

# Aristotle on the Fundamentality of *Dunamis* in Metaphysics Θ

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Contemporary neo-Aristotelians insist on the metaphysical reality of powers and dispositions in the actual world, and in this light, they also pay much attention to Aristotle's concept of *dunamis*. Aristotle indeed thinks that *dunamis* is one of the fundamental properties of his ontology as each thing is defined by its *dunamis* (*Pol.* I 2. 1253a22-23; *Meteor.* 4.12. 390a10-20 et al.). However, in the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle argues that *ousia* or form is *energeia* (Θ9. 1050b2-3) and that *energeia* has priority over *dunamis* (Θ8). Then the question arises as to what the relationship is between the definitive and fundamental role of *dunamis* on the one hand and the posteriority of *dunamis* to *energeia* on the other. This study answers this question by examining the notions of *dunamis* and *energeia* in *Metaphysics* Θ6 and Θ8.

In Chapter Θ6, Aristotle asks us to comprehend the concepts of *dunamis* and *energeia* by induction from various analogous examples. These examples show that *energeia* and *dunamis* specify two different and mutually exclusive ways of being of a particular property or state ( $\phi$ ).

However, in Θ8, Aristotle argues that *energeia* is prior to *dunamis* in three respects: (i) account, (ii) time, and (iii) being. I focus on arguments (i) and (iii). The argument for the priority in account claims that grasping the concept of the *dunamis* of  $\phi$  requires prior grasping the concept of the *energeia* of  $\phi$  (not the concept of mere  $\phi$ ). This suggests that the *energeia* of  $\phi$  to which we refer in defining the *dunamis* of  $\phi$  is not  $\phi$  expressed in present progressive tense like "She is building", since knowledge of *imperfective and ongoing* state or action is not presupposed by knowledge of *dunamis*. Instead, I argue that the *energeia* of  $\phi$  prior in account should be considered as state or action  $\phi$  considered under its perfective aspect, that is,  $\phi$  seen as a completed whole.

The argument for the priority in being raises a question about its consistency with the claim made in Θ6. The problem can be seen clearly in Beere's otherwise excellent interpretation. Beere holds that being in *dunamis* has the correlative *energeia* as part of its essence. However, this seems to be at odds with the thesis that  $\phi$ -in-*dunamis* and  $\phi$ -in-*energeia* are mutually exclusive. I argue that the condition that  $\phi$ -in-*dunamis* should satisfy is not to contain *energeia* of  $\phi$  as its essence but to have *essential relation* toward  $\phi$ -in-*energeia*. Therefore, Aristotle can claim that *dunamis* is one of the world's fundamental properties while acknowledging the priority of *energeia* over *dunamis*.