

The Aim and the Argument of Aristotle's Metaphysics

Part III: The true path

IIIα: Metaphysics Θ: ἐνέργεια and δύναμις

IIIα1: Θ and the ongoing investigation περὶ ἀρχῶν.

IIIα2: Θ1-6: δυνάμεις, τὸ ὄν δυνάμει, and the concept of ἐνέργεια.

IIIα3: Θ7-9: conclusions for the ἀρχαί and the priority of ἐνέργεια.

IIIα1: Θ and the ongoing investigation περὶ ἀρχῶν.

In devoting Part III of this book to Metaphysics ΘΛ together, I am opposing the current practice, which treats Metaphysics ΖΗΘ as forming a unit, Aristotle's "ontology of sensible substance," and typically denies that Λ is an intended part of the Metaphysics at all: it is common to regard Λ1-5 as a popular summary of ΖΗΘ, and Λ6-10 as a popular summary of the lost or never-written ontology of immaterial substances that was the intended culmination of the Metaphysics. By contrast, I think that Λ is, as it appears to be, the intended culmination of the Metaphysics, and that the main purpose of Θ is to provide the premisses and the conceptual apparatus that Aristotle will need for Λ's determinations περὶ ἀρχῶν.¹ And in understanding Θ's agenda it will be crucial to get it out from under the shadow of Ζ, and to see that Θ is not a continuation of ΖΗ but an independent fresh start in the investigation περὶ ἀρχῶν. Granted, Ζ too is designed as a contribution to the inquiry περὶ ἀρχῶν whose conclusions are drawn in Λ, and Λ3 draws directly on Ζ7-9. But Θ is much more closely connected to Λ than Ζ is, and this is because Θ reaches positive conclusions about the ἀρχαί, which Aristotle will incorporate into his own theory of the ἀρχαί as given in Λ, whereas Ζ is exploring the paths taken by the physicists and dialecticians, and showing that they do not succeed in reaching the ἀρχαί. Or, to put the point more gently: "ἀρχή" can be taken in stricter and looser senses. The form and matter of natural things are in a broad sense ἀρχαί, and they are duly discussed in Λ1-5, as are ἐνέργεια and δύναμις. But the proper sense of "ἀρχή", in which only wisdom is περὶ ἀρχῶν and the other sciences are not, entails that an ἀρχή is an eternal οὐσία capable of separate existence, and Ζ argues against the pre-Socratics and Plato that matter and form are not in this sense ἀρχαί; whereas Θ, beyond its conclusions about ἀρχαί in the broad sense, also shows that ἀρχαί in the strict sense must be pure ἐνέργεια, a conclusion which will be crucial to Aristotle's positive exposition περὶ ἀρχῶν in Λ6-10.

I will return to the question about the status of Λ at the beginning of IIIβ below. For now, by way of orientation to Θ, I will say some things about Θ's connections with other books of the Metaphysics, and, to begin with, about its independence of ΖΗ. The habit of treating ΖΗΘ as a unit seems to go back to Jaeger, who coins for the whole group the term "Substanzbücher" (p.203G, lost in the English p.197), which has become standard at least in German.² Jaeger (in 1923) thought that Aristotle first wrote ΖΗΘ, not as part of the original Metaphysics whose plan is laid out in Β, or even as part of a revised and expanded Metaphysics, but as an "originally independent complex" (p.209G/202E), and only afterwards "took Books Ζ-Θ out of their

¹by Θ, here and generally, I mean Θ1-9; Θ10 is pursuing another project

²Jaeger says p.203G that he is introducing the name "for brevity's sake", and on pp.204-5G he more carefully speaks of "Substanz- und Akt-Lehre"; nonetheless, his argument assumes that these books do indeed present a unified theory of material substance

isolation and inserted them into the Metaphysics" (p.208G/202E). Jaeger thinks that Aristotle, in assembling the Metaphysics, represents his earlier theological interests and his later ontological interests as parts of the same project, so that "the general theory of substance [sc. in ZHΘ] is now supposed to form the entryway into the theory of the immaterial substance of the first mover" (p.204-5G, 198E), but that ZHΘ were not originally intended for this function and do not perform it very convincingly. This particular way of describing the situation depends on a developmental understanding of Aristotle's views about the σκοπός of metaphysics, but even scholars who think that Aristotle's conception of metaphysics always combined ontology and theology continue to treat ZHΘ as a self-contained unit within the Metaphysics, devoted to the ontology of sensible substance.³ And probably the basic reason they are tempted to do this is that they see Z as beginning a treatment of sensible substance which is intended to lead into a theory of immaterial substance; and so it would be strange if, after ZH and before the promised ontotheology, Aristotle took a detour into a topic other than substance.⁴

Nonetheless, it is obvious that Θ does not see itself as part of an investigation of substance, and almost as obvious that ZHΘ are not a self-contained unit. Θ quite seldom speaks of οὐσία,⁵ and in two places it does so in order to distinguish its own project from the earlier investigation περὶ οὐσίας. Thus Θ8 says "it was said ἐν τοῖς περὶ τῆς οὐσίας λόγοις that everything which comes-to-be out-of something and [comes-to-be] something and [comes-to-be] by [the agency of] something, and this [last] is the same in species" (1049a27-9): the reference is to Z7-9, and presumably the λόγοι περὶ τῆς οὐσίας are ZH as a whole; in any case, they have been completed before Θ began. And indeed, the opening sentence of Θ1 is a summary and transition from the discussion of οὐσία which he has completed to the discussion of δύναμις and ἐντελέχεια which he is now beginning:

³see now Rapp's anthology on ZHΘ, intended for student use and titled Aristotles: Metaphysik: Die Substanzbücher (Z, H, Θ); Rapp's introduction gives a simple statement of the currently reigning view. a more baroque version in FP I,21-3: ZHΘ form a unity, but ZH were probably the original unity, with Θ added later (after Z7-9 had been added); still later the whole thing, originally destined as part of something else, was incorporated into the Metaphysics.

⁴One currently popular story about how Θ contributes to the inquiry into substance is Aryeh Kosman's: "... if we are to sustain the notion that substance-being is kath' hautō ... we will need to be able to give a proper account of how in substance, matter and form, subject and being, are one. This, then, is what I have called 'the problem of Metaphysics Θ', the problem of explaining (the very possibility of) the unity of substance-being. It is, I suggest, an important problem, and at the heart of Aristotle's enterprise. We have seen Aristotle's answer; matter is potential, form actual ..." ("Substance, Being, and Energeia", p.144 in OSAP v.2 [1984]). Kosman thinks that while Aristotle has already claimed in H6 that the problem of the unity of a material substance will be solved by identifying the matter with potentiality and the form with actuality, this is not yet a solution until the concepts of potentiality and actuality have been explicated, and explicated in such a way as to explain how they can be in some appropriate sense "the same thing"; and this is the task of Θ. So too Mary Louise Gill: "Although Z and most of H regard forms alone as primary substances because they alone are definable unities, H6 suggests that the solution for forms can be extended to material composites if their matter is viewed as potential and their form as actual. The problem in such cases is to determine the cause of unity. Metaphysics Θ takes up the topic of potentiality and actuality, giving special attention to the role of potentiality as active cause, in order to explain the being and persistence of sensible substances" (Aristotle on Substance p.171). I do not think it is possible to fit the actual text of Θ to this supposed task.

Furthermore, H6 says that while there is an aporia (especially about the unity of definition) that various of Aristotle's opponents cannot solve, "if, as we say, one is matter and the other form, and one is potentially and the other actually, what is in question would no longer seem to be an aporia" (1045a23-5). H6 is wrapping something up, and showing that on Aristotle's grounds it poses no difficulty, rather than calling for a new and deeper investigation.

⁵the word is used 16 times, 10 of them in Θ8 (5 of those 10 being an adverbial dative οὐσίᾳ, in the phrase πρότερον οὐσίᾳ). none of this adds up to anything like a theory of οὐσία. there is indeed something interesting being said about οὐσία in Θ8 and also in Θ6 and Θ7, to which I will return below, but it is hopeless to represent this as the main theme of the book

So [μὲν οὖν] we have spoken about that which is primarily, and toward which all the other categories of being are referred, οὐσία (for the others are called beings in accordance with the λόγος of οὐσία, the so-much and the such and the others that are said in this way: for they will all contain the λόγος of οὐσία, as was said in the first discussions [sc. Z1, esp. 1028a35-6]); but [δὲ picking up the initial μὲν οὖν] since being is said, in one way through [being] something or such or so-much, and in another way as potentiality and as actuality and product [κατὰ δύναμιν καὶ ἐντελέχειαν καὶ κατὰ τὸ ἔργον: the second καὶ is expegetic], let us distinguish/determine [διορίσωμεν] about potentiality and actuality. (1045b27-35).⁶

Here Aristotle is clearly referring to Δ7's distinction of four ways in which being is said: being per accidens, being as said in as many ways as there are categories, being as truth, and being in potentiality and actuality.⁷ Having said in E1 that we must seek the causes of being, Aristotle at the beginning of E2 takes up from Δ7 this list of the senses of being, now listing them in the order: being per accidens, being as truth, being as said of the categories, being in potentiality and actuality (1026a33-b2), and he does indeed examine them in this order in the subsequent text of the Metaphysics. Thus E2-3 discuss being per accidens (beginning by referring to the distinction of senses of being, 1026b2-3); E4 discusses being as truth (beginning by dismissing "being per accidens" and passing to "being as true" with a μὲν οὖν ... δέ, 1027b17-18); ZH discuss being as said of the categories, and primarily of οὐσία (E4 ends by dismissing "being per accidens and as true" and turning to study causes of the primary kind of being, apparently being as said of the categories, 1027b31-1028a6; Z1 starts by referring back to Δ for being as said of the different categories, 1028a10-13); Θ1-9 discusses being as actuality and potentiality (starting, in the passage we are now discussing, with a transition from being as said of the categories to being as potentiality and actuality); finally Θ10 goes back to the topic of being as truth (starting by recalling the senses of being as said of the categories, as actuality and potentiality, and as the true, 1051a34-b2). In the light of these texts, it is obvious that the beginning of Θ1 is not describing the investigation of potentiality and actuality as part of a continuing investigation of οὐσία (though many scholars persist in interpreting these lines in this way),⁸ but rather is passing

⁶this is actually not the whole of the first sentence (it takes another three lines to get to a full stop). Aristotle speaks in the part I have quoted of δύναμις and ἐντελέχεια, but switches before the sentence is over to speaking of δύναμις and ἐνέργεια, and then scarcely mentions ἐντελέχεια again for the rest of Θ; I will make some comments on this below. {the point must be connected with the more natural use of δύναμις and ἐνέργεια as names of ἀρχαί, with their more natural use in the original paradigm case of motion, and perhaps also with the formulation of B#14, here alluded to.} the phrase κατὰ τὸ ἔργον is also strange; again, I will return to it below. {ὄντα in b30 is predicate complement of λέγεται--is this controversial? it's clearer from the Z1 parallel; in b33, Jaeger's τῶ, with the main manuscripts, is better than Ross' τὸ}

⁷I will eventually have a full discussion in Iγ1. at the moment I abstain from judging whether "being καθ' αὐτό" (Δ7 1017a22) is the second sense, the second-third-and-fourth, or the second-and-fourth on this list (probably just the second, as seems confirmed by the end of E4; it looks like the antithesis between per accidens and per se occurs only within a sense of being common to the first and second senses?). repeat warning against Jaeger's folly (p.210G, p.203E; since repeated?), of saying that E is the fuller account and that Aristotle at the beginning of Z1 would have referred to E rather than to Δ7 if E had been part of the same text as ZHΘ

⁸so Gill: "Metaphysics Θ continues the investigation that has claimed Aristotle's attention since the beginning of Metaphysics Z and to which he alludes in the opening lines of Book Θ. The project, since the outset, has been to determine what entities are conceptually primary, and this has been the study of being in its primary sense, which is the study of substance (1045b27-32)" (Aristotle on Substance p.171; I have cited above Gill's explanation,

from one branch of the investigation announced in E2, the study of being as said of the categories, to another, the study of being as actuality and potentiality.

The three books ZHΘ do not form a natural unit within this investigation, which naturally divides into four parts, E2-3, E4 (with its supplement Θ10), ZH, and Θ1-9. It does seem reasonable to describe the four books EZHΘ as a unit within the larger argument of the Metaphysics. But their common topic is not οὐσία; nor are they really self-contained, since the reference back to Δ7 is essential, and Θ, like the earlier books, will continue to refer to other chapters of Δ at crucial turns in the argument.⁹ And, more broadly, EZHΘ are a branch of the project announced in Γ1 of seeking the ἀρχαί as causes of being-as-such and its per se attributes rather than of something of narrower extension (Iota's investigation of these per se attributes is the other main branch), using Δ's distinctions of senses of cause, being and so on, and hoping thus to resolve the aporiai about the ἀρχαί from B and to achieve the wisdom first described in A1-2.

Θ and the inquiry περὶ ἀρχῶν

However, it is not entirely obvious, once we get down into the detail of Θ, how the program of investigating different senses of being and the hope of acquiring knowledge of the ἀρχαί are supposed to fit together. The most common scholarly view (by no means confined to developmentalists) seems to be that in ZHΘ as a whole, Aristotle is for practical purposes just studying the being of ordinary objects for its own sake, and that, despite some general programmatic statements, in the Metaphysics as we have it this study has no organic connection with any conclusions about ἀρχαί. This view is wrong about ZH and it is more obviously wrong about Θ. To begin with, in Θ1, as soon as he has stopped saying what he will do and started doing it, he calls on Δ12's determination "that δύναμις and δύνασθαι are said in many ways" (1046a4-6), and says that those kinds of δύναμις which are not merely equivocal "are all ἀρχαί τινες" (1046a9-10). (The long discussion of δύναμις in Θ1,2,5 has always been embarrassing on an ousiological or even ontological interpretation of the task of Θ, but makes good sense as part of an investigation of ἀρχαί.) And Λ5 says that in one way "the ἀρχαί [of all things] are the same by analogy, for instance, ἐνέργεια and δύναμις, although these too are different and in different ways for different things" (1071a4-6). Now of course Aristotle does not believe that δυνάμις (or ordinary cases of ἐνέργεια) are ἀρχαί in the strict metaphysical sense. But that does not mean that he is using the word ἀρχή, in these texts from Θ1 and Λ5, carelessly or unseriously. Δυνάμις in particular have claims to be ἀρχαί (if not always to be ἀρχαί in the strict sense, then at least to be prior to the manifest things, and steps on the path to the absolute first things), and these claims deserve to be examined seriously. Furthermore, many of Aristotle's

immediately following, of how Θ contributes to this project). This is simply not a possible reading of the opening of Θ1. The same reading is apparently assumed by Kosman, who writes "... this distinction [between two different kinds of potentiality-actuality relationships], as Aristotle's remarks at the beginning of Θ suggest, is introduced as a moment in the argument concerning ousia and being that occupies the central books of the Metaphysics" (OSAP v.2, pp.137): the context in Kosman's article shows that Kosman takes this to mean (not simply that ZH are about οὐσία and that Θ is about being in some other sense, but) that Θ contributes to revealing the nature of οὐσία, and thereby also to revealing the nature of being as such; Kosman says so more explicitly in his article in the Scaltsas, Charles and Gill volume

⁹to repeat, Ross is wrong when he says that Aristotle also does this outside the Metaphysics; see my notes for Iγ1

predecessors have posited as ἀρχαί things which, at least on Aristotle's view, are δυνάμεις.¹⁰ Sometimes they themselves use the word δύναμις, as when the Hippocratic On Ancient Medicine speaks of the different δυνάμεις present in the human body and capable of causing disease or health. But Aristotle also thinks that an ultimate material ἀρχή would be pure δύναμις, and he discusses such an ἀρχή, for this reason, in Θ7. He also thinks that Anaxagorean material ἀρχαί, such as the bone-stuff that existed before the cosmos was formed, would be merely δυνάμεις (Anaxagoras calls it bone, but there are no actual bones except as functioning parts of an animal; it is simply the stuff of which bones could someday be made); Aristotle also speaks of the totality of Anaxagorean material ἀρχαί, the "ὅμοῦ πάντα", as if it were a single great material ἀρχή, which would be pure δύναμις (so Λ2 1069b20-24, Λ6 1071b26-9, Λ7 1072a19-20). But even some non-material ἀρχαί would count as δυνάμεις. "The Pythagoreans and Speusippus," who compare the ἀρχαί absolutely (apparently the One) to "the ἀρχαί of plants and animals," i.e. to seeds, which are less perfect than the things that develop out of them (Λ7 1072b30-1073a3), are like Anaxagoras (who also describes his ἀρχαί as seeds) taking δυνάμεις as their ἀρχαί. Aristotle also says, in criticizing an efficient ἀρχή like Anaxagoras' νοῦς or the demiurge of the Timaeus, which begins to act after a period of inactivity, that "its οὐσία is δύναμις" (Λ6 1071b18, cp. Λ9 1074b19-20). Even some Platonic forms would be δυνάμεις, for, if there are ideas, "there would be something much more knowing than Knowledge-itself, and more moved than Motion: for [ordinary instances of knowledge and motion] are more ἐνέργεια, and [the ideas of Knowledge and Motion] are [merely] δυνάμεις for [those ἐνέργεια]" (Θ8 1050b36-a2).¹¹

Aristotle's own view, argued for in Θ8, is that ἐνέργεια is prior to δύναμις, in οὐσία and in λόγος and also (in one sense, but not in another) in time. That means that no ἀρχή in the strict sense can be a δύναμις, since an ἀρχή is precisely that to which nothing is prior (for ἀρχαί in the strict metaphysical sense, that means that nothing is prior to them in οὐσία). And indeed Aristotle says in Λ6 that the first efficient principle should not be conceived, as Anaxagoras and

¹⁰or be ἀρχαί and causes on account of δυνάμεις which they possess. but Aristotle very often speaks of such things as being themselves δυνάμεις, the justification perhaps being that such things do not simply have their δυνάμεις as accidents that they could exist without; δύνασθαι is predicated of them essentially, and so it can be said that they are their δυνάμεις, or that their οὐσία is δύναμις (a phrase Aristotle uses several times, cf. collect: Λ6 1071b18, Λ9 1074b19-20, and, depending on a textual question, Θ8 1050b27)

¹¹{perhaps move some or all of the content of this note to IIIα3 in the discussion of Θ8, just have a brief note here referring the reader to that later discussion} against Joseph Owens ad locum, Aristotle is not saying that all Platonic forms would be δυνάμεις (I cannot extract from Owens, or imagine for myself, any argument that this would be true). but the form of motion is an awkward case, which cannot itself properly speaking be moved (i.e. it cannot be in one state at time t and in another at time t'), but which is somehow a cause to things which are properly moved: the Sophist insists that it is moved, and Aristotle concludes that this can be justified only inasmuch as it is a δύναμις for motion, which is actualized only in temporal things. Likewise there is a Platonic embarrassment about the form of knowledge: if it is the knowledge of some particular content, then how can it be a cause to participants who know something different?; but if it is not the knowledge of some particular content, then, to ask the question Aristotle asks about νοῦς, "if it knows [voεῖ] nothing, what would be honorable [σεμνόν] about it? it would be as if it were asleep" (Λ9 1074b17-18; σεμνόν is echoing the challenge at Sophist 248e7-249a2; I will come back to Aristotle's use of this passage). The Platonic forms of motion and knowledge are particularly important for Aristotle, not just because they were notorious embarrassments for Platonism, but because Aristotle wants his first ἀρχή to be most knowing and (not properly described as most κινούμενον, but) most ἐνεργοῦν and the first source of motion to those things that are in motion; he has to face the same problems that he is here confronting Plato with, and he wants to show that he is able to solve them, by describing his ἀρχή as something other than an idea of knowledge or motion, in a way that the Platonists cannot. I will return to the passage of Θ8 in IIIα3, and to Aristotle's solution in IIIγ.

Plato conceive νοῦς, in such a way that "its οὐσία is δύναμις" (Λ6 1071b18, cited just above), but rather "there must be an ἀρχή of this kind whose οὐσία is ἐνέργεια" (Λ6 1071b19-20; it is also called an ἐνέργεια at Λ7 1072a25 and 1072b27, and cp. Λ6 1072a5-6).

Θ8's examination of whether ἐνέργεια or δύναμις is prior belongs to an investigation περὶ ἀρχῶν. To say that X is prior to Y is to say that X is an ἀρχή at least relatively to Y; and the only way to find out whether something is an ἀρχή absolutely is to investigate whether it is prior to all other things, and whether anything else is prior to it. This is the key to seeing how Θ fits into the Metaphysics as a whole: for Θ8, which presents the main conclusions of Θ, is intimately connected, on the one hand with the aporiai about the ἀρχαί in B, and on the other with Aristotle's own positive exposition of the ἀρχαί beginning in Λ6. These connections have been ignored or denied by scholars who think that ΖΗΘ are not following the archeological program of B, and that Λ was not intended as part of the Metaphysics. But the connections are, when the texts are put together, obvious, and very important for understanding Aristotle's aims in Θ.

The fourteenth aporia of B, as Aristotle lists it in B1, asks "whether the ἀρχαί are ... δυνάμει or ἐνέργεια, and whether with regard to κίνησις or in some other way" (996a9-11); in the main body of B (without raising the issue about κίνησις) Aristotle asks "whether the στοιχεῖα are δυνάμει or in some other manner" (B#14 1002b33-4) and gives arguments on both sides:

If in some other way, then there will be something else prior to the ἀρχαί (for the δύναμις is prior to that cause, and it is not necessary for everything that is δυνατόν to be in that way). But if the στοιχεῖα are δυνάμει, it is possible for none of the things-that-are to be: for even what is not yet is δυνατόν [= able] to be, since what is not comes-to-be, and nothing that is ἀδύνατον [= impossible] comes-to-be. (B#14 1002b34-1003a5).¹²

¹²There are ambiguities in this passage, depending on how we take εἶναι in different places. There are perhaps three prima facie possible readings. (1) Aristotle could conceivably be asking whether the ἀρχαί (I take it there is no distinction here between ἀρχαί and στοιχεῖα) exist only potentially (like my firstborn child, if in fact I have no children, or like the point in the middle of this line): then "if the στοιχεῖα are δυνάμει, it is possible for none of the things-that-are to be" means: "if the ἀρχαί are, at the beginning, not actually existent, then there is no reason for anything ever to exist". This seems an implausible line of thought, and seems ruled out by Aristotle's arguing that if the ἀρχαί are not merely δυνάμει, "there will be something else prior to the ἀρχαί, for the δύναμις is prior to that cause": a δύναμις is not a non-existent object, but an existent object (typically in the category of quality) which is a certain kind of cause, namely a power for acting or being acted-on: Aristotle is thinking of the contrast drawn in Δ2 between causes "some spoken of as δυνάμενα and others as ἐνεργοῦντα, as either the housebuilder or the housebuilder housebuilding are causes of a-house-being-built [τοῦ οἰκοδομεῖσθαι]" (1014a8-10 = Physics II,3 195b4-6, cf. 1014a19-25 = 195b16-21; here Aristotle is thinking of an active cause, but presumably the same distinction can be drawn among passive causes, e.g. between the bronze which is potentially a statue and the bronze which is actually becoming, or actually being, that statue), and in B#14 he is asking whether the ἀρχαί are causes like the housebuilder or like the housebuilder housebuilding. (2) So if "are the ἀρχαί/στοιχεῖα δυνάμει or in some other manner" means "are they causes as δυνάμενα or as ἐνεργοῦντα", the apodosis "it is possible for none of the things-that-are to be" means "it is possible for none of the things other than the ἀρχαί, i.e. none of the things of which they would be causes, to exist, since these causes might never actually produce anything." It looks to me as if this is in fact what Aristotle means. Still, one might be queasy, both about having to stick in the clause "other than the ἀρχαί", and about the way that "to be" (and being merely δυνάμει/δυνατόν vs. in some stronger sense) changes meaning in the middle of the sentence. (3) The only way I see to avoid this would be to take εἶναι to be consistently short for "to be something, i.e. to be whatever it is supposed to be in each case". So the question about the ἀρχαί would be not whether they are merely potentially existent, but whether they are merely potentially what they are supposed to be, as e.g. Anaxagoras' pre-cosmic bone is really only potentially bone. Then "if the στοιχεῖα are δυνάμει, it is possible for none of the things-that-are to be" would mean "if the ἀρχαί are, at the beginning, not actually what they are supposed to be, then there is no reason for anything, including the ἀρχαί, ever to become

Aristotle's own view will be that "there must be an ἀρχή ... whose οὐσία is ἐνέργεια" (Λ6 1071b19-20), and that this is the ἀρχή in the strict sense, the first of all things. Of the two opposed arguments given in B#14, he thinks that the second is (when developed) decisive, and that the first can be answered. Now it is not very controversial that Θ8, in assessing whether or in what sense δύναμις or ἐνέργεια is prior, is in some sense contributing to answering B#14: even Jaeger, who thinks ΖΗΘ are an insertion unconnected with the program of B, thinks that Aristotle inserted B#14 precisely to connect B to the inserted books: this can only mean to Θ, and Θ8 would be the part of Θ directly responding to B#14.¹³ And besides more everyday senses in which ἐνέργεια is prior to δύναμις, Θ8 also argues that "eternal things are prior in οὐσία to corruptible things, and nothing that is δυνάμει is eternal" (1040b6-8), which immediately implies that the ἀρχαί are not δυνάμει.¹⁴ Still, while Θ8 is certainly collecting materials for a solution to the aporia, and in particular undermining the argument for the opposing side ("for the δύναμις is prior to that cause," i.e. the αἴτιον ὡς ἐνεργοῦν),¹⁵ it does not explicitly draw the conclusion about the ἀρχαί or connect closely with the actual text of Metaphysics B. The detailed, explicit positive answer to B#14 is given in Λ6, with a clear reference back to Θ8 and a close paraphrase of the entire text of B#14. This text is important for understanding the relations between B, Λ, and Θ, and it is worth citing in full (though I will not discuss all of it here), because there is something close to a conspiracy of silence about it in the literature.

Aristotle has just finished concluding that "there must be an ἀρχή ... whose οὐσία is ἐνέργεια" (1071b19-20).

But there is an aporia [καίτοι ἀπορία]: it seems that everything that is acting is capable [of acting], but not everything that is capable [of acting] is acting [τὸ μὲν ἐνεργοῦν πᾶν δύνασθαι, τὸ δὲ δυνάμενον οὐ πᾶν ἐνεργεῖν], so that δύναμις would be prior. But if this is so, then none of the things-that-are will be: for it is possible [for something] to be able to be but not yet to be [ἐνδέχεται γὰρ δύνασθαι μὲν εἶναι μήπω δ' εἶναι]. But if it is as the theologians [=

actually what it is supposed to be." Then we would have to take "even what is not yet is δυνατόν to be, since what is not comes-to-be, and nothing that is ἀδύνατον comes-to-be" to mean "even what is not yet X is δυνατόν to be X, since what is not X comes-to-be X, and nothing that is ἀδύνατον [= incapable] of being X comes-to-be X". I think this is implausible, particularly in light of the (as we will see) connected passage Θ3 1047a33-b2, where τὰ μὴ ὄντα (but δυνάμει ὄντα) have to be actually non-existent objects; and Aristotle's answer to the aporia in Λ6, to be discussed below, is probably decisive in favor of (2). But even if (3) is right, the overall meaning comes to pretty much the same thing as (2): for the ἀρχαί to be actually (vs. only potentially) what they are supposed to be is for them to be actually (vs. only potentially) the kind of causes they are supposed to be, i.e. for them to be causes as ἐνεργοῦντα (vs. only as δυνάμενα), and the second argument is saying that if the ἀρχαί are only causes as δυνάμενα, there will be no reason for matter to actually become any of the things it is capable of becoming--which comes to much the same as saying that there will be no reason for any of these potentially existing things to come to actually exist. {some of this, esp. the ref to the Δ2 actual/potential cause distinction, should be in the main text}

¹³Jaeger p.222G/214E; B#14 has nothing corresponding in K, so it is indeed not implausible that it is a late addition to the aporetic program. Cp. Ross' preface: "problem 13 [= my #14] is not expressly answered, but Aristotle's answer may be inferred from his doctrine that actuality is prior to potentiality (Θ8)" (AM I,xxiv).

¹⁴so too Θ8 1050b18-19: "none of the things which exists necessarily [is δυνάμει]; but these are first, for if they did not exist, nothing would exist."

¹⁵for the αἴτιον ὡς ἐνεργοῦν see the above footnote on the interpretation of B#14. I will have more discussion in IIIα3, on Θ8. I will also come back to the question of the rest of the opposing argument, which applies Plato's test to prove the priority of δύναμις; Θ8 doesn't address this as explicitly as one might wish, but one can tease out Aristotle's answer.

mythologists] say, who generate [all things] out of night, or the physicists who say that all things were together,¹⁶ the same impossibility [will arise]. For how will it be moved, if there is [sc. in the original pre-cosmic state] no cause in ἐνέργεια? The wood [ύλη] will not move itself, rather [the art of] carpentry moves it, nor will the katamenia or the earth move themselves, rather the [male or plant] seed moves them. This is why some people posit eternal ἐνέργεια, like Leucippus and Plato: for they say there is always motion.¹⁷ But they do not say what motion or on account of what, nor the cause of [its moving] in this way or that.¹⁸ For nothing is moved at random [ὡς ἔτυχε]; rather, there must always be some [sc. cause: δεῖ τι ἀεὶ ὑπάρχειν],¹⁹ just as now too [something is moved] in one way by nature, in another by violence or by νοῦς or by something else. So which of these is first?--it makes an enormous difference. But it is also not possible for Plato to name [as the ἀρχή of motion] what he sometimes²⁰ takes as the ἀρχή, what moves itself [i.e. soul]: for the soul is posterior, and simultaneous with the heaven, as he says.²¹ But as for taking δύναμις to be prior to ἐνέργεια, this is right in one way but not in another (we have said how [εἴρηται δὲ πῶς]). And that ἐνέργεια is prior is witnessed by Anaxagoras (for νοῦς is ἐνέργεια)²² and Empedocles [in positing as ἀρχαί] love and strife, and by those who say that there is always motion, like Leucippus: so that there was not for an infinite time chaos or night, but the same things [have always existed], either cyclically or in some other way, if ἐνέργεια is prior to δύναμις. (Λ6 1071b22-1072a9)²³

This text is fatal to the thesis (which Jaeger and Ross take over from Bonitz) that "Λ is an isolated lecture, giving a general view of the whole metaphysical system, entirely complete in itself, and presenting no trace of connection with the rest [of the Metaphysics]" (Jaeger p.174G/170E). The citation of Metaphysics B#14, flagged with the words "καίτοι ἀπορία", is unmistakable as soon as the texts are juxtaposed,²⁴ but is passed in silence in Bonitz' and Ross' commentaries; Ross in his preface says that B#14 "is not expressly answered, but Aristotle's

¹⁶Reading καίτοι εἰ ὡς λέγουσιν οἱ θεολόγοι οἱ ἐκ νυκτὸς γεννῶντες, ἢ οἱ φυσικοὶ οἱ ὁμοῦ πάντα χρήματά φασι; the οἱ after φυσικοὶ drops out by saut du même au même, leaving the original text of EJ, and the subsequent insertions of ὡς before οἱ φυσικοὶ (Ab, second hands in E and J, and Bonitz, Ross and Jaeger) and/or of ἦν before ὁμοῦ (Ab, a second hand in J; and Bonitz) are attempts to restore the grammar.

¹⁷the Plato reference is to the Timaeus (not to Laws X)--fill in notes from Lille paper

¹⁸the transmitted οὐδὲ ὡδὶ οὐδὲ τὴν αἰτίαν seems unintelligible; various emendations have been tried, but the sense will be pretty much the same on all of them. I am translating Jaeger's οὐδὲ τοῦ ὡδὶ ἢ ὡδὶ τὴν αἰτίαν; Ross prints instead Diels' οὐδ' εἰ ὡδὶ ἢ ὡδὶ τὴν αἰτίαν, "nor, if [the motion is] in this way or that, [do they say] the cause"

¹⁹perhaps discuss the sense of ὑπάρχειν ("be there beforehand" or the like); also note Ross' suggestion δεῖ τιν' ἀεὶ ὑπάρχειν.

²⁰in Laws X

²¹in the Timaeus; "posterior" to the disorderly motion, which exists before the heaven (whether this means the heaven proper, or, more likely, the ordered cosmos)

²²I take this to be a view Aristotle thinks is true, not one he attributes to Anaxagoras (against the apparent implication of Ross' translation); the critique at Λ6 1071b12-19 is directed against, among others, Anaxagoras' νοῦς and the demiurge of the Timaeus, which were inactive for infinite time and then began to act in producing the ordered world

²³for full discussion of this passage see IIIβ2b below

²⁴d footnote with citations and verbal comparisons. the parallel is closer in the second half; to explain the first half, you may have to say something about the implicit Plato's test argument--where should I do this? (also: do I want fuller discussions of potential and actual causes? where?)

answer may be inferred from his doctrine that actuality is prior to potentiality (Θ8)" (AM I,xxiv), with no mention of Λ.²⁵ Furthermore, Λ6 is not simply citing B#14, but also answering it: Aristotle is endorsing and developing the second argument, that if the ἀρχαί are δυνάμεις, there would be no sufficient reason for anything to come-to-be, and he develops the consequences of this argument in criticizing pre-Socratic and Platonic accounts of the ἀρχαί, and working out his own positive account. Aristotle is also aware that he must respond to the argument for the opposing side, that "everything that is acting is capable [of acting], but not everything that is capable [of acting] is acting, so that δύνاميς would be prior." The way he deals with this argument is to refer back to the results of his investigations in between B and Λ: "as for taking δύνاميς to be prior to ἐνέργεια, this is right in one way but not in another (we have said how [εἴρηται δὲ πῶς])." Here it is obvious that "εἴρηται δὲ πῶς" refers back to Θ8, which investigates the different ways in which δύνاميς is prior to ἐνέργεια or vice versa. Nonetheless, Bonitz and Ross go out of their way to deny any reference to Θ;²⁶ they say that εἴρηται is referring back instead to Λ6 1071b22-6, i.e. to the passage ("But there is an aporia ... for it is possible [for something] to be able to be but not yet to be") at the beginning of the section of Λ6 I have cited,²⁷ which I have marked as a paraphrase of B#14. But this is impossible. Ross says that 1071b22-6 "does not definitely say in what sense potency and in what sense actuality is prior, but indicates obscurely that although each individual potency is prior to the corresponding actuality, there must be some actuality prior to all potency."²⁸ But 1071b22-6 is not a statement of Aristotle's view, but a pair of opposing arguments together constituting an aporia (namely, B#14). What Aristotle is now doing at 1072a3-4 ("as for taking δύνاميς to be prior to ἐνέργεια, this is right in one way but not in another (we have said how)") is solving that aporia by referring to an earlier discussion which shows how to answer one of the two opposing arguments, the argument that "everything that is acting is capable [of acting], but not everything that is capable [of acting] is acting, so that δύνاميς would be prior." That earlier discussion cannot be the aporia 1071b22-6 itself; it can only be Θ8.

Of course, Θ8 is an "earlier discussion" only in the sense of being earlier than the restatement and solution of the aporia in Λ6--not earlier than the original statement of the aporia in B. One reason--in my view, the reason--why Θ8 is there is to give Aristotle the premisses he needs to solve the aporia, to refute his predecessors' accounts of the ἀρχαί, and to establish his own positive account περὶ ἀρχῶν in Λ6-10, which is all derived from Λ6's argument that the first moving principle is pure ἐνέργεια. And, as we will find in examining Θ in detail, a main reason why Θ1-7 are there is to give Aristotle the premisses he needs to establish the conclusions of Θ8

²⁵In fact, Ross' long list of passages where Aristotle explicitly or implicitly addresses the different aporiai (AM I,xxiii-xxiv) manages never once to refer to Λ--although the answers to B#1, #5, and #9 are also pretty obvious.

²⁶Bonitz ad loc. = p.492; Ross ad loc., with hesitation, but without hesitation in his preface I,xxvii n1. their only real argument is that when Aristotle refers back to something he has done in another book, he usually says εἴρηται πρότερον or εἴρηται ἐν ἄλλοις or the like, rather than merely εἴρηται (Bonitz also says that Aristotle doesn't have similar back-references at other places in Λ where we might expect him to; but so what?). but Bonitz' footnote notes an exception to this rule, and Ross in his commentary ad loc. adds several more. {note that Bonitz' reason for why his counterexample isn't a counterexample works about equally well for the present passage}. anyway, even if this were the only place Aristotle does this, he is still clearly doing it here. of course, if you're committed to the claim that "Λ is an independent lecture" etc., you will find it strange that he refers back to Θ so casually. but that claim is precisely what is in question.

²⁷so too Jaeger in his OCT apparatus

²⁸Ross ad loc., AM II,371; he is closely paraphrasing Bonitz ad loc., p.492

(and their corollaries or supplements in Θ9, of which more below).²⁹ And looking ahead to Λ6 helps us to see the real importance, and real radicalism, of the conclusions of Θ8: as Λ6 shows, these contradict the accounts of the ἀρχαί of virtually all of Aristotle's predecessors, undermining assumptions that they all share and implying radical revisions in the project of physics as understood by the pre-Socratic φυσικοί and not sufficiently revised even by the Academics. Λ6, in describing the physicists' accounts of the ἀρχαί and trying to show their insufficiency, starts by considering a hypothetical pre-cosmic situation in which only the ἀρχή or ἀρχαί exist, and then showing that the cosmos will not come-to-be from it: "if it is as the theologians say, who generate [all things] out of night, or if 'all things were together' as the physicists say, the same impossibility [will arise]. For how will it be moved, if there is no cause in ἐνέργεια?". Here the ἀρχαί are whatever is posited at the beginning of a cosmogonic narrative: the poets took night or chaos as their ἀρχή, and the physicists, taking over the poets' task of explanation and also their narrative method, modernize night and chaos by replacing them with "all things together" or the like. The physicists, like the poets, assume that to explain the world, we must explain how it and its various constituents arose: if we say that the ordered world has always existed, we are refusing to meet the demand for an explanation. Given this conception of the task of explanation, and of the role of ἀρχαί, it seems to follow that the ἀρχαί must be potential causes (causes like the housebuilder) rather than actual causes (causes like the housebuilder housebuilding), since if the ἀρχαί were already actual causes, they would already have produced a world. This conception of the ἀρχαί is also presupposed in the metaphor of the ἀρχαί as "seeds" (e.g. Λ7 1072b30-34) from which the world and its constituents will arise. Indeed, this is not merely a metaphor: for a pre-Socratic physicist, there must have been a first horse and a first olive-tree (at least, a first horse and first olive-tree in this world), and so the first members of these species must have arisen from some kind of seed which was not itself produced by a mature member of the species (and apparently, for Anaxagoras, seeds of different plants and animals were present in the original "all things together"). Thus Aristotle's thesis, in Θ8, that the seed is posterior (even temporally) to the mature form implies a radical challenge to the physicists' project of explanation and their conception of the ἀρχαί. But Aristotle draws out the implication only in Λ6-10.³⁰

Aristotle is not the first person to reject the picture of quiescent pre-cosmic ἀρχαί: as he says, "Leucippus and Plato" posit that there has always been motion, and thus always activity. Nonetheless, the atomists and the Timaeus continue to follow the narrative model of physical explanation. The atomists think that their ἀρχαί, the atoms, have always been moving, thus always active; to the difficulty, "if the ἀρχαί were already active, why hadn't they already produced a world?", they answer that the ἀρχαί had indeed already produced worlds infinitely many times in the infinite universe; they produced our world when they did and not before because sufficiently many atoms happened to collide and begin the world-forming process. So the atomists, despite believing in an eternal universe in which everything has a cause,

²⁹against what seems to be the currently dominant view, that the main point that the argument of Θ has been building up to is in Θ6. it is striking that Kosman's article never cites Θ8, even its conclusion that οὐσία is ἐνέργεια; I will come back to this below.

³⁰note in particular the passage I've just cited on "seeds": Aristotle's explanation, in reply, of why seeds are the wrong model for the ἀρχαί turns on saying that the mature form is prior to the seed rather than vice versa (Λ7 1072b35-1073a3): the reliance on Θ8 is obvious (it's not simply what he's saying in e.g. Z7--it turns on a priority assertion which is not made there). note also that it's not simply physicists who speak this way, but others who've bought into the physicists' metaphors in describing their own ἀρχαί: Aristotle's only named targets here are "the Pythagoreans and Speusippus" (1072b31)

nonetheless, like the other physicists, tell a narrative history of our world, beginning with an unexplained event. And Plato too, who may or may not believe in the eternity of the world, when he comes to talk about the world as a physicist, feels compelled to narrate its origin out of a pre-cosmic disorder. And Plato has no more explanation of why the world arose when it did than the atomists: the preceding disorderly motion gives no reason for order to arise at this moment, and the demiurge has no more reason for beginning to act at one moment than Anaxagoras' Nous. It is only in the Laws, which posits souls eternally moving bodies, that Plato escapes the force of Aristotle's criticism (if he is willing to posit soul as an ἀρχή, and give up on explaining its origins as in the Timaeus); and in the Laws Plato gives up on cosmogonic narrative and offers no comprehensive physics. Aristotle, perhaps building on the Laws, posits that the ἀρχαί were always active, and always active in the same way, not randomly or violently but in accordance with νοῦς, since he thinks that if they were only potentially acting causes (or only potentially rationally acting causes) there could be no explanation for their transition to activity (or to rational activity). Aristotle simply accepts the consequence, repugnant to the physicists, that the ἀρχαί had at any given time already produced the ordered world. But this means that there is no possibility of a narrative beginning with the ἀρχαί and leading up to the ordered world and its constituents. And this means not only a radical change in the project of physics--a denarrativization, and a turn to different kinds of explanation--but also a radical change from the physicists' understanding of "ἀρχαί," which now cannot be the starting-point of a narrative, temporally prior to the world, but can only be eternal causes prior "in substance" to their eternal effects. Once again, this is only implicit in Θ8, but understanding the radical consequences of Aristotle's argument there--consequences for archeology, not for ontology--helps us to see the point of Θ8, and of the larger argument of Θ which supports it.

It is also worth noting a further archeological consequence, not of Θ8, but of its supplement Θ9. The first half of Θ9 (1051a4-21) argues that, while a good ἐνέργεια is prior to the corresponding δύναμις, a bad ἐνέργεια is posterior to its δύναμις (being what happens when a δύναμις teleologically directed to a good ἐνέργεια is frustrated and produces the contrary result). Like the conclusions of Θ8, this is a general statement about priority and has nothing explicitly about ἀρχαί, but now Aristotle adds as a consequence "that there is no evil παρὰ τὰ πράγματα"--like a Platonic form of an evil or of Evil as such, or an indefinite dyad contrary to the One and Good, or Empedocles' Strife--and that "in the things which are ἐξ ἀρχῆς and eternal, there is no evil or anything which has gone wrong or been corrupted" (1051a17-21).³¹ Once again, the archeological conclusion explains the motivation for the discussions of priority; and again, Aristotle will draw out the consequences only in Λ10, where he will pull together the results of his investigations (in Θ9 and elsewhere) to resolve the dispute, going back to B#1 and before that to A's discussions of Anaxagoras and Empedocles and Plato, about good and evil in the ἀρχαί.

³¹reference to discussion at the end of IIIα3 below