

Book Review

Walter A. Brogan. *Heidegger and Aristotle: The Twofoldness of Being*. State University of New York Press, Albany, 2005. 211pp. Hardcover \$60.00, Paperback \$21.95. ISBN 0-7914-6491-1.

Stories that are easy to tell are the ones that tend to be passed on, which is perhaps why the usual American version of the story of Heidegger's relationship to Aristotle is fairly simplistic: this relationship is purely negative, insofar as Heidegger's thinking begins by overcoming Aristotle's distortion of pure Greek thinking. Walter Brogan devotes his latest book, *Heidegger and Aristotle*, to showing that precisely the opposite is true, highlighting instead Heidegger's positive appropriation of Aristotle by means of a phenomenological interpretation of the great thinker. For those who have drunk deeply from the well of Heidegger's commentaries on Kant and Plato, it is not surprising that Heidegger had a more complex understanding of Aristotle than is often noticed. However, to claim that Aristotle is a "hidden interlocutor" (3) in *Being and Time* is for some at best surprising and at worst scandalous. Therefore, Brogan wisely devotes an entire book to the defense of this claim, which simultaneously promotes sophisticated understandings of Aristotle and Heidegger.

By what right does Heidegger make the anachronistic claim that Aristotle is a phenomenologist, or at least an early version of one? Brogan wastes no time by stating in the Preface that Heidegger's work here depends on translation decisions. Aristotle's vocabulary has gone through a process of 'Latinization', which is a problem for the simple fact that these translations are also interpretations. Brogan cites the most famous example, namely how the Greek "*ousia*" became the Latin "*substantia*", and was subsequently translated into English as "substance." If we assume for the sake of argument that Heidegger is right about Aristotle's original meaning of "*ousia*", then this would be a severely misleading translation, as will be seen. The important point is to realize what is being implied here by both Brogan and Heidegger, namely that if

one held firmly to the Latinized vocabulary, a certain interpretation is inevitable. A new interpretation only becomes viable by recasting Aristotle's vocabulary in the original Greek meanings. Thus, it is ultimately on the battle hill of etymology that Heidegger's interpretation of Aristotle lives or dies.

One strong example of this, instructive because of its clarity and pith, is Heidegger's focus on the word "*epagoge*," in the *Physics*, traditionally translated as "induction." Heidegger rejects this translation because it is already an interpretation that he takes to be misleading, and instead leaves the word un-translated. Induction can be thought of as an empirical approach, where knowledge of universals is abstracted from the comparison and contrast of various individual beings. Instead, Heidegger thinks that approaching individuals through *epagoge* is phenomenological because it retains the ontological difference, or the difference between being and beings. It is able to do this, according to the original Greek understanding, because "*epagoge* means the ability to hold together the seeing (*nous*) of the whole and the seeing (*aisthesis*) of the individual that is constituted by the whole" (27). So it is indeed true, as all parties agree, that *epagoge* involves not only attending to an individual being but also achieving knowledge of the whole on the basis of the focus on individual beings. But if *epagoge* is translated as 'induction', then Aristotle becomes a thinker completely tied to empiricism, understanding the whole by means of checking a series of individuals and abstracting universals. While this is a standard translation, Heidegger claims that it leads to a grave misunderstanding of Aristotle. For the phenomenologist, being could be understood in principle by examining only one being, because we may ask what the being is "such that we can 'see' and 'recognize' beings in their being" (27). For Heidegger, the failure to think being as different from beings *is* the perversion of philosophy, and Aristotle is not guilty of this on his interpretation.

In addition to resisting the common error of eliding being and beings, Heidegger claims that Aristotle also has a substantial theory about being itself. As a phenomenologist, "Aristotle takes the ordinary experience of natural beings as moved beings and asks what their being must be if they show themselves in this way" (28). Because it is being that allows beings to be seen, beings give us

access to being. Brogan simplifies Heidegger's analysis with the phrase "kinetic ontology" (xi), because being is movement. The title of the book, "The Twofoldness of Being", is illuminated here because being has two elements, "emerging into presence...[and] preserving itself in this appearance" (34). Insofar as they are kept apart, they give rise to the possibility of movement. Insofar as they are held together in their separateness, it is possible to read Aristotle as thinking being as a unity, although a diverse unity. To refer to a previous comment, this is why Heidegger was pained when translators rendered "*ousia*" as "*substance*", because a substance is understood as something frozen and static. It is not that Aristotle rebelled against the popular notions of being as "permanence and endurance", but rather, according to Heidegger, "Being endures in the sense that its movement is continuous" (34).

Although it falls outside the scope of Brogan's thesis, at least some evaluation of Heidegger's recasting of Aristotle's vocabulary would certainly be helpful. Heidegger's incessant admonitions to return to the 'original' Greek meaning of Aristotle's vocabulary leaves us no choice but to wonder whether/how Heidegger is justified in this task. As it is, Brogan only claims to illuminate the often hidden positive appropriation of Aristotle by Heidegger, and to demonstrate that according to Heidegger, Aristotle has a viable phenomenological theory. Perhaps Brogan will save this additional etymological task for a companion volume. If he does produce something more, it will certainly join this book as immediate canonical reading for those English-speakers interested in Continental approaches to ancient philosophy.

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