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THE ANCIENT RECEPTION OF THE DISTINCTION  
BETWEEN 'ACTIVITY' (*ENERGELA*) AND 'MOTION'  
(*KINÊSIS*) IN ARISTOTLE'S *METAPHYSICS* Θ 6.1048B18-35

**Abstract**

The present article seeks to demonstrate that the passage in Aristotle's *Metaphysics Theta* (1048b18-35) which defends a distinction between motion (*kinêsis*) and activity (*energeia*) was not only well known by ancient commentators but also generated intense debate. The debate that is the focus here is the one caused by Plotinus's critique of the *kinêsis/energeia* distinction, which can be shown to have the passage in *Metaphysics Theta* as its target, and the response of Iamblichus as recorded and seconded by Simplicius. This debate helps us understand the significance of the passage and clarifies its ontological stakes. That the passage dropped out of one branch of manuscripts and was therefore unknown to later commentators like Michael of Ephesus and Thomas Aquinas is arguably unfortunate; an appendix seeks to show through the examples of these two figures just what was lost.

**Keywords**

Aristotle, *Energeia*, Motion, Plotinus, Iamblichus

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*1. Introduction: Recent Controversy Surrounding the Passage*

Having in Books *Zeta* and *Eta* of the *Metaphysics* discussed being in the sense of the categories, and therefore the primary and focal meaning of being in this sense, namely *ousia*, Aristotle in Book *Theta* (IX) turns to being in the sense of *dunamis* and *energeia*. These notions, we immediately learn, have themselves different meanings and Aristotle surprisingly, in the first five chapters of the book, focuses on the meanings he claims to be *not the most useful* for his present purpose (οὐ μὴν χρησιμωτάτη γέ ἐστι πρὸς ὁ βουλόμεθα νῦν, 1045b36-1046a1): *dunamis* and *energeia* in the senses *relative to motion* (κατὰ κίνησιν, 1046a2). We expect to be introduced finally to the *more useful senses* when we get to chapter 6 of the book, since Aristotle begins the chapter with the following words:

Since the *dunamis* spoken relative to motion has now been discussed, let us now determine with regard to *energeia* what it is and what kind of a thing it is. For the *dunaton* may at the same time become clear to those making distinctions, specifically that we do not call *dunaton* only what is of such a nature as to move something else or be moved by something else either simply speaking or in some qualified way, but that [it is also spoken of] in another way which we sought in speaking also of these things (1048a25-30).

Yet it is one of the many curiosities of contemporary Aristotelian scholarship that there is no agreement on what exactly the ‘useful’ senses of *dunamis* and *energeia* introduced starting with Θ 6 are. One might assume that one thing would be uncontroversial: namely, that of special relevance to Aristotle’s aim in the book is the latter half of Θ 6 (1048b18-35) in which he sharply distinguishes between *kinêsis* and *energeia*, given that Aristotle informed us in chapter one that if the senses of *dunamis* and *energeia* relative to motion were not the most useful ones for his present purpose, these notions extend beyond motion (ἐπὶ πλεον, 1046a1). What could be more relevant to Aristotle’s aim of finding senses of *dunamis* and *energeia* extending beyond *kinêsis*, which are the senses he declares to be the most useful in the context of his metaphysical inquiry, than the sharp distinction between *energeia* and *kinêsis* he defends in the latter part of Θ 6?

Yet here the state of current Aristotelian studies becomes even curi-  
ouser. In an influential *Oxford Studies* article from 2008, M. Burnyeat ar-  
gued, on both philosophical and philological grounds, that the passage at the  
end of Θ 6 not only had no relevance to Aristotle’s project in Book *Theta* or  
in the *Metaphysics* as a whole, but that it did not belong at all to the text,  
being wrongly inserted there from elsewhere (though Burnyeat, p. 227, was  
“inclined to agree” that it was written by Aristotle). In this view Burnyeat  
has been followed by other prominent commentators, including J. Beere in  
his book-length study of *Metaphysics Theta* (2009). I responded to  
Burnyeat’s arguments in an *Oxford Studies* article of 2019 and I will take this  
defense of the Passage as my starting point here (I will follow both Burnyeat  
and my 2019 article in referring to the text in question simply as “the Pas-  
sage”). In 2019 I defend the central role played by the Passage both in Book  
*Theta* and in the *Metaphysics* as a whole, showing it to be anything but the  
‘freak performance’ Burnyeat calls it. Something that in the eyes of Burnyeat  
and others makes the Passage suspect is that it is found in only one of the  
two traditions of manuscripts that have come down to us: the β tradition.  
This is what explains that the Passage was completely unknown to medieval  
commentators and translators who apparently had access only to manu-  
scripts in the α family. Thus, for example, Aquinas does not comment on it  
and Moerbeke does not translate it. But Burnyeat goes further in arguing  
that the passage was unknown *even to the Ancient Greek commentators* (see  
Burnyeat 2008, p. 237).

It is this claim that the present paper will conclusively, I hope, show to  
be false. This is because what I discuss here is what can be shown to be *Ploti-  
nus*’ critique of the Passage, in which he is following an earlier Stoic critique,  
and Iamblichus’ defense of the Passage against this critique, a defense in  
which he draws on the authority of Theophrastus. In short, I wish to show  
that the Passage was not only known by the ancient readers of Aristotle but  
was a subject of much controversy and discussion. Secondly, I want to draw  
from this ancient debate certain lessons about the meaning and importance  
of the Passage. Thus, while in 2019 I sought to show the importance of the  
Passage for Aristotle’s argument in Book Θ, as well as within the *Metaphysics*  
as a whole, the present paper seeks to show its importance in the Ancient

reception of Aristotle. As for doubts that could be raised regarding the authenticity of the Passage due to its absence from the  $\alpha$  tradition of manuscripts, these could be addressed only by a new critical edition of Book  $\Theta$  that would systematically compare divergent readings for this book in the  $\alpha$  and  $\beta$  traditions and arrive at some conclusion regarding their relative merits.<sup>1</sup> It therefore cannot be the aim of the present paper to prove the authenticity of the Passage on textual grounds; it can only, together with Gonzalez (2019), address doubts that have been raised about the Passage on philosophical and historical grounds.

## 2. *Translation of the Passage*

Before turning to the debate, we need to remind ourselves of the Passage and its argument. I provide first the Passage in my translation in 2019 (with a minor change) that follows the A<sup>b</sup> manuscript,<sup>2</sup> the main representative of the  $\beta$  family of manuscripts that preserves the Passage, and rejects the emen-

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<sup>1</sup> Recent work on the manuscript tradition of the *Metaphysics* – in particular Fazzo (2024) together with the case study on Z 17 in Fazzo (2022) – has reassessed the  $\alpha/\beta$  relationship to show that  $\beta$  does not possess independent stemmatic authority for material unattested in  $\alpha$ . This renders the authenticity of the Passage problematic and could be taken to suggest that it is a scholastic insertion transmitted within late-antique and Byzantine school copies. However, if my argument in Gonzalez (2019) is correct, the teaching of the Passage is genuinely Aristotelian and is needed exactly where it is in the argument of Book  $\Theta$ : something that of course does not preclude its insertion by a very astute student, though one then has to wonder why Aristotle would fail to do it himself. In any case, the philological argument for or against authenticity cannot be made here and requires further study of the manuscript divergences for Book  $\Theta$ . One thing that needs to be explained, for example, is why if, as Fazzo has shown, divergences in A<sup>b</sup> from manuscripts in the  $\alpha$  family can often be explained as results of assimilating Aristotle's text to the commentary of Michael of Ephesus copied with it in the margins of A<sup>b</sup>, the opposite is the case with the Passage: because the Passage was not known by Michael of Ephesus and is therefore skipped by his commentary, the scribe of A<sup>b</sup> can keep the commentary aligned with Aristotle's text only by putting a line through part of the Passage. Aligning Aristotle's text with the commentary thus requires in the case of the Passage not an insertion, but a bracketing (without deletion). See Gonzalez (2019) p. 127 n. 15. There are, in short, textual questions that require a thorough discussion not possible here.

<sup>2</sup> *Laurentianus Plut.* 87.12, 1201-1300.

dations proposed by modern editors as being unnecessary and question-begging. Especially in the present context, where our concern is the ancient reception of the Passage, it is advisable to be as little interventionist as possible.

Ἐπει δὲ τῶν πράξεων ὧν ἐστὶ πέρασ οὐδεμία τέλος ἀλλὰ τῶν περὶ τὸ τέλος, οἷον τοῦ ἰσχυαίνειν ἢ ἰσχυασία αὐτο. αὐτὰ δὲ ὅταν ἰσχυαίνη οὕτως ἐστὶν ἐν κινήσει, μὴ ὑπάρχοντα ὧν ἕνεκα ἡ κίνησις, οὐκ ἐστὶ ταῦτα πράξις· ἢ οὐ τελεία γέ, οὐ γὰρ τέλος ἀλλ' ἐκείνη ἐνυπάρχει τὸ τέλος καὶ ἡ πράξις οἷον ὄρα ἀλλὰ καὶ φρονεῖ καὶ νοεῖ καὶ νενόηκεν. ἀλλ' οὐ μανθάνει καὶ μεμάθηκεν, οὐδ' ὑγιάζεται καὶ ὑγιάσται. εὐ ζῆ καὶ εὐ ἔζηκεν· ἀλλὰ καὶ εὐδαιμονεῖ καὶ εὐδαιμόνηκεν. εἰ δὲ μη, ἔδει ἂν ποτε παύεσθαι, ὡσπερ ὅταν ἰσχυαίνη. νῦν δ' οὐ, ἀλλὰ ζῆ καὶ ἔζηκεν. τούτων δὴ τὰς μὲν κινήσεις λέγειν, τὰς δ' ἐνεργείας. πᾶσα γὰρ κίνησις ἀτελής, ἰσχυασία, μάθησις, βιάδις, οἰκοδόμησις. αὐταὶ δὲ κινήσεις καὶ ἀτελεῖς γε. οὐ γὰρ ἅμα βιαδίζει καὶ βεβιάδικεν, οὐδ' οἰκοδομεῖ καὶ ὠκοδόμησεν, οὐδὲ γίγνεται καὶ γέγονεν, ἢ κινεῖται καὶ κεκίνηται· ἀλλ' ἕτερον καὶ κινεῖ καὶ κεκίνηκεν. ἑώρακε δὲ καὶ ὄρα ἅμα τὸ αὐτὸ καὶ νοεῖ καὶ νενόηκεν. τὴν μὲν οὖν τοιαύτην ἐνέργειαν λέγω, ἐκείνην δὲ κίνησιν. τὸ μὲν οὖν ἐνεργεῖν τί τέ ἐστι καὶ ποῖον ἐκ τούτων καὶ τῶν τοιούτων δῆλον ἡμῖν ἔστω.

For in the case of actions which have a limit none is an end, but they are towards an end. For example, thinness in the case of becoming thinner: when things are in the process of becoming thinner, they are in motion in this way, whereas that for the sake of which the motion exists does not obtain. This is not an action, or at least not a complete one because it is not an end. But in the other case the end is present and the action, e.g., one sees, but also one thinks and understands and has already understood. But it is not the case that one is learning and has already learned or that one is being restored to health and has already been restored to health. One is living well and has already lived well, but furthermore one is actively being happy and has already been happy. Otherwise, it would be necessary to cease at some point, as when one is in the process of becoming thinner. Now this is not the case, but one is living and has already lived. Of these some are to be called motions, others, activities. For every motion is incomplete: becoming thinner, learning, walking, housebuilding. These are motions and indeed incomplete. For one is not at the same time walking and has completed walking, or building a house and has built a house, or becoming and has already become, or is in motion and has already moved, but [these are] different, as well as causing motion and having already caused motion. One is seeing and has already seen the same thing at the same time, and one is understanding and has already understood. This kind I call activity, that one motion. What being active is and what kind of a thing, let it be clear from these and these kinds of [examples].

The basic distinction defended here between a *kinésis* and an *energeia* is clear enough. Because the end of a *kinésis* lies outside of it, the *kinésis* lacks this end (and is therefore ‘incomplete’) as long as it lasts and *comes to an end* when it reaches its end; for example, the process of building a house is incomplete as long as the house is not built and ceases to exist once the house is built. This means, in terms of the ‘tense-test’ Aristotle offers, that the house is *being built* only as long as it is *not yet built* and *is built* only as long as it is *no*

*longer being built*. In contrast, an *energeia* possesses its end within itself and therefore is at every moment complete; for example, because seeing does not aim at an end outside itself, at every moment in the activity of seeing my seeing is complete or, again in terms of the ‘tense-test’, in *seeing* I simultaneously *have seen*. Here it is evident why *energeia* in the sense spoken of in relation to motion is not ‘the most useful’ one for Aristotle: while *kinêsis* is an end relative to the corresponding *dunamis*, it is not an end absolutely speaking. Only an *energeia* that is its own end and therefore an end without qualification can support the absolute priority (priority in *ousia*) of *energeia* over *dunamis* Aristotle will defend in  $\Theta$  8. Furthermore, only such an *energeia* can define the being of the ultimate end in the hierarchy of *ousia*: the *unmoved*, but *actively thinking and living mover* described in Book *Lambda*.

### 3. Plotinus’s Critique and its Continuation by J. Ackrill

In his critique of Aristotle’s categories in *Ennead* VI.1, before turning to Plato’s *megistê gene* in VI.2 and in the context of discussing the category of *poiein*, Plotinus challenges Aristotle’s characterization of movement as an “incomplete activity” (*ἀτελής ἐνέργεια*), a characterization we find explicitly defended in the *Physics* (III 2.201b31-32).<sup>3</sup> His argument is that motion is not incomplete as an activity, since it is fully and completely an activity (*ἐνέργεια μὲν πάντως*, *Enn.* VI.1.16.6), which is why it can be a species of activity (in the way that a mouse, being a species of the genus animal, is not a deficient or incomplete animal, but is fully and completely an animal). A motion is incomplete, has the character of ‘again and again’ (*ἔχει δὲ καὶ τὸ πάλιν καὶ πάλιν*), only in relation to something else, i.e., the product that follows upon it, and not in relation to *energeia*, which it always already is.<sup>4</sup> If we

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<sup>3</sup> On Plotinus’ critique of the sharp distinction between *ἐνέργεια* and *κίνησις* in *Enn.* VI.1 [42], 16. 4-19 see also the excellent discussions in Chiaradonna (2008), (2020) ch. 2 and (2023).

<sup>4</sup> Natali wishes to understand the “again and again”, not as contrasting to the claim that motion is fully an *energeia*, but as a positive addition (Natali 1994, p. 219 n. 19). But the meaning of the whole sentence must be something like the following: movement is fully *energeia*, but what makes it seem incomplete is the character of “again and again”, i.e., of *progression*, it has, not in relation to being an *energeia*, which it always already is, but in relation to the product.

take the example of building, Plotinus' point is that there is no incompleteness in the activity of building as such – it is fully the activity it is. Instead, the incompleteness lies in the house that is not yet completed. Plotinus' own example is walking (βάδισις, VI.1.16.10): if I am walking to the store, my walking is in itself a complete activity and is incomplete only in the sense that I have not yet arrived at the store. As Plotinus puts the point, what is lacking here is not the walking qua motion, but a certain distance of walking (τὸ ἐλλείπον οὐ τῆς βαδίσεως οὐδὲ τῆς κινήσεως, ἀλλὰ τῆς ποσῆς βαδίσεως, VI 1.16.11-12).

Plotinus' use of the walking example already suggests that, despite the apparent reference to the definition of motion in the *Physics*, his main target here is Aristotle's distinction between *kinésis* and *energeia* in *Metaph.* Θ 6: both because this is one of the examples Aristotle himself uses there to show that all motion is incomplete (πᾶσα κίνησις ἀτελής [...] βάδισις, 1048b29) and because Plotinus proceeds to challenge the temporal distinction between *kinésis* and *energeia* that Aristotle proceeds to make using precisely this example.<sup>5</sup> Aristotle argues, as we have seen, that a motion, unlike an *energeia*, excludes the simultaneous use of present and perfect tenses: while I can simultaneously be seeing and have seen, I cannot simultaneously be walking and have walked (οὐ γὰρ ἅμα βαδίζει καὶ βεβήδικεν, 1048b30-31). Focusing on

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<sup>5</sup> The use of this example is also noted by Noble (2016) p. 259 n. 50 as a reason for seeing Plotinus as referring to the *Metaphysics* passage and not the *Physics*. Chiaradonna's objection that 'walking' "is Aristotle's standard example for a motion directed towards an external end-state [...]" and there is no need to trace Plotinus' use of it back to *Metaphysics* 9.6" (Chiaradonna 2023, p. 74) misses the point: it is not simply that Plotinus uses an example also used in the *Metaphysics* passage, but that he uses it to address exactly the same point it is used to address in that passage: the incompatibility of present and perfect tenses in the case of motions. Aristotle does use the example of walking also in the *Nicomachean Ethics* as an example of motion not being complete at every moment of time (1174a31), but there the point about the incompatibility of the present and perfect tenses which Plotinus challenges with the example is completely absent: it is only because she fails to note this that Taormina can doubt Plotinus' knowledge of the Passage (Taormina 1999, p. 114 n. 1). Furthermore, the context in *NE* is a discussion of ἡδονή which is as absent from Plotinus' discussion as it is from the passage in *Metaph.* Θ 6. From these two points the only reasonable conclusion is that the target of Plotinus' critique is not the discussion in the *NE* but that in *Metaph.* Θ 6. The only other text I know of that uses the example of walking to make the point about the incompatibility of present and perfect tenses in the case of motion is *Physics* VI 1.231b30-232a1. But in that passage the point is not made to argue that walking is incomplete nor to contrast walking with an *energeia* (of which there is no mention in the passage). For more on this passage, see below.

this example – with good reason, since it appears the weakest example for making Aristotle’s point – Plotinus counters that walking is fully walking as soon as it begins (οἶον βάδισις ἐξ ἀρχῆς βάδισις ἦν, VI.1.16.9-10) and that the distance covered is irrelevant to the completeness of the walking as such. This allows him, against Aristotle, who claims that something cannot be in the process of becoming and the state of having become, or being moved and having been moved at the same time (οὐδὲ γίγνεται καὶ γέγονεν ἢ κινεῖται καὶ κεκίνηται, 1048b32), or simultaneously in the process of moving and the state of having moved (κινεῖ καὶ κεκίνηκεν, 1048b33), to conclude that the present and perfect tenses do not exclude each other in the case of motion: “the person in motion has also already moved [or completed the motion]” (ὁ γοῦν κινούμενος καὶ ἤδη κεκίνηται, 13-14). And if Aristotle’s suggestion is that a motion excludes the simultaneous use of present and perfect tenses because it *takes time* to reach its end and be completed, Plotinus retorts that a *kinēsis* as such, without regard to its product or goal that is something other than it, is no more in need of time than is an *energeia* (καὶ ὡς ἡ λέγονμένη ἐνέργεια οὐ δεῖται χρόνου, οὕτως οὐδ’ ἡ κίνησις, ἀλλ’ ἡ εἰς τοσοῦτον κίνησις, 13-16). So the relation of both *kinēsis* and *energeia* to time is the same: with regard to their being completely what they are at every moment, both are not in time (or are ‘in timelessness’, ἐν ἀχρόνῳ, as Plotinus says).<sup>6</sup> Here Plotinus rather brilliantly<sup>7</sup> uses against him Aristotle’s critique of Melissus in the *Physics* for absurdly thinking that there must be a beginning of change, “as if it did not occur all at once” (ὥσπερ οὐκ ἀθρόας γιγνόμενης μεταβολῆς, *Phys.* I 3.186a15-16). If change does not occur in time, Plotinus retorts, then why

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<sup>6</sup> It is presumably from this simultaneity of present and perfect tenses that Plotinus deduces the ‘timelessness’ of ἐνέργεια for Aristotle and of κίνησις for himself. It is not likely that he is thinking of the discussion of pleasure as ἐνέργεια versus κίνησις in the *Nicomachean Ethics* since what Aristotle stresses there is ἐνέργεια being *in time in the sense of being complete in each and every time* (καθ’ ὄντιν οὖν χρόνον τελεία, 1174a14-15, ἐν ὅτῳ χρόνῳ τέλειον, 1174b5-6; ἐν τῷ νῦν ὅλον τι, 1174b9). There is no incompatibility, of course, between saying that ἐνέργεια is complete in every moment of time and saying that it is *not in time* in the sense of *taking time*. But Plotinus is clearly thinking of the *Metaphysics* passage in particular and seeking to apply to motion the completeness and timelessness that that passage wishes to restrict to ἐνέργεια. Chiaradonna, in considering what Plotinus could mean in characterizing both κίνησις and ἐνέργεια as existing “in timelessness”, does not consider the possibility that he was here again provoked by the passage in *Metaph.* Θ 6 (Chiaradonna 2008, pp. 481-3).

<sup>7</sup> Natali writes here of Plotinus’ ‘perfidia’ (Natali 1999, p. 220)!

should motion? (33-36) If we insist that the *continuity* of motion requires it to exist in time, then Plotinus retorts that the same continuity would then require an activity like *seeing* (ἡ ὄρασις) also to exist in time (18-19): ‘seeing’ being, as we have seen, one of Aristotle’s examples of an *energeia* in contrast to a *kinêsis* in *Metaph.* Θ 6.<sup>8</sup> A little later in the treatise Plotinus makes essentially the same point with another example taken from *Metaph.* Θ 6: living and life (τὸ ζῆν καὶ ἡ ζωή), though given there as examples of *energeia*, take up time and therefore come to the same thing as *kinêsis*. “For the living of each is to be found in a complete time (ἐν χρόνῳ γὰρ τελείῳ) and happiness is not an *energeia* in what is partless (οὐκ ἐν ἀμερεῖ), but is such as they claim movement (κίνησις) to be” (18.3-5).

Plotinus’s critique is strikingly similar to an influential and often-cited modern critique: that by J. Ackrill (1997). Ackrill, just like Plotinus, focuses on Aristotle’s choice of walking as an example of a motion that is not an *energeia*. Ackrill asks: “For are not parts of walks walks”, so that in walking I can say “I have walked” (p. 152)? The only way to avoid this conclusion in his view is to specify the walking as “walking from A to Z: in walking from A to Z, I cannot say that I have walked from A to Z.” But then Ackrill makes in a different way the same point as Plotinus: if we specify in the same way a so-called activity, e.g., instead of simply ‘hearing’ we speak of ‘hearing a symphony’ (p. 153), then in that case too, the present and perfect tenses would exclude each other: hearing a symphony does not imply having heard the symphony. In short, in the cases of both hearing and walking, the activity taken in itself without further specification is complete and becomes incomplete only if specified in relation to some end. But then there is no distinction between *energeiai* and *kinêseis* as such, but only between different ways of considering an activity. As Ackrill writes, we “are forced to conclude that there is a serious confusion in Aristotle’s exposition of the *energeia-kinêsis* distinction” (p. 155). Despite the clear parallel, Ackrill makes no reference here to Plotinus.

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<sup>8</sup> Unlike others cited above, Brisson rightly notes that “Plotin emprunte à Aristote les exemples de la marche et de la vision, *Métaphysique* Θ 6.1048b29 et 33, 10-12. Voir aussi 44 (VI, 3), 22, 8-9” (Brisson 2008, p. 270 n. 203).

We can suspect, however, that Ackrill and Plotinus arrive at their critique from different philosophical assumptions and, indeed, their assumptions are diametrically opposed. For Ackrill, both what Aristotle calls ‘activities’ and what he calls motions are *continuous* in time and therefore quantifiable. Ackrill therefore does not know what to do with Aristotle’s explicit claim in the *Nicomachean Ethics* that an *energeia* is *not* ‘in time’. He also interprets, or rather misinterprets, the simultaneity of perfect and present tenses Aristotle ascribes to *energeia* as meaning only that an *energeia* as continuous always has a time that has already elapsed (perfect tense) and can continue indefinitely (present tense); on such an interpretation any sharp distinction between an *energeia* and *kinēsis* indeed disappears. Plotinus’ critique assumes, on the contrary, that neither what Aristotle calls an ‘activity’ nor what he calls a ‘motion’ is in itself in time; any quantifiable temporal continuity is accidental to it. What this critique says about Plotinus’ own conception of motion becomes clear from the following passage referring to the life of the Intellect turned towards the Good: “The motion itself was actually fulfilled by being motion in the intelligible world, and it was fulfilled in relation to the Good itself; it was no longer mere motion, but satiated and full motion” (ἡ δὲ κίνησις αὐτὴ πληρωθεῖσα τῷ ἐκεῖ κινεῖσθαι καὶ περὶ ἐκεῖνο ἐπλήρωσεν αὐτὸ καὶ οὐκέτι κίνησις ἦν μόνον, ἀλλὰ κίνησις διακορῆς καὶ πλήρης, VI.7.16.16-18). Motion in the intelligible world is a fulfilled and full or complete motion. But of course, motion in the intelligible world is what motion is *in itself*. Any ‘incompleteness’ of motion is to be attributed to that in which the motion is present. Qua motion walking is complete; what makes us call it incomplete is only the quantity of distance in which this motion is realized. In short, for Ackrill *energeia* and *kinēsis* do not differ because both take up time and are divisible in the same way; for Plotinus they do not differ because neither exists in time except accidentally.

#### *4. Reply to both Ackrill and Plotinus*

It is important to identify the opposed assumptions of Plotinus and Ackrill to see that neither assumption would be acceptable to Aristotle and that therefore their critiques fail to hit their target. On the one hand, I note with

Plotinus against Ackrill that an *energeia* is for Aristotle complete *in the moment* and in this sense is not in time, i.e., does not take up time. On the other hand, I note against Plotinus that ‘walking’ in the moment would not be walking: walking, and motion in general, has essentially the structure of ‘from-to’ (πάσα γὰρ κίνησις ἔκ τινος καὶ εἰς τι, *Physics* V 1.224b1), so that ‘quantity’ is not something accidental, but rather something essential to it (δοκεῖ ἡ κίνησις εἶναι τῶν συνεχῶν, III 1.200b16-17).<sup>9</sup> In contrast, there is no problem with ‘seeing’ existing completely in the moment because it is not a seeing ‘from-to’ and in this sense has no quantity or ‘limit’. As we have noted, what is behind Plotinus’ critique is the idea that motions like walking are simply physical manifestations of ‘motion-in-itself’ where the latter implies no from-to structure and no quantity. But as is well known, Aristotle strongly rejects the idea that there exists a motion-in-itself beyond specific kinds of motion (οὐκ ἔστι δὲ κίνησις παρὰ τὰ πράγματα, III 1.200b32-33). For him walking is not accidentally but essentially a motion from one place to another, i.e., a locomotion as distinct from, say, a qualitative change. In contrast, ‘hearing’ is not essentially a hearing of this or that, as if ‘hearing a symphony’ were a different kind of hearing from ‘hearing an alarm’. You hear as soon as something is heard, whatever that may be, and this is why hearing is complete in the moment and does not take up time. It is only because Ackrill seems not to take this into account that he can divide an activity into different temporal spans (for example, four symphonic movements) and claim that it is not yet complete at  $t^1$  but only at  $t^4$ . In short, in my view, Ackrill

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<sup>9</sup> Brisson captures well what is most peculiar, and most anti-Aristotelian in Plotinus’ conception of motion here: “En définitive, comme on l’a vu, Plotin opère une distinction entre le mouvement et le mouvement présentant une certaine étendue dans le temps et dans l’espace. Seul le temps perçu par les sens présente une extension. En lui-même le mouvement n’a rien à voir avec le temps et l’espace” (Brisson 2008, n. 210). In contrast, for Aristotle the “what”, the “in what” and the “when” are the three constitutive moments of movement (227b23-24); and “all that moves moves in time” (ἐν χρόνῳ γὰρ πᾶν κινεῖται, 227b26; see also 200b20-21).

misinterprets *energeia* in assigning it a from-to structure and thus a quantifiable temporal span, while Plotinus misinterprets *kinēsis* in denying it a from-to structure and thus placing it outside of time.<sup>10</sup>

### 5. Knowledge of the Passage in Antiquity

I have already given reasons for taking the target of Plotinus's critique, like that of Ackrill, to be the Passage in the *Metaphysics*. This means that the Passage was known to Plotinus and to those who debated the distinction with him, contrary to Burnyeat's claim otherwise. Burnyeat can make this claim only because he does not give careful consideration either to Plotinus' critique in *Enneads* VI or to Simplicius's report of the debate it engendered: a report we will examine in what follows.<sup>11</sup> Other commentators have fortunately hesitated to follow Burnyeat here and for the simple reason that they *have* worked closely with the Plotinian text. R. Chiaradonna, for example, who has written extensively on Plotinus and Neoplatonism, disagrees with Burnyeat to the extent of allowing that Plotinus *may* have been *also* thinking of the Passage while focusing on the *Physics*.<sup>12</sup> Yet this is insufficient: we can and must conclude that Plotinus was most definitely thinking of the Passage

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<sup>10</sup> Natali, who briefly notes the parallel between the two critiques, also notes how they are inverted: Ackrill seeks to show that *energeia* is *kinēsis* while Plotinus seeks to show that *kinēsis* is *energeia* (Natali 1999, 220 n. 20).

<sup>11</sup> In Gonzalez (2019) pp. 179-81, and in response to Burnyeat, I provide the debate between Plotinus and Iamblichus on the distinction between κίνησις and ἐνέργεια, as reported by Simplicius in his commentary on Aristotle's *Categories* (303.35-306.10 Kalbfleisch), as evidence that the Passage was known by the later Greek tradition. But what I did not offer there is the evidence of *Ennead* VI.1 that Plotinus clearly knew the Passage: indeed, while I granted that the discussion in Simplicius does not explicitly address the so-called 'tense-test' found in the Passage and only there, Plotinus' critique does explicitly address it. In short, the evidence for knowledge of the Passage in antiquity, contra Burnyeat, is even stronger than I took it to be in 2019. It is also worth recalling in this context Porphyry's claim that Aristotle's *Metaphysics* is 'concentrated' in Plotinus's writings (καταπεπύκνωται δὲ καὶ ἡ 'Μετὰ τὰ φυσικὰ' τοῦ Ἀριστοτέλους πραγματεία, 14.5-7). That Porphyry should single out this Aristotelian treatise is evidence of the importance he saw it to have for Plotinus. One indeed need only take a glance at the *Index fontium* in Henry-Schwyzler to see how thorough Plotinus's acquaintance with, and use of, this treatise is.

<sup>12</sup> Chiaradonna goes only so far as to conclude that, while of course Plotinus is directly referring only to the *Physics* passage, as Burnyeat claims, we cannot rule out, as Burnyeat does, that he might *also* have in mind the *Metaphysics* passage (Chiaradonna 2023, p. 75).

and that it was the *focus* of his critique. First, the target of Plotinus' critique, as we have seen, is the distinction between *kinêsis* and *energeia* in terms of the so-called 'tense-test': something that according to Burnyeat himself is found only in the Passage and *not* in the *Physics*. And if this were not enough, Plotinus uses the examples ('seeing' and 'walking') found in the Passage and not in the *Physics*. Secondly, what have been taken as clear references to the *Physics* are more plausibly interpreted as references to the Passage. If Chiaradonna still insists that the target of Plotinus's critique is the *Physics*, this is because he believes (Chiaradonna 2008, p. 479) that when Plotinus objects that "the person in motion has also already moved [or completed the motion]" (ὁ γοῦν κινούμενος καὶ ἤδη κεκίνηται), the source of his words "is certainly not *Metaphysics* 9.6, but *Physics* 6.6 [236b33-4]" (Chiaradonna 2023, p. 74) and that "What Plotinus paraphrases is certainly *Physics* 6.6 and not *Metaphysics* 9.6" (*ibid.*, p. 75). But one must first object that the 'certainly' is hardly warranted. In *Metaph.* Θ 6.1048b32 Aristotle rejects the possibility of "is in motion and has already moved" (κινεῖται καὶ κεκίνηται): a phrase clearly very similar to that used by Plotinus.

The question is therefore this: when Plotinus writes "the person in motion has also already moved [or completed the motion]" (ὁ γοῦν κινούμενος καὶ ἤδη κεκίνηται), does he have in mind (1) the claim at *Phys.* VI 6.236b33-34 that "everything in motion must have previously been in motion" (πᾶν τὸ κινούμενον ἀνάγκη κεινῆσθαι πρότερον) or (2) the denial at *Metaph.* Θ 6.1048b32 that something "is in motion and has already moved" (κινεῖται καὶ κεκίνηται)? If we allow this question to be asked, we see that there are indeed strong reasons for maintaining (2). First, in writing ὁ γοῦν κινούμενος καὶ ἤδη κεκίνηται, Plotinus is asserting this *against* Aristotle: is he therefore not more likely to have in mind the passage in which Aristotle *rejects* a similar claim, i.e., (2), than the passage (1) in which Aristotle *defends* a similar claim as his own? It would be at least very odd for Plotinus to critique Aristotle by affirming what Aristotle himself affirms in the *Physics*. Secondly, Chiaradonna himself notes that Plotinus uses the perfect κεκίνηται in an aspectual sense, "not as meaning that everything which is in motion now has been in motion before [...] but as implying that motion is fully present or complete from the start

and at every moment in which it occurs” (Chiaradonna 2023, p. 71). But Chiaradonna also himself notes that the perfect has this sense at *Metaph.* Θ 6 and *not* at *Physics* VI 6.236b33-34 where it clearly means “what has been in motion before”. The natural conclusion is therefore that Plotinus has in mind *Metaph.* Θ 6 and not *Phys.* 236b33-34, but Chiaradonna insists that Plotinus is referring to the *Physics* and concludes that he is deliberately changing the meaning of the perfect in the *Physics* passage and in a way that just happens to coincide with the meaning the perfect has at *Metaph.* Θ 6.<sup>13</sup> Is it not more natural to conclude that Plotinus is critiquing Aristotle’s denial at *Metaph.* Θ 6 that something can simultaneously be moving and have moved, objecting that this is in fact possible and in doing so reproducing the sense that the perfect tense has in that text? Instead, Chiaradonna apparently would have us believe that Plotinus is critiquing Aristotle by affirming what Aristotle himself affirms in the *Physics* (πᾶν τὸ κινούμενον ἀνάγκη κεκινήσθαι πρότερον) rather than by affirming what Aristotle denies in the *Metaphysics* (κινεῖται καὶ κεκίνηται), and that he takes his phrase (ὁ γοῦν κινούμενος καὶ ἤδη κεκίνηται) from the *Physics* and not the *Metaphysics* but understands the phrase in the sense it has in the *Metaphysics* and not the *Physics*.

If this is what it takes to deny that Plotinus’s target is *Metaph.* Θ 6, then the reasonable thing to do is to stop denying this and accept the evidence that that is indeed his target. It should be noted that a better candidate than

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<sup>13</sup> I wonder whether Chiaradonna’s preference for the more convoluted over the simpler explanation in (2023) is due to the influence of Burnyeat (2008); he does not in any case even cite the rebuttal in Gonzalez (2019) that already challenged precisely Burnyeat’s claim about Plotinus. This suspicion is strengthened if we contrast what Chiaradonna writes in his 2002 book, thus before Burnyeat (2008). There in n. 33 p. 170 Chiaradonna, while claiming that Plotinus is referring to *Physics* Z, maintains that Plotinus’ critique is best understood if related to *Metaph.* Θ 6 and *NE* X 3.1174a31ff. There he considers significant that the example of ‘walking’ (βάδασις) does *not* occur in the *Physics* text, but *does* occur in the *Ethics* text (though without noting that it also occurs in the *Metaphysics* text). There he also notes that the distinction between κίνησις and ἐνέργεια that is the object of Plotinus’ attack is *not* found in the *Physics* text, but in the *Ethics* text (he recognizes a few pages later that it is also found in the *Metaphysics*: p. 180). All of this is exactly right, but Chiaradonna seems to backtrack on or weaken all of these claims later. Yet the view that Plotinus’s critique refers only or primarily to the *Physics* is widespread and not only after Burnyeat (2008): Bréhier (1963) p. 24 already assumes that this is the case and in his ‘Notice’ does not even refer to the *Metaphysics* passage.

*Physics* VI 6 would be *Physics* VI 1 where Aristotle asserts the impossibility of simultaneously applying to motion the present and perfect (here aspectual) tenses (ἀμα κινεῖσθαι καὶ κεκινήσθαι, 231a29-30). Furthermore, Aristotle here uses the example of walking to make his point: “For example, if one walks to Thebes, it is impossible simultaneously to walk (βαδίζειν) and to have walked (βεβαδικέναι) to Thebes” (213a30-31). But this too cannot be the passage Plotinus is targeting. The point about the impossibility of the simultaneous use of present and perfect tenses in relation to what moves is not made here to contrast motion with *energeia*: the latter notion is not even mentioned here, so that there is also no contrast with seeing or thinking. The point is made rather to show why there cannot be motion in an indivisible magnitude (in an indivisible magnitude, the object moving will have completed its motion the moment it starts moving): something that is not the target of Plotinus’s critique. Furthermore, here, unlike in the Passage, Aristotle gives the walking example a destination: it is impossible simultaneously to be walking and to have walked *to Thebes*. If Plotinus had been thinking of this passage from the *Physics*, he would have jumped on this example, as he would have seen it as confirming his critique: the incompleteness, he would say, lies in covering *the distance to Thebes*, *not* in the activity of walking itself. If Plotinus instead does not use this example against Aristotle, that is because the text he had in mind is the one in which Aristotle says simply that one cannot be walking and have walked at the same time, i.e., the Passage. To make his objection Plotinus preserves the abstractness of the example in the Passage, speaking only abstractly of “covering a stade” (6.1.16.11).

We should conclude, therefore, that while Plotinus’s critique may start with the characterization of motion in the *Physics* as *energeia atelès*, the above shows that it quickly turns to the distinction between *kinésis* and *energeia* in the *Metaphysics*. Plotinus would have good reason for connecting the two since the Passage in Θ 6 begins with the same point made in the *Physics*, only using the word *praxis* instead of the word *energeia* it will immediately substitute: “this [*kinésis*] is not *praxis*, or indeed not a complete one [ἢ οὐ τέλεια γέ]” (1048b21-22).<sup>14</sup> We should conclude, therefore, that the

<sup>14</sup> Chiaradonna rightly observes that, while Plotinus quotes Aristotle’s claim in the *Physics* that κίνησις is ἐνέργεια ἀτελής, he surprisingly ignores the specification that it is ‘incomplete’

Passage was not only in the text of the *Metaphysics* at this time, contra Burnyeat, but that it was well-enough known and cited to merit Plotinus's strong critique.

6. *Iamblichus's Platonist Defense of Aristotle's Distinction  
against Plotinus*

If Plotinus critiques Aristotle's distinction from a Platonist perspective (according to which 'motion in itself' is not incomplete), Iamblichus clearly sought to reconcile it with a Platonist perspective by making the distinction into one between two levels of reality, the intelligible and the sensible. For the debate regarding the relation between *kinêsis* and *energeia* generated by Plotinus's critique, and thus Iamblichus's response, the crucial text is Simplicius' commentary on Aristotle's *Categories* (*CAG* VIII, in *Cat.* 9.11b1, pp. 303.35-306.10 Kalbfleisch). Simplicius has been commenting on Aristotle's presentation of the categories of acting (*ποιεῖν*) and being affected (*πάσχειν*), and has identified acting with *energeia* (*Σημαίνει δὲ τὸ μὲν ποιεῖν ἐνέργειαν [...]* 296.9). As we have seen, a discussion of the category of *poiein* is also the context for Plotinus' critique of Aristotle and that is why Simplicius will go on to refer to this critique here. One question Simplicius himself addresses is why *poiein* and *paschein* are distinct categories rather than both belonging to the category of relation. One part of his response is to claim that there are 'absolute actions' (like walking, running, speaking, reading, etc.) that are not relative to any patient (*ὅλως δὲ κατὰ παντὸς μὲν ἐνεργοῦντος τὸ ποιεῖν λέγεται, οὐ πάντα δὲ ἐνέργεια πρὸς πάσχον. οὐδὲ γὰρ αἱ ἀπόλυται ποιήσεις [...]* 299.9-11; see also 310.12 ff.). In this context, the question also arises of why 'movement' is not the genus that encompasses both acting and being acted upon. The first

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due to the *δυνατόν* of which it is the *ἐνέργεια* (2023, p. 78). But Chiaradonna does not consider a possible explanation: that the passage from *Metaph.* Θ 6, in which we also find the claim that *κίνησις* is *ἀτελής* (*οὐ τελεία γε*, 1048b21-22), even if it is said there to be an incomplete *πράξις* before Aristotle switches to the term *ἐνέργεια*, contains no reference to 'potentiality' or 'capacity'. That Plotinus, like the *Metaphysics* passage, makes no reference to the notion of *τὸ δυνατόν* to explain the incompleteness of motion could be further evidence that he is addressing the argument of this passage; even if he also has the definition of motion in the *Physics* in mind, he drops the part that is not relevant to the argument of the *Metaphysics* passage.

thing Simplicius does to dismiss this suggestion, and already in explicit criticism of Plotinus, is cite Aristotle's claim that the prime mover and actor is unmoved (the implication being that here we have action without motion; 302.12). Later he will explain that the genus *poiein* includes *energeiai* as well as *kinêseis* and therefore cannot be placed under the genus of motion (τὸ μέντοι ποιεῖν οὐ κινήσεως μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐνεργειῶν ἣν περιληπτικόν, 311.29-30).

After considering other views on whether movement is a single genus containing both acting and being affected – with Iamblichus reported as most strongly arguing against this – Simplicius reports “the great Plotinus” as saying that Aristotle avoided placing movement in a genus (i.e., the genus *energeia*) because it is an incomplete *energeia* (303.32-33). Then he cites directly what Plotinus writes in the *Enneads* after asking why movement will not be one genus: “If someone were to say that *kinêsis* is an incomplete *energeia*, nothing would prevent us from placing *energeia* at the top and putting under it the *kinêsis* that is incomplete *energeia* as one of its species” (VI.1.16.1-3). For Plotinus, as we have seen, *energeia* can be the genus of *kinêsis* because the incompleteness of *kinêsis* does not prevent it from being completely an *energeia*. Simplicius then reports Iamblichus as asking whether movement is an incomplete *energeia* because it is *inferior within the same nature* or because it belongs to a different and inferior nature (ὡς ἐν τῇ αὐτῇ φύσει ὑφείμενη ἢ μᾶλλον ὡς ἐσισταμένη εἰς πάντη καταδεστέραν φύσιν, 303.37-38). Iamblichus defends the second alternative, i.e., that *energeia* and *kinêsis* cannot have the same nature, by listing all the properties that are true of the former but are not true of the latter.<sup>15</sup> The first contrast he makes is as follows: “if movement strives *towards* its end because it comes into being for its sake, not yet possessing it within itself, and, on the other hand, *energeia* remains *at* the end, full of itself and its own completeness, then what is perfectly complete will not have any nature in common with what strives towards completeness.”<sup>16</sup> Iamblichus proceeds to make other distinctions that preclude one being the genus of the other: *kinêsis* is infinitely divisible and

<sup>15</sup> See also Simplicius' own claim later that there is nothing common to κίνησις and ‘pure’ ἐνέργεια (308.8-9).

<sup>16</sup> εἰ οὖν ἡ μὲν κίνησις ἐπὶ τὸ τέλος σπεύδει ὡς ἔνεκα αὐτοῦ γινομένη καὶ μηδέπω αὐτὸ ἐν ἑαυτῇ ἔχουσα, ἡ δὲ ἐνέργεια κατὰ τὸ τέλος ἔστηκεν. πλήρης οὖσα ἑαυτῆς καὶ τῆς οἰκείας τελειότητας. οὐκ ἂν τὸ τελεώτατον πρὸς τὸ ἐπειγόμενον εἰς τελείωσιν ἔχοι τινὰ κοινωμίαν φύσεως (304.3-7).

continuous, whereas *energeia* is a limit; *kinêsis* changes from one thing to its contrary and is thus composed of contraries, whereas *energeia* is completely unmixed and excludes its contrary; movement is coextensive with time, whereas *energeia* is characterized by dimensionless eternity. Whatever we think of these arguments meant to justify it, what we clearly have here is precisely the sharp distinction between *kinêsis* as such and *energeia* as such found in the Passage.<sup>17</sup> The conclusion is that acting is not to be joined together with being affected under the common genus ‘movement’ since this fails to keep acting pure and free from being affected and conflates *energeia* with movement.

Iamblichus also is reported as addressing Plotinus’ argument that walking is not in itself incomplete, but rather is incomplete only relative to the distance to be covered. To this Iamblichus objects that Plotinus is failing to understand movement as of a moveable thing existing *potentially*: it is in relation to the movable and being potentially, and not due to some extrinsic factor, that the movement cannot be whole (καθὸ κινητὸν οὐπω ἐστὶν ὅλον,

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<sup>17</sup> A detailed discussion of the Simplicius text discussed here can be found in Giardina (2011). That discussion, however, does not note the importance and significance of the Passage in Plotinus’s critique and therefore also in the response of Simplicius and Iamblichus; Giardina refers to the Passage only once in this very long article and only in passing and in a footnote, with no analysis (p. 92 n. 81). As a result, she assumes throughout that the sense of *energeia* that Iamblichus and Simplicius are sharply distinguishing from *kinêsis* against Plotinus is “immobile form” (p. 76). Against this, the following can be said: First, the sense of *energeia* that Aristotle in  $\Theta$  6 opposes to *kinêsis* is not *form*, which is opposed to matter instead, but rather *activity* of which the examples are thinking, seeing, living, etc. Secondly, we have seen that this is exactly how Plotinus understands the distinction since he treats it as a distinction between, for example, seeing and walking. Furthermore, while it is possible that Iamblichus is already assimilating the sense of *energeia* as activity to that of *form*, he too gives the *activity of thinking* as an example of an *energeia* separated from motion, as Giardina herself notes right before claiming that *energeia* in its pure form is *eidōs* (p. 75). As for Simplicius, Giardina also notes that he speaks of “pure action” (τὴν ποιήσιν καθαρὰν) as synonymous with pure *energeia* (p. 79). So are we to understand *poiêsis* here as equivalent to *eidōs*? In short, this reduction of *energeia* to *eidōs* is possible only if one does not give full weight to the teaching of the Passage; that Plotinus certainly did not make such a reduction and that Iamblichus and Simplicius at least did not carry out such a reduction to the extent Giardina does, is further evidence that *they* knew the Passage very well. Giardina (2014) recognizes the significance of the Passage and its Neoplatonic reception in another context.

308.2-3).<sup>18</sup> Here Simplicius cannot resist voicing his approval while also mocking Plotinus: “And I think [Iamblichus] speaks well, for [Plotinus] seems to me to be suffering from the same affliction as someone who would call the imperfect itself perfect, when it is imperfect and considered in respect of its imperfection” (308.3-5). The criticism here is that Plotinus’s position amounts to claiming that an imperfect *energeia*, considered in itself, is perfectly an imperfect *energeia* and therefore perfectly an *energeia*. Simplicius furthermore attacks what we have already seen to be a weakness of Plotinus’ position: his treatment of quantity as something accidental to movement.

While it seemed to the Peripatetics that movement should be reduced to quantity, Plotinus wishes to reduce it to *energeia*, so that just as *energeia* is not quantity, so also movement would be shown not to be quantity. But that movement is quantity is clear, not from its being in time (for this belongs to it accidentally), but in virtue of its dimensionality (*diastasis*), and in so far as it is difference, as Plato says, and unlikeness (308.11-16).

In the case of walking, it does not just *happen* to cover a certain distance, so that we can attribute its incompleteness to the distance and not to the walking itself: it essentially covers a certain distance as movement. In the case of movements that are not local movements there is also a certain quantitative extension essential to them: e.g., weight in the case of thinning or the color spectrum in the case of changing color. To speak of a movement that *covers no ground*, that does not go *from* something *to* something, is nonsensical.

If we wonder how Plotinus could have arrived at his position, the Simplicius text importantly reveals the source, since we are told that according to Iamblichus Plotinus was simply transferring to Aristotle *the Stoic* treatment of movement as the common genus of acting and being affected (306.13-15).<sup>19</sup> On Iamblichus’ account, the Stoics agree with the definition

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<sup>18</sup> Natali suggests that Iamblichus is recuperating the teleological dimension of movement in Aristotle which Plotinus completely ignores (Natali 1999, p. 227). He suggests that in this regard Plotinus is closer to the conception of movement in modern physics (p. 229).

<sup>19</sup> For an attempt to relate what we are told here about the Stoic position on *ἐνέργεια* to what we can gather about their views on movement from other texts, see the helpful article by Natasi (2024). Could the Stoics have known the Passage? If we reject the view that none of the esoteric writings could have been known to them, as Natasi does, then this is a possibility, though Natasi thinks that the absence of the Passage from a family of manuscripts dating a thousand years later counts as evidence against this (p. 574). In any case, we do not have for the Stoics the kind of evidence of knowledge of the Passage that we have for Plotinus

of *kinêsis* as *energeia atelês*, but object that the reason for its being *atelês* is *not* that it is any less of an *energeia* (οὐχ ὅτι οὐκ ἔστιν ἐνέργεια): on the contrary, motion is fully *energeia* (ἔστιν γὰρ πάντως, φασίν, ἐνέργεια) and is *atelês* only in containing the ‘again and again’ (πάλιν καὶ πάλιν). This means that it is stretched out in time “not so that it may arrive at *energeia* (for it is already that), but so that something different may come to be produced that exists after it” (307.4-5).<sup>20</sup> The suggestion, as in Plotinus, is that the ‘again and again’, being stretched out towards a goal, is something accidental to the movement as an *energeia*. Since its imperfection thus lies in something accidental to it, it can itself be fully *energeia*. Against this view Iamblichus asks how, if *kinêsis* is said to be *ateles* as a whole while *energeia* itself cannot be

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and Natasi discusses other texts from which the Stoics could have inferred Aristotle’s view that movement is incomplete *energeia in the sense of a defective energeia* (as Natasi rightly points out, the Stoic critique makes no sense if they did not understand Aristotle’s phrase *atelês energeia* in *this* sense: p. 573). If one agrees, as does Natasi (pp. 575-6), with the argument of Chame (2023) that the *energeia-kinêsis* distinction was already found in early Aristotle, specifically in the *Protrepticus*, then the Stoics could have found it there. But they are not likely to have found the characterization of movement as an *atelês energeia* there, which suggests the *Physics*, if not *Metaphysics* Θ 6. The question must therefore remain open.

<sup>20</sup> For how Iamblichus’ account of the Stoic position mirrors Plotinus’s articulation of his own position in *Ennead* VI.1, see Taormina (1999) p. 120. Natasi appears to think that what the Stoics are asserting against Aristotle is that motion is not at all *ateles* but is *teleia* precisely in its continuity as “again and again”. Thus, he writes: “If movement is a process always in making, then it is fully ἐνέργεια” (Natasi 2024, p. 556). But this is not the position Iamblichus attributes to them. Rather, on his testimony, the Stoics do not deny the incompleteness of motion, insisting instead that its incompleteness is not due to its failing to be an *energeia*, but is rather due to the character of “again and again” it has as a result of not yet having produced a product distinct from itself. This position is the same as that of Plotinus (VI.1.16.5-8). See in contrast Giardina (2011) p. 81, who gets this right. It is possible of course that Iamblichus is assimilating the position of the Stoics to that of Plotinus and thereby misinterpreting them. The position Natasi attributes to them (i.e., that movement is not incomplete at all but fully complete as movement) might seem more consistent with their ontology, but this is not the position Iamblichus attributes to them.

*ateleston* (307.6-7),<sup>21</sup> the two could possibly be the same.<sup>22</sup> But, as both we and the Stoics might reply, is not motion defined as an *energeia*, even if *ateles*? Iamblichus' response is surprising: No, he says, it is defined as an *entelecheia atelês*. He then explains what this means: the motion of sculpting the statue is *on the way towards the end* whereas only the finished statue is in possession of the end and therefore *hê teleia entelecheia* (307.10-15). The incomplete *entelecheia* that is motion is *separate from energeia* (κεχώρισται τῆς ἐνεργείας, 307.17). The implied distinction here between *entelecheia* and *energeia* is that the former is the result of a process of actualisation, whereas the latter is not, not being an end relative to motion, but rather being its own end.<sup>23</sup>

Iamblichus insists that, unlike *energeia* itself, being-in-actuality (ἐνεργεία ὄν), or *entelecheia*, stands in a relation of opposition (ἀντιθεται) to what exists potentially and constitutes the perfection of what is imperfect (τοῦ ἀτελοῦς ἐστὶ τελειότης). “*Energeia* as such, by contrast, is absolute and is not said in relation to any contrary” (ἡ μὲν τοι ἐνεργεία αὐτὴ καθ' ἑαυτὴν ἐστὶν ἀπόλυτος, πρὸς οὐδὲν ἐναντίον λεγομένη, 305.11-12).

Iamblichus further observes that the form of a statue cannot be in actuality (ἐνεργεία) without the presence of *energeia* as that which confers completeness upon it (305.13-14). This dependence, however, does not eliminate the distinction just drawn. For although being-in-actuality presupposes *energeia* as its condition, being-in-actuality remains opposed to, and therefore relative to, being-in-potentiality, whereas *energeia* itself is not.

We see here that Iamblichus' defense of Aristotle exaggerates the separation between *energeia* and *kinêsis*. If it is true that Aristotle defines *kinêsis* as an *entelecheia* of what is potential as such (ἡ τοῦ δυνάμει ὄντος ἐντελέχεια, ἢ

<sup>21</sup> Stobaeus preserves an interesting passage from Iamblichus's work *Πρὸς Σωκράτην περὶ Ἀρετῆς* that shows him to have adopted Aristotle's strict sense of *ἐνεργεία*: Ψυχῆς μὲν οὖν ἂν εἴη ἀρετὴ, τελείότης, καὶ εὐμετρία τῆς ζωῆς, λόγου τε καὶ νοῦ καὶ διανοήσεως ἢ ἀκροτάτη καὶ καθαρωτάτη ἐνεργεία (*Florilegium* I.60).

<sup>22</sup> Taormina (1999) p. 102 describes Iamblichus as sustaining the same view against Porphyry: “Développant son argument, il soutient qu'à ce niveau ontologique l'ἐνεργεία est absolue, exempte de toute forme de passion, et détachée de toute implication avec le mouvement, et que le mouvement ne naît ni de l'agir ni du pâtir”.

<sup>23</sup> Bréhier (1963) pp. 25-6 sees Iamblichus's critique as in general just a misunderstanding of Plotinus's profound change of perspective; he even refers contemptuously to “le fade éclectisme de Jamblique” (p. 26).

τοιούτον, κίνησις ἐστίν, *Phys.* III 1.201a10-11), he goes on to suggest in the same text that *kinēsis* is an incomplete *energeia* (ἢ τε κίνησις ἐνέργεια μὲν εἶναι τις δοκεῖ, ἀτελής δέ, III 2.201b31-32).<sup>24</sup> The crucial point is that *kinēsis* is neither a species of *energeia* nor something completely separate from *energeia*, but rather a *deficient*, i.e., *incomplete energeia*. There is no contradiction between claiming that *kinēsis* and *energeia* are as such distinct and claiming that *kinēsis* is a deficient *energeia* (on this point see Gonzalez 2019, pp. 137-46). Indeed, we have seen that in the Passage itself, Aristotle, after asserting that *kinēsis* is not *praxis*, immediately adds: “or indeed not a complete one” (1048b21-22). Iamblichus can be seen as ignoring this qualification in insisting on the complete separation between *kinēsis* and *energeia*. To do so, furthermore, he must sharply distinguish the two terms Aristotle uses interchangeably in defining motion, *energeia* and *entelecheia*, claiming that only *entelecheia* can be imperfect and can therefore be motion: a claim that has no basis in Aristotle’s text and goes against the evident sense of the term *entelecheia* that can only mean “being in possession of the end” and not “being in motion towards the end.” In short, Iamblichus’s rebuttal of Plotinus, we could say, *goes too far*.

Significantly, Iamblichus as quoted by Simplicius cites in support the view of *Theophrastus* (δεῖ πειθεσθαι Θεοφράστῳ) who appears to have been closer to the mark in his interpretation (and of course, closer to the source). We are told that to Theophrastus, as to Iamblichus himself, “motion appears to be separated from *energeia*” (δοκεῖ μὲν χωρίζεσθαι τὴν κίνησιν τῆς ἐνεργείας, 304.32-33). Yet we are also told that Theophrastus allowed that *kinēsis* is *energeia* in the sense of being encompassed by it, while denying that *energeia*

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<sup>24</sup> Giardina (2011) defends the reading of Iamblichus here as a correct reading of Aristotle. First, she appears to agree with Iamblichus that only *entelecheia* is called *ateles* while *energeia* never is (p. 83). When she must go on to acknowledge that Aristotle does in fact speak of *energeia ateles* and that he uses the terms *entelecheia* and *energeia* interchangeably in the definition of motion, she suggests that he was wrong to do so (p. 86). Aristotle presumably coined the term *entelecheia* to refer to a state of *being in possession of the end*, in which case an *entelecheia* by definition cannot be imperfect or only *on the way to an end*. This is why, against what Iamblichus suggests, Aristotle does not use the phrase *entelecheia atelēs* (clearly a contradiction in terms); instead, he defines motion as the *entelecheia of what is potential qua potential*. It should also be clear that if *entelecheia* itself includes potentiality and being-in-motion, Aristotle’s definition would be viciously circular.

is thereby itself *kinêsis* (εἶναι δε τὴν μὲν κίνησιν καὶ ἐνέργειαν ὡς ἂν ἐν αὐτῇ περιεχομένην, οὐκέτι μέντοι καὶ τὴν ἐνέργειαν κίνησιν, 304.33-34).<sup>25</sup> This again is the crucial point: while being separate from *energeia*, *kinêsis* can be ‘encompassed’ by it as a deficient form of *energeia*. This reference to Theophrastus is also important in suggesting that knowledge of the distinction made in the Passage and debate surrounding it go all the way back to Aristotle’s pupil, as indeed we are also led to expect by the Stoic critique of the distinction.

While we have seen that Plotinus explicitly attacks the so-called ‘tense-test’, i.e. the use of the simultaneity of perfect and present tenses to distinguish *energeia* from *kinêsis*, and does so with the same examples Aristotle uses to illustrate it, this test is not mentioned by Simplicius’s report of the debate. Simplicius does, however, address Plotinus’ argument that if change can occur all at once according to Aristotle, then movement too can exist outside of time (308.33-309.8). His response is essentially that the changes that occur all at once and outside of time are precisely for this reason not *movements*

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<sup>25</sup> It is not clear what work by Theophrastus is being referenced here; most likely a work *Περὶ κινήσεως* attributed to him a number of times in the secondary sources. In his *Metaphysics* 7b13-15 he shows that he is aware of the distinction: there he speaks of ascribing ἐνέργεια to the first principle and κίνησις to sensibles (τὴν ἐνέργειαν ἀντιμεταλλακτέον ὡς προτέραν καὶ τιμιωτέραν, τὴν δὲ κίνησιν ἐν τοῖς αἰσθητοῖς; Gutas (2010) p. 133 translates ἐνέργεια here as ‘actualized state’ but I do not find the justification on p. 272 convincing. See also 5a7 where Theophrastus ascribes ἐνέργεια to the first principle. There is also an important passage quoted by Themistius in his commentary on *De Anima*: ἀπαθὴς γὰρ φήσιν ‘ὁ νοῦς, εἰ μὴ ἄρα ἄλλως παθητικός’, καὶ ὅτι τὸ παθητικὸν ἐπ’ αὐτοῦ οὐχ ὡς τὸ κινήτὸν ληπτέον (ἀτελής γὰρ ἢ κίνησις) ἀλλ’ ὡς ἐνέργειαν (CAG V 3, pp. 107.30-108.18; Fr. 307A). Note how this is not a quote of the definition of motion in the *Physics*, but rather a distinction between κίνησις as being incomplete and ἐνέργεια as being complete: the distinction of *Metaph.* © 6. Priscian of Lydia’s *Paraphrase of Theophrastus’ Discourse ‘On the Soul’* 2.5-6 quotes the same words as those of Theophrastus, but importantly extends the quote: οὐχ ὡς τὸ κινήτὸν ληπτέον (ἀτελής γὰρ ἢ κίνησις) ἀλλ’ ὡς ἐνέργειαν. Ταῦτα δὲ διαφέρει. Χρήσθαι δὲ ἀναγκαῖον ἐνίοτε τοῖς αὐτοῖς ὀνόμασιν [...] (Fr. 307D). Theophrastus clearly has in mind Aristotle’s point in *De Anima* II 5, namely, that the sense is not strictly affected in the sense of being altered by its object and that if we speak of ‘alteration’ and ‘being-affected’ here, it is for want of other words, as these are not strictly the right words. Theophrastus is applying this point to the intellect while suggesting that we use the word he knows Aristotle opposes to κίνησις: ἐνέργεια. Simplicius himself maintains against the position of Plotinus that thought and perception are not κινήσεις but ἐνεργεῖαι since they are indivisible and are accomplished in the instant (308.19-26).

but *energeiai* (ἀλλ' ἐνέργειαι εἰσιν καὶ οὐχὶ κινήσεις αἱ τοιαῦται μεταβολαί, 309.8). A few lines later he explains that if the motionless presence of a form comes to be, there will indeed be timeless changes (ἄχρονοι), but not timeless motions (309.18-20). We have also seen that Iamblichus is reported to have appealed to different relations to time in arguing that *energeia* cannot be the genus of *kinêsis*: “and if one said that motion is to be assigned to time as extended but *energeia* is to be assigned to eternity (αἰών) as occurring without extension and present all at once and as a whole in the moment, not even in this way could there exist a common nature for eternal things and things in time.”<sup>26</sup> Here, of course, Iamblichus is cleverly using Plotinus’s own distinction between time and eternity against him by making it the basis for the distinction between *kinêsis* and *energeia* that Plotinus is challenging. But Iamblichus may have in mind also how the notion of the *aiôn* is anticipated by the temporality of *energeia* as described in the Passage: one that transcends the usual distinction between tenses and that, unlike that of *kinêsis*, has no extension.<sup>27</sup>

We see in any case how Iamblichus supports his absolute separation between *kinêsis* and *energeia* by assigning them to two completely different levels of reality. Chiaradonna is therefore right in suggesting that Iamblichus’ critique of Plotinus in defense of Aristotle has a *Platonist* agenda: he insists on

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<sup>26</sup> καὶ λέγοι δὲ χρόνω μὲν ἀντιπαρτείνειν τὴν κίνησιν ὡς ἂν διαστατὴν οὖσαν, αἰώνι δὲ τὴν ἐνέργειαν ὡς ἀδιάστατον ὑπάρχουσαν καὶ ὁμοῦ ὅλην ἐν τῷ νῦν παρούσαν, οὐδὲ οὕτως ἂν εἴη τις τῶν αἰωνίων καὶ τῶν ἐν χρόνω ὁμογενῆς φύσις, 304.22-25. Iamblichus has in mind here Plotinus’s account of what distinguishes time from eternity as being precisely a *διάστασις ζωῆς* (III.7.11.41). But Plotinus calls both the life of nous that constitutes eternity and the life of the soul that constitutes time indifferently both *kinêsis* and *energeia*. Thus he characterizes the contrast at one point as between ‘intelligible motion’ and the motion of a part of the soul (ἀντὶ κινήσεως νοεῖας ψυχῆς τινος μέρους κίνησιν, 50-51). Even the *διάστασις* of life in the soul is an *energeia*, specifically, an ἄλλο δὲ καὶ ἄλλο ἐνεργούν (52). And as we have seen, Plotinus would insist, with the Stoics, that the ‘other and other’ does not in any way make it less of an *energeia*. (See also: τὴν γὰρ ἐνέργειαν αὐτῆς παρεχομένη ἄλλην μετ’ ἄλλην [...] 35-36). Finally, for Plotinus the *διάστασις* of life in the soul is an image of the life of the intellect even if the latter lacks such *διάστασις*: ἀντὶ δὲ ἀδιαστατοῦ καὶ ἐνὸς εἰδωλον τοῦ ἐνὸς τὸ ἐν συνεχείᾳ ἔν [...] (52-54).

<sup>27</sup> On the top of p. 283 Burnyeat (2008) claims that Plotinus’ argument that ἐνέργεια is no more ‘in timelessness’ than is κίνησις is ‘indexed’ to the *Physics* and not to the Passage, but he completely ignores the response of Iamblichus and Simplicius defending the ‘timelessness’ of ἐνέργεια in contrast to κίνησις, a defense most certainly *not* ‘indexed’ to the *Physics*.

the absolute distinction between *energeia* and *kinêsis*, their having nothing in common, in order to assign the former to the intelligible world and the latter to the sensible world, thus maintaining a two-world theory (see Chiaradonna 2002, pp. 193, 222-3).<sup>28</sup> For Plotinus, in contrast, there are no ‘two-worlds’: motion in the sensible world is only an image of motion in the intelligible world with therefore no autonomous reality or nature of its own.<sup>29</sup>

To be perfectly fair to Iamblichus, however, he seems to have recognized that some *energeiai* must be accompanied by movements; I say ‘seems’ only because it is not always entirely clear when Simplicius is paraphrasing Iamblichus and when he is presenting his own views. In any case, we read in the commentary that activities such as imagination and perception cannot be without movements: to the extent that they are *affections*, they are movements, but in their form they are activities (κατὰ μὲν τὸ πάθος κινήσεις εἶναι, κατὰ δὲ τὸ εἶδος ἐνέργειαν, 305.22). As for how such a presence of *energeia* in movement (compared in the text to the presence of the ‘now’ in time, 305.18-19) is compatible with the sharp distinction between the two Iamblichus otherwise maintains, we need only note that even on his Platonist two-world theory, the intelligible can be present in the sensible or, inversely, the sensible can partake of the intelligible. Indeed, in the following lines the association of some activity with movement is related to the presence of some forms in matter (305.26-27). In any case, the main point of the passage is to critique those who, because of the association of certain activities with movements, drag activities down to movements (τῶν δὲ προσότερω προχωρούντων καὶ καθελκόντων αὐτὰς ἐπὶ τὰς κινήσεις οὐδαμῶς ἂν τις ἀνάσχοιτο, 305.28-29). Furthermore, since those activities not mixed with movements are described as *pure and completely unmoved activities* (τὴν μὲν καθαρὰν ἐνέργειαν κινήσεως ἐκτὸς εἶναι, παντελῶς ἀκίνητοι, 19-20, 26), if one

<sup>28</sup> One can therefore reach also here the conclusion Taormina (1994) reaches in studying another part of the debate between Plotinus and Iamblichus on Aristotle’s *Categories* (concerning in this case the category of ‘quantity’): that Iamblichus in defending Aristotle only by reconciling him with Plato is pseudo-Aristotelian or even himself anti-Aristotelian.

<sup>29</sup> “Contra l’‘immanentismo’ plotiniano, Giamblico difende una rigida gerarchia nella quale l’ἐνέργεια transcendente è contrapposta, nella sua stabilità e compiutezza, al mondo del movimento” (Chiaradonna 2022, p. 223). See also the conclusion of Taormina: “Jamblique a ainsi rompu le lien entre le mouvement et l’acte et il a défini chaque notion par rapport à l’ordre hiérarchique de la substance” (Taormina 1999, p. 123).

can speak here at all of an *ateles energeia*, it would not refer to a movement, which is not an *energeia* at all for Iamblichus, but to an activity that is mixed with movement. In sometimes mixing and sometimes not, *energeia* and *kinêsis* remain in themselves completely distinct. Thus Simplicius will argue some pages later that even if those are right who argue that certain activities of the soul are not possible *without* movements, it is still the case that these activities are not themselves movements because they are indivisible and *complete in the instant*: “If it is also the case that perception and intellection are completed in the ‘now’, neither in this case could they be *kinêseis*, but would correctly be called *energeiai*” (εἰ δὲ καὶ ἐν τῷ νῦν ἢ τε αἰσθησις καὶ ἡ νόησις ἐπιτελοῦνται, οὐδὲ οὕτως ἂν εἶεν κινήσεις, ἀλλ’ ἐνέργειαι ἂν ὀρθότερον καλοῖντο, 308, 24-25).

If Iamblichus exaggerates the separation between *kinêsis* and *energeia*, he still does the service of defending the distinction against Plotinus’ attack. If we go beyond the testimony of Simplicius to what little else we know of Iamblichus, we get a further indication of the significance of this defense. We find Iamblichus again appealing to the distinction between *energeia* and *kinêsis* in an important fragment from his *De Anima*. As Opsomer notes, Iamblichus here “distinguishes between Peripatetics who conceive this motionlessness [i.e., of the soul] as inactivity and those who envisage a motionless activity (*ἐνέργεια*) which is the source of the motions of the living being and which is what Aristotle calls the unmoved entelechy of the soul” (Opsomer 2016, pp. 353-4). Opsomer suggests that with the first option Iamblichus is thinking of Alexander of Aphrodisias, while the second he takes to represent Aristotle’s own view (p. 354). In the words of Iamblichus, the first view takes what is ‘motionless’ (*ἀκίνητον*) to be also ‘inactive’ (*ἀνενέργητον*), while the latter holds that the *motionless entelecheia* (*ἀκίνητος ἐντελέχεια*) of the soul encompasses ‘activity’ (*ἐνέργεια*) which he also calls ‘the most complete activity’ (*τελειοτάτη ἐνέργεια*).<sup>30</sup>

It is not possible to determine if Alexander knew the Passage, given that his commentary on Book *Theta*, if it ever existed, is lost and that there are no unambiguous references to the Passage in his surviving work. What seems

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<sup>30</sup> Fr. 16 in Finamore and Dillon (2002) pp. 40-1. Finamore and Dillon also see Alexander as a target here (p. 120).

clear, however, is that even if he knew the Passage, he gave it no importance. This is due to what C. Cerami has rightly called Alexander’s “thorough application of hylomorphism” (Cerami 2016, p. 164) and characterized as Alexander’s innovation. Whereas Aristotle never characterizes either the productive intellect or the unmoved mover as ‘matterless form’, Alexander insists on this characterization.<sup>31</sup> This means that the only sense of *energeia* in Θ 6 that *he* would have found useful is one introduced before the Passage: *energeia* as *form*. Yet the *energeia* attributed to the unmoved mover in Book Λ is the *energeia of nous that is life* (1072b26-27), i.e., *energeia* in the sense of the Passage of which living and thinking are given as examples: *activity* (πρᾶξις) as opposed to motion in being its own end. And what could more count as such an activity than the ‘thinking of thinking’ (νόησις νοήσεως νόησις, 1074b34-35) attributed to god?<sup>32</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Alexander describes the prime mover as εἶδος τι ἄυλον καὶ χωριστόν, ἐνέργειά τις οὐσα πάσης δυνάμεως κεχωρισμένη (*Quaestiones* 1.25, 10-11).

<sup>32</sup> In a very important paper, Fazzo (2016) raises the question of whether the unmoved mover should be described with the nominative ἐνέργεια or with the dative ἐνεργείᾳ with the subscript iota. The two would of course have been indistinguishable in the most ancient manuscripts, so that it is ultimately a question of which we judge the most genuinely Aristotelian. Fazzo defends the dative, suggesting that Alexander played a role in starting the tradition that came to identify god with ἐνέργεια in the nominative. But ἐνέργεια *in which sense?* Fazzo describes the alternative as being between understanding god as “being in act” and understanding god as being “pure act”. But while she sees the term ‘act’ as ambiguous between “activity” and “actuality”, she claims that god could be pure *energeia* (nominative) *only* in the sense of ‘actuality’ (p. 185). This is certainly Alexander’s view, but why should we accept it? Fazzo does not explain, presumably because she considers the idea of a ‘pure activity’, as opposed to *something that acts*, an odd notion, as it in fact is. But when we are speaking of the unmoved mover, or even of the productive intellect, the alternative is arguably even odder. For if the unmoved mover is *something that* lives and thinks, what exactly is this ‘something’ distinct from the activities it exercises? Obviously not matter, obviously not a compound of matter and form, also obviously (I would maintain) not ‘pure form’. Can we then make any sense of the unmoved mover as distinct from its activity? Lines 1072b29-30 can be revealing for this question: Aristotle here first says that life and continuous and eternal *aiōn* belong to the god (ὑπάρχει); but he then immediately adds, “For the god is this” (τοῦτο γὰρ ὁ θεός). One may wonder whether τοῦτο, as a neuter pronoun, refers to ζῶν ἄϊδιον ἄριστον (l. 29), as Fazzo takes it, or rather to ζῶν καὶ αἰών, which is still grammatically possible (since neuter reference can cover nouns of different genders) and, in my view, makes better sense. If, from the argument in chapter 9 that the god can think only of itself, the conclusion is drawn that the god’s thinking is a thinking of thinking, it is hard to see how one could avoid the conclusion that the god is the activity of thinking. The question

We in any case know that the Passage was unknown to the commentary of Pseudo-Alexander (Michael of Ephesus) and to medieval translators and commentators, with the consequence that the distinction between *kinêsis* and *energeia* and its significance fell into oblivion. Indeed, without the Passage, the interpretation Michael of Ephesus gives of Book *Theta* completely obliterates this distinction, whereas Aquinas can at best grope his way towards it (see appendix). I told the story of the rediscovery of the passage in Gonzalez 2019 (pp. 182-5) and will only briefly summarize it here. The key figure is Cyriacus Stroza, a Florentine scholar who immediately recognized and defended the importance of the Passage.<sup>33</sup> Through his efforts the Passage was translated and incorporated into the 1562 edition of the Bessarion translation of the *Metaphysics*<sup>34</sup> and gained the attention of later commentators such as the great Portuguese scholar Pedro da Fonseca who, crediting Sforza, described the Passage as containing “a serious teaching that is useful and consistent in no small measure with Aristotle’s doctrine” (Pedro da Fonseca 1604, p. 647), a conclusion that led him to critique severely the interpretation, or rather misinterpretation, of Michael of Ephesus. Interest in the

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cannot be settled here, but I suggest that the question should be, not whether the unmoved mover is something that acts *or* is pure actuality, but rather whether the unmoved mover is something that acts *or* is pure activity.

<sup>33</sup> (1562), (1563); see pp. 60-2. The main text is Stroza’s reconstruction of the missing books VIII and IX of Aristotle’s *Politics* which he first wrote in Greek and then himself translated into Latin. To this text Stroza appends a note in which he cites the Passage, already like later editors emending the text of the codices or, as he puts it, providing “verba Aristotelis talia, qualia in codice Graeco non sunt, sed esse talia debent”; he then follows this with his own and, to say the least, idiosyncratic translation into Latin. The text of the Passage was included earlier in the Aldine edition of 1497, presumably because that edition was based on a codex that contained the Passage. But that Stroza is drawing attention to the Passage decades later as one neglected by all Latin interpreters, and that its inclusion in the Bessarion translation is credited to him, suggests that the inclusion of the Passage in the Aldine went largely unnoticed. On the other hand, Stroza’s role appears limited to drawing attention to the importance of the Passage, as his emendations of the text and his Latin translation are not followed either by the Bessarion or by da Fonseca. The Bessarion translation corresponds to the Aldine Greek text, whether or not it is directly following it or the same manuscript (is the Aldine based on M [Ambr. F 113 sup.]?) Da Fonseca’s Greek text appears emended by him and his emendations already anticipate those of later editors.

<sup>34</sup> I was wrong to suggest in Gonzalez (2019) that it is first added in the 1577 Bessarion edition (p. 184).

Passage continued for a few centuries until skepticism (and, no doubt, change in philosophical fashion) threatened its excision.

7. *Conclusion: It is Time to Return the Passage to its Central Place  
in Aristotle's 'Metaphysics'*

The ancient debate we have considered shows that the Passage was both present in ancient manuscripts of the *Metaphysics* and, far from being neglected, was a subject of much discussion. An echo of this debate is to be found in Proclus's commentary on the *Parmenides*. In this commentary Proclus repeatedly assumes that *energeia* is a type of *kinêsis*, arguing, for example, that if motion cannot be ascribed to the One, neither can *energeia*. But at one point he reveals to us that this view that *energeia* is a kind of *kinêsis* is *Plato's* view and adds: "even if according to others *energeia* differs from *kinêsis*" (ἢ ἐνέργεια διαφέρει τῆς κινήσεως, 1172.17-18). Furthermore, there is clear evidence that Proclus himself knew the Passage. In the *Platonic Theology*, and in describing the intelligence of the divine demiurge as being in *energeia* (κατ' ἐνέργειαν) both intelligence (νοῦς) and intelligible (νοητόν), Proclus writes the following: "For it simultaneously thinks and has thought" (Αἰμα γὰρ νοεῖ καὶ νενόηκε, V.17.62.24-25).<sup>35</sup> This characterization of the *energeia* of thinking in terms of the simultaneity of present and perfect tenses is unique to the Passage. We can therefore be confident in concluding that when in the *Parmenides* commentary Proclus refers to the view that *energeia* differs from *kinêsis*, he has the Passage itself in mind as well as later philosophers who defended the distinction of the Passage such as Iamblichus. The passage from the *Platonic Theology* is also significant in another way: immediately after stating the simultaneity of thinking and having thought, Proclus describes the divine thinking as 'eternal' (τῶν θεῶν νόησις αἰώνιος, 62.27). This confirms something that was suggested above in relation to Iamblichus: that the simultaneity of present and perfect tenses could have been interpreted by Neoplatonists as characteristic of eternity. An intelligence that

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<sup>35</sup> I am indebted to Linguiti (2022) p. 366 for noting this reference to the Passage in Proclus.

simultaneously thinks and has thought does not reason according to temporal displacement (ὁ λογισμὸς οὐ κατὰ μετὰβασιν, 62.26-27), but eternally in a perfect present.

It is clear, then, that the relation between *energeia* and *kinēsis* was a topic of debate for centuries after Aristotle's death and was clearly instigated by our Passage which is where the distinction is explicitly explained and defended.<sup>36</sup> The question we should be asking is not Burnyeat's question: "Given that the Passage clearly does not belong where it is and was not there in antiquity, how did it come to be added to one family of the manuscript tradition?" This question is based on a false premise. Our question should be instead: "Given that the Passage belongs where it is (as concerns the argument of Book Θ) and was a subject of much discussion already in antiquity, why is it present in only one family of the manuscript tradition and absent from the other?" As already noted, this question, with the implications of any answer for the authenticity of the Passage, cannot be addressed here; answering it would require detailed, critical comparison of the two manuscript traditions. The argument here concerns the philosophical and historical importance of the Passage.

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<sup>36</sup> It is therefore not the case that, as Berti claims, "Burnyeat, 2008, ha dimostrato che questo passo è sconosciuto a tutti gli autori antichi [...]" (Berti 2017, p. 400 n. 30). Berti's claim is surprising, not only because Burnyeat did not and could not demonstrate any such thing, but because Burnyeat himself does not make any such claim, instead admitting: "My failure to find a single ancient author who knows the Passage may be just that, my failure; my search was very far from exhaustive" (Burnyeat 2008, p. 276). And the authors not considered by Burnyeat or not adequately interpreted by him (as in the case of Plotinus) are not limited to the ones discussed here. Giardina (2014) p. 500 has drawn attention to two other authors she notes are not considered by Burnyeat: Damascius and Olympiodorus. In their commentaries on Plato's *Phaedo*, these authors argue that the exercise of dying is not an activity that is its own end, its end being outside of it (i.e., *being dead*). In making this point, they contrast the exercise of dying with *thinking*, the latter containing its end within itself. Furthermore, they appeal to the test of simultaneity of present and perfect tenses to make this distinction (pp. 496-500). While Giardina allows that perhaps this is not sufficient to show that Damascius and Olympiodorus had direct knowledge of the Passage, as their knowledge could be second-hand, it does show that the distinction of the Passage, made in the way the Passage makes it, was well known. Giardina thus writes: "Tutta la tradizione esegetica neoplatonica esaminata prima considera l'ἐνέργεια esattamente nei termini di quella lezione aristotelica [i.e., the Passage], cioè come una condizione di compiutezza in quanto attività comprensiva del suo fine" (p. 500).

Apart from its historical significance, the usefulness of the ancient debate is the challenge it creates for understanding Aristotle. Aristotle's distinction between *energeia* and *kinêsis* is clearly not the distinction between genus and species Plotinus wants to turn it into. But neither is it the distinction between two absolutely separate ontological plains resulting in a two-world theory that Iamblichus wants to turn it into. *Energeia* for Aristotle as much characterizes the life of plants as it does the life of the unmoved mover. *Energeia* as perfect being and *kinêsis* as deficient being both belong to the same ontological level, contra Iamblichus, while remaining distinct, contra Plotinus.

A summation of the differences between the main protagonists of the debate we have considered, Aristotle, Plotinus, and Iamblichus, will be useful here.

- For Aristotle, the distinction is between *energeia* that, as possessing and being its own end, is complete, and *kinêsis* that, as intrinsically directed towards an end it does not possess, is incomplete. This difference means that something can be an *energeia* without being a *kinêsis* and vice versa, though the latter can also be described as a deficient form of the former. If an *energeia* possesses its own end, then *kinêsis*, as prevented by what is potential within it from possessing the end that is still *its end*, is an *incomplete energeia*; but this is also to say, given the completeness that defines *energeia*, that *kinêsis falls short of energeia*. The relation here is not one of genus and species because that relation cannot be one of being more or less complete (a mouse is no less completely an animal than an elephant).

- For Plotinus, *kinêsis* is in itself complete and acquires the appearance of incompleteness only from that in which it is present. If we want to make a distinction, at most we could speak of one genus of which one species has the differentia of incompleteness and the other has the differentia of completeness. But then the genus would be motion, with the species being more or less complete motion and where this 'more or less' lies outside of motion itself. Plotinus can thus also say that motion is "in the timeless" and comes to be in time only as present in a certain quantity. The only real distinction here is between motion in itself as it exists in the intelligible realm and images of motion in the physical world.

- For Iamblichus, the fact that the one is complete and the other incomplete makes *energeia* and *kinêsis* entirely different things with no genus in common. Since Iamblichus also subscribes to the Platonic dichotomy between intelligible and sensible worlds, *energeia* and *kinêsis* must be assigned to these two separate worlds respectively. But then *kinêsis* is not an incomplete *energeia*, but rather *not an energeia at all*.

We thus see that Aristotle's *kinêsis/energeia* distinction and its different receptions in Plotinus and Iamblichus correspond to three very different ontologies. In Aristotle we have one hierarchically ordered reality in which even living things in the sublunar world can exhibit activities that are more complete than motions, heavenly bodies are eternally active, as he tells us in  $\Theta$  8 (*ἀεὶ ἐνεργεῖ*, 1050b29), and the highest being is pure activity.<sup>37</sup> In Plotinus we have one reality that is entirely intelligible and that is reflected onto matter to create that mere image we call the 'sensible world'; there is accordingly only the motion of intelligible reality that is perfectly complete in itself, with what we see as incomplete motion being only the reflection of this motion in quantified matter. The motion of walking is perfectly complete in itself, i.e., *abstracted from the distance walked and therefore also from the covering of this distance through the movement of the legs*, in other words, *rendered non-physical and purely intelligible*. In Iamblichus we have two separate realities or 'worlds', the intelligible and the sensible, with activity and motion defining the two respectively and therefore being themselves separate. The Passage thus proves to be at the crux of ancient metaphysical debates.

*Appendix: Reading Aristotle's 'Metaphysics' without the Passage:  
two Examples*

As noted above, Michael of Ephesus wrote his commentary on *Metaphysics Theta* without the Passage being present in his manuscript(s). The result is an interpretation that simply obliterates the distinction between *energeia*

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<sup>37</sup> Because Aristotle does not restrict *energeia* as distinct from *kinêsis* to incorporeal substance, the difference between him and the Stoics is not simply that "the Aristotelian ontology posits the existence of incorporeal and immobile substances, while the Stoic one only admits the existence of bodies that act by setting themselves in motion" (Natasi 2024, p. 557). But it is certainly possible that the Stoics saw it this way.

and *kinésis* defended in the Passage. On this interpretation, Aristotle's claim (1046a1-2) in chapter 1 that *dunamis* and *energeia* go beyond (ἐπὶ πλεόν) the way they are spoken of according to motion means simply that what exists in *both* *dunamis* and *energeia* is 'more than' what exists only in *dunamis* or what exists only in *energeia*. To support this interpretation, Michael actually rewrites Aristotle's sentence at 1046a1-2 as follows: "*dunamis* and *energeia* go beyond what is said according to motion or according to *energeia* alone" (ἐπὶ πλεόν γάρ ἐστιν ἡ δύναμις καὶ ἡ ἐνέργεια τῶν κατὰ κίνησιν ἢτοι κατ'ἐνέργειαν μόνον λεγομένων, 566.7-8). What is added is not only the "alone", but also, and even more significantly, the idea that what goes beyond what is said according to *kinésis* must also go beyond what is said according to *energeia*, with the implication that these two notions are equivalent.<sup>38</sup> By what exists in *energeia* "alone" Micheal means 'form', while by what exists in *dunamis* "alone" he means prime and formless matter. This latter he incredibly takes to be the sense of *dunamis* under discussion in the first five chapters of Book *Theta*. Thus, when Aristotle at the beginning of chapter six says that he has spoken of *dunamis kata kinésin*, Michael explains that he means "the first and formless matter" (ἡ πρώτη καὶ ἀνείδεος ὕλη, 578.15-16). The transition then performed by Θ 6 is for Michael the transition from *dunamis* as matter and *energeia* as form to their unity *in motion*. His comment on 1047a30-31 (573.3-12) indeed shows Michael interpreting *energeia* entirely from the perspective of motion. This passage is difficult to translate without assuming an interpretation, but here is a translation as neutral as possible: "The name '*energeia*', which has been set down in relation to *entelecheia*, has come to other things mostly from movements" (ἐλήλυθε δ' ἡ ἐνέργεια τοῦνομα, ἢ πρὸς τὴν ἐντελέχειαν συντιθεμένη, καὶ ἐπὶ τὰ ἄλλα ἐκ τῶν κινήσεων μάλιστα). Michael's interpretation is that *energeia* is said in two ways: 1) in one sense *energeiai* are simply "the ends of movements" (κινήσεων τέλη); the example given is that the color white is *energeia* as the end of the movement of becoming white. Other examples would presumably be the Hermes statue and the house. *Energeia* in this sense is most properly called *entelecheia*. 2) In the

<sup>38</sup> Da Fonseca (1604) p. 510 looking ahead to the Passage, critiques 'Alexander' (Michael of Ephesus) for erring in his interpretation of the ἐπὶ πλεόν passage and failing to understand its true sense.

other sense *energeia* is simply *kinēsis* itself, for example, the process itself of becoming white. *Energeia* in this sense is said to exist both in potency and in act (ἥτις καὶ δύναμει ἔστι καὶ ἐντελεχείᾳ, 9), as on the way to the *telos* and possessing something of the *telos*. Michael therefore interprets Aristotle's claim at 1047a30-31 as meaning that *energeia* with its connection to *entelecheia* is derived from movement (12-18). It is because motion is always motion towards an end and because motion is most properly called *energeia* that *energeia* itself is identified with an end. As for Aristotle's claim that "*energeia* appears to be motion most of all" (δοκεῖ δὲ ἡ ἐνέργεια μάλιστα ἢ κινήσις εἶναι, 1047a32), Michael of course ignores the "appears" (δοκεῖ) and interprets this to mean that the second sense above is the most plausible sense of *energeia* since the *telos* is more a kind of rest than a motion and *energeia*: "ἐν γὰρ τῷ τέλει μάλιστα ἡρεμία ἀλλ' οὐ κινήσις ἔστι καὶ ἐνέργεια" (573.24-25). In short, it is *energeia as motion* that Michael thinks is the sense '*epi pleon*' that Aristotle seeks in Book *Theta*. The Passage would of course have made such an interpretation impossible, given that it insists on a sharp distinction between *energeia* and *kinēsis* precisely at the point at which Aristotle is supposed to have turned to the '*epi pleon*' sense.<sup>39</sup>

Aquinas in contrast manages to avoid this misreading even *without* the Passage, but his commentary still shows what the Passage could contribute. Aquinas does not see at 1047a30-31 a distinction between two ways in which *energeia* is said and he interprets Aristotle as saying only that the word '*energeia*' is derived from motion because motion is what is most evident to us, and that it is later extended to things other than motion (*et a motu ad alia derivatum est*, p. 1805). With regard to the '*epi pleon*' passage at the beginning of Book *Theta*, it signals for Aquinas that Aristotle's aim in the book is to consider potency and act not in so far as they are found in mobile beings, but insofar as they accompany being in general (*secundum quod sequuntur ens commune*). In this way potency and act can be found also in immobile beings such as intellectual beings (p. 1770). Accordingly, when Aquinas turns to

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<sup>39</sup> Given how Michael of Ephesus interprets *Metaphysics Theta*, it is hard to find plausible a hypothesis suggested by Berti: that the Passage was a note on *Theta* 6 written by Michael himself (!) and later inserted into the text of the  $\beta$  family (Berti 2017, p. 400 n. 30). Michael's interpretation is incompatible with the Passage and could be sustained only in ignorance of the Passage.

chapter six, he understands Aristotle there as addressing the question of what *energeia* is in order to show that “act is found not only in mobile things but also in immobile things” (*actus enim non tantum invenitur in rebus mobilibus, sed etiam in rebus immobilibus*, p. 1823). He therefore takes Aristotle to be looking also for a sense of capability or potency that is referred to “act that exists without motion” (*actum qui est sine motu*, p. 1824). He then explains that while the word ‘act’ is derived from motion, nevertheless it is not motion alone that is said to be act (*non tamen solum motus dicitur actus*).

How exactly, then, does Aquinas see chapter six as performing the transition to a conception of act that does not involve motion? This is by no means clear. Aquinas sees Aristotle as indicating with his different examples two ‘diversities’ (*duas diversitates*) of the word ‘actus’: 1) according to the first ‘diversity’, ‘actus’ means *actus* or *operatio*. Aquinas associates this ‘diversity’ with what he sees as a distinction between two kinds of proportion in the text: “analogy: as this in this or in relation to this, so that in that or in relation to that (*ἀνάλογον, ὡς τοῦτο ἐν τούτῳ ἢ πρὸς τοῦτο, τὸδ’ ἐν τῷδε ἢ πρὸς τὸδε*, 1048b7-8). The first takes the form of “as one thing is in another, so a third is in a fourth”. It is according to this sense of proportion that substance and matter are act and potential: as vision or hearing exists in the eyes or ears, so form exists in matter (p. 1828). The second kind of proportion takes the form of “as this is related to that, so this other thing is related to that other thing”. As vision is to what is to be seen (*videndum*), so hearing is to what is to be heard (*audiendum*) (p. 1829). Aquinas claims that it is according to this kind of proportion that motion is related to what has the power to move. What are we to infer from this? Unfortunately, Aquinas says nothing further.<sup>40</sup> He instead introduces the second ‘diversity’ he finds in the text: 2) the difference between how *actus* and *potentia* are used in relation to the unlimited and the void versus how they are used in relation, for example, to what sees, walks and is seen (p. 1830). In the case of the unlimited what is

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<sup>40</sup> Rather surprisingly, Ross follows Aquinas in this interpretation of different kinds of proportion as assigned to the two different examples, but without acknowledging Aquinas or giving any explanation whatsoever (Ross 1924, II, p. 251).

actually being divided is also always at the same time potentially divided (divisible).<sup>41</sup> Aquinas is closely following the text here since the distinction Aristotle makes at 1048b9-12 is precisely between how the infinite and void are said to be in *energeia* and *dunamis* and how things such as *what sees*, *what walks* and *what is seen* (οἷον τῶ ὄρωντι καὶ βαδίζοντι καὶ ὄρωμένῳ) are said to be in *energeia* and *dunamis*. But Aquinas's commentary on the chapter ends with a discussion of the sense in which the unlimited is in *energeia* and *dunamis* without proceeding to discuss what meaning *energeia* has in the case of things like seeing and walking. Why? Because his Latin translation is missing the passage in which Aristotle discusses the cases of seeing and walking (and their difference), which is our Passage.<sup>42</sup> The truncated character of Aquinas's commentary only shows us how necessary the Passage is to the argument of the chapter.

It is also striking how the activities of seeing and hearing are Aquinas's reference point even for understanding the other 'diversity', i.e., the sense in which both form and motion are *energeia*: form because it is in matter *as vision is in the eyes*; motion because it is related to the power to move *as vision is related to what is to be seen*. This use appears to imply that an activity like seeing is no more a motion than it is a form: it is rather a third sense of *energeia* that serves as the paradigm in terms of which we are to understand how form is *energeia* (like vision in the eyes) and how motion is *energeia* (like vision in relation to what is to be seen). But none of this is clarified by Aquinas: his commentary is frustratingly laconic. If he had found the Passage in his text, it would have been a godsend: it would have clarified how an activity like seeing is indeed a sense of *energeia* distinct from both form and motion and a paradigmatic sense in being its own end in the way that motion (as always being towards an end not yet reached) and form (as being an end only relative to

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<sup>41</sup> Michael already emphasized this distinction of senses (580.22-24).

<sup>42</sup> In Gonzalez (2019) I failed to note that the examples of seeing and walking that play such a central role in the Passage are already introduced immediately before the Passage as contrasting with the *apeiron* and in a way that leads us to expect that they too will be discussed: something that only strengthens my case that the Passage belongs exactly where it is. But I did note another connection: that the Passage begins speaking of actions that *have a limit* (πέρας) is explained by the fact that Aristotle is now turning to the sense of *energeia* that is to be contrasted with that of the *unlimited* (ἄπειρον) he has just discussed (p. 150).

matter) are not; it would also have enabled him to show how the chapter indeed arrives at a conception of act suitable to immobile beings (as motionless activity), which is what he takes to be its purpose. Instead, while he finds a difference in the senses of *actus* and *potentia* between the unlimited and the void, and the one hand, and seeing/walking/being-seen, on the other, he finds in his text only a discussion of the former (p. 1830). Aquinas therefore concludes his commentary on the chapter with the most laconic statement of all: “Then in the end he sums up what he said. And this is clear in the text” (*Deinde in fine epilogat quod dixit. Et est planum in litera*, p. 1831).

Aquinas made the best sense he could of Θ 6 without the Passage. But his laconic and unsatisfying commentary suggests that he himself found something missing and that he would have made much of the Passage if he had found it in the Latin translations. The early Greek readers discussed in this paper, in contrast, benefitted philosophically from having the Passage, whatever its origin. We today are equally fortunate and should continue their debate.

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