegger emphasized the significance of the claim that one of the primary meanings of being was tied to the notion of ἀλήθεια. One of the most crucial ways in which Heidegger sought to emphasize this aspect of Aristotle’s thinking can be found in the 1930 Summer Semester lecture course, *The Essence of Human Freedom: An Introduction to Philosophy*, trans. Ted Sadler (New York: Continuum, 2005); M. Heidegger, *Vom Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit: Einleitung in die Philosophie*, ed. Harmut Tietjen (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1982). In this seminar, Heidegger lays the groundwork for a revolutionary interpretation of Aristotle’s most sustained discussion of being as δύναμις and ἐνέργεια in *Metaphysics* Θ, which famously concludes with a discussion of being as ἀλήθεια and ψεῦδος that has often been received as an editorial addition without any consequence for the otherwise unified theme of the treatise. While Heidegger seemed cognizant of the revolutionary implications of his interpretation, he nonetheless did not follow through with developing the conclusions of this reading, even though

This faint echo and trace of the primordial experience of being as ἀλήθεια in Aristotle's understanding of being as ἐνέργεια has been somewhat ignored given the dominance of the traditional interpretation of his texts as the founder of the conventional conception of metaphysics. Even though we are dealing with Aristotle's most innovative attempt to give expression to an experience of being that could not find words in the Greek language of his time, there has been a tendency, even in Heidegger's own interpretation,¹² to simply translate these terms as "actuality" and therefore avoid the complexity of what is at stake in Aristotle's understanding of being as ἐνέργεια.¹³ Heidegger was one of the few readers of Aristotle who subtly understood the significance of the neologistic origin of these terms, despite not going the step further of dwelling in the experience that caused these terms to come about. Even though Heidegger recognized the decisive importance of ἐνέργεια and ἐντελέχεια in the history of being in "Metaphysics as History of Being,"¹⁴ he nonetheless seemed at times to believe that these terms simply provided a further confirmation of the traditional ontotheological interpretation of Aristotle's text whereby he would be the founder of the metaphysics of constant presence.

But, to begin critically reflecting on this constitutive ambiguity in Heidegger's interpretation, we could ask: Can ἐνέργεια and ἐντελέχεια simply be reduced to the sense of being as actuality? Is it true that the indiscriminate Latin translation of these terms as *actualitas* fully capture their meaning?¹⁵ While the traditional reception of Aristotle's thinking has gone as far as to suggest that *actualitas* actually offers a better and clearer

he proceeded to offer a lecture course on the first three chapters of *Metaphysics* Θ in the Summer Semester of 1931, which was probably condensed due to lack of time. See M. Heidegger, *Aristotle's Metaphysics Θ 1-3: On the Essence and Actuality of Force*, trans. Walter Brogan and Peter Warnek (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995); M. Heidegger, *Aristoteles, Metaphysik Θ 1-3: Von Wesen und Wirklichkeit der Kraft* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1990). Even as late as the 1950s, Heidegger was aware of this connection between, on the one hand, δόναμις and ἐνέργεια and, on the other hand, ἀλήθεια and ψευδος. See M. Heidegger, *Seminare: Platon – Aristoteles – Augustinus*, ed. Mark Michalski (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2012). For an excellent overview of the complexity of Heidegger's interpretation of Aristotle, see Francisco J. Gonzalez, "Δόναμις and Dasein, 'Ενέργεια and Ereignis: Heidegger's (Re)Turn to Aristotle," *Research in Phenomenology* 48, no. 3 (2018): 409–32.

¹² A key example of this can be found in Heidegger's 1939 essay where he claims that the reason why Aristotle ultimately attributes priority to ἐντελέχεια and ἐνέργεια over δόναμις is due to the fact that the former "fulfill[s] the essence [*Wesen*] of intrinsically stable presencing [*ständigen Anwesenung*] more essentially than δόναμις does" (GA 9, 357/219).

¹³ Although Heidegger often translates the term ἐνέργεια and ἐντελέχεια in a rather traditional manner as "actuality" [*Wirklichkeit*], this more literal rendering of the term can be found as early as his 1924 Summer Semester lecture course, *Basic Concepts of Aristotelian Philosophy*, where he writes: "ἐνέργεια in an entirely distinctive sense, perhaps the fundamental character of being (*fundamentale Charakter des Seins*), a how of being in an entirely distinctive sense (*ein Wie des Seins ein einem ganz ausgezeichneten Sinn*). He means the 'being-at-work' (*Im-Werke-Sein*) itself. If our expression 'actuality (*Wirklichkeit*)' were not so worn out (*abgegeriffen*), it would be an excellent translation" (GA 18, 70/49-50).

¹⁴ "The pro-gression [*Fort-gang*] of metaphysics from its essential beginning [*Wesensbeginn*] leaves this beginning behind, and yet takes a fundamental constituent of Platonic-Aristotelian thinking along" (GA 6.2, 410/10).

¹⁵ The question of the reducibility of δόναμις and ἐνέργεια to the notion of "actuality" and "presence" is a heated debate that continues to this day. Even though Heidegger recognizes the difficulties and nuance surrounding this issue, there have been attempts to suggest that even Heidegger falls into this view. See Francisco J. Gonzalez, "Whose Metaphysics of Presence? Heidegger's Interpretation of *Energeia* and *Dunamis* in Aristotle," *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* 44, no. 4 (2006): 533-68. In a more recent essay, Gonzalez has developed a more nuanced critique of Heidegger's interpretation as more of the *Gesamtausgabe* has become available, especially volume 82. See Gonzalez, "Δόναμις and Dasein, 'Ενέργεια and Ereignis."

sense of ἐνέργεια and ἐντελέχεια, there are good reasons, upon closer inspection, for doubting whether this is truly the case. As Heidegger notes in his own interpretation of this decisive shift in the history of being, “*Actualitas* no longer preserves [*bewahrt*] the essence [*Wesen*] of *energeia*. The literal translation is misleading. In truth it brings precisely another transposition or misplacement to the word of Being” (GA 6.2, 412/12).¹⁶ Although it seems tempting to believe that the meaning of ἐνέργεια is preserved and even brought to further clarification with the Latin translation *actualitas*, this supposedly “literal” translation is misleading, especially given its role in the development of our own modern understanding of the term “actuality.” What this translation of ἐνέργεια accomplishes is a leveling down of the originary experience that led Aristotle to invent a word for describing the coming into presence of a being from itself through its activity and deed. In a sense, to adopt this seemingly unproblematic translation would imply ignoring the fundamental question that Heidegger poses in his 1968 seminar in Le Thor and that most forcefully expresses the difficulty and perplexity behind the term ἐνέργεια – namely, “Through what fundamental experience [*Grunderfahrung*] does Aristotle arrive at ἐνέργεια?” (GA 15, 25/49).¹⁷

In order to arrive at a preliminary answer to this question, I would like to focus attention in what follows on one of the rare but crucial instances in which Heidegger confronts Aristotle’s attempt to think of being in terms of ἐνέργεια. Although Aristotle deals with the meaning of being as ἐνέργεια in several places, there are few more interesting, problematic, and decisive for his overall understanding of being than its role in *Metaphysics* Λ. The reason for choosing this text, among many others, is in a sense purely strategic. Although Aristotle develops a thorough and detailed account of the meaning of being as δύναμις and ἐνέργεια in *Metaphysics* Θ, which Heidegger follows and traces (albeit partially) in his 1931 Summer Semester lecture course,¹⁸ it is in *Metaphysics* Λ that Aristotle’s investigation into the source (ἀρχή) and cause (αἰτία) of being finds its highest and most complex development.

At the beginning of *Metaphysics* Λ, Aristotle identifies his investigation (θεωρία) as concerned with οὐσία, that is, being¹⁹ (*Met.* Λ 1, 1069a19).²⁰ More specifically, what is at stake for Aristotle in this treatise is nothing less than an attempt to seek and disclose the principles and causes (αἰ ἀρχαὶ καὶ τὰ αἰτία) of being (*Met.* Λ 1, 1069a19-20), which is

¹⁶ M. Heidegger, *Nietzsche: Zweiter Band*; M. Heidegger, *The End of Philosophy*.

¹⁷ Martin Heidegger, *Four Seminars*, trans. Andrew Mitchell and François Raffoul (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012); M. Heidegger, *Seminare*, ed. Curd Ohwadt (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1986).

¹⁸ See Heidegger, *Aristotle’s Metaphysics Θ 1-3; Aristoteles, Metaphysik Θ 1-3*.

¹⁹ In this essay, I will adopt a rather unconventional (albeit more literal) translation of the term οὐσία as “being.” Although there are many reasons one could invoke to justify such a translation, I am relying on the tendency of more contemporary literature, which has (to my mind, rightly) recognized that continuing to translate οὐσία as “substance” often entails a flattening out of the meaning of the term. Thus, by translating οὐσία simply as “being,” it becomes easier to situate Aristotle’s writings within the general context of the question of being as it appears in his predecessors (e.g., Plato) as well as in ancient Greek philosophy as a whole. For an excellent discussion of the difficulties of translating οὐσία, see Aryeh Kosman, “Translating Ousia,” in *Virtues of Thought: Essays on Plato and Aristotle* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), 267-79.

²⁰ In the present essay, I will be referring to Aristotelis, *Metaphysica*, ed. W. Jaeger (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1957).

precisely the goal of the sought-after science described at the beginning of the *Metaphysics* since wisdom (σοφία) deals most of all with principles and causes (*Met.* A 1, 982a1-3). Aristotle proceeds to identify three ways in which being (οὐσία) is said to be (*Met.* Λ 1, 1069a30-1). First, being is said to be perceptible (αἰσθητή), whether the being can be considered as eternal (ἄιδιος) or finite (φθαρτή), while the other sense of being is said to be is without reference to movement (ἀκίνητος) (*Met.* Λ 1, 1069a31-34). Aristotle continues by noting that the perceptible kind of beings would be the subject of natural science (φυσικῆς) since they involve movement (κίνησις), whereas the latter, because unmoved (ἀκίνητος), would be the subject of another science (*Met.* Λ 1, 1069b1-2). These opening lines of *Metaphysics* Λ are often read as justifying the division between natural and theological science (ἐπιστήμη), which would then show how Aristotle's thinking, while developing an account of nature (φύσις), is nonetheless in the end directed toward theology as the ultimate ground of being. However, another reading of the passage is made possible when attention is drawn to the important qualification made by Aristotle immediately after introducing this supposed division between natural and theological science, which reads, "unless there is no common principle to them all" (εἰ μηδεμία αὐτοῖς ἀρχὴ κοινή) (*Met.* Λ 1, 1069b2; my trans.). It will be worth keeping this reference to a common origin (ἀρχὴ κοινή) in mind since it will prove decisive in Aristotle's further remarks in *Metaphysics* Λ.

After laying out the foundations for the investigation being carried out in this treatise, Aristotle proceeds to investigate the main characteristics of perceptible being (αἰσθητὴ οὐσία), which is characterized above all by its relationship to change (μεταβλητή) (*Met.* Λ 1, 1069b4). In the chapters of *Metaphysics* Λ that follow, Aristotle draws on several aspects of his other writings, which include the definition of movement (κίνησις) and its intricate connection with change (μεταβολή), the distinction between matter (ὕλη) and form (εἶδος), and the meaning of being as δύναμις and ἐνέργεια.²¹ Without offering a thorough exegesis of Aristotle's account of perceptible being, it is worth stressing Aristotle's decisive use of the meaning of being as δύναμις and ἐνέργεια, which was developed at length in *Metaphysics* Θ and appears to play a central role in this treatise as well. After all, both δύναμις and ἐνέργεια are at work in the distinction between form and matter, given that the terms are often employed in a strictly parallel manner. Furthermore, they play an equally decisive role in Aristotle's definition of the phenomenon of movement, which would hardly be comprehensible without the complex interweaving of δύναμις and ἐνέργεια.

It is as a result of the overarching role of the meaning of being as δύναμις and ἐνέργεια in Aristotle's writings that he goes on, in *Metaphysics* Λ, to make the following decisive claim: "And further, there is another way in which, by analogy, the principles are the same – namely, being-at-work and potency" (*Met.* Λ 5, 1071a4-6; my trans.). This passage provides an important insight into the way in which δύναμις and ἐνέργεια can be understood as a primary sense of being. Although the meaning of being as οὐσία is frequently stressed by Aristotle throughout his writings, δύναμις and ἐνέργεια play

²¹ After introducing the three ways in which being is said to be, Aristotle proceeds to discuss perceptible being (αἰσθητὴ οὐσία), which involves a discussion of change (μεταβολή). These perceptible beings are described by Aristotle as composed of both matter (ὕλη) and form (εἶδος), which are further understood in terms of potency (δύναμις) and activity (ἐνέργεια). See *Metaphysics* Λ 2-5, especially 1069b3-34.

an equally decisive role in the unconcealment of beings in their being. And yet the latter sense of being seems to introduce the particularly *dynamic* character of Aristotle's understanding of being. If οὐσία can be understood, in a sense, as "beingness" or even "being-there," then it is only with the aid of δύναμις and ἐνέργεια that such a being begins to reveal itself in its being as *what it is* (τό τι ἦν εἶναι) – that is, by way of the interplay of its different capacities, potencies, abilities, activities, deeds, and functions. Given the broadly disclosive role of both δύναμις and ἐνέργεια, it becomes clearer why Aristotle appeals to them analogically as the principles of being of all things. While Aristotle has described both eternal and finite perceptible beings according to a common origin (ἀρχὴ κοινή) in the meaning of being as δύναμις and ἐνέργεια, it remains to be seen in what way the unmoved being (ἀκινήτος οὐσία) is to be understood if it is the case that none of these aspects of perceptible being applies to it.

In turning to the exceptional case of the unmoved being, Aristotle is turning, in a sense, to what has traditionally been interpreted as his explicitly theological science. In other words, given the distinction between perceptible and unmoved being, Aristotle's turn to the unmoved being has often been read as directing his attention away from the realm of nature (φύσις), perception (αἴσθησις), and movement (κίνησις) in order to transcend and move toward the realm of the divine (τὸ θεῖον) – that is, God (θεός). It is precisely in these later chapters of *Metaphysics* Λ that we find the very few explicit sustained attempts to consider the role of the prime mover in Aristotle's ontology, whose activity is described most famously as thought thinking itself (νόησις νοήσεως νόησις) (*Met.* Λ 9, 1074b34-5). Without being able to do justice to the contents of this treatise in their entirety, I would nonetheless like to direct my attention in what remains of this essay to Heidegger's attempt to translate and interpret the crucial passages in *Metaphysics* Λ 6 where Aristotle most explicitly discusses the need for an unmoved being that would be the origin of all being.

In an obscure but crucial section of his 1922 Summer Semester lecture course on Aristotle, Heidegger carries out a groundbreaking and innovative translation and interpretation of *Metaphysics* Λ 6. According to Heidegger, what is at stake in this crucial chapter of Aristotle's treatise is nothing less than "the ontological sense of the being of movement as pure temporal unfolding" (*Der Seinssinn von Bewegungsein als reine Zeitigung*) (GA 62, 102).²² I claim that the single most important aspect of Heidegger's entire translation and interpretation of *Metaphysics* Λ is his sustained attempt to render the term ἐνέργεια as temporal unfolding (*Zeitigung*). Although I will go on in what follows to elaborate on the significance of this translation, it is worth noting at the outset that, by interpreting ἐνέργεια in this explicitly temporal dimension, Heidegger is able to revitalize the Aristotelian text. If it is the case that ἐνέργεια is related to the coming to be or bringing

²² The seminar in question is volume 62 of Heidegger's *Gesamtausgabe, Phänomenologische Interpretation ausgewählter Abhandlungen des Aristoteles zur Ontologie und Logik*, ed. G. Neumann (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2005). Curiously enough, this volume of the *Gesamtausgabe*, which was originally published in German in 2005, has yet to be translated into English. However, Ian Alexander Moore has produced an outstanding translation of the relevant section of this seminar, which will be published in an issue of *Kronos*. In what follows, I will be relying on Moore's translation. I would like to thank Andrzej Serafin for sharing this translation with me.

about of time and its ripening,²³ then there is a more profound way of understanding the role of the prime mover in Aristotle's thinking than the one offered by the conventional ontotheological interpretation. According to the traditional interpretation, the role of the prime mover in Aristotle's *Metaphysics* Λ is to guarantee the stability and eternity of the being of all things through its pure ἐνέργεια. In contrast, in Heidegger's interpretation, the possibility remains of understanding the enigmatic pure ἐνέργεια of the prime mover as something like the originary pure temporalizing of being as the ripening and bringing about of time in its unfolding, while at the same time withdrawing and giving space and time for things to be.

Heidegger begins his interpretation of *Metaphysics* Λ 6 by focusing on Aristotle's contextual remarks dealing with the fundamental ontological characteristics of the phenomenon of movement, which suggests that "it is not possible for movement to either come to be or pass away. For it always was" (ἀλλ' ἀδύνατον κίνησιν ἢ γενέσθαι ἢ φθαρῆναι. ἀεὶ γὰρ ἦν) (*Met.* Λ 6, 1071b6-7; my trans.). This passage introduces one of the fundamental pillars of Aristotle's understanding of the natural world – namely, the assumption that movement always was. The main evidence for the always having been character of κίνησις can be found, according to Aristotle, in our experience of this phenomenon. Even though there are instances of movement that clearly convey a beginning and an end, a coming to be and a passing away, the first movement, that is, the origin (ἀρχή) of movement, is in a sense distinct from all other movements insofar as it has always seemed to be. Taking this passage as his point of departure, Heidegger offers the following interpretive translation of the text: "The ontological character [*Seinshaftigkeit*] of movement is such that the Being of movement [*Bewegungsein*] cannot itself emerge and pass away [*entstehen und vergehen*]. Because movement always was [*Bewegung war nämlich immer*]" (GA 62, 102).²⁴ What is worth emphasizing in Heidegger's approach to Aristotle's claim concerning the phenomenon of movement is its always having been character, which is captured by the German *war immer*. It is the always having-been character of κίνησις that is responsible for its nongenerated and indestructible characteristic. Movement neither emerged nor passed away. Rather, it has always been.

On the basis of this ontological interpretation of movement as always having been, Aristotle continues his account in *Metaphysics* Λ 6 by suggesting that the same characteristics can be found in the phenomenon of time (χρόνος). Continuing his line-by-line translation of the text, Heidegger translates lines 1071b7-9 of *Metaphysics* Λ 6 as follows, "And likewise, time [χρόνον]. For it is not possible for there to be an earlier and a later without time not already having been" (GA 62, 102). In other words, both movement and time, the two fundamental pillars of Aristotle's understanding of the realm of nature (φύσις), are characterized in their being as always having been. But at this point,

²³ I am indebted to Ian Alexander Moore's note in his translation on this wide lexical range of the German term *Zeitigung*. He makes the following insightful observation: "It should be noted that the verb *zeitigen* also has the sense of 'ripening' and 'bringing about.' Earlier in the lecture course (GA 62: 42), Heidegger uses the German *Vollzug* ('carrying out,' 'enactment') as a synonym."

²⁴ Heidegger, *Phänomenologische Interpretation ausgewählter Abhandlungen des Aristoteles zur Ontologie und Logik*. Throughout the present essay, I will be referring to Ian Alexander Moore's unpublished forthcoming translation.

the following question seems to emerge: If both movement and time have always been, then how can we begin to make sense of their coming into being? This appears to be a significant impasse (ἀπορία) in Aristotle's thinking. Given that Aristotle does not appeal to a creator god that would have brought both κίνησις and χρόνος into being, another explanation is required for their always having been. It would be a willful distortion of Aristotle's thinking to believe that the prime mover can be understood as the origin and cause of movement and time in this specific sense.²⁵ Rather, an effort must be made to understand the following perplexing state of affairs: on the one hand, Aristotle identifies the being of both κίνησις and χρόνος as always having been, but, on the other hand, there nonetheless exists a kind of being that is unmoved (ἄκινήτος), which is somehow responsible for these without having brought them into being.

Perhaps the solution to this impasse (ἀπορία) can be found in Aristotle's use of the term συνεχής to describe the being of movement and time in *Met.* Λ 6, 1071b9-10, which reads in Heidegger's translation as follows: "Movement – just like time – is holding itself together [συνεχής] in itself according to its ontological sense [*sich in selbst nach ihrem Seinsinn zusammenhaltend*]" (GA 62, 102).²⁶ This passage is crucial for understanding the way in which Aristotle claims that both movement and time maintain themselves in their being. With the aid of Heidegger's unconventional yet thought-provoking translation of συνεχής as "holding itself together in itself" (*sich in selbst zusammenhaltend*), we obtain a clearer sense of how to elucidate the being of both κίνησις and χρόνος. Following Heidegger's suggestion, we could say that the most useful way of understanding the fundamentally continuous²⁷ aspect of movement and time is as a kind of gathering that is reminiscent of the originary sense of the Greek word λέγειν.²⁸ What characterizes both

²⁵ As I will note throughout the remainder of this essay, it is important to emphasize this non-generable and indestructible character of movement. Although Aristotle's texts have often been interpreted as establishing the ontotheological tradition whereby God ought to be understood as the ultimate principle and ground of being, it is necessary to contrast this ontotheological critique with the way in which Aristotle thinks of the divine. Aristotle claims neither that God is the creator of movement nor that God will eventually bring this movement to an end. On the contrary, whatever God's role might be in the Aristotelian cosmos, it cannot be understood according to the usual schema of the ontotheological critique as a "creator God." For this reason, as I hope to show in the remainder of this essay, it is necessary to rethink the role of the unmoved being in Aristotle's ontology as somehow affecting the very nature of movement but without being responsible for either its creation or its destruction.

²⁶ Although outside of the scope of the present essay, it would be worth comparing Heidegger's translation of this passage with the one offered by Gadamer. Gadamer translates the term συνεχής as "constantly self-sustaining" (*beständig anhaltend*). Although Gadamer seems to approximate the fundamental insight drawn by Heidegger in his translation of συνεχής as "holding itself together in itself," the crucial difference seems to be that Gadamer calls upon the meaning of "constantly self-sustaining" in a way that draws on the notion of being as "constant presence," whereas Heidegger emphasizes the gathering (*zusammenhaltend*) aspect of the Greek term. See *Aristoteles Metaphysik XII: Übersetzung und Kommentar von Hans-Georg Gadamer*, trans. Hans-Georg Gadamer, 5th ed. (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2004).

²⁷ It is worth noting that "continuous" is how the term συνεχής is often translated into English. While this translation is not misleading in itself, it has often been interpreted to mean that movement and time can be understood as a "constant presence" in the natural world, especially by way of its eternity. The main benefit of both Heidegger's and Gadamer's respective translations of συνεχής as "holding itself together" and "constantly self-sustaining" is the recovery of the eminently dynamic character of this gathering aspect of movement in Aristotle's thinking.

²⁸ There are several places where Heidegger develops this interpretation of λέγειν and λόγος as gathering throughout his writings. One of the most well-known references can be found in his insightful essay on Heraclitus's Fragment B 50 in *Early Greek Thinking*, trans. David Farrell Krell and Frank A. Capuzzi (New York: Harper

κίνησις and χρόνος is their ability to hold themselves in their being and in this way provide a constant source of change and time understood as before and after. Although the term *συνεχής* has often been interpreted as indicating the “eternity” of time understood as constant and static presence, Heidegger’s translation allows for a rethinking of the always-having-been character of movement and time as a moment of gathering and scattering insofar as both *κίνησις* and *χρόνος* hold themselves together while at the same time giving expression to the dynamic character of being as capable of change.

In order to elucidate this fundamental ontological character of both movement and time as *συνεχής*, Aristotle appeals to the image of movement in a circle (*κύκλος*). Heidegger offers the following translation of Aristotle’s famous illustration of the self-sustaining aspect of *κίνησις* and *χρόνος* with the aid of circular motion in *Met.* Λ 6, 1070b10-11: “Holding itself together in itself – according to its ontological sense – movement is only as a progression from-to [*κατὰ τόπον*], and indeed, such a progression of from-to in the manner of ‘circling’” (GA 62, 103). With the aid of this cyclical understanding of time, Aristotle offers an account in which the phenomena of both movement and time can be understood as constantly maintaining both its sameness and its difference. At any point in the circumference of a circle, one is always already at both a beginning and an end. In this sense, it is worth recalling the following expression from Heidegger’s description of the hermeneutic circle in *Being and Time*: “What is decisive is not to get out of the circle, but to get in it in the right way” (*Das Entscheidende ist nicht, aus dem Zirkel heraus-, sondern in ihn nach der rechten Weise hineinzukommen*) (GA 2, 153/143).²⁹ Thus, I argue that the most productive way of getting into the circular aspect of both movement and time is precisely by noting the simultaneous identity and difference involved in the self-sustaining character of these phenomena.

Having clarified the self-sustaining aspect of *κίνησις* and *χρόνος* in *Metaphysics* Λ, we arrive at a further impasse (*ἀπορία*), which can be formulated in the following manner: If movement and time are self-sustaining phenomena that have always been, then of what use is it to posit some prime mover? This question, it should be noted, cuts across the ontotheological critique of Aristotle’s writings. The true difficulty in Aristotle’s account is to imagine the precise role of the prime mover given that both *κίνησις* and *χρόνος* are self-sustaining and self-gathering phenomena that do not require this unmoved being for either their coming-to-be or passing-away. In order to begin addressing this difficulty, we should note that Aristotle’s claim thus far has been limited to the always-having-been character of movement and time, but it has not really addressed the *futurity*³⁰ of these

Collins, 1984), 59-78; *Vorträge und Aufsätze*, ed. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Hermann (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2000), 211-34.

²⁹ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (New York: State University of New York Press, 2010); *Sein Und Zeit* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1977).

³⁰ By referring to the “futurity” of movement and time, I am situating Aristotle’s previous claim regarding the always-having-been character of these phenomena now within the context of their always going to be. This difference seems worth emphasizing given that Aristotle’s claim earlier in *Metaphysics* Λ 6 seems to imply the futurity of *κίνησις* and *χρόνος* without explicitly mentioning it. I suggest that this is due to the fact that the always having been character informs but does not determine the claim that both movement and time will always be (in the future). In fact, as I aim to show in what follows, it is precisely once one notices this distinction that the role of the unmoved mover becomes clearly associated with the futurity of both *κίνησις* and *χρόνος*.

phenomena. Put otherwise, Aristotle has argued that there is no coming to be or passing away of κίνησις or χρόνος due to their always having been. But one could ask: Will they always be? The answer to this question does not explicitly seem to follow from Aristotle's account as presented in *Metaphysics* Λ 6. The self-sustaining and self-gathering aspect of movement and time only touches on the always having been character, but the futurity of these phenomena is, in a sense, dependent on some other source (ἀρχή), which Aristotle has identified as the prime mover.

As mentioned previously, Aristotle's appeal to the prime mover as the source and cause of the being of movement and time cannot be understood according to the modern understanding of the creator God since this would make the prime mover responsible for the coming to be of these phenomena, which is something that Aristotle has explicitly rejected throughout his discussion in *Metaphysics* Λ 6. A further contrast might help elucidate the strangeness and uniqueness of Aristotle's claim. Aristotle clarifies the distinctly anti-Platonic character of his account of the being of the prime mover in *Met.* Λ 6, 1071b14-15, which reads as follows in Heidegger's translation: "Yet it also does not contribute anything to the *illumination* of the always-being-necessary of movement, i.e., in general of the Being of movement, if we posit the ways of having Being as always persisting – as do those who posit the 'on the basis of what's of moved things as something like this'" (GA 62, 103). What this passage establishes beyond doubt is the distinctly anti-Platonic attempt by Aristotle to account for the origin and cause of movement and time. In other words, the prime mover cannot and should not be understood as an eternal (ἀϊδίους) principle comparable to the forms or ideas (τὰ εἶδη). Rather, what is at stake for Aristotle in the account of the prime mover is something like a fundamental rethinking of the eternal source of movement and time since this being is clearly responsible both for the always having been of movement as well as its futurity without being responsible either for their generation or for their destruction.

How, then, does Aristotle describe the enigmatic being and activity of this prime mover? The clearest answer to this question can be gathered from the following passage: "For unless there is being-at-work, then there will be no movement" (εἰ γὰρ μὴ ἐνεργήσῃ, οὐκ ἔσται κίνησις) (*Met.* Λ 6, 1071b17; my trans.). But it is precisely with reference to this passage that Heidegger's innovative and revolutionary translation and interpretation appears. As mentioned earlier, the ingenious aspect of this approach rests squarely on Heidegger's attempt to translate ἐνεργήσῃ as pure temporalizing (*reinen Zeitigung*). By understanding ἐνέργεια in temporal terms as a kind of "temporalizing," Heidegger offers a surprising suggestion concerning the role of the prime mover in Aristotle's thinking. What accounts for the futurity of movement and time – that is, the possibility of their being – is nothing other than the temporalizing thrust through which both phenomena are being-at-work (ἐνέργεια). In order to more clearly appreciate the innovative and groundbreaking aspect of Heidegger's translation, it would be worth quoting at length his rendering of this passage, which reads, "If the 'from out of which' is not in the manner of pure temporal unfolding (*reinen Zeitigung*), it will never be possible to understand what this means: movement is (*Bewegung ist*) [*and indeed eternal pure circular movement*]" (GA 62, 103-104). In addition to this translation, which already introduces several glosses on the Greek, the stakes of Heidegger's translation and interpretation are revealed in the alternative

rendering that builds more explicitly upon the pure temporal unfolding of ἐνεργήσει in Aristotle's text: "If the ontological sense (*Seinssinn*) is not posited as such – that it can be explicated as to be understood from temporal unfolding (*Zeitigung*) – it will never be possible to understand what 'there is movement' means (*wird es nie verständlich sein, was es heißt: es ist Bewegung*)" (GA 62, 104). In both attempts to translate this crucial passage, what is at stake for Heidegger in Aristotle's claim that ἐνέργεια is at the core of the futurity of both movement and time is nothing other than the way in which these phenomena are given. Put otherwise, ἐνέργεια, understood as "pure temporalizing," offers an important insight into the nature of the givenness of being as time. The enigmatic moment of the circle that is always folding into itself and yet nonetheless maintains a certain difference with itself provides the exemplary illustration of how ἐνέργεια also allows for the givenness of time and movement as a self-same and self-differentiating phenomenon.

Heidegger ends his partial translation and interpretation of *Metaphysics* Λ 6 by directly confronting the crucial line in which Aristotle introduces the claim that the being (οὐσία) of this prime mover must be understood as purely determined by ἐνέργεια. The passage in question reads "Therefore, it is necessary for there to be such an origin whose being is being-at-work" (δεῖ ἄρα εἶναι ἀρχὴν τοιαύτην ἧς ἡ οὐσία ἐνέργεια) (*Met.* Λ 6, 1071b19-20; my trans.). In Heidegger's own rendering, the passage becomes "Thus, with the Being of eternal movement, there must, for the latter, be a point of departure whose ontological character, sense of being, is pure temporal unfolding, ἐνέργεια" (GA 62, 104). As has been noted throughout the present essay, Heidegger provides a groundbreaking and innovative approach to the way in which Aristotle introduces the need for a being whose οὐσία would be characterized by pure ἐνέργεια. In Aristotle's thinking, the prime mover is not responsible either for the coming to be (γένεσις) of time, as it might seem to be the case for the cosmological account of time offered by Plato in the *Timaeus*,³¹ nor for its passing away. Instead, the few remarks that Aristotle in fact dedicates to the being of the prime mover do not go beyond suggesting, always in a very elusive way, the manner in which such a being would be an enigmatic origin or source of temporalizing that would allow both for the always-having-been character of movement and time and its futurity. Through the image of continuous circular motion, such a granting of movement and time to being seems to occur incessantly but perhaps always and each time in a novel and unexpected manner.

³¹ See Plato, *Timaeus* 28a. However, even with regard to this intimation of a creator God in Plato, the following question could still be raised: Can this demiurgic God be so easily translated into our own modern and contemporary notion of the divine? See, for instance, Serge Margel, *The Tomb of the Artisan God: On Plato's Timaeus*, trans. Philippe Lynes (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2019). I believe that greater caution is required in order to make sense of the ancient Greek conception of the divine. As suggested previously at the beginning of this essay, we should resist the otherwise conventional tendency to believe that the Christian and modern reception of ancient Greek thought provides us with a seamless translation and transition. On the contrary, what remains thought-provoking and noteworthy is the enduring strangeness of the ancient Greek conception of God with our own. I have suggested that this distinct notion of the divine can be more suggestively elucidated through the fundamental experience of being found in ancient Greek thinkers. I understand the present interpretation of Aristotle's use of ἐνέργεια in his conception of the unmoved mover as a preliminary albeit necessary step toward deconstructing the ontotheological interpretation of the Stagirite's texts and more productive reappropriation of his thinking of the divine.

In the preceding discussion, I hope to have elucidated at least one possible way of retrieving the latent possibilities that can be found in Heidegger's unfinished interpretation and translation of *Metaphysics* Λ. By paying attention to the productive ambiguities and ambivalences of Heidegger's interpretation of Aristotle, I have sought to show that the issue of Aristotle's role in the history of being and metaphysics is perhaps, fundamentally, undecidable. I have argued that Aristotle cannot simply be reduced to the founder of the Western ontotheological tradition of metaphysics. Instead, by way of Heidegger's interpretation, my goal has been to amplify some of the suggestions found in Aristotle's text, which can be interpreted as elusive traces of a more originary thinking of being that remains ahead of us. As Heidegger has demonstrated time and again throughout his various interpretations of Aristotle's texts, there are still latent traces of an other-than-metaphysical thinking that remain worthy of further consideration and provide a way to fundamentally rethink the traditional constitution of Western philosophical thought. One of the most significant affinities between Heidegger's thinking and Aristotle's writings can be found in the latent connection between ἐνέργεια and *Ereignis*, which Thomas Sheehan has notably suggested share an important correspondence³². In both terms, we can see a concern with thinking the nature and origin of time through its givenness. Without being able to fully explore this connection, I nonetheless hope that the present essay has shown the extent to which Heidegger's interpretation of Aristotle provides us with a way of reappropriating the dynamic character of ancient Greek thought.

³² See Sheehan, "Heidegger's Interpretation of Aristotle" and "On the Way to *Ereignis*." Another important intimation of this connection can also be found in Oberst, "Heidegger's Appropriation of Aristotle's Δύναμις/Ἐνέργεια Distinction."