

A Transcategorical Conception of *Dynamis* and *Energeia*

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Abstract. On the standard interpretation of *Metaphysics* IX, Aristotle proceeds from the original sense of δύναμις and ἐνέργεια to an ontological conception of these terms. This should raise the question of what is *not* ontological about the former and what *is* ontological about the latter. To address these questions I discuss the commentaries by Heidegger and Menn, which alone come close to addressing these issues. But their readings cannot neatly distinguish between the two senses of δύναμις and ἐνέργεια that we find in the Aristotelian text, thus compelling us to seek a better way of clarifying the standard interpretation, which I argue can be more precisely understood in the following way: δύναμις and ἐνέργεια in their customary meaning cannot be considered ontological in the sense that they have a particular locus among the categories, which is what sets them apart from their newer, ontological meaning. I conclude therefore that the text of *Metaphysics* IX can be understood as proceeding from an *intracategorical* conception of δύναμις and ἐνέργεια toward a *transcategorical* conception of these terms.

I. Introduction

There are various interpretations of Aristotle's concepts of δύναμις and ἐνέργεια and of *Metaphysics* IX, where we find Aristotle's most extensive treatment of these two concepts.¹ On the standard interpretation, which is sometimes challenged but I think is right, Aristotle begins *Metaphysics* IX by discussing δύναμις and ἐνέργεια in the more customary

¹For book-length studies of Aristotle's concepts of δύναμις and ἐνέργεια or of *Metaphysics* IX, see especially Charlotte Witt, *Ways of Being: Potentiality and Actuality in Aristotle's Metaphysics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003); Stephen Makin, *Aristotle: Metaphysics Book Θ* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); Jonathan Beere, *Doing and Being: An Interpretation of Aristotle's Metaphysics Theta* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); and Aryeh Kosman, *The Activity of Being: An Essay on Aristotle's Ontology* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013); for a discussion of the general structure of *Metaphysics* IX see in particular Makin, *Aristotle: Metaphysics Book Θ*, xi–xviii; and Beere, *Doing and Being*, 19–29.

sense of the terms (namely, in the sense of capacity and activity), which paves the way toward an understanding of δύναμις and ἐνέργεια in the novel sense: being something *potentially* and being something *actually*. According to Anagnostopoulos, who calls this the dominant view and criticizes it, the idea here is that δύναμις and ἐνέργεια in the latter sense have “a ‘modal’ or ‘ontological’ use.”² Witt, who unlike Anagnostopoulos supports this interpretation, likewise mentions the novel “ontological meaning” of these terms,³ and she adds that this latter is what allows Aristotle to draw “the ontological distinction between being potentially and being actually.”⁴ Witt belongs to a camp that includes Beere, Frede, Heidegger, Makin, and Menn, all of whom talk about the derived “ontological” (or sometimes the “modal” or “adverbial”) sense of δύναμις and ἐνέργεια.⁵

One problem here is that even if we leave aside the arguments advanced by its critics and assume that the interpretation at issue here is accurate at least in broad strokes, its meaning remains ambiguous unless one answers the question of what is *not* ontological about δύναμις and ἐνέργεια in the older sense and what *is* ontological about δύναμις and ἐνέργεια in the newer sense. The objective of this paper is to pursue these two questions, not in passing but as the very focus of the discussion. Thus, in what follows I will try to understand what is *metaphysically significant* about capacity and activity that disqualifies them from being associated with the newer sense of δύναμις and ἐνέργεια, just as I will try to explain what is special about this latter meaning of the terms. In accordance with this goal, I will begin by examining the interpretations of *Metaphysics* IX advanced (independently) by Heidegger and Menn, both of whom propose a reading consistent with the aforementioned interpretation but are unique in the following sense: while neither Heidegger nor Menn focuses specifically on the two questions raised above, each of them implicitly operates with a particular framework within which we can begin to contextualize the metaphysical status of capacity and activity precisely as concepts that are not ontological or adverbial.

According to both Heidegger and Menn, although the conceptual analogues of δύναμις and ἐνέργεια can be found in Plato’s dialogues (albeit under different

²Andreas Anagnostopoulos, “Senses of *Dunamis* and the Structure of Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* Θ,” *Phronesis* 56, no. 4 (2011): 388–425, at 389.

³Witt, *Ways of Being*, 10.

⁴*Ibid.*, 7.

⁵Besides the works already cited, a seminal paper on this subject that deserves mention is Michael Frede, “Aristotle’s Notion of Potentiality in *Metaphysics* Θ,” in *Unity, Identity, and Explanation in Aristotle’s Metaphysics*, ed. T. Scaltsas, D. Charles, and M. L. Gill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 173–93. Witt, Makin, and Beere have been influenced to an important extent by Frede’s reading of the Aristotelian text. Those belonging to this camp will nevertheless disagree on many issues and need not mean exactly the same thing by the term “ontological.”

guises), in the *Metaphysics* these concepts become the raw material that Aristotle exploits to develop a novel conceptualization of the two ways in which anything can be said to exist, which I shall simply call “the ways of being.” Importantly for our purposes, because it is important to them to show that the ways of being must be identified specifically as an Aristotelian discovery, Heidegger and Menn are interested in the question of what, exactly, is different about the conceptual analogues of δύναμις and ἐνέργεια that they claim predate Aristotle. For example, instead of stating simply that the Aristotelian text transitions from powers and capacities to potentiality (which is a view already shared by many), Heidegger states more specifically that there is an *ontic* sense of δύναμις where the latter term signifies a being (*Seiende*) and not a way of being and therefore that Aristotle’s discovery must be understood in terms of the transition from an *ontic* to an *ontological* conception of δύναμις (and *mutatis mutandis*, the same applies to ἐνέργεια). Similarly, Menn argues specifically that there is an older (original) sense of δύναμις and ἐνέργεια, where these terms lack the “level of generality” that is encountered in their later, adverbial use.⁶

In a word, because Heidegger and Menn are eager to portray the ways of being specifically as an Aristotelian discovery, they are interested in the question of what is metaphysically significant about capacity and activity that disqualifies them from being associated with this newer sense of δύναμις and ἐνέργεια. Even though Heidegger and Menn operate with a particular framework within which we can begin to contextualize the metaphysical status of capacity and activity as concepts that are not ontological, however, one would still need to explicate what is implicit in their discussion, which is what I will try to do in the second and the third sections of the paper. This analysis, in turn, will pave the way toward seeking a more precise way in which we can answer the question of what is metaphysically significant about the older and the newer senses of δύναμις and ἐνέργεια, which will be the subject of the final section of the paper. In this section I will argue, namely, that although their interpretations contain an element of truth, neither Heidegger nor Menn has managed to say very precisely what is metaphysically significant about capacities and activities in this context. More specifically, my point will be that unlike capacity and activity, both of which have a *particular locus* among the categories, δύναμις and ἐνέργεια in the newer sense are concepts that are marked by a kind of universality that can only be at issue if these concepts cut across all the categories. If so, I will conclude, this already sets the stage for proposing a way in which we can more precisely understand the standard interpretation of *Metaphysics IX*, which can now be taken as stating that the transition that takes place in the Aristotelian

⁶Stephen Menn, “The Origins of Aristotle’s Concept of Ἐνέργεια: Ἐνέργεια and Δύναμις” [“Origins”], *Ancient Philosophy* 14 (1994): 73–114, at 93.

text is a transition from an *intracategorical* conception of δύναμις and ἐνέργεια to a *transcategorical* conception of these terms.

II. Heidegger's Interpretation of Δύναμις and Ἐνέργεια

The concepts of δύναμις and ἐνέργεια receive vast attention in Heidegger's various lectures on Aristotle. In these lectures Heidegger focuses on a number of different issues, such as the origins of these concepts in the philosophy of Plato, their subsequent appropriation by Aristotle, their role in the definition of motion, and so on. In this paper I will focus on a single aspect of Heidegger's interpretation of δύναμις and ἐνέργεια; namely, I will examine what Heidegger believes to be the difference between the "ontic" and the "ontological" sense of these terms.⁷ I will argue that it is this very distinction between beings and the being of beings that provides the context necessary to understand Heidegger's remark that Aristotle's novel conception of δύναμις and ἐνέργεια as modes of being enabled him to achieve "a fundamental advance beyond Platonic ontology."⁸ Building on this discussion, I will focus more specifically on the question of what, exactly, is ontic about the original, "less useful" senses of δύναμις and ἐνέργεια.⁹ Before proceeding further, however, I must provide some context to Heidegger's discussion.

Mention has already been made that it is in *Metaphysics* IX that we find Aristotle's most extensive treatment of δύναμις and ἐνέργεια. In the opening chapters of this book, the kind of δύναμις discussed by Aristotle is the δύναμις to act or be acted on (δύναμις τοῦ ποιεῖν καὶ πάσχειν).¹⁰ In other words, this kind of δύναμις is what *enables* some action or passion,¹¹ and there is a corre-

⁷Insofar as we limit the scope of the inquiry in this way, Heidegger does present a consistent interpretation of Aristotle, regardless of whether he changes his mind on other issues concerning δύναμις and ἐνέργεια; for further discussion, see Francisco J. Gonzalez, "Δύναμις and *Dasein*, Ἐνέργεια and *Ereignis*," *Research in Phenomenology* 48, no. 3 (2018): 409–32, at 429. Cf. Daniel Dahlstrom, "Rethinking Difference," in *Heidegger's Question of Being: Dasein, Truth, and History*, ed. H. Zaborowski (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2017), 8–25, on the question of whether Heidegger understands the ontological difference in various ways throughout his career.

⁸Martin Heidegger, *Basic Concepts of Ancient Philosophy* [GA 22], trans. R. Rojcewicz (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), 232.

⁹Aristotle states in *Metaphysics* IX.1 that the δύναμις and ἐνέργεια to be dealt with initially are not the most useful (οὐ χρησιμώτατη) for our present purposes because they are not what is truly being sought (1045b36–1046a1).

¹⁰See, for example, 1046a16–17, 1046a19–20, and 1046b25–26. In some such passages Aristotle also talks about acting and being acted on *well*, which are simply more specific kinds of action and passion.

¹¹Aristotle explains the δύναμις in question as ἀρχὴ μεταβολῆς ἐν ἄλλῳ ἢ ἢ ἄλλο, as the principle of motion in another or as another (1046a11), and the subsequent text distinguishes

sponding kind of ἐνέργεια, which in turn can be understood as the *exercise* or the *enactment* of this kind of δύναμις. The examples given in the text of the δύναμις τοῦ ποιεῖν are the δύναμις for heating and the δύναμις for building, while the examples of the δύναμις τοῦ πάσχειν are the δύναμις for being burned and the δύναμις for being crushed (1046a22–28). In the literature, these δυνάμεις are often referred to as capacities, and likewise Heidegger refers to them as *Kräfte*. If we adopt this terminology, we should say that capacities are twofold: there are agent capacities (i.e., capacities for some doing) as well as patient capacities (i.e., capacities for some suffering).

This sets the stage to take another look at the concept of capacity, this time in light of what Heidegger calls the ontological difference, that is, the difference between beings (*Seiende*) and the being (*Sein*) of beings. According to Heidegger, capacities are specific entities. For example, the agent capacity of a builder to build is “a” capacity, and so is the corresponding patient capacity that belongs to the material (e.g., the wooden beams) suitable for the production of a house. Each person or each thing has a number of such capacities. To name a few, whatever is hot has an agent capacity to warm up some other object, oil has a patient capacity to be burnt, the teacher has an agent capacity to teach, the student has a patient capacity to be taught, and so on.¹² In and of themselves, there is nothing about capacities that must be understood in a distinctly ontological sense; an ontological inquiry would concern itself not with specific entities but rather with their being.

In his commentary on *Metaphysics* IX, Heidegger does not focus specifically on the question of why δύναμις in the sense of capacity is not to be identified with δύναμις in the ontological sense of the term, but he at least states in several passages that capacities are countable—as he puts it, we speak of them *im Plural*—and they are in each case things that are present.¹³ In another work, Heidegger refers to the kind of δύναμις in question here as the *ontischer Begriff von δύναμις* (GA 22: 141). And there is a similar story to be told about ἐνέργεια.

between the δύναμις of the agent and that of the patient (the ἦ is missing from Bekker’s edition; the Greek text used in this paper is based instead on David Ross’s edition of the *Metaphysics* in the *Oxford Classical Texts* series). Cf. the *Theaetetus* (156a), in which dialogue Plato distinguishes between two kinds of motions: those that are characterized by having an agent capacity and those that are characterized by having a patient capacity (τῆς δὲ κινήσεως δύο εἶδη . . . δυνάμιν δὲ τὸ μὲν ποιεῖν ἔχον, τὸ δὲ πάσχειν).

¹²For Aristotle’s example of the teacher and the student in its wider context, see *Physics* III.3, 202a18–202b9.

¹³Martin Heidegger, *Aristotle’s Metaphysics* Θ 1–3: *On the Essence and Actuality of Force* [GA 33], trans. W. Brogan and P. Warnek (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 41. The rendering of *Kraft* as “force,” reflected already in the title of the work, is controversial; however, given the list of different but similar terms used throughout Heidegger’s lecture course (e.g., *Gewalt*, *Kraft*, *Macht*, *Potenz*), the current translation has arguably fewer drawbacks than its alternatives.

Using the standard terminology according to which the exercise of a capacity is called an activity, we can say that the enactment of my capacity to teach would be “an” activity (the process of teaching), and the same holds for the enactment of my student’s capacity to be taught (the process of being taught); these activities, too, are *Seiende*, for they are specific entities. In light of this, we can now turn to Heidegger’s analysis of *Metaphysics* IX, where he makes the point that we should distinguish the “ontic” concept of δύναμις and ἐνέργεια discussed above from the “ontological” sense of these terms:

We speak of forces and activities in the plural (δυνάμεις, ἐνέργειαι); there are many kinds of such forces and activities. . . . But over and against these present forces and activities there is ἐπὶ πλέον: ἡ δύναμις καὶ ἡ ἐνέργεια—the δύναμις and the ἐνέργεια, in the singular, stated simply and understood singularly, uniquely. . . . And just this exposition of δύναμις and ἐνέργεια ἐπὶ πλέον is the decisive, basic discovery of the entirety of Aristotelian philosophy; δύναμις and ἐνέργεια, taken singularly, obtain for the first time through philosophical inquiry an essentially other, higher meaning. (GA 33: 41–2)

What, then, is “the” δύναμις and “the” ἐνέργεια, stated singularly? In the former case, what is at issue are not capacities but the *being* of capacities, which Heidegger refers to as *Kraftsein*. As he puts it:

“Force” taken in this way, understood as being-force, is the “ontological” concept of force. “Ontological”—the traditional expression means the being of beings. Here it means: the force-being of every particular force. (GA 33: 89)

These remarks would apply, *mutatis mutandis*, to the case of ἐνέργεια, where, similarly, what is at issue is not the enactment of capacities but the *being* of any such enactment. Thus understood, δύναμις and ἐνέργεια no longer stand for things that are present but, rather, for the two modes in which the things that are present are present.¹⁴ In the *Basic Concepts of Ancient Philosophy*, Heidegger writes in his discussion of δύναμις that from “this *ontic* concept of δύναμις, there must be distinguished: δυνάμει [δὺν],” the latter of which is “not an extant ability (*kein seiendes Vermögen*), but a *character of Being*” (GA 22: 141). According to

¹⁴As will be discussed below, Heidegger claims that the two modes of being are particularly conspicuous in the analysis of motion, but let me add in passing that it is questionable whether Heidegger ever provides a sufficient discussion of how, exactly, one is to derive “being *potentially* something” from the being of capacities or to derive “being *actually* something” from the being of activities.

Heidegger, δυνάμει ὄν and ἐνεργεία ὄν are both “modes of presence,” and these two modes of presence are particularly conspicuous in the analysis of motion:¹⁵

The question now arises: what is the transition from this ontic concept of δύναμις in the sense of “ability” (*Vermögen*) to the ontological concept of δυνάμει ὄν, or its correlate, ἐνεργεία ὄν? The use of the concept of δύναμις in the ontological sense develops out of the analysis of *motion*. (GA 22: 233)

What the analysis of motion brings to the fore are the fundamental concepts without which no change can be properly understood. One of these concepts is παρουσία, by which is meant presence, and the other is ἀπουσία, which signifies absence.¹⁶ These concepts play a central role in the analysis of motion because motion involves the disappearance of something (for example, of some quality) and its replacement with something else (with a different quality). What is especially important to realize in this context is that when, say, a new quality appears, it does not simply appear *ex nihilo*. This is because the initial absence of the quality in question was never a complete absence but rather a qualified absence. We may therefore say that the quality was “relatively absent”¹⁷ but nevertheless still present. According to Heidegger, there have been philosophers, such as the Megarians, who conflate relative and absolute absence, but this is only because “the Megarians comprehend the essence of presence *too narrowly*” (GA 33: 159).¹⁸

¹⁵Heidegger’s temporal interpretation of the concept of presence as well as the way in which he ascribes to the Greeks a “metaphysics of presence” are outside the scope of this paper, but for a critique of Heidegger on this issue, see Francisco J. Gonzalez, according to whom “the central characteristic of [Aristotle’s concept of] Being is not [static] *presence* . . . but rather *act*” (“Whose Metaphysics of Presence? Heidegger’s Interpretation of *Energeia* and *Dunamis* in Aristotle,” *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* 44 [2006]: 533–68, 542). Cf. Joseph P. Carter, “Heidegger’s *Sein zum Tode* as Radicalization of Aristotle’s Definition of *Kinēsis*,” *Epoché* 18, no. 2 (2014): 473–502, at 478ff.

¹⁶See Martin Heidegger, *The Essence of Human Freedom* [GA 31], trans. T. Sadler (London: Continuum, 2008), 47–8 for Heidegger’s identification of ἀπουσία and παρουσία with δύναμις and ἐνέργεια.

¹⁷I borrow this phrase from Jussi Backman, “Divine and Mortal Motivation: On the Movement of Life in Aristotle and Heidegger,” *Continental Philosophy Review* 38, nos. 3–4 (2006): 241–61, at 250, who in turn has borrowed it from Thomas Sheehan. See, for example, Thomas Sheehan, “On Movement and the Destruction of Ontology,” *The Monist* 64, no. 4 (1981): 534–542, at 537.

¹⁸As Heidegger puts it, the problem is that “the Megarians comprehend the ‘non’ as pure negation (*bloße Negation*)—rather than as a distinctive privation (*eigentümliche Privation*)” (GA 33: 180). For further discussion of Heidegger’s analysis of Aristotle’s confrontation with the Megarian philosophers, see Hikmet Unlu, “Aristotle, Heidegger, and the Megarians,” *Revue Roumaine de Philosophie* 64, no. 1 (2020): 125–40.

In sum, the analysis of motion provides the context to bring into relief the two ways in which anything can be said to exist: namely, a thing can exist in the mode of full presence or in the mode of relative absence (as we shall see in the next section, Menn will call these “full being” and “diminished being.”) For our present purposes, however, what is most important is not the difference between the two modes of being but rather what they have in common.¹⁹ And one thing that they have in common is that they are not *things* that are present but are, rather, *ways* in which the things that are present are present. In the *Basic Concepts of Ancient Philosophy* (GA 22: 241), Heidegger writes that “δυνάμει ὄν and ἐνέργειᾳ ὄν are two basic modes of being (*Grundarten des Seins*).” As he puts it in another passage in the same work, “Both concepts, that of δυνάμει ὄν and as well as that of ἐνέργειᾳ ὄν, are modifications of what is present (*Modifikationen des Anwesenden*) with respect to its presence” (GA 22: 236). Thus, what these modes or modifications modify is the presence of the things that are present.

To recapitulate, the two kinds of presence are not specific entities or even specific kinds of entities, which is why they need to be distinguished from δύναμις and ἐνέργεια in the ontic sense. Heidegger believes that Aristotle was the first philosopher to conceptualize—or at least that Aristotle was the first philosopher to do this in a clear and distinct manner—the two ways in which something can be present. If Heidegger is right, this would entail, among other things, that Plato had not developed a conceptualization of the two ways of being, even though he too was conversant with the concepts of capacity and activity.

In the *Sophist* (247d–e), in which dialogue Plato examines the concepts of being and non-being, there is a passage—namely, the famous γιγαντομαχία passage—where the Giants define being as “the capacity to act” (δύναμις εἰς τὸ ποιεῖν) or “the capacity to be acted on” (δύναμις εἰς τὸ παθεῖν). Likewise, in the *Theaetetus* (to which dialogue the *Sophist* serves as a sequel), Socrates adopts a very similar terminology (δύναμιν δὲ τὸ μὲν ποιεῖν ἔχον, τὸ δὲ πάσχειν) when he is talking about the two kinds of motion (156a).²⁰ Therefore, when Aristotle talks about the δύναμις τοῦ ποιεῖν καὶ πάσχειν in *Metaphysics* IX (1046a19–20), his wording is almost a verbatim restatement of passages that exist in Plato’s dialogues. The δύναμις in question in all of these cases corresponds to what we have identified above as capacity.

In his commentary on the *Sophist*, Heidegger argues that δύναμις “is related here εἰς τὸ ποιεῖν and εἰς τὸ παθεῖν” and that what is at issue in this context are forces “which effect something or which have properties . . . by which they can

¹⁹For further discussion of the difference between these two modes of being, see GA 22: 236. For an interesting analysis of Heidegger’s reading of Aristotle on this issue, see Carter, “Heidegger’s *Sein zum Tode* as Radicalization of Aristotle’s Definition of *Kinēsis*,” 478.

²⁰See also John J. Cleary, “Powers that Be’: The Concept of Potency in Plato and Aristotle,” *Méthexis* 11 (1998): 19–64, at 20–5.

suffer something.”²¹ Drawing from our previous discussion, therefore, we can say that these forces or capacities (*δυνάμεις*) are to be characterized as things that exist and not as the ways in which they exist. According to Heidegger, however, one problem here is that Plato “has not yet elaborated an actually precise concept of being versus beings” and that the philosophy of Plato is plagued with “an indifference between the ontic and the ontological.”²² If so, we cannot straightforwardly ascribe to Plato an ontic or an ontological conception of *δύναμις* because what we find in his dialogues is a *mélange* of ontic and ontological concerns. In fact, Heidegger even claims that nobody before Aristotle was able to develop a conceptualization of *δύναμις* and *ἐνέργεια* in the ontological sense. As he puts it, “Aristotle was the first to disclose these characters of being, and he thereby achieved a fundamental advance beyond Platonic ontology” (GA 22: 232).²³

As we will see presently, a similar position is maintained by Stephen Menn, who likewise argues that the ways of being are to be understood specifically as an Aristotelian discovery. In Menn’s view, even though the conceptual analogues of the terms *δύναμις* and *ἐνέργεια* can be encountered in the dialogues of Plato, in Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* these concepts become the raw material that the latter philosopher exploits to develop a novel conceptualization of the ways of being. As will also be discussed, however, in lieu of the Heideggerian distinction between the ontic and the ontological senses of *δύναμις* and *ἐνέργεια*, Menn instead distinguishes between the customary and the adverbial use of these terms. Building on these, I will focus (in the final section of the paper) on the question of what is metaphysically significant about *δύναμις* and *ἐνέργεια* in the older sense that disqualifies them from being associated with the newer sense of the terms.

²¹Martin Heidegger, *Plato’s Sophist* [GA 19], trans. R. Rojcewicz and A. Schuwer (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 329.

²²GA 19: 313, translation slightly modified. On this point, see also Brogan, who writes that “Plato . . . has not discovered the ontological difference” (Walter A. Brogan, “Heidegger’s Aristotelian Reading of Plato: The Discovery of the Philosopher,” *Research in Phenomenology* 25, no. 1 [1995]: 274–82, at 275) and that “Plato still thinks of being as a being”; see Walter A. Brogan, *Heidegger and Aristotle: The Twofoldness of Being* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005), 170.

²³On this point see also Brogan, according to whom “this work [GA 33] is an eloquent refutation of those who would assume that Heidegger reads Aristotle as *the* metaphysician *par excellence* and of those who would understand Heidegger’s own work as an overcoming of the oblivion of being that begins with Aristotle’s *distortion* of Greek thinking” (“Heidegger’s Interpretation of Aristotle: The Finitude of Being,” *Research in Phenomenology* 14, no. 1 [1984]: 249–58, at 250; emphasis original).

III. Menn's Interpretation of Δύναμις and Ἐνέργεια

In Heidegger's view, Aristotle is the first philosopher to conceive the idea that a thing can be present in two different ways: namely, that it can be fully present or relatively absent. Menn takes this a step further and argues that it is "only the relatively mature Aristotle" who was able to conceptualize the two ways of being ("Origins," 104). According to Menn, in the dialogues of Plato there are several different terms that refer to the distinction between capacity and activity, and the young Aristotle eventually settles on the terms δύναμις and ἐνέργεια to refer to these concepts. One of the points Menn wants to make is that although Plato and the young Aristotle adopt a different terminology, they are in effect saying very similar things. Menn's main point, however, is that both Plato and the young Aristotle stand in contrast to the later Aristotle, whose novel insight was to realize that terms such as δύναμις and ἐνέργεια can be used as *adverbial datives* to modify being, in which case they begin to stand for the two modes of being (some things are *potentially* so; others are *actually* so).²⁴ In other words, neither Plato nor the young Aristotle can be said to have philosophized about the two ways of being; this novel conceptualization is something that we find only in the relatively mature Aristotle.

In his paper on the origins of the terms δύναμις and ἐνέργεια in the philosophy of Aristotle, Menn takes a close look at what he calls the older (customary) senses of δύναμις and ἐνέργεια.²⁵ Let us begin our discussion with Menn's analysis of the older sense of ἐνέργεια.²⁶ According to Menn, ἐνέργεια in the older sense of the term signifies activity, but activity itself divides into action and passion, which in turn can be identified with two of Aristotle's ten categories: ποιεῖν and πάσχειν ("Origins," 107). In light of this, one may say that activities are twofold; namely, there is on the one hand the activity of the

²⁴The present study aims at disambiguating the standard interpretation of *Metaphysics* IX and therefore does not question its validity. Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning that the way in which Menn and Frede read *Metaphysics* Θ has been challenged at length by Anagnostopoulos. More specifically, according to this latter commentator, the dative use of δύναμις and ἐνέργεια cannot bear the hermeneutical weight that the likes of Menn and Frede require for their interpretations ("Senses of *Dunamis* and the Structure of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* Θ," see especially 392ff.)

²⁵Menn translates the former word as "ability," "power," or "capacity" and the latter as "exercise" or "activity." I follow Menn in translating the latter as "activity," and as will be shown below, one consequence of this is that (for Menn and those who follow him on this point) activities are by definition intracategorical.

²⁶Although ἐνέργεια is most likely an Aristotelian neologism, the term nevertheless can be said to have an older use, dating back to the times when the early Aristotle was using this term *exclusively* to mean activity.

agent and on the other hand the activity of the patient.²⁷ As far as the earlier Aristotle is concerned, then, the term ἐνέργεια is simply a way of jointly referring to two categories at once.

Assume, for example, that I am painting my wall. When I am engaged in this process, I am acting on the wall (action), just as the wall is being acted on by me (passion). To take another example, when I am teaching my students (action), I am doing something which they in turn are suffering (passion). What is at issue here can in each case be described as an activity, which then comprises both actions (painting or teaching) and passions (being painted or being taught). Because action and passion (ποιεῖν and πάσχειν) are two categories, they can be thought of as the two categories of activity, in which case, however, activity is not anything like a “mode” of some category, for it is *itself* a category (or a way of jointly referring to two categories at once).

This sets the stage for understanding Menn’s interpretation of the older sense of δύναμις. According to Menn, δύναμις in the older sense of the term,²⁸ which has thus far been referred to as capacity, is simply the enabling condition (ἀρχή) for some action or passion.²⁹ Menn does not spend time discussing the categorial nature of capacities—which is understandable, given that his interpretation of *Metaphysics* IX does not stress the role of the categories—but the examples discussed in his works suggest that they minimally include both substantial and nonsubstantial qualities.³⁰ If so, capacities are (minimally) qualities that enable some action or passion, while activities are the *exercise* of capacities. To use a familiar example, an instance of a capacity would be the agent capacity of a builder to build, while an instance of an activity would be the enactment of this capacity, namely, the process of building. The examples Aristotle provides in *Metaphysics* IX.6 show that activities can be end-inclusive (living, perceiving,

²⁷Strictly speaking, however, Aristotle would maintain that what is at issue here are two different explanations of the same activity from opposite perspectives. See also Aquinas, *In III Physicorum*, lect. 5, n. 314 in *Commentary on Aristotle’s Physics*, trans. R. J. Blackwell, R. J. Spath, and E. Thirlkel (Notre Dame: Dumb Ox Books, 1999). Cf. Aquinas, *In VII Metaphysicorum*, lect. 3, n. 1315 in *Commentary on Aristotle’s Metaphysics*, trans. J. P. Rowan (Notre Dame: Dumb Ox Books, 1995); Stephen Menn, “Aristotle’s Definition of Soul and the Programme of the *De Anima*,” *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 22 (2002): 83–139, at 101; and Anton Ford, “Action and Passion,” *Philosophical Topics* 42, no. 1 (2014): 13–42, at 15.

²⁸As far as δύναμις is concerned, Menn argues, it is not merely the term that predates Aristotle but also the concept which it signifies: “The first thing to stress is that the concept of δυνάμεις, powers, was already commonplace before Aristotle’s time,” Stephen Menn, “Aristotle on the Many Senses of Being,” *Princeton Classical Philosophy Colloquium*, (2008), 1–40, at 31. In another paper, Menn writes that “what Plato means by δύναμις is ‘active or passive power’” (“Origins,” 74), which is precisely what we have in mind when we are talking about capacities.

²⁹Menn, “Aristotle on the Many Senses of Being,” 31–2.

³⁰For example, “the person who possesses sight” is endowed with a substantial quality, “the house-builder” with a nonsubstantial quality (“Origins,” 92).

thinking) or end-exclusive (walking, building),³¹ which distinction is important but not pertinent here.³² What is important, rather, is that activities are in each case actions or passions,³³ whereas capacities are their enabling conditions.

Menn argues in detail that the capacity-activity pair can be found (albeit under different guises) in the dialogues of Plato. In the *Euthydemus*, for example, Plato distinguishes between two kinds of artisans: one who is inactive at the moment and the other currently practicing a trade, and Plato sometimes reserves the term *χρησις*, which means “employment” or “use,” to refer specifically to the latter case (“Origins,” 81). In an earlier passage in the same dialogue (*Euthydemus* 277e–278a), Plato likewise distinguishes between having (*ἔχων*) some knowledge and exercising it (*πράττειν*). In the *Theaetetus*, Plato draws a very similar distinction between possession and use, comparing the *κτησις* with the *ἔξις* of knowledge (“Origins,” 82), in which case, however, it is the latter term that signifies the use of some capacity.

³¹There are controversies—both textual and philosophical—surrounding the passage in *Metaphysics* IX.6 where Aristotle draws this distinction (i.e., between *ἐνέργεια* and *κίνησις*). See Myles Burnyeat, “*Kinēsis* vs. *Energeia*: A Much-Read Passage in (but not of) Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*,” *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 34 (2008): 219–92; and Francisco J. Gonzalez, “Being as Activity: A Defence of the Importance of *Metaphysics* 1048b18–36 for Aristotle’s Ontology,” *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 56 (2019): 123–92 for a detailed discussion concerning the manuscript evidence for this passage. Among the works already cited, Makin (*Aristotle: Metaphysics Book Θ*, 150) and Beere (*Doing and Being*, 226–7) also discuss these textual controversies. Textual issues aside, it is difficult to deny that what is at issue here is a genuine Aristotelian distinction, for Aristotle draws a similar distinction when discussing the ontological status of pleasure in *Nicomachean Ethics* X.4 1174a29ff. Lastly, those according to whom the *ἐνέργεια-κίνησις* distinction does not play a central role in the transition to the useful sense of *ἐνέργεια* need not follow Burnyeat in excising the passage because there may be an alternative explanation for its presence (for further discussion, see Menn, “Origins,” 107).

³²Menn suggests that some commentators—he does not name them in this passage, but the people he has in mind are the likes of Kosman, Halper, and Gill—overstate the importance of the *ἐνέργεια-κίνησις* distinction (in other words, the distinction between the activities where the present implies the perfect and the activities where there is no such implication) in the general context of *Metaphysics* IX (“Origins,” 106). For a defense of Menn’s interpretation, see Hikmet Unlu, “*Dynamis* and *Energeia* in Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*,” *European Journal of Philosophy* 30, no. 1 (2022): 17–31, at 9–12 and the references cited there. For an alternative interpretation, which is the minority view, see Edward C. Halper, “Aristotle on Knowledge of Nature,” *The Review of Metaphysics* 37, no. 4 (1984): 811–35, at 815–8; Halper, *One and Many in Aristotle’s Metaphysics: The Central Books* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1989), 209; Mary L. Gill, *Aristotle on Substance: The Paradox of Unity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 214–8; and Kosman, *The Activity of Being*, 73–8.

³³For example, it is clear from *Metaphysics* V.12, 1019a24–26 that walking belongs to the category of action and from *De Anima* II.11, 424a1 that perception is a kind of passion. In *In II De anima*, lect. 23, n. 547—see Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle’s De Anima*, trans. K. Foster and S. Humphries (Notre Dame: Dumb Ox Books, 1994)—Aquinas also notes that perception is a passion (*sentire est pati quoddam*).

Thus, unlike Aristotle's works, where we find a more or less consistent terminology, Plato's dialogues distinguish between possession and use in a number of different ways. Leaving aside these terminological differences, however, Menn takes Plato and Aristotle to be saying very similar things because, for both philosophers, what is at issue here are the concepts of capacity and activity, even though Plato and Aristotle end up using different words to refer to the same things.³⁴ If we keep this in mind, it should come as no surprise that, according to Menn, the capacity-activity pair is originally unconnected with the newer sense of δύναμις and ἐνέργεια that we encounter only in the works of the mature Aristotle:

The power-activity distinction is originally Platonic, and is originally unconnected with any distinction between being-in-the-full-sense and the diminished being of not-yet-existent objects; it is only Aristotle, and only the relatively mature Aristotle, who uses the power-activity distinction to develop . . . a way of conceiving the difference between full and diminished being. ("Origins," 104)

In the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle divides being into four general senses: (i) being *per accidens*, (ii) being as said of the categories, (iii) being in respect of δύναμις and ἐνέργεια, and (iv) being as truth (see, for example, *Metaphysics* V.7, 1017a7–1017b9 and VI.2, 1026a33–1026b2).³⁵ Menn notes therefore that one branch of the fourfold division of the senses of being comprises ὄν δυνάμει and ὄν ἐνεργείᾳ, which Menn sometimes refers to as "diminished being" and "full being." According to Menn, however, it is important to understand that capacity and activity "are not two senses of being" ("Origins," 95). This is why Menn stresses that the older and the newer meaning of δύναμις and ἐνέργεια are originally unconnected.³⁶ He claims that δύναμις and ἐνέργεια in the newer sense are most visible in the use of these terms in the *dative* case (δυνάμει and ἐνεργείᾳ), where these adverbial datives no longer stand for capacity and activity but rather qualify a being, any being, in terms of the mode of its existence. For

³⁴In fact, Menn would point out that even on terminological issues the two philosophers are more alike than may initially appear. The early Aristotle uses the words χρῆσις and ἐνέργεια interchangeably, and in the *Protrepticus*—Aristotle's earliest work—χρῆσις is used more commonly than ἐνέργεια. Menn concludes from this and similar examples that "it is χρῆσις that is the original [i.e., Academic] technical term for activity, ἐνέργεια having begun as an explanatory synonym or alternate for χρῆσις before coming to displace it" ("Origins," 79).

³⁵On the fourfold division of the senses of being, see also Franz C. Brentano, *On the Several Senses of Being in Aristotle*, trans. Rolf George (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), 3–5; and Heidegger, GA 33: 8–14.

³⁶Menn claims nevertheless that δύναμις and ἐνέργεια in their older meaning pave the way toward the adverbial use of these terms (in the sense that capacities and activities serve as the *causes* of the ways of being).

example, a thing may be δυνάμει (potentially) a statue or ἐνεργεία (actually) a statue; a wall may be δυνάμει green or ἐνεργεία green; a tree may be δυνάμει tall or ἐνεργεία tall. As Menn puts it:

These adverbial datives float freely enough that they can attach to any predicate, and Aristotle isolates their meaning in its pure state by attaching them to εἶναι: τὸ ὄν δυνάμει and τὸ ὄν ἐνεργεία (or more usually τὸ ὄν ἐντελεχείᾳ) in the *Metaphysics* are fundamental divisions of the senses of ‘being’ . . . This level of generality, and especially the application to εἶναι, are very far from the Aristotle of the *Protrepticus*. (“Origins,” 93)

Menn’s point is not only that these “datives” of being modify the existence of some predicate (where ἐνεργεία implies that the predicate exists *fully*, while δυνάμει implies that the predicate exists in a *diminished* sense) but also that there is no trace of the two ways of being in the writings of the early Aristotle, for in these works the terms δύναμις and ἐνέργεια simply mean capacity and activity and therefore lack the level of generality that we encounter in their later, adverbial use (more on this later). And what can be said of Aristotle’s early works can also be said of Plato’s dialogues, where the aforementioned adverbial use of δύναμις and ἐνέργεια is absent.³⁷ Menn concludes thus that the mature Aristotle must be considered “the first formulator of this distinction” between full and diminished being (“Origins,” 73).

The adverbial dative δυνάμει [meaning] “potentially” seems not to be found before Aristotle . . . In particular, nobody before Aristotle speaks of a sense of being δυνάμει or κατὰ δύναμιν; nor, of course, do they speak of being “actually,” being in ἐνεργεία or ἐντελεχείᾳ, since this is [already] the default sense of being and only needs terminology when there is a sense of being in δύναμις to contrast it with. (“Aristotle on the Many Senses of Being,” 32)

According to Menn, the conceptualization of the two ways of being takes place for the first time in the history of philosophy in the works of the relatively mature Aristotle.³⁸ Hence, just because we encounter the terms δύναμις and ἐνέργεια in the early works of Aristotle, we should not jump to the conclusion that these terms signify two modes of being; what they signify, rather, are capaci-

³⁷Menn notes that Plato uses δύναμις adverbially once (“Origins,” 74), albeit not in the way in which we have been discussing. According to Menn, what comes closest to Aristotle’s adverbial use is “the fifth hypothesis of Plato’s *Parmenides*” (ibid., 94).

³⁸Interestingly, Menn also believes that the argument structure of *Metaphysics* IX reflects Aristotle’s own philosophical development, i.e., that the thematic progression of Book IX “must recapitulate the path [Aristotle] himself had taken from the original sense of the δύναμις-ἐνέργεια contrast to something deeper” (“Origins,” 92).

ties and activities, which are concepts that can already be found in the dialogues of Plato. In sum, Menn argues that although the terms *δύναμις* and *ἐνέργεια* originally stand for capacity and activity, which concepts already exist in Plato's dialogues, the mature Aristotle comes to realize that he can use *δύναμις* and *ἐνέργεια* in the dative case—as adverbial datives—to qualify any predicate, as a result of which these terms now serve to distinguish between the two ways in which anything can be said to exist.

In his analysis of Aristotle's concepts of *δύναμις* and *ἐνέργεια*, Menn does not focus specifically on the two questions raised at the very beginning of this paper, and as will be discussed below, it is not entirely clear if he succeeds in advancing a consistent interpretation of the Aristotelian text. Nevertheless, (i) Menn's characterization of motion as a joint term for the categories of doing and suffering and (ii) his point that the newer, adverbial use of *δύναμις* and *ἐνέργεια* is characterized by a level of generality that is absent in their original meaning are, I believe, important observations, especially because they pave the way toward a more precise way in which we can distinguish between the earlier and the later meaning of *δύναμις* and *ἐνέργεια*.

IV. From Kinds of Being to Ways of Being

To recapitulate, because Heidegger and Menn are eager to show that the ways of being must be identified specifically as an Aristotelian discovery, they are interested in the question of what is different about the conceptual analogues of *δύναμις* and *ἐνέργεια* that they claim predate Aristotle. Importantly for our purposes, both Heidegger and Menn implicitly operate with a particular framework within which we can begin to address the question of what is metaphysically significant about capacity and activity that distinguishes them from the "more useful" senses of *δύναμις* and *ἐνέργεια*. In Heidegger's interpretation of *Metaphysics* IX, according to which the Aristotelian text must be understood as involving a transition from the ontic to the ontological sense of *δύναμις* and *ἐνέργεια*, the reason that *δύναμις* and *ἐνέργεια* in their more useful meaning do not signify capacity and activity is that the latter are about specific entities. Alternatively, on Menn's interpretation, capacities and activities are to be distinguished from the newer sense of *δύναμις* and *ἐνέργεια* because the former lack the level of generality that we encounter in their later, adverbial use.

Let us first consider the view held by Heidegger. The distinction that he draws between the ontic and the ontological is a distinction between entities and whatever makes these entities what they are. For example, from an ontic point of view we would be concerned with animals, but from an ontological point of view we would be concerned with what makes them animals in the first place, in which case we would be concerned with the *animality* of animals.

Similarly, according to Heidegger, when we discuss δύναμις, we can either focus on forces or, alternatively, on the “forcehood” (*Kraftsein*) of forces. The same holds for ἐνέργεια, in which case we can draw a distinction between activities and their being.

Heidegger, I submit, is right in maintaining that δύναμις and ἐνέργεια in their more useful meaning do not stand for beings—in which case they cannot be *plural* or *present* either—but the distinction Heidegger draws between *Seiende* and *Sein* is insufficient to provide us with the means to distinguish between the less useful and the more useful senses of δύναμις and ἐνέργεια. Granted, the being of capacities is what makes them capacities in the first place, just as the being of activities is what makes them activities. However, this transition from *Seiende* to *Sein* is by itself insufficient to eliminate categorial particularity, and the same can be said of the transition from animals to animality. Animality is not “an” animal, but it is nevertheless categorially particular, in the sense that it has a particular locus in the domain of the categories (it can be associated only with οὐσία and not with any of the other nine categories). Yet the same holds for δύναμις and ἐνέργεια; once again, the transition from *Seiende* to *Sein* does not thereby eliminate categorial particularity. If so, however, there is a problem here, given that the ways of being cannot be categorially particular. Of course, this is not to say that according to Heidegger δύναμις and ἐνέργεια in their more useful meaning have a particular locus in the domain of the categories; it is clear that he thinks otherwise (GA 33: 6). My point, rather, is that if activities are *doings* and *sufferings*, whereas capacities are the substantial or nonsubstantial *qualities* that serve as the enabling condition of activities, there is nothing to suggest that the transition from these *Seiende* to their *Sein* can account for the transition from the less useful to the more useful senses of δύναμις and ἐνέργεια.

As for Menn, I am generally in agreement with his interpretation of *Metaphysics* IX, which I have, however, deliberately presented thus far only in part. Now, if we take a closer look at Menn’s discussion of ἐνέργεια, we see that his analysis tries repeatedly to distinguish between ἐνέργεια as activity and ἐνέργεια as actuality, where the latter is to be understood as the result of a process that has already been completed.³⁹ According to Menn, by means of the enactment of agent and patient capacities, a new actuality will arise in the world, and this new actuality stands for the *stable result* of a completed motion—i.e., it stands for the *completedness* of the motion.⁴⁰ Assume, for example, that somebody is cutting a tree (action) and that the tree is being cut (passion). Eventually, as a result of

³⁹It is sufficient to demonstrate the problem in the case of ἐνέργεια, which is what I shall focus on here, but the same kind of problem would arise for δύναμις.

⁴⁰Although ἐντελέχεια would be the less ambiguous term to use in such a context, Menn devotes the last section of his paper (“Origins,” 105ff.) to showing that there is a sense in which ἐνέργεια, too, signifies the completedness of some motion, in which case Aristotle can be said

the enactment of agent and passive capacities, the tree in question will acquire a new size and hence a new quantity. To put it differently, after the motion has been completed—which kind of motion Aristotle would call diminution—the tree will end up having acquired a new form in the category of quantity, which is precisely the new actuality that the motion in question gives rise to.

Here, however, one faces a similar problem to the one we have encountered in our discussion of Heidegger. Namely, the stable result of a completed motion is particular in the sense that it thereby excludes various kinds of being. To provide some context to Menn's interpretation, according to Aristotle, there are four categories in respect of which (κατά) motion takes place (*Physics* III.1, 200b33–34), and it is the difference between these four categories (substance, quality, quantity, and place) that constitute the difference between the four motions (generation/corruption, alteration, growth/diminution, and locomotion). If so, actuality as Menn understands it must be limited to those very categories where the effect of some motion can be seen, in which case, there cannot be an actuality in the case of the remaining categories. Granted, we can conceptualize “the result that finally emerges from the cooperation of the active and passive powers” (“Origins,” 101) in the case of substance, quality, quantity, and place, but what about the rest of the categories? Does Menn believe, for example, that actuality in the category of time is produced in the same way in which a new quality arises in the world (i.e., as the stable result of a completed motion)? If not, how can we reconcile this with Menn's other claim that δύναμις and ἐνέργεια in the new sense “can attach to *any* predicate?” (“Origins,” 93; emphasis mine.)

The problem here is that Menn is trying to do too many things at once, which I think is why he wavers between two different conceptions of actuality: (i) actuality as the stable result of a completed motion and (ii) actuality as a way of being. On the one hand, Menn is trying to distinguish what we may call the “kinetic” categories of action and passion from the “static” categories of substance, quality, quantity, and place, the latter of which are the four categories where the effect of the motion is felt. On the other hand, he is also trying to distinguish between the older and the newer senses of ἐνέργεια. The distinction between the kinetic and the static categories is, in fact, an important distinction but should not be conflated with the distinction between the older and the newer senses of ἐνέργεια, for the newer sense of ἐνέργεια lies outside the categorial domain. The conception of actuality as the stable result of a completed motion is categorially particular, but any such particularity needs to be entirely absent from the discussion when we are talking about the ways of being.

to have transitioned from a conception of ἐνέργεια as activity to a conception of ἐνέργεια as completedness.

Note here, however, that our discussion up to this point already paves the way toward a reading of the Aristotelian text that clarifies the standard interpretation of *Metaphysics* IX without running into the aforementioned problems. As was said, instead of simply stating that Aristotle proceeds from capacities and activities to an ontological or adverbial conception of δύναμις and ἐνέργεια, Heidegger and Menn implicitly operate with a particular framework within which we can begin to contextualize what is metaphysically significant about capacities and activities in virtue of which they need to be distinguished from the newer senses of δύναμις and ἐνέργεια. And their interpretations contain an element of truth, but I don't think Heidegger or Menn have managed to say very precisely what is metaphysically significant about the two senses of δύναμις and ἐνέργεια. Neither Heidegger's ontological conception of δύναμις and ἐνέργεια (not as *Seiende* but as *Sein*, such as *Kraftsein*) nor Menn's construal of actuality as "the stable result of a motion that has already been completed" is devoid of particularity with respect to the categories. Menn is on the right track when he notes that δύναμις and ἐνέργεια in their older meaning lack the level of generality that we encounter in the newer meaning of the terms, without realizing, however, that his own construal of ἐνέργεια as the completedness of some motion and δύναμις as the counterpart to *this* kind of ἐνέργεια are incompatible with his claim that δύναμις and ἐνέργεια in the novel sense can attach to any predicate.

Anything that is particular owes its particularity in part to its exclusionary nature. The particular excludes something by its very definition. In cases where what is excluded are kinds of being, which in the Aristotelian framework stand for the ten categories, what we are talking about can be referred to as categorial particularity. If we phrase things in this way, whatever is confined to *some* categories cannot be devoid of categorial particularity, and likewise, whatever contains no such particularity cannot have a particular locus in the categorial domain. If something has a particular locus within the categories, we can call it *intracategorial*;⁴¹ if not, we can call it *transcategorial*.⁴² Thus, if the ways of being should necessarily be devoid of categorial particularity, they need to be

⁴¹I thank an anonymous reviewer for suggesting this word.

⁴²The medieval theory (or, better yet, theories) of transcendentals is far too complex and nuanced a topic to cover adequately in the confines of this paper, but it is worth noting that my use of the term "transcategorial" bears resemblances to one way in which the term "transcendental" tends to be understood. Joseph Owens, for example, writes that a transcendental predicate "is not confined to any one of the Aristotelian categories . . . [but] runs *through* all the categories"; see Joseph Owens, *An Elementary Christian Metaphysics* (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1963), 111.

transcategorical. Because capacity and activity are intracategorical,⁴³ they cannot be associated with *δύναμις* and *ἐνέργεια* in their newer meaning.

Those according to whom the standard interpretation of *Metaphysics* IX is accurate at least in broad strokes contrast the original sense of *δύναμις* and *ἐνέργεια* with what they call the “ontological” (or sometimes the “modal” or “adverbial”) use of these terms. Although this by no means guarantees that by the term “ontological” they mean exactly the same thing, I think all commentators would agree minimally that whatever is ontological falls under the study of being as being and that for Aristotle the latter involves an investigation of the *senses* of being, of which there are four (see note 35 above). Assuming the standard interpretation is true, therefore, the question then becomes: why is it that capacity and activity do not constitute one of the four senses of being?

I have argued above that while a sufficient discussion of this question is nowhere to be found, Heidegger and Menn—partly because they are very eager to identify the ways of being specifically as an Aristotelian discovery—implicitly operate with a framework within which we can begin to contextualize the metaphysical status of capacity and activity as concepts that are not ontological or adverbial. If my arguments have been successful, however, neither of them has managed to say very precisely what is special about capacity and activity in this context. Heidegger is right in maintaining that specific entities, which are plural and countable, cannot be what Aristotle has in mind when he is talking about *δύναμις* and *ἐνέργεια* as one of the four senses of being, but as shown above, his distinction between *Seiende* and *Sein* is by itself insufficient to eliminate categorial particularity. Meanwhile, Menn is right in maintaining that *δύναμις* and *ἐνέργεια* in the novel sense must be capable of attaching to every predicate, but his own construal of *δύναμις* and *ἐνέργεια* renders them incapable of attaching to every predicate.

On my alternative proposal, *δύναμις* and *ἐνέργεια* in the ontological sense of the terms cannot refer to specific entities or specific kinds of entities (nor even to their being) because all of these are categorially particular. If so, capacity and activity cannot be thought of as one of the four senses of being, precisely because the former are restricted to a particular locus within the domain of the

⁴³This, I believe, is the most important insight in Menn’s analysis of *Metaphysics* IX. While there are only a handful of passages in Menn’s paper where he talks about the categories, his portrayal of *κίνησις* as a joint term for the categories of *ποιεῖν* and *πάσχειν* allows for a correct understanding of *δύναμις κατὰ κίνησιν* (capacity) and *ἐνέργεια κατὰ κίνησιν* (activity), which correspond to *δύναμις* and *ἐνέργεια* in the “less useful” sense. On this interpretation, activities are doings (*ποιεῖν*) and sufferings (*πάσχειν*), whereas capacities are the substantial or nonsubstantial qualities that serve as the enabling condition of activities. If this is right, however, it is already very clear that what is at issue at the beginning of *Metaphysics* IX is a *categorially particular* type of *δύναμις* and *ἐνέργεια*.

categories. What Aristotle does in *Metaphysics* IX is to employ familiar concepts so as to appropriate them philosophically by erasing their particularity. For example, the δύναμις that Aristotle begins *Metaphysics* IX with has a particular essence (its essence is to be a principle of motion in another or as another). In contrast, transcategorial terms cannot have a particular essence, nor can they be defined in the true sense of the word.⁴⁴ From the relation between capacity and activity, Aristotle is able to develop a novel conceptualization of the two ways in which anything that exists can be said to exist, but unlike capacity and activity, the ways of being are characterized by *having lost their particularity* in the domain of the categories.

Even if we agree that δύναμις and ἐνέργεια in their original meaning are intracategorial terms, whereas δύναμις and ἐνέργεια in the “derived” sense are transcategorial terms, many questions remain concerning the details of this derivation. In particular, it would need to be shown how, exactly, Aristotle is able to generate *analogical unity* (ἐν κατ’ ἀναλογία) from the way in which the analogs listed in *Metaphysics* IX.6 are related to one another. That, however, would be a completely different topic that is beyond the scope of the present inquiry, which rather concerns the question of what is metaphysically significant about δύναμις and ἐνέργεια in the customary sense that disqualifies them from being associated with δύναμις and ἐνέργεια in the novel sense—to which my answer is simply that the former are categorially particular, the latter are not. To conclude, the standard interpretation of *Metaphysics* IX can be more precisely understood if we maintain that it is the categorially particular nature of capacity and activity that renders them ineligible for inclusion among the senses of being, just as it is the transcategorial nature of δύναμις and ἐνέργεια in the newer sense that renders them capable of attaching to any of the ten categories.

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⁴⁴Transcategorial terms can nevertheless be said to have *some* kind of unity (namely, they can be πρὸς ἓν or ἐν κατ’ ἀναλογία).