Aristotelian Ontology and its Contemporary Appropriation: Some Thoughts on the Concept of Analogy

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1. Introduction

This essay argues for the unity of what Aristotle calls First Philosophy, ἡ πρώτη φιλοσοφία, by focusing on the concept of analogy. Analogy is important to First Philosophy because, among other reasons, it is the implicit principle by which Aristotle orders the different ways in which something may be said 'to be.' Such a principle seeks a middle ground between strict ontological univocity, which collapses the distinction between the different modes of being altogether, and a radical equivocity in which these modes lack any relation to one another. Though some scholars reasonably doubt whether the concept of analogy is immediately evident in Aristotle's extant works,[1] I nonetheless contend that it constitutes an implicit paradigm for understanding the relationship between the different modalities of being enumerated in both the *Categories* and *Metaphysics*.

Yet if, as I will suggest, the concept of analogy functions by expressing both identity and difference among manifold ways of being, the unity it establishes among them is necessarily a fragile one. Therefore, the unity I aim to attribute to First Philosophy on the basis of this concept is likewise a fragile unity, in that it simultaneously (1) orients metaphysics towards a unified object of study, by organizing the different modalities of being in reference to a primary term; and (2) seems also to raise more questions than it answers about exactly how this primary term should be understood, when considered in light of Aristotle's actual discussion in the *Metaphysics*. In the final section of this essay, I will accordingly attempt to answer these questions

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1. For a historical analysis of the concept of analogy as it emerges out of the scholastic interpretation of Aristotle's texts, see J. Lonfat, "Archéologie de la notion d'analogie d'Aristote à St. Thomas d'Aquin," *Archives d'historie doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Âge* 71.1 (2004): 36. Cf. P. Ricœur, *The Rule of Metaphor*, trans. R. Czerny (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975), 271, as well as M.-D. Phillipe, "*Analogon* and *Analogia* in the Philosophy of Aristotle," *The Thomist* 33.1 (1969): 2.

by contending that, although Aristotle initially claims in *Metaphysics* IV, 2 that the primary ontological referent is 'substance' or 'thinghood' (οὐσία),[2] his discussion in Books VII–XII in fact necessitates that 'thinghood' must be understood in reference to 'activity,' or ἐνέργεια.

2. Pierre Aubenque, Aristotle and the 'Oblivion of Being'

To clarify the stakes of this discussion I will begin by outlining some features of Pierre Aubenque's Heideggerian reading of Aristotle. This reading, which goes further than most others in demonstrating the contemporary relevance of Aristotle's thought, highlights the issue I aim to address below. For starters, Aubenque contends (at times) that the general project of the *Metaphysics* culminates in a 'failure (échec).'[3] Yet to say that Aristotle's project fails is already to presuppose that it has a specific goal, and thus to understand the full force of this conclusion it is necessary to see more precisely what he considers the goal of Aristotle's ontology to be. Ultimately, the goal is for Aubenque the univocal reduction of the manifold senses of being to a common definition: that of 'thinghood,' or οὐσία.

It is also important to see how, for Aubenque, the reduction of the manifold senses of being necessarily accompanies a reduction of the status of language as well. He thus argues that, in general, '[l]a philosophie d'Aristote représente une mutation décisive dans l'essence du langage.'[4] On this view, the manifold senses of being and the plurivocal essence of language are two sides of the same coin. The implicit conclusion here is that Aristotle's ontology marks a step towards what Heidegger had called the 'oblivion of Being.'[5] For Heidegger, this oblivion is what propels western thought towards the end game of technological domination over the world and other human beings. Heidegger himself had called this state of affairs *die Technik*, which he writes 'is in its essence a destiny within the history of Being and of the truth of Being, a truth that lies in oblivion.'[6]

2. The first of these translations is favoured by H. Tredennick, *Aristotle* Metaphysics *Vols. I & II* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1933), 1003b 7 (149). The second is J. Sachs, *Aristotle's* Metaphysics (Santa Fe, New Mexico: Green Lion Press, 1999), 1003b 7 (54). Unless otherwise indicated, all subsequent references to the English translation of the *Metaphysics* will be to that of Sachs, with Bekker pagination indicated first, and the conventional page numbers following in parentheses.

3. P. Aubenque, *Le problème de l'être chez Aristote* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1966), 487.

4. P. Aubenque, "Aristote et le langage," in *Problèmes aristotéliciens: Philosophie théorique* (Paris: Vrin, 2009), 25/6.

5. M. Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism", trans. F.A. Capuzzi and J.G. Gray, in *Basic Writings*, ed. D.F. Krell (Toronto: Harper Perennial Modern Thought Edition, 2008), 244.

6. Ibid.

Aubenque portrays Aristotle as the architect of this oblivion, arguing that Aristotle '"démythifie" le langage, le "dépoétise," en le dépouillant autant que faire se peut de son ambiguïté. Il le rend disponible par là pour toutes les exigences de la représentabilité scientifique, de la calculabilité mathématique, voire de la transformation technique du monde.'[7] This connection between the oblivion of being and the reduction of the status of language is also suggested in another of Aubenque's essays, which states that '[l]'histoire de la métaphysique témoigne donc d'un oubli progressif de l'être. Mais on ne peut décrire cet oubli comme oubli de son "sens" qu'à la condition d'entendre par "sens" de l'être ce surgissement mulitiforme et non réglé qui […] se traduit par une pluralité incommode de significations.'[8]

The foregoing considerations reflect two basic premises in Aubenque's reading of Aristotle: (1) that the proper meaning of being is inseparable from an irreducible plurivocity of significations; and (2) that in reducing, or attempting to reduce this manifold to a single, univocal meaning, Aristotle inaugurates the historical destiny of western metaphysics as a forgetting of the meaning(s) of being, and the reduction of the status of language to a mere tool for communication, etc. Above all, this is important because it appears to authorize his subsequent suggestion that, as a result, 'il est permis de faire, au moins par la pensée, un pas en arrière vers les Présocratiques, vers le temps où l'homme était encore "le berger de l'être".'[9]

If this call seems to echo the late Heidegger's turn towards the Presocratics and the poetry of Hölderlin, it also suggests more explicitly that in order to overcome the historical oblivion of being that Aristotle's thinking brings about, philosophical thought must transform itself back into the pre-theoretical poetizing with which it first began. Although the call in fact derives its impetus from the assumption that Aristotle succeeded in transforming language, and thus in reducing the manifold senses of being to a univocal one (which implicitly contradicts his earlier thesis that Aristotle's project in the *Metaphysics* is a failure), what interests me here is the 'either/or' structure that this reading of Aristotle presupposes, insofar as the above remarks suggest that there is no middle ground between scientific univocity on the one hand, and mytho-poetic equivocity on the other.

While I intend to argue against this reading in what follows, it is crucial to point out that it does engage the text of the *Metaphysics* and other works to a degree. Concerning the *Metaphysics*, this can be seen in the way that Books I–V establish a general conception of First Philosophy as a pre-eminently scientific knowledge of being *qua* being. Starting with the reflection in Book

7. Aubenque, "Aristote et le langage," 26.
8. P. Aubenque, "Abiguïté ou analogie de l'être?" in *Problèmes aristotéliciens*, 238.
9. Aubenque, "Aristote et le langage," 26.

I, Chapter 2 that 'the most precise (ἀκριβέσταται) kinds of knowledge are the ones that are most directed at first things (αἳ μάλιστα τῶν πρώτων εἰσιν),'[10] Aristotle proceeds to characterize the knowledge sought after in First Philosophy as 'a contemplation of the first sources and causes (τῶν πρώτων ἀρχῶν').[11]

This preeminently scientific character of First Philosophy can be seen to determine the general features of Aristotle's discussion in the subsequent books. Beginning with the doxography in Book I, Chapters 3–10, Aristotle's critical stance towards the theories of both the Presocratics and Plato is motivated above all by the equivocal way in which they formulated their metaphysical causes. Aristotle in fact claims three times in Book I that previous philosophers expressed themselves 'murkily,' ἀμυδρῶς.[12] This consideration leads him to conclude in Chapter 10 that, 'while in a certain way all the causes have been spoken of before, in another way they have not been spoken of at all.'[13]

The claim that the early Greek thinkers, including Plato, were only able to speak of first causes 'in a certain way (τρόπον μέν τινα),' while 'in another way (τρόπον δέ τινα)' they did not speak of them at all, underscores the problem that equivocation poses for First Philosophy. This seems to suggest that, above all, what is needed is a way of speaking about being *qua* being that is purely univocal, and Aristotle responds to this demand in Book IV by highlighting the importance of the law of non-contradiction, which in turn legitimates his procedure in Book V of exhaustively defining the terms in his philosophical vocabulary. The principle passage of the discussion in Book IV is Aristotle's remark that 'not to mean one thing is to mean nothing,'[14] as this seems to demand that words and things be coordinated in a 1:1 ratio, which is just what univocity is.

In light of Aristotle's general characterization of First Philosophy as a pre-eminent science, we begin to see more clearly that Aubenque's reading has a basis in the text. The super-scientific character of the knowledge sought after in this pursuit, as well as Aristotle's subsequent discussion of the law of non-contradiction, both suggest that anything short of the univocal definition of being will indicate the failure of First Philosophy as a science, and consequently (on Aubenque's reading) the dispersion of the manifold senses of being in an irreducible plurivocity of significations. Furthermore, Aristotle's critical evaluation of his predecessors also implies that the historical

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10. Sachs, *Aristotle's* Metaphysics, 982a 25 (4).

11. Ibid, 982b 10.

12. Sachs, *Aristotle's* Metaphysics, 985a 12 (9), 988a 23 (16), 993a 15 (28).

13. Sachs, *Aristotle's* Metaphysics, 993a 15–6 (28): 'ἀλλὰ ἀμυδρῶς ταύτας, καὶ τρόπον μέν τινα πᾶσαι πρότερον εἴρηνται, τρόπον δέ τινα οὐδαμῶς.'

14. Sachs, *Aristotle's* Metaphysics, 1006a 35–1006b 8 (61): 'τὸ γὰρ μὴ ἓν σημαίνειν οὐθὲν σημαίνειν ἐστίν'.

trajectory of First Philosophy is one that inherently moves away from the vague equivocations of poetry, myth and metaphor, towards the clarity of a conceptual understanding of metaphysical causes.[15] To an extent, then, some of the above considerations can be taken to suggest that there is no middle ground for First Philosophy between univocity and equivocity.

3. ANALOGY AND πρὸς ἕν REFERENCE

Aristotle's discussion in Book IV of the *Metaphysics* suggests that when a word means more than one thing, the law of non-contradiction dictates that we should 'set down a different word for each formulation.'[16] Otherwise, the same name will come to mean something different in each instance, which is a close approximation of what Aristotle calls homonymy or equivocation (ὁμωνυμία) in the opening lines of the *Categories*. For '[t]hings are equivocally named (ὁμώνυμα λέγεται), when they have the name only in common, the definition […] corresponding with the name being different.'[17] On the other hand, the opposite to this form of predication is synonymy or univocity (συνωνυμία): for '[t]hings are univocally named (συνώνυμα δὲ λέγεται), when not only they bear the same name but the name means the same in each case.'[18] Finally, Aristotle goes on in the subsequent lines to specify a third mode of naming, which is called paronymy or 'derivation' (παρωνυμία): for '[t]hings are "derivatively" named (παρώνυμα δὲ λέγεται) that derive their own name from some other, that is given a new verbal form, as, for instance, "grammarian" from "grammar," from "heroism," "hero," and so on.'[19]

My hypothesis is that this third form of naming is just what Aristotle has in mind in Book IV of the *Metaphysics* when he first introduces the claim that '[b]eing is meant in more than one way (τὸ ὂν λέγεται μὲν πολλαχῶς).'[20] For, not only does he not claim there that the different ways of being are homonymous, he explicitly states that they '[point] toward one meaning and some one nature *rather than ambiguously [i.e., homonymously]* (καὶ οὐχ ὁμωνύμως).'[21]

In support of this hypothesis, a suggestive comparison can be made to relate the examples of paronymous terms, which Aristotle gives in the *Cat-*

15. Cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 993a 15–17 and 983a 11–18 for indications of this desire to move beyond the equivocal perplexities characteristic of philosophical thought in its early stages.

16. Sachs, *Aristotle's* Metaphysics, 1006b 2 (61). 'τεθείη γὰρ ἂν ἐφ' ἑκάστῳ λόγῳ ἕτερον ὄνομα.'

17. Aristotle, *Categories*, trans. H.P. Cooke (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1938), 1a 1–2 (13).

18. Aristotle, *Categories*, 1a 6–8 (13).

19. Ibid, 1a 12–15.

20. Sachs, *Aristotle's* Metaphysics, 1003a 33 (53).

21. Ibid, 1003a 33–34, emphasis added.

egories, to the ones he gives to illustrate the *pros hen* relationship in Book IV of the *Metaphysics*. 'Grammarian' and 'heroism,' we recall, 'derive' their names, and are therefore named *paronymously*, by reference to a first term: 'grammar' and 'hero,' respectively. Similarly, Aristotle goes on in the *Metaphysics* to observe that

> [j]ust as every healthful thing points toward health, one thing by protecting it, another by producing it, another by being a sign of health, and another because it is receptive of it, and also what is medical points toward the medical art [...] so too is *being* meant in more than one way, but all of them pointing toward one source (οὕτω δὲ καὶ τὸ ὂν λέγεται πολλαχῶς μέν, ἀλλ᾽ ἅπαν πρὸς μίαν ἀρχήν).[22]

As the subsequent lines make clear, this is so because although being is said in many ways, 'some things are said to "be" because they are independent things (τὰ μὲν γὰρ ὅτι οὐσίαι), others because they are affections of independent things (τὰ δὲ ὅτι πάθη οὐσίας); others because they are ways into thinghood (τὰ δ᾽ ὅτι ὁδὸς εἰς οὐσίαν),' et cetera.[23] According to Ricœur's reading of this passage in *The Rule of Metaphor*, 'there is a continuous chain formed from the paronyms in paragraph 1 of the *Categories* to the reference *pros hen*, *ad unum* in *Metaphysics* Γ 2 and Ε 1.'[24] By uncovering a middle ground between strict homonymy and synonymy, in this sense, the notion of paronymy in the *Categories* allows Aristotle to say that being *qua* being, even though it exceeds the generic unity of a determinate class, is nevertheless the object of a unified science insofar as its many senses are related by reference to a primary one.[25]

Nevertheless it is necessary to go slightly beyond the letter of Aristotle's text here to show that the *pros hen* reference of paronymous terms is connected to the possibility of an analogical relation among them. This is in some sense problematic, since Aristotle himself does not explicitly draw this connection. Yet this does not preclude suggesting that the *pros hen* relationship of *Metaphysics* IV lays the groundwork for the fully developed theory of the *analogia entis* that is elaborated in late Scholastic Philosophy.

In two separate articles, Aubenque downplays the connection I aim to draw, and his reasons for doing so are instructive. In one, he not only claims

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22. Sachs, *Aristotle's* Metaphysics, 1003a 35–1003b 6 (53/4).

23. Sachs, *Aristotle's* Metaphysics, 1003b 6–10 (54), translation modified. Cf. Tredennick, *Aristotle* Metaphysics Vol. I (149).

24. Ricœur, *Rule of Metaphor*, 272. See also W.D. Ross, *Aristotle* Metaphysics (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924), 256. Cf. T. Irwin, "Homonymy in Aristotle," *The Review of Metaphysics* 34.3 (March, 1981): 523–44; C. Shields, *Order in Multiplicity: Homonymy in the Philosophy of Aristotle* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1999); and J. Ward, *Aristotle on Homonymy: Dialectic and Science* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

25. Cf. Ricœur, *Rule of Metaphor*, 273.

that there is no specific mention of such a doctrine in any of Aristotle's writings; he goes further by speculating that 'on est contraint d'admettre que, si Aristote n'a pas parlé d'analogie à propos de l'être, c'est qu'il ne voulait pas en parler.'[26] If this argument is less than convincing, it is moreover noteworthy in that it marks a departure from the authority of Heidegger, who in the Introduction to *Being and Time* had noted that 'Aristotle himself understood the unity of this transcendental "universal," as opposed to the manifold of the highest generic concepts with material content, as the *unity of analogy.*'[27] Then again, it could also be a sign of fidelity to the later Heidegger, who in 1947 distanced himself from the project of *Being and Time* by claiming that its thinking 'did not succeed with the help of the language of metaphysics.'[28]

In the second aforementioned article, Aubenque gives a more substantial justification for why the relationship between the manifold senses of being cannot be analogical. He first notes that

> [c]'est grace à l'idée d'*analogie* que l'on a cru pouvoir, au Moyen Âge, lever la désolante alternative d'une unité qui ne serait qu'équivoque et d'une univocité qui ne serait que fragmentaire. Et l'on a cru pouvoir s'appuyer sur Arisote disant qu'il y a, entre les significations multiples de l'être, une certaine unité de rapport, puis que tous les sens autres que le premier renvoient à (*pros*) un sens premier, qui est l'être comme essence (*ousia*).[29]

Yet for Aubenque, it is problematic to conceive the *pros hen* reference as one of analogy: '[m]alheureusement, il ne suffit pas qu'il y ait rapport pour qu'il y ait, au sens propre du terme, analogie: il faut qu'il y ait en outre égalité de rapports.'[30] The crucial point here is that the *pros hen* relationship, which orders the multiple significations of being, is *pros hen* only to the extent that the primary term to which the others refer exists in an asymmetrical relationship with respect to them. It is for that very reason the cause of their being 'by derivation' what it is primarily. Problematically, however, analogy for Aubenque is properly limited to expressing an equality of relationships between different groups of individuals, as is suggested by Aristotle's discussion in the *Poetics* of 'metaphor by analogy (κατὰ τὸ ἀνάλογον)': for, he

26. Aubenque, "Sur les origines de la doctrine de l'analogie de l'être. Sur l'histoire d'un contresens," in *Problèmes aristotéliciens*, 253.

27. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, in *Basic Writings*, 43.

28. Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism," 231. Concerning the putative 'turning' between early and late phases of Heidegger's thought, see W.J. Richardson, *Heidegger: Through Phenomenology to Thought* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974). Cf. L.P. Hemming, "Speaking out of Turn: Martin Heidegger and *die Kehre*," *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 6, 3 (1998): 393–423.

29. Aubenque, "Abiguïté ou analogie?" 238.

30. Ibid.

says, 'I call "by analogy" cases where *b* is to *a* as *d* is to *c*.'[31] The assumption for Aubenque is thus that analogy necessarily expresses a symmetrical relationship between several terms, whereas the *pros hen* relation is necessarily asymmetrical. *Disproportionality* is thus the condition for understanding the primary term in the *pros hen* relationship in its causal priority, yet for Aubenque this is just what analogy is incapable of showing.

Nevertheless, this assumption is challenged directly by the reading of Franz Brentano, who in fact isolates two distinct, but interconnected forms of analogy in Aristotle: on the one hand, 'an analogy of proportionality,' and on the other 'an analogy to the same terminus.'[32] Quite significantly, Brentano takes issue with the interpretation of Adolf Trendelenberg precisely because the latter had argued that Aristotle links the different modes of being in the *Categories* 'in an equality of relations.'[33] While Brentano does not actually deny that it is possible to find such an equality of relations among the different modes of being, his contention is that this proportional analogy does not adequately express the *pros hen* relationship among the senses of being enumerated by Aristotle. He thus agrees with Trendelenberg to the extent that he sees an analogical relation between the senses of being, but disagrees with him to the extent that he takes this relation to correspond *more* to the second form of analogy (analogy to the same terminus) than to the first, i.e., proportional analogy:

> we must assume a second type of analogy in addition to the one discussed by Trendelenberg, which occupies, together with the first kind, an intermediate position between the univocal and the merely equivocal. […] While the analoga discussed in the first place displayed an equality of relations together with a difference of concepts, we here find an entirely different connection, but a connection to the same concept as a *terminus*, a relation to the same origin [*arche*] [...].[34]

In direct opposition to Aubenque's reading, Brentano thus considers the *pros hen* relationship among the senses of being to correspond to a form of disproportionate analogy, or 'analogy to the same terminus.' One of the texts cited by Brentano in support of this interpretation is Aristotle's discussion of the different senses of 'one,' ἕν, at *Metaphysics* V, 6. Aristotle says there

31. Aristotle, *Poetics*, trans. Stephen Halliwell (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995) 1457b 16-17 (105). ʽτὸ δὲ ἀνάλογον λέγω, ὅταν ὁμοίως ἔχῃ τὸ δεύτερον πρὸς τὸ πρῶτον καὶ τὸ τέταρτον πρὸς τὸ τρίτον·'

32. F. Brentano, *On the Several Senses of Being in Aristotle*, trans. R. George (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), 58. Cf. Ricœur, *Rule of Metaphor*, 276, which locates these same forms of analogy in the *De Veritate* of Aquinas.

33. Brentano, *Several Senses of Being*, 63. Cf. A. Trendelenberg, *Geschichte der kategorienlehre* (Berlin: G. Bethge, 1846), 156.

34. Brentano, *Several Senses of Being*, 65 (citing Aristotle *Metaphysics* 1003b 6).

that 'some things are one in number, others in species, others in genus, and others *by analogy* (τὰ δὲ κατ᾽ ἀναλογίαν).'[35] What this means becomes somewhat clearer a few lines below, where we are told that such things are one κατ᾽ ἀναλογίαν as 'are in the condition that something else is, in relation to something else (ὅσα ἔχει ὡς ἄλλο πρὸς ἄλλο).'[36] Tellingly, this seems to approximate the *pros hen* relationship posited by Aristotle between the different modes of being, insofar as these modes are understood in relation to (πρὸς) a primary referent.

Also telling is Aristotle's subsequent comment that 'as many things as are one in species are also one in genus, while those that are one in genus are not all one in species, but are all one by analogy, but not all those that are one by analogy are one in genus (ὅσα δὲ ἓν ἀναλογια, οὐ πάντα γένει).'[37] Bracketing the notion of numeric unity, if we take the three other kinds—formal or specific unity, generic unity and analogical unity—as ways of ordering multiplicity, then we can begin to see that a progressively broadening scope is established in the movement from one to the next. In other words, species is the least inclusive, since everything that is one by species is also one by genus, but not vice versa; and in turn, everything one by genus is also one by analogy, but again, not vice versa. The implication is thus that there is a kind of unity more encompassing than that of the genus, and this kind of unity is analogical. In Brentano's words, 'this unity of analogy is differentiated from general unity and ranked above it.'[38]

4. FROM ΟΥΣΙΑ TO ΕΝΕΡΓΕΙΑ: THE CAUSAL PRIORITY OF BEING *QUA* BEING

Since Aubenque rejects analogy as inadequate to expressing the *pros hen* relationship among the manifold modes of being, he also thereby denies to First Philosophy the possibility of a middle ground between univocity and equivocity. At the same time, we have seen Aubenque claim above that the univocal sense of being, which operates as the primary term in relation to which all the others are understood, is 'l'être comme essence (*ousia*).' On the one hand, this statement is consistent with the argument of the *Metaphysics* to an extent, for Aristotle explicitly states at numerous points that the primary way of being is indeed οὐσία.[39] Brentano, for his part, likewise observes that the primary sense of being to which the others are (analogically) related is 'the being of substance.'[40] Yet, on the other hand, it is crucial to see how this

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35. Sachs, *Aristotle's* Metaphysics, 1016b 33 (86), emphasis added.
36. Ibid, 1016b 34–5.
37. Ibid, 1017a 1–3. Cf. Phillipe, "*Analogon* and *Analogia*," 23.
38. Brentano, *Several Senses of Being*, 60.
39. Cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1003b 10, 1028a 15, and 1069a 20.
40. Brentano, *Several Senses of Being*, 66.

understanding of the primary sense of being can also be taken to legitimate Aubenque's remark that '[l]es deux projets d'Aristote, celui d'un discours sur l'être, celui d'un discours premier et par là fondateur, semblent aboutir l'un et l'autre à un échec.'[41]

I take this to mean that, for Aubenque, Aristotle's metaphysical inquiry is ultimately incapable of giving an account of being that is applicable, at once, both to eternal being and to finite, temporally conditioned being(s). If the *Metaphysics* simply ended after Book VII, where Aristotle examines the notion of οὐσία in detail, this conclusion would be more or less accurate. For the investigation into being *qua* οὐσία in Book VII in fact leads to some inescapable paradoxes that seem to call into question, or at any rate greatly qualify the explanatory capacity of 'thinghood' or 'substance' as the primary meaning of being. This is above all because, in the same way that 'being is said in many ways,' οὐσία too is meant in no less than 'four ways': 'for the thinghood of each thing seems to be what it keeps on being in order to be at all (τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι), but also seems to be the universal (τὸ καθόλου), and the general class (τὸ γένος), and, fourth, what underlies these (τὸ ὑποκείμενον).'[42]

Aristotle quickly rejects the sense of substance corresponding to 'what underlies,' τὸ ὑποκείμενον. The other three, taken together, are treated as being in some way inseparable from an understanding of what a thing 'keeps on being in order to be at all.' If this odd formulation, τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι, can be taken to refer to the active principle that is responsible for each thing's being what it is, it is implicitly connected to both 'the universal' and to 'the general class,' since a thing's essence cannot be articulated without a statement of the class to which it belongs. Yet it is crucial to point out that the consideration of being as 'substance' or the 'what it is' leads Aristotle's inquiry into several vitiating *aporiai* throughout the course of the discussion.[43] Consequently, the end of Book VII (Chapter 17) intimates that the concept of οὐσία is incapable of accounting for this active principle in and of itself. In other words, Aristotle himself seems to recognize that the conception of being *qua* οὐσία is not able to explain what makes individual things the things that they are. This is on my reading precisely what what propels the *Metaphysics* beyond Book VII, towards the distinction between δύναμις and ἐνέργεια in Book IX and, even beyond this, towards Aristotle's characterization of the divine Unmoved Mover as an actuality of self thinking thought in Book XII.

To the extent that Aristotle calls into question the explanatory adequacy of οὐσία, Aubenque's claim that the metaphysics of substance culminates in failure is an important consideration. At the same time, this is not the whole

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41. Aubenque, *Le problème*, 487.

42. Sachs, *Aristotle's* Metaphysics, 1028b 34–35 (119).

43. For one of the most serious of these *aporiai*, see *Metaphysics* VII, 13 (1038b 10–13).

story: the final chapter of Book VII seems to promise a way out of all the difficulties inherent in a conception of being *qua* οὐσία, by 'making another start (πάλιν ἄλλην οἷον ἀρχὴν ποιησάμενοι λέγωμεν).'[44] This new beginning is connected to the fact that, for the first time in the discussion, the notions of efficient and final cause emerge in relation to οὐσία: 'since thinghood is a certain kind of source and cause (ἀρχὴ καὶ αἰτία τις), one must go after it from that starting point.'[45]

Above all, what this new start demands is a clear connection between οὐσία and form on the one hand, and between form and activity on the other. Although the first of these connections does not become explicit until Chapter 6 of Book VIII, the closing lines of Book VII point out the need for it by suggesting that, in the case of sensible individuals, it is not sufficient merely to ask *what* each thing is, but rather we must ask *why* each thing, conceived as a composite of matter and form, has the specific thinghood or οὐσία that it has. In the case of a house, for instance, Aristotle notes that we must ask 'why are these things here, say bricks and stone, a house?'[46] In asking this, however, 'one is looking for what is responsible (τὸ αἴτιον), which in some cases, as presumably with a house or a bed, is that for the sake of which (τίνος ἕνεκα) it is, but in some cases it is that which first set the thing in motion (τί ἐκίνησε πρῶτον).'[47] Aristotle goes on to claim that, in either case, 'what is being sought is the responsible thing by means of which the material is something, and this is the form (εἶδος).'[48]

If this establishes the need to understand οὐσία or 'thinghood' through the form responsible for a sensible thing's being what it is, Book VIII, Chapter 6 goes on to clarify that, in order to conceive of the form in this way, we must in turn consider it as an activity, or ἐνέργεια. Thus 'if,' says Aristotle, 'as we say, there is one thing that is material and one that is form, and the former has being as potency and the latter as being-at-work, the thing sought after would no longer seem to be at an impasse.'[49] Henceforth, matter and form are seen to relate to one another as potency and activity respectively – that is to say, as inseparable moments that comprise the being of sensible individuals. This in turn points to the importance of the discussion in Book IX, where the nature of and the relationship between potency and activity is given precise treatment.

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44. Sachs, *Aristotle's* Metaphysics, 1041a 7 (151).
45. Ibid, 1041a 10–13 (151).
46. Ibid, 1041a 28–29.
47. Ibid, 1041a 29–30 (151/2).
48. Ibid, 1041b 8–9 (152).
49. Ibid, 1045a 23–25 (165).

The discussion of δύναμις and ἐνέργεια is significant for two main reasons: (1) because in examining these ways of being Aristotle moves beyond a simple conception of being *qua* οὐσία; and (2) because it is in considering the notion of being as ἐνέργεια that analogy once again becomes important. This is again for two main reasons: firstly, analogy is important to this discussion because, rather than define ἐνέργεια, Aristotle introduces it in Chapter 6 through a series of examples by which, as he says, one can see it 'at one glance, by means of analogy (τὸ ἀνάλογον συνορᾶν).'[50] Given the rigor of Aristotle's definitions up to this point, it seems mysterious that he should suddenly declare, with respect to what is arguably the most important sense of being encountered so far, that 'what we mean to say is clear by looking directly at particular examples, nor is it necessary to look for a definition of everything (καὶ οὐ δεῖ παντὸς ὅρον ζητεῖν).'[51]

Is this method of indicating by particular examples perhaps what Aristotle has in mind in Book VI, when he distinguishes between First Philosophy and the other, individual sciences? For he notes that the regional sciences concern themselves with one determinate class or genus of things and, beginning with a definition of the class itself, 'demonstrate (ἀποδεικνύουσιν) the properties that belong in their own right to the class of things they are concerned with.'[52] Yet because first philosophy is the science not of this or that genus of being but rather of being *qua* being, it cannot avail itself of demonstration in this way, because demonstration requires a generic definition as its starting point. Demonstration, in other words, is in fact only possible on the prior assumption that the privileged form of being is indeed the essence (οὐσία), whereas First Philosophy is itself the investigation into how and why this is so. Consequently, says Aristotle, 'there is no demonstration of the thinghood or the what-it-is of things, *but some other means of pointing to it* (τις ἄλλος τρόπος τῆς δηλώσεως).'[53] Is it possible that Aristotle has 'seeing by analogy' in mind when he speaks of this 'other way of pointing,' which is available to the inquiry into being *qua* being?

The second reason analogy is important to the discussion of ἐνέργεια is that it leads to a conception of divine being in Book XII, which provides the focal point in relation to which all other kinds of activity, and hence all other beings, can be analogically ordered *pros hen*. In other words, the conception of being as ἐνέργεια permits a disproportionate relation of analogy to be established among actively existing beings, in the same way it does with respect to the common predicables in the *Categories*.

50. Ibid, 1048a 34 (174).

51. Ibid, 1048a 37–8 (173/4).

52. Ibid, 1025b 8–14 (109).

53. Ibid, 1025b 15–17 (emphasis added). For Aristotle's account of the relation between demonstration and definition in scientific reasoning, cf. *Posterior Analytics* II, 3, 90b 18ff.

Most crucial to the discussion of ἐνέργεια is the distinction Aristotle draws between it and motion, κίνησις.[54] While he admits that the proper meaning of ἐνέργεια is most commonly associated with motion, he proceeds to uncover another, more rigorous meaning that applies to activities in complete possession of their end. One major consequence of this analysis is that it becomes possible to say that the more an activity is in possession of its end, the more properly the term ἐνέργεια will apply to it.

Another very important consequence of this discussion is that 'activity' and 'life' emerge as reciprocally determining concepts. This is above all because the examples through which Aristotle uncovers this other notion of ἐνέργεια—sight (τὸ ὁρᾶν), understanding (τὸ φρονεῖν) and contemplative thought (τὸ νοεῖν)—are in fact all activities that characterize the being of living things. Yet his contention here is not just that sight and thought are isolated instances of ἐνέργεια: it is rather that all self-reflexive activities that are found in living beings, for which the soul is responsible, are this kind of ἐνέργεια. In the same way that a true ἐνέργεια is understood as an activity in which the present continuous and past perfect tenses coincide, Aristotle therefore says in general that 'one is living and in a state of having lived.'[55]

If these examples suggest a connection between this other, more proper notion of ἐνέργεια and life (ζωή), the consequences of this connection are twofold: on the one hand, it introduces a hierarchy among living beings, implying that those whose perceptive activities are more complete, by virtue of being more in possession of their ends or objects, are more active, and consequently *more alive* than others. On the other hand, to the extent that none of the observed life forms, which Aristotle investigates exhaustively in the *De Anima*, enjoy a perfectly uninterrupted, complete activity, the second consequence of this connection is a certain reorientation of exactly what it means to be alive. In other words, since it is possible according to this connection to say that the more active a being is, the more alive it is, and because this notion of activity depends above all on the related notions of completeness and being in possession of the end, it follows that if there is some being whose essential activity is in total possession of its end, that is for this reason a complete ἐνέργεια in the proper sense of the term, then this being would necessarily also be the most alive as well.

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54. Cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1046a 1–1049b 35 passim.

55. Sachs, *Aristotle's* Metaphysics, 1048b 28 (175). See also Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 980a 23–24. It is moreover significant that Aristotle defines the soul as an 'entelechy (ἐντελέχεια)'—a word he uses more or less interchangeably with ἐνέργεια. Cf. Aristotle, *De Anima*, trans. W.S. Hett (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1936), 412a 27–28.

We encounter such a being in the unmoved mover of Book XII, which Aristotle describes in Chapter 9 as 'a thinking of thinking (νοήσις νοήσεως νοήσις)'—that is, a thinking whose object and end is only itself.[56] As this most complete activity, which is eternally, and necessarily in possession of its end, this 'thinking of thinking' is characterized by Aristotle in Chapter 7 as 'a god who everlastingly lives the best life (τὸν θεὸν εἶναι ζῷον ἀΐδιον ἄριστον).'[57] Aristotle's point is in other words that the divine is most truly alive, because it is most truly an ἐνέργεια in the most proper sense of the term. Far from being a metaphor, in this sense, the claim that the unmoved mover is a living being (ζῷον) is made literally, to the extent that it refers to a being whose essential activity is a pure, uninterrupted one that is eternally in possession of its end.[58]

Ultimately, it is this divine being that allows the manifold senses of being to be truly unified through a relation of analogy or *pros hen* reference to a primary term. It is no longer purely a question here of a strictly logical relationship between οὐσία and the other modes of being elaborated in the *Categories*. For if these predicables are stated in numerous texts only to be (i.e., analogically) in reference to the primary category of οὐσία, Aristotle's discussions of ἐνέργεια in Book IX and of the divine in Book XII indicate more fundamentally that individual, sensible οὐσίαι themselves, which both move and have matter (and therefore are all incomplete kinds of ἐνέργεια), *are* only in and through their relation to a primary cause, which cannot but be the unmoved mover.[59] Individual οὐσίαι therefore relate to the divine being and can be said 'to be' analogically in reference to it, which alone *is*, *lives* and *acts* in the sense in which the *Metaphysics* gives us to understand these terms.

5. Conclusion

The notion that analogy both grounds divine causality and unifies the concept of being raises some important questions about the kind of speculative results that can ultimately be drawn from the *Metaphysics*. Above all, it suggests that Aristotle's criticisms of his philosophical predecessors in Book I may also, in the end, apply to his own thought. These criticisms are summed up by his claim that the early Greek thinkers only spoke of the causes in a

56. Sachs, *Aristotle's* Metaphysics, 1074b 35 (248).

57. Ibid, 1072b 29 (242).

58. Aubenque argues that Aristotle's attribution of life to the unmoved mover is metaphorical in "Hegel et Aristote," in *Problèmes aristoteliciens,* 91. I. For a convincing counter-argument, cf. I. Koch, "Le 'Dieu vivant' d'Aristote," in *La 'Métaphysique' d'Aristote: Perspectives contemporaines,* ed. M. Marcy and A. Tordesillas (Paris: Vrin, 2005), 199–214.

59. The necessary causality of the prime mover is hinted at in *Metaphysics* IX (1049b 12–1050b 6), but established explicitly in *Physics* VIII, 1–6, as well as *De Motu Animalium* 1–6, passim.

certain way (τρόπον μέν), while in another way (τρόπον δέ) they did not speak of them at all. Yet it is crucial to point out that, as Aristotle admits in *Metaphysics* XII, 5, it is ultimately only in a certain sense (ὡδὶ μὲν) that the causes of all things can be seen as the same, while in another sense (ὡδὶ δὲ) they are different.[60] Significantly, the sense in which the causes of all things are one is 'by analogy'—τὸ ἀνάλογον.

For Ricœur, analogy in this way opens up a space for philosophy that is in between 'the univocity of a genus' and 'the mere chance equivocalness of a simple word.'[61] As modalities of discourse, univocity belongs to demonstrative science in the same way that equivocity belongs to poetry and myth. So if analogy functions as an intermediary between these two incompatible modalities, Aristotle's analogical the-ontology can for this reason be seen as stretched between, and at the same time as holding together, the scientific and mytho-poetic experiences of the world that define Hellenic culture in its broadest contours. That First Philosophy does effectively mediate these two kinds of experience can best be seen in the fact that Aristotle corroborates his account of the unmoved movers in *Metaphysics* XII, 8 by recourse to both of them: he accordingly cites not only the most current astrological theories of his day, but also the most ancient tradition of mythic poetry, which claims that the heavenly bodies 'are gods, and that the divine embraces the whole of nature.'[62]

If the concept of analogy underscores how Aristotelian ontology situates itself between the scientific and the poetic, it is in my view the neglect of this concept that permits Aubenque to portray Aristotle as 'le véritable initiateur de la modernité.'[63] Regardless of whether Aubenque contends that the *Metaphysics* fails or succeeds in reducing the manifold meanings of being to a strict unity, his underlying assumption in either case is that such a project could not but inaugurate what Heidegger calls the 'oblivion of Being,' which cuts philosophy off from its origins in poetry, myth and the wonder that animated the earliest Greek philosophers' attempts to articulate a rational cosmic order. This reading, however, obscures the significance of the fact that Aristotle takes the name and character of his first principle (Νοῦς) from Anaxagoras. Along with the fundamental importance of analogy that I have attempted to argue for above, this basic fact indicates that, in tension with the distinctions Aristotle seeks to establish between his own project and that of his predecessors, there still exist deep continuities between it and its mytho-poetic past.

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60. Sachs, *Aristotle's* Metaphysics, 1071a 34–1071b 3 (237/8).
61. Ricœur, *Rule of Metaphor*, 260.
62. Sachs, *Aristotle's* Metaphysics, 1074b 2–3 (247).
63. Aubenque, "Aristote et le langage," 26.