

Aristotle's Proto-Phenomenology of Being: The Reciprocity of *Dunamis* and *Energeia* in Nature,
Movement, and the Soul

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Abstract

This dissertation is a study of the relationship between *dunamis* and *energeia* in Aristotle's ontology. Throughout his writings, Aristotle employs these terms to uncover what I call a proto-phenomenological description of the different ways of being. While contemporary scholarship has suggested the significance of *dunamis* and *energeia* for Aristotle's understanding of being, the relationship between these terms has often been interpreted as mutually exclusive. Accordingly, *dunamis* would be understood as subordinate to *energeia*, which would function as the sole primary term of Aristotle's ontology. I argue that it is a mistake to consider *dunamis* and *energeia* as non-reciprocal and subordinate terms. Furthermore, I suggest that this mistake often leads to an underestimation of the dynamic character of Aristotle's proto-phenomenological account of being. To recover this dimension of Aristotle's thinking, I claim that *dunamis* and *energeia* ought to be understood as reciprocal and co-constitutive terms characterized by a constant and dynamic interrelation. To defend this interpretation, I turn to Aristotle's conceptions of nature, movement, and soul as discussed in the *Metaphysics*, *Physics*, and *De Anima*. I argue that each of these key terms provide a concrete illustration of how *dunamis* and *energeia* function as co-constitutive principles for the manifestation of the being of natural beings. I propose that this proto-phenomenological approach to being remains Aristotle's most significant and enduring contribution to Western ontology.

Chapter 1. The Foundations of Aristotle's Proto-Phenomenology of Being as *Dunamis*
and *Energeia*

"In the collection of treatises by Aristotle which we know under the title *Metaphysics* there is one, Book Theta (IX), that deals with *dunamis*, *energeia*, and *entelecheia*, as the highest determinations of Being [obersten Bestimmungen des Seins]."¹

I. Introduction

Although the debate concerning the precise nature of the relationship between *dunamis* and *energeia* in Aristotle's writings remains ongoing, most scholars would agree that these terms play a decisive role in his ontology. Across a variety of different contexts, Aristotle appeals to this ontological distinction between two ways of being in order to explain the way in which beings appear or become manifest in their being [*ousia*]. While the importance of *dunamis* and *energeia* for Aristotle's philosophical project has gained renewed attention and consideration, I argue that there are yet other ways to continue appreciating the distinct contribution of these ontological terms. In this chapter, I approach Aristotle's most sustained discussion of *dunamis* and *energeia* in *Metaphysics* IX with the aim of showing the extent to which these terms can be understood as offering the foundations for a proto-phenomenological² approach to being. With the expression "proto-

¹ Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche: Volumes One and Two*, trans. David Farrell Krell (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1991), 64; *Nietzsche: Erster Band*, ed. Brigitte Schillbach (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1996), 61.

² Throughout this dissertation, I will be using the expression "proto-phenomenological" to designate the connection between Aristotle's discussion of being as *dunamis* and *energeia* with his investigation into the manifestation or coming into appearance of the being [*ousia*] of beings. In other words, my use of this phrase aims to clarify the way in which these two senses of being are related to the way in which beings show themselves as what they are. Thus, I aim to demonstrate the extent to which Aristotle's ontological discussion of being as *dunamis* and *energeia* can be primarily understood as a concern with the phenomenological manifestation of *ousia*. My understanding of the term "proto-phenomenological" is largely indebted to two

phenomenological,” I mean to emphasize the way Aristotle’s understanding of being as *dunamis* and *energeia* invites a more sustained reflection on the manner in which beings show themselves as what they are by way of their distinctive way of being. I claim that the complex and dynamic sense of being that emerges as a result of Aristotle’s proto-phenomenological approach to being as *dunamis* and *energeia* has been underappreciated. In order to retrieve this sense of being, I argue that one of the most fruitful ways of uncovering the distinctive characteristic of Aristotle’s ontology is by situating his understanding of being as *dunamis* and *energeia* within this proto-phenomenological context.

In adopting this approach to Aristotle’s text, I am developing a suggestion made by Martin Heidegger in his 1924 Summer Semester lecture course on the basic concepts of Aristotelian philosophy, where he writes:

For us, the concepts δύναμις, ἐνέργεια, ἐντελέχεια are so worn out [*abgegriffen*] that one is not capable of seeing what was at stake in the fundamental meaning of these concepts.

We must work to insert ourselves back [*zurückschrauben*]

sources: the first source can be found in Martin Heidegger’s 1923/24 lecture course—*Introduction to Phenomenological Research* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2005); *Einführung in die phänomenologische Forschung* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2006)—where he argues that one can find an originary sense of phenomenology in Aristotle’s writings. The second major source that I am indebted to for this expression is Sean D. Kirkland who offers a robust account of the proto-phenomenological character of Aristotle’s dialectical method in his excellent study, “Dialectic and Proto-Phenomenology in Aristotle’s Topics and Physics,” *Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy* 29, no. 1 (2014): 185–213. For examples of certain proto-phenomenological interpretation of Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* that are similar to the one I am offering in the present chapter, cf. Aryeh Kosman, *The Activity of Being: An Essay on Aristotle’s Ontology* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013); Christopher P. Long, *The Ethics of Ontology: Rethinking an Aristotelian Legacy* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2004); Pierre Rodrigo, *Aristote, l’eidétique et la phénoménologie* (Éditions Jérôme Millon, 1998). A similar approach, albeit from a different methodological orientation, can also be appreciated in Achim Oberst, “Heidegger’s Appropriation of Aristotle’s Δύναμις/Ενέργεια Distinction,” *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 78, no. 1 (2004): 25–51.

into the time when the concepts δύναμις and ἐνέργεια were formed [*ausgebildet*].³

Following the upshot of this passage, I believe a similar claim could be made about the current situation in the reception of Aristotle's texts. Contemporary scholarship continues to be dominated by what could be referred to as logical interpretations of *dunamis* and *energeia*, which understands these terms as referring to modal states of possibility or actuality. In contrast to this modal logical approach, I suggest that Aristotle's discussion of being as *dunamis* and *energeia* can be understood in a proto-phenomenological sense. With the use of this expression, I do not mean that Aristotle was somehow a direct precursor to the specific methodology employed by Edmund Husserl and others. Rather, my use of the expression "proto-phenomenological" is meant along similar lines to the use found in Heidegger's 1923/24 lecture course where he attributes to Aristotle a kind of primordial phenomenology that develops according to an awareness of the relationship between *logos* and *phainomenon*.⁴ Put otherwise, I believe that the re-insertion [*zurückschrauben*] back into the context in which Aristotle discovered the meaning of being as *dunamis* and *energeia* is most helpfully elucidated by understanding this approach as proto-phenomenological. With the aid of this hermeneutical strategy, there is a greater possibility of rediscovering the originary experience that led Aristotle to invent these terms.

³ Martin Heidegger, *Basic Concepts of Aristotelian Philosophy*, trans. Robert D. Metcalf and Mark B. Tanzer (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2009), 199; *Grundbegriffe der aristotelischen Philosophie* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2002), 293. Translation modified. I would like to thank Justin Humphreys for bringing my attention to the German *ausgebildet*, which I have decided to translate as "formed" rather than "cultivated" in order to draw upon the root of the verb *gebilden*, which can mean "to build," and emphasize the implicit connection in this passage between Aristotle's decision to coin the terms *energeia* and *entelecheia* and our subsequent need to place ourselves back into the domain of this linguistic innovation.

⁴ Cf. Heidegger, *Introduction to Phenomenological Research; Einführung in die phänomenologische Forschung*.

By adopting this proto-phenomenological interpretation of *dunamis* and *energeia*, I aim to challenge the often-presupposed link between what could be referred to as Aristotle’s “ousiology” and the modal interpretation of these terms.⁵ In referring to the “ousiological” interpretation of Aristotle’s writings, I do not intend to argue that the meaning of being as *ousia* is somehow entirely irrelevant for his ontology. On the contrary, what I am referring to by using this expression is something more akin to the tendency to reduce the meaning of *ousia* to the schema of the categories, which ends up reinforcing the modal and categorial approach to being as *dunamis* and *energeia*.⁶ While such a reading remains plausible and grounded in Aristotle’s text, I argue that such an approach results in the perhaps unintended consequence of neutralizing the distinctly dynamic sense of being at stake in the terms *dunamis* and *energeia*. Rather than understanding them as merely

⁵ Although there are several instances and iterations of what I have referred to as the “ousiological” interpretation of the *Metaphysics*, perhaps the most succinct way of understanding this expression is by assigning it to all interpretations of Aristotle’s text that aim to prioritize the categorial understanding of being as *ousia* to the detriment of what I have and will be referring to throughout the present dissertation as the proto-phenomenological sense of *dunamis* and *energeia*. While the exact relationship between these two senses of being is beyond the scope of the present dissertation, it nonetheless remains possible to briefly outline my general approach to this issue. Put simply, I understand the relationship between these two senses of being as non-mutually exclusive, which means that they each offer a distinct contribution to elucidating Aristotle’s overall understanding of being. In this sense, one should not immediately subordinate the meaning of being as *dunamis* and *energeia* to the schema of the categories. On the contrary, there are perhaps good reasons, which I aim to explore in the present chapter, for recognizing that Aristotle’s use of *dunamis* and *energeia* offer an insight into the nature of being that is different yet not incompatible with the categorial sense of being. According to my interpretation, the distinct contribution of *dunamis* and *energeia* for Aristotle’s overall ontology is to make explicit the uniquely proto-phenomenological dimension of being, that is, the way in which beings become manifest through their way of being. For examples of what I am referring to as the “ousiological” interpretation of Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*, cf. for instance Franz Brentano, *On the Several Senses of Being in Aristotle*, trans. Rolf George (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975); Edward Halper, *One and Many in Aristotle’s Metaphysics: The Central Books* (Las Vegas: Parmenides Publishing, 2005).

⁶ In the introduction to her study of *Metaphysics* IX, Charlotte Witt rightly criticizes this tendency in Aristotelian scholarship. Cf. *Ways of Being: Potentiality and Actuality in Aristotle’s Metaphysics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003). In a similar way, Martin Heidegger criticizes this “ousiological” reduction of the plurivocity of being in Aristotle in the context of his introductory remarks to his 1931 Summer Semester lecture course on Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* IX. Cf. *Aristotle’s Metaphysics Θ 1-3: On the Essence and Actuality of Force*, trans. Walter Brogan and Peter Warnek (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1995); *Aristoteles, Metaphysik Θ 1-3: Von Wesen und Wirklichkeit der Kraft* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1990).

modal logical concepts of possibility and actuality, I suggest that a much richer sense of these terms begins to emerge when they are understood as part and parcel of Aristotle's overall proto-phenomenological interest in the manifestation or disclosure of beings in their way of being.

A further consequence of introducing this proto-phenomenological interpretation of *dunamis* and *energeia* is that it allows for what I argue is a better and more nuanced understanding of the relationship between these two terms. When *dunamis* and *energeia* are understood as logical and modal categories of being, there is a tendency to comprehend them as mutually exclusive and contradictory. In other words, if these terms can be neatly reduced to possibility and actuality, then it becomes more difficult to understand the complex way that they dynamically work together to give expression to a thing's way of being. Hence, it seems worthwhile to emphasize the proto-phenomenological meaning of *dunamis* and *energeia*, as I aim to show, is always focused on the self-manifestation of beings through their way of being. Furthermore, I will argue that the most thought-provoking and distinctive characteristics of Aristotle's approach to being as *dunamis* and *energeia* is that they can be understood as reciprocal and co-constitutive principles of being. Put more forcefully, what distinguishes this meaning of being is perhaps the fact that it is essentially twofold.⁷ Neither *dunamis* nor *energeia* are themselves sufficient for giving expression to a thing's way of being. Rather, the essentially twofold dimension of

⁷ Many scholars have noted the importance of Aristotle's emphasis on the twofoldness of being. For an excellent discussion of this essential motif and how it informs Aristotle's thinking, cf. Walter Brogan, *Heidegger and Aristotle: The Twofoldness of Being* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2005). In addition to Brogan, Christopher Long develops a thorough interpretation of Aristotle's principles of being that makes use of their essential twofoldness. Cf. *The Ethics of Ontology: Rethinking an Aristotelian Legacy*. More recently, Adriel Trott has challenged the traditional interpretation of the subordination of matter to form by arguing in favor of their essentially twofold contribution to the being of living beings. Cf. *Aristotle on the Matter of Form: A Feminist Metaphysics of Generation* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019).

this sense of being can be appreciated even when Aristotle describes them as a single, unified sense of being.⁸ Thus, the aim of the present chapter is to suggest that the foundations of Aristotle’s proto-phenomenology of being lie can be found in this dynamic and complex interplay between *dunamis* and *energeia* as reciprocal and co-constitutive principles of a thing’s way of being, whereby being is expressed sometimes as *dunamis* and at other times as *energeia*.

II. Theme and Scope of *Metaphysics IX*: Being as *Dunamis* and *Energeia*

In order to begin defending this interpretation, it is worth assessing whether *dunamis* and *energeia* can be understood simply as a single, unified sense of being or if it is also necessary to understand them as essentially twofold. As is usually the case with many of Aristotle’s writings, one of the most appropriate places to test this claim is the beginning of *Metaphysics IX*.⁹ Aristotle often introduces the main theme and scope of his discussion at the beginning of the self-contained treatises that form the individual books of the *Metaphysics*. Therefore, I will now turn to the opening lines of *Metaphysics IX* to obtain

⁸ Although this position is somewhat uncommon, there have been attempts to think the reciprocal and co-constitutive relation between these two terms as principles of being. Cf. Mark Sentesy, *Aristotle’s Ontology of Change* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2020); “Are Potency and Actuality Compatible in Aristotle?,” *Epoché* 22, no. 2 (2018): 239–70. Similarly, albeit from a different perspective, I believe this is also how Christopher Long understands what he calls the dynamic economy of principles developed in *Metaphysics IX*. Cf. *The Ethics of Ontology: Rethinking an Aristotelian Legacy*, 85–110. Finally, Gwenaëlle Aubry has argued that *dunamis* and *energeia* understood as a unified sense of being provides the coherence and unity to Aristotle’s ontology. Cf. *Dieu sans la puissance: Dunamis et energeia chez Aristote et chez Plotin* (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 2020).

⁹ As mentioned in the introduction to this dissertation, my hermeneutic approach to Aristotle’s texts is greatly informed by Helen S. Lang’s “method of subordination.” According to Lang, it is possible to identify a common stylistic structure in Aristotle’s texts whereby the theme and scope of a specific treatise is often delimited and discussed in the opening lines. In the present case, I aim to show the extent to which both *dunamis* and *energeia* as primary senses of being inform the theme and scope of *Metaphysics IX*. In the chapters that follow in this dissertation, I will adopt a similar approach to each of the texts under consideration.

a clearer sense of how Aristotle understands the turn to the meaning of being as *dunamis* and *energeia*.

Aristotle begins his discussion in *Metaphysics* IX with the following introductory remarks:

What concerns primary being [*peri tou prôtôs ontos*], toward which all the other categories of being are referred back [*pros ho pasai hai allai katêgoriai tou ontos anapherontai*], has been discussed—namely, beingness [*ousia*]. For it is in accord with the account of beingness [*kata ton tês ousian logon*], that the others are said to be—that is, quality [*poson*], quantity [*poion*], and the others that are said to be in this way [*kai talla ta houtô legeomena*]. For they will all include the account of beingness, as we said in the earlier discussions (*Met.* IX.1, 1045b27-32).¹⁰

It is immediately worth noting the way Aristotle appears to be distinguishing the preceding account of being in terms of *ousia* with the account to be offered in *Metaphysics* IX. While the meaning of being as *ousia* functions as the unifying term for the other categories of being, there does not seem to be any immediate reason for placing the forthcoming account

¹⁰ Throughout this dissertation, the translations of Aristotle's text are my own. However, I have extensively consulted the excellent translations of Aristotle's writings done by C. D. C. Reeve and Joe Sachs. Given that the interpretation developed here has often required many modifications of their respective translations, I have decided to both acknowledge my debt to their renditions, while nonetheless taking responsibility for my own approach to the original Greek. Cf. *Metaphysics*, trans. C. D. C. Reeve (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2016); *Physics*, trans. C. D. C. Reeve (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2018); *De Anima*, trans. C. D. C. Reeve (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2017); *Metaphysics*, trans. Joe Sachs (Santa Fe, NM: Green Lion Press, 2002); *Physics: A Guided Study*, trans. Joe Sachs (New Brunswick, N. J.: Rutgers University Press, 1995); *On the Soul and On Memory and Recollection*, trans. Joe Sachs (Santa Fe, NM: Green Lion Press, 2004).

of being as *dunamis* and *energeia* in a subordinate relation to the preceding one concerning *ousia*. On the contrary, the meaning of being as *ousia* has been developed according to the categorial sense of being, which would include all of the ways in which being is said [*legomena*] but is now about to be developed in an alternative direction.

This alternative approach to the meaning of being as *ousia* seems to be outlined in the follow-up passage to the previously cited one, which reads:

But since being [*to on*] is said, on the one hand, in terms of what it is [*tô ti*] or what sort [*poson*] or how much [*poion*], and, on the other hand, with respect to potency [*dunamin*] and actuality [*entelecheian*] and in accord with function [*ergon*], let us also make some determinations about potency [*dunameôs*] and actuality [*entelecheias*] (*Met.* IX.1, 1045b32-5).

This passage provides an initial approximation to the difference between the categorial understanding of being as *ousia*, which would aim to uncover the various ways in which something is said to be according to the categories of being, and what could be understood as a distinctive approach to being as *ousia* that would understand being in terms of a variety of related terms that range from its various potencies, capacities, activities, functions, and so on. One could even claim that the former approach to being resonates with the categorial approach to being, whereas the latter can be identified as a more proto-phenomenological approach. The reason why the meaning of being as *dunamis* and *entelecheia* can be understood as proto-phenomenological firmly rests on the fact that it refers to the various ways in which a being is characterized by its functions [*erga*], which are never simply the

result of their several *energeiai* or *entelecheiai* but, in an important sense, also their *dunameis*. Each of these terms indicate a way of grasping the being of some entity in relationship to its various forms of manifesting itself as what it is. For this reason, I have chosen to refer to this account of being as proto-phenomenological.

With the help of the preceding discussion, it has become possible to obtain a clearer insight into the way in which Aristotle introduces the meaning of being as *dunamis* and *entelecheia* as, at the very least, on the same ontological foundation as the preceding account of being as *ousia* in terms of the categories of being. Additionally, what is worth further emphasis is the fact that Aristotle has clearly identified both *dunamis* and *entelecheia* as a single, unified sense of being, which provides two different aspects to the same manifestation of a thing's way of being. Based on the preceding analysis, it is all the more puzzling that contemporary Aristotelian scholarship has often devalued the meaningful ontological contribution of *dunamis* to the manifestation and disclosure of the being of some entity, which would go against the grain of Aristotle's own text, as suggested above.

Although the preceding remarks have suggested that *dunamis* and *energeia* are both unified and twofold, I would like to offer further clarification and nuance to this approach in order to avoid potential confusions and misunderstandings. The most significant misunderstanding that could arise from the proposed unified interpretation of *dunamis* and *energeia* would be something akin to a Megarian error, which would imply that these terms are so inextricably linked to the point of indistinction. In *Metaphysics* IX.3, Aristotle introduces the "Megarian view" as follows: "Something is potential only when it is active, but when it is not active it is not potential" [*hotan energê monon dunasthai, hotan de mê*

energê ou dunasthai] (*Met.* IX.3, 1046b29-30). Many contemporary scholars have drawn attention to the hermeneutic significance of Aristotle's confrontation with the Megarian view for further clarifying the former's distinctive approach to these issues in *Metaphysics* IX.¹¹ According to these interpreters, Aristotle's decision to place the confrontation with the Megarian view toward the beginning of his account of *dunamis* and *energeia* can be understood as motivated by the desire to recognizing the validity of his predecessors' view, while also distinguishing his own view from theirs.

Concerning his criticism of the Megarian position, Aristotle suggests that the error lies in their strict identification of *dunamis* with *energeia*. In other words, the mistake lies in the claim that a *dunamis* exists only when it is actively put to work as an *energeia*. The key example that Aristotle himself uses to illustrate this view is that of the architect. According to the Megarian view, an architect is only such when they are in the process of actively designing a building, rather than simply someone who happens to have the knowledge [*technê*] (*Met.* IX.3, 1046b33-6). What can be appreciated in this example is the complete erasure of the manifold ways in which beings shows themselves as what they are through their various capacities and activities. Put more forcefully, the Megarian view leads to a complete reduction of being to sheer presence. According to this view, only the actual presence of a *dunamis* can contribute to the phenomenological and ontological elucidation of some being. If this *dunamis* cannot be made present through some *energeia*, then it simply does not have exist or have an influence on the disclosure of some being.

¹¹ Cf. Gwenaëlle Aubry, *Dieu sans la puissance: Dunamis et energeia chez Aristote et chez Plotin* (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 2020); Heidegger, *Aristotle's Metaphysics Θ 1-3; Aristoteles, Metaphysik Θ 1-3: Von Wesen und Wirklichkeit der Kraft*; Witt, *Ways of Being: Potentiality and Actuality in Aristotle's Metaphysics*.

While there seems to be an agreeable common-sense logic to the Megarian view, Aristotle nonetheless challenges this claim by delving deeper into the complex interaction of *dunamis* and *energeia*. Aristotle begins by wondering about the possible meaning of the claim that an ability [*dunamis*] is only meaningfully present in its active exercise [*energê*]. According to this view, the architect would be deprived of their distinctive way of being whenever they are not in the active process of putting that knowledge [*technê*] to work. Furthermore, if a *dunamis* can only be revealed or disclosed with reference to *energeia*, then Aristotle wonders how one could possibly account for the process of learning [*mathonta*] and forgetting [*lêthê*], which both imply a more complex interrelation of these terms than can be found in the Megarian account. In Aristotle's view, the being of the architect is not simply defined by the power inherent in carrying out their work. Rather, their being is already marked by their *dunamis* to carry out such an *energeia*, regardless of whether it is ever carried out. Otherwise, one would have to appeal to sudden bursts of activity that seem to be entirely unrelated to a pre-existing *dunamis* (*Met.* IX.3, 1046b36-a4). The architect who appears to have forgotten how to build is no less an architect than the one who is actively building. Instead, what is revealed in both instances is the variety of different ways of disclosing the being of some entity, which suggests that the relationship between *dunamis* and *energeia* is more complicated than merely paralleling the traditional opposition between presence and absence.

One of the most significant consequences of Aristotle's polemical confrontation with the Megarian position in *Metaphysics* IX.3 can be found in the former's rejection of the reduction of being to presence. Among the many strange [*atopa*] consequences that follow from the Megarian view, there is none more detrimental to an overall understanding

of being than the complete demolition of the various ways of manifesting both capacities and activities. According to the Megarian view, being can be reduced to its brute appearance or manifestation without any need to account for the many ways in which being can be either more or less than what it is both as the result of some latent *dunamis* or by the unexpected emergence of some *energeia*.¹² In either case, Aristotle's challenge to the Megarian view begins by re-introducing the phenomenological complexity of the experience of being. Being rarely appears simply as what it is. On the contrary, the self-manifestation of being according to *dunamis* and *energeia* suggests a more dynamic sense of being that is intimately linked to the phenomenon of change [*metabolê*] and movement [*kinêsis*]. However, before delving further into this dynamic sense of being, I would like to articulate the consequences of this discussion for more clearly comprehending the intrinsic relation between *dunamis* and *energeia*.

The preceding discussion has clarified the extent to which Aristotle believes that the Megarian position is plagued by several inconsistencies and contradictions. One of the most significant contradictions concerns the seeming erasure of the possibility of being otherwise since the possibility of being either more or less than what one is, which is expressed, in a sense, by way of a capacity [*dunamis*], would only meaningfully manifest itself in its active doing [*energê*]. Aristotle rejects this reduction of being to presence, which in turn implies that the contrasting relationship between these two terms cannot be

¹² By referring to the notion of *dunamis* as "latent," I am emphasizing one of the most important characteristics of this sense of being. As Giorgio Agamben rightly points out regarding Aristotle's conception of *dunamis*, "Aristotle's brilliant, even if apparently obvious, thesis is that potentiality is essentially defined by the possibility of its non-implementation," *The Fire and the Tale*, trans. Lorenzo Chiesa (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2017), 37. In other words, *dunamis* itself is characterized by the possibility of its non-manifestation. Hence, it is always a mistake to treat *dunamis* as if it only existed as a result of its possible manifestation since this is only one aspect of its very being. The difficulty of obtaining a clear grasp on Aristotle's understanding of *dunamis* is precisely its enigmatic character, which often manifests itself as possibility but in such a way that is neither entirely reducible to presence nor absence.

understood as similar to that between presence and absence.¹³ On the contrary, *dunamis* shows itself even without being directly expressed through its active doing. Put otherwise, *dunamis* cannot be simply identified with or reduced to *energeia*. They each represent distinct ways of manifesting the being of some entity. Hence, one should avoid believing that only *energeia* is tied to the phenomenalization of a thing's way of being. Instead, there is a distinct kind of latent phenomenalization that is brought forth by *dunamis*. I believe Aristotle gestures toward these distinct forms of manifestation when he claims that *dunamis* and *energeia* are distinct [*heteron*] (*Met.* IX.3, 1047a17-9), which is not simply to say that they are different, but also a way of acknowledging their potentially inextricable link.

Based on these remarks, the crucial distinction between Aristotle and the Megarian position rests on their respective claims concerning the difference [*heteron*] and sameness [*tauto*] of *dunamis* and *energeia*. According to Aristotle, the Megarian view is characterized by the desire to make *dunamis* and *energeia* one and the same [*tauto*] (*Met.* IX.3, 1047b19-20). While Aristotle clearly rejects this view throughout his polemical confrontation with the Megarian position in *Metaphysics* IX.3, there is no indication that Aristotle fundamentally rejects their intricate link.¹⁴ On the contrary, one of the most

¹³ Francisco J. Gonzalez is motivated by a similar concern in his polemical confrontation with Martin Heidegger's interpretation of Aristotle. According to Gonzalez, Heidegger's reading of Aristotle is primarily concerned with demonstrating the extent to which the ancient Greek thinker subordinated or reduced being to presence. In an attempt to resist Heidegger's purported interpretive distortion, Gonzalez argues that Aristotle's understanding of being is hardly reducible to presence. Instead, Aristotle's understanding of being as *dunamis* and *energeia* involves a more complicated account of the relationship between presence and absence. In this sense, Gonzalez's interpretation is very similar to the one I am offering above. Cf. "Whose *Metaphysics* of Presence? Heidegger's Interpretation of *Energeia* and *Dunamis* in Aristotle," *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* 44, no. 4 (2006): 533–68; "Δύναμις and *Dasein*, Ἐνέργεια and *Ereignis*: Heidegger's (Re)Turn to Aristotle," *Research in Phenomenology* 48 (2018): 409–32; "Being as Activity: A Defence of the Importance of *Metaphysics* 1048B18–35 for Aristotle's Ontology," in *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, vol. 56 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 123–92.

¹⁴ In this sense, I agree with Charlotte Witt's view that Aristotle's discussion of the Megarian position in *Metaphysics* IX.3 is not so much motivated by a stark contrast between his position and theirs, but rather as

significant consequences of Aristotle's confrontation is the recognition of the complex identity and difference of *dunamis* and *energeia*. Aristotle's decisive modification to the Megarian view concerns the reduction of being as *dunamis* and *energeia* to presence. What distinguishes Aristotle's account is that *dunamis* and *energeia* cannot be reduced to the schema of presence and absence since both terms refer to the disclosure of being, which means that they make manifest the being of an entity even when it is not, strictly speaking, present. With this much broader¹⁵ understanding of being, Aristotle's account can recognize the way in which *dunamis* and *energeia* are *both* ways of disclosing the being of some entity. Hence, I suggest that the relationship between *dunamis* and *energeia* cannot simply be one of either subordination or indistinction, which seem to be the two traits that characterize the Megarian view. Instead, I argue that the relationship between these two terms is best understood as characterized by both sameness *and* difference.

The preceding remarks have provided an approach to Aristotle's understanding of being as *dunamis* and *energeia* as characterized by both identity and difference. According to this approach, these terms can neither be entirely separate nor subordinated to each other. On the contrary, Aristotle's merit is to have discovered a way of acknowledging both their distinction and co-operation in giving expression to the appearance of some being. Hence, I argue that Aristotle's account of *dunamis* and *energeia* ought to be distinguished from the categorial sense of being since the former is primarily concerned with the manifestation and disclosure of a thing's way of being. This disclosure takes place through the complex

a way of building upon the truth of the Megarian view by offering a more nuanced account of the relationship between *dunamis* and *energeia* that is capable of overcoming the difficulties of their explanation. Cf. Witt, *Ways of Being: Potentiality and Actuality in Aristotle's Metaphysics*.

¹⁵ With the use of this expression, I am building upon an underdeveloped insight found in Heidegger's 1931 summer semester lecture course on *Metaphysics* IX.3 revolving around the difference between Aristotle's view and the Megarian one. Cf. Heidegger, *Aristotle's Metaphysics* Θ 1-3, 155; *Aristoteles, Metaphysik* Θ 1-3: *Von Wesen und Wirklichkeit der Kraft*, 181.

interplay of *dunamis* and *energeia*, which, as I have suggested, reveal both the sameness and difference that constitutes the being of entities. While the preceding remarks have begun to elucidate the implications of such a proto-phenomenological approach to Aristotle's account of being, I will now turn to his more sustained discussion of the interrelation of *dunamis* and *energeia* in *Metaphysics* IX.6, which I claim offer further foundations for his overall discussion.

III. The Proto-Phenomenological Description of Being as *Dunamis* and *Energeia*

Aristotle begins his discussion in *Metaphysics* IX.6 with the following programmatic statement:

Since what concerns the kind of potency [*dunameôs*] according to movement [*kata kinêsin*] has been discussed, let us make distinctions about activity [*energeias*], both concerning what it is [*ti estin*] and what sort of thing it is [*poion ti*] (*Met.* IX.6, 1048a25-7).

Although this passage seems to straightforwardly signal the transition in Aristotle's *Metaphysics* IX from the account of *dunamis* to *energeia*, I suggest that the interpretation of this passage requires greater nuance and care. The common interpretation of this passage as signaling a thematic shift in Aristotle's discussion presupposes that the preceding discussion did not deal with *energeia* at all. According to this interpretation, Aristotle's *Metaphysics* IX can simply be divided into two halves whereby the first half would be dedicated exclusively to *dunamis* and the latter half would be specifically focused on

energeia.¹⁶ While this interpretation has greatly influenced the reception of Aristotle's text, I argue that such a view is too simplistic. Instead, I claim that there are convincing reasons for developing a more nuanced understanding of this passage, which would require challenging the schematic division of *Metaphysics IX* into two halves.

To begin dismantling this oversimplified interpretation of *Metaphysics IX*, it is worth recalling Aristotle's opening remarks to the treatise. In these opening lines, Aristotle suggests that the theme and scope of *Metaphysics IX* will focus on both *dunamis* and *entelecheia* (or *energeia*). It is important to remember that Aristotle's concern in this treatise is with developing an account that will use both terms as co-constitutive and reciprocal principles. Recognizing this to be the case, it is nonetheless true that Aristotle states that he will begin by focusing on the "kinetic" sense of these terms, that is, "according to movement" [*kata kinêsin*].¹⁷ Following Aristotle's own suggestion, one is tempted to interpret the first half of *Metaphysics IX* as developing an account of *dunamis* and *energeia kata kinêsin*. As noted in our brief overview of *Metaphysics IX.3*, it is worth recalling that both *dunamis* and *energeia* were already at stake in this section of the text, which seriously puts into question the attempt to neatly divide the treatise into two halves. Thus, I argue that there is no convincing reason for restricting Aristotle's account of *dunamis* to the first half of *Metaphysics IX* in order to then interpret the second half of the treatise as primarily focused on *energeia*. Such a view presupposes a strict separation

¹⁶ This overly schematic approach to *Metaphysics IX* can be seen in most of the major outlines of the treatise offered in commentaries to this text. Cf. for instance, Stephen Makin, ed., *Aristotle: Metaphysics Book Θ* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2009); W. D. Ross, *Aristotle's Metaphysics: A Revised Text with Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 2 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975).

¹⁷ As Gwenaëlle Aubry rightly notes, "Le livre Θ peut se lire tout entier comme opérant la translation de ce couple notionnel du champ du mouvement à celui de l'être. L'élucidation progressive du sens ontologique de la *dunamis* et de l'*energeia* n'aboutit pas pour autant à la révocation de leur sens kinétique, mais bien plutôt à sa subsumption sous ce sens premier," *Dieu sans la puissance: Dunamis et energeia chez Aristote et chez Plotin*, 27.

between *dunamis* and *energeia* that does not correspond to the more nuanced interrelation of the terms that I have suggested thus far.

Returning to the opening lines of *Metaphysics* IX.6, I would like to read this passage as making the role of *energeia* more explicit within Aristotle's broader account. By adopting this view, we can avoid the otherwise strange consequences of dividing the treatise according to a strict division between *dunamis* and *energeia* that simply does not match the actual progression of Aristotle's text. Approaching the text in this way, we are now confronted with the question of the ontological role of movement [*kinêsis*] in Aristotle's account in *Metaphysics* IX. While this question is usually dismissed by the traditional interpretation, there is another possible approximation to this issue, which is suggested by Heidegger in his 1931 Summer Semester lecture course on *Metaphysics* IX:

The possibility [*die Möglichkeit*] remains that the movement [*der Gang*] in the subsequent sections proceeds as follows: originating [*Ausgang*] from δύναμις κατὰ κίνησιν, advancing [*Fortgang*] to ἐνέργεια κατὰ κίνσην, passing over [*Übergang*] to the ἐνέργεια κατὰ κινήσεως, and proceeding [*Ausgang*] to the δύναμις κατὰ κινήσεως.¹⁸

Although Heidegger does not offer any further elucidation on this hermeneutical suggestion, we could begin unpacking the implications of this approach in the following manner. First, Heidegger uses the various resonances of the term "movement" [*Gang*] in German in order to account for the internal movement and transitions of *Metaphysics* IX. According to Heidegger, the first movement (i.e., the originating movement [*Ausgang*])

¹⁸ Heidegger, *Aristotle's Metaphysics* Θ 1-3, 45; *Aristoteles, Metaphysik* Θ 1-3: *Von Wesen und Wirklichkeit der Kraft*, 55.

appears in the guise of *dunamis kata kinêsin*, which we could designate as the initial proto-phenomenological manifestation of *dunamis*. In our daily interaction and encounter with beings, these beings first become apparent to us according to an initial *dunamis* related to *kinêsis*. However, Heidegger continues, the manifestation of the *dunamis kata kinêsin* is not the only way in which these beings manifest themselves to us. In addition to *dunamis kata kinêsin*, there is a transition [*Fortgang*] that reveals the appearance of an *energeia kata kinêsin*. What is at stake in this transition from *dunamis* to *energeia* is the disclosure of one way of being to another, that is, from a manifest potential or latency of being to its active enactment. This brief summary of the “kinetic” meaning of *dunamis* and *energeia* seems commonplace enough. In fact, such an account is not entirely different from what initially characterizes the Megarian position. It is only in the extended [*epi pleon*] sense of these terms that we begin to see their more inconspicuous ontological meaning, which is suggested by Heidegger as a passing over [*Übergang*] to an *energeia kata kinêseôs* that then proceeds [*Ausgang*]¹⁹ back to a *dunamis kata kinêseôs*.

Heidegger’s shift from the accusative to the genitive case seems crucial to his overall interpretation of *Metaphysics IX*. It is unfortunate that he never offered any further details about the hermeneutic and philosophical implications of this grammatical shift.²⁰

¹⁹ There is a curious double meaning to the German word “*Ausgang*,” which can mean both the starting-point or origin of the emergence of something (*Aus-gang*) and the culmination or ending of a movement. With this double meaning in mind, Heidegger is suggesting that *dunamis* maintains an important ontological function in Aristotle’s account by being both the origin and culmination of the disclosure of being. In other words, Heidegger’s interpretation of *dunamis* as *Ausgang* offers another illustration of both the ontological and phenomenological importance of the term, which cannot simply be subordinated to *energeia*.

²⁰ Heidegger’s shift from the accusative to the genitive case seems crucial to his overall interpretation of *Metaphysics IX*. It is regrettable that Heidegger does not go into further details about this seemingly important grammatical shift. The scholarly consensus seems to be that Heidegger intended to carry out a much broader interpretation of *Metaphysics IX* in this 1931 Summer Semester lecture course but, due to time constraints according to Franco Volpi’s thorough study, he was unable to complete this projected reading. While this explanation satisfies the historical reasons why Heidegger did not complete his interpretation of *Metaphysics IX*, they are far from satisfying the underlying *philosophical* reasons why he never returned to the issue throughout his lecture courses. In a sense, Heidegger’s incomplete interpretation of *Metaphysics IX* remains

Without claiming to reconstruct Heidegger's view on the matter, I would nonetheless like to suggest a possible way of interpreting the philosophical importance of the transition from the accusative to the genitive case and how it maps onto a broader interpretation of *Metaphysics IX*. According to Smyth, the accusative case can often be used to denote the *state* in respect to which the noun described, whereas the genitive case can often be used to indicate the *source* or *origin* of the noun it modifies.²¹ With these considerations in mind, one could argue that the use of the accusative in the expression *dunamis kai energeia kata kinêsin* can be understood as delimiting the domain in which beings initially show themselves through movement. In other words, the initial realm and respect in which beings show themselves as what they are is through their distinctive *dunamis* and *energeia*, which originally seems to be a result of their capacity for *kinêsis*. In this initial appearance of being, there is no indication that *dunamis* and *energeia* are understood as the source or origin of their manifestation. On the contrary, this initial appearance of being appears to be the result of the ordinary phenomenon of movement. However, once one calls upon the broader meaning of these terms, then one has shifted to the *dunamis kai energeia kata kinêseôs*, which can now be understood as suggesting that the movement through which these beings become manifest to us is the very origin and principle of their being. Thus, *dunamis* and *energeia* become manifest as ontological and phenomenological principles through *kinêsis*. Although these remarks can only remain on the level of speculation, they

one of the most thought-provoking gaps across his writings. Cf. William McNeill, "In Force of Language: Language and Desire in Heidegger's Reading of Aristotle's *Metaphysics Θ*," in *Heidegger and Language*, ed. Jeffrey Powell (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2013), 46–62; Pierre Rodrigo, "Heidegger lecteur d'Aristote: Δύναμις et Ἐνέργεια sous le regard phénoménologique," *Études Philosophiques* 3 (1990): 353–72; Franco Volpi, *Heidegger e Aristotele* (Padova: Daphne Editrice, 1984); Franco Volpi, "La 'riabilitazione' della Δύναμις e dell'ἐνέργεια in Heidegger," *Aquinas* 33 (1990): 3–28.

²¹ Herbert Weir Smyth, *Greek Grammar*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984). For Smyth's discussion of the genitive, cf. §§1289-1296. For his discussion of the accusative, cf. §§1551-1562

nonetheless provide an indication of the overall approach and stakes of the present interpretation of *dunamis* and *energeia*.

As suggested above, Heidegger's interpretation provide a way of approaching the two purported halves of *Metaphysics* IX without needing to presuppose a strict separation between them. By adopting this attitude to Aristotle's treatise, we can avoid the prejudice of the traditional interpretation of *Metaphysics* IX, which would require interpreting the second half of the treatise as an abandonment of the realm of movement [*kinêsis*]. However, as suggested by Heidegger's remarks, there is no need to prematurely dismiss the role of *kinêsis* in elucidating the ontological and phenomenological meaning of *dunamis* and *energeia*. In other words, one does not need to purify these terms from their kinetic meaning in order to arrive at their purely ontological one. Rather, what is required from any interpretation of *Metaphysics* IX is a careful and nuanced appreciation of the continued presence of *kinêsis* in the ontological and phenomenological account of being as *dunamis* and *energeia*. Aristotle does not seem intent on extracting these terms from their kinetic context. On the contrary, I argue that the overall aim of *Metaphysics* IX is to show how one can arrive at the ontological and phenomenological significance of *dunamis* and *energeia* through a sustained meditation of their connection with *kinêsis*. Even when there seems to be no movement present, Aristotle's use of *dunamis* and *energeia* seems to rely upon the dynamic sense of being indicated by the manifestation of beings through *kinêsis*. Hence, I suggest that the very dynamic character of Aristotle's account of being as *dunamis* and *energeia* would be entirely neutralized if one were to interpret the later chapters of *Metaphysics* IX as an abandonment of movement. It is only by acknowledging the relationship between *kinêsis* and *dunamis* and *energeia* that we begin to recognize why this

proto-phenomenological approach to being is radically different from the categorial approach.

The preceding remarks have prepared an alternative hermeneutic option for interpreting the relationship between the purported two halves of *Metaphysics* IX. In order to appreciate the implications of such an approach for our overall understanding of the relationship between *dunamis* and *energeia*, I would like to turn to the following passage where Aristotle offers some remarks on how the former remains of decisive importance in the sustained discussion of the latter in *Metaphysics* IX.6:

The capable [*to dunaton*] will at the same time become clear as we make our determinations, because we do not say that what is capable is only of that which naturally moves something else, or is moved by something else [*ou monon touto legomen dunaton ho pephuke kinein allo ê kineisthai hup' allou*], either simply or in a certain respect, but also use the term in a different way [*alla kai heterôs*], which is why in the course of our inquiry we went through the former (*Met.* IX.6, 1048a27-30).

This passage lends further support to the interpretation suggested above.²² Aristotle does not claim that the entire previous discussion of *dunamis* is completely irrelevant to the

²² I find the resonance between this passage and the one found toward the opening lines of the treatise intriguing and worth noting since they provide further indications of the profound unity between *dunamis* and *energeia*. Toward the beginning of *Metaphysics* IX.1, Aristotle claims, “When we have spoken about it [i.e. *dunamis*], though, in the determinations we make concerning activity [*energeia*] we shall also make clear the others” (*Met.* IX.1, 1046a2-4). In other words, as indicated by both this passage and the one under discussion from *Metaphysics* IX.6, Aristotle hardly seems interested in completely abandoning either sense of being. Instead, whenever he temporarily brackets discussion of one term in favor of the other, Aristotle is always mindful to note that such a sustained analysis of one term will have decisive implications for the other.

current account of *energeia*. On the contrary, Aristotle suggests that the meaning of *dunamis* as *dunaton* (i.e., of being capable) will now be understood in a different [*heterôs*] manner. This different sense of *dunamis* seems to be the broader meaning of the term, which is not simply restricted to movement, but incorporates even that which is not characterized by *kinêsis*. Hence, Aristotle's interest in expanding the notion of *dunamis* beyond the realm of *kinêsis* should not be understood as an abandonment of movement all together. Instead, I argue that Aristotle's gesture here is best understood as incorporating the extended sense of *dunamis* to the preceding analysis of its kinetic meaning. Given that *dunamis* is not solely restricted to the realm of *kinêsis*, Aristotle needs to account for its manifestation even when no movement takes place, which is not to say that such an understanding of *dunamis* is deprived of its dynamic quality.

Having clarified the general aim of Aristotle's approach to *dunamis* and *energeia* in *Metaphysics* IX.6, I would like to turn to one of the most decisive and enigmatic lines of the entire treatise, namely, the supposed "definition" of *energeia*. If we recall the main outline of the traditional interpretation of *Metaphysics* IX, then it comes as no surprise that the presence of a definition of *energeia* would lend credence to the claim that *energeia* remains the central focus of this section of the text. However, such a view overlooks the extremely enigmatic way in which Aristotle introduces this definition. To begin, one should recall that *energeia* is a properly Aristotelian term, that is, a term entirely invented by Aristotle. Despite having invented the term, Aristotle only dedicates a single passage throughout his extant writings to its definition (i.e., *Metaphysics* IX.6). Aristotle's apparent lack of interest in offering a clear-cut definition of *energeia* has continued to puzzle scholars to this day. One would assume that a definition of the term would be found in

what is often informally referred to as Aristotle’s “philosophical lexicon,” namely, *Metaphysics* V. However, as Chung-Hwan Chen notes, there is no entry corresponding to *energeia* in *Metaphysics* V,²³ which only shows just how difficult it is to obtain a clear grasp of the meaning of the term in Aristotle’s writings. Although he offers some etymological remarks at least on two distinct moments in *Metaphysics* IX,²⁴ the only “formal” definition of *energeia* is the following one: “Activity, then, is the existence of the thing not in the way in which we say that it exists potentially” [*Esti dê energeia to huparchein to pragma mê houtôs hôsper legomen dunamei*] (*Met.* IX.6, 1048a30-2).

One of the most noteworthy aspects of Aristotle’s definition of *energeia* is the fact that he relies heavily on the contrast between it and *dunamis*. Rather than define *energeia* on its own terms, Aristotle’s definition depends entirely on this difference from *dunamis*. In fact, if one wanted to be even bolder, then it could even be said that Aristotle does not so much define the term (at least strictly speaking) as much as he acknowledges a relational or analogical connection between the two terms. Given his approach, I suggest that the peculiarity of Aristotle’s definition at least plausibly supports the claim that these terms are ultimately undefinable because they are reciprocal and co-constitutive. In fact, their undefinability stems from their mutual implication and inextricable connection. Both terms

²³ “In the so-called ‘philosophical lexicon,’ namely Book V of the *Metaphysics*, there is even no chapter in which the different meanings of ‘energeia’ are explained, while as a matter of fact, such an explanation is more needed because this term is employed in a still greater variety than the term *dunamis*,” Chung-Hwan Chen, *OYΣIA and ENEPTEIA: Two Fundamental Concepts in the Philosophy of Aristotle* (Taipei: China Series Publishing Committee, 1958), 48.

²⁴ I am thinking of the following passages from *Metaphysics* IX.3 and 8, respectively: “The name “activity [*energeia*],” which is connected [*suntithemenê*] to “actuality [*entelecheian*],” has been extended to other things from applying most of all to movements [*epi ta alla ek tôn kinêseôn malista*]. For activity seems most of all to be movement [*dokei gar hê energeia malista hê kinesis einai*]” (1047a30-32) and “For the function [*ergon*] is the end [*telos*], and the activity [*energeia*] is the function, and this is why the name “activity” is said of things with reference to the function and extends [*sunteinei*] to the actuality [*entelecheian*]” (1050a21-3).

mutually elucidate each other since *energeia* is primarily defined as not be a *dunamis*, which would imply that a *dunamis* is something that is not an *energeia*.

The preceding remarks have shed light on the reciprocity and co-constitutive character of *dunamis* and *energeia*. But a further enigma lies behind the claim that they are both ways of describing the existence of a thing [*to huparchein to pragma*]. I would like to begin elucidating this admittedly complicated expression by noting that the term *to huparchein* is an abstract noun derived from the verb *huparchô*, which has a wide lexical range that includes “to begin,” “to exist,” “to be,” “to belong,” and so on.²⁵ Among the various possible meanings, I have decided to emphasize the term “existence” since Aristotle seems to be using the expression *to huparchein* as indicating the way in which a thing appears to be. In other words, recalling Aristotle’s definition of *energeia*, what is indicated by this term is one of the ways in which something becomes manifest as being or existing. But, if this is the case, then, following our previous discussion, we would have to say that *dunamis* too would be a form of making manifest the existence or being of some entity. Thus, both *dunamis* and *energeia* would be understood as two different forms of making manifest the existence of some being.

There is another important aspect to the expression *to huparchein* that is worth emphasizing. In addition to the wide lexical range mentioned above, the etymology of the

²⁵ The expression *to huparchein* is often translated in English as “existence,” which is then interpreted in a static sense. In other words, the expression *to huparchein* has traditionally been associated with the mere presence of something. Although Heidegger has often been accused of reducing the Greek understanding of being to static presence understood as “present-at-hand,” a recently published 1951 seminar on Aristotle suggests that the interpretation of *energeia* as *huparchein* in a static sense goes against the grain of the Aristotelian text. Commenting on the difficulty of the traditional interpretation of Aristotle’s definition of *energeia* as *to huparchein*, Heidegger writes: “Die Schwierigkeit für die Interpretation ist hier, daß ἐνέργεια bei ihrer Wesensbestimmung immer gegen die δύναμις abgegrenzt wird und umgekehrt. Mit diesem Hinweis auf die Bestimmung der ἐνέργεια als ὑπάρχειν (das mit ὑποκεῖσθαι zusammenhängt) ist schon abgewehrt, ἐνέργεια als Wirklichkeit und Realität zu nehmen,” *Seminare: Platon – Aristoteles – Augustinus*, ed. Mark Michalski (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2012), 660.

term *huparchein* contains a reference to the term *archê*, which is widely known to be one of the central terms of Aristotle's philosophy. Given his wide use of the term throughout his writings, *archê* can take on many meanings. However, for our purposes, there is a particularly relevant one that appears in *Metaphysics* I where he claims that wisdom [*sophia*] is concerned with the first causes and principles of being [*ta prôta aitia kai tas archas*] (*Met.* I.1, 981b27-9). Thus, if one were to situate the term *archê* within the broader Aristotelian project of the elucidation of the causes and principles of being, then the aim of wisdom is impossible without a clear grasp of the *archê*. By drawing this connection between *energeia* (and *dunamis*) with the *archê* of *huparchein*, one can begin to see the importance of the account found in *Metaphysics* IX for Aristotle's overarching project of the "sought-after" science [*tên epistêmên zêtoumen*] described in *Metaphysics* I.2.

While the preceding remarks have clarified the decisive connection between *to huparchein* and *dunamis* and *energeia*, I would now like to turn to the expression *to pragma*, which plays an equally decisive role in Aristotle's account in *Metaphysics* IX.6. The following discussion of *to pragma* draws from Pierre Hadot's exceptional study of the various meanings of the expression in ancient Greek philosophy.²⁶ Hadot begins his study by criticizing the careless approach to *pragma* understood simply as "thing."²⁷ Although this has often been the most accepted standard translation of *pragma*, Hadot suggests that greater attention needs to be paid to the multiple valences of the Greek term, which include "deed," "act," "affair," "matter," and so on. As suggested by this list of the semantic range of *to pragma*, the term can hardly be reduced simply to "thing" in our usual understanding

²⁶ Pierre Hadot, "Sur divers sens du mot *pragma* dans la tradition philosophique grecque," in *Concepts et catégories dans la pensée antique*, ed. Pierre Aubenque and Rémi Brague (Paris : Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1980), 309–20.

²⁷ Hadot, 319.

of the word. Instead, as Hadot suggests, one ought to understand the expression *to pragma* as implicated in a concerned relationship with that which is either being thought or under discussion. Put otherwise, Hadot's study has the merit of reminding us that *pragma* was often used by the ancient Greeks to refer to the matter or issue at hand. Hence, I am not entirely surprised that many contemporary phenomenologists have found a latent or primordial sense of phenomenology in Aristotle's text, which is constantly concerned with the *to huparchein to pragma* (i.e., the existence of some thing). Expanding on Hadot's suggestions, I argue that Aristotle's definition of *energeia* as *to huparchein to pragma* can be interpreted as a proto-phenomenological motto for focusing our attention on how beings show themselves according to their own principle [*archê*] as what they are.

Having identified the connection between *dunamis* and *energeia* as co-constitutive forms of disclosing the *to huparchein to pragma*, I would like to now turn to Aristotle's concrete illustration of these principles [*archai*] by way of specific examples. Aristotle offers the first concrete illustration of the proto-phenomenological meaning of these terms in the following passage:

We say, for example, that Hermes exists potentially [*dunamei*] in the wood and the half-line in the whole, because it could be abstracted [*aphairetheiê*] from it, and also that a knower is [potentially] even when not contemplating, if capable [*dunatos*] of contemplating. By contrast, we say that other things exist actively [*energeia*] (*Met.* IX.6, 1048a32-5).

This passage provides us with a concrete illustration of how Aristotle relies on both *dunamis* and *energeia* to arrive at a description of a thing's distinct ways of being and appearing. Furthermore, the passage also reinforces the claim that these two terms should not be understood as mutually exclusive or separate. On the contrary, Aristotle's approach in this passage can best be described as a logic of co-operative encounter, to borrow a phrase coined by Christopher P. Long.²⁸ Neither *dunamis* nor *energeia* are working in complete isolation from the other. Rather, there is already an intrinsic connection between something's *dunamis* and *energeia*, which suggests their complex unity and difference. It is not as if the wood were simply something entirely different from the statue of Hermes or, better yet, that the half-line is somehow not contained in the whole. Instead, both the potential and active thing *exist*. By drawing on both the contrast and harmony between *dunamis* and *energeia*, Aristotle is acknowledging that they equally contribute to the manifestation of a thing's way of being.²⁹

In order to continue elucidating the specific roles of *dunamis* and *energeia* in Aristotle's proto-phenomenological approach to being, I would now like to stress their relative independence to each other in order to assess their equally legitimate ontological contribution more clearly. I should clarify that my interest in emphasizing the difference between these terms rather than their unity should not be interpreted as a regression in my

²⁸ Christopher P. Long, *Aristotle on the Nature of Truth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

²⁹ In his 1926 Summer Semester lecture course, Heidegger forcefully makes the point that both *dunamis* and *energeia* are forms of becoming present: "Both concepts, that of *δυνάμει ὄν* as well as that of *ἐνεργείᾳ ὄν*, are modifications of what is present with respect to its presence." *Basic Concepts of Ancient Philosophy*, trans. Richard Rojcewicz (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2008), 236; *Die Grundbegriffe der Antiken Philosophie* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1993), 322–23. There has been an unfortunate tendency in the secondary literature on Aristotle to believe that only the *energeia on* is relevant for ontology. Such an approach completely disregards the fact that the *dunamei on* is there and becomes manifest in our experience, even if this manifestation takes the form of a latent presence that is inconspicuous and difficult to discern.

overall claim. In the preceding sections, I have defended the claim that *dunamis* and *energeia* are characterized both by their identity and difference. In the presentation of Aristotle's account, it is necessary to alternate between these two perspectives. Otherwise, one runs the risk of believing that only the sameness or difference of *dunamis* and *energeia* could properly account for their complex interrelation. However, by ignoring the oscillation between these two terms, one easily falls back into the overly static division between these two terms that has been at the center of their traditional reception. For example, even though Jan Patočka is a careful reader of Aristotle's writings, he nonetheless proceeds to argue that *dunamis* can be understood as "inauthentic presence," whereas *energeia* is true, authentic presence.³⁰ In contrast, I have sought to emphasize the relative independence and complementarity of *dunamis* and *energeia* in the manifestation of being. The difficult task of understanding both the independence and complementarity of these terms depends on a constant shift in perspective that sometimes emphasizes their unity and sometimes stresses their difference. Hence, in what follows, I would like to draw attention to their different roles in Aristotle's proto-phenomenological approach to being as suggested in *Metaphysics IX.6*.

Aristotle's account in *Metaphysics IX.6* acknowledges the relative independence of *dunamis* and *energeia*. Although they each contribute to the disclosure of being, Aristotle

³⁰ Such a view is quite common in the contemporary scholarship on Aristotle's thinking. Among the many examples of this view, one could point to Jan Patočka's interpretation of *dunamis* and *energeia* as "inauthentic" and "authentic" existence. According to Patočka, "La δύναμις est la présence inauthentique, présence d'un absent ; l'ἐνέργεια est la présence du présent en tant que tel," *Aristote, ses devanciers, ses successeurs* (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 2011), 243. Although his interpretation remains limited by his use of the problematic terms "inauthentic" and "authentic," Patočka nonetheless inadvertently points to an important aspect of the manifestation of *dunamis*, namely, the presence of an absence. Drawing upon the preceding analyses, it would be worth emphasizing this distinctive character of the manifestation of *dunamis* since it provides an important clue into how it is a reciprocal and co-constitutive principle with *energeia*.

suggests that they carry out this function in different ways. To recall the previously discussed examples, the half-line is not something ontologically different from the whole, as the wood is not something entirely distinct from the statue. Instead, each of these discrete moments correspond to one and the same being. The main distinction here is that these discrete moments are two ways in which these things show themselves as what they are. The former term is neither negated nor sublated³¹ by the latter. On the contrary, both terms offer their own distinct contribution to the disclosure of a thing's being. The complementarity between *dunamis* and *energeia* lends further credence to the suggestion that these terms are best understood as co-constitutive principles of being. In order to further defend this claim, I would like to draw attention to how Aristotle continues to suggest a reciprocity between these two terms in the following decisive passage:

What we wish to say is clear [*dêlon*] from the particular cases [*kath' hekasta*] by induction [*epagôgê*], and it is not necessary to look for a definition of everything [*kai ou dei pantos horon zêtein*], but can be seen in the analogy [*tô analogon suonaran*], namely, that as what is building [*to oikodomoun*] is in relation to what is capable of building [*to oikodomikon*], and what is awake [*to egrêgoros*] is in

³¹ In using the term “sublation,” I am referring to Georg W. F. Hegel’s notion of dialectic as *Aufhebung*. My reference to Hegel here is not haphazard since I believe that Hegel’s writings on Aristotle represent one of the few noteworthy attempts to think through the complex relationship of sameness and difference implied in the Aristotelian account of *dunamis* and *energeia*. Instead of attempting to discuss this issue at length in this footnote, I would like to simply note the following texts, which have sharply articulated the stakes of this debate: cf. Pierre Aubenque, “Dialectique hégélienne et dialectique aristotélicienne,” in *Problèmes aristotéliciens: Philosophie théorique* (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 2009), 69–84; “Hegel et Aristote,” in *Problèmes aristotéliciens: Philosophie théorique* (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 2009), 85–100. Cf. also: Theodor Adorno, *Metaphysics: Concept and Problems*, trans. Rolf Tiedermann and E. F. N. Jephcott (Polity Press, 2015).

relation to what is asleep [*to katheudon*], and what is seeing [*to horôn*] is in relation to what has its eyes closed but has sight [*to mouon opsin echon*], and what has been shaped out of the matter [*to apokekrimenon ek tês hulês*] is in relation to the matter [*tên hulên*], and what has been finished off [*to apeirgasmenon*] is to the unfinished [*to anergaston*] (*Met.* IX.6, 1048a35-b4).

I would like to begin commenting on this passage by drawing attention to Aristotle's use of the term induction [*epagôgê*] as the proper way of arriving at a clear understanding of *dunamis* and *energeia*. Aristotle's use of *epagôgê* in this context is significant, especially because he then proceeds to claim that it is not necessary to look for a definition of everything. As suggested above in our discussion of his "definition" of *energeia*, Aristotle's approach to both *dunamis* and *energeia* does not seem primarily concerned with arriving at what we might refer to as a "logical" definition of these terms.³² Rather, Aristotle's concern is with learning how to see [*sunoran*] the analogy³³ between these two

³² Aristotle's apparent disinterest in offering any kind of "formal" definition of *energeia* seems to me to be the only way of making sense why he does not feel the need to expand on his otherwise highly enigmatic and brief remarks in *Metaphysics* IX.6. I am not the only interpreter to have drawn this conclusion from Aristotle's discussion of *energeia*. Cf., Enrico Berti, "Il concetto di atto nella *Metafisica* di Aristotele," in *L'atto aristotelico e le sue ermeneutiche* (Roma: Herder, 1990), 53; Patočka, *Aristote, ses devanciers, ses successeurs*, 243. Although these remarks primarily focus on Aristotle's non-definition of *energeia*, one could draw a similar conclusion with respect to *dunamis*. Without wishing to deny the important role played by Aristotle's definition of *dunamis* in *Metaphysics* V.12, which is otherwise interpreted as the authoritative [*kurios*] definition of the term, I nonetheless wonder if the meaning of the term does not undergo some form of change or mutation when it is extended beyond its ordinary use in the realm of *kinêsis*. In other words, while the kinetic sense of *dunamis* is easy to define, I wonder whether the ontological meaning of the term might not end up being just as difficult to define as the ontological sense of *energeia*.

³³ The role of analogy in Aristotle's writings remains without a doubt one of the most difficult issues in the secondary literature. Moreover, it does not seem possible to arrive at a satisfactory understanding of the role of analogy in Aristotle's texts without engaging to some extent with the medieval reception of his texts and the *analogia entis*. Without wishing to insert myself directly into this debate, I understand Aristotle's use of the term *analogon* here as a way of specifying the reciprocal relationship between *dunamis* and *energeia*. The main goal of Aristotle's use of examples throughout *Metaphysics* IX.6 is simply to offer a proportional analogy between the two terms whereby the thing's way of being in *dunamis* corresponds to an alternative

terms. The use of the term *sunoran* not only reinforces the proto-phenomenological interpretation of Aristotle's account, but it also offers an important clue into the relationship between *dunamis* and *energeia*. By using the compound verb *sunoran*, Aristotle's text demands an equal attention to the way in which these terms are brought together [*sun*] in order to give expression to a thing's way of being.³⁴ It is only by adopting this holistic perspective whereby we are aware of the joint activity of *dunamis* and *energeia* that we will obtain an adequate ontological grasp of some being.

At this point, I have offered a defense of my interpretation of *Metaphysics IX* as offering the foundations for a coherent and consistent proto-phenomenological approach to being. Throughout the preceding sections, we have seen the extent to which Aristotle's account of *dunamis* and *energeia* is characterized by a complex interrelation whereby these terms function as reciprocal and co-constitutive principles of being. Although there is a tendency to believe that only *energeia* contributes to the phenomenological and ontological disclosure of a thing's being, I have argued that Aristotle's approach in *Metaphysics IX* requires us to acknowledge the decisive role of *dunamis* in co-operating with *energeia*. Although the preceding interpretation has laid out the foundations of Aristotle's proto-phenomenology, this account would remain incomplete if I did not address two major

state of being in *energeia*. In this sense, Aristotle's use of analogy provides further support for the claim that I have defended thus far concerning the reciprocity of these two senses of being. Beyond the specific interests of the present dissertation, it would be worth further investigation whether the analogical relationship between *dunamis* and *energeia* might shed further light on the broader role of analogy in Aristotle's thinking. For an excellent introduction and reference to the importance of analogical reasoning in ancient Greek thought, cf. G. E. R. Lloyd, *Polarity and Analogy: Two Types of Argumentation in Early Greek Thought* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1992). For an outstanding study on the complex history of the reception of analogy in Aristotelian and post-Aristotelian thinking, cf. Jean-François Courtine, *Inventio Analogiae: Métaphysique et Ontothéologie* (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 2005).

³⁴ I would like to thank Sean Kirkland for drawing my attention to the significance of the word *sunoran* in this passage, especially as it relates to the broader claim of this dissertation concerning the reciprocity and co-constitutive relationship between *dunamis* and *energeia*.

challenges to my reading. The first challenge can be found in Aristotle's account of prime matter [*prôtê hulê*], which follows immediately after the recognition of the reciprocity between *dunamis* and *energeia* in *Metaphysics* IX.6. If these terms are co-constitutive, then why would Aristotle claim in the proceeding chapter that there exists something like a pure *dunamis* deprived of any *energeia*? The second major challenge to my interpretation is closely related to the first. In *Metaphysics* IX.8, Aristotle introduces what many scholars have identified as the main thesis of the entire treatise, namely, the priority of *energeia* over *dunamis*. If these terms are characterized by their reciprocity, then how can Aristotle argue that *energeia* is prior to *dunamis*? Such an approach would appear to introduce a fundamental asymmetry between the terms, which would entail that *energeia* is ontologically independent of *dunamis*.³⁵ Thus, in what follows, I will address these two challenges in order to defend my interpretation of *Metaphysics* IX.

IV. Prime Matter as Pure *Dunamis*: A Threshold-Case

The issue of prime matter in Aristotle's thinking is a highly debated subject in the secondary literature.³⁶ Scholars remain divided on whether the term plays an important role in Aristotle's thinking or if it is simply a hypothetical presupposition.³⁷ In what follows, I

³⁵ Michail Peramatzis adopts this position, for instance, when he writes the following at the beginning of the introduction to his study: "In my view, Aristotelian priority, in its most general outline, consists in an asymmetric independence relation between prior and posterior items. Put simply, a prior item is (or can be) without the posterior item, while the latter is not (or cannot be) without the former," *Priority in Aristotle's Metaphysics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 3. As I hope to show throughout the present dissertation, I do not believe that this asymmetrical model of priority can be unconditionally ascribed to Aristotle's understanding of *dunamis* and *energeia*.

³⁶ For an account that is very close to the one developed here, cf. Trott, *Aristotle on the Matter of Form: A Feminist Metaphysics of Generation*, 79–119.

³⁷ For an excellent survey of the complex and debated reception of prime matter in Aristotle's texts, cf. William Charlton, ed., *Aristotle Physics: Books I and II* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), specifically the Appendix entitled, "Did Aristotle Believe in Prime Matter?"

offer an interpretation of Aristotle’s discussion of prime matter in *Metaphysics* IX.7 that acknowledges its important role as a threshold-case of experience that nonetheless does not fundamentally challenge the otherwise reciprocal relationship between *dunamis* and *energeia*. To begin defending this interpretation, one must note the limited and specific context in which Aristotle appeals to prime matter. Although some scholars argue that it plays a decisive role in Aristotle’s writings, even a brief comprehensive survey of the extant texts would show that the phrase *prôtê hulê* rarely appears as a prominent term.³⁸ Instead, based on one of its most well-known appearances in *Metaphysics* IX.7, prime matter can best be understood as a hypothetical or rhetorical excursus on the temporality of *dunamis* (i.e., the when [*pote*]). Hence, Aristotle’s account of prime matter does not introduce any form of absolute separation between *dunamis* and *energeia*, as if the discussion of *prôtê hulê* would imply the existence of some pure *dunamis*. Instead, I suggest that Aristotle’s concern is primarily guided by the attempt to understand the temporal interrelationship between *dunamis* and *energeia* as illustrated by positing the existence of some prime matter.

Aristotle introduces the notion of prime matter in the following lengthy and dense passage of *Metaphysics* IX.7:

It seems that when we say that something is not this [*ou tode*]
but rather *that* [*ekeinon*]³⁹—for example, a box is not wood

³⁸ For instance, one could consult several indexes to Aristotle’s writings (e.g., the *Index Aristotelicus* by Bonitz, the *Index* by Organ, and the index included in the Oxford Revised Translation) and note the relatively sparse appearances of the term throughout his treatises.

³⁹ Aristotle’s use of the term *ekeinon* is worth noting, especially since his use of the suffix *-inon* will become a point of reference throughout the passage in order to illustrate the difference between being a “this something” [*tode ti*] and that which is responsible for something’s being a *tode ti*, but which itself is not a “this something.” Moreover, Aristotle uses two forms of the demonstrative pronoun, *tode* and *ekeinos*, as a means of directing our attention to the concrete way a being shows itself to be either this or that. Aristotle’s use of demonstrative pronouns throughout this passage provides further suggestions of the extent to which

but wooden [*xulinon*], the wood is not earth but made of earth [*gêinon*],⁴⁰ and again with earth if it is similarly not another this but rather made of that [*ekeinanon*]*—*the latter one is always simply the next one up potentially [*aei ekeino dunamei haplôs to husteron estin*]. For example, the box is neither made of earth nor earth but wooden. For this is potentially [*dunamei*] a box and this is the matter [*hulê*] of a box*—*the wood simply of the box considered simply, and of this box, this wood. But if there is something primary that is no longer said to be *that* with reference to something else, then this is prime matter [*ei ti esti prôton ho mêketi kat' allo legetai ekeinanon touto prôtê hulê*]*—*for example, if earth is made of air, and air is not fire but made of fire, then fire is prime matter, because it is not a this something [*ou tode ti ousa*] (*Met. IX.7, 1049a18-27*).

This passage offers a very dense and nuanced account of prime matter. However, one of its primary merits is Aristotle's use of concrete examples in order to illustrate his point. Although Aristotle does not explicitly invoke the notion of abstraction [*aphairesis*], it

his overall approach to these questions was guided by a proto-phenomenological sensitivity. One must imagine his audience constantly being told to see this or that as a way of arriving at a better grasp of the issue under discussion.

⁴⁰ While I commend Reeve's attempt to follow Aristotle's use of *ekeinanon* throughout this passage by translating the expression as "thaten" and similar expressions (e.g., *gêinon* as "earthen"), which illustrates the complex gesture at stake in Aristotle's creative use of the Greek language, I have opted for a more conventional translation, which interprets the suffix *-inon* as "material genitive." Cf. §1323-4 of Weir Smyth, *Greek Grammar*.

seems that something like it is at stake in this passage.⁴¹ In his proto-phenomenological approach to prime matter, Aristotle invites us to draw a distinction between what we would describe as being a “this something” [*tode ti*] and that which is not. Based on this distinction, Aristotle proceeds to show the relationship between the *tode ti* and that which is not something but is responsible for its being. Thus, the box is a *tode ti*, but it is made from wood. As we continue tracing what makes up the being of something, we arrive at some first thing that is not exactly a *tode ti*, but from which some being arises. By drawing on this distinction between something that is a *tode ti* and that which is not but still plays a role in that thing’s being, Aristotle appears to draw on a certain ontological difference between a thing’s *dunamis* and its *energeia*. The box, understood as an *energeia on*, cannot be reduced either to its *dunamis* (i.e., the wood), but it also does not seem entirely conceivable without it. What appears to be the most convincing aspect of Aristotle’s account of *prôtê hulê* is his attention to the reciprocal relationship between a thing’s being in *dunamis* and its subsequent being in *energeia*. One could say that the notion of prime matter appears as a reminder that there is always some primordial and latent *dunamis* that lies behind every manifestation of *energeia*.

This interpretation of prime matter provides us with a way to problematize the traditional reception of this term within Aristotle’s thinking. *Prôtê hulê* cannot be

⁴¹ The exact meaning of *aphairesis* in Aristotle’s writings is a debated issue. There seems to be a tendency to re-interpret the ancient Greek notion of “abstraction” by relying on the modern and more abstract mathematical sense of the term. However, it is worth emphasizing that the ancient Greek understanding of *aphairesis* maintains significant differences from the modern sense of abstraction. For instance, one would have to primarily focus on the role of geometrical figures and how they informed one of the main paradigms for the ancient Greek notion of abstraction. For a particularly lucid account of the role of concrete spatial figures in Aristotle’s understanding of *aphairesis*, cf. Justin Humphreys, “Abstraction and Diagrammatic Reasoning in Aristotle’s Philosophy of Geometry,” *Apeiron* 50, no. 2 (2017): 197–224. In particular, it is worth noting the connection drawn by Humphreys between the capacity to perform abstraction with the power of imagination [*phantasia*], which suggests that there is always a visualizing and concrete component to *aphairesis*.

understood as some hypostasized form of pure *dunamis* deprived of *energeia*.⁴² On the contrary, the notion of prime matter plays an important hypothetical role in Aristotle's account. As suggested above, prime matter is arrived through what might be called a process of reduction whereby we attempt to trace the complex relationship between a thing's being a *tode ti* and that which contributes to its being without being a "this something." Aristotle's analysis suggests that the temporality of *dunamis* is best understood as a kind of latent form of manifestation that becomes even more manifest in the corresponding *energeia*. Hence, Aristotle's discussion of prime matter does not contradict the guiding thesis of the present chapter. On the contrary, *prôtê hulê* provides a further indication of the intricate link formed by *dunamis* and *energeia*, which can be illustrated with the aid of an interweaving spiral that is constantly intersecting with itself. Although the manifestation of *dunamis* is inconspicuous, Aristotle's account of prime matter serves as a reminder that the manifestation of some *energeia* is always inextricably linked to some prior *dunamis*. Thus, one could describe *prôtê hulê* as a threshold-concept⁴³ in Aristotle's proto-phenomenology of being, which is a way of indicating, on the one hand, that prime matter does not strictly speaking become manifest to us and, on the other hand, it appears as the initial threshold [*peras*] of a being's manifestation, which can be understood as its primordial ground.⁴⁴

⁴² Theodor Adorno is right to note the difficulty of imagining one without the other during his discussion of the relationship between matter and form in Aristotle's writings. Cf. Adorno, *Metaphysics: Concept and Problems*.

⁴³ Wolfgang Wieland has drawn attention to the way prime matter can be understood as a limiting concept in Aristotle's thinking. Cf. in particular, Wieland's insightful analyses in "Aristotle's Principles as *Τοποι*," *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal* 32, no. 1 (2011): 33–65; "Aristotle's Physics and the Problem of Inquiry into Principles," in *Articles on Aristotle: 1. Science* (London: Duckworth, 1975), 127–40.

⁴⁴ My interpretation of *prôtê hulê* as the primordial ground of a thing's being in *dunamis* is heavily indebted to Pierre Aubenque's lucid and thought-provoking discussion of the notion of matter in Aristotle's writings where he makes the following insightful remark: "Le mot le plus profond d'Aristote sur la matière est sans doute celui qui la désigne comme *phusis hupokeiménè* (*Phys.*, I, 7, 191a8), c'est-à-dire, si nous prenons le

The preceding analyses have suggested that Aristotle's understanding of prime matter does not fundamentally contradict the guiding claim of this chapter, namely, that *dunamis* and *energeia* are co-constitutive principles of being. On the contrary, Aristotle's of *prôtê hulê* as a threshold-concept provides us with a clear indication that every manifestation of *energeia* is always the result of some prior *dunamis*. In order to clarify the inextricable relationship between these terms, I suggested that we could imagine them in terms of a constantly intersecting spiral. With the aid of this image, we can more clearly see the way in which the complex relationship of *dunamis* and *energeia* is characterized by different forms of manifestation and temporality, which partially explains the difficulty to trying to jointly think of them. While the manifestation of *energeia* always becomes manifest as a result of an activity or work, the appearance of *dunamis* primarily takes place through a more latent and delayed form of phenomenalization. The latent temporalization of *dunamis* is, in part, what explains its relative independence from and irreducibility to *energeia*. Every *dunamis* is characterized by its own temporality (i.e., its own "when" [*pote*]) through which it makes its appearance. I suggest that this latent temporality of *dunamis* ought to be understood both in terms of excess and lack. By using the term "latency," I hope that both excess and lack appear as constitutive features of the temporality of *dunamis*. Interpreters have often drawn attention to the role of *dunamis* as lack to emphasize the "imperfect" or "incomplete" presence of a thing awaiting its fulfillment either in *energeia* or *entelecheia*. However, I believe that the corresponding excess of

mot *phusis* dans son sens archaïque, mais encore vivant chez Aristote, comme « éclosion toujours sous-jacente », "La matière chez Aristote," in *Problèmes aristotéliens: Philosophie théorique* (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 2009), 219. By relating the Greek notion of *peras* to the idea of a threshold, I am emphasizing the connection that exists between a being's determinacy and its always being at the limit. I would like to thank Walter Brogan for his insightful suggestion to think of the *peras* as a threshold rather than simply a limit.

dunamis has not received the same attention. *Dunamis* cannot unconditionally be understood as lack since one overlooks the fact that *dunamis* also gestures toward the excess of being, that is, in the capacity of something to be more than what it currently is.⁴⁵ Instead, a more adequate grasp of *dunamis*, which is supported by the preceding account of prime matter, requires an acknowledgement of the positive indetermination of the term, which suggests that it cannot merely be understood as an unfulfilled *energeia*.⁴⁶

V. The Question of the Priority of *Dunamis* or *Energeia*

The second major challenge to the co-constitutive character of *dunamis* and *energeia* in Aristotle's *Metaphysics* IX appears in the form of a central claim, which reads: "It appears that activity is prior to potentiality" [*phaneron hoti proteron energeia*

⁴⁵ A crucial example of this excessive character of *dunamis* appears in the form of *technê*. In the acquisition of a *technê*, one does not become entirely defined by a lack. Rather, one has gained an ability or skill to perform some function or activity. By acquiring some *dunamis*, we have become capable of more than what we currently are. Hence, the "incompleteness" indicated by the term *dunamis* has a profound double meaning that cannot cease to be a source of our meditations on the term. On the one hand, *dunamis* refers to that which is not-yet but, on the other hand, the not-yet is also the to-come. For a clear example of someone who struggles to grapple with the duality of *dunamis* as excess and lack, cf. Jan Patočka who writes, for instance, "La δύναμις est toujours à la fois possibilité des deux: avoir et ne pas avoir. La δύναμις est, en d'autres termes, le manque, le défaut de quelque chose dont il n'est pas encore décidé si la chose l'aura ou non. La δύναμις première, pure, est l'état d'indécision d'un quelque chose de déterminable," Patočka, *Aristote, ses devanciers, ses successeurs*, 168. What remains problematic in Patočka's account is the claim that *dunamis* can be simply understood as lack [*manque*] and fault [*défaut*]. By adopting this approach, Patočka's otherwise thought-provoking phenomenological interpretation of Aristotle nonetheless ends up reinforcing the basic prejudices of the most traditional reception of these terms.

⁴⁶ Given the hermeneutic approach that I have adopted in the present dissertation, I am unable, within the context of the present chapter, to discuss the other extreme possibility of a problematic dissymmetry between *dunamis* and *energeia*. If one surveys the entirety of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, then one will see that most beings [*ousiai*] described therein are constituted by the reciprocal and co-constitutive relationship of these two terms. However, there is one important exception that does not appear until quite late in the *Metaphysics*, namely, the figure of God [*ho theos*] whose being [*ousia*] is characterized solely by *energeia*. I will discuss the figure of God in the guise of the first unmoved mover in chapter three of this dissertation. As I will examine later, I suggest that the phenomenalization of God as pure *energeia* can only be characterized by the same kind of threshold-concept found in the discussion of prime matter. In this sense, God, like prime matter, is distinguished from other beings [*ousiai*] by being situated at the limits of all phenomenalization. This elusive presence of God's being is what seems to allow Aristotle to describe God as somehow causing movement in other things without itself being moved. Thus, with these considerations in mind, one would have to admit that God would be outside of the usual understanding of phenomenalization.

dunameôs estin] (*Met.* IX.8, 1049b5).⁴⁷ The priority of *energeia* over *dunamis* constitutes a more complex and difficult challenge than prime matter concerning their reciprocal and co-constitutive character. While the notion of *prôtê hulê* merely suggested the existence of a hypothetical primordial *dunamis* that would then engage in a dynamic interplay with *energeia* in order to disclose a thing's way of being, the priority thesis has often been understood as introducing a relationship of subordination between the two terms. Rather than understand *dunamis* and *energeia* as joint causes, the priority thesis seems to reinforce the idea that only *energeia* provides the most fundamental ontological and phenomenological contribution to the disclosure of something's being. According to this interpretation, the relationship between *dunamis* and *energeia* is no longer proportional and symmetrical, but hierarchical and asymmetrical.⁴⁸ Additionally, the priority thesis of *Metaphysics* IX.8 has often been understood as the central claim of the treatise as such.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ I have opted for the more phenomenologically sensitive translation of the Greek term *phaneron* as "appears" rather than follow Reeve's translation, which translates the term as "evident." My choice for drawing attention to the phenomenological character of the term *phaneron* is to resist the otherwise traditional reception of Aristotle's texts whereby the expression *phaneron* is detached from its experiential context and situated on a purely logical one. In my approach to Aristotle's writings, it is important to distinguish between the phenomenological interpretation of *phaneron* as "appears, reveals, discloses" from the purely logical interpretation of *phaneron* as "evident, clear, distinct." By adopting the purely logical approach to translating *phaneron*, one receives the impression that Aristotle's appeal to "evidentness" can be assimilated to the Cartesian approach of identifying "clear and distinct" ideas. The main benefit of the phenomenological translation and interpretation of *phaneron* is that it reminds us to situate Aristotle's concerns within the context of appearance and manifestation in the proto-phenomenological context in which they appear to take place. Cf. Kirkland, "Dialectic and Proto-Phenomenology in Aristotle's *Topics* and *Physics*"; Pavlos Kontos, "Aristotle in Phenomenology," in *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Phenomenology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 5–24.

⁴⁸ One of the clearest and most recent formulations of this interpretation can be found in Michail Peramatzis' monograph, *Priority in Aristotle's Metaphysics*. In the introduction to his monograph, Peramatzis writes, "In my view, Aristotelian priority, in its most general outline, consists in an asymmetric independence relation between prior and posterior items. Put simply, a prior item is (or can be) without the posterior item, while the latter is not (or cannot be) without the former," *Priority in Aristotle's Metaphysics*, 3. In addition to Peramatzis, this interpretation is shared by a majority of contemporary Aristotelian scholars. Cf. Stephen Menn, "The Origins of Aristotle's Concept of *Ἐνέργεια*: *Ἐνέργεια* and *Δύναμις*," *Ancient Philosophy* 14, no. 1 (1994): 73–114.

⁴⁹ For instance, Heidegger writes, "In this sentence Aristotle's thinking and *pari passu* Greek thinking reaches its peak," *Pathmarks*, ed. William McNeill (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 218; *Wegmarken*, ed. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Hermann (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1976), 286. Another instance of this can be found in the following remark made by Heidegger toward the end of his 1926

Some scholars go as far as to claim that the entire discussion of *Metaphysics* IX is building up to this thesis.⁵⁰ Thus, following these interpretations, it would be necessary to read the entirety of Aristotle's account of *dunamis* and *energeia* from the perspective of the priority thesis.

In what follows, I aim to relativize the supposed strictness of Aristotle's claim concerning the priority of *energeia* to *dunamis*. To begin, I will turn to Aristotle's discussion of the many senses of priority in *Metaphysics* V.11. By drawing on the seemingly aporetic⁵¹ character of this text, I offer an alternative approach to the question of the priority of *energeia* to *dunamis*, which highlights the decisive qualification of this priority with respect to time. By drawing attention to Aristotle's own hesitation concerning the temporal priority of *dunamis* or *energeia*, I argue that a possible solution to this ambivalence can be found in recognizing the *perspectival* character of priority. I claim that Aristotle's understanding of priority cannot be reduced to a single meaning. On the contrary, Aristotle's approach acknowledges the fact that priority is said in many ways. If this interpretation is plausible, then Aristotle's priority thesis does not fundamentally contradict the otherwise reciprocal relationship between *dunamis* and *energeia*. By acknowledging the perspectival dimension of the question of priority, I argue that the

Summer Semester lecture course: "Only by understanding the implicit sense of the Greek concept of Being as presence, can this apparently paradoxical thesis be clarified, namely, that actuality is prior to potentiality," *Basic Concepts of Ancient Philosophy*. Heidegger also makes this point toward the end of his interpretation of *Physics* II.1: "The basic thesis Aristotle has put forth concerning the hierarchy of ἐντελέχεια and δύναμις can be expressed briefly as follows: ἐντελέχεια is οὐσία "to a greater degree" than δύναμις is. Ἐνέργεια fulfills the essence of intrinsically stable presencing more essentially than δύναμις does," *Pathmarks*, 219; *Wegmarken*, 287. For a critical discussion of this claim, cf. Gonzalez, "Whose *Metaphysics* of Presence?"

⁵⁰ For an overview of those who have adopted this view, cf. Stephen Makin's excellent overview of these positions in Makin, *Aristotle: Metaphysics Book Θ*.

⁵¹ By referring to the following interpretation of priority as "aporetic," I am drawing upon the work of Pierre Aubenque. In what follows, I will be drawing heavily on Aubenque's discussion of the priority thesis in *Le problème de l'être chez Aristote: Essai sur la problématique aristotélicienne* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1962).

stakes of Aristotle's proto-phenomenological approach to being are further illustrated since the manifestation of *dunamis* or *energeia* will be directly related to the perspective adopted.

In order to begin clarifying Aristotle's understanding of priority [*proteron*], I will turn to his account of the many senses of the term in *Metaphysics* V.11. One of the most striking aspects of Aristotle's account of priority is that there does not appear to be a single, unified meaning of the term.⁵² Instead, Aristotle proceeds to offer various examples of priority (e.g., regarding time, movement, capacity, order, knowledge, substance, and so on) without ever arriving at an authoritative sense. Among the various forms of priority discussed, I would like to focus on his discussion of the priority in knowledge [*gnôsis*]:

What is prior in knowledge [*to tē gnôsei proteron*] is treated as also simply prior [*haplôs proteron*]. Of these things, the prior in account [*kata ton logon*] are distinct [*allôs*] from the prior in perception [*kata ton aisthêsin*]. For universals are prior in account [*kata men gar ton logon ta katholou protera*], whereas particulars are prior in perception [*kata de tēn aisthêsin ta kath' hekasta*] (*Met.* V.11, 1018b30-4)

In this passage, Aristotle claims that priority in knowledge [*gnôsis*] is unconditionally prior to all other forms of priority. However, priority in knowledge has an essentially twofold meaning: on the one hand, it can refer to knowledge of the account [*logos*] and, on the other hand, it can refer to the knowledge obtained by perception [*aisthêsis*]. Although one might

⁵² In defense of this interpretation, one could readily contrast this text with others like it. For instance, in *Metaphysics* V.12, Aristotle discusses the various senses of the term *dunamis* and concludes his account by offering what appears to be a primary sense of the term. In contrast, Aristotle's discussion of priority arrives at no such conclusion. Rather, it would almost appear as if Aristotle were aware that priority can have *only* a relative meaning depending on the perspective adopted. For this reason, I have decided to emphasize this perspectival approach to priority in my own interpretation of *Metaphysics* V.11.

be tempted to claim that one of these forms of knowledge must be prior to the other, there is no indication in Aristotle's text that this is the case. As Richard Bodéüs and Annick Stevens note, Aristotle does not explicitly assume a position in favor of either *logos* or *aisthêsis*.⁵³ Instead, one could say that the priority of *logos* or *aisthêsis* depends on the specific perspective adopted in one's inquiry.

This essentially twofold priority of knowledge according to *logos* and *aisthêsis* can equally be elucidated by drawing on a parallel distinction introduced by Aristotle. In order to elucidate the complicated issue of the priority of knowledge, Aristotle appeals to the distinction between *to katholou* and *to hekaston*. I do not wish to enter the debate concerning the translation of these terms, which is frequently rendered into English as "the universal" and "the particular," respectively.⁵⁴ For the purposes of the present discussion, it suffices to note that *to katholou* refers to "the whole," whereas *to hekaston* refers to "the particular." By drawing upon this parallel distinction, we can see that the knowledge of *logos* provides us a broader, holistic account of the whole [*to katholou*], whereas *aisthêsis* is authoritative when it comes to the particular [*to hekaston*]. In each case, we are dealing with a priority of knowledge. However, the precedence of either *logos* or *aisthêsis* will depend on whether we are interested in knowing the whole or the particular. However, for the present purposes, the most relevant aspect of Aristotle's discussion of priority is that these two forms are ultimately proportional and symmetrical since neither of them ultimately subordinates the other.

⁵³ "La première opposition voit s'affronter le jugement de la raison et celui de la sensation, la seconde le jugement de la raison et la réalité ontologique; mais dans aucun des deux cas Aristote ne nous dit quelle instance sera capable de décider de ce qu'il en est en vérité" Richard Bodéüs and Annick Stevens, eds., *Métaphysique – Delta* (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 2014), 143.

⁵⁴ For a particularly insightful approach to the relationship between the universal and the particular in Aristotle's writings, cf. Christopher P. Long, "Between the Universal and the Singular in Aristotle," *Telos* 126 (2003): 25–40.

In order to further explore the extent to which Aristotle's understanding of priority is informed by plurivocity and perspectivalism, I would like to draw attention to the following passage:

But since there are many ways of being [*to einai pollachôs*], first, the underlying thing is prior, which is why beingness is prior [*prôton men to hupokeimenon proteron, dio hê ousia proteron*]. Second, the potential cases are distinct from the actual ones [*epeita allôs ta kata dunamin kai kata' entelecheian*]. For some things are potentially prior [*ta men gar kata dunamin protera esti*], others actually so [*ta de kata entelecheian*]*—*for example, potentially, the half-line is prior to the whole, and the part [*to morion*] to the whole [*tês holês*], and the matter [*hê hulê*] to the being [*tês ousias*], whereas actually, they are posterior, since it is [only] when the whole has been dissolved that the part will actually be (*Met. V.11, 1019a4-10*).

I claim that this passage offers a clear illustration of how the question of priority can be understood as perspectival. In order to avoid potential misunderstanding, I am not suggesting that Aristotle believes that one can adopt any perspective on the question of priority. Instead, I argue that Aristotle's approach to priority is cognizant of the qualified character of all priority claims. By drawing attention to unqualified aspect of priority claims, Aristotle acknowledges the fact that priority will always entail a multiplicity of

perspectives that are sometimes opposed but equally legitimate.⁵⁵ Returning to the issue of the priority of *dunamis* or *energeia*, one could argue that, with the preceding discussion in mind, it seems difficult to argue for an absolute priority of one over the other. The priority of *energeia/entelecheia* cannot be absolutely or unconditionally taken as the only sense of priority, even if the *dunamis* only becomes readily apparent after abstracting from the thing in *energeia*. Hence, it would appear that Aristotle's understanding of priority with regard to *dunamis* and *energeia* requires a more nuanced and cautious approach, which is capable of recognizing their identity and difference as it becomes manifest through their reciprocal and co-constitutive interweaving that sometimes results in the priority of the former and sometimes in that of the latter.⁵⁶ Thus, drawing on the preceding analysis, we can conclude that Aristotle's understanding of priority as complex and polyvalent rather than static and unconditional. The absence of any absolute or unqualified meaning of priority suggests that priority is always qualified, relative, and perspectival.

Returning to Aristotle's priority thesis in *Metaphysics* IX.8, I would now like to focus on Aristotle's curious qualification of the thesis with respect to time [*chronos*].

⁵⁵ I would like to thank Justin Humphreys for his insightful suggestions on my interpretation of the perspectival character of priority.

⁵⁶ The question of priority with respect to *dunamis* and *energeia* is a complex one and I do not assume that I have exhaustively dealt with the issue in any way. However, I do believe that the preceding discussion can offer the necessary preparation for a more sustained defense and articulation of the perspectival position. Within the current scholarship, my position most closely resembles the one developed by Mark Senteny in his essay, "Are Potency and Actuality Compatible in Aristotle?". Senteny offers a substantial critique of what he refers to as the "incompatibilist interpretation" and suggests that ultimately *dunamis* and *energeia* in fact are compatible. Although Senteny does not go as far as I do in drawing the consequence of perspectival priority concerning *dunamis* and *energeia*, I believe there is a certain harmony between his position and the one being developed here. In contrast, cf. Enrico Berti, "Potenza e Atto in Aristotele: Concetti Assoluti o Relativi?," *Aquinas* 59, no. 1 (2016): 13–26, which, to my mind, offers an unsatisfactory account of the relationship between these two terms. Although one would assume that the title of this essay would promise a substantial engagement with the relationship of these terms, Berti limits his engagement with *Metaphysics* IX.8 to a brief couple of pages without really touching on the critical issue. Furthermore, Berti's analysis seems more focused on Aristotle's suggestion that the unmoved mover is a being characterized by pure *energeia* than he is in trying to clarify the relationship between *dunamis* and *energeia*.

According to Aristotle, *energeia* is prior in account [*logos*] and being [*ousia*] to *dunamis*, but with respect to time [*chronos*], there is a way in which it is prior and a way in which it is not (*Met.* IX.8, 1049b10-2). Aristotle’s qualification of the temporal priority of *energeia* to *dunamis* suggests that this issue is qualified and perspectival. Although most scholars gloss over this interesting qualification,⁵⁷ I am interested in the extent to which Aristotle’s qualification of temporal priority can be interpreted as providing a further illustration of his proto-phenomenological approach. In what follows, I suggest that Aristotle’s priority thesis does not need to be read solely through the lens of the overarching priority in being [*ousia*]. Rather, I argue that an equally legitimate and suggestive interpretation can be developed by drawing upon Aristotle’s proto-phenomenological sensitivity to the alternating priority of *dunamis* and *energeia* with respect to time.⁵⁸

To begin, I would like to draw attention to the peculiar formulation of Aristotle’s qualification of temporal priority: “In time [*chronô*] [*energeia*] is prior [*proteron*] in this way: an active thing [*energoun*] that is the same in form [*tô eidei to auto*], but not in number [*arithmô d’ou*], is prior” (*Met.* IX.8, 1049b17-9). Drawing attention to the distinction between form [*eidos*] and number [*arithmos*], Aristotle can simultaneously maintain the

⁵⁷ For instance, Charlotte Witt writes, “Priority in time is fairly straightforward; it is temporal and causal priority; priority in the order of generation,” *Ways of Being: Potentiality and Actuality in Aristotle’s Metaphysics*, 77. Similarly, Stephen Makin writes, “Temporal priority is the most clearly defined of the various types of priority considered by Aristotle in this chapter,” *Aristotle: Metaphysics Book Θ*, 185. Finally, Peramatzis also notes: “For brevity’s sake, I shall leave to the side definitional and temporal types of priority as they are relatively unproblematic,” *Priority in Aristotle’s Metaphysics*, 279. Among the few scholars who noted the exceptional character of Aristotle’s discussion of temporal priority and sought to develop the consequences of this priority, I would like to note the work of Pierre Aubenque and Christopher P. Long in particular. Cf. Aubenque, *Le problème de l’être chez Aristote: Essai sur la problématique aristotélicienne*; Long, *The Ethics of Ontology: Rethinking an Aristotelian Legacy*.

⁵⁸ In what follows, I am expanding on the following suggestion made by Pierre Aubenque concerning the relativity of priority in Aristotle’s understanding of *dunamis* and *energeia*: “Il faudra bien convenir que le débat sur l’antériorité respective de la puissance ou de l’acte — débat qui donnera lieu plus tard à des railleries faciles — est un faux débat. L’acte et la puissance sont co-originaires ; ils ne sont que des extases du mouvement ; seul est réel l’affrontement de la puissance et de l’acte au sein du mouvement,” *Le problème de l’être chez Aristote: Essai sur la problématique aristotélicienne*, 442–43.

temporal priority of *dunamis* over *energeia* with respect to number and *energeia* over *dunamis* with respect to form. This complex point can be illustrated by the following example: if I looked around a garden, then I would be able to see that the previous harvest of tomatoes is temporally prior to the ones currently in season. However, if I were to focus not on the *eidê* of the tomatoes, but on this specific tomato, which is the same in number, then I could claim that the seed of *this* tomato is temporally prior to the full-grown tomato. Expanding on this highly compressed formulation, Aristotle offers a more concrete illustration of this point in the following passage:

I mean this, that to this human who is already actively what he is [*tou êdê ontos kat' energeian*], and to the corn and to what is seeing, the matter and the seed and what is capable of seeing, which are potentially [*dunamei*] a human and corn and seeing, but not yet actively so [*energeia d' oupô*], are prior in time [*proteron tô chronô*] (*Met.* IX.8, 1049b19-23).

This passage provides further evidence of Aristotle's sustained commitment to acknowledge the temporal priority of both *dunamis* and *energeia*. On the one hand, Aristotle draws attention to the manifestation of a being as *energeia* (e.g., a human being, corn, active seer), which are temporally prior to their potential states when considered according to the whole [*to katholou*]. But, on the other hand, Aristotle then shows how their potential states (e.g., the potential human, seed, and potential seer) are also temporally prior to their active states when considered from the perspective of the particular [*to hekaston*]. In his attempt to remain faithful to the proto-phenomenological way in which temporal priority becomes manifest, Aristotle does not unconditionally assert the priority

of either *dunamis* or *energeia*. Instead, Aristotle simply remains steady to his proto-phenomenological analysis, which allows both to be temporally prior to the other without violating the principle of non-contradiction. Thus, Aristotle's analysis, at least up to this point, seems perfectly capable of acknowledging the equal proto-phenomenological legitimacy of the temporal priority of *dunamis* and *energeia*.

Even though the preceding pages have suggested a possible approach to the question of priority in Aristotle's thinking, there is no denying that the issue remains a complicated one. The fact that Aristotle's text never definitively offers an unqualified response to the priority of either *dunamis* or *energeia* appears of the utmost importance. Although there are certain passages where Aristotle seems to unconditionally affirm the priority of *energeia* to *dunamis*, I have suggested that a more complex and nuanced understanding of priority can be evoked in order to problematize this otherwise straightforward approach, especially when adopting a proto-phenomenological approach to being. To illustrate this point, we could draw attention to the following well-known passage, which has often been read as reaffirming Aristotle's commitment to the absolute priority of *energeia* to *dunamis*:

Prior in time [*protera tô chronô*] to these, however, are other things that are actively what they are, from which these came to be [*hetera onta energeia ek hôn tauta egeneto*]. For what actively is always comes to be from what potentially is as a result of what actively is [*aei gar ek tou dunamei ontos gignetai to energeia on hupo energeia ontos*] (for example, human from human, musician as a result of musician), there

being always a first mover [*aei kinountos tinos prôtou*]; and the [first] mover already actively is [*to de kinoun energeia êdê estin*] (*Met.* IX.8, 1049b23-7).

This passage would appear to reinstate the absolute priority of *energeia* over *dunamis*, which subordinates all manifestation of the latter to the presence of the former. According to this perspective, the Archimedean point of Aristotle's ontology and metaphysics is none other than *energeia*, which establishes a hierarchical relationship between itself and *dunamis*. Thus, Aristotle can be read as the foundational figure of the metaphysics of presence since the meaning of being can only be found in the notion of *energeia* understood as "actual presence," which makes *dunamis* entirely subservient to *energeia*.⁵⁹

In order to problematize this traditional interpretation, I would like to turn to a passage in *Metaphysics* IX.8 that I claim further illustrates the complex interrelation between *dunamis* and *energeia*, which makes it difficult to decide on whether Aristotle can simply be understood as founding a metaphysics of presence or if there are also resources in his text for deconstructing it:

Animals do not see in order that they may have sight [*ou gar hina opsin echôsîn horôsi ta zôa*], rather they have sight in order that they may see [*horôsîn opsin echousîn*], and similarly too they have the craft of building in order that they may build and the capacity to contemplate in order that they may contemplate (*Met.* IX.8, 1050a10-2).

⁵⁹ Cf. Long, *The Ethics of Ontology: Rethinking an Aristotelian Legacy*. For a critical engagement with Long's interpretation, cf. Francisco J. Gonzalez, "Form in Aristotle: Oppressive Universal or Individual Act?," *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal* 26, no. 2 (2005): 179–98.

This passage provides us with a clear illustration of how *dunamis* and *energeia* are intricately linked in something as supposedly straightforward as the activity of sight in animals. According to Aristotle, animals do not see [*opsis*] for the sake of “having sight” [*echôsin horôsi*]. On the contrary, animals have the *dunamis* for seeing in order to see [*horôsin*].⁶⁰ Put otherwise, the *energeia* of sight is not for the sake of the *dunamis*. Rather, it is the *dunamis* that can be described as the capacity for having [*echousin*] this capacity and being able to exercise it. However, Aristotle’s use of the verb “to have” [*echo*] offers a possible insight into how *dunamis* and *energeia* partake in such a complex interplay to the point of their indistinguishability.⁶¹ Hence, Aristotle’s insightfulness is a result of having understood how difficult it is to distinguish *dunamis* and *energeia*, while nonetheless being attentive to the complex and intricate way these terms co-operate to give expression to a thing’s distinctive way of being.

⁶⁰ Aristotle’s use of the subjunctive mood here is worth noting since it suggests that it is not simply the activity of sight that interests him here, but rather the possibility [*dunamis*] of sight understood as a capacity. In chapter five of the present dissertation, I will return to the capacity of sight [*opsis*] in the context of a broader discussion of perception [*aisthêsis*] with the aim of showing how *dunamis* and *energeia* are dynamically co-operate in Aristotle’s thinking.

⁶¹ Although I cannot expand on this insight within the context of the present chapter, I would nonetheless like to note the connection between the verb “to have” [*echein*] and the Aristotelian notion of *hexis*. According to Agamben, “The concept of habit (*hexis*) was thought by Aristotle precisely to eliminate the aporias implicit in this doctrine and to assure to potential some reality,” *The Use of Bodies*, 59; *L’uso dei corpi* (Vicenza: Neri Pozza Editore, 2017), 89. While Agamben considers the notion of *hexis* as rendering Aristotle’s thought inconsistent (cf. also *Opus Dei: An Archaeology of Duty*, trans. Adam Kotsko (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2013).), I would suggest that the present interpretation of *dunamis* and *energeia* provides the necessary background for arriving at a more harmonious understanding of their inextricable relationship in the notion of habit. Although sharing some of Agamben’s hesitations, the following passage by Pierre Rodrigo resonates with the overall attempt of the present dissertation to understand the co-constitutive character of *dunamis* and *energeia*: “Whatever its limitations may be, *hexis*, such as Aristotle presents it to us, involves a *vectorial, dynamic conception of being*. We should understand by this a conception of being as tension towards, and as intending, this quite determinate fulfillment that is represented, in each situation, by the conjoined *energeia* (or second entelechy) of subject and object,” “The Dynamic of *Hexis* in Aristotle’s Philosophy,” trans. Clare Carlisle, *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* 42, no. 1 (2011): 14; *Aristote. Une philosophie pratique: Praxis, politique et bonheur* (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 2006), 124.

Although the traditional interpretation of Aristotle's account of *dunamis* and *energeia* continues to hold sway over the reception of his texts, I hope to have suggested an alternative approach to this issue. Challenging the subordination of *dunamis* to *energeia*, I have suggested that these terms are best understood as reciprocal and co-constitutive principles of being. By adopting this approach to *Metaphysics* IX, the present interpretation has resisted the tendency to attribute what appear to be inconsistencies in his account to failures in Aristotle's thinking. On the contrary, my interpretation approaches these moments as genuine *aporias*, which Aristotle aims to describe and analyze according to a proto-phenomenological fidelity that follows the constant interplay between *dunamis* and *energeia*. This complex and agonistic tension hardly ever appears to be unconditionally resolved into a harmonious simplicity. Instead, *dunamis* and *energeia* appear to be characterized by a constant oscillation that sometimes is a result of the former and at other times is due to the latter. Rather than believing that these tensions ultimately become resolved in an overly static understanding of *energeia* as "actuality," the present interpretation has sought to situate these terms as part of an ongoing co-operation of the terms in their joint effort to disclose being.

VI. Conclusion

The present chapter has laid the foundations for a unified interpretation of *Metaphysics* IX. Situating the theme and scope of the treatise as a joint investigation into being as *dunamis* and *energeia*, I have argued that Aristotle's account understands these terms as co-constitutive principles for the disclosure of being. Aristotle's rejection of the Megarian leveling of *dunamis* to *energeia* and being to sheer presence lays the foundation

for his nuanced approach to the identity and difference of these terms. Such an investigation into the sameness and difference of *dunamis* and *energeia* finds its peak in *Metaphysics* IX.6 where Aristotle suggests that both terms are proportionally and reciprocally related to the disclosure of the *to huparchein to pragma*, that is, the existence of a thing's way of being. Based on this interpretation, I suggested that Aristotle's account is already characterized by a proto-phenomenological sensitivity insofar as these terms refer to distinct forms of the manifestation and disclosure of a thing's being.

As suggested toward the beginning of this chapter, it is important to distinguish the proto-phenomenological account of being as *dunamis* and *energeia* from the categorial account of being as *ousia*. While these two accounts are by no means mutually exclusive, they are distinguished by sharp methodological differences. The latter can be understood as deploying a form of linguistic analysis that is focused on how being is *said*. In contrast, I have suggested that the former is best described as proto-phenomenological, which is primarily focused on how being *appears* and *becomes manifest*. Without wishing to exaggerate the distinction between these two approaches, there is little doubt that the proto-phenomenological approach to being as *dunamis* and *energeia* offers a clearer illustration of the dynamic sense of being at stake in Aristotle's understanding of complex beings (e.g., natural beings). Although a more substantial defense would be needed to legitimate this interpretation, I would nonetheless suggest that this incipient proto-phenomenological sense of being as *dunamis* and *energeia* is perhaps what led Heidegger to read the tenth and final chapter of *Metaphysics* IX on truth and falsity [*alêtheia kai pseudos*] as the culminating point of the treatise.⁶² Unfortunately, Heidegger never developed this

⁶² Although Heidegger develops this suggestion throughout several lecture courses across his writings, a particularly clear and precise formulation can be found in the following passage from his very last seminar

otherwise extremely productive and suggestive approach to *Metaphysics IX*. I have attempted in the preceding pages to develop some of these indications in my own way through a unified interpretation of this treatise. If I were tempted to develop Heidegger's insight, then I would suggest that one should resist the initial temptation to associate *dunamis* simply with concealment [*lêthe*] and *energeia* solely with unconcealment [*alêtheia*] in order to arrive at a more nuanced account of how both terms are implicated in the interplay between concealment and unconcealment.

Having laid out the foundations of Aristotle's proto-phenomenological approach to being as *dunamis* and *energeia* as it appears in *Metaphysics IX*, the following chapter will expand on these insights by turning to other texts in the Aristotelian *corpus* that bring these terms to bear on the manifestation of being. In order to further ground the ontological validity of *dunamis* and *energeia* as co-constitutive principles of being, I will turn to a discussion of *Physics I* where Aristotle provides a sustained account of the principles [*archai*] of natural beings. I aim to show how that Aristotle's simultaneously twofold and tripartite understanding of ontological principles is entirely compatible with the account developed in *Metaphysics IX* concerning *dunamis* and *energeia*. Without collapsing Aristotle's account of being as *dunamis* and *energeia* to the well-known distinction between matter [*hulê*] and form [*eidos*], I suggest that the former distinction elucidates the dynamic quality of the interrelationship of the latter two terms. Turning to the discussion

on Aristotle in 1951: "Wenn also das ἀληθές das κυριώτατα ὄν ist und anderseits die ἐνέργεια für Aristoteles gerade die Interpretation des Seins ist, wo sich das Anwesendste des Anwesenden zeigt, dann ist der Zusammenhang von Θ 1-9 und Θ10 verständlich," *Seminare: Platon – Aristoteles – Augustinus*, 661. For other places where Heidegger suggests this connection, cf. *Logic: The Question of Truth*, trans. Thomas Sheehan (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2010); *Logik: Die Frage nach der Wahrheit*, ed. Walter Biemel (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1976); *The Essence of Human Freedom: An Introduction to Philosophy*, trans. Ted Sadler (New York: Continuum, 2005); *Vom Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit: Einleitung in die Philosophie*, ed. Harmut Tietjen (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1982).

of nature [*phusis*] in *Physics* II, I show how Aristotle's account similarly suggests a complex interrelationship between matter and form, which can be said to replicate the co-constitutive relationship between *dunamis* and *energeia*. I conclude my interpretation of *Physics* II by suggesting that the activity of matter and form as joint causes can best be understood according to the proto-phenomenological interpretation already displayed to be at work in *Metaphysics* IX.

Chapter 2. The Dynamic Twofoldness of Nature as Matter and Form

“These sentences do not simply recapitulate the already proven thesis, namely, that φύσις can be spoken of in *two* ways. Much more important is the emphasis given to the crucial thought that φύσις, spoken of in two ways, is not a being [*nicht ein Seiendes*], but a manner of being [*eine Art des Seins*].”⁶³

I. Introduction

Although there are specific methodological differences between the *Physics* and *Metaphysics*, it is also important to acknowledge the decisive overlap between the two texts. As Pierre Aubenque has shown at the beginning of his exceptional study, the title “Metaphysics” cannot be directly attributed to Aristotle.⁶⁴ However, as the title suggests, the editor of Aristotle’s writings made use of the expression *meta ta phusika* in order to assemble several Aristotelian treatises that seem to both bear some resemblance to the investigations carried out in the *Physics*, while also seeming to go beyond them. In brief, the reception of Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* has continually oscillated between these two meanings: on the one hand, these treatises are continuous with the investigations of the *Physics* but, on the other hand, these investigations seem to point to something beyond [*meta*] the physical world (e.g., the divine).

According to Aubenque, the reception of Aristotle’s writings has been defined by these two main strains whereby there are those who emphasize the continuity between physics and first philosophy, whereas there are others who stress the discontinuity between

⁶³ Heidegger, *Pathmarks*, 215; *Wegmarken*, 281.

⁶⁴ The following reconstruction of this problematic are indebted to Pierre Aubenque’s exceptionally lucid account in the introduction to *Le problème de l’être chez Aristote: Essai sur la problématique aristotélicienne*, 21–70.

these two investigations. The discontinuous interpretation is developed by the neo-Platonic tradition, which strives to identify the theological dimension of Aristotle's thinking as the one most adequately corresponding to the goal of first philosophy.⁶⁵ Following this neo-Platonic interpretation, Aristotle's *Metaphysics* is primarily concerned with going beyond physics and toward God [*ho theos*] as the goal of being *qua* being. While the neo-Platonic reception of Aristotle's writings continue to influence the interpretation of his texts, Aubenque is right on insisting that physics and first philosophy might share important affinities, which would support the continuity thesis between the *Physics* and *Metaphysics*.

If one were to defend the commonality between these two treatises, then we could begin by noting that both the *Physics* and *Metaphysics* share an interest with the natural world and the beings therein. Although God appears during Aristotle's account of being *qua* being in the *Metaphysics*, one should not overlook the fact that this collection of treatises nonetheless is constantly preoccupied with the being of natural beings. Commenting on the connection between these two texts, Heidegger writes, "in a quite essential sense [*wesentlichen Sinne*], meta-physics is "physics," i.e., knowledge of φύσις (ἐπιστήμη φυσική)."⁶⁶ According to Heidegger, "in general it makes little sense to say that the *Physics* precedes [*gehe voraus*] the *Metaphysics*, because metaphysics is just as much "physics" as physics is "metaphysics."⁶⁷ Heidegger's remarks offer an important reminder that one should not restrict Aristotle's ontological investigations simply to the *Metaphysics*. The *Physics* also contains important ontological analyses of the being of natural beings,

⁶⁵ For an excellent discussion of this reception, cf. the conclusion to Aubenque's study, *Le problème de l'être chez Aristote: Essai sur la problématique aristotélicienne*.

⁶⁶ "Meta-physisk ist in einem ganz wesentlichen Sinne »Physik« – d.h. ein Wissen von der φύσις (ἐπιστήμη φυσική)," Heidegger, *Pathmarks*, 185; *Wegmarken*, 241.

⁶⁷ "Überhaupt hat es wenig Sinn zu sagen, die »Physik« gehe der »Metaphysik« voraus, da Metaphysik ebenso sehr »Physik« ist als die Physik »Metaphysik«,," Heidegger, *Pathmarks*, 185; *Wegmarken*, 242.

even if it refrains from commenting on those things that seem to go beyond the purely physical realm. Thus, it is a fundamental mistake to interpret the *Physics* as the simply “ontic” complement to the ontological investigations found in the *Metaphysics*.⁶⁸ Instead, both texts offer significant ontological descriptions of what it means for a natural being to be.

In this chapter, I follow Heidegger’s suggestion that both the *Physics* and *Metaphysics* are characterized by a joint ontological project, namely, to elucidate the being of natural beings. In order to establish this connection, I will show the compatibility between the ontological account of the principles developed in *Physics* I and the previously discussed account of *dunamis* and *energeia* in *Metaphysics* IX. I argue that the compatibility between these two accounts can be understood as a result of their shared proto-phenomenological approach to being. Aristotle’s *Physics* is not an abstract analysis of the principles of natural beings. On the contrary, as Aristotle notes throughout the opening sections of this treatise, the task of the *Physics* is to arrive at concrete understanding of the way in which beings become manifest by way of their matter [*hulē*]

⁶⁸ As noted above, my use of the terms “ontic” and “ontological” follow Heidegger’s own helpful distinction between these two understandings of being in *Being and Time*. However, the same point can be made with less technical and extraneous vocabulary. For instance, there are some Aristotelian scholars who interpret the *Physics* as a work of “natural science” [*epistēme phusikē*]. A key example of this can be found in Robert Bolton’s interpretation. Cf. “Aristotle’s Method in Natural Science: Physics I,” in *Aristotle’s Physics: A Collection of Essays*, ed. Lindsay Judson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003), 1–30. According to this interpretation, there is little to no “ontological” value to the *Physics* at all. Instead, the *Physics* is something more akin to a concrete working out of physical or natural phenomena that have little to no relation with Aristotle’s discussion of being *qua* being as described in the *Metaphysics*. While this view continues to draw supporters, I suggest that this approach ends up underappreciating the extent to which Aristotle’s philosophical writings seem to be constantly preoccupied with offering an account of being *qua* being such that making a strict distinction between an *epistēme* of *phusis* and one of being [*to on*] seems less attractive than to understand his concerns as ultimately guided by the aim of clarifying being as such [*to einai*] in all of its different forms of manifestation. For a well-argued critique of the view that Aristotle’s *Physics* constitutes an empirical investigation into nature, cf. the introduction, “Le mythe d’une physique empiriste” to Lambros Couloubaritsis, *La Physique d’Aristote: L’avènement de la science physique* (Bruxelles: Ousia, 1997), 17–48.

and form [*eidōs*], especially as they are dynamically at play in the notion of nature [*phusis*]. Such an approach to natural beings reinforces the claim that *dunamis* and *energeia* function as reciprocal and co-constitutive principles of the being of natural beings.

II. The Natural Approach to the Principles of Being

I would like to begin demonstrating the compatibility between the two accounts found in *Metaphysics* IX and *Physics* I by turning to the opening lines of the latter treatise:

Since all inquiries, in which there are principles [*archai*], causes [*aitia*], or elements [*stoicheia*], knowledge and understanding [*to eidenai kai to epistasthai*] come about from knowledge [*gnôrizein*] of these (for we believe that we know each thing when we know its primary causes and principles, even down to its elements), it is clear that the first task in the understanding of nature [*tês peri phuseôs epistêmês*] must be to determine the principles (*Phys.* I.1, 184a10-6).

This passage provides us with a helpful insight into the general methodological principle guiding Aristotle's investigation into nature. According to Aristotle, all knowledge [*to eidenai*] and understanding [*epistêmê*] deals with principles, causes, or elements since we say that we know [*gnôrizein*] something when we have arrived at a clear grasp of them. Even though Aristotle establishing this as the fundamental methodological principle of the *Physics*, it is nonetheless worth noting that this approach is not simply restricted to the domain of nature. On the contrary, Aristotle's remarks on the proper method of natural

investigations can readily be articulated to other domains of inquiry, such as ethics, politics, and so on. In his 1924 Summer Semester lecture course, Heidegger even goes as far as to describe this opening passage of the *Physics* as part of Aristotle's overall project of *archê*-research,⁶⁹ which could be understood as any investigation concerned with arriving at an account of the principles of beings. Thus, the broad methodological discussion found in the opening lines of Aristotle's *Physics* lends support to important continuity between this text and the *Metaphysics*. Both texts are concerned at the most elementary level with elucidating the principles through which a being shows itself as what it is, which is the primary goal of any understanding of being as such.

Aristotle continues his opening methodological discussion in *Physics* I by suggesting the following natural way [*pephuke hê hodos*] to conduct such an investigation into the principles, causes, and elements of beings:

The natural route [*pephuke hê hodos*] is from the things that are more knowable and more conspicuous to us [*ek tôn gnôrismôterôn hêmin kai saphesterôn*] to things that are most conspicuous and known by nature [*ta saphestera tê phusei kai gnôrimôtera*], since the same things are not knowable to us as are knowable simply [*ou gar tauta hemin te gnôrima kai haplôs*] (*Phys.* I.1, 184a16-8).

⁶⁹ Cf. Heidegger, *Basic Concepts of Aristotelian Philosophy; Grundbegriffe der aristotelischen Philosophie*. Heidegger's suggestion has an interesting plausibility from a philological and hermeneutic perspective. According to the list of Aristotelian treatises compiled by Diogenes Laertius, there supposedly exists a treatise [*logoi*] entitled simply "*Peri archôn*" ["Concerning principles"], which could very well be the text that has been transmitted to us as Book I of the *Physics*. For an account of this possible connection, cf. the introductory remarks to W. D. Ross, ed., *Aristotle's Physics: A Revised Text with Introduction and Commentary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1936).

This passage draws upon a well-known Aristotelian leitmotif whereby one moves from what is clearer to us toward that which is clearer by nature. There is perhaps no clearer articulation of what we could call Aristotle's proto-phenomenological method than this general principle. According to such an approach, we would begin with what initially appears to us as familiar in order then to proceed toward that which is inconspicuous or inapparent to us but is clearer by nature. Thus, Aristotle's decision to begin with initial appearances and manifestations can be understood as part and parcel of his overall proto-phenomenological approach to being.⁷⁰

The preceding remarks have begun to identify the proto-phenomenological aspects that appear toward the beginning of the *Physics*. However, I would now like to further elucidate this character of Aristotle's thinking by showing how his understanding of principle, cause, and element already include this proto-phenomenological dimension. Although each of these terms play a decisive role in Aristotle's investigation into natural beings, I would like to focus my attention specifically on the notion of principle [*archê*] since the meaning of this term significantly informs his understanding of the other two terms. The role of the term *archê* in Aristotle's thinking can hardly be overstated. Throughout his writings, Aristotle's approach is characterized by a constant concern with the principle that constitutes the being of beings. Aristotle's most sustained discussion of the term "principle" can be found in *Metaphysics* V.1 where he introduces at least six possible meanings of the term *archê*. Fortunately, it is unnecessary to examine all six

⁷⁰ For an excellent discussion of how the opening passages of *Physics* I can be read in this proto-phenomenological way, Cf. Kirkland, "Dialectic and Proto-Phenomenology in Aristotle's *Topics* and *Physics*." Moreover, I would like to acknowledge that my use of the term "proto-phenomenology" is heavily indebted to Kirkland's article. Additionally, I understand Wolfgang Wieland's interpretation of the opening passages of *Physics* I to be offering a similar proto-phenomenological approach to Aristotle's thinking. Cf. "Aristotle's *Physics* and the Problem of Inquiry into Principles."

meanings of the term since, according to Aristotle, the common root of these various senses is found in the following one: “It is common, then, to all principles to be the first thing from which a thing is, or comes to be, or is known [*pasôn men oun koinon tôn archôn to proton einai hōthen ê estin ê gignetai ê gignosketai*] (*Met.* V.1, 1031a17-9). This common definition of *archê* mentions at least three possible senses of the term, which can be roughly identified as “ontological,” “genetic,” and “epistemological.” While one could interpret these possibilities as primarily exclusive disjunctions, I will approach Aristotle’s common account of *archê* as an inclusive disjunction, which means that any of these senses of the term adequately convey the meaning of the term.

Drawing on this broad sense of *archê*, we can interpret the opening lines in a comprehensive proto-phenomenological sense. According to this interpretation, Aristotle’s search for the principles of being can be understood in either an ontological, genetic, or epistemological register. In each case, the ultimate concern of Aristotle’s account is to arrive at an understanding of how a being shows itself as what it is. This self-manifestation of beings can take place through its existence [*einai*], its coming to be [*gignetai*], or how we come to know it [*gignosketai*]. In other words, there is no need to reduce Aristotle’s search for the *archê* to any of these forms. On the contrary, according to the broad definition of “principle,” the most comprehensive description of Aristotle’s project is to arrive at nothing short of the various aspects of a thing’s being and the way it can be known.⁷¹ Hence, it is not surprising that Aristotle continues his account of *archê* by noting

⁷¹ In my approach to the fundamental significance of the broadest sense of the term *archê*, I have benefited from John Sallis’ insightful remarks on the term in *The Figure of Nature: On Greek Origins* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2016). To illustrate the proximity of his description of *archê* with the one analyzed here, I would like to draw attention to the following passage where Sallis draws on the various senses of the term in its most general and broad definition: “An ἀρχή is, first of all, that from which things arise, that by virtue of which they come forth into the open; but furthermore, it is that which has sovereignty

that “things are also said to be causes in an equal number of ways [*isachôs de kai ta aitia legetai*], since all causes are principles [*panta gar ta aitia archai*]” (*Met.* V.1, 1013a16-7).⁷² In short, Aristotle’s approach to the principles of being can be understood in their most expansive meaning as a concern with the tripartite aim of clarifying the existence, coming to be, and knowability of some being.

III. The Contrarian Structure of the Principles of Being

The preceding remarks on the opening passage of *Physics* I has provided an important orientation to our interpretation of this text. However, this discussion has left the theme of the treatise somewhat unclear. In what follows, I will adopt the “method of subordination” by turning to *Physics* I.2 in order to clarify the theme of the treatise. Although *Physics* I.1 does not provide us with a clear indication of the theme of the treatise, we can safely assume the following fact about the text: its theme is concerned with developing an investigation concerning nature. We have also noted that this approach to nature takes the form of an interest in the principles, causes, and elements of natural beings. Hence, the opening treatise of the *Physics* prepares the broad ontological stakes of the

over things, that which commands their coming forth, not merely at a point of origin but throughout their entire course,” Sallis, 16.

⁷² Although a thorough discussion of the meaning of *aitia* is beyond the scope of the present chapter, it is worth emphasizing the connection drawn by Aristotle between *archê* and *aitia*. In *Metaphysics* V.2, Aristotle offers the well-known account of the four primary senses of *aitia*: first, the underlying thing [*to hupokeimenon*]; second, the what-it-was-to-be [*to ti ên einai*]; third, the principle of change and rest [*archê tês metabolês ê staseôs*]; fourth, the end and the good [*to telos kai tagathon*] (*Met.* V.2, 1013b16-28). Aristotle continues his account by suggesting that the term *aitia* is primarily articulated in terms of these four meanings. However, in addition to these, there are various ways [*tropoi polloi*] of being causes (*Met.* V.2, 1013b28-30). Aristotle proceeds to note at least six ways in which something can be a cause. But the one that is most relevant for the purposes of the present dissertation is the following: “all of them either as actualities or potentially [*panta de ê hôs energounta ê kata dunamin*]” (*Met.* V.2, 1014a19-20). In other words, the broadest sense of *dunamis* and *energeia* provide a further insight into the way in which causes become manifest. Hence, the broad applicability of *dunamis* and *energeia* to Aristotle’s overall account of principle and cause elucidates both being and coming-to-be.

investigation into *phusis* without specifying the exact theme of the treatise. For this reason, one can interpret the scope of the opening treatise of the *Physics* as outlining the broad ontological stakes of the investigation into *phusis*.

While the preceding analysis of *Physics* I.1 has provided us with an indication of the scope of this treatise, it is now worth attempting to elucidate its theme. Aristotle begins *Physics* I.2 with the following observation: “It is necessary that the principle [of beings] to be either one or many” (*Phys.* I.2, 184b15-6). With the aid of this passage, we can see that Aristotle’s primary preoccupation in this treatise is to arrive at a clearer grasp on the nature and number of the principles. The broad ontological character of *Physics* I.2 can be appreciated in how Aristotle situates himself within the debate concerning the principles of being. As noted in the previously cited passage, Aristotle begins by dividing the principles of being into either one or many. Following this initial distinction, Aristotle continues outlining the various positions on this debate by noting that if the principles can be reduced to one, then it is necessary to elucidate whether it is motionless [*akinêton*], as defended by Parmenides and Melissus, or in motion [*kinoumenên*], as those concerned with nature [*hoi phusikoi*] claim.

I would like to linger further on the question concerning whether the principle of being can be understood as either motionless or in motion since Aristotle’s criticism of the former option has decisive consequences for his overall approach. Aristotle forcefully rejects the Parmenidean view according to which the principle of being would be motionless since such an investigation would “not be an investigation concerning nature” [*ou peri phuseôs esti skopein*] (*Phys.* I.2, 184b25-5a1). Although his rejection of the Parmenidean view does not necessarily entail an unconditional acceptance of the alternate

position, there is little doubt that Aristotle's investigation in the *Physics* is fundamentally guided by the existence of movement [*kinêsis*] without which one would hardly be able to obtain an adequate grasp of nature [*phusis*]. To further illustrate this point, one could cite the well-known passage in which Aristotle claims that the existence of *kinêsis* remains the fundamental assumption of his overall approach: "As for us, we must assume [*hupokeisthō*] that the things that are by nature [*ta phusei*] are beings that move [*kinoumena einai*], either all of them or some of them. And this is clear from induction [*epagôgê*]" (*Phys.* I.2, 185a12-4). This passage suggests that there can be no study of nature without the existence of beings that move. As Helen Lang has pointed out in her study of *Physics* I, the early reference to movement in *Physics* I can be understood as anticipating Aristotle's decision to investigate both nature and movement.⁷³ Moreover, Aristotle's use of the term *epagôgê* suggests that this assumption cannot be deduced from any logical definition or argument. Instead, the existence of beings that move is simply acknowledged as part of our experience of the realm of nature.

Returning to the main theme and question concerning the nature and number of principles, Aristotle has rejected both the claims that they are one and motionless. Although the rejection of the Parmenidean view might be assumed to have led Aristotle to adhere to the position developed by the *phusikoi*, Aristotle also rejects the idea that the kinetic principles of being are limitless and irreducible to a few. If the principles were not capable of being reduced to a limited quantity, then one would be condemned to an endless flux of appearances, which is only a partially correct assessment of the dynamic nature of reality.

⁷³ Cf. Helen S. Lang, *The Order of Nature in Aristotle's Physics: Place and the Elements* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); *Aristotle's Physics and Its Medieval Varieties* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992).

A clear indication of Aristotle's rejection of an unlimited [*apeiron*] number of principles of being can be derived from his general hesitation regarding the existence of the unlimited as such. While recognizing the existence of more than one principle that is responsible for movement, Aristotle nonetheless rejects the view that the principles multiply indefinitely and incessantly. On the contrary, Aristotle's own view can best be understood as a delicate balance between acknowledging the non-simplicity of the principles of being (i.e., their irreducibility to one) and their contribution to the existence of movement.⁷⁴ I suggest that it is such a complex and nuanced position that ultimately distinguishes Aristotle's view from that of his predecessors.

Although his account of the nature and number of principles is initially arrived at through a critical confrontation with his predecessors, Aristotle also acknowledges the extent to which his predecessors also partially intuited the common structure of the principles. In *Physics* I.5, Aristotle claims, "all thinkers posit contraries as principles [*Pantes dê tanantia archas*]" (*Phys.* I.5, 188a19). Without wishing to enter the debates concerning whether Aristotle's reconstruction of the commonality of his predecessors is ultimately accurate, my primary interest in this claim is Aristotle's suggestion that the principles are characterized by a contrarian structure.⁷⁵ Aristotle continues his account of

⁷⁴ As I hope to suggest in the present and following chapter, these two aspects of Aristotle's understanding of ontological principles might contribute to the same overall characteristic of his account. For a clear and suggestive argument in favor of this view, cf. Senteny, *Aristotle's Ontology of Change*.

⁷⁵ Aristotle's acknowledgement that the primary principles of being take the form of contraries [*enantia*] has significant consequences for his overall understanding of being and the relationship with change. As Lambros Couloubaritsis points out: "En soulignant ainsi que les contraires doivent être pensés comme des principes, Aristote montre que toute philosophie du devenir, quelle qu'elle soit, est obligée de penser ce qui est en devenir à partir des contraires," *La Physique d'Aristote: L'avènement de la science physique*, 150. I aim to show that Aristotle's commitment to the contrarian structure of the principles of being can be illustrated in his account of nature and movement, which both rely on the dynamic interplay of *dunamis* and *energeia*.

the contrarian structure of the principles by further commenting on the reasonableness [*eulogós*] of this assumption:

The principles [*tas archas*] must come neither from each other [*mête ex allêlôn einai*] nor from other things [*mête ex allôn*], and all things must come from them [*kai ek toutôn panta*]. And to the first contraries [*tois enantiois tois prôtois*] these features belong: because they are first they do not come from other things [*dia men to prôta einai mê ex allôn*], and because they are contraries they do not come from each other [*dia de to enantia mê ex allêlôn*] (*Phys.* I.5, 188a27-30).

This passage provides a clear illustration of why Aristotle believes his predecessors are ultimately right in identifying the contrarian structure of the principles. According to Aristotle, if the principles were not characterized as contraries, then it would be easy to derive many principles from another, which would make it difficult to truly discern what can qualify as a principle. In other words, an infinite regress is always possible if every principle can be derived from some other principle. However, the contrarian structure offers a resolution to this otherwise perplexing *aporia*. If the principles of being maintain a contrarian opposition, then they cannot be derived from each other. Consequently, their non-derivability from each other would allow these principles to become responsible for the derivation of other things. Thus, the contrarian structure of the principles suggests that they are ultimately characterized by reciprocity.

Aristotle's remarks on the contrarian structure of the principles bears an important parallel with the account of *dunamis* and *energeia* discussed in *Metaphysics* IX. In the

preceding discussion, I suggested that the relationship between these two terms can be understood as ultimately reciprocal and co-constitutive. I grounded this thesis on the complex identity and difference between *dunamis* and *energeia*, which meant that these terms were inextricably related and yet also significantly distinct. Based on the present discussion, one could argue that the distinction between these two terms can be understood according to this contrarian structure. The relative independence of *dunamis* and *energeia* suggests that these terms cannot be derived from each other. At the same time, these terms give expression to the way in which beings become manifest through distinct yet interrelated states of being. Thus, the similarity between Aristotle's account of the contrarian structure of the principles in *Physics* I and the meaning of being as *dunamis* and *energeia* in *Metaphysics* IX suggests the fundamental compatibility of these two accounts.

In order to continue illustrating the compatibility between these ontological accounts, I would like to focus on Aristotle's use of concrete examples in order to further elucidate the contrarian structure of the principles in the following passage:

A house too, and a statue, and any other such thing whatsoever comes to be in the same way [*kai hotioun allo gignetai homoiôs*]. For the house comes to be not from the combination [*mê sugkeisthai*], but rather division [*diêrêsthai*], of these things in this way, and the statue, or anything else that is shaped [*tôn eschêmatismenôn*], comes to be from shapelessness [*ex aschêmosunês*]. And each of these things is on the one hand an order [*ta men taxis*], and

on the other a sort of composition [*ta de sunthesis*] (*Phys.*
I.5, 188b16-21).

In this passage, Aristotle suggests that all beings capable of *genesis*⁷⁶ come to be from a process of division [*diairesis*]. For instance, the form of a house and statue becomes manifest through their being shaped [*eschêmatismenôn*] from out of the contrary state (i.e., shapelessness [*aschêmsounês*]). Although one could interpret the presence or absence of shape according to the distinction between being and non-being, I suggest that Aristotle's account of coming-to-be is more complex. To begin, it is necessary to resist the urge to interpret shapelessness as simply non-being. On the contrary, shapelessness can already be understood as a force [*dunamis*] of resistance to the activity of being shaped. In other words, there is already a dynamic and agonistic relationship between these two ways of relating to shape that resemble Aristotle's account of the contrarian structure of the principles of being. If one were to offer an adequate description of the shape of some being, then one could not simply attribute this to its having been shaped. Instead, these beings maintain their shape through a continuous exchange between shapelessness and being shaped. Although the discussion of this passage appears to simply be a digression, Aristotle notes, "it is also the same in all other cases [*homoiôs touto kai epi tôn allôn*], since the same account also holds of the beings that are not simple but composite [*ta mê hapla tôn ontôn alla suntheta kata ton auton echei logon*]" (*Phys.* I.5, 188b8-10). Thus, Aristotle's

⁷⁶ Although I cannot offer an extended discussion of this issue in the present context, I find it relevant that Aristotle continues his discussion of the principles in *Physics* I by noting the reciprocal relationship that exists between coming-to-be [*genesis*] and passing-away [*phthora*]. Aristotle's entire discussion of the life of natural beings seem impossible without these two contrary principles being at the source of both their natality and mortality. In other words, the fact that natural beings are born and eventually pass away provides a further indication that the principles of being must be contraries. Despite being unable to do so here, I believe there is an important connection between Aristotle's account of *genesis* and *phthora* in *On Coming-to-Be and Passing Away* that significantly resonates with the proto-phenomenological approach found in his account of *dunamis* and *energeia*.

account of the contrarian structure of the principles of being applies to both simple and composite beings, which means that all beings come-to-be through the interplay of contraries.

At this point in his analysis of the nature and number of principles, Aristotle confidently claims that “it is necessary for the principles to be contraries” (*Phys.* I.5, 189a9-10). Although the contrarian structure of the principles would suggest that these must ultimately be understood to be two, Aristotle proceeds to test this claim by analyzing whether the principles are indeed two or perhaps three or more (*Phys.* I.6, 189a11-2). If one were to suggest a possible explanation for Aristotle’s hesitation on this issue, one could point to the following *aporia*: if the principles are contraries, then how does one account for the existence of a third thing that undergoes the agonistic interaction of these two principles? Let’s take the previously discussed example of a house or statue. If we explained the coming-to-be of the house as simply a result of the encounter between shapelessness and being shaped, then how do we meaningfully refer to the house that emerges as a result of this dynamic? Neither shapelessness nor being shaped can provide a satisfactory account of that which results from their intricate tension. Instead, Aristotle suggests that there must be some third thing that is affected by the contraries.⁷⁷ In other words, Aristotle’s account is guided by the conviction that the contrarian structure of the principles can only be made sense of when brought to bear on a concrete third thing that undergoes their elaborate interplay.

⁷⁷ Although Aristotle describes this tripartite structure throughout *Physics* I.6, a particularly clear illustration of this point can be found in the following brief passage: “Love does not gather strife together and make something from it, nor does strife do so from love, but both affect a third distinct thing [*amphô heteron ti triton*]” (*Phys.* I.6, 189a24-6).

In order to obtain a clearer understanding of the need to introduce a third thing within his account of the principles as contraries, I would like to draw attention to the following passage where Aristotle expands on this issue:

Therefore, on the basis of these and other considerations, there would seem to be some reason to say that the elements [*ta stoicheia*] are three [*tria*] in number, as we said, but not more than three [*to de pleiô triôn ouketi*]. For one is sufficient for being affected [*to paschein hikanon to hen*], while if there are four [*tettarôn*], there will be two contrarieties [*duo esontai enantiôseis*], and a separate intermediate [*metaxu*] nature will be needed for each (*Phys.* I.6, 189b16-21).⁷⁸

In this passage, Aristotle expands on the reasons for why one there would be the need for at least three elements in every process of coming-to-be. If this were not the case, then one might be able to say that affection took place without anything being affected. However, this would lead to a blatant absurdity. Similarly, if there were four elements in the process of *genesis*, then one could hardly claim that affection took place, especially given that these four elements would function as two contraries, which would require a separate

⁷⁸ In this passage, Aristotle begins to speak now in terms of elements [*stoicheia*] rather than principles [*archas*]. Although the shift from principles to elements might seem to announce a significant transition in his account, it is worth recalling that Aristotle had already claimed that these terms were to a certain extent mutually interchangeable and part of the same investigation concerning knowledge and understanding (cf. *Phys.* I.1, 184a10sqq.). A more important shift in Aristotle's terminology is the sudden introduction of the term "being affected" [*to paschein*]. In the following chapter of this dissertation, I will be focusing on the intricate connection between affection and being affected [*to poein kai to paschein*] because I claim that affectivity provides a clear illustration of how *dunamis* and *energeia* function as co-constitutive principles of movement [*kinêsis*]. Aristotle's introduction of the term in the present context provides an important intuition into the complex affective structure of movement.

intermediate [*metaxu*] for each one. After identifying the various impasses of simply positing the principles as contraries, Aristotle concludes his account in the following rather inconclusive manner: “It appears [*phaneron*], then, that the elements [*to stoicheion*] are neither one in number [*oute hen*], nor more than two or three [*oute pleiô duoin ê triôn*]—but whether they are two or three involves, as we said, much puzzlement [*aporian echei pollen*]” (*Phys.* I.6, 189b27-9).

There is no denying that *Physics* I.6 ends on an extremely aporetic note. However, as noted above, Aristotle understands that one must investigate further how the contrarian structure of the principles can be understood alongside the existence of a third thing that results from their dynamic exchange. In order to begin elucidating Aristotle’s answer to this issue, it would be worth turning to *Physics* I.7. This text seems to provide Aristotle’s own position on the issue since he begins his discussion in the following manner:

Therefore, let us speak [*hemêis legômen*] first concerning all cases of coming to be [*prôton peri pasês geneseôs*]. For it is in accord with nature [*kata phusin*] to first say what is common [*ta koina prôton*] to all cases, and then to see what is special to each one [*hekaston idia theôrein*]” (*Phys.* I.7, 189b30-2).

Aristotle proceeds to offer an extremely dense and nuanced description of the nature and number of the principles of being throughout *Physics* I.7. However, we should note that the overall content of his account does not differ from the main points discussed in the preceding sections. Aristotle’s main goal in *Physics* I.7 is nothing other than a further refinement and clarification of his view, which does not substantially differ from the

primary theses found in his critical engagement with his predecessors. Given these facts, I will avoid repeating the content of Aristotle's account and focus on his proposed solution for the *aporia* outlined in *Physics* I.6.

As usual, it would be profitable to turn to Aristotle's concrete examples in order to clarify the main assumptions of his account. Before turning to his discussion, I find it significant that Aristotle continually draws from the realm of *genesis* in order to clarify the contrarian structure of the principles of natural beings. For instance, Aristotle notes: "For we say that one thing comes to be from another [*phamen gignesthai ex allou allo*], and a distinct one from a distinct one [*ex heterou heteron*], whether speaking about simple things or about compound ones [*ê ta hapla legontes ê ta sugkeimena*]" (189b32-4). This passage provides an echo of the preceding discussion of how the contrarian structure of the principles can be seen at work in the coming-to-be of both simple and composite beings. Hence, Aristotle's account of *genesis* provides a decisive illustration of the co-operative exchange between contraries and how they make manifest a thing's way of being.

While Aristotle's account remains committed to the contrarian structure of the principles of being, he nonetheless offers a solution to the *aporia* announced in *Physics* I.6 by appealing to an important distinction between two types of coming-to-be: "Of simple things that come to be [*tôn gignomenôn hês ta hapla*], we say that some remain when they come to be [*to men hupomenon gignetai*], whereas others do not [*to d' ouk hupomenon*]" (*Phys.* I.7, 190a9-10). This passage suggests that there are two distinct modes through which the phenomenon of *genesis* can take place. On the one hand, there are processes of coming-to-be whereby something remains [*hupomenon*] despite it having undergone serious alterations and changes. On the other hand, there are manifestations of *genesis*

where something is so significantly altered that it no longer remains what it was. Mobilizing this distinction between two forms of *genesis*, Aristotle continues his account by making the following crucial observation:

Having made these distinctions [*diôrismenôn*], there is this to grasp from every case of coming to be [*ex hapantôn tôn gignomenôn touto esti labein*], if seen [*epiblepsê*] in the way we are saying [*legomen*], namely, that there must always be some underlying subject that comes to be [*dei ti aei hupokeisthai to gignomenon*], and even if it is one in number [*ei kai arithmô estin hen*], in form it is not one [*all' eidei ge ouk hen*]" (*Phys. I.7, 190a13-6*).

This extremely dense and compressed passage nonetheless provides us with an account of Aristotle's solution to the *aporia* found in *Physics* I.6. As illustrated by this passage, the key to Aristotle's approach can be found in his recognition of the underlying thing [*hupokeimenon*]⁷⁹ that remains throughout the process of *genesis*. Among the various characteristics of the *hupokeimenon*, the most interesting and relevant one for our present purposes is the fact that the underlying thing cannot be understood in simply one way. On the contrary, according to Aristotle, even though the *hupokeimenon* remains one in number, it is nonetheless more than one in form. It is the non-simplicity of the underlying thing that allows it to both maintain its form and take on new determinations.

⁷⁹ It is worth noting that the Greek term *hupokeimenon*, which derives from the verb *hupokeimai*, has a broad lexical range that includes "to lie under," "to set forth," "to assume," "to exist," and so on. Although I will translate *hupokeimenon* as "underlying thing" throughout the following discussion, I would nonetheless like to interpret it according to the image of that which remains after the process of *genesis*. In other words, the *hupokeimenon* is not simply the underlying subject understood in a completely static sense. Rather, this term can be best interpreted as that which remains throughout the process of coming-to-be as simultaneously constituted by identity and difference.

To illustrate this non-simplicity of the *hupokeimenon* more clearly, it is worth focusing on the present passage:

The underlying thing [*to hupokeimenon*], however, though one in number [*arithmô men hen*], is two in form [*eidei de duo*]. For on the one hand there is the human, the gold, and in general the countable matter [*holôs hê hulê arithmêtê*], which is more of a this something [*tode ti mallon*], and it is not coincidentally that what comes to be comes to be from it; on the other hand there is the lack [*sterêsis*] (that is, the opposite [*enantiosis*]), which is coincident [*sumbebêkos*] (*Phys.* I.7, 190b23-7).

This passage suggests that the non-simplicity of form is intricately linked to the process of coming-to-be.⁸⁰ Anything that is subject to the dynamic activity of *genesis* is already capable of taking on more than one form. The capacity for becoming implies an ability to be other than what one is, which introduces indeterminacy into the manifestation of some being. I have decided to emphasize this passage rather than others because it is here that one can obtain a clearer view of the complexity of Aristotle's account. Given that the *hupokeimenon* capable of *genesis* is characterized by a fundamental indeterminacy, one would have to acknowledge the decisive twofold manifestation of the underlying thing: on the one hand, it can appear as the thing that remains the same throughout the process of

⁸⁰ Aristotle also offers an insightful description of the non-simplicity of the underlying thing in the following passage: "It is then evident [*phaneron*]—if indeed there are causes and principles of the beings that are by nature [*aitiai kai archai tôn phusei ontôn*], from which they primarily and not coincidentally are [*ex hôn prôtôn eisi kai gegonasi mê kata sumbebêkos*] or have come to be the thing that each is said to be in accord with its being [*kata tēn ousian*]—that everything comes to be from both the underlying subject and the shape [*gignetai pan ek te tou hupokeimenou kai tēs morphês*]" (*Phys.* I.7, 190b17-20).

coming-to-be but, on the other hand, it can also become manifest simply as “the opposite thing” [*to antikeimenon*].⁸¹ In other words, Aristotle’s use of the terms *hupokeimenon* and *antikeimenon* suggest two corresponding ways in which a thing can show itself as form [*eidōs*]. By recognizing the equally disclosive role of the *antikeimenon*, we arrive at a clearer understanding of how lack [*sterêsis*] can reveal itself as a positive phenomenological characteristic of some underlying thing. Thus, this purportedly negative concept, which is perhaps more closely associated with non-being [*mê einai*] than being [*einai*], nonetheless has a positive phenomenological meaning.

Although Aristotle seems to relegate lack to something merely coincidental [*sumbebêkos*], a closer examination of the process of *genesis* would reveal that this phenomenon would hardly be intelligible without the dynamic interplay of the contraries. There is no denying the difficulty of firmly asserting whether Aristotle ultimately identifies the principles of being as two or three. In fact, one would be tempted to attribute this indeterminacy to the constant exchange of principles, which are not only characterized as contraries, but also modified by the persistence of an underlying thing that is capable of both remaining like itself and constantly becoming different from itself. One of Aristotle’s clearest descriptions of this complexity can be found in the following passage:

We have said, then, how many principles there are of natural beings that come to be [*posai hai archai tôn peri genesin phusikôn*], and in what way they are so many [*kai pôs posai*].

And it is clear that there must be something to underlie the

⁸¹ Without being able to expand on this insight, I find it curious that the terms *to hupokeimenon* and *to antikeimenon* share a suggestive linguistic construction, which would suggest that they are decisively interrelated. Both terms are constructed by making a participial form of the verb *hupokeimai* and *antikeimai* into a substantive, which could literally be translated as “the underlying thing” and “the contrary thing.”

contraries [*kai dêlon estin hoti dei hupokeisthai ti tois enantiois*], and that the contraries must be two in number [*kai tanantia duo einai*]. In another way, though, this is not necessary [*tropon tina allon ouk anagkaion*], since just one of the contraries, by its absence and presence, is sufficient to produce the change [*hikanon gar estai to heteron tôn enantiôn poiein tê apousia kai parousia tèn metbolên*] (*Phys.* I.7, 191a3-7).

This passage demonstrates the extent to which Aristotle remains committed both to the contrarian structure of the principles and the non-simplicity of the underlying thing. Hence, Aristotle is guided both by the view of his predecessors and yet wishing to discover a more complex way of tracing the complex identity and difference inherent to a thing as it undergoes the process of *genesis*. Thus, what has come to the fore in the preceding analysis of Aristotle's account of the principles of being is a description of the role played by both the contraries and the *hupokeimenon* in clarifying the dynamic quality of the process of coming-to-be, which requires a broader understanding of presence that recognizes the phenomenological legitimacy of absence.⁸²

Having offered a brief reconstruction of Aristotle's view on the nature and number of the principles of being in this text, I would like to offer some concluding remarks on the compatibility between the accounts found in *Metaphysics* IX and *Physics* I. To begin, it is

⁸² In this sense, I would like to recall Francisco J. Gonzalez's critical discussion of the attempts to reduce Aristotle to an alleged "metaphysics of presence." Cf. "Whose Metaphysics of Presence?" What the preceding discussion of Aristotle's account of the principles of being in *Physics* I has shown is that the primary principles have an inherent dynamism by the sheer fact that this going in and out of presence or absence is capable [*hikanon*] of producing a change [*metabolê*] in beings. As I have suggested throughout the present dissertation, one of my primary aims is to elucidate this inherent dynamism to Aristotle's understanding of the principles of being.

worth drawing attention to the following passage where Aristotle himself draws a connection between the preceding account and the meaning of being as *dunamis* and *energeia*: “This, then, is one way [*eis tropos*], but there is another [*allos*] in that the same things can be said either with respect to a capacity or with respect to an activity [*tauta legein kata tēn dunamin kai tēn energeian*]” (*Phys.* I.8, 191b27-9). This passage provides us with a more solid foundation upon which to suggest the connection between Aristotle’s two ontological accounts of the principles of being. According to Aristotle, the preceding discussion of the contrarian structure of the principles is perfectly compatible and harmonious with the complex interrelationship that exists between *dunamis* and *energeia*. Recalling our interpretation of Aristotle’s account of *Metaphysics* IX as offering a consistent and coherent proto-phenomenological description of being, we are now in a better position to claim that a similar approach can also be discerned in *Physics* I. Aristotle’s discussion of the dynamic tension between *dunamis* and *energeia* provides us with the necessary resources for re-thinking the relationship between the contraries as they affect the underlying thing.

The preceding remarks have presented Aristotle’s account of the principles of being in *Physics* I as ultimately compatible with the account offered in *Metaphysics* IX. This connection suggests that the former account also understands the primary contraries as reciprocal and co-constitutive terms. In order to illustrate this point, I would like to draw attention to the following passage, which anticipates the complex interrelationship between the primary contraries that will characterize Aristotle’s understanding of nature [*phusis*]:

The thing that remains [*hê hupomenousa*] is a joint cause
[*sunaitia*] along with the shape [*tê morphê*] of the thing that

comes to be [*tôn gignomenôn*], just as a mother is, whereas the other part of the contrariety [*hê d' hetera moira tês enantiôseôs*] might often appear [*an phantastheiê*], if thought [*dianoian*] is focusing intensely on its production of bad effects, not to be at all [*oud' einai to parapan*]. For we say that there is one thing that is divine [*theiou*], good [*agathou*], and sought after [*ephetou*], and a second that is contrary [*to enantion*] to the first, and a third that naturally yearns for and desires [*pephuken epiesthai kai oregesthai*] the first, in accord with its own nature [*kata tèn autou phusin*] (*Phys. I.9, 192a13-19*).

This passage is exemplary in its attention to the specific contribution of each of the principles of being. As a result, we can be assured that none of these principles are ultimately self-sufficient. Instead, they each contribute some aspect to the manifestation of a thing's way of being. Thus, the initial appearance of the thing is not merely the manifestation of its shape [*morphê*]. Rather, the form becomes fully revealed when it appears as a joint cause [*sunaitia*] that is responsible for the being of some underlying thing [*to hupokeimenon*]. In other words, it is only the joint activity of matter [*hulê*] and shape [*morphê*] that fully makes manifest the being of the *hupokeimenon*. According to this view, matter cannot be understood simply as inert matter. On the contrary, *hulê* plays a crucial role in the manifestation of *morphê* since these two principles are, as Aristotle rightly notes, *joint causes*. Therefore, one could claim that the most comprehensive and holistic view of a thing that comes to be [*to gignomenon*] arises out of this reciprocal and co-constitutive

interplay of matter and shape. In order to further illustrate the compatibility between Aristotle's account of the ontological principles in *Metaphysics* IX and *Physics* I, I would now like to turn to the way matter and form concretely function as co-constitutive principles of the nature [*phusis*] of some being.⁸³

IV. The Dynamic Twofoldness of Nature as Matter and Form

Aristotle's account of nature begins by introducing the following important ontological distinction: "Among beings [*tôn ontôn*], some are by nature [*ta men esti phusei*], while others are the result of other causes [*ta de di' allas aitias*]" (*Phys.* II.1, 192b8-9). We should note the significance of this distinction whereby Aristotle suggests an ontological dimension to his account of *phusis*. Aristotle proceeds to enumerate the kinds of beings whose being becomes manifest according to some nature, namely, animals, plants, and the elements (*Phys.* II.1, 192b9-11). According to Aristotle, what distinguishes natural beings from all other beings is the presence of the following ontological feature: "Each of them has within itself a principle of moving and being at rest [*hekaston en heautô archên echei kinêseôs kai staseôs*]—some with respect to place [*kata topon*], some with respect to increase and decrease [*kat' auxêsin kai pthisin*], others with respect to alteration [*kata alloiôsin*]" (*Phys.* II.1, 192b13-5). In other words, the *being* of natural beings is

⁸³ In this footnote, I would like to note the subtle debate in the secondary literature concerning the relationship between Books I and II of the *Physics*. According to some scholars, there seem to be some difficulties in trying to understand the transition from the general account of the principles of natural beings in Book I to the discussion of nature found in Book II. In the present footnote, I do not intend to enter this debate. For the present purposes, it suffices simply to note that there *is* a connection between the two treatises insofar as the latter draws upon the former for its ontological vocabulary. In other words, even though there might seem to be some difficulties in perfectly squaring the two accounts, there should be no doubt that Aristotle's understanding of nature [*phusis*] would hardly be intelligible without the previous discussion of form [*eidōs*], matter [*hylê*], and lack [*sterêsis*].

ontologically distinguished by the presence of an internal principle that determines its movement and rest.

In order to further clarify the distinct ontological characteristics of natural beings, Aristotle continues by drawing attention to the significant contrast between animals and, for instance, a bed or a cloak. While the former is distinguished by an internal principle of movement and rest, the latter come-to-be as a result of some craft [*apo technês*], which means that they have no innate impulse for change [*oudemian hormên echei metabolês emphuton*]” (*Phys.* II.1, 192b16-19). It is worth noting Aristotle’s use of concrete examples since I suggest that it provides an illustration of how his proto-phenomenological approach and how it elucidates the ontological distinction between these two beings. If we read the opening paragraphs of *Physics* II in this way, then Aristotle is concerned with clarifying the distinction between nature [*phusis*] and craft [*technê*] by directing our attention to the concrete difference between, say, an animal and a bed. According to induction [*epagôgê*], we can observe that there is a dynamic quality to the animal’s internal capacity for movement and rest that is simply not present in the being of a bed. Without the external influence of some craftsman [*technitês*], the bed would not even be capable of coming-into-being. Hence, the decisive ontological difference between natural and artificial beings is partially grounded on the internal capacity for movement and rest, which provides the former type of beings a way of revealing themselves as what they are.⁸⁴

A further significant ontological characteristic of natural beings is suggested by Aristotle in the claim that all beings who have a nature can also be understood as a being

⁸⁴ Although not necessarily sharing the same assumptions as the present interpretation, it is worth noting that Helen Lang’s interpretation of *Physics* II similarly emphasizes the importance of this treatise for the overall subject of the investigation developed in the *Physics*: “*Physics* 2.1 establishes the problems that form the proper subject matter of the remainder of the *Physics*,” *Aristotle’s Physics and Its Medieval Varieties*, 24.

[ousia] (*Phys.* II.1, 192b32-3). Hence, *phusis* is understood by Aristotle as some underlying thing [*hupokeimenon ti*] that determines the being [ousia] of some natural being as capable of its own movement and rest (*Phys.* II.1, 192b34). These glosses on the ontological significance of nature suggest that Aristotle's account of *phusis* ought to be considered as part of his overall account of the being of natural beings. Furthermore, we have seen that this ontological characteristic of natural beings is manifested in various ways. According to Aristotle, the appearance of nature can appear either in how certain beings are by nature [*phusei*], have a nature [*echei phusin*], or exist according to nature [*kata phusin*]. Each of these manifestations of nature provide Aristotle with a complex and nuanced proto-phenomenological account of the being of natural beings.

The preceding remarks have suggested that Aristotle's account of nature can be understood as concerned with the proto-phenomenological manifestation of *phusis* in natural beings. In order to further clarify the centrality of this methodological approach in Aristotle's investigation, I would like to turn to the following well-known passage, which I argue adds further support to the present interpretation:

It would be silly to try to show that there is such a thing as nature [*hos estin hê phusis, peirasthai deiknunai geloion*].

For it is clear that there are many beings of the relevant sort [*phaneron hoti toiauta tôn ontôn estin polla*]. And to show [*deiknunai*] what is clear [*ta phanera*] by means of what is not clear [*dia tôn aphanôn*] is characteristic of someone who is not able [*ou dunamenou*] to discern what is knowable by

means of itself and what is not knowable by means of itself

(*Phys.* II.1, 193a3-6).

The proto-phenomenological character of this passage should be clear. According to Aristotle, it would be ridiculous to attempt to prove the existence of *phusis* since we can see that many beings show themselves as possessing an internal principle of movement and rest. In other words, the existence of natural beings already provides us with the evidence of the existence of nature. Given that the existence of nature can be discerned from the clear manifestation of beings that have a nature, are by nature or exist according to nature, Aristotle's discussion suggests that our primary encounter with *phusis* can be attributed to their proto-phenomenological evidence. To put the point more forcefully, one could say that any investigation into nature must be guided by this proto-phenomenological sensitivity to the way in which the *phusis* of some being becomes manifest by way of their distinctive capacity to show themselves as capable of movement and rest. It is a matter of being led into the nature by way of induction [*epagôgê*], rather than seeking to prove its existence by way of deduction. Thus, Aristotle's investigation into nature can be best understood as a proto-phenomenological concern with the way in which beings show themselves to be characterized by an internal principle of movement and rest that is intrinsically related to their being [*ousia*].

To begin elucidating Aristotle's proto-phenomenological account of nature, I would like to begin with the central *aporia* that informs the opening sections of *Physics* II, namely, the question whether *phusis* is best understood as matter [*hulê*] or shape [*morphê*]. Although the reception of this account has often revolved around which of these alternatives most adequately characterizes the phenomenon of nature, it is worth recalling

the previously discussed passage in *Physics* I.9 where Aristotle suggests that both matter and form function as joint causes of a thing's *phusis*. Even though interpretations of *Physics* II have suggested that nature should be primarily if not exclusively associated with shape, I argue that greater attention needs to be paid to the fact that Aristotle seems committed to grant equal phenomenological legitimacy to both matter and shape. In other words, I claim that Aristotle's proto-phenomenological account of nature suggests a complex understanding of *phusis* whereby both *hulê* and *morphê* function as joint causes that cooperatively interact with each other. I suggest that it is Aristotle's recognition of the irreducibly twofold aspect of nature that gives the phenomenon of *phusis* its characteristic dynamism.

To begin, it would be worth turning to the following passage where Aristotle focuses on what most immediately appears [*dokei*]⁸⁵ to contribute to a thing's nature: "It appears [*dokei*] to some people that the nature [*phusis*] and being [*ousia*] of each of the beings that are by nature [*tôn phusei ontôn*] is the first component present in it [*to proton enuparchon*], which is intrinsically unshaped [*arruthmiston on kath' heauto*]" (*Phys.* II.1, 193a9-11).⁸⁶ According to this passage, the initial impression of a thing's *ousia* and *phusis*

⁸⁵ I find it significant that Aristotle introduces the claim that matter provides an initial phenomenalization of nature by appealing to what appears [*dokei*] to be the case. As I have noted previously, it is worth emphasizing the etymological meaning of the verb *dokein*, which is not simply reducible to the epistemological meaning ("to seem"), but also includes an important phenomenological or proto-phenomenological meaning ("to appear"). For a well-argued account of this interpretation of Aristotle's use of *dokein*, cf. Kirkland, "Dialectic and Proto-Phenomenology in Aristotle's Topics and Physics." Thus, according to the interpretation I am suggesting here, Aristotle's decision to begin with the claim that matter is what initially phenomenalizes nature is a result of his proto-phenomenological approach to *phusis* as such.

⁸⁶ I find Aristotle's use of *arruthmiston* here suggestive, especially when interpreted in relation to *ruthmos*. Although this term is often translated as "rhythm," I would like to emphasize the broad semantic range of the term, which, according to the Liddell-Scott James (LSJ), can mean "rhythm," "time," "proportion," "measure," "form," "structure," and so on. In the previously cited passage, Aristotle seems to be playing on the interplay between *ruthmos* and *arruthmiston*, which are both understood as form or shape. The LSJ cites *Metaphysics* I.4, 985b16 and VIII.2, 1042b14 as instances of this use. In these passages, Aristotle attributes to Democrattus the claim that *ruthmos* can be understood as *morphê kai eidos*. What I find to be most thought-provoking about Aristotle's use of *arruthmiston* in these contexts is the fact that the LSJ notes that the term

is the result of some primary underlying thing [*to proton enuparchon*], which is unshaped [*arruthmiston*] but nonetheless provides some sense of what the thing is. As we noted in *Physics* I, the primary underlying unshaped thing can be associated with matter. Aristotle proceeds to illustrate this claim by directing our attention to the being of a bed. According to this account, the nature of the bed appears initially to be a result of its matter, that is, the wood through which it is produced. In other words, on this initial proto-phenomenological description, the bed's *phusis* manifests itself as its *hulê*.

While the preceding remarks have shown how the nature of some being initially appears to be determined by matter, Aristotle is not entirely committed to the unconditional identification of *phusis* with *hulê*. On the contrary, even though he remains committed to the claim that nature initially becomes manifest as a result of matter, Aristotle also nuances his account through the following critical assessment of Antiphon's argument:

If someone were to bury a bed, and the decomposing material were to acquire the capacity [*dunamin*] to send up a shoot, what would come up would not be a bed but wood—his supposition being that the disposition of the material that is in accord with convention [*kata nomon*] and craft [*technên*] belongs coincidentally [*kata sumbebêkos*] to the wood, whereas the being [*ousian*] is what remains continuously while these things happen to it (*Phys.* II.1, 193a12-7).

can be translated as “not reduced to form,” which is relevant given our discussion of *dunamis* and *energeia* as co-constitutive and reciprocal senses of being. Hence, as I suggest in the following pages, the matter of some underlying thing is irreducible to form because they are joint causes of a thing's nature.

This passage offers a further elucidation on how *phusis* is revealed by way of *hulê*. However, it is important to emphasize Aristotle's critical evaluation of Antiphon's argument. While Antiphon could be said to correctly identify the connection between matter and nature, Aristotle rejects the complete identification of the two. Although *hulê* provides an initial manifestation of *phusis*, we could say that Aristotle is only outlining an initial, but still incomplete proto-phenomenological description of nature. Without dismissing the validity of Antiphon's argument,⁸⁷ Aristotle is committed to assessing the extent to which shape or form [*morphê kai eidos*] also provides another perspective on the phenomenon of *phusis*. In order to further illustrate this point, I would like to draw attention to the following passage where Aristotle outlines his essentially twofold approach to nature:

In one way, then, something is said to be nature [*phusis*] when it is the first underlying matter [*hê prôtê hekastô hupokeimenê hulê*] for each of the things that have within themselves a principle of movement and change [*tôn echontôn en hautois archên kinêseôs kai metabolês*]. In another way, though, what is said to be nature is the shape [*morphê*]*—that is, the form [eidos]—that is in accord with the account [kata ton logon] (Phys. II.1, 193a28-31).*

This passage reaffirms the claim that nature is an essentially twofold phenomenon. We see that Aristotle describes matter and shape or form as two ways of describing *phusis*. At this

⁸⁷ This point is also emphasized by Marjolein Oele in her essay on Aristotle's notion of *phusis*. Cf. Marjolein Oele, "Aristotle on *Physis*: Analyzing the Inner Ambiguities and Transgression of Nature," in *A Companion to Ancient Philosophy*, ed. Sean D. Kirkland and Eric Sanday (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2018), 164.

point in his account, Aristotle does not seem to privilege one term over the other. Instead, he merely identifies *hulê* and *morphê kai eidos* as providing two different yet potentially reciprocal accounts of nature.⁸⁸

In order to further elucidate the essentially twofold character of Aristotle's account of nature, I would like to briefly turn to his discussion of the analogy between *phusis* and craft [*technê*]. It is worth noting that the connection between *phusis* and *technê* is partially because they both deal with a combination between matter and form. While nature arises from the internal interrelation of *hulê* and *morphê*, craft comes about by the external interplay of these terms. Without wishing to enter a thorough discussion of Aristotle's use of the craft analogy,⁸⁹ I am interested in suggesting how the analogy between *phusis* and *technê* is more complicated than might initially seem to be the case. Rather than interpret the relationship between matter and form in an overly rigid manner, I would like to continue arguing in favor of a dynamic interpretation of these terms, which I believe is already at work in the following passage:

⁸⁸ For a similar account to the one developed here on the co-constitutive and reciprocal relation between form and matter, cf. Adriel Trott's *Aristotle on the Matter of Form: A Feminist Metaphysics of Generation*. In this text, Trott uses Elizabeth Grosz's image of the Möbius strip, which primarily focuses on the relationship between mind and body, as a hermeneutic strategy for describing the Aristotelian conception of *hulê* and *morphê*. According to Trott, "On the Möbius strip account, form and matter are neither identical nor opposed in a binary that leads to asymmetry. Material has significance of its own in a way that connects it to form without reducing or opposing it to form," Trott, 25. Cf. also Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994).

⁸⁹ Although a thorough discussion of Aristotle's use of the craft analogy is outside of the scope of the present discussion, I nonetheless believe that this account is propaedeutic to the overall discussion of nature. Given that Aristotle introduces the craft analogy immediately after having identified the two possible approaches to *phusis* through *hulê* and *morphê*, I suggest that the former can be read as an attempt at elucidating the equally reciprocal interrelationship that exists in the description of the latter. In other words, the dynamic relationship of matter and form in *technê* provides a clearer illustration of the complex interplay between these two terms in the phenomenon of nature. Hence, one could argue that even within the domain of craft, we are dealing with a reciprocal and co-constitutive relationship between the craftsman [*technitês*] and the artifact [*technêma*], which cannot simply be reduced to the imposition of form onto brute matter. For an excellent discussion of the complex interweaving of matter and form in Aristotle's use of the craft analogy, cf. Trott, *Aristotle on the Matter of Form: A Feminist Metaphysics of Generation*, 212–35.

And since in the one case we would not yet say that a thing is at all in accord with craft [*oute kata tēn technēn*] if it were only potentially [*dunamei monon*] a bed and had not yet the form [*eidōs*] of a bed, or that it is a craft [*technēn*], so it is in the case of things composed by nature [*out' en tois phusei sunistamenois*]. For what is only potentially [*dunamei*] flesh or bone, before it might acquire the form that is in accord with the account [*prin an labē to eidōs to kata ton logon*] by which we delimit [*horizomenoi*] flesh or bone and say what it is, it neither has its own nature nor is it by nature [*oute phusei estin*] (*Phys.* II.1, 193a33-b3).

This passage provides a clear illustration of how matter and form understood as *dunamis* and *energeia* function as reciprocal and co-constitutive principles of the coming-to-be of both natural and artificial beings. In this sense, the craft analogy plays an important clarificatory role of the otherwise inapparent dynamic tension that exists between *hulē* and *morphē* in the realm of nature.⁹⁰ Hence, any comprehensive account of either natural or artificial beings must be aware of the inextricably complex relationship between matter and

⁹⁰ For a very interesting and thought-provoking discussion of the reciprocal relation between nature [*phusis*] and craft [*technē*] that supports and develops our thesis concerning the reciprocity of form and matter, cf. Walter Brogan's excellent essay, "The Intractable Interrelationship of *Physis* and *Techne*," in *Heidegger and the Greeks: Interpretive Essays*, ed. John Panteleimon Manoussakis and Drew A. Hyland (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006), 43–56. One of the most important aspects of Brogan's interpretation of the relationship between *phusis* and *technē* is the following suggestion, which I believe resonates with the account developed in the present chapter: "The need for involving *techne* in any discussion of the truth of natural beings, I believe, lies in this capacity to relate to the concealedness that belongs to the being of natural beings," 46. I understand Brogan's concern as that of recognizing the decisive and constitutive concealedness of matter [*hulē*] that agonistically encounters the disclosure implied in the notion of form [*eidōs*]. To put it another way, it is important to recognize the way in which *dunamis* plays an equally constitutive role as *energeia* in the disclosure of a thing's being.

form in the former as can be seen in the relationship between the craftsperson and the artifice. In both cases, there is a co-operative work among contraries that calls to mind the dynamic interaction between *dunamis* and *energeia* that we identified in *Metaphysics IX* as laying the foundations for Aristotle's proto-phenomenological approach to being. According to this view, the process through which a natural or artificial being comes-into-being is not simply a result of the presence of the matter in *dunamei*. Rather, it is only once the *dunamis* becomes interwoven with the *energeia* that the complex process of the disclosure of a thing's being appears in all its intricacy. Thus, the matter of a thing can and must be understood as responsible for the *dunamis* of a thing and as working co-operatively with the form or craft to enact the *energeia* and jointly make a thing what it is.

Although the preceding remarks have emphasized the co-constitutive and reciprocal relationship between matter and form in the phenomenon of nature, we need to confront Aristotle's seeming preference of the latter over the former as he continues developing his account of *phusis*. After having suggested that these terms function as joint causes of a thing's nature, Aristotle nonetheless returns to the issue of the priority of form over matter. Even though matter has an initial proto-phenomenological priority to form, Aristotle suggests: "In fact, the form is more nature than the matter is [*mallon hautê phusis tês hulês*]. For each thing is said to be when it actually is more than when it potentially is [*hekaston gar tote legetai hotan enetelecheia ê, mallon ê hotan dunamei*]" (*Phys.* II.1, 193b6-8).⁹¹ While we have already addressed the relative and perspectival character of

⁹¹ A clear example of such an interpretation can be found in Heidegger's interpretation and close reading of *Physics II*, where he describes the difficulty in the following manner: "Although ὕλη and μορφή both constitute the essence of φύσις [*beide das Wesen der φύσις ausmachen*], they do not carry equal weight [*so halten sies ich doch nicht gleichgewichtig die Waage*]. Μορφή has priority [*Vorrang*]," *Pathmarks*, 215; *Wegmarken*, 282. Heidegger's interpretation of *Physics II* faithfully follows the weight of priority in Aristotle's text, which I do not intend to contradict whatsoever. Nevertheless, I hope that the following discussion of the priority of form over matter can be read with the preceding account of the relative and

priority in Aristotle's thinking, I would like to revisit the issue now within the context of his account of *phusis* since I claim that it will provide us with a clearer understanding of how the question of priority does not substantially challenge the otherwise reciprocal and co-constitutive activity of matter and form as joint causes.

V. The Question of Priority of Matter or Form in Nature

I would like to begin addressing the issue of the priority of form over matter in Aristotle's account of nature by recalling the extent to which the preceding remarks have suggested an intrinsic relationship and reciprocity between these two terms. We have noticed the many ways in which Aristotle seems committed to recognizing the equal legitimacy of both matter and form in giving expression to the essentially twofold phenomenon of nature. There have been no indications in the preceding discussion that Aristotle unequivocally privileges either form or matter in his explanation of *phusis*. On the contrary, I have been arguing in favor of a co-constitutive relationship between these terms, which Aristotle introduced at the end of *Physics* I within the context of his account of the principles of being. Given that Aristotle agrees with his predecessors concerning the contrarian structure of the principles of being, we might ask whether this commitment does not extend to his account of nature. If this were the case, then Aristotle does not unreservedly reduce the principle of nature to either matter or form. By reducing *phusis* to simply one principle, Aristotle would essentially be denying the essential twofoldness implied by the contrarian structure of the principles of being.⁹² Hence, there must exist

perspectival character of priority in Aristotle's thinking, which suggests a much more nuanced and complex understanding of the term than simple subordination.

⁹² According to Christopher P. Long's reading, the tensions in Aristotle's discussion of the priority of form over matter in *Physics* II provide a glimpse into the essential limitation of Aristotle's hylomorphism in

another way of accounting for the priority of form over matter without necessarily denying the essential twofoldness of these principles.

In order to challenge the traditional reception of this debate, I would like to focus on the following passage where Aristotle provides an example meant to illustrate the way in which the priority of form can be understood along similar lines to the priority of *energeia*:⁹³

Human comes to be from human, but not bed from bed. That in fact is why some people say that the shape [*to schema*] is not the nature [*tên phusin*] but the wood, because if it were to send up a shoot, it would not be a bed that comes up but wood. But if this is therefore craft, the shape too is nature [*kai hê morphê phusis*]: human does indeed come to be from human (*Phys.* II.1, 193b8-12).

This passage significantly echoes the reasoning found in Aristotle's account of priority in *Metaphysics* IX. Aristotle illustrates the priority of form over matter by drawing attention to the activity [*energeia*] of the fully formed being in generating something like itself. Hence, the fully formed human being does not come-to-be from the potential human being.

adequately accounting for the nature of kinetic principles. Hence, Long argues, "the hylomorphic economy of kinetic principles is already beginning to show its limitations, for it seems to be predicated on a rather simple dichotomy between form and matter in which the form secures order hegemonically," *The Ethics of Ontology: Rethinking an Aristotelian Legacy*, 46. I agree with Long that there are important limitations to Aristotle's hylomorphic account in reckoning with the dynamic character of kinetic principles. However, in what follows, I hope to offer an interpretation of both *Physics* II and III that draws on the Aristotle's proto-phenomenological description of being as *dunamis* and *energeia*, which I suggest might overcome some of the apparent limitations of the hylomorphic account in its attempt to make sense of the kinetic principles.

⁹³ In order to illustrate the parallel I have in mind, one could turn to the following passage in *Metaphysics* IX where Aristotle argues in favor of the temporal priority of *energeia* to *dunamis* with respect to coming-to-be [*genesis*]: "It is also clear [*dêlon*] even in this case that activity [*energeia*] is prior [*proteron*] in this way as well to potentiality [*dunameôs*], namely, in coming to be and time [*kata genesin kai chronon*]" (*Met.* IX.8, 1050a2-3).

Rather, a fully formed human being only comes-to-be as the result of the procreative activity of another fully formed human being. While such an explanation would indeed illustrate the priority of form over matter by appealing to the parallel priority of *energeia* to *dunamis*, I nonetheless wonder whether one could appeal to the relative and perspectival character of priority in order to offer a more nuanced description of the process of *genesis*. If Aristotle was already able and willing to recognize the qualified temporal priority of *dunamis* according to a proto-phenomenological perspective focusing on the concrete individual being, then couldn't we call upon this same reasoning to relativize the priority of matter over form? My aim in introducing this suggestion is not merely to invert the priority of form over matter. On the contrary, I believe that the more faithful reading of Aristotle's account of nature rests on the essentially twofold character of this phenomenon.⁹⁴

With the preceding remarks in mind, we might wonder why Aristotle's account of priority with respect to nature seems to be in tension with his otherwise clear recognition of the essentially twofold aspect of *physis*. A possible explanation for this strain in Aristotle's explanation can be attributed to the complex role of lack [*sterêsis*]. Our previous discussion of the opening treatise of the *Physics* revealed the decisive ontological role of *sterêsis* in Aristotle's account of the principles of being. While there is a tendency to

⁹⁴ For an excellent account of the importance of twofoldness in Aristotle's understanding of being (especially with respect to his account of nature), cf. Brogan, *Heidegger and Aristotle: The Twofoldness of Being*; "Double Archê: Heidegger's Reading of Aristotle's Kinetic Ontology," *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities* 11, no. 3 (2006): 85–92. Another important interpretation of Aristotle's account of *physis* as irreducibly twofold is developed by Marjolein Oele in "Aristotle on Physis: Analyzing the Inner Ambiguities and Transgression of Nature." In her discussion of this issue, Oele offers the following suggestion, which I understand as resonant with the reading proposed throughout the present dissertation: "Despite his insistence that "form is more *physis* than matter" (*Phys.* II.193b8), we have to underline that for Aristotle *physis* is ultimately split—is twofold," 165. In fact, Oele's suggestion of a "codependent ontological relationship" between matter and form can be read as another echo of the reciprocity and co-constitutive relationship that I have been identifying throughout the present dissertation between *dunamis* and *energeia*.

consider lack as a purely accidental aspect of coming-to-be, I suggested that it plays a crucial role in Aristotle's overall understanding of both being and *genesis*. In *Physics* I, Aristotle suggests that the non-simplicity of form (i.e., its irreducibility to pure presence) is a direct result of *sterêsis*, which he describes as one of the possible ways in which form (or its absence) becomes manifest. By recognizing the decisive role of lack in the manifestation of form, Aristotle is not opposing *sterêsis* to *eidos* (or, for that matter, *ousia*).⁹⁵ Instead, we could more adequately characterize Aristotle's aim as an attempt to recognize the constitutive role played by lack in every process of coming-to-be. For instance, in the following passage, Aristotle suggests that *sterêsis* is not diametrically opposed to the manifestation of *phusis*, but rather one of the possible ways in which it becomes manifest to us: "Something is said to be shape or nature in two ways [*hê de morphê kai hê phusis dichôs legetai*], since the lack too is in a way form [*kai gar hê sterêsis eidos pôs estin*]" (*Phys.* II.1, 193b18-20). With the aid of this passage, we are reminded of how *sterêsis* should not be dismissed either as an accidental aspect of coming-to-be or a purely negative determination. On the contrary, Aristotle clearly understands lack as a positive phenomenological determination since it is one of the two possible manifestations of form or nature. Thus, it would be a mistake to believe that the priority of form in

⁹⁵ In his discussion of Aristotle's account of *phusis*, Dennis J. Schmidt offers a similar interpretation, for instance, in the following suggestion: "The point is not simply to oppose *sterêsis* as perishing to *ousia* as presencing, but to recognize the twofold character and repetition at work in *phusis* as a movement that is both perishing and presencing," "Economies of Production: Heidegger and Aristotle on *Phusis* and *Techne*," in *Crises in Continental Philosophy* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1990), 154. I understand Schmidt's suggestion here to offer an opening toward a more complex understanding of the relationship between presence and absence, being and non-being, in Aristotle's thinking. Given that his interpretation of Aristotle is engaging in a critical dialogue with Heidegger's own reading, I would be tempted to suggest that Schmidt's more nuanced interpretation of the relationship between *sterêsis* and *ousia* within the account of *phusis* challenges the traditional reception of these terms. In what follows, I emphasize the constitutive role of *sterêsis* in the manifestation of *phusis*. Similarly, in my interpretation of Aristotle's account of *kinêsis* in *Physics* III, I will also be guided by the intuition that the dynamic interplay between *dunamis*, *energeia*, and *entelecheia* in that text is also a consequence of a more complex understanding of *sterêsis* and its role in the manifestation of *ousia*.

Aristotle's account of *phusis* confirms his broader privileging of presence over absence. Rather, the re-introduction of *sterêsis* in Aristotle's account of nature offers us an important reminder that the non-simplicity of form implies a recognition of the essentially twofold and dynamic interplay of both presence and absence.⁹⁶

In order to conclude the present discussion of the essential twofoldness of nature and the relative and perspectival character of priority therein, I would like to turn to the opening lines of *Physics* II.2, which read: "Having distinguished the various ways in which things are said to be nature [*diôristai posachôs hê phusis*], the next thing is to get a theoretical grasp [*theôrêteon*] on how the mathematician [*mathêmatikos*] differs from the natural scientist [*phusikou*]" (193b22-3). There are two aspects of this passage worth noting. The first thing worth emphasizing is Aristotle's reference to the preceding discussion as having gone through the various ways in which things are said to be nature, which would suggest that both matter and form offer equally legitimate and correlative expression to the phenomenon of *phusis*. Secondly, Aristotle claims that the next step in continuing to elucidate this issue will require a theoretical grasp on the difference between the mathematician and natural scientist. Aristotle's decision to focus on these two figures is perhaps no coincidence. In fact, if one were to call upon a parallel discussion in

⁹⁶ My interpretation resonates with the following suggestion developed by Walter Brogan's discussion of Heidegger's reading of *Physics* II: "The *archê*, the *phusis*, the *morphê*, of the movement (*genesis*) which constitutes natural beings is *twofold*: *eidos* and *sterêsis*. Every placing itself forth into presence is always a drawing itself away from presence into non-presence or absence," "Double Archê: Heidegger's Reading of Aristotle's Kinetic Ontology," 91. I understand Brogan as suggesting that Aristotle's understanding of *genesis* cannot but take place within this simultaneous movement of presence and absence that constitutes every natural being as essentially twofold. A similar view is developed by Dennis Schmidt when he writes, "The key here is that to the being of *phusis* there thus belongs an ineluctable lack, a *sterêsis*, which shows itself simultaneously in the dual modes of a not-yet-attained goal and of the perishing of a present state in favor of a coming one," "Economies of Production: Heidegger and Aristotle on Physis and Technê," 154. As I hope to show in the following chapter of this dissertation, Aristotle's account of *kinêsis* provides us with a further crucial illustration of the constitutive relationship between a not-yet-attained goal and the perishing of the present state in order to make possible some future one.

Metaphysics VII.17, then we could say that these two figures are used in a paradigmatic or metonymical sense whereby the mathematician signifies concern for form, whereas the natural scientist exemplifies an attention to both matter and form.⁹⁷ The metonymic sense of Aristotle's distinction can be further developed by noting that the mathematician is concerned with separating [*chôrisei*] the particular matter of a being from its form in order to study their characteristics. In contrast, the natural scientist cannot separate the form from the matter because the being [*ousia*] of a natural being is determined by nature [*phusis*], which is itself a twofold [*dichôs*] phenomenon. To put the point even more forcefully, it seems impossible to develop a comprehensive account of natural beings without recognizing the inseparability of form and matter that informs their nature.

Aristotle proceeds to clarify the characteristically holistic approach adopted by the natural scientist more forcefully in the following crucial passage:

Since nature [*phusis*] is twofold [*dichôs*], form and matter [*to te eidos kai hê hulê*], we should get a theoretical grasp [*theôrêteron*] on it as if we were investigating what snubness⁹⁸ is, doing so neither without their matter nor with

⁹⁷ Although the present discussion is perhaps the most well-known instance of Aristotle's metonymic or paradigmatic use of the distinction between the mathematician and natural scientist, he also uses this example in *Metaphysics* VII.11 where he claims: "For it is necessary for the natural scientist to know not only about the matter, but also about the being according to the account [*peri tês ousias tês kata ton logon*], even more so [*kai mallon*]" (1037a16-7). The inherent difficulty of both passages can be attributed to their respective claims concerning the role of form and its priority in the investigation of the natural scientist. While there is a tendency to interpret this passage as suggesting a disjunctive approach to the relationship between matter and form, I argue in favor of a conjunctive approach, which is grounded on the need for the natural scientist to obtain a comprehensive or holistic approach of the being of natural beings as it is manifested in both *hulê* and *morphê*.

⁹⁸ Aristotle's use of snubness [*simos*] within this context is important because it provides us with a concrete illustration of a phenomenon that can only be disclosed through a simultaneous attention to both its form and matter. An equally insightful use of snubness in Aristotle's writings can be found in *Metaphysics* VI. In this text, Aristotle is concerned with distinguishing between three main kinds of *epistêmê*. Within the present context, we are primarily interested in Aristotle's description of the natural [*phusikê*] kind of *epistêmê*, which can only arrive at a proper understanding of its objects through the reciprocal and co-constitutive relationship

regard to their matter [alone] [*hōst' out' aneu hulês ta
toiauta oute kata tēn hulēn*] (*Phys.* II.2, 194a12-5).

This passage provides a crucial illustration of how Aristotle's proto-phenomenological approach to the phenomenon of nature requires a concomitant concern for both matter and form. Given that the natural scientist is meant to be led by the evident existence of nature as an internal principle through which natural beings show themselves as being either by or according to nature, the proto-phenomenological account of *phusis* cannot ignore how matter and form contribute to this process. A natural being cannot properly be said to be *except* through this dynamic interplay of matter and form, which should not be understood in a static sense. We have already noticed how lack plays an essential and constitutive role in how the nature of natural beings become manifest to us through a constant oscillation of presence and absence. Hence, we should not be surprised at all when, toward the end of his discussion, Aristotle claims: "It belongs to the natural scientist to know both natures [*kai tēs phusikēs an eiē to gnōrizein amphoteras tas phuseis*]" (*Phys.* II.2, 194a26-7). As we have been suggesting, the investigation of the natural scientist cannot take place in any other way since their understanding of natural beings is determined by a concurrent interest in both matter and form.

between matter and form. Although the present discussion remains limited to *Physics* II, I would like to cite the following passage, which provides a further illustration of the distinctive character of the natural scientist's inquiry when compared with the mathematician: "Of things capable of being defined [*tōn horizomenōn*], that is, of the "what is" that things are [*tōn ti esti*], some are the way the snub is [*ta men hōs to simon*], others the way the concave is [*ta d' hōs to koilon*]. And these differ because the snub is grasped in combination with the matter [*suneilēmnenon esti meta tēs hulēs*] (for the snub is a concave *nose*), whereas the concavity is without perceptible matter [*aneu hulēs aisthētēs*]. If, then, all natural things are said the way the snub is [*panta ta phusika homoiōs tō simō*] (for example, nose, eye, face, flesh, bone, and in general, animal, and leaf, root, bark, and, in general, plant—for the account of none of these is without movement [*outhenos aneu kinēseōs ho logos autōn*], but always includes matter [*aei echei hulēn*]), the way we must inquire into and define the what-it-is [*to ti esti*] in the case of natural things is clear, as is why it belongs to the natural scientist to get a theoretical grasp even on some of the soul, that is, on as much of it as is not without matter [*hosē mē aneu tēs hulēs estin*]" (*Met.* VI.1, 1025b28-6a6).

The natural scientist provides a forceful illustration of why Aristotle's account of nature must be understood as essentially twofold and concerned with both form and matter. Although the initial sections of *Physics* II might give the impression that the natural scientist can carry out their investigation into *phusis* by focusing solely on form understood as the primary meaning of nature, the preceding discussion has shown that such an interpretation would significantly level the complexity and nuance of Aristotle's remarks. In their concern with a holistic understanding of natural beings and their corresponding nature, the natural scientist cannot but proceed according to a joint interest in matter and form. Hence, as Aristotle notes later in *Physics* II.7, the natural scientist must familiarize themselves with the four causes of being, which means that their approach cannot be limited simply to the formal cause of natural beings. Instead, Aristotle continues, "Since there are four causes [*aitia tettares*], the natural scientist should know them all [*peri pasôn tou phusikou eidenai*], and to give the why in a natural scientific way must refer it back to all of them [*kai eis pasas anagôn to dia ti apodôsei phusikois*]*—the matter* [*tên hulên*], the form [*to eidos*], the cause of movement [*to kinêsan*], the for-the-sake-of-which [*to hou heneka*]" (*Phys.* II.7, 198a22-4). Thus, even though the last three causes can often be gathered into one, each of these causes remain co-constitutive principles of being. The natural scientist cannot simply ignore some for being relatively less important than the others. Similarly, they cannot solely focus on some rather than others on account of the former being more fundamental than the latter. Instead, Aristotle's natural scientist is guided by the co-constitutive and reciprocal relation amongst the primary causes and principles such that one could describe them more adequately as complementary rather than subordinate to each other. Thus, Aristotle's account of priority does not fundamentally

challenge the essentially twofold character of *phusis* and the reciprocal and co-constitutive relationship that exists between matter and form. In contrast to the abstracting procedure of the mathematician, Aristotle's natural scientist appears more in the guise of a proto-phenomenologist for whom matter and form are inseparable and corresponding moments of the disclosure of nature as the ontological principle of natural beings.

VI. Conclusion

In order to bring the present chapter to a conclusion, I would like to reflect on its two major outcomes. The present chapter began with an interpretation of the opening treatise of the *Physics* and its important parallel with the account of being as *dunamis* and *energeia* offered in *Metaphysics* IX. I sought to establish the connection between these two accounts by emphasizing their shared *ontological* aim. Rather than interpreting the *Physics* as simply the more concrete or "ontic" component of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, I suggested, following Heidegger, that these two investigations are both concerned with the nature of being and its principles. The compatibility between these two accounts can most clearly be appreciated in Aristotle's claim that the principles of being must be contraries. With the aid of the contrarian structure of the principles of being, Aristotle proceeds to develop his account in *Physics* I, which introduces matter and form as the joint causes of natural beings. Additionally, Aristotle acknowledges the constitutive role of lack in the process of coming-to-be of all natural beings, which adds further dynamism and complexity to his ontological account.⁹⁹

⁹⁹ Although approaching the issue from a different perspective, I believe the following suggestion offered by Helen Lang resonates with my own account of the proto-phenomenological dynamic involved between matter and form in nature: "The force of Aristotle's definition of nature as an intrinsic source of being moved lies here: nature is uniquely defined by an intrinsic active orientation of the moved, potency, toward its mover,

Based on this interpretation, I suggested that Aristotle's account of the number and nature of ontological principles is perfectly compatible with the one developed in *Metaphysics* IX according to *dunamis* and *energeia*. Although these accounts are compatible, I nonetheless argue in favor of the superiority of the latter over the former, at least in terms of explanatory force. In other words, I suggest that Aristotle's account of being as *dunamis* and *energeia* provides a more dynamic understanding of how the primary contraries that make up the principles of being enter into a constant interaction whereby each of these maintain their status as co-constitutive causes of a thing's way of being. In order to illustrate this point, I turned to Aristotle's account of nature where he expands on the insight introduced in *Physics* I.9, which states that matter and form are joint causes [*sunaitiai*] of a thing's being. I suggested that Aristotle's understanding of *phusis* is essentially characterized by an irreducible twofoldness since *hulê* and *morphê* each contribute to the manifestation of a thing's nature. However, in order to convincingly defend this view, I had to revisit the issue of priority in Aristotle's account. Drawing on the preceding analysis of the relative and perspectival character of priority in Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, I argued that a similar dynamic is at stake in *Physics* II. I further clarify this point by turning to Aristotle's paradigmatic or metonymic use of the distinction between the mathematician and natural scientist. According to this distinction, the latter is distinguished from the former by their attentiveness to the inextricable relationship between matter and form without which no natural being could be said to be. Thus, Aristotle's description of the natural scientist can be understood as indicating that

actuality," *The Order of Nature in Aristotle's Physics: Place and the Elements*, 48. Echoing Lang's interest in the active orientation of *dunamis* to *energeia*, my proto-phenomenological interpretation of *phusis* draws attention to this intrinsic striving of the former to the latter as an ongoing process of oscillation through which natural beings reveal their very being.

understanding the complex relationship between matter and form is not only decisive for elucidating the meaning of nature, but also the being of all natural beings.

With the aid of the present chapter, I have sought to expand on the foundations of Aristotle's proto-phenomenological approach to being as *dunamis* and *energeia* by showing how it can be seen to be at work in the *Physics*. My hope is that the preceding remarks have offered both the plausibility and productivity of re-reading Aristotle's hylomorphic account of nature through the lens of the proto-phenomenological sense of being found in *Metaphysics* IX. As suggested above, this proto-phenomenological interpretation of the *Physics* invites us to revisit the otherwise static relationship that seems to characterize matter and form as joint causes of a thing's nature. By re-reading *hulê* and *morphê* through *dunamis* and *energeia*, I have sought to recover the dynamic relationship that not only describes the inextricable correlation of these terms, but also how they imply a similar account with respect to nature. However, in order to further extend this insight, I will turn to Aristotle's discussion of movement [*kinêsis*] in *Physics* III. As I aim to show in the following chapter, the turn to *kinêsis* will not only allow us to return to the primitive ground of *dunamis* and *energeia* as they become manifest through movement, but I suggest that this transition will also provide us with a more concrete elaboration of the dynamism involved in the phenomenon of nature.

Chapter 3. The Phenomenon of Movement Between *Dunamis* and *Energeia*

“This Aristotelian investigation into movement has a *fundamental significance for the whole ontology* [*eine fundamentale Bedeutung für die ganze Ontologie*]: basic determination of beings [*Grundbestimmung des Seienden*] as ἐνέργεια, ἐντελέχεια, and δύναμις.”¹⁰⁰

I. Introduction¹⁰¹

There is perhaps no clearer statement concerning the centrality of movement for Aristotle’s understanding of nature and natural beings than the opening lines of *Physics* III, which read:

Since nature [*phusis*] is a principle of motion and change [*archê kinêseôs kai metabolês*], and our methodical inquiry is concerned with nature, we must not let what movement is remain hidden [*dei mê lanthanein ti esti kinêsis*]. For it is necessary, being ignorant of it, to be ignorant also of nature (*Phys.* III.1, 200b12-5).

¹⁰⁰ Heidegger, *Basic Concepts of Aristotelian Philosophy*, 222; *Grundbegriffe der aristotelischen Philosophie*, 328.

¹⁰¹ The present chapter expands on the basic intuition suggested in the preceding one concerning the inherent limitations of Aristotle’s hylomorphic account and its ability to make sense of the dynamic nature of the kinetic principles. Drawing on a similar approach to the one developed by Christopher P. Long’s discussion of the *Physics*, the present chapter offers a more dynamic understanding of the kinetic principles of being by interpreting Aristotle’s account of movement along the lines of his proto-phenomenological interpretation of being as *dunamis* and *energeia*. While my interpretation significantly resonates with Long’s approach, I nonetheless depart from his more disjunctive approach between the economy of principles developed in the *Physics* and *Metaphysics*. In contrast, I defend a more inclusive approach, which suggests a greater degree of continuity between these two texts along the lines of the foundations of Aristotle’s proto-phenomenological approach to being as *dunamis* and *energeia*. Cf. Long, *The Ethics of Ontology: Rethinking an Aristotelian Legacy*.

This passage reminds us of the implicit link between *kinêsis* and *phusis* that has been at play throughout the opening treatises of the *Physics*. As Aristotle suggests toward the beginning of the *Physics*, movement is the fundamental assumption of the entire investigation.¹⁰² Without an adequate understanding of *kinêsis*, the phenomenon of nature seems to be entirely obscured, especially when considering that the definition of *phusis* describes an internal principle of both movement and rest. Furthermore, given that all beings determined by nature are described as beings [*ousiai*], we could say that movement also plays an important role within the context of his ontological and proto-phenomenological investigation into the being of natural beings.¹⁰³

In this chapter, I focus on Aristotle's account of movement in *Physics* III. I suggest that the phenomenon of *kinêsis* provides a clear illustration of the dynamic and reciprocal interrelationship of *dunamis* and *energeia*, which I argue is essential to the self-manifestation of all natural beings. If Aristotle is correct to notice an ontological connection between being and movement, then the pervasiveness of *kinêsis* suggests that all natural beings are, at least in some sense, determined by this intricate interplay.¹⁰⁴ I claim that Aristotle's account of movement can best be understood as proto-phenomenological, which should be interpreted in contrast to the categorial determination

¹⁰² In her discussion of this opening passage, Helen Lang makes the following important observation regarding the connection of nature and movement: "In short, motion and nature are coextensive, they are found together, and they, and those things required by them, form the primary subject matter of physics as a science," *The Order of Nature in Aristotle's Physics: Place and the Elements*, 34. Thus, according to Lang, the opening lines of Books II and III of the *Physics* provide the clearest and most substantive introduction to the overall theme of Aristotle's natural philosophy. For this reason, the present dissertation has decided to focus primarily on them to show the extent to which Aristotle's understanding of the being of natural beings is characteristically defined by the dynamic interplay of *dunamis* and *energeia*. For another version of Lang's argument, cf. *Aristotle's Physics and Its Medieval Varieties*, 23–34.

¹⁰³ "As for ourselves, we must assume [*hupokeisthō*] that the things that are by nature [*ta phusei*] are in movement [*kinoumena einai*], either all of them or some of them. And this is clear from induction [*epagôgê*]" (*Phys.* I.2, 185a12-4).

¹⁰⁴ The importance of change for Aristotle's understanding of being has most recently been explored in a systematic way by Mark Sentesy. Cf. *Aristotle's Ontology of Change*.

of this phenomenon. My reason for adopting this interpretation is a result of Aristotle's own difficulty with unconditionally identifying *kinêsis* with either *dunamis* or *energeia*. I argue that the main consequence of the indetermination of movement suggests a more complex and dynamic relationship between these terms. As I aim to show, the pervasiveness of the phenomenon of *kinêsis* in Aristotle's thinking suggests that all natural beings must be understood according to this dynamic reciprocity of *dunamis* and *energeia*, which I suggest is decisively illustrated by the mutual affection involved in the complementary relationship between the mover and being moved.

II. The Definition of Movement and Its Relation to Nature

I would like to begin my interpretation of Aristotle's account of movement by recalling the definition of nature, which reads: "Nature is a certain principle and cause of being moved and coming to rest [*tês phuseôs arches tinos kai aitias tou kineisthai kai êremein*]" (*Phys.* II.1, 192b21-22). Looking back on this definition of *phusis*, I would like to emphasize the reciprocity that exists between movement and rest in Aristotle's definition. In other words, nature is not entirely determined by a capacity for movement, but also by a co-constitutive ability for rest [*êremas*].¹⁰⁵ We should keep the complementary ability for movement and rest in the definition of nature in mind since it will prevent us from associating the dynamic of *phusis* solely with *kinêsis*. Instead, the

¹⁰⁵ For a particularly insightful account of the importance of both movement *and* rest in Aristotle's understanding of nature, cf. Guang Yang, "Being as Physis: The Belonging Together of Movement and Rest in the Greek Experience of Physis," in *Paths in Heidegger's Later Thought*, ed. Günter Figal et al. (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2020), 125–40.

dynamism of Aristotle's conception of nature seems to be more a result of the intrinsic indetermination between a correlative capacity for moving or being at rest.¹⁰⁶

Having recalled Aristotle's definition of nature, I would now like to focus on the two registers in which he situates his account of movement. Aristotle begins to outline the first level of his account of *kinêsis* within a specific description of the phenomenon itself. Following this, Aristotle claims, "once we have made determinations about movement [*diorisamenois peri kinêseôs*] we must try to inquire in the same way about the things that come next in order" (*Phys.* III.1, 200b15-6). This second register indicates to the variety of phenomena that are grounded on the existence of movement, that is, place [*topos*], void [*kenos*], and time [*chronos*] (*Phys.* III.1, 200b20-1). These phenomena, which are grounded in *kinêsis*, also reveal a fundamental characteristic of movement itself as something "continuous" [*sunexôn*] (*Phys.* III.1, 200b17). Although there are many ways to understand continuity [*sunexês*], I would like to interpret it within the present interpretation as pervasiveness with which movement is responsible for the holding together of place, void, and time.

¹⁰⁶ Recalling our discussion of nature in the preceding chapter, Aristotle's recognition of both movement and rest as co-constitutive aspects of the phenomenon of nature that offers another important illustration of the reciprocity between *dunamis* and *energeia* in the way of being of natural beings. It is of the utmost significance that Aristotle does not reduce *phusis* to either movement or rest since what most accurately characterizes the phenomenon is its essential twofoldness. If we were to reduce a natural being simply to either the dynamic state of *kinêsis* or the presumably static state of rest [*êrema*], then we would be overlooking the way in which these beings are constantly moving from one state to the other, which suggests a more originary dynamism that pertains to these natural beings capable of life [*zoê*]. As Helen Lang has insightfully pointed out, "'To be at rest' is neither 'stasis' nor 'to remain unchanged'; rather, it is an activity because it implies that potential is fully actualized and activity ensues," *The Order of Nature in Aristotle's Physics: Place and the Elements*, 50. Lang's insistence that rest is a different kind of activity [*energeia*] suggests that movement and rest should not be understood as rigidly corresponding to *energeia* and *dunamis*, respectively. On the contrary, they each signal, albeit in different senses, the dynamic interplay of *dunamis* and *energeia*.

Acknowledging these initial traits of Aristotle's account of movement, I would like to focus on the specific way in which he begins to identify the different manifestation of *kinêsis* through *dunamis*, *entelecheia* or their complex interaction:

Some things, then, are actual only [*entelecheia monon*], others potential, others potential and actual [*dunamei kai entelecheia*], being either a this something [*tode ti*], a quantity [*tosonde*], a quality [*toionde*], or likewise one of the other categories of being [*tôn allôn tôn tou ontos katêgoriôn*] (*Phys.* III.1, 200b26-8).

This passage provides us with a further illustration of how Aristotle's proto-phenomenological account of being as *dunamis* and *entelecheia* is relevant to his description of movement.¹⁰⁷ Here we see how these terms give expression to the self-manifestation of a thing's way of being.¹⁰⁸ Across the various categories of being, we can say that every aspect of some being can show itself sometimes through *dunamis*, at other times through *entelecheia*, and even further as something both *dunamis* and *entelecheia*.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ Helen Lang suggests an important connection between Aristotle's account of *dunamis* and *energeia* to his description of movement in the following passage: "Indeed, for Aristotle, an account of motion is nothing other than an account of the relation between what is potential and what is actual," 57. I aim to show the extent to which the connection between these two accounts animates the entire of Aristotle's account in *Physics* III.

¹⁰⁸ In his commentary on this passage, Alejandro Vigo argues that Aristotle's intention is to situate movement primarily in the domain where *dunamis* and *entelecheia* are related to the self-manifestation of a thing's way of being: "La intención de Ar. es poner de manifiesto que es sólo en este último sector de lo real donde reside en general la posibilidad del movimiento, y ello por cuanto coexisten inseparablemente en este tipo de objetos la actualidad y la potencialidad," *Aristóteles: Física Libros III-IV* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Biblos, 1995), 105. I understand one of the major consequences of Vigo's interpretation to be the inextricable link between *dunamis* and *entelecheia* in Aristotle's account of movement. Similarly, Mark Sentesy notes the importance of Aristotle's use of *dunamis* and *energeia* in his account for the existence of change in the following passage: "The key to Aristotle's argument for the being of change is that he uses potency (*dunamis*) and complete activity (*entelecheia*) in an ontologically meaningful way: it is because each is a certain meaning of *being* that they can establish the being of change," *Aristotle's Ontology of Change*, 40.

¹⁰⁹ In his interpretation of this passage, Russell Winslow draws an important contrast between Aristotle's account of movement as admitting both *dunamis*, *entelecheia*, and their interweaving with the Eleatic view. Thus, according to Winslow, "Having ignored potency from his considerations, this nature eludes Parmenides

Aristotle's use of *dunamis* and *entelecheia* as reciprocal and co-constitutive principles of a thing's self-manifestation further suggests a continuity between Aristotle's proto-phenomenological account of being across the *Metaphysics* and *Physics*. However, before continuing to develop my proto-phenomenological interpretation of Aristotle's account of movement, I would like to clarify the distinction between this approach and the categorial one suggested above. Although *dunamis* and *entelecheia* intervenes in both the proto-phenomenological and categorial approach to being, I claim that there is a distinction between these two approaches. While the categorial approach to being is concerned with how things are *said*, Aristotle's proto-phenomenological description of being focuses more on how things *appear*. Although there is an important link between these two approaches (which might ultimately be complementary), I nonetheless would like to emphasize their difference within the present context since the traditional reception of Aristotle's account of *dunamis* and *entelecheia* has often been interpreted in terms of a rigidly modal sense rather than a dynamic phenomenological one.¹¹⁰

and, as a result, nature lies in latency," *Aristotle and Rational Discovery: Speaking of Nature* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2007), 38. As I suggested in the preceding chapters, one of the most significant aspects of Aristotle's proto-phenomenological account of being as *dunamis* and *energeia* is precisely its ability to account for this latent aspect of being that proves decisive for understanding the possible dynamic excess of being in their ability to being other than they presently are, which implies that they are not capable of being understood as simply "being present." In his interpretation of the ontological implications of Aristotle's account of *kinēsis*, Rémi Brague too notes a sharp contrast between the Aristotelian approach and the Eleatic one. Cf. Rémi Brague, "Aristotle's Definition of Motion and Its Ontological Implications," trans. Pierre Adler and Laurent D'Ursel, *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal* 13, no. 2 (1990): 1–22.

¹¹⁰ A similar approach to the one developed here can be found in Russell Winslow's discussion of *kinēsis*. For instance, Winslow writes: "Motion cannot be a being in any way that resembles what we most immediately name as a being," *Aristotle and Rational Discovery: Speaking of Nature*, 38. Winslow continues his discussion of movement by emphasizing the fact that *kinēsis* cannot be fully accounted for through the notion of being [*ousia*], which, at the very least, suggests that movement may not perfectly be described according to the categorial sense of being. Similarly, Mark Sentesy draws attention to the distinction between the categorial sense of being and the phenomenon of *kinēsis* in the following passage: "The import of this distinction is that the terms by which Aristotle will define change—*dunamis* and *energeia/entelecheia*—are not categorial beings, and they are not assimilable to categorial structure," *Aristotle's Ontology of Change*, 42. In the present chapter, I aim to show the extent to which Aristotle's account of movement is best understood as a proto-phenomenological one insofar as it becomes the most adequate way of approximating the dynamic and fundamental indeterminacy of *kinēsis*.

These preliminary remarks have offered an important insight into the broad ontological character of movement. Through the various permutations of *dunamis* and *entelecheia*, beings show themselves as what they are in manifold ways. In every case, what is fundamentally at stake is a proto-phenomenological account of the self-manifestation of beings. Hence, the following remark in which Aristotle suggests the co-extensiveness of movement and being should come as no surprise considering the preceding discussion: “So there are just as many kinds [*eidōs*] of movement and change as there are of being [*hōste kinēseōs kai metabolēs estin eidē tosauta hōsa tou ontos*]” (*Phys.* III.1, 201a8-9). Although the reception of this passage has provoked heated debate in the secondary literature,¹¹¹ I understand the co-extensive relationship between movement and being as emphasizing the former’s ontological significance. Thus, Aristotle’s account of movement already moves within the domain of things that are [*onta*], which can be read as a concern with how beings become manifest through their capacity for *kinēsis*.¹¹²

Having clarified his initial remarks on movement, I would like to now turn to Aristotle’s definition of *kinēsis*, which reads: “Since there is a distinction with respect to each kind [*genos*] between actuality [*entelecheia*] and potentiality [*dunamei*], the actualization of what is potentially, insofar as it is such, is movement [*hē tou dunamei ontos entelecheia, hē toiouton, kinēsis estin*]” (*Phys.* III.1, 201a9-11). This definition serves as

¹¹¹ The traditional approach to this passage can be found in W. D. Ross’ commentary. In it, Ross writes, “The statement is not strictly true, since according to Aristotle, there is μεταβολή in respect of only four categories (substance, quality, quantity, place), and κίνησις in respect of only three (quality, quantity, place),” *Aristotle’s Physics: A Revised Text with Introduction and Commentary*, 536. While such an approach remains plausible, I believe that a more nuanced account of the relationship between the definition of *kinēsis* and its extension to other phenomena is required. Without wishing to enter into a detailed discussion of this issue, I nonetheless believe that we can interpret the coextensiveness between movement and being as playing a decisive role throughout Aristotle’s thinking. Thus, there are as many kinds of movement as there are of being.

¹¹² This is how I make sense of the difficult passage: “So there is no movement or change [*oude kinēsis oude metabolē*] of anything beyond the ones we mentioned, since no *being* [*ontos*] exists beyond the ones we mentioned earlier” (*Phys.* III.1, 201a1-3).

an important reminder that Aristotle's conception of movement would, strictly speaking, be rather unintelligible without a developed understanding of *dunamis* and *entelecheia*, as for instance developed in *Metaphysics IX*.¹¹³ Furthermore, there is another interesting aspect to Aristotle's definition of *kinêsis* and the way it makes use of these terms. Although we are accustomed to think of *dunamis* and *entelecheia* as mutually exclusive terms, we see here that Aristotle explicitly uses them both in their co-constitutive relationship to define the very meaning of movement. In other words, movement is one of those complex phenomena that cannot be grasped solely through either *dunamis* or *entelecheia*. On the contrary, Aristotle's definition already suggests that movement is always the result of their dynamic interaction.

In order to clarify the intricate relationship between *dunamis* and *entelecheia* at stake in the phenomenon of movement, it is worth emphasizing Aristotle's use of the phrase "the actualization of what is potentially insofar as it is such." One of the most difficult aspects of comprehending Aristotle's definition of movement rests decisively on what is often referred to as the "as-clause." Aristotle's use of the "as-clause" can be seen to introduce a qualification with respect to the manifestation of movement since one of the first questions concerning *kinêsis* is usually the following: where does the movement take place—in the thing moving or the thing being moved? Furthermore, should we understand *kinêsis* as an *energeia* or should we instead consider it to be a *dunamis*? These questions help anticipate what will become a more persistent preoccupation throughout the present

¹¹³ In chapter one of the present dissertation, I argued that Aristotle describes the relationship between *dunamis* and *energeia* as one of complex identity and difference. With respect to *Physics III*, Alejandro Vigo suggests a similar assumption to be at stake in Aristotle's account of movement. Cf. *Aristóteles: Física Libros III-IV*, 110.

account of movement, namely, the fundamental undecidability of its status as an *energeia*, *entelecheia* or *dunamis*.

In addition to its qualifying function, I would like to suggest a more speculative role of the “as-clause” in Aristotle’s definition of movement. In order to clarify this other speculative function of the “as-clause,” it is worth drawing attention to the other well-known use of it in Aristotle’s writings, namely, in the expression “being *qua* being” [*on hê on*].¹¹⁴ What I will refer to as the “intensifying” role of the “as-clause” can be understood as emphasizing the preceding term and its role in the meaning of the expression. In other words, the “as-clause” emphasizes that what is under discussion in each of these phrases is *dunamis* and *on*. Thus, the use of the adverb “as” [*hê*] directs attention to the noun it modifies, which means that it intensifies the role it plays in the overall meaning of the sentence.

With these considerations in mind, I would claim that the primary focus of Aristotle’s definition of movement is that being of what is potentially [*dunamei ontos*]. In other words, the focus of *kinêsis* is not on the mover, but on the moved (or, in more modern terms, the concern is not focused on the subject of the activity, but on its object).¹¹⁵ While

¹¹⁴ Although this expression appears in several instances throughout Aristotle’s writings, I am thinking primarily of its appearance in the opening line of *Metaphysics* IV: “There is a science that gets a theoretical grasp on being *qua* being and of the things belonging intrinsically to it [*Estin epistêmê tis hê theôrei to on hê on kai ta toutô huparchonta kath’ hauto*]” (*Met.* IV.1, 1003a21-2). For an excellent account of the “as-clause” and its role in Aristotle’s definition of movement, cf. Sentesy, *Aristotle’s Ontology of Change*. I have benefitted from Sentesy’s thought-provoking account of it in terms of my own speculative interpretation of the “as-clause” as playing an intensifying role.

¹¹⁵ I make this comparison in full awareness of the modern provenance of the subject-object distinction in contemporary thought. In this sense, I am following, for instance, the work of Martin Heidegger who has suggested throughout his interpretations of Aristotle that it is inappropriate to read the ancient Greek thinker through the lens of the modern subject-object distinction. But there is another reason why we should avoid introducing the modern subject-object distinction into Aristotle’s texts. If we try to grasp Aristotle’s discussion of movement and affection according to the subject-object distinction, then we risk distorting the uniqueness of his account. According to my interpretation, there is a more profound logic at stake in Aristotle’s account of movement and affection than the binary logic of subject and object. Instead, I suggest that the logic of movement and affection is most adequately characterized as a logic of dynamic and co-

the association of movement with potential being seems straightforward, I nonetheless claim that we should resist the temptation to thereby interpret *dunamis* and *entelecheia* according to a rigid distinction between these terms. Instead of reducing *kinêsis* to the restricted interplay of subject and object, we could wonder whether there might be some other kind of understanding of affection and change at stake in Aristotle's ancient Greek conception of movement. Such an approach is already challenged by the fact that Aristotle makes use of both *dunamis* and *entelecheia* in his definition of *kinêsis*. Thus, the phenomenon of movement is inseparable from the convergence of these two terms.

Aristotle's two further clarifications of the initial definition of movement provides us with a clearer illustration of the complex relationship that exists between *dunamis* and *entelecheia*.¹¹⁶ Given that the second emendation more closely resembles the initial definition than the first one, I would like to focus primarily on the latter, which reads: "The actualization of what is potentially [*hê tou dunamei ontos entelecheia*], when it is actually active [*hotan entelecheia on energê*], not insofar as it is itself but insofar as it is movable [*ouk hê auto all' hê kinêton*], is movement [*kinêsis estin*]" (*Phys.* III.1, 201a27-9). This passage expands on the compressed meaning of the initial definition by introducing a further complication into the phenomenon of movement. What makes this passage more

operative interaction between *dunamis* and *entelecheia*. For an illustration of a similar approach to Aristotle's writings, cf. Long, *Aristotle on the Nature of Truth*. For another account of why we should avoid reading Aristotle according to the modern subject-object distinction, cf. Kirkland, "Dialectic and Proto-Phenomenology in Aristotle's Topics and Physics."

¹¹⁶ According to Pierre Aubenque, the seemingly inextricable relationship between *dunamis* and *entelecheia* in the definition of movement suggests that, in their most fundamental sense, these terms are characterized by an essential and originary indistinction. Hence, Aubenque writes: "La formule recherchée sera celle où l'acte et la puissance, tout en étant distingués (sans quoi toute parole sur le mouvement serait impossible), sont référés à leur indistinction primitive," *Le problème de l'être chez Aristote: Essai sur la problématique aristotélicienne*, 454. As I intend to show later on in the present chapter, this fundamental indistinction between *dunamis* and *entelecheia* in the phenomenon of *kinêsis* might ultimately be a constitutive aspect of its very definiability.

beneficial for understanding the complexity of *kinêsis* in Aristotle's thinking is the way in which *energeia* intervenes in the manifestation of that which is in *dunamis*. In other words, this more detailed account of movement relies on a more dynamic and convergent sense of *dunamis*, *energeia*, and *entelecheia* than initially appeared to be the case. With the aid of this passage, we can see that the manifestation of that which is potential [*dunamei on*] is revealed through the co-operation of both *energeia* and *entelecheia*.

In order to appreciate this dynamic more clearly, let us turn to the following example where Aristotle illustrates his definition with the use of several concrete examples:

For example, the actualization of the alterable, insofar as it is alterable, is alteration [*alloiôsis*]; the actualization of what is capable of increasing and its opposite, decreasing (for there is no name common to both) is increasing and decreasing [*auxêsis kai pthisis*]; the actualization of what is capable of coming to be and passing away is coming to be and passing away [*genesis kai phtora*]; and the actualization of what is capable of spatial movement is spatial movement [*phora*] (*Phys.* III.1, 201a11-5).

This passage is of the utmost importance for the present interpretation of Aristotle's account of movement since it introduces us to the *breadth* this phenomenon. Although there is a tendency to anachronistically reduce *kinêsis* to mere spatial movement, the previously cited passage clearly states that *phora* is simply one case of movement. Along with spatial movement, Aristotle describes the process of alteration [*alloiôsis*], increasing and decreasing [*auxêsis kai pthisis*], and coming-to-be and passing-away [*genesis kai*

phthora] as different forms of *kinêsis*.¹¹⁷ Aristotle introduces other forms of movement (e.g., building, learning, curing, rolling, maturing, and aging), but I believe the point has been established concerning the breadth of the phenomenon of *kinêsis* and its broader connection to the disclosure of being through a variety of activities and processes (*Phys.* III.1, 201a18-9).

The preceding remarks have offered a clarification of the fundamental ontological and proto-phenomenological significance of movement in Aristotle's thinking. We have seen that the phenomenon of *kinêsis* cannot be reduced simply to spatial movement [*phora*]. Furthermore, I argued that it cannot be adequately grasped according to the modern distinction between subject and object. In contrast to these two misconceptions, I suggested that the phenomenon of movement is most adequately understood as a dynamic event or encounter that takes place through a complex interaction between *dunamis*, *energeia*, and *entelecheia*. Furthermore, this nuanced and intricate phenomenon extends to a variety of different activities and processes, which are all described by Aristotle as different forms of *kinêsis*. Hence, the preceding interpretation of movement has shown the extent to which Aristotle's understanding of nature and being are hardly intelligible without the dynamic sense of being implied by the phenomenon of *kinêsis*. To put the point more

¹¹⁷ Russell Winslow emphasizes this broad understanding of *kinêsis* in the following passage: "Perhaps the best way of expressing *kinesis* in all its manifestations within the Aristotelian world is with the word "change" or perhaps also the Latinate "transformation." After all, *metabolê* remains the word that Aristotle employs when he wants to name motion in the broadest possible way," *Aristotle and Rational Discovery: Speaking of Nature*, 39. Winslow's interpretation rightly emphasizes that Aristotle's world is, properly speaking, a world of change. It is difficult to imagine exactly the very meaning of being [*ousia*] in Aristotle's thought without the dynamism introduced by constant movement [*kinêsis*] and change [*metabolê*]. As Stanley Rosen puts it, "Aristotle's theory of change and genesis is expressed most directly in terms of *energeia* and *dunamis*," "Dunamis, Energeia and the Megarians," in *Essays in Philosophy: Ancient*, ed. Martin Black (South Bend: St. Augustine's Press, 2013), 169. Thus, the following interpretation draws on the broad significance of movement in Aristotle's thought to continue developing the implicit proto-phenomenology that is at stake in the self-manifestation of natural beings through all kinds of changes and processes.

forcefully, one would have to admit that a world entirely deprived of movement is entirely incompatible with the proto-phenomenological description we find at work in Aristotle's writings. Based on the preceding remarks, we can see that Aristotle would be unable to account for any process of alteration, change, coming-to-be, and passing-away without the fundamental assumption of the existence of movement. It is only with the aid of the notion of *kinêsis* that these processes are made intelligible, which are essential to the self-manifestation of natural beings.

There are further consequences of Aristotle's broad definition of movement. The most relevant consequence for the present dissertation, which further illustrates the complex dynamic between *dunamis* and *energeia*, is to be found in the relationship of mutual affectivity that exists between the mover [*to kinêtikon*] and the thing being moved [*kinêtikon*]. As I hope to suggest in what follows, the phenomenon of *kinêsis* introduces a relationship of mutual affectivity between the mover and the thing being moved, which determines the broad characteristics of all natural beings capable of movement. To illustrate this complex logic of mutual affectivity, I would like to focus on the following passage:

Since, in some cases [*enia*], the same things are both potential and actual [*kai dunamei kai entelecheia*], although not at the same time or with respect to the same thing, but instead, for example, are actually hot and potentially cold, already it follows that many things will both affect each other and be affected [*polla êdê poiêsei kai peisetai hup'*

allêlôn], since everything of this sort will be at once capable of affecting and being affected [*hapan gar estai hama poiêtikon kai pathêtikon*] (*Phys.* III.1, 201a19-23).

This passage reminds us that the relationship between the mover [*to kinêtikon*] and the thing moved [*to kinêton*] is as complex as the dynamic interrelation that exists between *dunamis* and *entelecheia*. Given that movement involves things that are both potential and actual, Aristotle's account of *kinêsis* suggests a process through which things show themselves as, for instance, actually hot and potentially cold. While the interaction of *dunamis* and *entelecheia* cannot take place at the same time or in the same respect without being in violation of the fundamental ontological and phenomenological principle of non-contradiction, Aristotle nonetheless suggests that they provide us with two forms of becoming manifest. Hence, the wood in the fireplace is actively in the process of burning up and producing warmth, but it also appears as potentially cold if something were to dampen its warming effect. These two forms of disclosing the *dunamis* and *entelecheia* of things becomes only more complex when dealing with more complex natural beings defined by a variety of capacities, abilities, and activities. But the fundamental insight identified by this passage is the fact that movement involves a process of mutual affectivity,¹¹⁸ which implies that things are both capable of affecting and being affected by each other at the same time [*hama poiêtikon kai pathêtikon hup'allêlôn*].¹¹⁹

¹¹⁸ What I am referring to throughout this dissertation as “mutual affection” is often referred to in the secondary literature as “reciprocal action.” While the latter notion also emphasizes the reciprocity that exists between the mover and the thing moved, I have chosen to replace the emphasis on action [*poiein*] in favor of affection [*pathein*] since discussions of reciprocal action often forget the pathetic dimension of movement. Although the following remarks will focus on the role of mutual affectivity in Aristotle's account of *kinêsis*, I nonetheless hope that the idea of reciprocal action can also be appreciated throughout my interpretation since they are ultimately the essentially twofold sides of the same phenomenon.

¹¹⁹ Without being able to elaborate on this issue, I am intrigued by the tension that appears to be at work in Aristotle's commitment to the idea of mutual affection, while nonetheless maintaining the complex identity

Having identified the mutual affectivity at the core of the phenomenon of movement, I would like to pose the following question: how far is Aristotle committed to the mutual affection regarding those beings who are both potential and actual [*kai dunamei kai entelecheia*]? Acknowledging the complexity of Aristotle's account as developed in the later books of the *Physics*,¹²⁰ I nonetheless believe that the mutual affection at stake in the phenomenon of movement extends to all the processes we have determined as *kinêseis*. In other words, every form of movement is characterized by the reciprocal action and mutual affection between the mover and the thing moved. Furthermore, this reciprocity is the result of the complex interactivity of *dunamis*, *energeia*, and *entelecheia* that give expression to the self-manifestation of all beings capable and subject to the manifold forms of change and alteration. In this sense, Rémi Brague is entirely right to suggest that Aristotle's account of movement can be understood as "the keystone of the Aristotelian edifice."¹²¹ Thus, *kinêsis* provides us with a holistic sense of the dynamic proto-phenomenological

and difference between *dunamis* and *entelecheia*. When Aristotle introduces the idea of mutual affection, it would almost seem as if such a claim would violate the fundamental ontological and phenomenological principle of non-contradiction. However, according to Aristotle, the interrelationship between *dunamis* and *entelecheia* involved in *kinêsis* takes place according to a complex dynamism of these two terms, but not at the same nor in the same respect. However, we nonetheless wonder how Aristotle can describe the mutual affection between mover and moved without violating the principle of non-contradiction.

¹²⁰ Given that I am primarily following the "method of subordination" suggested by Helen Lang, I do not believe it would be useful to extend the present discussion of *kinêsis* beyond the limits imposed on me by this hermeneutic model, which is restricted to what was referred to earlier as the general [*katholou*] or common [*koina*] account of movement. However, it is nonetheless important to note that Aristotle continues developing the particularities of each kind of movement, for instance, in *Physics* V, which is perhaps the most detailed treatise on the varieties of *kinêsis* and how there seem to be some distinctions between it and change [*metabolê*] when considered in their particularity. However, given that I am focusing on the significance of *kinêsis* for Aristotle's understanding of the proto-phenomenological sense of being as *dunamis* and *energeia*, it seems unnecessary to go into the specific differences between movement, change, alteration, and so on. In the broadest sense, all these terms suggest a common phenomenon that indicates any capacity of a being to be other than it currently is. For this reason, I will continue to refer to *kinêsis* in this broad sense throughout the remainder of the present dissertation.

¹²¹ Rémi Brague, *Aristote et la question du monde* (Paris: CERF, 2009), 499.

sense of being that characterizes natural beings as composed of both *dunamis* and *entelecheia*.¹²²

III. Movement as Incomplete *Energeia* Between *Dunamis* and *Entelecheia*

Aristotle's definition of movement has already provided us with an important illustration of the intricate relationship that exists between *dunamis* and *entelecheia*. Given that *kinêsis* is defined by Aristotle as "the actualization of the potential insofar as it is such" [*hê tou dunamei ontos entelecheia hê toiouton*], we already noted that there is a sense that movement is concerned with both *dunamis* and *entelecheia*. On the one hand, it is the potential being [*dunamei ontos*] that is the object of some actualization [*entelecheia*]. On the other hand, it is the *actualization* of this potential being that appears to be at stake. In our preceding discussion, we mentioned that this tension is an anticipation of Aristotle's further remarks on the being of movement, which appears to be neither fully identified with *dunamis* nor *entelecheia*. In what follows, I would like to focus on Aristotle's remarks in *Physics* III.2, which provide us with a more nuanced account of the reciprocal and co-constitutive relationship between these two terms. According to Aristotle, movement itself is a complex phenomenon that is a form of activity [*energeia*] albeit incomplete [*ateles*]. In order to elucidate the character of this incomplete activity, I argue that the *energeia*

¹²² Although I have already referenced these works throughout the present dissertation, I nonetheless would like to emphasize the extent to which my interpretation is informed by the various scholars who have strongly associated Aristotle's account of movement with his overall ontology. My aim in the present chapter is not simply to repeat their superb analyses. Rather, I hope to clarify the phenomenological (or proto-phenomenological) implications of Aristotle's ontological analysis of *kinêsis*. In order to obtain a clearer sense of the ontological interpretation of Aristotle's account of movement, cf. Brague, "Aristotle's Definition of Motion and Its Ontological Implications"; *Aristote et la question du monde*; Heidegger, *Basic Concepts of Aristotelian Philosophy*; *Grundbegriffe der aristotelischen Philosophie*; Patočka, *Aristote, ses devanciers, ses successeurs*; Senteny, *Aristotle's Ontology of Change*.

ateles of movement is best understood as suggesting the inextricable relationship that exists between *dunamis* and *entelecheia* in the phenomenon of *kinêsis*.

To begin, it is worth focusing on the passage where Aristotle describes the inherent difficulties in defining movement as either *dunamis* or *entelecheia*, which reads: “It is also clear from what others say about movement that what we have stated is correct [*kalôs*], and from the fact that it is not easy to define it otherwise [*ek tou mê radion einai diorisein allôs*]” (*Phys.* III.2, 201b16-8). According to Alejandro Vigo, there are significant epistemological and ontological consequences to Aristotle’s recognition of the indeterminacy of movement.¹²³ On the one hand, the epistemological consequences of movement’s indeterminacy suggests that *kinêsis* is difficult to comprehend because it does not neatly fall either within the domain of *dunamis* or *entelecheia*. On the other hand, the further ontological consequence of this indeterminacy can be understood as signaling the pervasiveness with which *dunamis* and *entelecheia* co-operate to give expression to that which shows itself in the phenomenon of movement.

Aristotle continues his remarks on *kinêsis* by situating his definition of movement in the context of his predecessors’ attempts to describe this phenomenon:

We cannot put movement [*kinesin*] and change [*metabolên*] in some other kind [*genos*]. This is clear if we investigate where some people put them. For some say that movement is otherness [*heterotêta*] or inequality [*anisotêta*] or non-being [*to mê on*]. But none of these—whether things that are other than something, or things that are unequal, or things

¹²³ Vigo, *Aristóteles: Física Libros III-IV*, 118–19.

that are not—is necessarily in movement, nor is change to these or from these, any more than to or from their opposites
(*Phys.* III.2, 201b18-24).

This passage provides us with the horizon in which Aristotle situates his definition of movement. All his predecessors attempted to locate *kinêsis* in a kind [*genos*], which was sometimes described as otherness [*heterotêta*], inequality [*anisotêta*] or even non-being [*to mê on*]. However, according to Aristotle, the mistake of his predecessors was none other than the attempt to identify movement with a specific *genos*. In contrast, Aristotle's definition of *kinêsis* is distinguished by the fact that it does not inscribe movement within a specific kind. On the contrary, Aristotle's account remains faithful to the essential indeterminacy of movement as it appears to constantly oscillate between *dunamis* and *entelecheia*.

In order to clarify Aristotle's commitment to the fundamental indeterminacy of movement, I would like to draw attention to the following passage, which provides us with a clear description of his approach:

What causes people to posit movement as these is that it seems to be something indefinite [*aoriston ti dokei einai hê kinêsis*], and the principles [*archai*] in one of the two columns of opposites, because they are lacks [*to sterêtikai*], are indefinite [*aoristoi*]. For none of them is either a this or a such-and-such sort or any of the rest of the categories [*tôn allôn katêgoriôn*] (*Phys.* III.2, 201b24-7).

This passage highlights the fundamental difficulty encountered by Aristotle's predecessors, which can be summarized in the following question: how should one deal with the indefinite [*aoriston*] quality of movement? According to Aristotle, his predecessors sought to reduce the indefinite character of *kinêsis* by identifying it with some *genos*. However, one could say that they overlooked the fact that the indefinite aspect of movement is constitutive of the manifestation of *kinêsis* itself. Instead of remaining with the essential indeterminacy of the phenomenon, Aristotle's predecessors sought to determine and define movement within a restricted kind. But we might ask: what if there were a way to remain with the fundamental indeterminacy and indefinite character of *kinêsis* such that the phenomenon itself would reveal itself through its irreducibility to any specific *genos*? I argue that the principal merit of Aristotle's account of movement is to have sought to elucidate the meaning of the phenomenon from out of this fundamental indeterminacy.

As I have suggested throughout the present discussion, the indeterminacy and indefinite character of movement is an essential, not incidental, aspect of Aristotle's account.¹²⁴ A possible approximation to the indeterminacy of *kinêsis* might be attributable to the phenomenon of lack [*sterêsis*]. If we recall the role played by *sterêsis* in *Physics* I, then we know that it is one of the possible manifestations of form. Furthermore, in *Physics* II, Aristotle has suggested that lack can also disclose the phenomenon of nature. Throughout these analyses, we have seen that *sterêsis* cannot be dismissed as simply an incidental aspect of the manifestation of natural beings. On the contrary, lack has appeared

¹²⁴ My interpretation is heavily indebted to the following suggestive remark by Pierre Aubenque, who suggests that the indefinite aspect of movement reveals itself even in the temporality of *kinêsis*, which is also *aoriston*: "Le temps propre du mouvement est l'*aoriste*, en qui se manifeste l'indistinction originelle d'un présent qui se dissout dans la succession indéfinie des instants, d'un passé qui n'est jamais tout à fait clos et d'un avenir qui fuit sans cesse," *Le problème de l'être chez Aristote: Essai sur la problématique aristotélicienne*, 455.

as something constitutive to every form of manifestation that involves a complex and dynamic interaction between *dunamis* and *energeia*. I have suggested that this *positive* phenomenological meaning of *sterêsis* must be understood as something that allows for the manifestation of change and alteration since these processes manifest some presence through the complex intervention of some absence. Hence, we are not entirely overstating the issue by drawing a possible connection between lack and the fundamental indeterminacy of movement. Within the present context, the indefinite character of *kinêsis* can be understood as a withdrawing from all categorial determination, which is perhaps why it does not seem to fit within any discrete *genos*.¹²⁵

Aristotle continues elucidating the indefinite aspect of movement by identifying what he considers to be its fundamental cause, which he describes in the following passage: “The cause of movement’s seeming to be indefinite [*aoriston*], though, is that it cannot be posited unconditionally either as a potentiality of beings [*dunamin tôn ontôn*] or as an activation [*energeian*] of them” (*Phys.* III.2, 201b27-9). This passage confirms our preceding remarks on the indefinite and indeterminate quality of Aristotle’s account of *kinêsis*. With the aid of this passage, we can now more forcefully describe the indeterminacy and indefiniteness of movement as the *result* of its inability to be reduced to either *dunamis* or *energeia*. On my interpretation, this irreducibility of movement to these terms can be interpreted as a productive oscillation between them, which means that

¹²⁵ The present interpretation can be read along the lines of the persistent thread in this dissertation distinguishing between the categorial sense and the proto-phenomenological sense of being. While the categorial account of movement would lead us to describe movement as belonging to some discrete kind [*genos*], we could say that the proto-phenomenological approach to *kinêsis* is more capable of remaining with the fundamental indetermination and indefiniteness of movement, which is a constitutive aspect of this phenomenon as such. I have drawn attention to this distinctly phenomenological aspect of Aristotle’s account since I argue that it is more competent to account for these fundamental aspects of movement. For a thought-provoking account of how Aristotle’s understanding of movement challenges the usual interpretation of the categorial sense of being, cf. Sentesy, *Aristotle’s Ontology of Change*.

kinêsis sometimes shows itself as sometimes a form of *dunamis* and at other times a kind of *energeia*. Hence, Aristotle claims, “Movement seems to be a sort of activity, but incomplete activity [*kinesis energeia men einai tis dokei, atelês de*]” (*Phys.* III.2, 201b31-2). Although this passage suggests that movement is a kind of *energeia*, I would like to further elucidate the implications of Aristotle’s claim that it is an incomplete sort of activity. There are several ways of understanding the incompleteness of the activity of movement.¹²⁶ However, within the present context, I argue that the “atelic” character of *kinêsis* can be understood as a result of its always maintaining a relationship to *dunamis*. In other words, Aristotle’s claim in the previously cited passage should not be read as returning to the purported privilege of presence over absence (i.e., *energeia* instead of *dunamis*). On the contrary, I suggest that Aristotle’s identification of movement as an atelic activity reminds us that this phenomenon is inseparable from potency.¹²⁷ What is worth further emphasis is the fact that neither of these terms are capable *by themselves* to give expression to the phenomenon of movement. Instead, we could say that *kinêsis* is fully

¹²⁶ Lambros Couloubaritsis suggests that the entire difficulty of Aristotle’s account of movement resides in the following question: “Toute la difficulté de comprendre l’analyse d’Aristote réside dans cette question : comment ce qui est possible et n’est rien d’autre que possible, peut-il prétendre fonder le mouvement, mieux, constituer le mouvement ?,” *La Physique d’Aristote: L’avènement de La Science Physique*, 283.

¹²⁷ My interpretation resonates with the following suggestion made by Mark Sentesy: “We do not need to say that the potency has vanished or been exhausted or replaced by its actuality,” *Aristotle’s Ontology of Change*, 61. In other words, the traditionally rigid association of movement with activity can be explained as the result of an inattention to the latent presence of *dunamis* in every *energeia*. I have already suggested such a view in the initial chapter of the present dissertation. Given the co-constitutive relationship between these terms, I do not believe that Aristotle’s description of *kinêsis* as an *energeia ateles* does not mean that movement is purely a matter of activity. Rather, according to the interpretation suggested above, a more faithful account of Aristotle’s account of movement requires us to dwell in the indeterminacy and indefiniteness of an *energeia* that is always a form of *dunamis* and a *dunamis* that is always in a sense *energeia*. It is this ongoing oscillation between these two poles that gives movement its characteristic dynamism. For an alternate account of this dynamism understood as “tragic,” cf. Aryeh Kosman’s excellent analysis in “Aristotle’s Definition of Motion,” *Phronesis* 14, no. 1 (1969): 57.

disclosed only once we are able to comprehend the dynamic oscillation between *dunamis* and *energeia* that seems to be a constitutive characteristic of movement's indeterminacy.¹²⁸

Aristotle's attempt to remain with the atelic and indefinite character of movement is a result of his proto-phenomenological approach to *kinêsis*. As Pierre Aubenque has suggested in his interpretation of these passages, what Aristotle has in mind is the seemingly quotidian experience of movement as something both not-yet and to-come, which seems to define the very manifestation of natural beings capable of and subject to *kinêsis*.¹²⁹ As I have suggested above, Aristotle's analysis remains sensitive to the way in which movement appears as both a form of *dunamis* and *energeia*. Hence, the most faithful phenomenological account of *kinêsis* would require a more complex understanding of these terms as co-constitutive features of movement. The atelic character of movement suggests that *dunamis* is not simply in an asymmetrical relationship to *energeia*. On the contrary, the phenomenon of movement seems entirely unintelligible without this complex and intricate relationship between the two terms.¹³⁰

To illustrate this point, I would like to turn to the following passage, which I suggest provides an even further clearer illustration of this complex interrelationship:

¹²⁸ Rémi Brague develops a similar approach in his discussion of Aristotle's definition of movement. Cf. "Aristotle's Definition of Motion and Its Ontological Implications."

¹²⁹ I am thinking in particular of the following passage: "L'inachevé est au cœur même de notre expérience fondamentale du monde sublunaire, qui est celle de l'être en mouvement," Aubenque, *Le Problème de l'Être Chez Aristote: Essai Sur La Problématique Aristotélicienne*, 455.

¹³⁰ I believe that Francisco J. Gonzalez offers a similar interpretation to the one I am offering here. According to Gonzalez, movement can be understood as a *hybrid* phenomenon, which suggests that *kinêsis* vacillates between a complete and incomplete *energeia*. Gonzalez elucidates the hybrid quality of movement in the following passage where he writes: "Aristotle's solution to this dilemma is to define motion as that strange hybrid called an incomplete *energeia* where the cause of the incompleteness lies not in the *energeia* as such but rather in what is capable remaining capable (the 'qua being capable' of the definition), in the fact that the end which is the *energeia* or *entelecheia* of the house has not yet been reached so long as the motion still exists," "Being as Activity," 139.

The cause of this, though, is that the thing that is potentially [to *dunaton*], of which it is the activation [*energeia*], is incomplete [*ateles*]. And because of this it is difficult to grasp what movement is, since it must be posited either as a lack [*sterêsin*] or as a potentiality [*dunamin*] or as an activity [*energeian*] that is unconditionally such [*haplên*]. But evidently none of these is possible. And so the remaining option is that it must be the way we said, that it is a sort of activity [*energeian tina einai*], but the sort of activity [*energeian*] we stated, which, though difficult to discern, can exist [*chalepên men idein, endechomenên d' einai*] (*Phys.* III.2, 201b32-2a3).

In this passage, Aristotle returns to the *cause* [*aition*] of movement's indefiniteness, which was already addressed at the beginning of *Physics* III.2. Returning to this issue, Aristotle nonetheless offers a fuller, more nuanced account of the complex dynamic that informs the relationship between *dunamis* and *energeia* in the phenomenon of movement. Aristotle suggests that the potential thing [to *dunaton*] is incomplete [*ateles*] even while it is in the process of being activated [*energein*]. The reason for this is that the potential thing does not achieve any kind of completion or fulfillment [*entelecheia*] until the process has come to an end [*telos*]. In other words, the phenomenon of movement is always a simultaneous manifestation of a potency [*dunamis*] that takes the form of both an activity [*energeia*] and completion [*entelecheia*]. Although my explanation seems to reproduce a rather standard or traditional understanding of Aristotle's account, I believe that my emphasis on the

dynamic exchange amongst these three moments of the manifestation of movement provide the decisive insight for the properly proto-phenomenological meaning of *kinêsis*. Thus, we can describe movement as the result of a constant dynamic interplay of *dunamis*, *energeia*, and *sterêsis* that makes manifest an incomplete activity [*energeia ateles*], that is, an activity that is lacking its end [*telos*] because it capable [*dunaton*].¹³¹

IV. The Pervasiveness of Movement and the Reciprocity of Mover and Moved

Having clarified these decisive aspects of Aristotle's account of movement, I would now like to return to the issue raised in the opening lines of *Physics* III (i.e., movement's continuity [*sunecheia*]).¹³² I previously suggested that Aristotle's description of movement as continuous suggests that *kinêsis* can be understood as an all-pervasive phenomenon that characterizes the manifestation of natural beings and their complex interaction. We have already seen the way in which Aristotle's account of *kinêsis* clarifies the inherent dynamism of the nature [*phusis*] and being [*ousia*] of natural beings. However, the relevance and pervasiveness of movement extends far beyond this domain. The opening lines of Aristotle's definition of *kinêsis* already suggested that this phenomenon is at the foundation of other fundamental notions in his description of the natural world (e.g., the infinite [*apeiron*], place [*topos*], void [*kenos*], and time [*chronos*]). Calling attention to the etymological meaning of *sunecheia*, we could say that movement's continuous and

¹³¹ The interpretation I offer here has important resonances with the one developed by Jan Patočka in *Aristote, ses devanciers, ses successeurs*. According to Patočka, the phenomenological importance of Aristotle's account of movement can only be grasped according to a complex logic of manifestation. In fact, Patočka identifies Aristotle as an important source and resource for the development of an "a-subjective phenomenological ontology" that can respond some of the fundamental impasses of modern philosophy and contemporary phenomenology.

¹³² "Now motion seems to be one of the continuous things [*dokei hê kinêsis einai tôn sunechôn*]" (*Phys.* III.1, 200b16-7).

pervasive character is what gathers all these fundamental pillars of Aristotle's natural investigation into the being of natural beings in the *Physics*.

With the preceding interpretation of the decisive features of Aristotle's account of movement in mind, I would now like to elaborate on the implications of the fundamental ontological and proto-phenomenological pervasiveness of *kinêsis* as a decisive feature of the being of natural beings. More specifically, I am interested in making explicit the prevalence of mutual affection in the various forms of movement that define and determine the way natural beings disclose their being. In other words, I am interested in elucidating the extent to which all natural beings capable of movement are also characterized by their ability to be moved. Put otherwise, the manifestation of the various forms of *kinêsis* in natural beings takes place through the mutual affectivity involved in both acting and being acted upon, which is grounded on the reciprocal and co-constitutive interaction between *dunamis* and *energeia*. As I aim to show, the ubiquity of this mutual affection of mover and moved admits of very few exceptions, especially within the proto-phenomenological domain of natural beings.¹³³

To begin, I would like to recall the major points of the previous discussion of the structure of mutual affection at stake in Aristotle's account of movement. According to Aristotle, when movement takes place, there is a sense in which both the mover and moved partake in *kinêsis* since this activity emerges as a result of some contact that affects both. In other words, all movement through contact is brought about by the mutual affection of mover and moved, which provides the phenomenon of *kinêsis* with its characteristic

¹³³ The most notable exception, of course, is the case of the prime mover, which is described by Aristotle as being unmoved. I will address this exceptional case of the prime mover toward the end of the present chapter. However, my analysis will be guided by the fact that most natural finite beings are characterized by the co-constitutive ability to both move and be moved.

indeterminacy and indefiniteness. These proceeding remarks have shown that these phenomenological characteristics of movement are grounded on the ontological interrelation of *dunamis* and *energeia* whose complex dynamic we have been tracing throughout the present dissertation. Hence, I suggest that movement can more adequately be described as a kind of *medial* phenomenon that happens or takes place between both the mover and the moved.

Aristotle can be seen to open the possibility of interpreting movement in this way when, in the context of discussing the various *aporiai* that emerge as a result of the indeterminacy and indefiniteness of *kinêsis*, he suggests:

Also evident, and a point that raises a puzzle [*to aporoumenon*],¹³⁴ is that movement is in the thing moved [*estin hê kinêsis en tô kinêtô*], since movement is the actualization of the moveable by what can in fact move something [*entelecheia esti toutou [kai] hupo tou kinêtikou*]. And this activation [*energeia*] of what is capable of moving something [*tou kinêtikou*] is no other than this. For there must be the actualization [*entelecheian*] of both, since it *can move* something by having the potentiality to do so [*kinêtikon estin tô dunasthai*], and it *is moving* it by being active [*kinoun de tô energein*]. But it is on the moveable that

¹³⁴ It is worth noting the extreme difficulty of Aristotle's notoriously compressed prose, especially at the beginning of this passage. In W. D. Ross' Greek text, the opening line of *Physics* III.3 reads: *Kai to aporoumenon de phaneron*. A literal translation of this expression would be "And there appears also to be an impasse." However, many translators have supplemented this passage. Both Ross and Alejandro Vigo in their respective commentaries suggest that Aristotle's compressed prose might be a result of the fact that the *aporia* under discussion was probably familiar to Aristotle's audience. Cf. *Aristotle's Physics: A Revised Text with Introduction and Commentary*, 540; *Aristóteles: Física Libros III-IV*, 121.

the mover is capable of acting [*estin energêtikon tou kinêtou*], so that the activation [*energeia*] of both alike is one, just like the interval from one to two and from two to one or the hill up and the hill down. For these things are one, but their account is not one [*tauta gar hen men estin, hoi mentoi logos ouk eis*]. And similarly in the case of the mover and the moved [*tou kinountos kai kinoumenou*] (*Phys.* III.3, 202a13-21).

This passage clearly lays out the major difficulty of the location of movement. According to Aristotle, our initial instinct would be to situate the existence of movement in the realm of the moved [*tô kinêtô*]. If we recall the preceding discussion of the definition of movement as the actualization of the potential insofar as it is such, then we remember that *kinêsis* is proto-phenomenologically made manifest in the capacity [*dunamis*] of the mover to move that which is moved. While this description corresponds to our usual experience of the phenomenon of movement, we can also offer greater nuance to this account by drawing attention to the way in which the mutual affectivity of mover and moved provides us with a more complicated explanation. It might not be ultimately possible to reduce movement simply to the actualization of the capacity of the thing to be moved since such a view would lead to an oversimplification of *kinêsis* as such. What the mutual affectivity of movement implies is that *kinêsis* should be understood as a medial phenomenon that actualizes the capacities found in both mover and moved to partake in this actualization. In fact, the previously cited passage emphasizes the medial aspect of movement by indicating that both the mover and moved share a single actualization [*entelecheia*], as illustrated by

Aristotle's suggestion since the same hill can be visualized as both ascending and descending.¹³⁵

The previous remarks have clarified the extent to which Aristotle's account of the mutual affection of both mover and moved is pervasive throughout the manifold manifestations of movement. Aristotle's view on this issue is perhaps summarized in the following passage, which reads: "Everything which causes movement is also moved [*kineitai de kai to kinoun pan*]" (*Phys.* III.2, 202a3). This passage succinctly summarizes the basic intuition motivating Aristotle's account of movement, which concerns the reciprocal action and mutual affection of the mover and moved. Aristotle's brief remarks on touch within the context of his account of movement highlights the mutual affection that is at stake in the contact [*thigei*] between mover and moved.¹³⁶ Thus, there is a sense in which, according to Aristotle's account of movement, the mover does not remain entirely unaffected in the process of moving since it is also acted upon by the moved through contact.

V. The Exceptional Case of the Unmoved First Mover

While the preceding discussion has suggested that the principle of mutual affection extends to most natural beings capable of movement, my account would remain incomplete if I did not briefly address the most significant exception to this rule in the *Physics*.

¹³⁵ *Phys.* III.3, 202a18-20. Vigo's commentary on this passage offers a helpfully nuanced account of what he refers to as the "triangular structure of actualization" that is at stake in Aristotle's description of both the identity and difference of the mover and moved in the phenomenon of movement. Cf. Vigo, *Aristóteles: Física Libros III-IV*, 122.

¹³⁶ Cf. *Phys.* III.2, 202a7. Another particularly insightful instance of Aristotle's description of the mutual affection involved in movement can be found in the following passage, which seems decisive for the interpretation offered above: "To affect this sort of thing, insofar as it is this sort, is just what it is to move it [*to gar pros touto energein, hê toiouton, auto to kinein esti*]" (*Phys.* III.2, 202a5-6).

Aristotle's account of movement in *Physics* III has suggested that *kinêsis* involves a particularly complex interrelationship between *dunamis* and *entelecheia* in order to become manifest. Furthermore, I have suggested that the ubiquity of movement implies a corresponding pervasiveness of mutual affectivity, which can be most clearly illustrated by the dynamic relationship that exists between mover and moved. Through contact and touch, both the mover and moved find themselves affected by each other since the movement that brings them together is most adequately described by a particular association of *dunamis* and *entelecheia*. However, as soon as he appears to have firmly established the ubiquity of mutual affection through movement, Aristotle introduces the following suggestion: "To some, indeed, it seems [*dokei*] that everything that causes motion is moved [*hapan kineisthai to kinoun*], but how this truly stands will be clear from other considerations (for there is something causing motion and motionless [*esti gar ti kinoun kai akinêton*])" (*Phys.* III.1, 201a25-7). In other words, while he has shown the regularity of mutual affection in natural beings capable of *kinêsis*, Aristotle nonetheless admits a particular exception to this rule when it comes to dealing with the originating cause of movement, which seems to be motionless [*akinêton*] rather than in movement [*kinoun*].

In order to examine this exceptional case in greater detail, I would like to focus on Aristotle's discussion of the matter in the concluding treatise of the *Physics*, which is where he offers the most detailed discussion. To begin, let us focus on the following opening question to the treatise, which outlines the major issue to be discussed in the treatise:

Did motion [*kinêsis*] at some time come into being [*gegone pote*], not having been present before, and is it in turn passing away, so that there will be no motion, or is it

something that neither has come into being nor passes away [out' egeneto oute phtheiretai], but always was and always will be [all'aei ên kai aei estai], belonging [huparchei] to beings [tois ousin] in a way that is without death [athanton] or pause [apauston], as though it were a kind of life for all things put together by nature [zoê tis ousa tois phusei sunestôsi pasin]? (*Phys.* VIII.1, 250b11-5).

This passage reminds us that movement is a fundamental phenomenon in Aristotle's understanding of the natural world.¹³⁷ Regardless of the answer to this complicated question, Aristotle's commitment to the existence of *kinêsis* as one of the most essential characteristics of all natural beings seems rather clear in the previously cited passage. According to this passage, movement plays a fundamental ontological role in Aristotle's description of the natural world. We have already noted the decisive role played by *kinêsis* in Aristotle's understanding of the being [*ousia*] and nature [*phusis*] of natural beings. However, as suggested in the previously cited passage, Aristotle also draws a connection between movement and life [*zoê*], which provides us with a further illustration to the decisive ontological significance of the former notion.¹³⁸ To put it more forcefully, we

¹³⁷ Rémi Brague echoes this interpretation in his own discussion of the opening passage of *Physics* VIII: "Ce genre de passages peut nous apprendre quel souci anime l'entreprise aristotélicienne d'une physique, un souci proprement *ontologique*," *Aristote et la question du monde*, 404. In other words, as I have been noting throughout the present chapter, Aristotle's account of movement plays a fundamental ontological role in his overall understanding of the natural world and the being of natural beings.

¹³⁸ I believe that the connection Aristotle draws here between movement and life is decisive for the overall interpretation developed in the present dissertation. As I aim to show in the following chapters of the present work, the dynamic interplay of *dunamis* and *energeia* is at the core of Aristotle's conception of life as it appears throughout the *De Anima*. Although there are many decisive consequences of Aristotle's association of movement with life, I believe that one of the most significant ones is the implication that *zoê* is best understood as revealing an inherent dynamism to Aristotle's understanding of both natural beings (i.e., plants, animals, and human beings) and eternal and heavenly beings (i.e., the planets and, to a certain extent, God).

could say that the entirety of Aristotle's dynamic understanding of the natural world and the being of natural beings would be completely unintelligible without this broad understanding of *kinêsis*.

The question posed at the beginning of *Physics* VIII provides an important touchstone for the rest of the treatise. The decisive insight revealed in these opening lines revolves around Aristotle's acceptance of the continuity and ubiquity of movement in the natural world. Aristotle describes this view in the following passage: "That motion is, everyone says who discusses anything about nature, because what they are all considering is the forming of the cosmos [*to kosmopoiein*] and what concerns coming into being and destruction, which cannot be if there is no motion [*hên adunaton huparchein mê kinêseôs ousês*]" (*Phys.* VIII.1, 250b15-8). While this passage is primarily directed to his predecessors' approach to the question concerning the origin and end of movement, Aristotle also shares the view that any process of coming-to-be or passing-away would be unintelligible without positing the existence of movement. Moreover, given that there does not seem to be a decisive end to these processes, Aristotle goes one step further by arguing in favor of the continuity and everlasting character of *kinêsis* as fundamental to any understanding of the natural world. Hence, we can read the opening lines of *Physics* VIII as distinguishing the alternative approaches to the question concerning the possible origin and end of movement. On the one hand, if movement were brought about by something else or capable of coming to an end, then there would be a moment in which movement were *not*. But, on the other hand, if movement is neither subject to coming-into-being nor passing-away, then *kinêsis* has always been and will always be, given that it is responsible for the constant dynamism of natural, living beings. Aristotle is adamant on affirming the

perpetuity and continuity of movement, which would imply that all beings are determined by mutual affection. However, given that Aristotle is equally committed to the existence of some first mover who remains unmoved, he must develop a more explicit account of how such a being would prove an exception to the otherwise regular extension of mutual affectivity within the natural world.

To begin developing an answer to this question, Aristotle suggests that we should recall the things mentioned previously in the investigation concerning nature.¹³⁹ We might interpret this as a reference to the earlier treatises of the *Physics*, especially Book III, which provides us with an explicit definition of movement. This possible link suggests the coherence of the *Physics*, which seems unified by the persistence of movement throughout the various treatises. The preceding sections of the present chapter have suggested that this is indeed Aristotle's approach throughout these texts. However, we can see that a major difficulty of Aristotle's account can be identified in the following difficulty: "Why some things are at one time moved, at another time in turn at rest [*dia ti pote enia tôn ontôn hote men kineitai hote de êremei palin*]" (*Phys.* VIII.3, 253a23-4). Aristotle approaches this issue by trying to contextualize the exceptions and interruptions to movement within the latter's fundamental continuity. According to the preceding analysis, *kinêsis* is a constant trait within the natural world. However, there are many instances in which things seem to be entirely at rest and without any movement. The main question for Aristotle is how to account for the manifold ways in which natural beings are sometimes in movement and yet at other times at rest.

Aristotle's solution to this *aporia* appears to be outlined in the following passage:

¹³⁹ Cf. *Phys.* VIII.1, 251a8-9.

It is possible [*endechetai*] that some beings are always motionless [*ta men aei tôn ontôn akinêta einai*], and others always in motion [*ta d' aei kinoumena*], while others have a share in both [*ta d' amphoterôn metalambanein*], which is the very thing we must say, for this both holds the resolution of all the impasses [*touto echei lusin te pantôn tôn aporoumenôn*] and is the end for us of this present business [*kai telos hemin tautês tês pragmateias estin*] (*Phys.* VIII.3, 252b28-32).

This passage offers a further indication of how Aristotle's emphasis on the fundamental twofoldness of movement provides an important solution to the difficulty concerning the existence of things in motion and at rest. According to this passage, the source of error lies in the incapacity of acknowledging how many things have a share [*metalambanein*] in both movement and motionlessness. In other words, the capacity for movement always already includes the ability to remain motionless. As illustrated by Aristotle's understanding of nature, a natural being has an internal principle of either developing according to a process of movement or remaining itself through the activity of rest. I have been tracing this complex interrelationship throughout the present dissertation with the aid of Aristotle's account of being as *dunamis* and *energeia*. Thus, within the present context, we can see how far the essential twofoldness of being extends throughout Aristotle's account of natural beings. There is a further important connection between the present discussion in *Physics* VIII with Aristotle's critical engagement with the Eleatic position, which understands being as both one and motionless. We have already seen the extent to which

Aristotle's rejection of simplicity is related to his broad commitment to the essential twofoldness. In our previous discussion of *Physics* I, we noted how the Eleatics commitment to the simplicity of being is constitutive of their denial of movement, whereas Aristotle's adherence to the essential twofoldness of being calls for the existence of movement as an intrinsic aspect of natural beings.

Returning to this disagreement between Aristotle and the Eleatics, the following passage suggests that the fundamental distinction between them rests on the former's commitment to the proto-phenomenological manifestation of movement as intrinsically complex and non-simple:

For even if it is in truth [*alêtheian*] in the way some say it is, that being [*to on*] is infinite [*apeiron*] and motionless [*akinêton*], still it does not *appear* so to the senses [*all' outi phainetai ge kata tèn aisthêsin*], but many beings manifestly move [*alla kineisthai polla tôn ontôn*] (*Phys.* VIII.3, 254a24-7).

This passage suggests that our proto-phenomenological experience of the world already reveals itself as already determined by movement. According to Aristotle, our perception of the world does not disclose being to us as either infinite [*apeiron*] or motionless [*akinêton*]. Rather, being appears to be many insofar as movement is a constitutive feature of the being of most natural beings. Hence, Aristotle's commitment to the essential twofoldness and complexity of being introduced by the phenomenon of movement is grounded in the appearances themselves. In fact, Aristotle formulates his proto-phenomenological approach to *kinêsis* in more forceful terms in the following passage:

“One belief is sufficient [*hikanê mia pistis*]: for we see some thing sometimes moving and sometimes at rest [*horômen enia hote men kinoumena hote d' êremounta*]” (*Phys.* VIII.3, 254a35-b1). Thus, we can conclude that Aristotle’s discussion in *Physics* VIII does not radically depart from his previous commitment to the ubiquity and pervasiveness of movement.

While the preceding analysis has confirmed the continuity in Aristotle’s approach to the ubiquity of movement, we still need to account for the exceptional case of motionlessness within this framework. Although motionlessness seems to be simply analogous with the absence of movement (i.e., rest), Aristotle’s understanding of *akinêton* suggests a more radical distinction than mere *êremos*. We should note that Aristotle’s use of *akinêton* to describe the motionlessness of the prime mover suggests a more radical distinction between the ordinary rest attributed to those beings capable of movement. In fact, we would even say that the entire difficulty concerning motionless appears to be the result of its being entirely deprived of *dunamis*. In *Physics* VIII.4, Aristotle suggests that it is the plurivocity of *dunamis* that is responsible for the indefiniteness of movement.¹⁴⁰ In other words, the mere presence of *dunamis* in the phenomenon of movement renders the latter entirely indeterminate and indefinite, which appears to be its most characteristic aspect. However, in order to elucidate the meaning of motionlessness, we must attempt to consider the *akinêton* without relying on the notion of rest as simply the opposite of movement.

¹⁴⁰ “Since “potentially [*dunamei*]” is meant in more than one way [*pleonachôs legetai*], it is this that is responsible for its being unclear that such things are moved by something [*tout' aition tou mê phaneron einai hupo tinos ta toiauta kineitai*]” (*Phys.* VIII.4, 225a30-2).

To begin elucidating the being of motionlessness, we need to abstract the *akinêton* from the capacity for movement. If motionlessness is deprived of the constitutive *dunamis* involved in *kinêsis*, then we could begin distinguishing motionlessness from rest by defining the latter more exclusively with the notion of *energeia*. In other words, while rest can be described as the opposing *dunamis* to movement, then we could designate motionlessness as the *energeia* that is defined by its lack of relationship to any *kinêsis*. Recalling Aristotle's definition of movement in *Physics* III, motionlessness can be understood as a complete activity [*energeia*] that would be deprived of any *dunamis*. However, if this is the case, we might repeat the question concerning the threshold cases of phenomenality: how should we understand the *energeia* of motionlessness without it becoming manifest as the dynamic interplay of some *dunamis*? Wouldn't the difficulty of perceiving the pure *dunamis* of prime matter correspond to this pure *energeia* of the motionlessness of the prime mover? If our parallel between these two threshold cases seems plausible, then we could say that this motionless prime mover is responsible for the disclosure of movement in natural beings without itself being affected by them. With the aid of this parallel, we can begin appreciating the reasoning invoked by Aristotle to justify the belief that the cause and origin of all movement is a first motionless mover.

Among the various arguments in favor of the existence of a first motionless mover in *Physics* VIII, I would like to focus on the following one since it is the most relevant for the present interpretation:

Since we see the one extreme [*horômen to eschaton*], which can be moved but has no source of motion [*ho kineisthai men dunatai kinêseôs d' archên ouk echei*], as well as that which

is moved not by anything else but by itself, it is reasonable [eulogon]—we do not say necessary [hina mê anagkaion]—that there be also the third kind which causes motion while being motionless [to triton einai ho kinei akinêton on] (*Phys.* VIII.5, 256b20-4).

This passage provides us with both a clear and nuanced illustration of Aristotle’s approach to the existence of some first unmoved mover. Although many believe that Aristotle dogmatically asserted the existence of such a being for the purposes of his overall project, the previously cited passage reveals the extent of his restraint and nuance to this issue.¹⁴¹ My approach to this passage treads the fine line between drawing attention to Aristotle’s simultaneous affirmation and qualification of his claim. On the one hand, Aristotle claims that it is reasonable [eulogon] to believe that there is a first unmoved mover that is responsible for the existence of movement. On the other hand, he qualifies this assertion as “not necessary” [mê anagkaion], which at least suggests that the existence of some first unmoved mover does not need to be read in a strictly dogmatic manner. Hence, contrary to the otherwise dominant “ontotheological” interpretation of the *Physics*,¹⁴² we can see how

¹⁴¹ Rémi Brague offers the following insightful suggestion on how to understand Aristotle’s nuanced and complex approach to the existence of a first unmoved mover within the context of his investigation into the natural world: “Il ne s’agit pas de se réfugier dans le suprasensible, invoqué ailleurs, et juste après notre texte, dans des passages qui rappellent le fait du Premier Moteur. Il s’agit plutôt de considérer le sensible, et, en un premier temps, lui seul, du point de vue du Tout qu’il forme,” *Aristote et la question du monde*, 410. My overall approach to the existence of God and the prime mover in Aristotle’s writings throughout the present dissertation radically affirms and adopts the approach outlined here by Brague. In my interpretation of Aristotle’s texts, it is not a matter of understanding the supersensible as a necessary disjunction with the sensible world. Rather, I interpret Aristotle as always situating his discussion of the supersensible within the sensible world of ordinary experience and never in opposition to it.

¹⁴² With the use of the expression “the ontotheological interpretation of Aristotle,” I am referring to the various attempts to reduce Aristotle’s discussion of nature [*phusis*], movement [*kinêsis*], and related issues to the way in which God appears as the first unmoved mover that guarantees the stability of the universe. I discuss this interpretation at greater length in the conclusion of the present dissertation. For now, it is simply worth noting that the present interpretation offered in this chapter is intent on recognizing the importance of the theological question in Aristotle’s thinking without somehow believing it constitutes the single, most

Aristotle's account of the first unmoved mover remains firmly situated within his proto-phenomenological engagement with the movement that defines the being and nature of the natural world. We can readily acknowledge that Aristotle's account of the first unmoved mover in *Physics* VIII is situated at the very limits of his investigation concerning the being of natural beings and their characteristic traits.¹⁴³ However, I remain unconvinced that the introduction of the unmoved mover would imply a complete rejection of the otherwise proto-phenomenological approach to being as revealed through the experience of movement and nature.¹⁴⁴

VI. Conclusion

The preceding paragraphs have developed a broad interpretation of the ontological and proto-phenomenological significant of movement in Aristotle's thinking. Beginning with the definition of movement as the "actualization of the potential insofar as it is such,"

important reference to his otherwise independent treatment of natural beings throughout the *Physics* and, as I suggested in the opening chapter of this dissertation, the *Metaphysics*.

¹⁴³ My understanding of the threshold position of Aristotle's account of the unmoved mover toward the end of the *Physics* is heavily indebted to Helen Lang's interpretation. More specifically, I am thinking of the following passage by Lang, which offers an excellent summary of how the account of the unmoved mover in the *Physics* is both within the scope of the investigation and somehow also outside of it: "The argument remains within physics as Aristotle defines it: motion exhibited in natural things, including the causes required by this motion," *Aristotle's Physics and Its Medieval Varieties*, 86. While in complete agreement with Lang's approach to this complex association of natural philosophy and theology in Aristotle's text, I would expand on her remarks by noting that the relative reticence in the natural account of the existence of the unmoved mover is directly related to the limitations of the proto-phenomenological approach to this being. As Lang suggests, "Because physics is the science of things that contain an intrinsic principle of motion, it should not contain statements about τὸ ἀκίνητον κινουῦν independently of the requirements of motion," 93. Hence, the account of the unmoved mover in *Physics* VIII can only extend as far as the phenomenal realm of movement.

¹⁴⁴ In her discussion of this controversial interweaving of natural philosophy and theology, Helen Lang makes the following insightful comment, which I believe resonates with the interpretation I have offered in the present chapter: One would only need to add that, while the investigation certainly remains within the boundaries of the natural investigation developed in the *Physics*, it is also worth recalling that the figure of the first mover is nonetheless situated at the very limit of ordinary, proto-phenomenological experience, which provides a possible insight into why Aristotle seems to say so little about this figure throughout his writings.

I continued to outline the complex interrelationship that exists between *dunamis* and *energeia* in the realm of *kinêsis*. Throughout the present chapter, we have been able to confirm what Rémi Brague describes in the following passage: “The consequence of this ontological rehabilitation of motion is an undisputed fact... it is Aristotle’s concern for the elaboration of a *knowledge* of the sensible.”¹⁴⁵ In other words, my overall approach to Aristotle’s *Physics* has emphasized the intricate connection between his account of movement and its pervasiveness throughout the realm of the sensible. In fact, I suggested that the ubiquity of *kinêsis* in Aristotle’s approach to the natural world provides us with a further illustration of the dynamic interplay of *dunamis* and *energeia* crucial to the being of natural beings.¹⁴⁶ Given that beings capable of movement are also able to be moved, I argued that the touch and contact involved in the phenomenon of *kinêsis* implies that all natural beings are constantly defined by mutual affection. I assessed Aristotle’s commitment to this claim by turning to the exceptional threshold-case of the unmoved mover. While Aristotle’s account certainly implies the existence of some first mover that remains unaffected by that which it moves, I suggested that the possibility of this being does not imply an indiscriminate rejection of the pervasiveness of movement. On the contrary, we can understand the existence of the unmoved mover as the result of Aristotle’s thoroughly inscribed in his proto-phenomenological investigation into the being of natural

¹⁴⁵ Brague, “Aristotle’s Definition of Motion and Its Ontological Implications,” 4.

¹⁴⁶ In taking movement as having this broad ontological and proto-phenomenological significance for Aristotle’s overall approach to the natural world, I am following, for instance, a suggestion by Lambros Couloubaritsis, which states: “Le double statut de la *phusis* comme “matière” et comme “forme” n’est rien d’autre qu’un aspect de la manifestation du dédoublement ontologique impliqué d’entrée de jeu par *tout* devenir physique,” *La Physique d’Aristote: L’avènement de la science physique*, 293. In other words, according to Couloubaritsis, the essential twofoldness of nature corresponds to a broader twofoldness at work in every physical process of becoming. In the previous chapter of this dissertation, I have adopted and expanded Couloubaritsis’ suggestion with regard to the phenomenon of nature. In the current chapter, I have sought to make a similar point with regard to movement.

beings.¹⁴⁷ Thus, we can conclude that Aristotle's account of *kinêsis* remains thoroughly situated within his overall understanding of the reciprocal and co-constitutive relationship between *dunamis* and *energeia* outlined in *Metaphysics IX*.¹⁴⁸

With these remarks in mind, I would like to turn in the remaining two chapters of the present dissertation to Aristotle's account of ensouled living beings in the *De Anima*. My primary motivation for turning to this text is a result of Aristotle's consistent use of both *dunamis* and *energeia* to describe the being [*ousia*] of these ensouled beings. Moreover, Aristotle locates the investigation into the soul [*psuchê*] as intimately related to that of nature [*phusis*]. Finally, we can appreciate that Aristotle's account of ensouled beings is firmly situated within his broader understanding of the natural world as a world of movement and mutual affection, which is characterized by a dynamic interrelationship between *dunamis* and *energeia*. Given that Aristotle describes the soul as a principle of life, the following two chapters will suggest that the dynamic and agonistic tension between *dunamis* and *energeia* reveals itself in the manifold meanings of *zoê* discussed throughout the *De Anima*. Thus, these chapters will provide a summary of sorts of how these various

¹⁴⁷ By emphasizing the continuity between Aristotle's natural philosophy and theology in the *Physics*, I am guided by the following comment by Pierre Aubenque: "La pensée humaine est une pensée en mouvement de l'être en mouvement, une saisie inexacte de l'inexact, une recherche dont l'inquiétude même est à l'image de la négativité de son objet. C'est parce que la pensée humaine est toujours séparée d'elle-même qu'elle coïncide avec un être qui ne parvient jamais à coïncider avec un être qui ne parvient jamais à coïncider avec soi," *Le problème de l'être chez Aristote: Essai sur la problématique aristotélicienne*, 494.

¹⁴⁸ The overall framing of the present interpretation of Aristotle's account of movement in the *Physics* is heavily indebted to the following suggestion by Pierre Aubenque: "L'acte et la puissance présupposent toujours le mouvement comme l'horizon à l'intérieur duquel ils signifient. Définir le mouvement en termes d'acte et de puissance, ce n'est donc pas autre chose qu'explicitier le mouvement dans des termes qui le présupposent déjà, sans qu'il y ait pourtant cercle vicieux, puisque ce qui était simple horizon toujours supposé devient ici l'objet explicite du regard," *Le problème de l'être chez Aristote: Essai sur la problématique aristotélicienne*, 453. Hoping to expand upon Aubenque's remarks, I have sought to emphasize the intimate connection between Aristotle's proto-phenomenological account of being as *dunamis* and *energeia* in *Metaphysics IX* and how it provides us with an important resource for clarifying the definition of movement as described in *Physics III*. Thus, the interpretation developed above suggests that the most productive way of interpreting Aristotle's account of *kinêsis* is by situating it within the broader ontological and proto-phenomenological context identified with the meaning of being as *dunamis* and *energeia*.

aspects of Aristotle's proto-phenomenological approach to being elucidate the self-manifestation of concrete living beings in their mode or way of being.

Chapter 4. The Definition of the Soul as the *Entelecheia* of *Dunameis*

“From the presentation of the origin of two fundamental determinations of Being, namely, δύναμις and ἐνέργεια, it already become clear that ζωή thereby receives an exemplary significance. Indeed, this is precisely the first ever phenomenological grasp of life, and it led to the interpretation of motion and made possible the radicalization of ontology.”¹⁴⁹

I. Introduction¹⁵⁰

In order to appreciate the importance of Aristotle’s account of the soul for his overall proto-phenomenological description of natural beings, I would like to begin by focusing on the following well-known opening passage from the *De Anima*:

Supposing that knowing [*eidêsin*] to be a noble [*kalôn*] and an estimable [*timiôn*] thing, and one sort more so than another either in virtue of its exactness or by being about better and more wondrous things. On both these grounds we may quite reasonably place the study of the soul [*tên peri tês psuchês historian*] in the first rank. It seems too that to truth as a whole [*pros alêtheian apasan*], knowledge [*gnôsis*] of the soul makes a great contribution, especially with respect to nature [*malista de pros tên phusin*], since the soul is as it were a principle of living things [*esti gar hoion archê tôn zôôn*] (*De An.* I.1, 402a1-7).

¹⁴⁹ Heidegger, *Basic Concepts of Ancient Philosophy*, 153; *Die Grundbegriffe der antiken Philosophie*, 182.

¹⁵⁰ In this footnote, I would like to thank William McNeill for having helped me appreciate the proto-phenomenological aspects of Aristotle’s thinking in the *De Anima*.

This opening passage provides insight into the significance of the investigation of the soul for Aristotle's natural philosophy.¹⁵¹ Within the context of our preceding analyses, we can see that Aristotle's discussion of the soul in the *De Anima* provides us with an opportunity to bring the dynamic proto-phenomenological sense of being as *dunamis* and *energeia* to bear on the self-manifestation of concrete beings. Ensouled beings are not only defined by an internal principle of movement and rest (i.e., by a nature [*phusis*]). They are also decisively situated within the realm of movement, which is to say, within the domain of mutual affection. In the *De Anima*, Aristotle takes these insights even further by identifying these various aspects of the being of natural beings with the disclosure of their life [*zoé*]. Hence, we can see how Aristotle's account of the soul provides us with an exemplary occasion for bringing the preceding analyses into a greater unity since the concrete ensouled being offers us an instance in which beings reveal themselves as what they are through the complex interaction of *dunamis* and *energeia*.

In the present chapter, I begin by focusing on the intricate relationship that Aristotle establishes in the opening books of the *De Anima* between the body and the soul. I argue that Aristotle developed a strong hylomorphic account in favor of the inextricable relationship between these two parts of the living being. Continuing to draw on my previous discussion of the reciprocal and co-constitutive relationship of *dunamis* and *energeia*, I suggest that Aristotle's strong hylomorphic account can be read as further illustration of his commitment to the essential twofoldness of natural beings. To further clarify this commitment, I then turn to Aristotle's definition of the soul as the first

¹⁵¹ For suggestive accounts that have greatly influenced the present interpretation of the significance of the *De Anima* for Aristotle's thinking overall, cf. Brague, *Aristote et la question du monde*; Heidegger, *Basic Concepts of Ancient Philosophy*; *Die Grundbegriffe der antiken Philosophie*.

actualization of a natural body that has life as its potency. I claim that this definition of *psuchê* provides another instance of how the soul is made manifest through the dynamic interplay of *dunamis* and *energeia*. Hence, in the concluding section of this chapter, I argue that the soul's intricate relationship to its capacities can be interpreted as the outlines of Aristotle's proto-phenomenological approach to natural beings. Given that ensouled beings reveal themselves through their respective capacities, I suggest that Aristotle's *De Anima* can be read as a proto-phenomenological description of the manifold forms of life, which are disclosed through the actualization of a being's distinctive capacities.

II. The Significance of the Soul and Its Reciprocity with the Body

There is no better place for identifying the reciprocal activity of *dunamis* and *energeia* in Aristotle's account of the soul than the strictly hylomorphic description of ensouled beings in the opening sections of the *De Anima*. Among the many difficulties confronting any investigation of the soul, Aristotle identifies the nature of the soul's relationship to the body as ranking among the foremost *aporiai*. Even a casual overview of the secondary literature on the *De Anima* will show that this issue remains one of the most vexing questions and heated debates in the reception of Aristotle's writings. There is relatively little consensus between the following two views. On the one hand, Aristotle seems committed to a strong sense of hylomorphism, which would suggest the inseparability of the body with the soul. On the other hand, there are instances throughout Aristotle's account in which the priority of the soul over the body suggests a subordinate relationship between these terms. Without wishing to deny the possibility of the separability of the soul from its body in some exceptional cases, I argue that Aristotle

defends a strong sense of hylomorphism, which calls for a reciprocal and co-constitutive relationship between the body and the soul.

Although I defend a strong sense of hylomorphism throughout Aristotle's account in the *De Anima*, I nonetheless acknowledge that, as Aristotle rightly notes, "altogether in every way the soul is one of the most difficult things to get any assurance about" (*De An.* I.1, 402a10-1). Even though the soul becomes manifest through its form [*eidōs*] and definition [*logos*], there is an important sense in which *psuchē* is in many senses a more inconspicuous phenomenon than the body [*sōma*], which is more closely associated with matter [*hylē*].¹⁵² According to Aristotle, previous ancient Greek thinkers defined the soul by drawing attention to the three ways in which this phenomenon seemed to become manifest: motion, sense perception, and bodilessness [*asōmatō*] (*De An.* I.2, 405b11-2). For Aristotle's predecessors, the soul was defined by its capacity for motion, its central role in the activity of sense perception, and its bodiless character. Among these various characteristics, I would like to draw attention to the bodilessness of the soul, which seems to be the most straightforward manner of distinguishing *psuchē* from the body. According to this view, the soul cannot be defined *as a body* since it is something inherently bodiless. However, we should not be led to believe that the bodilessness of the soul implies a complete lack of relationship between *psuchē* and *sōma*. While it remains true that the soul is not itself a body, we should wonder whether the former ever manifests itself without the co-operation and reciprocal action of the latter.¹⁵³ Thus, we could initially define the strong

¹⁵² Pierre Aubenque has this difficulty in mind when he makes the following suggestion during his discussion of the Aristotelian definition of anger [*orgē*]: "La forme est ce qui nous apparaît *d'abord* de la chose : la forme (εἶδος) est, ce que nous voyons (*cf.* εἶδον) de la chose et que nous pouvons le mieux en exprimer, alors que sa matière nous est cachée," "Sur la définition aristotélicienne de la colère," *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'Étranger* 147 (1957): 313.

¹⁵³ Michael Shaw expresses this point nicely in the following passage: "Insofar as Aristotle seeks to undermine dualism, soul and body are not two distinct principles, but two perspectives on the same thing,"

hylomorphic account as entailing a co-constitutive relationship between body and soul without which no living being can manifest itself as what it is.

To further elucidate the stakes of this strict sense of hylomorphism,¹⁵⁴ I would like to focus on the well-known difficulty concerning the affections¹⁵⁵ [*ta pathê*] of the soul. According to Aristotle, this *aporia* is concerned with the following question: “Whether all of them belong in common [*koina*] to it and to the thing that *has* the soul, or any of them belong to the soul itself alone [*idion autês*]” (*De An.* I.1, 403a3-5). According to this passage, it is difficult to determine whether the affections of the soul are something that happen to the soul or to that thing which *has* a soul. For instance, if someone were to show anger toward someone, then the question would be: does anger reveal itself as something pertaining to somebody’s soul or to their body, which is defined by having a soul? In response to this question, Aristotle suggests, “it does seem [*phainetai*] that with most of its affections, the soul neither does anything nor has anything done to it without the body [*aneu tou sômatos paschein oude poiein*]” (*De An.* I.1, 403a5-7). In other words, most affections of the soul reveal themselves as involving some being that not only *has* a body, but in a sense is inseparably linked to its body. We cannot make sense of any affection [*pathêsis*] except by acknowledging that the thing affected is always already intrinsically

“Ορέγεσθαι and Natural Teleology: The Role of Desire in Aristotle’s Ontology” (Villanova, Villanova University, 2005), 301.

¹⁵⁴ For a similar approach to the issue of strict hylomorphism in Aristotle’s *De Anima*, cf. Jean-Louis Labarrière, “Hylémorphisme et fonctionnalisme. Sur la relation âme/corps chez Aristote,” in *La condition animale: Études sur Aristote et les Stoïciens* (Louvain-La-Neuve: Éditions Peeters, 2005), 259–76.

¹⁵⁵ Although the usual translation of *ta pathê* in this context is “attributes,” I have opted for a more literal translation of the term *pathos* as “affection.” By adopting this alternate translation, I hope to stress the important role of affection in elucidating Aristotle’s hylomorphic account of the relationship between body and soul. While “attribute” does suggest an intricate connection between the substance or substrate and the attributes belong to it, I believe that the language of affection shows more explicitly the nature of the relationship between body and soul.

defined by its possession of a body and soul through which it reveals itself as a concrete being.

The preceding remarks have suggested the extent to which Aristotle's approach in the *De Anima* is primarily interested with the living thing that is composed both body and soul. This strong sense of hylomorphism was illustrated through his comments on the *aporia* concerning the affections of the soul. While it is widely acknowledged that the soul is nothing material (i.e., it is not a body), we must correspondingly concede that the soul does not become manifest except through some body. The most adequate way of interpreting Aristotle's hylomorphism is along the lines of our preceding discussion of nature [*phusis*]. In other words, body and soul must be understood as reciprocal and co-constitutive principles of the being of living beings. Without either of these, the living being could not be said to *be* in any strict sense of the term. It is only through the joint activity of both body and soul that we can obtain a holistic account of what it means for something to be a living being.

With the aid of these remarks, we have seen the extent to which Aristotle remains committed to a strong sense of embodiment throughout the *De Anima*. At least at this initial stage of Aristotle's investigation into the nature of the soul, there do not be any persuasive reasons for claiming that we should consider *psuchê* as anything other than reciprocally and co-constitutively linked to the body. To further illustrate this point, I would like to draw attention to the following passage where Aristotle concludes his discussion of the difficulties concerning the affections of the soul:

Now if any of the works of the soul [*tôn tês psuchês ergôn*]
or of the things that happen to it [*pathêmaton*] belong to it

alone [*idion*], it would be possible for the soul to be separated [*endechoit' an eiê chôristê*]; but if nothing belongs to it alone, it could not be separate, but in the same way that many things are properties of the straight line *as* straight, such as touching a sphere at a point, still no separated straight line will touch a bronze sphere in that way, since it is inseparable [*achôriston*], if it is always with some sort of body [*eiper aei meta sômatos tinos estin*] (*De An.* I.1, 403a10-6).

This passage illustrates Aristotle's attention and nuance to the complex relationship that exists between the body and the soul. For instance, I would like to emphasize Aristotle's use of conditional statements through this passage. Aristotle does not speak describe the works of the soul as absolutely and unconditionally being separate from the body. On the contrary, he claims that if any of these activities were separate, then it would be possible [*endechoit' an eiê*] for the soul to be separate. Furthermore, Aristotle offers the rather dense and complicated explanation of the inseparability of body and soul with the aid of the properties of a straight line. While Aristotle's use of this example remains rather obscure, I understand his invocation of this image as suggesting the inseparability of the soul since it is always with some sort of body. In other words, given that the activities of the soul never become manifest except as always accompanied by some body, then we cannot truly understand the living being except as maintaining a complex relationship between its body and soul. Thus, I argue that Aristotle's account in the opening sections of the *De Anima*

can be interpreted as developing a strong sense ofhylomorphism, which will remain the guiding intuition of the rest of his investigation.

In drawing attention to the co-constitutive relationship between body and soul that informs Aristotle's strict sense ofhylomorphism, I am simply drawing the implications of his essentially twofold understanding of the nature [*phusis*] of natural beings. We have already seen how Aristotle's conception of nature is irreducible to either matter or form. On the contrary, the distinctly Aristotelian aspect of *phusis* is that it is simultaneously defined as both *hulê* and *morphê*. If nature is understood in this irreducibly twofold sense, then we should wonder why this twofold approach wouldn't remain operative in Aristotle's account of the soul. In other words, while the soul can be understood as most decisively revealing itself as form and definition, it does not seem possible to interpret *psychê* except through its inseparable relationship to *sôma*.

To further illustrate this point, I would like to focus on Aristotle's use of the distinction between the dialectician and the natural scientist in order to elucidate different approaches to the phenomenon of the soul. According to Aristotle, the *phusikos* and *dialektikos* are distinguished by their respective approaches to the relationship or lack thereof between the body and soul (*De An.* I.1, 403a29-30). Drawing on the example of anger [*orgê*], Aristotle suggests that the natural scientist would focus primarily on the material [*tên hulên*], whereas the dialectician would pivot more toward the form and definition [*to eidos kai ton logon*] (*De An.* I.1, 403b1-2). From this perspective, Aristotle asks: "Which of these is the natural scientist [*phusikoi*]? Is it the one concerned with the material who ignores [*agnoôn*] the definition or the one concerned with the definition alone [*ton logon monon*]? Or is it rather the one who is concerned with what arises out of both

[*ho ex amphoin*]?” (*De An.* I.1, 403b7-9). This question introduces an important alternative, which resonates with our previous discussion of the parallel distinction found in *Physics* II. The crux of the issue lies on whether one is guided by the reciprocal and co-constitutive relationship between matter and form or whether one’s focus is primarily centered on the form and definition alone. Although each of these approaches constitute legitimate ways of coming to know the being of natural beings, Aristotle suggests that only the former (i.e., the one concerned with both matter and form) who can most adequately be described as a natural scientist. While the dialectician provides what we could term a logical account of the soul through its focus on *logos*, I suggest that only the natural scientist provides us with a proto-phenomenological account, at least according to our use of the term throughout the present dissertation. The definition itself is incapable of accounting for the complex interrelationship between body and soul that constitutes the being of ensouled beings. On the contrary, it is only by acknowledging the joint activity of these co-constitutive principles that we can provide the adequate proto-phenomenological definition of some ensouled being as “necessarily having a certain sort of material, if it is to be at all [*anagke d’ einai touton en hulê toiadi, ei estai*]” (*De An.* I.1, 403b2).

The previous discussion has shown the extent to which Aristotle’s proto-phenomenological account of the soul cannot be understood as a purely formal endeavor. Instead, what we have noticed throughout the present analysis is that there is a constant and ongoing tension between the existence of the body and the manifestation of the soul. Rather than being defined by a mutually exclusive or subordinate relationship, I have argued that body and soul are dynamically related to each other in order to constitute the being of ensouled beings. Without denying the possibility of the soul’s exceptional

detachment from the body in the activity of thought [*nous*], we can see that the most common manifestation of ensouled beings is through the complex interaction of *psuchê* and *sôma*. Given that the natural scientist is committed to a holistic proto-phenomenological account to the ensouled being, we have suggested that this investigation cannot overlook the correlation of body and soul. Rather, insofar as the ensouled being belongs to the realm of nature, it too cannot be understood except in this essentially twofold way. Hence, the opening discussion of ensouled beings found in the *De Anima* offer a further confirmation of the basic continuity of the complex relationship between *dunamis* and *energeia*, which informs the fundamental ontological and proto-phenomenological nature of Aristotle's understanding of being.

III. The Common Definition of the Soul as *Entelecheia*

After offering a brief survey of the views of his predecessors and some of the difficulties deriving from their positions, Aristotle begins his own account of the nature of the soul with the following programmatic statement: "Let us go back again and, as though from the beginning, try to distinguish what the soul is [*ti esti psuchê*] and what its most common account [*koinotatos logos*] would be" (*De An.* II.1, 412a4-6). As illustrated by this passage, Aristotle's preliminary account of soul will be focused on its most common definition [*koinotatos logos*]. Given the broad scope of this account, Aristotle immediately turns to the various ways in which something is said to be in general:

We say, then, that one kind [*genos*] among the beings [*tôn ontôn*] is beingness [*ousian*], and of this, one sort has being as matter [*hulên*], which is according to itself not a this

something [*ouk esti tode ti*], and another is shape and form [*morphê kai eidos*], on the basis of which something is already said to be a this something, and a third, what is composed of these [*to ek toutôn*]. And matter is a potency [*dunamis*], whereas form is an actuality [*entelecheia*] (*De An.* II.1, 412a6-10).

Aristotle's decision to draw upon the various senses of being [*ousia*] suggests that the common account of the soul is already situated within a fundamental ontological analysis of *psuchê*. Oyr previous discussion of nature demonstrated the extent to which *phusis* was similarly situated within on a broadly ontological register. According to Aristotle, any being determined by *phusis* simultaneously reveals itself as a being [*ousia*]. In this passage, Aristotle describes an analogous ontological significance to the phenomenon of soul. One of the primary concerns of Aristotle's ontological investigation into the nature of the soul is a preoccupation for determining the beingness [*ousia*]¹⁵⁶ of ensouled beings. However, as suggested in the previously cited passage, the meaning of *ousia* manifests itself in several ways (i.e., matter, shape/form, or that which is composed of both matter and form).

Throughout the present dissertation, I have consistently emphasized the decisive role of the twofold in Aristotle's understanding of being. Within the present context, we can see that both matter and form provide two discrete instances of what it means for

¹⁵⁶ At several points throughout the present dissertation, I have translated the word *ousia* simply as "being." In a previous footnote, I offered my reasons for doing so. In the present context, I have opted for the translation "beingness," which, although appearing to be substantially different from "being," is in fact a more literal translation of *ousia*. However, given the grammatical awkwardness of constantly using it as a translation of this term, I have opted to only rarely invoke it, as I have done in this context. For other similar approaches to translating *ousia*, cf. the introductions to Joe Sachs' translations of Aristotle's writing and Aryeh Kosman, "Translating *Ousia*," in *Virtues of Thought: Essays on Plato and Aristotle* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), 267–79.

something to be. However, there is an additional sense of being that is neither the negation nor sublation of these terms. On the contrary, that which is composed of both matter and form provides an illustration of how *ousia* reveals itself in its most concrete sense as the result of the joint activity of these co-constitutive principles. We have already highlighted the strong sense of hylomorphism that provides Aristotle with the fundamental intuition of his investigation in the *De Anima*. Given this strict view, we would expect that the most defined sense of *ousia* that will serve as the guiding thread of Aristotle's approach to ensouled beings would be that which is composed of both matter and form. Hence, even though there is a tendency of taking soul as the sole defining feature of an ensouled being, Aristotle suggests that the manifestation of soul is most properly brought to the fore alongside the concurrent disclosure of body.

To obtain a clearer grasp of Aristotle's distinctive approach, I would like to turn directly to Aristotle's initial attempt at offering a common definition of the soul: "It is necessary, then, for the being of the soul to be understood as form of a natural body that has life potentially" [*anagkaion ara tēn psuchēn ousian einai hōs eidos sōmatos phusikou dunamei zōēn echontos*] (*De An.* II.1, 412a19-21). We should note the complexity and nuance in Aristotle's common definition of the soul, which is already characterized by a complex dynamic between *dunamis* and *energeia*. Anticipating Aristotle's further comments on the soul, we can already see that the common definition implies that *psuchē* can be understood as a kind of *entelecheia* through which the form [*eidos*] of some body becomes manifest. However, insofar as the soul is the actualization of some body, we should remember that this relationship between *psuchē* and *sōma* is defined by a fundamental tension through which beings become manifest as what they are. Hence, the

soul understood as the actualization of the body implies that what is brought forth and disclosed in the manifestation of *psuchê* is nothing other than some capacity [*dunamis*] of the body, namely, its capacity for life [*zoên*]. We could emphasize this reciprocity between body and soul by noting that it is only a body of a certain kind, namely, with the capacity for life,¹⁵⁷ that is capable of having a soul.¹⁵⁸ One of the more significant conclusion we can draw from Aristotle's initial common definition of the soul is the following: "The things that seem most of all to be beings are bodies [*ousiai malist' einai dokousi ta sômata*], and of these, the natural ones [*ta phusika*]" (*De An.* II.1, 412a11-12). Thus, we could state that Aristotle's preliminary common definition of *psuchê* is best understood as a complex, dynamic tension between body and soul that further manifests itself through the capacity for life and the actualization of this *dunamis*.

I have stressed throughout the present discussion the reciprocal and co-constitutive relationship between body and soul in Aristotle's *De Anima*. Furthermore, I have attempted to show that this dynamic relationship between these two principles requires a more complex understanding of the identity and difference that constitutes the being of ensouled beings. As suggested previously, Aristotle's description of the soul as immaterial does not imply a rejection of all relationality to the body. Rather, his claim seems much more restricted, namely, "the soul could not be a body [*ouch an eiê sôma hê psuchê*]" (*De An.* II.1, 412a17). In other words, Aristotle's initial concern is with recognizing the

¹⁵⁷ Thomas Kjeller Johansen also seems to have this in mind when, in his excellent study on the powers of the soul in Aristotle, he writes: "The description of the body as potentially alive points us then towards thinking of the body as the kind of thing that is suited to being determined by the soul," *The Powers of Aristotle's Soul* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 15.

¹⁵⁸ In his discussion of Aristotle's definitions of soul, J. L. Akrill expresses this point quite nicely in the following passage: "*Psuchê* is the power a body must have if it is to be a man," "Aristotle's Definition of *Psuchê*," in *Essays on Plato and Aristotle* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 166. Put otherwise, the notion of *psuchê*, while identified by Aristotle with an *entelecheia*, nonetheless is also crucially understood as a kind of power [*dunamis*] of the body to disclose its being.

fundamental distinction that exists between the body and soul. However, this initial stress on the difference of these terms is then developed into a concern for the complex identity that exists between them. Hence, even though the soul is not a body, we have seen how the former does not become manifested except through the corresponding joint activity of the latter. Thus, we should interpret Aristotle's claim that "the soul is the actuality of such a body [*toioutou ara sômatos entelecheia*]" (*De An.* II.1, 412a21-2) as already inscribed within the elaborate interplay that exists between *dunamis* and *entelecheia*.

A further indication of the intricacy of Aristotle's common account of the soul can be attributed to his more complex understanding of *entelecheia*. As noted above, Aristotle identifies at least two meanings of this term. Rather than clearly defining these two senses of *entelecheia*, Aristotle illustrates them by pointing toward the analogical relationship that exists between knowledge [*epistêmê*] and contemplation [*theôrein*] (*De An.* II.1, 412a22-3). This distinction, which is often referred to in the secondary literature as simply "first" and "second actuality,"¹⁵⁹ can helpfully be elucidated through the contrast between acquisition and use.¹⁶⁰ The first sense of *entelecheia*, which Aristotle associates to knowledge [*epistêmê*], refers to an actualization that is acquired but not necessarily being at work. In contrast, the second meaning of *entelecheia* is understood by Aristotle to refer to the active use of this initial *entelecheia* (i.e., its active being-at-work). While these initial

¹⁵⁹ Many scholars have noted the difficulty in confidently distinguishing between these two aspects of *dunamis* and *energeia*. However, it is important to acknowledge Aristotle's use of both terms for describing the way of being of some entity. Hence, as Ackrill notes, "'potentiality' and 'actuality' can come to be used not only for successive phases, but also for aspects of the composite which are present simultaneously," 169. I argue that this acknowledgement is crucial for understanding the manner in which *dunamis* and *energeia* function as proto-phenomenological terms in the way I have suggested throughout the present dissertation.

¹⁶⁰ According to the current literature, it seems that Aristotle's distinction between acquisition and use, especially revolving around the distinction between *energeia* and *entelecheia*, is heavily indebted to Plato's own similar distinction, which appears most notably in the *Theaetetus*. For an excellent survey of this connection, cf. Menn, "The Origins of Aristotle's Concept of Ἐνέργεια: Ἐνέργεια and Δύναμις."

remarks on the two senses of *entelecheia* provide us with a rough approximation into these terms and their relevance for Aristotle's account, we might wonder: what does Aristotle mean by having an *entelecheia* without it actively being at work? Should we understand this actual yet inactive *entelecheia* as a potential sort of *entelecheia*? The answer to these questions is anything but simple. Attempting to offer a response to these questions, I argue that the first sense of *entelecheia* is best understood as a potential actuality insofar as its possession or acquisition does not imply its active use or manifestation. Taking the example of knowledge, the first sense of *entelecheia* provides the ground for a *potential* use of it in the activity of contemplation, which would be more closely related to the second meaning of the term. Thus, I suggest that the two senses of *entelecheia* imply a more nuanced and complex relationship with *dunamis* than might initially appear.¹⁶¹

If the interpretation suggested above appears plausible, then Aristotle's definition of the soul as a first kind of actuality (*De An.* II.1, 412a23) need not be understood as an unconditional or absolute privilege of *entelecheia* over *dunamis*. Rather, Aristotle's identification of soul with the first sense of *entelecheia* can be interpreted as an implicit recognition of *psuchê*'s complex manifestation in conjunction with the body through the confluence and interplay of *dunamis*, *energeia*, and *entelecheia*.¹⁶² In this sense, we can

¹⁶¹ In the following passage, Thomas Kjeller Johansen gives an equally nuanced account of the relationship between first and second *entelecheia* as the one I am offering here: "The distinction between first and second fulfillment is correspondingly to be read in terms of the degrees with which the soul realizes the body's potential: in the activity of contemplating, perceiving, taking nourishment, the body's potential is more fully realized than in merely having the capacity to do these things, though in having the capacity the body's potential is sufficiently realized for us to say that it has soul and that a living being of a certain kind exists," *The Powers of Aristotle's Soul*, 16. For a similarly sensitive approach to the complexities of Aristotle's use of *entelecheia* in the definition of the soul, cf. Eli Diamond, *Mortal Imitations of Divine Life: The Nature of the Soul in Aristotle's De Anima* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2015), 56–57.

¹⁶² At this point in the present discussion of Aristotle's conception of the soul, I would like to simply highlight how my approach to the interrelationship between *dunamis* and *entelecheia* provides us with a more complex understanding of the being of natural beings. Rather than developing a static account of the relationship between body and soul, my interpretation has outlined a broadly dynamic description of how the actualization of the body co-operates with the potency for life in some natural body. As I will continue to demonstrate in

preliminarily conclude that Aristotle's common account of the soul provides an excellent illustration of the complex interaction between *dunamis* and *entelecheia* that we have been tracing throughout the present dissertation as the foundation of his proto-phenomenological description of being. We have seen that Aristotle recognizes the body and soul as co-constitutive and reciprocal principles of a living being's identity. Although the soul becomes initially manifest as the actualization [*entelecheia*] of some natural body, we have also noted that this actualization is made possible by the presence of a potency [*dunamis*] for life in said body. Hence, the being of ensouled beings is hardly intelligible without this dynamic co-operation between body and soul given that the concrete being [*ousia*] is composed of these two principles. Thus, Aristotle's common account of the soul is situated within his broader commitment to the essential twofoldness of being, which begins with the complex relationship between *dunamis* and *entelecheia* and extends all the way to his hylomorphic account of natural beings.

IV. The Second Definition of the Soul: Between *Dunamis* and *Entelecheia*

Aristotle's common account of the soul provides us with the general outlines of his overall approach to the issue. However, immediately after describing the initial manifestation of the soul as the principle of actualization of some natural body with the potency for life, Aristotle begins to develop a second definition of *psuchê*. We should note that Aristotle's decision to propose a second definition of the soul is grounded on the same methodological principle that we previously discussed as informing his proto-phenomenological approach to the principles of being in *Physics* I. Drawing on this

the following chapter, Aristotle's dynamic understanding of the ensouled being is further illustrated by the intricate connection that exists between the soul and its respective capacities.

principle, Aristotle claims: “Since what is clear [*to saphes*] and more knowable [*gnôrimôteron*] by speech [*logon*] arises out of what is unclear [*asaphôn*] but more obvious [*gnôrimôteron*], we must in this way try again to approach the soul” (*De An.* II.2, 413a11-3). I understand Aristotle’s invocation of this proto-phenomenological principle as providing us with the resources for comparing the respective merits of his two accounts of the soul. As suggested above, Aristotle’s common account of *psuchê* relies on what initially and for the most part appears to us as characteristic of its self-manifestation. Hence, we arrive at the claim that the soul is the actualization of some natural body with the potency for life since this is what ordinarily appears to define the soul. While this common account of *psuchê* provides us with what is most obvious to us, Aristotle suggests that this initial account can be further elucidated with reference to *logos*.

With the help of this opening passage of *De Anima* II.2, we can more clearly describe the relationship between these two accounts of the soul. We can see that these two definitions are not meant to be understood in a mutually exclusive manner. It is not the case that the common account of the soul somehow fails to adequately describe the nature of *psuchê* and its initial appearance. On the contrary, the principal merit of the common account is to draw upon what usually and ordinarily characterizes the disclosure of the soul through the actualization of some natural body. By deciding to outline a second account of the soul, Aristotle does not intend to do away with the common account. Rather, we can understand the second definition as making use of *logos* to clarify this inaugural appearance of the soul. Thus, I argue that there is no substantial difference between Aristotle’s two accounts of *psuchê*. In what follows, I will show the extent to which the second definition

of the soul is similarly characterized by a complex interaction between *dunamis* and *entelecheia*, which remains the guiding intuition of both accounts of *psuchê*.

To begin our discussion of the second account of the soul, I would like to draw attention to the decisive distinction with which Aristotle further describes the initial appearance of *psuchê* in some entity: “So we say, taking this as a starting point for the inquiry, that what is ensouled [*empsuchon*] is distinguished from what is soulless [*apsuchou*] by living [*tô zên*]” (*De An.* II.2, 413a20-2). I understand Aristotle’s use of this fundamental distinction between ensouled and soulless beings provides a fundamental touchstone to his second account of the soul.¹⁶³ According to the previously cited passage, the difference between these two beings can be made apparent by the presence of absence of life. While ensouled beings become manifest through their capacity for life, soulless beings reveal themselves as incapable of life. To further illustrate this distinction, we can call upon the difference between a fox and a rock. On the one hand, the fox’s ability to feed itself, reproduce, and perceive the world around it provides us with clear phenomenological indications of the presence of life and, consequently, of soul in this being. On the other hand, the rock seems entirely incapable of any of these fundamental capacities, which would suggest that it is not defined as capable of either life or soul. Thus, Aristotle’s distinction between soulless and ensouled beings can be read as providing a fundamental proto-phenomenological touchstone for the entirety of his second account of the soul.

With the preceding discussion in mind, we can further appreciate the centrality of life for Aristotle’s second account of the soul. We have already noted how the presence of life provides us with clear proto-phenomenological evidence of the existence of a soul

¹⁶³ For an interesting discussion of the importance of the distinction between the ensouled being and the one lacking soul, cf. Heidegger, *Aristotle’s Metaphysics* ¶ 1-3.

within some natural body. An equally defining aspect of Aristotle's conception of life is its essential plurivocity, which finds its clearest statement in the following phrase: "Living is meant in more than one way" [*pleonachôs tou zên legomenou*] (*De An.* II.2, 413a22). Hence, when offering a proto-phenomenological description of the soul, we should be aware of the wide variety of abilities and activities that manifest the phenomenon of life in ensouled beings. According to Aristotle, this broad spectrum of abilities and activities involve the intellect [*nous*], perception [*aisthêsis*], movement and rest with respect to place [*kinêsis kai stasis hê kata topon*], the movement¹⁶⁴ resulting from nutrition [*trophên*], and so on (*De An.* II.2, 413a23-5). With the aid of this broad array of manifestations of life, Aristotle's investigation into the soul can be understood as firmly grounded on his overall proto-phenomenological approach to being. The inquiry into *psuchê* is part and parcel of any investigation into the life of natural beings and how this life becomes manifest through its most distinctive capacities and activities. Hence, as I aim to show later, plants, animals, and human beings reveal themselves as what they are (i.e., the life that they are capable of living) through the intricate connection between the *dunameis* and *energeiai* that provide further illustrations of the complex interrelation of their body and soul.

The preceding remarks have indicated the extent to which Aristotle's second definition of life is intimately connected to the phenomenon of soul. Although this connection was already implicit in Aristotle's common account,¹⁶⁵ we could say that the

¹⁶⁴ In describing nutrition as a form of movement, I am calling upon our preceding discussion of *kinêsis*, which showed the extent to which many processes (e.g., spatial movement, growth and alteration, nutrition, among others) are all described by Aristotle as different manifestations of movement.

¹⁶⁵ Eli Diamond also emphasizes the important role of life in Aristotle's common definition of the soul: "The most common definition (*κοινότατος λόγος*) of soul is thus its most basic activity which cannot go unexercised without the death of the organism, the bare minimal activity required for its continued existence. It is for this reason the most inclusive definition of soul, in that it includes not only every instance of living being, but also every moment of the living existence of each being," *Mortal Imitations of Divine Life: The Nature of the Soul in Aristotle's De Anima*, 45. As I aim to show in the following chapter, there is a decisive

second definition of soul further elucidates the centrality of life for his conception of *psuchê*. We can see that the relationship between soul and life in Aristotle's second account provides us with further proto-phenomenological evidence of the nature of ensouled beings as the dynamic unity of body and soul. I have already suggested how the manifestation of life in some natural being reveals the presence of soul. Hence, we could say that beings cannot show themselves as ensouled without the manifestation of life in some form or another.¹⁶⁶

Another important similarity between Aristotle's two accounts of the soul is the complex and nuanced co-operation of *dunamis* and *entelecheia* in the manifestation of the being of ensouled beings. To illustrate this point more concretely, I would like to turn to Aristotle's reference to plants. According to Aristotle, plants can be described as ensouled precisely on account of their potency [*dunamis*] for life. Such a life is expressed most properly by their capacity for obtaining nutrition [*trophê*], which is described by Aristotle in the following manner: "They evidently have in themselves this sort of power [*dunamin*] and source [*archên*], through which they have growth and decay in opposite directions" (*De An.* II.2, 413a25-8). This passage provides us with an important illustration of a decisive parallel between *psuchê* and *phusis*. Like nature, the soul appears as the internal principle of some form of capacity [*dunamis*] that is responsible for the disclosure of life in ensouled beings through their characteristic activities [*energeiai*]. Hence, just like nature, we must understand the soul to be an essentially twofold principle since ensouled

connection between the most common and basic activity of the soul as actualizing principle of some natural body and Aristotle's discussion of the nutritive capacity [*to threptikon*] as the foundation of all other capacities of the soul.

¹⁶⁶ In his discussion of the connection between life and soul in Aristotle's definition of *psuchê*, Ackrill offers the following excellent description of the reciprocity between these two terms: "Until there is a living thing, then, there is no 'body potentially alive'; and once there is, its body is necessarily actually alive," "Aristotle's Definition of *Psuchê*," 176.

beings are distinguished by the complex identity and difference between *dunamis* and *energeia*.

I have sought to emphasize the continuity between Aristotle's two accounts of the soul, especially as they are equally grounded on the reciprocity of *dunamis* and *energeia*. Given that the soul is described as the actualization of some natural body having life in potency, we can already see that the ensouled being is composed of a dynamic relationship between *dunamis* and *entelecheia*. Similarly, Aristotle's second account of the soul is grounded on the manifestation of life, which we have shown to be an intrinsic potency of natural bodies capable of receiving the soul. While the manifestation of life in ensouled beings provides us with an important initial manifestation of the soul, we have also indicated that these beings disclose themselves as the beings that they are as a result of the various activities [*energeia*] that most closely make manifest their form of life. Hence, Aristotle claims: "For now, let us say this much only, that the soul is the source [*archê*] of these things that have been mentioned and is delimited by them: by nutrition [*threptikô*], by perception [*aisthetikô*], by thinking [*dianoêtikô*], and by movement [*kinêsei*]" (*De An.* II.2, 413b11-13).¹⁶⁷ This passage can be read as the comprehensive summary of Aristotle's second account of the soul. In it, we clearly see that he understands the soul as a principle [*archê*] of natural beings. Moreover, Aristotle identifies a variety of capacities and abilities that characteristically define and delimit the being of ensouled beings, such as nutrition,

¹⁶⁷ C. D. C. Reeve translates *hōristai* as "defined." In contrast, I suggest that "delimited" is a more adequate translation in the present context. While the latter translation is a perfectly legitimate and valid translation of the Greek term, there are some difficulties in suggesting that the soul is defined by these capacities. A more moderate claim would be to suggest that the soul is differentiated and therefore distinguished in its essential being by its capacities. According to this view, which is the one I will be adopting throughout the remainder of the present dissertation, we can draw attention to the crucial role of the soul's capacities in disclosing the essential being of some entity without unconditionally restricting it to these capacities. I would like to thank Walter Brogan for bringing this aspect of the Greek to my attention.

perception, thinking, and movement.¹⁶⁸ To further illustrate how the soul becomes manifest and delimited by these intrinsic capacities, we should turn to the following suggestion by Aristotle: “Some animals have all these capacities, others some of them, and still others only one (and this makes the differences [*diaphora*] among the animals)” (*De An.* II.2, 413b32-4a1). Situating this passage within the context of his overall approach to the soul, I argue that Aristotle’s attention to the differentiating role of the capacities of the soul is a direct result of his proto-phenomenological description of ensouled beings as disclosed through this dynamic interplay of *dunamis* and *energeia*.¹⁶⁹

With the aid of this more refined analysis of Aristotle’s proto-phenomenological account of the soul, we can more clearly appreciate how different kinds of ensouled beings reveal themselves through their respective capacities. Furthermore, considering Aristotle’s strict hylomorphic account of being in the *De Anima*, we could say that these abilities and activities are directly correlated to the specific kind of body possessed by these ensouled beings. We have already seen that body and soul should not be understood as subordinate or mutually exclusive principles. On the contrary, the complex identity of ensouled beings is a direct result of a dynamic interaction between *psuchê* and *sôma*. Aristotle’s common account of the soul already provided us with an illustration of how the actualization of the capacity for life is made possible by the natural body as being of a certain kind.

¹⁶⁸ I would like to thank Walter Brogan and Ken Tully for helping me further grasp the importance of Aristotle’s use of the *-tikô* ending in this passage whereby the usual form of these nouns is modified in order to express a kind of capacity or ability.

¹⁶⁹ Although the interpretation I am advocating for in the present chapter between the soul and its capacities adopts this general proto-phenomenological approach, it is worth noting that this interpretation is controversial, to say the least. For an alternative account to the one I am offering here, cf. Rebekah Johnston, “Aristotle’s *De Anima*: On Why the Soul Is Not a Set of Capacities,” *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 19, no. 2 (2011): 185–200.

To further appreciate the intricate connection between body and soul, it is worth turning to the following lengthy passage, which functions as a kind of conclusion to Aristotle's second account of *psuchê*:

For this reason, those who think the soul neither has being without a body [*mêt' aneu sômatos einai*], nor is any sort of body [*mête sôma ti*], get hold of it well [*kalôs*], for it is not a body but something that belongs to a body [*sômatos ti*], and this is why it is present in a body and in a body of a certain kind [*en sômati toioutô*], and those earlier thinkers did not think well who stuck it into a body without also distinguishing which bodies and of what sort, even though there is no evidence that any random thing [*tou tuchontos*] admits just any random thing [*to tuchon*] within it. (*De An.* II.2, 414a19-25).

This passage provides a more nuanced and detailed description of why I have emphasized the strict hylomorphism animating Aristotle's account throughout the present interpretation. We have suggested that the manifestation of soul seems highly unlikely without the corresponding co-operation of the body. Hence, the soul most clearly becomes manifest when it is understood as something that belongs [*huparchei*] to a body, that is, accompanies it and is something of a body [*sômatos ti*]. By belonging to the body, we could say that the soul is always already engaged in a co-operative and reciprocal relationship with *sôma* in order to give expression to the disclosure of an ensouled being's characteristic way of being. As suggested above, we cannot understand the relationship between body

and soul cannot be grasped in simply any haphazard way. Rather, we must comprehend Aristotle's strict sense of hylomorphism as implying a coordinating relationship between *psuchê* and *sôma* that can be most adequately described as one of mutual adequation. For the soul to become manifest as a principle of actualization for some natural body, the body in question must be of a certain *kind* [*toiouton*], that is, one appropriately¹⁷⁰ constituted by the capacity [*dunamis*] for life. Aristotle offers a further description of the relationship between these two principles as follows: "For the actualization of each thing naturally comes about in what it already belongs to potentially, that is, the appropriate matter" [*hekastou gar hê entelecheia en tô dunamei huparchonti kai tê oikeia hulê pephuken egginesthai*] (*De An.* II.2, 414a25-7). We have seen the extent to which Aristotle's two accounts of the soul are defined by this reciprocal and co-constitutive relationship between body and soul implied by a strong sense of hylomorphism, which can be clearly illustrated in the following passage: "That, then, the soul is a certain actualization [*entelecheia*] and articulation [*logos*] of that which has the potency [*dunamin*] to be in that way, is clear from these things" (*De An.* II.2, 414a27-8). Thus, in conclusion, we can state that the soul as an *entelecheia* of that which is in *dunamis* is how the concrete living being shows itself as characterized by a dynamic tension, which is nothing other than the most ordinary manifestation of life itself.

¹⁷⁰ In using the word "appropriate" as a quasi-translation of the term *dunamis*, I am particularly indebted to Heidegger's suggestive attempts to translate and interpret the Aristotelian notion as an active kind of potential. Cf. in particular, Heidegger, *Basic Concepts of Aristotelian Philosophy*; Heidegger, *Grundbegriffe der aristotelischen Philosophie*.

V. The Relationship Between the Soul and Its *Dunameis*

The preceding remarks have offered a more detailed and thorough description of Aristotle's proto-phenomenological attempts to define the nature of the soul through the complex interaction of *dunamis* and *entelecheia*. We have already seen the extent to which ensouled beings is dynamically composed of both body and soul. Additionally, we have traced the disclosure of ensouled beings through the manifestation of life, which is characterized by a wide variety of potencies and activities that range from nutrition, perception, and desire up to the capacity for thinking. Given that these various capacities serve to further delimit and distinguish beings in their very being, the present interpretation of Aristotle's proto-phenomenological investigation into ensouled beings would be incomplete without further elucidating this interrelation between the soul and its capacities in greater detail. Thus, in what follows, I would like to turn to Aristotle's discussion in *De Anima* II.3 where he elaborates on the issue.

Aristotle begins by discussing the elaborate connection between the soul and its capacities in the following passage: "Of the potencies of the soul [*tôn de dunameôn tês psuchês*], all of those that have been mentioned belong to some living things, as we said, while to others some of them belong, and to still others only one" (*De An.* II.3, 414a29-31). We already noted that the capacities of the soul provide us with an initial delimitation of the nature of the ensouled being. With the aid of this passage, we can more confidently assert that these abilities are an essential part of the being of these entities. While plants reveal themselves as exclusively constituted by their capacity for acquiring nutrition, animals show themselves as delimited by their ability to perceive in addition to acquire nutrition (*De An.* II.3, 414a32-b1). Hence, we can see that the presence and manifestation

of capacities in ensouled beings provide us with the necessary proto-phenomenological evidence for obtaining a further grasp of their essential characteristics. Put simply, ensouled beings show themselves as what they are through their most characteristic and defining abilities.

This intricate connection between the soul and its capacities allows us to reinterpret Aristotle's second account of the soul as being distinguished from the common one by a greater attention to the disclosure of ensouled beings through their corresponding abilities. Hence, if Aristotle's common account of the soul provided us with a general outline or overview of the initial manifestation of *psuchê*, we could say that the second definition focuses more specifically on the relationship between the soul and its particular kind of body in giving expression to a delimited form of life. Put otherwise, Aristotle's second account of the soul reveals the essential limitations of an overly abstract description of *psuchê*. By focusing on the intimate link between the soul and its capacities, Aristotle suggests that a more specific account of the soul must be guided by the manifestation of specific differences amongst ensouled beings (*De An.* II.3, 414b20-1). In fact, I suggest that Aristotle outlines this specific aspect of his proto-phenomenological approach to the soul in the following passage:

It would be ridiculous to inquire after the common account [*koinon logon*], both in the one case and in the other, which would not be the particular [*idios*] account of any thing there is, nor apply to any proper and indivisible form [*eidōs*], while neglecting an account that is of that sort (*De An.* II.3, 414b25-8).

This passage suggests the complementarity of Aristotle's two accounts of the soul, which can now be more clearly distinguished as a common description and a more particular [*idios*] one. Throughout the present analysis, I have argued that Aristotle's common account of the soul is meant to offer an initial outline to the investigation of *psuchê* as such. In this way, Aristotle is primarily guided by the way in which the soul appears most clearly to us through its intricate connection to some natural body with the capacity for life. However, as Aristotle suggests in the opening lines of *De Anima* II, this initial appearance of soul must be further refined and supplemented by the way in which *logos* further makes this phenomenon manifest to us. It is important to recall that the second account of the soul is not meant to deny the major points of the common one. On the contrary, we have seen how these two accounts are both grounded on the reciprocal and co-constitutive activity of both body and soul. To further clarify the complex relationship between these two principles in the ensouled being, Aristotle believes it is useful to focus on the manifold way in which various forms of life become manifest through the abilities and activities that delimit these beings as what they are. We can see Aristotle clearly outline the basic proto-phenomenological principle of this approach in the following passage: "Therefore for each kind, one needs to inquire what the soul of each is [*tis hekastou psuchê*], as for a plant, a human, and a wild animal" (*De An.* II.3, 414b32-3). Thus, we can conclude that both of Aristotle's accounts of the soul are guided by the broad ontological significance of the essentially twofold activity of this principle in co-operation with the body as the dynamic relationship that gives expression to the disclosure of ensouled beings in their distinctive forms of life.

VI. Conclusion

The present chapter has offered a comprehensive outline of the main framework and guiding intuitions of Aristotle's proto-phenomenological investigation into the soul. As we have noted, Aristotle's two accounts of *psuchê* are grounded in the reciprocal and co-constitutive activity of the soul with the body that gives ensouled beings their characteristic appearance. I have suggested that Aristotle is committed to a strict sense of hylomorphism, which makes its way into his various definitions of the soul. Furthermore, the phenomenon of life provides us with a further illustration of how the abilities and activities of ensouled beings are closely related to the disclosure of their characteristic way of being. Given this close relationship between the soul's capacities and activities, I suggest that we can best understand Aristotle's proto-phenomenological description of the soul as "nested"¹⁷¹ since each of the capacities of the soul seem to be closely related to each other. Hence, the manifestation of perception in animals already implies the presence of the nutritive capacity. Similarly, human beings show themselves as already delimited by the capacity for perception and nutrition in addition to their seemingly exclusive capacity for thought. This nested understanding of the soul is part and parcel of Aristotle's overall view of the relationship amongst ensouled beings since, according to him:

For without the nutritive part there is no perceptual one
[*aneu men gar tou threptikou to aisthêtikon ouk estin*] but
the nutritive part is found apart from the perceptual in the
case of plants. Again, without touch none of the other sorts

¹⁷¹ My use of the term "nested" is heavily indebted to Eli Diamond's discussion of the differentiation of the soul as following a "logic of serial unity." Cf. Diamond, *Mortal Imitations of Divine Life: The Nature of the Soul in Aristotle's De Anima*.

of perception is present [*aneu men tou hapitkou tôn allôn aisthêseôn oudemia huparchei*], but touch is present without the others (*De An.* II.3, 415a1-5).

Given the “nested” aspect of Aristotle’s understanding of the soul, we can see that our present discussion has remained within the domain of the common account of *psuchê* since we were primarily interested in elucidating the general framework of the *De Anima*. However, to truly do justice to Aristotle’s account, we must turn to a more detailed discussion of the soul and its intrinsic relationship to its delimiting capacities. By tracing the various ways in which ensouled beings are disclosed through their respective capacities, we will be able to determine the extent to which Aristotle’s account of the soul provides us with one of the clearest illustrations of the relevance of the proto-phenomenological meaning of being as *dunamis* and *energeia* in the comprehension of the complex identity and difference of these types of being.

“L’intellect, dans sa dualité (agent/patient) est la réponse fournie par Aristote au phénomène de la présence. La présence comporte deux aspects inséparables : les choses sont là, et nous sommes là—nous sommes le *là* des choses. Les choses sont là pour nous et nous affectent : nous sommes, dans cette mesure, passifs ; mais elles sont là parce que nous sommes là pour nous laisser affecter par elles, et nous sommes de la sorte actifs.”¹⁷²

I. Introduction

Aristotle’s definitions of the soul already provide us with an illustration of how the manifold senses of life become manifest in ensouled beings through a complex interaction amongst *dunamis*, *energeia*, and *entelecheia*. Moreover, Aristotle suggests that there is an intricate relationship between the soul and its differentiating abilities through which they disclose their way of being. Intending to expand on these insights, the aim of the present chapter is to offer a more detailed interpretation of Aristotle’s proto-phenomenological account of the soul as revealing its way of being in the world through its respective abilities and activities.¹⁷³ While Aristotle has identified numerous capacities of the soul as intimately tied to the manifestation of life in ensouled beings, I will focus on what are usually considered to be the three primary abilities of *psuchê* (i.e., nutrition, perception,

¹⁷² Rémi Brague, *Aristote et la question du monde* (Paris: CERF, 2009), 355–56.

¹⁷³ By interpreting Aristotle’s proto-phenomenological account as a description of being-in-the-world, I am drawing on Rémi Brague’s interpretation in *Aristote et la question du monde*. Following Heidegger’s interpretation of Aristotle but also going beyond it, Brague suggests that *energeia* can be understood as referring to the distinctive way in which a being discloses itself as being-in-the-world. Without making use of my specific terminology, I believe Brague’s interpretation can also be identified as proto-phenomenological insofar as he is concerned with how beings are disclosed through their activity. Situating Brague’s interpretation alongside the one I have been developing in the present dissertation, this chapter will continue offering an analysis of Aristotle’s *De Anima* through this proto-phenomenological lens.

and thought). By adopting this approach, I am unfortunately bracketing Aristotle's discussion of desire [*orexis*] and spatial movement [*kinêtikon kata topon*].¹⁷⁴ However, given that desire is intricately tied to movement and we have already offered an interpretation of *kinêsis* in this dissertation, I will focus exclusively on these other capacities of the soul, which will allow us to discern how these specific abilities make manifest the different kinds of ensouled beings in Aristotle's account.¹⁷⁵

II. The Reciprocity of *Dunamis* and *Energeia* in Nutrition

To begin our interpretation of the primary abilities of the soul, there seems to be no better natural starting point than the nutritive capacity [*threptikon*]. We have already seen

¹⁷⁴ Although a detailed discussion of this capacity is outside the scope of the present dissertation, I would nonetheless like to acknowledge the significance of the soul's capacity for spatial movement for the interpretation to be developed. In *De Anima* III.9, Aristotle identifies the capacity for causing movement with respect to place [*tô kinein tèn kata topon kinêsin*] as one of the two defining capacities of the soul (432a15-22). This suggestion can be read as confirming the decisive ontological and proto-phenomenological significance we attributed to movement in our interpretation of the *Physics*. Furthermore, given that nature remains unintelligible without the existence of movement, our preceding discussions have shown the fundamental importance of *kinêsis* for Aristotle's discernment of the being of natural beings. Hence, in what follows, I will be focused on other capacities of the soul that also disclose essential aspects of the being of ensouled beings, while nonetheless acknowledging that these abilities are situated within the pervasive and ubiquitous influence of movement as a fundamental ontological fact of all natural beings.

¹⁷⁵ Another decisive capacity of the soul that is unfortunately outside of the scope of the present discussion is the capacity of imagination [*phantasia*]. It would require an entire section devoted to Aristotle's nuanced account of imagination, especially as it is developed thoroughly in *De Anima* III.3. However, in this brief footnote, I would like to emphasize that this ability of the soul provides us with a further illustration of the complex dynamic that exists between *dunamis* and *energeia*. We can see the agonistic tension between these two terms most clearly at play in Aristotle's remarks concerning the simultaneous dependence and relative independence of the imagination on perception. Insofar as the imagination is relatively independent of perception, we could say that *phantasia* can be understood as a form of activity. However, given that this capacity is also somewhat dependent on *aisthêsis*, we would also have to acknowledge that imagination is best understood as a kind of potency. For further discussions of the complex relationship between imagination and perception in Aristotle's account, cf. Emmanuel Alloa, "El poder de visualizar. La *phantasia* según Aristóteles," *Anuario Filosófico* 51, no. 2 (2018): 243–74; Justin Humphreys, "Aristotelian Imagination and Decaying Sense," *Social Imaginaries* 5, no. 1 (2019): 37–55; Long, *Aristotle on the Nature of Truth*, 131–44. Each of these interpreters develop an account of interpretation that is characterized by a similar attention to the complex interrelationship between *dunamis* and *energeia* that I have been suggesting throughout the present dissertation (whether it is Alloa's understanding of imagination as a "medial" event, Humphrey's suggestion that *phantasia* is not simply a "decaying sense" but a productive power somewhere between perception and intellection or finally Long's thought-provoking suggestion that imagination can be described as a "middle-voiced event" that "acts like the fulcrum between perceiving and thinking").

Aristotle describe this capacity as one of the most basic and initial manifestations of the life of ensouled beings. According to Aristotle, the nutritive capacity can most clearly be appreciated in plants since this is the ability that most closely discloses their being (*De An.* II.3, 414a32-4). However, it is important to remember that the nutritive capacity is not exclusive to plants. On the contrary, Aristotle describes it as “the first and most common potency of soul [*kai prôtê kai koinotatê dunamis esti psuchês*], by which life is present in them all [*kath’ hên huparchei to zên hapasin*]” (*De An.* II.4, 415a24-5). Given the broad significance of the nutritive capacity, we seem to be justified in identifying it as an essential component of Aristotle’s proto-phenomenological account of the life of the soul.¹⁷⁶ As illustrated above, Aristotle’s account of the nutritive capacity is not restricted to the manifestation of the being of plants. Instead, we can see that, strictly speaking, all living beings partake in this nutritive capacity since it is what sustains the initial and basic manifestation of life in ensouled beings.¹⁷⁷ Hence, Aristotle notes, “this sort of potency of the soul is a source such as to preserve the thing’s manner of being as the sort of thing it is [*hê toiautê tês psuchês archê dunamis estin oia zôzein to echon autên hê toiouton*]” (*De An.* II.4, 416b17-9). With the aid of these passages, we can more confidently conclude that the nutritive capacity should not be overlooked as simply the most lowly or incidental aspect of ensouled beings. Instead, we can justifiably describe this capacity of the soul as being in all senses of the term foundational for the initial manifestation of *psuchê* as having a potency for life.

¹⁷⁶ For an excellent discussion of the foundational role of the nutritive in Aristotle’s understanding of being as informed by desire, cf. Shaw, “Ορέγεσθαι and Natural Teleology: The Role of Desire in Aristotle’s Ontology.”

¹⁷⁷ A similar approach to the one presented here can be found in Diamond, *Mortal Imitations of Divine Life: The Nature of the Soul in Aristotle’s De Anima*.

Having outlined the foundational role of the nutritive capacity for the disclosure of the potency for life in an ensouled being, we can see how Aristotle's proto-phenomenological account builds from this fundamental *dunamis* his nested conception of the soul. Aristotle had already suggested that the various specific accounts of the soul can be understood as a series of successions in which greater degrees of complexity are added to the manifestation of ensouled beings (*De An.* II.3, 414b28-32). While the nutritive capacity is often dismissed as simply the lowliest capacity of the soul, I have been suggesting that it provides the basis for all other manifestations of ensouled beings, such as perception and intellection. Without the presence and activity of the *threptikon*, no other capacities or abilities of the soul would be able to become manifest. Hence, the nutritive capacity plays an essential role in Aristotle's proto-phenomenological account of the soul both in its initial manifestation and the foundation that makes possible all other forms of potency.¹⁷⁸

To further illustrate the foundational role played by Aristotle's account of the nutritive capacity of the soul, I would like to return to the question of priority. While we might believe that Aristotle would begin his account with either perception or intellection as prior to nutrition, we have seen that he begins with the nutritive capacity. If we were to determine what kind of priority this capacity has over the rest, then we could reasonably assume that the nutritive capacity is temporally prior to those the perceptive and intellectual one. Given that beings cannot persist in their being without the nutritive capacity, it simply

¹⁷⁸ For a similar approach to the nutritive capacity as the one developed here, cf. Mary Louise Gill, "Method and Nutritive Soul in Aristotle's *De Anima* II,4," in *Nutrition and Nutritive Soul in Aristotle and Aristotelianism*, ed. Giouli Korobili and Roberto Lo Presti (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2021), 21–42. More specifically, I am thinking of the following decisive methodological principle outlined by Gill toward the beginning of her study: "A detailed study of nutritive soul should therefore reveal the vital status of nutrition as the chief manifestation of life itself and moreover pay dividends for correct procedure when tackling the higher psychic faculties," 22.

follows that this ability must be always already at work from the beginning of the ensouled being's life. From both the genetic and developmental perspective, the nutritive capacity is that without which no being can be said to have a soul or be alive. It is only because of the nutritive capacity that the other abilities become manifest. Hence, the priority of the nutritive capacity of the soul ends up framing Aristotle's entire account.

Aristotle confirms our interpretation of the temporal priority of the nutritive capacity in the following passage, which can be read as offering a methodological orientation to his overall account: "It is necessary for the one who is going to make an inquiry about these [potencies] to get hold of what each of them is [*hekaston ti estin*], and then investigate in this way about what has directly to do with them and the other things about them" (*De An.* II.4, 415a14-6). As illustrated in this passage, we can see Aristotle outline the primary concern of his account. According to this passage, the proper way of grasping the meaning of some potency is to investigate how they become manifest and their role in the disclosure of ensouled beings. In other words, if we wish to make clear the meaning of the nutritive capacity, then we must see how it functions, for instance, in plants and their ability to sustain and maintain life. Similarly for the other *dunameis*, Aristotle's proto-phenomenological investigation must involve a careful and detailed analysis of how these capacities gradually provide us with the intricate relationships amongst the various forms of the soul. Hence, given their nested relationality, we must begin with the nutritive capacity of the soul as the initial manifestation of life in ensouled beings and work our way up to perception and intellection, while nonetheless recalling that each consecutive disclosure of *psuchê* is grounded in the preceding one.

I would like to further elucidate Aristotle's account of the nutritive capacity by focusing on his discussion of food [*trophê*] and the role it plays in the activity of nutrition. While this ability also manifests itself in the capacity for reproduction and generation [*gennêseôs*], I suggest that the role of food in Aristotle's description of nutrition provides us with a clear illustration of the complex dynamic through which this process becomes manifest (i.e., through the reciprocal and co-constitutive relationship between *dunamis* and *energeia*). To begin, let us turn to the following passage where Aristotle identifies what we could refer to as the contrarian structure of food:

It seems that something contrary is food for its contrary [*dokei einai hê trophê to enantion tô enantiô*], but not every contrary thing for every other [*ou pan panti*], but all those contraries that have not only their coming-into-being but also their growth from each other [*all' hosa tôn enantiôn mê monon genesin ex allêlôn echousin alla kai auxêsin*] (*De An.* II.4, 416a21-4).

With the aid of this passage, we can appreciate more clearly how Aristotle's account of food is broadly situated within the ancient Greek debate concerning contraries.¹⁷⁹ According to Aristotle, food initially appears to us as the result of contraries. However, we cannot identify simply any contrary as food. Instead, it is specifically contraries with respect to coming-into-being [*genesis*] and growth [*auxêsis*]. Aristotle continues by

¹⁷⁹ It is worth recalling our preceding analysis of the contrarian structure of the principles of being in *Physics* I. Recalling the connection between this account and the one found in *Metaphysics* IX concerning *dunamis* and *energeia*, I suggested that the dynamic interplay between the latter terms can be assumed to also be at play in the former ones. Given that contraries are irreducible to each other, their complex interrelation can account for the manifold processes that are broadly defined by Aristotle as movement. Thus, in the present chapter, I aim to show how the various capacities of the soul are similarly defined by this broadly contrarian structure and intricate interaction between *dunamis* and *energeia*.

offering the further elucidation on how the contrarian structure of nutrition and food had been considered by some of his predecessors: “Some people say that like is nourished by like [*to homoion tô homoiô trephesthai*], in the same way that something grows [*auxanesthai*], while to others it seems just the opposite, as we were just saying, that contrary is nourished by contrary [*to enantion tô enantiô*]” (*De An.* II.4, 416a29-32). This passage provides us with a much clearer sense of Aristotle’s own view on the issue. Aristotle explicitly identifies with those who believe that the nutrition comes about by the encounter among contraries. Hence, the process of nutrition should not be understood as simply the assimilation or homogenization of what is other to some identity in sameness. Rather, Aristotle suggests that the defining feature of nutrition is the complex interaction of contraries through which some movement or change [*metabolê*] takes place.

To more clearly appreciate the dynamic at play in nutrition, we should focus on the complex relationship between food [*trophê*] and what is fed [*trophomenos*]. The preceding passages have already suggested that the relationship between these terms follows a broadly contrarian structure. Given that nutrition cannot be understood as a process of assimilation, we should understand Aristotle’s distinction between food and the thing fed as already highlighting the contrarian structure. By drawing attention to these two elements, Aristotle suggests that the event of nutrition becomes manifest in the dynamic interplay between food and what is fed. However, it is important to recall that the relationship between these two elements should not be grasped through the image of homogenization. On the contrary, food is received by what is fed precisely because it is something *other* than itself. In other words, it is the difference between food and what is fed that allows for the very process of nutrition to take place.

Aristotle continues his account of the process of nutrition by drawing attention to the relationship of affectivity that exists between food and what is fed:

The food [*hê trophê*] is affected [*paschei*] by the thing fed [*tou trephomenou*], not the latter by the food, just as the carpenter is not affected by his material [*tês hulês*] but it by him. The carpenter, though, merely changes from inactivity to activity [*metaballei monon eis energeian ex argias*] (*De An.* II.4, 416a34-b2).

According to this passage, the role of food in nutrition is to undergo a form of affection by the thing fed. However, Aristotle suggests that the reverse is not the case. Drawing on a comparison with the realm of *technê*, Aristotle suggests that the thing fed remains unaffected by food in the same way that the carpenter is not affected by the material worked on. Instead, the relationship between food and what is fed seems to be one of asymmetry since only the former undergoes a process of affection. Although the thing being fed remains unaffected throughout the process of nutrition, Aristotle nonetheless suggests that there is some form of change [*metabolê*] from inactivity to activity. In other words, even though the thing being fed does not appear to undergo any form of affection, we can still see it be altered through the change from *argia* to *energeia*.

The preceding discussion has raised an important difficulty concerning the process of nutrition. On the one hand, Aristotle has described the relationship between food and what is fed as asymmetrical given that only the former is affected by the latter. However, this asymmetry should not lead us to believe that what is fed does not undergo any form of change. On the contrary, Aristotle describes what is fed as undergoing a change [*metabolê*]

from inactivity to activity. To emphasize the difficulty at stake in sharper detail, we might ask: how should we understand the lack of affectivity in the process of change from *argia* to *energeia*? Can we really describe what is fed as entirely unaffected by the food it consumes? In posing these questions, I do not intend to interpret Aristotle against the grain of his own text. On the contrary, I am trying to make sense of his claim that nutrition can be described as a kind of affection¹⁸⁰ and yet the affectivity involved is asymmetrical rather than reciprocal.

To begin offering a possible solution to this *aporia*, I would like to focus more intently on the relationship between these two elements of the process of nutrition. When some ensouled being ingests food, there is a trivial sense in which what is fed is affected by the food (e.g., by the manifest quality, quantity, color, smell, and taste). Although these properties of food might not be essential to the process of nutrition as such, there does seem to be some degree of mutual affectivity at stake here. However, we could extend this point even further by drawing upon our previous discussion of Aristotle's use of the craft analogy to describe the relationship between form and matter in the phenomenon of nature. While Aristotle describes both nature and craft as more closely associated with form than matter, I argued that the appropriateness of the material plays an important role in both *phusis* and *technê* since these phenomena are disclosed through their co-operation and joint activity of both *hulê* and *morphê*. In other words, we could say that the craftsman cannot remain entirely unaffected by their material since they must be able to discern its appropriateness

¹⁸⁰ I am thinking of *De Anima* II.4, 415b23-8 where Aristotle seems to at least entertain this claim. Although the passage appears primarily focused in establishing perception as a kind of alteration, Aristotle can be seen as including all forms of movement through which life becomes manifest in the following passage: "It is the same with growth and wasting away [*homoiôs peri auxêseôs te kai pthiseôs*], since nothing that does not nourish itself either wastes away or grows naturally, and nothing nourishes itself which does not share in life [*trephetai outhen ho mê koinônei zôês*]" (*De An.* II.4, 415b25-8). In other words, if growth and wasting away can be understood as processes of affection, then why wouldn't we understand nutrition in the same way?

for the exercise of some craft. Hence, the good craftsperson is the one who can find the most adequate way of bringing the form into co-operation with the matter in order to achieve the goal of the process of *technê*. Returning to the issue of nutrition, I suggest that a similar dynamic is at stake in the relationship between food and what is fed. The potentially consumable food, when actively consumed, undergoes a process of alteration whereby it becomes sustenance for the continued life of the ensouled being. When this incorporation takes place, the distinction between food and the thing being fed becomes blurred since it is no longer entirely clear whether the activity of nutrition comes about through the activation of food or the thing being fed. Thus, the most adequate description of nutrition would be through the image of mutual affection whereby food and the thing being fed provoke some change in each other by activating their respective potencies and activities.¹⁸¹

III. The Reciprocity of *Dunamis* and *Energeia* in Perception

Turning now to the perceptive capacity of the soul, we can safely assume that it will follow a similar dynamic to the one found in the nutritive one.¹⁸² Such a continuity

¹⁸¹ As I suggest later in this chapter, this mutual affection of food and the thing being fed can also be clearly appreciated in the perceptive faculty of taste since this process also involves the mutual affectivity of the organ of taste (i.e., the tongue) and the object tasted. Hence, while Aristotle gestures toward an asymmetrical relationship of affection between these two elements of nutrition, his more detailed account of taste offers further evidence in support of the interpretation offered above.

¹⁸² For similar approach to the one developed here, cf. Anna Marmodoro, *Aristotle on Perceiving Objects* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); Gilbert Romeyer Dherbey, “La construction de la théorie aristotélicienne du sentir,” in *Corps et âme: Sur le De Anima d’Aristote*, ed. Gilbert Romeyer Dherbey and Cristina Viano (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1996), 127–48. I would especially like to draw attention to Marmodoro’s description of Aristotle’s account of perception, which resonates with the interpretation that follows in the present chapter: “Perception for Aristotle is an instance of causal interaction between the properties of objects in the world and the perceiver’s sense organs. It is the mutual activation of the respective causal powers in the object and the perceiver that comprises this causal interaction, which grounds the perceiver’s experience on the one hand, and the object’s sounding, coloring, etc., on the other,” *Aristotle on Perceiving Objects*, 1. Hence, I will be concerned with what I describe as the mutual activation

between these two abilities is not only suggested by the connection suggested by Aristotle between perception and affection (*De An.* II.4, 415b24). However, we could also attribute this similarity between the nutritive and perceptive capacity by recalling Aristotle's nested conception of soul. According to this view, we would assume that the perceptive ability of the soul would remain firmly situated within both the contrarian and affective structure described in the process of nutrition. In what follows, I would like to clarify the equally complex and intricate relationship between the perceiver and perceived in Aristotle's account of perception. Given Aristotle's commitment to the broadly kinetic and affective structure of the process of perception,¹⁸³ I aim to show how this relationship is best understood according to the dynamic interplay of both *dunamis* and *energeia* as illustrated by the perceiver and perceived.

While Aristotle dedicates a significant portion of his account of the capacities of the soul to the manifold modes of perceiving, there is little doubt that these texts constitute some of the most complex and dense passages in the entire *De Anima*. I interpret Aristotle's detailed and nuanced account of perception in these sections to be the result of his broader proto-phenomenological commitment to describing the process of *aisthêsis* in painstaking detail in order to do justice to the dynamic interplay that appears to be at stake in this ability of the soul. Hence, Aristotle does not merely offer an all-encompassing account of perception without considering the minute detail with which the respective forms of perceiving take place through the activation of the senses. On the contrary, he seems well-

of the respective causal powers of both the perceiver and perceived throughout Aristotle's account of perception in *De Anima* II.

¹⁸³ "Perception comes about in being moved and affected [*hê d' aisthêsis en tô kineisthai te kai paschein sumbainei*], as has been said, since it seems to be a sort of alteration [*alloiôsis tis einai*]" (*De An.* II.5, 416b33-5).

aware of the uniqueness of each sense to make manifest the capacity of the soul to perceive its surroundings.

We can begin outlining the main characteristics of the perceptive capacity of the soul by turning to Aristotle's discussion of two fundamental difficulties concerning perception. We can describe the first difficulty as dealing with the issue of the perception of perception, whereas the second one is meant to address the reason why perception never takes place without the existence of some external object (*De An.* II.5, 417a2-4). In order to begin solving these difficulties, we should recall Aristotle's suggestion that perception can be understood as a process of alteration [*allôiosis*]. Hence, perception always involves a process of becoming-other, which is the manifest consequence of it being a form of alteration. Furthermore, I have also suggested that perception can be understood as incorporating the affective relation that already characterized the process of nutrition. These characteristics suggest that Aristotle's understanding of perception always already involves a relationship to some exterior object that provokes both the process of alteration and affection that characterizes this capacity.

To obtain an even clearer grasp of these characteristics, let us turn to the following passage where Aristotle outlines his response to these difficulties:

The perceptive power [*to aisthêtikon*] does not have to exist as an activity [*energeia*] but only as a potency [*dunamei monon*], and this is why the sense organ is not perceived [*dio ouk aisthanetai*], just as what is burnable is not burned itself by itself without something to set it on fire, for then it would

set itself on fire, and there would be no need of a fire that was actually [*entelecheia*] [doing so] (*De An.* II.5, 417a6-9).

It is important to note the important parallel between this passage and Aristotle's initial description of the process of nutrition as involving both food and what is fed. This passage suggests that the perceptive capacity [*to aisthêtikon*] is directed toward the thing perceived [*to aisthêton*]. It is the existence of a perceptible object that provokes the process of perception itself. Hence, we can say that there is no perception without the interrelation between the perceptive capacity and the thing perceived since without the former cannot be said to be actualized except through the latter. We can further describe the significant role played by the perceptible object by noting how the perceptive capacity is *dependent* on it. Thus, we can already begin to see that Aristotle's account of perception attributes a more active role to the potentially perceivable object than usually appears to be the case.

The preceding remarks provide us with evidence in support of the claim that perception is a medial or even middle-voiced phenomenon.¹⁸⁴ As Christopher P. Long suggests, Aristotle's use of the infinitive *to aisthanesthai* already encourages us to grasp perception as a middle-voiced event that neither unconditionally privileges either the purported subject of the activity (i.e., the perceiver) or its object (i.e., the perceived). On

¹⁸⁴ Emmanuel Alloa discusses the medial aspect of perception in his excellent study, "Metaxu: Figures de la médialité chez Aristote," *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale* 62, no. 2 (2009): 247–62. In a similar vein, Christopher P. Long describes Aristotle's account of perception as a middle-voiced phenomena by drawing attention to the fact that *to aisthanesthai* is already a middle-voiced verb that cannot simply be reduced to a merely passive reception of perceptible qualities. Cf. *Aristotle on the Nature of Truth*. Rather, there is a similarly active receptivity at play in perception that, according to Long, suggests a more dynamic co-operation between the perceiver and the perceived than is usually believed to be the case. For other similar approaches to Aristotle's account of perception, cf. Richard A. Lee, Jr. and Christopher P. Long, "Nous and Logos in Aristotle," *Freiburger Zeitschrift Für Philosophie Und Theologie* 54, no. 3 (2007): 348–67; Pascal Massie, "Seeing Darkness, Hearing Silence: Meta-Sensation and the Limits of Perception in Aristotle's *De Anima*," *Epoché* 25, no. 1 (2020): 81–99.

the contrary, Aristotle's commitment to the ambiguity introduced by the middle-voiced form of perception can clearly be seen at work in the following passage:

Since we speak of perceiving [*to aisthanesthai*] in two senses [*legomen dichôs*] (for what has the potency [*dunamei*] of hearing and seeing we say hears and sees even if it happens to be asleep, as well as what is already actively [*energoun*] hearing and seeing), then even perception [*hê aisthêsis*] should be spoken of in two senses [*dichôs legoito*], the one as being in potency [*dunamei*], the other as being in activity [*energeia*], and similarly the thing perceived [*to aisthêton*] means both what is in potency to be perceived [*to dunamei on*] and what is actively being perceived [*to energeia*] (*De An.* II.5, 417a10-14).

This passage provides an excellent illustration of the nuance in Aristotle's proto-phenomenological approach to the perceptive capacity of the soul. Given that perceiving can be described in an essentially twofold manner [*dichôs legomen*], we must identify it as both a capacity [*dunamis*] and an activity [*energeia*]. On the one hand, we refer to the ability to perceive as the result of having, for instance, ears with which to hear. However, the mere possession of sense organs does not imply the activity of perceiving. Hence, the other meaning of perceiving is its *active* sense, which becomes manifest whenever something that has the capacity for perception is currently in the process of perceiving some object. While we are used to understanding the essentially twofold meaning of perception in this way, Aristotle suggests a further duality not just of the activity of

perceiving [*to aisthanesthai*], but also in the thing perceived [*to aisthêton*]. In other words, we must recognize a similar twofoldness to be at play in the perceptible object since it can be described as either what is potentially perceivable or what is actively being perceived. Hence, we can see that Aristotle's proto-phenomenological account of perception invites us to discern the complex interaction of *dunamis* and *energeia* in both the perceiver and perceived.¹⁸⁵

We can see the constant awareness of this essentially twofold conception of perception to be at work in Aristotle's account. In fact, Aristotle also identifies a similar twofold meaning to being acted upon [*paschein*] and being moved [*kinetai*] since, according to him, we can understand these two phenomena "as though they were the same as activity [*energeian*]" (*De An.* II.5, 417a15-6). I understand Aristotle's identification of *paschein* and *kinetai* as a way of underlining the dynamic and intricate relationship between *dunamis* and *energeia* found to be at play in these phenomena. Before turning to Aristotle's concrete examples of the different ways of perceiving through the senses, I would like to further emphasize the complex meaning he attributes to both *dunamis* and *energeia* throughout the present discussion. We have already discussed the implications of the essentially twofold meaning of perception, which affects both the perceiver and perceived. Hence, our attention cannot be univocally associated with what appears to be the active role of the perceiver and the passive role of the perceived. On the contrary, Aristotle's account has suggested that there is already an important passive element to the way in which the perceiver relates to its object as well as a correlative active dimension to the

¹⁸⁵ Long formulates this point quite nicely in the following passage: "The way τὸ αἰσθάνεσθαι speaks in the middle voice can itself be heard in ἡ αἰσθήσις and τὸ αἰσθητόν, for the former expresses the active and passive dimensions of the power of perceiving, while the latter expresses the active and passive dimensions of the perceived," *Aristotle on the Nature of Truth*, 122.

presence of the perceptible object with respect to the perceiver. While Aristotle had already suggested earlier in the *De Anima* that there exist two meanings of *entelecheia*, we now see that there is a similarly twofold aspect to *dunamis*. Thus, Aristotle's description of the various forms of perceiving ought to be read according to the more intricate relationship between *dunamis* and *energeia* that we have been tracing throughout the present dissertation. We can no longer remain content with identifying *dunamis* with the passivity of the perceived object and *energeia* with the activity of the perceiver. Instead, we must strive to clarify the joint activity and co-operative activation that brings together the perceiver and the perceived in the process of perception.¹⁸⁶

To further illustrate this reciprocity in greater detail, I would now like to turn more explicitly to Aristotle's discussion of the various objects of perception.¹⁸⁷ Let us begin with the first form of perception discussed by Aristotle, namely, sight [*hê opsis*].¹⁸⁸ The object of sight, according to Aristotle, is the visible [*to horaton*], which he describes as both color [*chrôma*] and something else which can be spoken of in terms of *logos*, but which does not

¹⁸⁶ Without being able to go into this issue in greater detail, I would nonetheless like to note how there exists a potential connection between the complex interrelationship between *dunamis* and *energeia* in Aristotle's account of perceiving and his important notion of habit [*hexis*]. I have already suggested in previous footnotes that the Aristotelian conception of habit provides us with a clear illustration of how *dunamis* and *energeia* can both be at work in a dynamic and flexible way that points beyond the simple opposition between activity and passivity. Drawing attention to this constellation of issues, Christopher P. Long writes: "Perceiving too involves such a natural, active condition, which Aristotle calls ἐξίς. A ἐξίς must be understood, then, as both active and passive; it involves the active capacity for a being to hold itself in a certain way according to the sort of being it is and the passive capacity to be moved by things that resonate with its own natural capacities," 125. Although I am unable to offer a detailed account of habit in the present context, I aim to clarify this middle-voiced sense of perceiving understood as both active and passive throughout my interpretation of Aristotle's account of perception.

¹⁸⁷ In what follows, I will be focusing primarily on Aristotle's account of the proper sensibles since I would claim that the same proto-phenomenological dynamic between *dunamis* and *energeia* would equally be at play in his description of the common sensibles. Hence, I have decided to exclude a more thorough discussion of common or incidental sensibles since the former can easily be contextualized within the account of the proper sensibles, whereas the latter offers a different perspective on the being of sensible beings and would require a different methodological framework than the one I am developing here.

¹⁸⁸ In the following account of sight in Aristotle's *De Anima*, I am heavily indebted to Rémi Brague's excellent analysis of it in *Aristote et la question du monde*.

seem to have a name [*anônumon*] (*De An.* II.7, 418a26-8). We should emphasize the twofold aspect of the visible object in Aristotle’s account since it provides us with an indication concerning the irreducibility of the visible to the mere presence of a thing. On the contrary, Aristotle has already suggested that the visible object requires some dynamic arrangement of both color and something else for the *horaton* to become visible. We might be surprised by Aristotle’s claim, especially given that, after associating color with the visible, he proceeds to suggest that the object becomes visible in its own right [*kath’ hauto*] and hence can be understood as having the cause [*aition*] of its being visible [*einai horaton*] within itself (*De An.* II.7, 418a29-30). While such a description of the visible object provides us with a clear illustration of what we might refer to as the active sense of potency, Aristotle elaborates on this internal capacity of the visible object to become manifest in the following manner: “Every color has the potency to set in motion [*kinêtikon*] what is actively transparent [*energeian diaphanous*], and this is the nature [*phusis*] of color; and for that reason it is not visible without light [*ouk horaton aneu photos*], but of each thing every color is seen in light” (*De An.* II.7, 418a31-b2).¹⁸⁹ With the help of this passage, we can more clearly appreciate the complex interrelationship between potency and activity in Aristotle’s account of sight. Even though the *horaton* has an internal capacity to make itself seen, Aristotle suggests that this *dunamis* is a form of setting in motion that which is actively transparent. According to Aristotle, this potency is nothing other than the nature of color, which is a necessary condition of visibility but not a sufficient one.¹⁹⁰ Instead,

¹⁸⁹ For a similar approach to perception and the qualities of the perceptible objects to the one I am suggesting here, cf. Victor Caston, “Aristotle on the Reality of Colors and Other Perceptible Qualities,” *Res Philosophica* 95, no. 1 (2017): 35–68.

¹⁹⁰ As mentioned previously in the discussion of the *dunamis* of the soul, Aristotle frequently uses the adjectival suffix *-kon* to indicate a kind of capacity or ability. I am indebted to both Walter Brogan and Ken Tully in helping me appreciate this aspect of the Greek.

Aristotle claims that there is some other factor (i.e., light [*phos*]), which co-operates with the color of the visible object in order to provoke the event of sight.

To further illustrate this complex dynamic in the phenomenon of sight, let us turn to Aristotle's definition of light as the "activity of the transparent as transparent" [*hê toutou energeia tou diaphanous hê diaphanes*] (*De An.* II.7, 418b9-10). With the aid of this definition of light, we can appreciate more concretely the dynamic interrelation between *dunamis* and *energeia* in Aristotle's account. We have already seen that Aristotle describes color as an intrinsic potency of the visible object to make itself visible. However, without the corresponding co-operation of the activity of light, perception does not take place. It is only through the activity of light that the potentially visible object becomes disclosed in its color. In a similar way, we could say that the mere presence of light does not immediately imply the perception of some visible object. Given that the potential color of the visible object co-operates with the activity of light, we must acknowledge that perception only comes about through the joint activity of these causes.¹⁹¹

A similar logic can be seen at play in Aristotle's account of hearing [*akoês*]. Aristotle begins his account of hearing by distinguishing between two senses of both sound [*psophou*] and hearing. Regarding the former, Aristotle notes: "Sound is of two sorts [*dittos*], one a certain activity [*energeia tis*], the other a potency [*dunamei*]" (*De An.* II.8,

¹⁹¹ To further accentuate the co-operative role between the perceiver and perceived in the capacity for sight, we could draw attention to Aristotle's critical engagement with the Democritean view of perception. According to Aristotle, "Seeing comes about when what is capable of perception is acted upon by something [*paschontos ti tou aisthêtikou ginetai to horan*], and since it is impossible that it be acted upon by the color itself that is seen, what remains is for it to be acted upon by what is in between [*upo tou metaxu*], so that it is necessary that something be in between" (*De An.* II.7, 419a17-19). This passage offers us a clear reminder that perception is defined by Aristotle through this mutual affection of the perceiver and perceived that happens in the between [*metaxu*] of these two elements of *aisthêsis*. For other accounts of the important medial role of the *metaxu* in Aristotle's discussion of perception, cf. Alloa, "Metaxu: Figures de la médialité chez Aristote"; Romeyer Dherbey, "La construction de la théorie aristotélicienne du sentir."

419b4-5). Aristotle draws attention to the twofold meaning of sound since we do not claim that everything has a sound [*ou phamen echein psophon*] (*De An.* II.8, 419b6). Hence, we say that there are certain things (e.g., sponge or wool, to use Aristotle's own examples) that do not produce sound when they are struck with another object. In contrast, the objects that can produce a sound [*dunatai psophêsai*] are those objects (e.g., bronze) capable of moving air [*to kinêtikon henos aeros*] that will then be received in the organ of hearing (i.e., ear). With the aid of these remarks, we can see that Aristotle's account of sound also implies a dynamic interplay between *dunamis* and *energeia*. The production of sound cannot simply be the result of some indiscriminate activity. Instead, we have seen that the manifestation of sound can only take place if the object in question is capable [*dunaton*] of producing a sound. Thus, a sound can only be heard if the appropriate interrelation between *dunamis* and *energeia* becomes manifest in the perceptible object.¹⁹²

Aristotle's account of smell [*osmê*], although similarly characterized by this dynamic, nonetheless presents an important difficulty. According to Aristotle, smell is one of the most burdensome senses to describe since it is the least precise of all our senses (*De An.* II.9, 421a7-10). In comparison to animals, we have a much weaker sense of smell, which makes it arduous to adequately describe how this inapparent sense can be described and becomes manifest to us in our proto-phenomenological experience of perception. Regardless of the significant obstacles confronting his description of smell, we can

¹⁹² Although the preceding discussion has focused on the essential twofoldness of sound, it should be clear that this same duality is present in the phenomenon of hearing. The possession of ears is not a sufficient condition for the activity of hearing. On the contrary, one could very well have ears and yet hear nothing unless there is something to be heard. Hence, we can easily recognize the similar dynamic relationship between *dunamis* and *energeia* in Aristotle's account of both hearing and sound.

nonetheless discern Aristotle's consistent commitment to the essentially twofold structure of perceptible objects in the following passage:

And just as with hearing [*akoē*] and each of the other senses [*hestakē tōn aisthēseōn*], there is something audible [*akoustou*] and something inaudible [*anēkoustou*], visible [*horatou*] and something invisible [*aoratou*], so too with the sense of smell there is something odorous [*osphrantou*] and something odorless [*anosphrantou*] (*De An.* II.9, 421b3-6).

This passage confirms the decisively twofold character of both perception and perceptible objects. As we have already suggested regarding sight and hearing, the perceptive capacity involved by each of these senses emerges as the result of the complex interaction of both the *dunamis* and *energeia* of the perceiver and the perceived. Within the present context, we can see that smell too is defined both by its capacity to produce an odor and its actively being smelled. Without the co-operation of these two aspects of smell, the perceptible object would not be capable of being perceived. For instance, the odorless [*anosphranton*] can be described as something either entirely incapable of having a smell [*to adunaton einai mēd' holōs echein osmēn*] or having only a slight or insignificant one (*De An.* II.9, 421b6-8). In contrast, the perceptible object is defined by its ability to provoke the activation [*entelecheia*] of the potential organ of smell [*to osphrantikon aisthêtērion dunamei*] (*De An.* II.9, 422a7). Thus, without this dynamic co-operation between these two elements of perception, there would be no event of perception as such.

Aristotle's discussion of the final two proper senses (i.e., taste [*geuston*] and touch [*hapton*]) can be treated jointly given their intimate connection with each other. According

to Aristotle, “What is perceived by taste is a certain sort of tangible thing” [*to geuston estin haptōn ti*] (*De An.* II.10, 422a8). Hence, taste is already a form of touch. Aristotle continues drawing the important parallel between taste and touch by suggestion that the account [*logos*] of the relationship between the latter capacity and its perceptible object (i.e., the tangible [*tou haptou*]) is like the one developed with respect to taste and what is tasted (*De An.* II.11, 422b17). Given the association between these two senses, I will take the liberty of offering a much briefer account of how taste and touch are equally determined according to this essential twofold interaction between *dunamis* and *energeia* in the perceiver and perceived. However, following the organization of Aristotle’s own text, I will begin by focusing on taste and its relationship to flavor [*chumos*].

Aristotle begins his account by identifying the presence of flavor with the capacity of a body [*sōma*] to be moist [*en higrō*] (*De An.* II.10, 10-1). Expanding on the defining characteristics of flavor, Aristotle proceeds to describe taste as taking place without the need for some medium [*metaxu*] (*De An.* II.10, 422a13-4). While the other previously discussed senses require some medium (e.g., light, transparency, and air) for their manifestation, Aristotle believes that taste requires no such thing. Instead, when something is directly placed on our tongue, we immediately become aware of its flavor. The immediacy of the activity of taste distinguishes it from the rest of the other senses since they do not require anything other than the direct contact with its perceived object. However, we should not interpret the immediacy of taste to imply the lack of twofoldness and affectivity discussed above. On the contrary, Aristotle acknowledges the need for some other form of mediation in the activity of taste, which he identifies with the presence of

moisture [*hugrôds*].¹⁹³ According to Aristotle, “Nothing produces a perception of flavor without moisture” [*outhen poiei chumou aisthêsin aneu hugrotêtos*] (*De An.* II.10, 422a17). In other words, one of the most interesting aspects of Aristotle’s account of taste is that the intervention of moisture can be interpreted as either actively [*energeia*] or in potency [*dunamei*] (*De An.* II.10, 422a18). Thus, even though taste does not take place through some medium, there is still a complex relationship between *dunamis* and *energeia* at play for the tongue to be able to taste the flavor through the intermediary presence of moisture.¹⁹⁴ Taste, like the other senses, are also defined by the essentially twofold structure of perception. Given that taste is concerned both with what has taste [*tou geustou*] and what is tasteless [*tou ageustou*], the tongue becomes a discerning organ with which to become aware of the complex interaction of the capacity for something to produce a flavor and its actively being tasted. (*De An.* II.10, 422a20-30). Furthermore, for the tongue to taste some potential object, it “must be neither actually moist [*hugron einai entelecheia*] nor incapable of becoming moist [*adunaton hugrainesthai*]” (*De An.* II.10, 422b1-2). In other words, the tongue must be “capable of surviving being moistened, but not be moist” [*to dunamenon hugrainesthai sôzomenon mê hugron*] (*De An.* II.10, 422b4-5), which is another way of saying that the capacity for taste [*to geustikon*] is a result of the complex

¹⁹³ In his interpretation of Aristotle’s account of touch, Emmanuel Alloa suggests that the mediation of this sense becomes manifest in the encounter amongst bodies. Cf. “Getting in Touch: Aristotelian Diagnostics,” in *Carnal Hermeneutics*, ed. Richard Kearney and Brian Treanor (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015), 57–72.

¹⁹⁴ We could more clearly illustrate this complex interaction of potency and activity by turning to Aristotle’s brief description of saltiness [*to halmuron*]. According to Aristotle, the ability to taste something salty is the result of it being “easily dissolved and adapted to the dissolving action [*suntéktikon*] of the tongue” (*De An.* II.10, 422a18-19). With the aid of this example, we can see that the saltiness of some object becomes disclosed through the dissolving action of the tongue, which makes manifest the potentially salty object of perception.

interplay between the *dunamis* and *energeia* of flavor and the tongue capable of tasting (*De An.* II.10, 422b15-6).

With the aid of the preceding outline of Aristotle's account of taste, I will now proceed to offer a briefer discussion of touch.¹⁹⁵ We have already justified this approach to touch as the result of it and taste sharing a similar account [*ho autos logos*] (*De An.* II.11, 422b17). Given this connection, we should already anticipate a similar twofold structure through which perception becomes manifest through the dynamic interaction of the respective *dunamis* and *energeia* of both the perceiver and perceived. Before turning to a more detailed discussion of touch and its relationship to what is touched, I would like to emphasize the paradigmatic role of this sense for Aristotle's overall conception of perception. While the preceding senses have been described according to a simple opposition between contraries (e.g., visible/invisible, loud/soft, bitter/sweet), Aristotle suggests that the manifold object of touch reveals a variety of contraries (e.g., dry/moist, hard/soft, among others) (*De An.* II.11, 422b23-7). Although there are many ways of interpreting the variety of phenomena made manifest through touch, I understand this claim as confirming the fundamental role of this sense in Aristotle's conception of the life of ensouled beings.¹⁹⁶ Through touch, ensouled beings become aware of their world and their

¹⁹⁵ The preceding analysis of touch and the importance of this sense in Aristotle's thinking is indebted to the following essays, which I see as developing a similar interpretation to the one offered in what follows: Michael Golluber, "Aristotle on Knowledge and the Sense of Touch," *Journal of Philosophical Research* 26 (2001): 655–80; Pascal Massie, "Touching, Thinking, Being: The Sense of Touch in Aristotle's 'De Anima' And Its Implications," *Existencia* 23 (2013): 155–74. Cf. also Alloa, "Getting in Touch: Aristotelian Diagnostics"; Jean-Louis Chrétien, *The Call and the Response*, trans. Anne A. Davenport (New York: Fordham University Press, 2004); Jacques Derrida, *On Touching—Jean-Luc Nancy*, trans. Christine Irizarry (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005).

¹⁹⁶ The importance of the phenomenon of touch for Aristotle's general account of the soul goes as far back as the second definition of *psuchê* found in *De Anima* II.2. In that text, Aristotle begins by relating the emergence of the capacity [*dunamis*] for perception with the appearance of animal life. According to Aristotle, among the first capacities of animals capable of perception is none other than touch (*De An.* II.2, 413b4-5). Aristotle continues by noting that touch, like nutrition, seems to be a basic and elemental capacity of life, which can be found separated from the other senses (*De An.* II.2, 413b5-7). Within the present context,

capacity to engage with other things found in the world. Thus, touch reveals what is true of all the other senses, namely, that the latter too are made up of more than one pair of contraries (*De An.* II.11, 422b25-6).

Turning now to Aristotle's more explicit description of touch, we should begin with identifying its sense organ, namely, flesh [*sarx*]. According to Aristotle, touch takes place whenever the flesh comes into contact with something that is potentially [*dunamei*] a discrete attribute of some body capable of touch, such as hot, cold, dry, and moist (*De An.* II.11, 423b30-1). While touch is often actualized through the contact with some external body, we should also note that this sense is one of the most continually active ones in ensouled beings since the absence of the capacity for touch would result in the death of that being. We see here that Aristotle's account of touch is constantly negotiating between the potential aspect of this sense and the activation that results from the flesh's encounter with some external object.¹⁹⁷

The preceding remarks have offered a comprehensive account of the essentially twofold and complex relationship between *dunamis* and *energeia* that characterizes Aristotle's proto-phenomenological description of perception. I have surveyed each of the

we could say that touch is, in a sense, the foundation of all other forms of perception since, without it, the animal could not possibly live or be at all. Thus, I am suggesting that Aristotle's account of touch opens to a wide variety of contraries because it is through this sense that animated beings become aware of their surrounding world. For a more detailed account of the fundamental aspect of touch for Aristotle's account of life, cf. Chrétien, *The Call and the Response*; Cynthia Freeland, "Aristotle on the Sense of Touch," in *Essays on Aristotle's De Anima*, ed. Martha C. Nussbaum and Amélie Oksenberg Rorty (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 227–48.

¹⁹⁷ In his brief overview of the main characteristics of Aristotle's account of touch, Derrida emphasizes the significant role of the external object without which no experience of *haphês* would take place: "Let's first recall that sense, the *faculty* of sensation—the tactile faculty, for example—is only *potential* and not *actual* (ibid., 417a), with the ineluctable consequence that of itself, it does not sense *itself*; it does not auto-affect itself without the motion of an exterior object. This is a far-reaching thesis, and we shall keep taking its measure with regard to touching and "self-touching,"" *On Touching—Jean-Luc Nancy*, 6. In the concluding section of the present chapter, I aim to show that this structure of affection through which perception comes about through the encounter with something other than itself can also be seen at work in Aristotle's account of intellect and the peculiar form of auto-affection at play between its affective and productive aspects.

proper senses discussed by Aristotle with the aim of providing a consistent picture of this dynamic and contrarian structure. To briefly summarize and conclude this discussion, let us turn to the following passage, which can be read as a summary of Aristotle's views on the nature of perception: "[Perception is] a way of being acted upon [*paschein*], in which what acts [*to poioun*] makes another thing, which is potentially such as it [*dunamei on*], be of that attribute that the former has actively [*energeia*]" (*De An.* II.11, 424a1-2). In other words, we have seen how every instance of perception requires the complex interaction between the perceiver and perceived. It is not enough to describe perception simply with the aid of the activity of the former. Rather, as I hope to have shown, the perceived object plays a fundamental role in the process of perception, which is revealed through the mutual affection that makes both perceiver and perceived share the same activity.

At this point in our discussion, we can reasonably conclude that both the nutritive and perceptive capacity have revealed both plants and animals as emerging and partaking in this complex dynamic between *dunamis* and *energeia*. Through this interplay, these ensouled beings reveal themselves as what they are through their specific mode of relating to that which is outside of itself. The life of these beings can only be disclosed through this interrelation, which suggests that *zôê* appears to be the result of an intricate tension between *dunamis* and *energeia*. With the previous remarks in mind, we could conclude that all plants and animals become manifest in their being through this convoluted entanglement. However, to broaden the scope of Aristotle's proto-phenomenological description of being even further, I would like to focus on the ambiguity that characterizes the most distinctly human capacity of the soul as well as the most extraordinary ability, namely, the intellect [*nous*].

IV. The Reciprocity of *Dunamis* and *Energieia* in Passive and Productive *Nous*

I would like to begin the present interpretation of Aristotle's account of the intellectual capacity of the soul by focusing on the analogy drawn between this ability and the perceptive one. I understand the association between the intellectual and perceptive capacity as an essential aspect of Aristotle's discussion since it invites us to interpret thought in terms of the preceding account of perception. I have outlined the extent of Aristotle's commitment to the complex interaction between *dunamis* and *energeia* throughout the various forms of perceiving. With this account in mind, we might wonder whether the Aristotelian conception of thought is similarly characterized by a process of being-affected by an intelligible object [*paschein ti an eiê hupo tou noêtou*] (*De An.* III.4, 429a14). In this sense, we could understand the main difference between thought and perception as primarily a consequence of their respective objects. However, there overall general structure would appear to be the same. While there might exist a common affective structure between these two abilities, Aristotle nonetheless seems to reject this possibility by claiming that the intellect [*to noein*] is unaffectedable [*apathes*] and yet somehow receptive of the form [*dektikon tou eidous*] by being potentially such as it is [*dunamei toiouton*] (*De An.* III.4, 429a15-6). Even though the unaffectedability of the intellect constitutes a significant obstacle to our overall interpretation of Aristotle, the aim of the present discussion will be to elucidate the complex receptivity of *nous* as a result of its potency.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁸ I understand Aristotle's qualification of the intellect as unaffectedable to introduce a modification in our usual sense of affection without necessarily implying the absence of all sense of change or alteration. By interpreting Aristotle's account of *nous* in this way, I am following a suggestion developed by Victor Caston who writes: "In describing the understanding as "such as not to be affected" (*ἀπαθές*), he is *not* claiming that

Despite Aristotle's characterization of the intellect as unaffected, we can see that he remains committed to the analogy between perceiving and thinking. As suggested above, Aristotle describes the difference between these two capacities is primarily the result of distinct objects. On the one hand, perceiving [*to aisthanesthai*] is directed toward perceptible objects [*ta aisthêta*], whereas, on the other hand, thinking [*to noein*] is primarily focused on intelligible objects [*ta noêta*] (*De An.* III.4, 429a17-8). With this similarity in mind, we can say that the difference between these two capacities of the soul correspond to their distinct forms of affection and receptivity through which they respectively receive and encounter their objects.¹⁹⁹ To avoid an important potential misunderstanding, I am not suggesting that the affective structure of perceiving and thinking are, strictly speaking, identical. On the contrary, I am arguing that we should understand the receptivity through which the intellect takes on its intelligible object can and must be interpreted as a distinctive form of affectivity.

To further clarify this peculiar form of receptivity, we should recall the intricate relationship between the perceiver and perceived discussed above. Aristotle's account of

it is *impervious* to change and so indestructible, as we find Plato claiming, for example, in *Rep.* X (609D-612C). On the contrary, Aristotle clearly thinks the understanding in question is perishable (*φθαρτός*, *De Anima* 3.5, 430a24-25) and that its function is hindered by the effects of old age," "Aristotle's Argument for Why the Understanding Is Not Compounded with the Body," *Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy* 16 (2000): 138. My aim in what follows is not to argue in support of the identification of the intellect without the body. On the contrary, I hope to suggest that there is an important reciprocity between the two aspects of *nous* that suggests a more intricate relationship between *dunamis* and *energeia*.

¹⁹⁹ Even Franz Brentano draws on the analogy between perceiving and thinking in order to describe the particular form of affection involved in the intellect's reception of its intelligible object: "Since thinking is in this way similar to sensing, it will have to be an affection by the intelligible, in that improper sense of affection which we have ascertained for sensation," *The Psychology of Aristotle*, trans. Rolf George (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), 75. Although Brentano will go on to associate the intellect solely with the soul and not with the ensouled body (which would seem to overlook the role of imagination [*phantasia*] in the activity of thinking), I find it significant that he at least recognizes the role of affectivity in *nous*' reception of the intelligible object. We could even say, following Myles Burnyeat, "Those who insist on underlying material processes for perception, but not for intellectual understanding, owe us an explanation of why Aristotle should tolerate such a significant lack of parallelism between the two types of cognition whose parallelism he trumpets," *Aristotle's Divine Intellect* (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 2008), 22.

perception was grounded on the need for an external object. Across the various senses, we have seen that perception cannot be reduced simply to the passive role of the perceived and the active role of the perceiver. Instead, the intricate relationship between these two elements suggests a more complex dynamic between *dunamis* and *energeia*. With these details in mind, I would like to return to Aristotle's proto-phenomenological account of *nous* to examine the extent to which this similar dynamic is at play in the intellectual capacity. More specifically, we can focus on Aristotle's critical engagement with his predecessor, Anaxagoras. Aristotle identifies Anaxagoras with having claimed that *nous* is something entirely unmixed [*amigê*]. We can interpret this claim as another iteration of Aristotle's suggestion concerning the unaffectedability of *nous*. In both cases, we are interested in discerning how the intellect receives its intelligible object. We should begin by recalling that *nous* does not require the existence of some external object. On the contrary, the intellect receives its intelligible object from itself. What deserves further emphasis is that this ability of *nous* to receive its object from itself is the result of its own nature [*phusis*], which Aristotle describes as having "no nature [*phusin*] at all other than this, that it is a potency [*dunatos*]" (*De An.* III.4, 429a21-2).

The preceding remarks have revealed the decisively potential aspect of the intellectual capacity of the soul. Although *nous* is described by Aristotle as both unmixed and unaffectedable, he nonetheless suggests that the receptivity through which the intellect receives its intelligible object is on account of its potential nature. This decisive aspect of the intellect suggests a further distinction between this ability and the perceptive capacity of the soul. While the perceptive ability is affected by the existence of an external object, the intellectual capacity is only affected by itself. However, as we have been suggesting

throughout the present discussion, this auto-affection²⁰⁰ of the intellect is of an entirely different sort than the one found in the perceptive capacity. Aristotle describes this auto-affective manner through which the intellect gives itself its object as made possible by its strictly potential aspect (*De An.* III.4, 429a22-4). Hence, the freedom of *nous* is directly related to the potency of the intellect to affect itself and thus give itself its object of intellection.

While this form of affectivity is different from the one found, for instance, in the domain of movement, the present interpretation allows us to establish a greater degree of continuity between the nutritive and perceptive capacities with the intellectual one. Perhaps the main difficulty in discerning the complex interrelationship of *dunamis* and *energeia* in Aristotle's account of the intellect is a result of the inapparent interplay of these terms through the process of auto-affection.²⁰¹ Although each of the capacities of the soul are

²⁰⁰ My use of the term "auto-affection" is a way of gesturing toward the distinct form of affection involved in Aristotle's account of the intellect. While perception primarily takes place through a kind of "hetero-affection" (i.e., the process of being affected by something other than oneself), the distinguishing feature of the intellect is that *nous* affects itself through its own capacity to think. While the relationship between passive (or, we might say, affective) and active (i.e., productive) intellect has rarely been understood in affective terms, I will argue throughout the remainder of this chapter in support of the significance of this dimension of *nous* and the continuity it suggests between the other capacities of the soul.

²⁰¹ The indiscernibility of *dunamis* and *energeia* in Aristotle's account of the intellect will be the primary focus of the remainder of the present interpretation. In adopting this approach, I am especially indebted to Giorgio Agamben's suggestion that the lines between pure potentiality and actuality become blurred as soon as Aristotle begins to focus on the notion of *nous*. In the first volume of his *Homo Sacer* project, Agamben writes, "At the limit, pure potentiality and pure actuality are indistinguishable, and the sovereign is precisely this zone of indistinction. (In Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, this corresponds to the figure of the "thinking of thinking," that is, to a thinking that in actuality thinks its own potentiality to think," *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), 47. Although he develops this theme in other texts along the lines of a critique of political theology (most notably in *The Kingdom and the Glory: For a Theological Genealogy of Economy and Government* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011), 68–108; *Il Regno e la gloria: Per una genealogia teologica dell'economia e del governo* (Vicenza: Neri Pozza Editore, 2007), 83–124.), Agamben nonetheless leaves open this alternative possible interpretation of pure potentiality in *De Anima* III.5: "Contrary to the idea of potentiality that is annulled in actuality, here we are confronted with a potentiality that conserves itself and saves itself in actuality. Here potentiality, so to speak, survives actuality and, in this way, *gives itself to itself*," *Potentialities: Collected Essays in Philosophy*, 184; *La potenza del pensiero: Saggi e conferenze*, 287. In what follows, I aim to show the extent to which passive and productive *nous* are characterized by a dynamic relationship of reciprocity.

characterized by this intricate reciprocity between *dunamis* and *energeia*, this dynamic is more difficult to see clearly at work in the intellect. Given that the intellect gives itself its own intelligible object, the auto-affection of *nous* is the result of its potential nature, which means that this process takes place only when it “is not actively any of the things that *are* until it thinks” [*outhen estin energeia tôn ontôn prin noein*] (*De An.* III.4, 429a24). This passage subtly indicates the imperceptible co-constitutive relationship between *dunamis* and *energeia* in Aristotle’s account of the intellect. Before it thinks, the intellect is defined solely by its potential nature. However, after producing its intelligible object, *nous* transitions to its active state through which it becomes one with what it thinks.

Perhaps the most puzzling aspect of Aristotle’s account of the intellect is how *nous* can remain constitutively twofold throughout the process of thinking. In transitioning from its potential to its active state, the intellect does not relinquish its defining characteristic (i.e., its nature). I am interested in the extent to which the intellect seems characterized by a reciprocal and co-constitutive relationship between *dunamis* and *energeia*. To further elucidate this convoluted interrelation between these two parts of *nous*, I would like to focus on the following passage, which provides an excellent illustration of the point discussed above:

And when the intellect has come to be each intelligible thing, as the knower is said to do when he is a knower in the active sense [*ho epistêmôn legetai ho kat’ energeian*] (and this happens when he is able to activate his knowing on his own [*sumbainei hotan dunêtai energein di’autou*]), the intellect is even then in a sense those objects in potency [*esti men kai*

tote dunamei pôs], but not in the same way as before [*ou mên homoiôs kai prin*] it learned and discovered them, and it is then able to think itself [*kai autos di' hautou tote dunatai noein*] (*De An.* III.4, 429b5-9).

This passage reminds us of how difficult it is to maintain a strict separation and distinction between the two parts of the intellect. As illustrated by this passage, *nous* is constantly defined and made manifest through the complicated interlacing of the passive part and the productive one. The intellect is initially made manifest through its essential nature as potency. However, as soon as it thinks something, the intellect takes on an active state through which it fulfills its capacity for thinking. While it is difficult to discern the co-constitutive relationship between these two aspects of *nous*, it is worth emphasizing that the intellect never entirely exhausts itself in either its passive or productive state. On the contrary, we could most adequately describe the intellect as a kind of “active capacity” through which the soul is able to both maintain its essential nature as potential, while nonetheless affecting itself and entering a state of active thought. Although this latent capacity that remains present in every manifestation of active *nous* is difficult to discern, we can see it at play in the constant oscillation that characterizes the intellect as always in between its passive and productive state.²⁰² Thus, even Aristotle’s account of the intellect suggests a dynamic interchange between *dunamis* and *energeia*.

This interpretation of the constitutive twofoldness of Aristotle’s conception of intellect appears to be most clearly illustrated by the following well-known passage:

²⁰² The difficulty of understanding this strange interweaving of *dunamis* and *energeia* in Aristotle’s account of *nous* is helpfully described by Aryeh Kosman in his excellent study, “What Does the Maker Mind Make?,” in *Essays on Aristotle’s De Anima*, ed. Martha C. Nussbaum and Amélie Oksenberg Rorty (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 343–58.

But since in all nature [*hapasê tê phusei*] one thing is the matter [*to hulê*] for each kind [*genos*] (this is what those things are in potency [*dunamei*]), but there is something else that is the causal and productive thing [*to aition kai poiêtikon*] by which all of them are made [*tô poiein panta*] (as is the case with a craft [*technê*] in relation to its matter [*hulên*]), so it is necessary that these differences [*diaphoras*] be present [*huparchein*] in the soul as well (*De An.* III.5, 430a10-4).

This passage provides an important confirmation of the essential twofoldness of nature that has characterized the various phenomena under discussion in the present dissertation. I have suggested that the foundations of this constitutive duality of nature can be found in Aristotle's proto-phenomenological account of being as *dunamis* and *energeia* in *Metaphysics* IX. Following this, I outlined the pervasiveness of this twofold account of being in Aristotle's account of the principles of being in *Physics* I. With the aid of the contrarian structure of the principles of natural beings, I continued to outline how the essential twofoldness of being manifested itself through the dynamic interrelationship between matter and form in Aristotle's conception of nature. Aristotle's account of movement provided us with a further illustration of this intricate exchange between *dunamis* and *energeia*. Finally, throughout Aristotle's proto-phenomenological account of the soul, we were also able to show how this reciprocity begins with his definition of the soul and extends throughout its various capacities. Even the intellectual capacity of the soul provided us with further confirmation of the extent of the constitutive twofoldness of being

in Aristotle's ontology.²⁰³ To illustrate how Aristotle's conception of *nous* can be read as a veritable peak of his essentially twofold understanding of being, let us turn to the following passage:

There is one sort of intellect that is such by becoming all things [*estin ho men toioutos nous tô panta ginesthai*], while there is another sort that produces all things [*ho de tô panta poiein*] in the way that an active condition [*hexis*], such as light [*to phôs*] does, for in a certain way light too makes the colors that are in potency [*ta dunamei*] become active ones [*energeia*] (*De An.* III.5, 430a14-7).

I would like to draw attention to the thought-provoking connection suggested by Aristotle in this passage between *nous* and its disclosing function. Recalling the role of light in Aristotle's account of sight, we should remember that the visible object became manifest in its color through the activity of *phôs*.²⁰⁴ More specifically, I suggested that the visible object became manifest through its co-operation with light since perception would not take place without the joint activity of these two elements. Thus, the decisive connection between the productive intellect and light provides us with a further, crucial illustration of the co-operative relation between *dunamis* and *energeia* across the capacities of the soul.²⁰⁵

²⁰³ Thomas Kjeller Johansen makes a similar point toward the end of his discussion of the intellect and its place in Aristotle's natural philosophy: "The opening of III.5 is no doubt meant to remind us of this viewpoint on nature. It should not surprise us that even in those activities that we are most autonomous, in thinking which is up to us when we know, we are still ultimately dependent on an external mover. If we were not, we would not be like the rest of nature. In referring us on to the role of god, Aristotle's psychology is of a piece with his physics," *The Powers of Aristotle's Soul*, 245.

²⁰⁴ In his approach to this passage, Aryeh Kosman also seems guided by the role of light in Aristotle's understanding of perception and thinking, which seems to be most accurately defined as "creating the first actuality of visibility," "What Does the Maker Mind Make?," 348.

²⁰⁵ The complex interaction of *dunamis* and *energeia* described by Aristotle's account of the intellect gestures toward the broader significance of habit for his overall ontology. Although a detailed analysis of habit falls

V. Conclusion

To bring the preceding interpretation of Aristotle's conception of the intellect to a conclusion, I would like to simply emphasize the passive and productive aspects of *nous* as reciprocal and co-constitutive aspects of this capacity of the soul.²⁰⁶ My aim throughout the present chapter has been to suggest that an overly strict separation of these two aspects of the intellect is a fundamental mistake. On the contrary, I have argued that we should understand the intellect as an essentially twofold capacity, which shares important similarities, for instance, with the essential nature [*phusis*] through which natural beings show themselves as what they are. Rather than understand these two aspects of *nous* as essentially separate, we can best understand them as the two essential features through which the thinking capacity becomes manifest. Although Aristotle acknowledges the possibility of the productive aspect of *nous* being momentarily separated from its passive aspect, this detachment only occurs according to a finite amount of time since no finite natural beings can maintain themselves within this persistent activity of thought and contemplation. The only exception to this rule would appear to be God and, to a lesser

outside the scope of the present dissertation, I have already suggested that *hexis* can be understood both as an "active condition" or "active capacity," which suggests an ongoing interrelation between *dunamis* and *energeia*. The irreducibility of habit to either potency or activity suggests that it too would be a productive place to continue exploring Aristotle's proto-phenomenological understanding of being. For a thought-provoking overview of this approach, Cf. Giorgio Agamben, *Opus Dei: An Archaeology of Duty*, trans. Adam Kotsko (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2013); *The Use of Bodies*; Rémi Brague, "De la disposition: À propos de *diathesis* chez Aristote," in *Concepts et catégories dans la pensée antique*, ed. Pierre Aubenque and Rémi Brague (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1980), 285–308; Pierre Rodrigo, "The Dynamic of *Hexis* in Aristotle's Philosophy," trans. Clare Carlisle, *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* 42, no. 1 (2011): 6–17.

²⁰⁶ Christopher P. Long develops a similar interpretation of the complex interweaving of passive and productive *nous*. According to Long, "Despite Aristotle's division of the discussion of *voûç* into the passive and the active, these dimensions of *voûç* must, like perceiving and being appeared to, be understood in the middle voice," *Aristotle on the Nature of Truth*, 167.

extent, the heavenly bodies.²⁰⁷ However, if we were to bracket these beings who exist at the very limits of Aristotle's proto-phenomenology of natural beings, then we would have to recognize the consistency with which he describes the being of these entities as characterized by a constant oscillation between *dunamis* and *energeia*. I have suggested throughout the present dissertation that the co-constitutive and reciprocal relationship between these terms never exhaust themselves in each other. Instead, we can see them at work throughout the manifold forms through which the ensouled being reveals itself as capable of life. In every case, the distinguishing mark of Aristotle's conception of life is that it can only be fully grasped by way of this dynamic co-operation between *dunamis* and *energeia*.²⁰⁸ Thus, we can conclude the present dissertation by noting the extent to which Aristotle's account of life in its various modes of manifestation (e.g., the soul, nature, movement, and so on) can most adequately be described according to the co-constitutive and reciprocal relationship of this dynamic, proto-phenomenological meaning of being.

²⁰⁷ In the following passage, William McNeill offers what I consider to be an accurate account of the complex and nuanced activity of God with respect to the world of finite beings: "Aristotle's God, as that which is most divine and most "is," is conceived as that which, as an object of love (*hōs erōmenon*: M, 1072 b4), ultimately moves the human desire to see, and does so in such way as to "activate" the potentiality of *nous* in us, the *theōrein* that first lets beings be in the relative constancy of their presence. Although this supreme being is invisible as such, and even uncontaminated (*amigēs*) in the sense that it does not itself become any of the visible things, Aristotle's divinity is nevertheless not independent of the world, but constantly "at work" in it as that which lets all things be in their belonging together in the being of one world," *The Glance of the Eye: Heidegger, Aristotle, and the Ends of Theory* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1999), 257.

²⁰⁸ By way of a discussion of the role of desire [*orexis*] in Aristotle's ontology, Michael Shaw suggests a similar dynamic tension as being constitutive of the Aristotelian understanding of the force of life. Cf. "Ὁρέεσθαι and Natural Teleology: The Role of Desire in Aristotle's Ontology," 305.

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