

PHRONESIS VS. SOPHIA: ON HEIDEGGER'S
AMBIVALENT ARISTOTELIANISM

PANAGIOTIS THANASSAS

THE ISSUE, THE *SACHE*, around which an interpretative dialogue between Aristotle and Heidegger can be carried out has been recognized and confirmed in its importance by both Heidegger himself and numerous scholars in the last decades: it is the relation between theory and praxis, and respectively the relation between σοφία and φρόνησις. There is no need to argue here for the importance of this relationship in the context of Aristotelian philosophy; but the subject is also crucial for the philosophy of Heidegger, insofar as this philosophy is from the outset an attempt to overcome an established understanding of philosophy as a theoretical activity isolated from life and the world of πράττειν. Already in his first series of university lectures in 1919 at the University of Freiburg, Heidegger would identify as the main task of his philosophical engagement the demonstration (and later on the challenge) of what he will call “primacy” or “total regime of the theoretical element” (*Generalherrschaft des Theoretischen*).¹ Because of this regime, the main (and ultimately the sole) topic of philosophy, life itself, remains vague and is bypassed.

Heidegger seeks at this time—and here all scholars are in agreement—a genuine form of life that goes beyond the traditional Aristotelian opposition between “theory” and “praxis.” Faced with this opposition and wanting to undermine it, Heidegger obviously has to challenge Aristotle, and especially *Nicomachean Ethics*, the constitutive text of this opposition. This confrontation will mark Heidegger’s philosophy throughout the 1920s. Another point of consensus among scholars is that this confrontation does not amount to a passive adoption of Aristotelian positions, distinctions and evaluations, but is a

Correspondence to: Panagiotis Thanassas, AUTH – Dept. of Philosophy, 54124 Thessaloniki, GREECE.

¹ The most detailed critical discussion of this primacy is found in M. Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe* (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1975–present), vol. 56/57: 84–94 (hereafter, the *Gesamtausgabe* will be abbreviated “GA”). See also G. Figal, “Heidegger als Aristoteliker,” in *Heidegger-Jahrbuch 3: Heidegger und Aristoteles* (Freiburg/München: Alber, 2007), 57–8.

kind of productive adaptation and reinterpretation of the Aristotelian heritage: “appropriation,” “reappropriation,” “*originelle Aneignung*,” “reinterprets and transforms”—these are the terms in which this relation has been described.² But what precisely is the content and nature of this appropriation?

Its first description and assessment still retains its importance. This was a text by Franco Volpi, which pointed out the “homologies” between *Being and Time* (BT) and *Nicomachean Ethics* (NE).³ It is worth noting here that Volpi outlined his illustration before many of Heidegger’s lectures of the period 1919–26 were published; but it is precisely these lectures that allow us to incorporate Volpi’s contribution into a broader context and to point out its occasional inadequacies. The need for amplifying the scope of the analysis is also clear from a consideration of the many diverging accounts to which scholars have been led in their interpretations of the relationship between Heidegger and Aristotle. While, for instance, Volpi presents Heidegger’s philosophy as the result of a long confrontation with Aristotle, Sadler insists that this philosophy, as essentially Lutheran, is “not just *non-Aristotelian* but actually *anti-Aristotelian*.”⁴ Taminiaux, for his part, adopting the critical project of Hannah Arendt, believes that Heidegger’s philosophy is dominated by a “Platonic bias,” or a “hyper-Platonism,” which banishes the political element and subjugates the entire field of action to the sovereignty of theoretical

² See, among many others, J. Taminiaux, *Heidegger and the Project of Fundamental Ontology* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 124; F. Volpi, “Being and Time: A Translation of the Nicomachean Ethics?” in *Reading Heidegger from the Start: Essays in his Earliest Thought*, ed. T. Kiesel and J. van Buren (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 201; and F. Volpi, “‘Das ist das Gewissen!’ Heidegger interpretiert die Phronesis (Ethica Nicomachea VI,5),” in *Martin Heidegger und die Griechen*, vol. 8 of *Schriften der Martin-Heidegger-Gesellschaft*, ed. M. Steinmann (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 2007), 172. Sadler, by contrast, insists that in Heidegger’s work there are only “translational hints” at Aristotle (*Heidegger and Aristotle: The Question of Being* (London: Athlone, 1996), 142.

³ F. Volpi, “*Sein und Zeit*: Homologien zur *Nikomachischen Ethik*,” in *Philosophisches Jahrbuch* 96 (1989): 225–40. Volpi’s position was then restated (or often *verbatim* repeated) in multiple publications.

⁴ T. Sadler, *Heidegger and Aristotle: The Question of Being*, 150. Sadler also holds that Aristotle’s influence on Heidegger is only methodological and does not involve “ontological” categories, such as *πρᾶξις* or *φρόνησις*! (*Ibid.*, 153.)

reflection.⁵ The most characteristic and important case of an unmediated conflict among researchers lies in the specific issue of the relationship between σοφία and φρόνησις and in the way in which Heidegger adopts, appropriates, and/or reinterprets this relationship. While, for example, according to Volpi, Heidegger proceeds to a reversion of their hierarchy, attributing to φρόνησις a leading role and regarding θεωρία as “derived from a modification” of ποίησις, Gonzalez insists that Heidegger corroborates the superiority of σοφία over φρόνησις, while Kontos argues against Volpi that σοφία is not a form of nonauthenticity for Heidegger, but of utmost authenticity.⁶ In another articulation of the same conflict, Rosen argues that “σοφία is assimilated by Heidegger into φρόνησις,” while, by contrast, Gonzalez argues that Heidegger “assimilates φρόνησις to σοφία.”⁷

In my opinion, such confusion is produced by an assumption implicitly shared by the vast majority of scholars (although this, of course, does not validate its correctness). This is the conviction that Heidegger's philosophy constitutes a uniform, homogeneous corpus and that his thought evolves linearly and uniformly. I have already argued elsewhere⁸ that this assumption is not valid, that the alleged

⁵ See especially J. Taminiaux, *Heidegger and the Project of Fundamental Ontology*, 129–32. It is typical that Taminiaux attributes to Heidegger's “hyper-Platonism” an emblematic feature of Aristotle's teaching, “the pre-eminence of σοφία as ‘Dasein's highest possibility’” (ibid. 141). S. Rosen similarly maintains that Heidegger is closer to Plato than to Aristotle. See S. Rosen, “Phronesis or Ontology: Aristotle and Heidegger,” in *The Impact of Aristotelianism on Modern Philosophy*, ed. R. Pozzo (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2004), 251.

⁶ See F. Volpi “*Sein und Zeit*,” 231–2; F. Volpi, “Dasein as Praxis: The Heideggerian Assimilation and Radicalization of the Practical Philosophy of Aristotle,” in *Martin Heidegger: Critical Assessments*, vol. 2, ed. C. Macann (London/New York: Routledge, 1992), 105; F. J. Gonzalez, “On the Way to Sophia: Heidegger on Plato's Dialectic, Ethics, and Sophist,” *Research in Phenomenology* 27 (1997): 26; P. Kontos, “L'éthique aristotélicienne et le chemin de Heidegger,” *Revue philosophique de Louvain* 95 (1997): 139–40.

⁷ S. Rosen, “Phronesis or Ontology: Aristotle and Heidegger,” 256; F. J. Gonzalez, “Beyond or beneath Good and Evil? Heidegger's Purification of Aristotle's Ethics,” in *Heidegger and the Greeks*, ed. D. A. Hyland and J. Manoussakis (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 154.

⁸ See P. Thanassas, “From Circular Facticity to Hermeneutic Tidings: Heidegger's Contribution to Hermeneutics,” *Journal of Philosophical Research* 29 (2004): 47–71; “Rhetorik der Alltäglichkeit,” in *Heidegger über Rhetorik*, ed. J. Kopperschmidt (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2009), 245–72.

unity of Heidegger's thought does not indicate its real course of evolution—not even for the limited period of the 1920s, when he tries to chart the route which will finally lead him to BT. Along these lines, before evaluating the significance of Heidegger's engagement with Aristotle, we should reconstruct the main landmarks on the path of his thought, and particularly the trail of his Aristotle interpretations, in a way that does not eliminate the (often heterogeneous) diversity of its directions.⁹

In view of the restricted scope of the present paper, which will focus on Heidegger's evaluation, adoption and adaptation of φρόνησις and its relation to σοφία, the task is not unfeasible. Heidegger deals with NE 6 mainly in:

I. a text of 1922 entitled “Phenomenological Interpretations with Respect to Aristotle” (PIA)¹⁰

Ia. a talk given in 1923/24 under the title “Being-true and Existence” (“Wahrsein und Dasein”)

Ib. the university lectures of the Summer Semester 1924 on *Basic Concepts of Aristotelian Philosophy*, also known as “lectures on *Rhetoric*” (GA 18)

II. the lectures of the Winter Semester 1924–25 on Plato's *Sophist*¹¹

⁹ A recent important study stresses from the outset that Heidegger's work presents no single interpretation of Aristotle, but “a multitude of more or less elaborated interpretive sketches and attempts”; see D. Yfantis, *Die Auseinandersetzung des frühen Heidegger mit Aristoteles. Ihre Entstehung und Entfaltung sowie ihre Bedeutung für die Entwicklung der frühen Philosophie Martin Heideggers (1919–1927)*, (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2009), 18.

¹⁰ M. Heidegger, “Phänomenologische Interpretationen zu Aristoteles (Anzeige der hermeneutischen Situation),” in *Phänomenologische Interpretationen ausgewählter Abhandlungen des Aristoteles zu Ontologie und Logik (Sommersemester 1922)* (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 2005); hereafter: “GA 62.” The English Translation is: M. Heidegger, “Phenomenological Interpretations in Connection with Aristotle. An Indication of the Hermeneutical Situation (1922),” in *Supplements*, ed. J. van Buren (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), 111–45 (hereafter: “PIA”). In some instances below, this translation has been emended. References are made to both the original and the translation.

¹¹ M. Heidegger, *Platon: “Sophistes” (Wintersemester 1924/25)*, (Frankfurt: Klostermann 1992). English translation: M. Heidegger, *Plato's “Sophist,”* trans. R. Rojcewicz and A. Schuwer (Bloomington: Indiana

Since Ia remains unpublished and in Ib the references to NE 6 are rather incidental and without specific impact on the issue of φρόνησις, we will focus our attention on the texts I and II, while in the concluding section (III) we will attempt a brief mention of BT and an overall assessment of Heidegger's relation to Aristotle.

I

The destruction of φρόνησις. In his frequent return to the beginnings of his philosophical formation, Heidegger repeatedly argued that it was determined from the start by Aristotelian philosophy, which he had encountered through the dissertation of Franz Brentano.¹² Meanwhile, the publication of all university lectures of his first Freiburg period (1919–1923) allows us to assert that this self-description is incorrect.¹³ On the contrary, his first steps were inspired by an unceasing quest for an authentic “life,” and especially by a phenomenological approach to religiosity, in a quest for an originality experienced within the communities of early Christianity. In this context, Heidegger regarded the philosophical tradition, especially in its Aristotelian (and Platonic) version, as an obstacle to be overcome in order to formulate a “road to an original Christian theology—free from the Greek element,”¹⁴ while Christianity was regarded as a “great revolution against Hellenism.”¹⁵ Heidegger will turn to Aristotle only towards the end of 1921, seeking in him what the

University Press, 2003); in some instances below, this translation has been emended. Hereafter: “GA 19,” followed by references to both the original and the translation.

¹² F. Brentano, *Von der mannigfachen Bedeutung des Seienden nach Aristoteles*, (Freiburg: Herder, 1862). Heidegger's reference is found in his “Mein Weg in die Phänomenologie,” in *Zur Sache des Denkens*, GA 14: 93 and following.

¹³ See GA 56–63.

¹⁴ GA 59: 12, 91; see on this R. Elm, “Aristoteles—ein Hermeneutiker der Faktizität? Aristoteles' Differenzierung von φρόνησις and σοφία,” in *Heidegger-Jahrbuch* 3, op. cit., 271.

¹⁵ GA 58: 61.

religious phenomenon was unable to provide: the elucidation and determination of a genuine way of doing philosophy.¹⁶

But why does Heidegger choose Aristotle as his main philosophical interlocutor? I think that we can (and should) distinguish two factors motivating this attraction. First, in his early philosophical steps, Heidegger is confronted with increasing clarity by the historicity of life, the counterpart of which is the historicity of philosophy as an outstanding expression of life. The critical project of phenomenology will gradually be decoupled from its theoretical self-confinement and will be related, as a “fulfillment” (*Vollzug*) of “formal indication” (*formale Anzeige*), to the facticity (*Faktizität*) of existence, thus taking on a hermeneutic and historical form.¹⁷ Facticity (*Faktizität*) denotes the ultimate, nonreducible reality of individual existence, which every genuine philosophy should acknowledge as its foundation and point of departure. The founding *factum* is life itself and its fundamental reality can never be ignored, cannot be reduced to or deduced from any concept or abstraction. His recognition of the historicity of life and philosophy directs Heidegger to the past, in search of that historical point when the present way of life and

¹⁶ G. Figal and D. Yfantis also place this shift of Heidegger’s interest in 1921 (see G. Figal, “Heidegger als Aristoteliker,” in *Heidegger-Jahrbuch* 3, op. cit., 54; D. Yfantis, *Die Auseinandersetzung*, 19).—Volpi’s attempt to present the entire development of Heidegger’s thought as a successive dedication to the four meanings of “being” distinguished by Brentano must therefore be dismissed as unfounded and overly schematic (see F. Volpi, “Dasein as Praxis,” 94–5; “*Being and Time*,” 196–7; and finally, his “Der Rückgang auf die Griechen in den zwanziger Jahren. Eine hermeneutische Perspektive auf Aristoteles, Platon und die Vorsokratiker im Dienst der Seinsfrage,” in *Heidegger-Handbuch*, ed. D. Thomä (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2003), 29–30. Equally misleading, I think, is also the question of Volpi, when he asks what forces Heidegger, having started with Brentano and the ontological analysis of the multiple meanings of “being,” to turn in the 1920s to the Aristotelian practical philosophy (see F. Volpi, “Das ist das Gewissen,” 169). Heidegger turns to NE not in order to follow a project of exploring the meanings of “being” (and in particular “being” as “being true”), but in his search for authenticity. It is the question of an authentic life that leads him to “being true”—and not vice versa. On the other hand, Volpi points out correctly the importance of Heidegger’s disengagement from Husserl’s analysis of the transcendental subjectivity in the 1920s, and especially from the emphasis this analysis gave to pure theory (ibid. 169).

¹⁷ See on this D. Yfantis, *Die Auseinandersetzung*, 63–5, and the references therein.

philosophy was shaped. In addition, Heidegger's central task since 1919, namely, throwing off the "total regime of the theoretical element," inevitably leads to a confrontation with that philosophy which first made the distinction between praxis and theory and perceived the activity performed in the field of the latter as a virtue *par excellence*. On the other hand, NE 6 opens up a remarkable possibility for an analysis of our relation to the world, which is not exclusively theoretical. This double motivation for Heidegger's involvement with Aristotle becomes obvious in the first text that will occupy us: PIA.¹⁸

Heidegger, in fact, offers here only the sketch of such an interpretation, often referring to manuscripts which we still lack.¹⁹ Three Aristotelian texts make up the topic of this sketch: NE 6, *Metaphysics* (Met.) A 1–2 and *Physics* (Phys.) A–E. This sequence is rather surprising, but it follows a clear plan, which will be explained later on. Already in the first paragraph of the text on NE, Heidegger points out that:

1. his interpretation will "temporarily leave aside the specific problem of ethics";²⁰
2. he will focus on the five intellectual virtues, in order to show that σοφία and φρόνησις are "the authentic modes of actualizing νοῦς";²¹
3. he will underscore the character of beings to which σοφία and φρόνησις refer—demonstrating thus the relationship between the intellectual virtues and the "ontological problem."²²

What mainly interests Heidegger here is the way in which φρόνησις and σοφία, as actualizations of νοῦς, attain truth. The placement of φρόνησις in 6.3 as an intellectual virtue next to σοφία and νοῦς, τέχνη

¹⁸ The manuscript "Phenomenological Interpretations with Respect to Aristotle" is commonly known as the "Natorp-Report"; Heidegger himself called it simply "Introduction." It was written in 1922, with a view to Heidegger's possible appointment to the Universities of Göttingen and Marburg; sent then to both Universities, the text was only published in 1989.

¹⁹ See for example GA 62: 383, where Heidegger refers to a "manuscript V, pp. 48–162," which, according to the editor of the volume, "could not be identified."

²⁰ GA 62: 376 / PIA: 129.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

and ἐπιστήμη, provides him with an opportunity to disengage it from every moral perspective and to consider it only as a form of ἀληθείειν.²³ He thus moves quickly to the concepts of ἀληθές and ἀλήθεια in order to declare his disagreement with the invocation of Aristotle as a precursor to two basic conceptions of truth: neither the notion of truth as *adaequatio*, nor its location within the field of judgment (*Urteil*) have their origins in the thought of Aristotle.²⁴ The primordial meaning of ἀληθές is not even related to λόγος, since the concept of ἀλήθεια denotes primarily a deprivation of oblivion/concealment: it means “taking the *beings* into true safekeeping as unveiled.”²⁵ But what are the beings which are taken into this veritative “safekeeping” within φρόνησις? Heidegger gives an answer in a series of notes that accompany this volume: it is the beings that constitute “the realized aim of action [*das in Handlung erzielte*].”²⁶ At the same time, however, in its character as ἀληθείειν, practical reason remains “*cognitive, i.e. theoretical.*”²⁷

The emphasis on the veritative element of φρόνησις and on its character as “illumination” certainly does not suggest its transformation into a kind of theoretical contemplation. Heidegger does not fail to stress that φρόνησις produces truth as an epitactical principle of πρακτά.²⁸ Apart from its role as a mode of ἀληθείειν, φρόνησις remains ἔξις—and it is this point that provokes Heidegger’s criticism. As a ἔξις, φρόνησις does not arise “out of an explication of the human life as such,” but is determined with reference to the ἐνδεχόμενα ἄλλως ἔχειν—that is, through an “ontological radicalization of the idea of beings that are moved.”²⁹ The result is a kind of a heteronomous

²³ As Taminioux and others have pointed out, Heidegger omits here (but also in GA 19) any reference to the moral virtues, and generally to the Books 2–5 (see J. Taminioux, “The Interpretation of Aristotle’s Notion of Arete in Heidegger’s First Courses,” in *Heidegger and Practical Philosophy*, ed. F. Raffoul and D. Pettigrew (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), 17. In a similar way, two years later, the modes of ἀληθείειν will appear as ways of Dasein’s “self-orientation” (M. Heidegger, *Sich-Orientieren*, GA 19: 129/89).

²⁴ GA 62: 377–9 / PIA: 130–2.

²⁵ GA 62: 378–9 / PIA: 131–2.

²⁶ GA 62: 405.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ GA 62: 384 / PIA: 135.

²⁹ GA 62: 385 / PIA: 136.

determination of human existence and its analysis, which fails to fulfill the main (if not unique) task assigned then by Heidegger to philosophy, that is, an interpretation of life that originates from within itself, that is, as a self-interpretation of life's own existential movement.

If, however, φρόνησις, and subsequently the overall determination of life, remain in this heteronomy, what of the role of σοφία, of its primacy and its relation to φρόνησις? At first, Heidegger attempts a very interesting and probably accurate translation of σοφία as “pure understanding” (*reines Verstehen*). He then focuses on Aristotle's description of the origination of σοφία and adopts the position that its “structure will become intelligible only on the basis of its rootedness in factual life and its *genesis from this*.”³⁰ Obviously enough, this interrogation leads outside NE, pointing to the first Book of *Metaphysics*. The comparative formulation σοφώτερον is derived there by Aristotle from factual life and common language. It is this formulation that will constitute the epicenter of Heidegger's interpretation. Driven by an inclination towards a μάλλον εἶδέναι, factual life develops its questions, its “Whys,” “in a primordially ‘practical’ sense.”³¹ This movement, however, has another side: striving for this μάλλον εἶδέναι, factual life abandons the care of practical-productive activity. Care transforms itself into an εἰδέναι, striving for autonomy. This is certainly a move “*put forward* by factual life *itself*”—and in this sense, the theoretical attitude and tendency is at least as primordial as the practical-productive activity.³²

The treatment of Met. A1–2 ends with the important remark that divine θεωρεῖν, but also θεῖον as its object, have an exclusively ontological and not a theological character: they do not emerge within religious experience, but are conditioned by the ontological concept of motion. One might expect that this purification of every theological aspect of the divine runs contrary to Heidegger's own aspirations and self-understanding. Yet, only two years after his plea for a purgation of theology from secular influences, and obviously in the midst of his Aristotelian turn, Heidegger hastens to declare his current aversion for

³⁰ GA 62: 387 / PIA: 137.

³¹ GA 62: 388 / PIA: 138.

³² GA 62: 388 / PIA: 138.

every theological interrogation: all “philosophy is *in principle atheistic*,” it “amounts to raising one’s hand in a vote against God [*eine Handaufhebung gegen Gott*].”³³

What is ultimately Heidegger’s position in this programmatic text, which, in its sketchy character, is of course unable to fulfill all expectations outlined in it? The editors of the volume in the *Collected Works* have added a series of supplementary manuscripts (*Beilagen*), which are quite revealing of Heidegger’s intentions. We encounter there, on the one hand, a priority of νοῦς, which “precedes λόγος . . . , demonstrates the possible direction of life’s mobility according to its two basic directions σοφία—φρόνησις.”³⁴ On the other hand, φρόνησις is true because it achieves a full appropriation of the principles of πράττειν; ἀληθεύειν in φρόνησις is more primordial than in θεωρεῖν, for the latter achieves ἀληθεύειν “perspectively (*perspektivisch*),” while φρόνησις achieves it “respectively (*respektivisch*).”³⁵ In the last of these supplementary manuscripts, we finally encounter a surprising, but perplexing distinction between σοφία and θεωρεῖν: while θεωρεῖν is derivative and an instance of fallenness, “σοφία on the contrary has passed through the stay (*Aufenthalt*): the radicalization of θεωρεῖν, a way of ‘concern’ (*Besorgen*) that originates from τέχνη and constitutes primordially so much the ‘practical’ as well as the ‘theoretical.’”³⁶

This attempt to draw a distinction between σοφία and θεωρεῖν is indicative of the overall hermeneutic stance of this text. It is obvious that Heidegger is not interested in an orthodox interpretation of Aristotle, and perhaps not even in an interpretation as such

³³ GA 62: 363 / PIA: 121, 194. It is thus an anachronism when Gadamer maintains that in PIA Heidegger still seeks “an adequate interpretation and an anthropological understanding of Christian conscience”; see H.-G. Gadamer, “Heideggers ‘theologische’ Jugendschrift,” in *Phänomenologische Interpretationen zu Aristoteles*, by M. Heidegger (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2003), 77. And I certainly do not share Brogan’s assumption that, in calling PIA “Heidegger’s Theological Early Writings,” Gadamer wants “to parody Dilthey’s decision to give the same title to the discovery of the early works of Hegel” (W. Brogan, *Heidegger and Aristotle: The Twofoldness of Being*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005), 11–12). Yfantis, on the contrary, correctly insists that PIA undertakes a “purely philosophical” argumentation and reveals Heidegger’s current position that philosophy cannot but be atheistic (*Die Auseinandersetzung* 130).

³⁴ GA 62: 404.

³⁵ GA 62: 414.

³⁶ GA 62: 414–15.

whatsoever. He attempts a “destruction” of the Aristotelian thought, searching in it for what he has already announced as the starting point and motive of his quest: traces of an association of this thought with life’s facticity, which could serve as the framework, or at least the initiation, for a reassessment of the question: what is philosophy? Reading this text, that was missing for several decades, Gadamer was right in admitting with surprise that Heidegger here is not interested as much in φρόνησις as in σοφία.³⁷ At the same time, despite their brevity and occasional inconsistency, these studies make clear that Heidegger turns to Aristotle mainly in order to distance himself from the Stagirite. His interpretation, as any interpretation, delimits a field of tensions between the poles of proximity and distance. An interpretation is successful to the extent that it balances efficiently between these two poles (without necessarily seeking the “middle path”). Even if we could confidently say that Heidegger’s interpretations achieve balance, they certainly seek more the distance from the Aristotelian texts than the proximity to them.

The attempt to contrast σοφία and θεωρία is characteristic of Heidegger’s philosophical ambivalence, which emphatically refuses to submit to the Aristotelian conceptual distinctions; σοφία is the intellectual virtue that exclusively applies to the activity of θεωρία—this observation is undeniable in the context of Aristotelian philosophy. In shifting his focus from NE 6 to the genealogy of σοφία found in Met. A 1–2, Heidegger attempts to substitute this genealogy for the fundamental linkage of σοφία and θεωρία and to reduce σοφία to its practical-productive origin.³⁸ Heidegger’s emphasis on the fact that theory, as an activity of life, remains a form of praxis is justifiable, but it is misleading to present this common feature of theory—which it shares with other activities—as its proper trait. I regard this interpretation as a misconception, which in Heidegger’s own framework has been immensely productive.

³⁷ Gadamer, “Heideggers ‘theologische’ Jugendschrift,” 81; Gadamer goes on to stress: “more than the actuality of practical philosophy, it is its [σοφία’s] importance for Aristotelian ontology, *Metaphysics*, that concerns young Heidegger.” In this context, Book 6 appears as “an introduction to Aristotle’s *Physics*” (ibid. 82), in which Heidegger sees the “real centre” of Aristotelian thought (ibid. 85); these are my own translations.

³⁸ “Genealogy of σοφία” is an expression also used by J. Taminioux, “The Interpretation of Aristotle’s Notion of Arete,” 21.

If the remarks above hold some validity, then many of the interpretative conflicts seem to lose their importance. Here I will confine myself to only two questions. The first lies in the dilemma: does Heidegger accept the Aristotelian primacy of σοφία or does he rather opt for a prevalence of φρόνησις? Does he attempt to assimilate φρόνησις into σοφία or σοφία into φρόνησις? If, however, σοφία and φρόνησις are intended here in their Aristotelian conceptual content, then the question seems erroneous from the beginning: a σοφία that has assimilated φρόνησις is no longer σοφία and vice versa. The concepts of both virtues are significant only in their distinction. If, on the other hand, the rhetoric of “assimilation” attempts to describe Heidegger’s interpretive movement after an alternative conceptual demarcation of the two virtues, then I believe that any answer to that question loses its explanatory force, unless we first identify the content of this new demarcation. This, however, is a matter of reconsidering Heidegger’s philosophy as a whole, and not only his Aristotle interpretations.

I take a similar position concerning the second issue, the celebrated “ontologization” committed by Heidegger with respect to Aristotelian practical philosophy and in particular with respect to φρόνησις. The term was established by Volpi, according to whom the term denotes: (a) an interpretation of Aristotelian determinations “as ways of being in the strict sense, such that all ontic meaning is excluded in principle,”³⁹ and (b) a series of determinations of Dasein’s constitution, so that “their content is not something that Dasein can freely choose to have or not to have but is something from which it cannot be abstracted.”⁴⁰ Heidegger presents his own PIA primarily as a contribution to ontology and logic.⁴¹ In 1924 he will coin the term *Ontologie des Daseins*, to which he will return on several occasions.⁴² The position that Heidegger ontologizes Aristotle’s practical philosophy is shared by nearly all scholars⁴³—but what is impressive

³⁹ F. Volpi, “*Being and Time*,” 201.

⁴⁰ F. Volpi, “Dasein as Praxis,” 113.

⁴¹ GA 62: 346 / PIA: 111.

⁴² GA 18: 68.

⁴³ See R. Bernasconi, “Heidegger’s Destruction of Phronesis,” in *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* 28, supplement (1989): 142; S. Rosen, “Phronesis or Ontology: Aristotle and Heidegger,” 251, 263; W. Brogan,

here is the under-determination of this concept. Recent research not only has failed to advance beyond Volpi's initial reflection, but has often ignored his fundamental insight, that is, his reminder that many of the Aristotelian concepts and definitions already have an ontological value.⁴⁴ Indeed, what else is the Aristotelian concept of φρόνησις, if not an ontological determination of human existence, that is a determination of it as a "way of Being"?⁴⁵

Certainly, we cannot ignore that Heidegger bypasses the moral content or aspect of Aristotelian φρόνησις. As we have seen, he declares from the start that his interpretation will "temporarily leave aside the specific problem of ethics"—and later on it will be proved that the omission was not temporary at all.⁴⁶ Presenting, however, this indifference as a result of an ontologically oriented interpretation is based on the assumption that ontology is incompatible with ethics or, in other words, on the modern assumption that ethics is only possible as "ethics without metaphysics."⁴⁷ This assumption is shared by those who seem to insist that any ontological reading of φρόνησις would "destroy this concept,"⁴⁸ while ignoring that NE itself, as practical

Heidegger and Aristotle, 147; F. J. Gonzalez, "Beyond or beneath Good and Evil?" 129; R. Elm, "Aristoteles—ein Hermeneutiker der Faktizität?" 268; D. Yfantis, *Die Auseinandersetzung*, 252. The only exception is McNeill, who sees Heidegger's enterprise rather as a de-ontologization of Aristotelian categories: Heidegger's temporal/historical approach to human existence is, according to McNeill, the result of "a certain displacement of an ontology of presence-at-hand operative in Aristotle's accounts of ethical *praxis*"; see W. McNeill, *The Time of Life: Heidegger and Êthos* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006), 77.

⁴⁴ F. Volpi, "Being and Time," 202.

⁴⁵ At least this is the character of φρόνησις in NE 6, where Aristotle remains indifferent to its various particular manifestations; but also the eminent τύπον in 1094b20 is in fact a methodological self-restraint of the ethics to follow, which results from an ontological determination and explication of ethics.

⁴⁶ GA 62: 376 / PIA: 129.

⁴⁷ This contradiction of Heidegger's interpretation to modern ethical considerations is also made by D. Yfantis (*Die Auseinandersetzung*, 252), who, however, shares the opinion that Heidegger's interpretation is contrary to Aristotle's intentions: The latter's ethical treatise "does not seek theoretical knowledge but wants to clarify the already existing practical experience of his listeners . . . , in order to provide them with a transparent guidance in view of a particular practical realization."

⁴⁸ T. Sadler, *Heidegger and Aristotle: The Question of Being*, 146; see also F. J. Gonzalez, "Beyond or beneath Good and Evil?" 129.

philosophy, still remains a form of *theory*, that is, a form of systematic conceptual elucidation which does not always “flow” into practical guidance, does not always aim at practical regulation, but is carried out occasionally “for its own sake”: as a virtue of the λογιστικόν, φρόνησις is desirable καθ’ αὐτήν (1144 a1–2).

Heidegger’s attempt to overcome the “theory vs. praxis” opposition delineates a field of tensions between these two concepts, which reveals itself not as a product of this interpretation, but as implicit in Aristotle’s own philosophy. While Heidegger wants to eliminate the autonomy of the theoretical element and anchor it in the praxis of life, he simultaneously interprets practical φρόνησις in a way which detaches it from moral virtues and presents it as a quasi-theoretical self-understanding of human existence. It is already Aristotle, however, who often hovers between the theoretical attraction exercised by the supremacy of σοφία and the insight that speculative activity, itself a transformation of other, primary, practical-technical activities, does not suffice (a) to cover the entire field of the rational and (b) to realize happiness on its own. The adequacy of σοφία as the most excellent and perfect of virtues for εὐδαιμονία (1098a17–18) remains confronted with the complementarity of φρόνησις as an indispensable part of virtue as a whole (1144a2–5). The parallelism of these tensions becomes evident in the series of university lectures on Plato’s *Sophist*, given by Heidegger in the Winter Semester of 1924–25.

II

The limits of historical destruction. Heidegger’s lectures on the *Sophist* contain his most extensive and important interpretative study of NE. The first “Introductory Part” on Aristotle occupies almost 200 of the 600 pages of the lectures’ edition in the *Collected Works*.⁴⁹ A first, but in my view rather insufficient, justification of this paradoxical disproportion is given by the author with reference to the need for a “guiding line” to be supplied by Aristotelian philosophy, in so far as this, being later, makes it possible (following an “old principle of

⁴⁹ GA 19.

hermeneutics”) “to proceed from the clear to the obscure.”⁵⁰ The thematic axis of Heidegger’s approach still remains the problem of truth, the treatment of which will start again with the five ways of ἀληθεύειν in NE 6. Heidegger reiterates the privative character of truth in its etymological origination from ἀ+λήθη and interprets ἀληθεύειν as “to be disclosing [*aufdeckendsein*]: remove the world from concealedness and coveredness.”⁵¹ The emphasis with which Aristotle states that ἡ ψυχὴ ἀληθεύει offers the possibility of a distinction: truth is a feature of beings, but above all an ontological determination of human existence. From this primordial ἀληθεύειν is derived the truth of λέγειν, which has the possibility of a “detachment” (*Freiständigkeit*), an autonomous self-sufficiency towards things, that is the possibility not only of errors but also of its decline into “chatter” or “idle talk” (*Gerede*). The detachment of λέγειν thereby permits the “nonsense” of viewing truth as *adaequatio*, as “correspondence of the soul, the subject, with the object.”⁵² The transformation of truth into “value” (*Wert*) in contemporary epistemology concludes what Heidegger describes here in general terms as the “history of the fallenness of truth.”⁵³

By way of the Aristotelian distinction between ἐπιστημονικόν and λογιστικόν, a clearly ontological distinction explicated by Aristotle through a reference to another distinction between the variable and the immutable/eternal, Heidegger will emphasize the role of temporality, stressing that “for the Greeks, Being means presence” and that “beings are interpreted as to their Being on the basis of time.”⁵⁴ Obviously enough, Heidegger is here already on the way towards BT.⁵⁵ In the previous semester, the lectures on Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* had revealed λέγειν as the field of the notorious “everydayness” of

⁵⁰ GA 19: 11/8 (as mentioned in note 10 above, the page numbers refer to the original and the translation).

⁵¹ GA 19: 17/12.

⁵² GA 19: 25–7/18–19.

⁵³ GA 19: 27/19.

⁵⁴ GA 19: 34/23–4.

⁵⁵ D. Yfantis (*Die Auseinandersetzung*, 217–18) convincingly shows that the plan to write a treatise on Aristotle was replaced by the treatise on “time” precisely because Heidegger, in his confrontation with Aristotle, noticed the temporal character of οὐσία and thus the foundation of ontology upon temporality. This diagnosis is the starting point of fundamental ontology.

existence (*Alltäglichkeit des Daseins*), whereupon conceptuality and theoretical activity are founded. In this context, a profound change has occurred: in the 1924 lectures, Heidegger does not investigate the specific conceptuality of Greek philosophy, as rooted in specific, historically located fundamental experiences, but the relationship between *conceptuality in general* and an *achronic, quasi-eternally existing everydayness*. This allows the suspicion that, in these lectures, Aristotle functions only as a pretext, a cover for the formation of the *systematic* project of a conceptuality founded in everydayness.⁵⁶ In other words, the issue here is what was previously mocked in the PIA: “the Dasein-in-general of some universal humanity!”⁵⁷

The project of fundamental ontology will take shape in 1925, in the context of the lectures entitled *Prolegomena to the History of the Concept of Time*⁵⁸ and will lead in the following year to the compilation of the incomplete *magnum opus*: BT. On the way to BT, Heidegger has in fact abandoned the project of historical destruction. Turning to Aristotle, he no longer seeks to delineate the field of tensions between past and present, but rather to obtain a historical covering for his achronic determination of Dasein as the ground of all conceptuality. The historical tensions opened up (according to PIA) between the philosophical tradition and contemporary philosophical research, between the concealing function of tradition and the disclosing return to the genuine sources of our conceptuality, are now replaced by a new *systematic* tension unfolding between an ahistorical conceptuality and its (equally unhistorical) ground.

But what is, assuming this context, the role and position of the interpretation of NE in the 1924–25 lectures on the *Sophist*? I would insist that understanding this interpretation presupposes that we abandon the expectation of a linear development in Heidegger’s thought. Obviously, the years 1922–26 are an extremely dense period, permeated by strong tensions or even inconsistencies. To this observation I would add the hypothesis (which, however, can only be

⁵⁶ See on this P. Thanassas, “Rhetorik der Alltäglichkeit.”

⁵⁷ GA 62: 350 / PIA: 114.

⁵⁸ GA 20. See M. Michalski, “Χάιντεγκερ, Ντίλταϊ και Η έννοια του χρόνου [Heidegger, Dilthey, and *The Concept of Time*],” *Hypomnema* 5 (2006): 174–5; D. Yfantis, *Die Auseinandersetzung*, 362.

verified within a critical edition of the *Collected Works*) that the lectures of this period do not always reflect fully and accurately the evolution of Heidegger's thought, but may constitute remnants of earlier stages, which he has already overcome. In other words, although in the summer of 1924 Heidegger has already abandoned the project of historical destruction as a process that coincides with philosophy as such, in the fall of the same year he returns to Aristotle, taking up the thread where PIA left off. My hypothesis is thus that the lectures of the 1924–25 Winter Semester rely mainly on material that very likely existed since 1922, when Heidegger was referring to detailed interpretations still remaining unidentified.⁵⁹

As for their content, these 200 pages do not differ substantially from the outline exposed in PIA, but they differ fundamentally in the role they are expected to perform. While in 1922 the interpretations of Aristotle were the conclusion of a retrospective historical movement which coincided with philosophy as such, now, in the fall of 1924, they have become a mere "Introductory Part" to an interpretation of the *Sophist*. In the 1922 text, the historical destruction of Aristotle appeared to be a genuine expression of a philosophy that originates from factual existence, as a form of theory which occurs out of praxis, but which in turn becomes necessary for understanding life and praxis. Factual life will never appropriate itself authentically without historical destruction; praxis will never understand itself authentically without theory. The scheme of historical destruction obviously results in a kind of primacy of $\theta\epsilon\omega\rho\acute{\iota}\alpha$,⁶⁰ which is quite close to the Aristotelian position but far from Heidegger's aspiration to overcome this traditional primacy. The mode of this overcoming, historical destruction, proves ultimately to be a form of ratifying the primacy.

Heidegger's hermeneutic confrontation with NE has its own value in view of the prospects that it opens up for the interpretation of this text. On the other hand, this confrontation reflects a permanent embarrassment of Heidegger in view of the interconnection of this

⁵⁹ See above, note 19. In a letter to Jaspers commenting on how PIA came about (November 19, 1922), Heidegger clearly indicates the existence of extensive interpretations: "I sat down for three weeks, taking notes extracted from my own texts, and added an Introduction" (quoted in GA 62: 442).

⁶⁰ As Figal indicates: "hermeneutics of facticity is *theory*." G. Figal, *Zu Heidegger: Antworten und Fragen* (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 2009), 168.

interpretation and his own project. The tension between the Aristotelian primacy of theory and Heidegger's intention to abolish or modify it, a tension we have already observed in the PIA, appears intact again in the lectures on the *Sophist*.⁶¹ At this point, however, a methodological remark on the reading of these lectures might prove useful in relation to an observation made by Gadamer and often repeated by other scholars: Heidegger's manner of presentation led those attending the lectures to often forget that what they were presented was not Aristotle but Heidegger.⁶² This danger, however, can be addressed through the appropriate hermeneutic preparation. What is more dangerous is probably the reverse: to forget that Heidegger, although his interpretation is full of his own conditions, ultimately follows here the intention of interpreting a foreign, Aristotelian text—and this holds throughout this long Introduction to GA 19. This simply means that, when he favors a position, he acts as an interpreter of the Aristotelian text, without necessarily adopting it as his own philosophical stance.⁶³

Let us return, however, to the ways in which ἀληθεύειν takes place. In view of ἐπιστήμη, Heidegger will stress that this, together with the other intellectual virtues, remains a form of praxis: "Every compartment of Dasein is thus determined as πράξις and ἀλήθεια."⁶⁴ This position is as correct as any other form of under-determination: if

⁶¹ I prefer to speak of a tension rather than of a "contradiction," as Taminiaux did (J. Taminiaux, "The Interpretation of Aristotle's Notion of Arete," 23–4).

⁶² See H.-G. Gadamer, *Philosophical Apprenticeships (Studies in Contemporary German Social Thought)*, (Boston: MIT Press, 1985), 49: "In Heidegger's lectures we were often so personally touched that we no longer knew whether he was speaking of his own concern or that of Aristotle."

⁶³ Thus I do not share Gonzalez's conviction ("On the Way to Sophia," 29–30) that Heidegger is always "appropriating, and not simply paraphrasing," Aristotle's analysis. Brogan (in *Heidegger and Aristotle*), on the other side, pursues an interpretation which presents Heidegger's reading as a quasi-natural, ordinary reading of the Aristotelian text. In my view, however, the price for this "domestication" is a dulling of the hermeneutically productive tension between the two divergent philosophical projects. Kirkland, for his part, presents an interesting reading of the "temporality of φρόνησις," in a text eminently influenced by Heidegger but at the same time self-sufficient, without a single reference to Heidegger; see S. D. Kirkland, "The Temporality of Phronêsis," *Ancient Philosophy* 27 (2007): 127–40.

⁶⁴ GA 19: 39/27.

everything is πρᾶξις , then we simply deprive πρᾶξις of any possibility of being a distinct concept, we reduce all human activities to this amorphous, undifferentiated conduct. A similar under-determination takes place in the case of φρόνησις , which is the subject of § 8 in the lectures: the object of φρόνησις is “ζωή itself”; its τέλος is “the Being of the deliberator himself”; it is “not a πρὸς τι and not a ἔνεκά τινος ; it is the ἄνθρωπος himself.”⁶⁵ In these assessments and throughout his analysis, Heidegger only incidentally mentions and then quickly sidesteps the issue of the content of this self-relation. He cites, for example, the phrase $\text{τὰ αὐτῷ ἀγαθὰ καὶ συμφέροντα}$,⁶⁶ but only to focus on αὐτῷ , which he describes as a form of void self-relation, finally reaching a conclusion quite astonishing from an Aristotelian perspective: “A result is not constitutive for the Being of an action; only the εἶ , the How, is.”⁶⁷ But on what grounds could we understand εἶ in the formal sense of “How”?

This attempt to drain NE from any moral intent has been pointed out repeatedly and sufficiently. Heidegger himself stresses that “the ἀγαθόν has at first no relation to πρᾶξις at all; instead, it is a determination of beings insofar as they are *finished, complete*.”⁶⁸ But what is then the role of a φρόνησις that has lost all of its moral and evaluative content? Bare of its relation with moral virtues, φρόνησις can now only assume the function of a self-elucidation! Since the κακία of 1140b19 is interpreted as a “tendency to cover” (*Verdeckungstendenz*), φρόνησις retains only the form of “an ἀληθεύειν which makes an action transparent in itself.”⁶⁹ Resolutely but tacitly, φρόνησις loses here its epitactical character and appears as a form of self-understanding of the acting subject. This alone will then make possible its impressive linking with conscience (*Gewissen*)⁷⁰—a quite unconvincing linking, since it is justified simply by the impossibility of oblivion as a common feature of both concepts.⁷¹

⁶⁵ GA 19: 49–50/34–5.

⁶⁶ NE 1140a25; GA 19: 48/34.

⁶⁷ GA 19: 51/35.

⁶⁸ GA 19: 123/84–5.

⁶⁹ GA 19: 52–3/37.

⁷⁰ GA 19: 56/39.

⁷¹ The only scholar who shared this identification was probably F. Volpi: “There are thus good grounds for saying that conscience in Heidegger corresponds to φρόνησις ” (*Being and Time*, 208). Yfantis, by contrast,

The focal point of Heidegger's interest in φρόνησις is here again its relation to σοφία, not only because this relation is of great importance for Aristotle in NE 6, but mainly because it is crucial for Heidegger's own inquiry and interests. The interpretation of φρόνησις as a form of self-elucidation transforms it into a form of theory, the object of which is man himself, as the acting subject. This "moral neutralization" of φρόνησις⁷² will be followed by a "theoretical neutralization" of σοφία, which effectively renders the Aristotelian insistence on the primacy and superiority of this virtue null and void. While, however, the "theorization" of φρόνησις was based on its internalization and a redirection of its intentions from the πρακτόν to the πράττων, the "practization" of σοφία is based on a genealogical reconstruction of its origin from pretheoretical, techno-practical activities on the basis of Book A1–2 of the *Metaphysics*.

Heidegger recognizes in A1–2 a "comparative mode of speech" (μᾶλλον, σοφώτερον), which Aristotle adopts from everyday language in order to apply it to his genealogy; but Heidegger perceives this genealogy as an "ontological-theoretical founding" of σοφία in pretheoretical forms of human activity, and for this reason he evokes⁷³ the well-known passage from NE 6.7,⁷⁴ where σοφία is characterized as ἄρετὴ τέχνης.⁷⁵ In my view, however, this is not just an idiosyncratic interpretation, but a clear misunderstanding of Aristotle's reference to a common way of speaking of σοφία, which does not anticipate his own definition of the concept. As Aristotle clearly emphasizes, he refers here exclusively to a way of speaking about σοφία in the field of arts, with exemplary cases of σοφοί like Phidias and Polycleitus, and

correctly notes (*Die Auseinandersetzung*, 320–1) that φρόνησις has less in common with *Gewissen* than with *Entschlossenheit* and that the concept of conscience in BT cannot have its origin in Aristotle's practical philosophy.

⁷² In his important essay ("Aristoteles—ein Hermeneutiker der Faktizität?" especially 278–9), R. Elm described the specific aspects of Heidegger's attempted "moral neutralization of φρόνησις."

⁷³ GA 19: 66–8/46–7.

⁷⁴ 1141a11–12.

⁷⁵ R. Bernasconi ("Heidegger's Destruction of Phronesis," 134–6), reminds us that Heidegger follows here Prantl's interpretation, according to which Aristotle allows for only two intellectual virtues; σοφία is thus the excellence of τέχνη. Brogan, in turn, correctly remarks that, according to Heidegger, "σοφία is a privative way of revealing." *Heidegger and Aristotle*, 17.

he stresses restrictively: ἔνταῦθα οὐθὲν ἄλλο σημαίνοντες τὴν σοφίαν. Although in τέχνη we can indeed discover a “given predelineation for σοφία,”⁷⁶ this does not make σοφία a case, a version or a perfection of τέχνη! As Heidegger himself will later concede, “σοφία, from the very beginning, constitutes an autonomous mode of Being of Dasein, juxtaposed to ποίησις.”⁷⁷

It is only the presence of νοῦς in φρόνησις and σοφία which ensures that they both capture the last things (σοφία the first principles, φρόνησις the individual cases); this renders them both the “highest modes of ἀληθεύειν.”⁷⁸ But which of the two is the supreme one? While Aristotle, on the grounds of the ontological priority of its objects, asserts his preference for σοφία, Heidegger makes a spectacular move. He insists that φρόνησις is inferior, just because its autonomy is limited, and this happens since it depends on goodness: ἀδύνατον φρόνιμον εἶναι μὴ ὄντα ἀγαθόν.⁷⁹ Not only πράξις depends on φρόνησις, but also φρόνησις on πράξις, for it remains unreal without the fulfillment, the accomplishment of action. This essential feature of φρόνησις is presented by Heidegger as an undermining of its independence, and he thus blames Aristotle for endangering the autonomy of φρόνησις to the extent that he makes it depend on its realization in the person of him who is ἀγαθός.⁸⁰ This leads to a dilemma, which has never and in no way occupied Aristotle and therefore should be considered as Heidegger’s own dilemma: while φρόνησις has a human being as its topic, it loses its autonomy, dependent as it is on man’s goodness; and σοφία retains its autonomy, but thus lets go of its contact with human Being.⁸¹

Let me emphasize that the dilemma does not appear in this form anywhere in the Aristotelian corpus. The emphasis with which this ostensible dilemma is highlighted seems to confirm my suspicion that it is Heidegger’s own invention: it is the dilemma that concludes his attempt to transform the Aristotelian distinction between σοφία and φρόνησις; it is the dilemma that concludes his own project of

⁷⁶ GA 19: 77/53.

⁷⁷ GA 19: 125/86.

⁷⁸ GA 19: 158–64/108–13.

⁷⁹ 1144a36; GA 19: 166/114.

⁸⁰ GA 19: 167/115.

⁸¹ GA 19: 168/115.

destruction; and it is the dilemma that will show him the way of abandoning this project and that will ultimately direct him to a venture already prepared one semester earlier, namely, fundamental ontology. In 1922, Heidegger formulated the anticipation that a return to Aristotle could remove the sediments of the tradition and grant access to a form of philosophy originating from factual life. The task of historical destruction is a theoretical enterprise that appears in the form of the fulfillment of an authentic biotic relationship with the past, a theoretical enterprise that attempts to escape its bare theoreticity. That project has failed in a double way: both in general, as a project of historical destruction in the form of theory that emerges out of facticity, and in the specific expectation that such an emergence has indeed taken place in the Aristotelian philosophy and will be revealed there. This double failure is announced by the dilemma just outlined. To the extent that φρόνησις remains dependent on facticity, it is unable to constitute a mode of self-elucidation; and to the extent that theory focuses on a pure search for principles, it loses its relation to human facticity.

Could we speak of a progress or, at least, a development in Heidegger's thought from the PIA of 1922 to the *Sophist* of 1924? The new elements of the 1924 lectures are mainly the numerous references to the "Being of Dasein" and to temporality. The content of the Aristotle interpretations, however, is actually a repetition and unfolding of the same hermeneutic approach already exposed in PIA. Having meanwhile traced, on the occasion of the Aristotelian *Rhetoric* (GA 18), a version of substituting everydayness for historicity, Heidegger returns for a last time in GA 19 to the project of historical destruction, colliding again with the contradictions I have tried to indicate. In these lectures, however, NE is a mere Introduction to the main theme of the *Sophist*, in view of which Heidegger will examine the "fundamental question of Greek philosophical research . . . the question of Being, the question of the meaning of Being, and characteristically the question of truth."⁸² Heidegger's "transitory Platonism"⁸³ is not only a result of the tensions of his relation with

⁸² GA 19: 190/132.

⁸³ This apt formulation belongs to Figal (*Zu Heidegger: Antworten und Fragen*, 108); this "Platonism" does not denote anything like the approval of Plato's theory of ideas, but simply Heidegger's provisional approach of

Aristotle, but is also an insight regarding the limits of historical destruction altogether. This project is gradually abandoned in favor of a search for elements of Greek ontology contributing to the identification and formulation of the question which, gradually but steadily, emerges as the primary one: the question of Being. The confrontation with the ontological questioning of the *Sophist* will indeed contribute to the identification of this question, which in the following semester will take the form of a “fundamental ontology.”

III

BT. Some conclusions. The Second Part of BT was entitled “Basic Features of a Phenomenological Destruction of the History of Ontology on the Guideline of the Problematic of Temporality” and had as its subjects:

- a. Kant’s doctrine of the schematism and time;
- b. Descartes’ *cogito sum*;
- c. Aristotle’s treatise on time.

In view of these topics, my position that Heidegger has abandoned here the project of historical destruction could seem unfounded. The first point to argue against such an objection is that this Second Part was never published, and the same applies to the Third Division of the First Part, which would “explicate time as the transcendental horizon of the question of Being.” Nevertheless, already the announcement of this diagram of contents confirms that destruction here, to the extent that it still remains as a goal, has been separated from the issues to be discussed in the First Part:

- a. preparatory fundamental analysis of Dasein;
- b. Dasein and temporality;
- c. time and Being.

Platonic dialectic, that is, of the “insight into the perspectivity of philosophical thought” as an alternative to Aristotle’s pure theory. *Ibid.*, 116.

Reduced in the lectures on *Rhetoric*⁸⁴ to an empty shell and having gone through the failure of GA 19, the destruction of the history of philosophy has now been completely cut off from the analysis of Dasein and is “exiled” in Part 2. Human existence here is not approached within a historical reflection, as an interrogation of philosophical tradition, but in the form of a quasi-eternal structure; and this despite the emphasis on the role of historicity as a “temporal mode of Being of Dasein itself,”⁸⁵ and despite the dedication of a large part of the published work to historicity,⁸⁶ which, however, is considered here as a specific, partial aspect of Dasein, without structuring and determining its overall analysis.⁸⁷

Between 1922 and 1927, Heidegger has revised his certainty that “philosophical research . . . is ‘historical’ knowledge”⁸⁸ and now attempts an ontological investigation, which is in principle ahistorical and founded upon an ahistorical Dasein. Philosophy no longer constitutes a “hermeneutics of facticity,” but has to be “constituted as science” and to undertake as its main task the “objectivation of Being” within the horizon of time⁸⁹—that is, within an ahistorical time, which since 1924 has begun to replace history in the function of the horizon within which fundamental philosophical questions are raised and answered. Only this elision of history will render BT’s impressive foundationalism possible.

Heidegger seeks in Dasein a *fundamentum inconcussum*, on which ontology will be transcendently founded as “scientific philosophy.” This undertaking fails as well. It is not accidental that, a

⁸⁴ GA 18, 1924.

⁸⁵ BT 19.

⁸⁶ BT 2.5, §§ 72–7.

⁸⁷ My position on the limits of the project of historical destruction and its abandonment in 1925, initially formulated in 2000 (in publications in Modern Greek), found its most recent reiteration in P. Thanassas, “Rhetorik der Alltäglichkeit.” Earlier, Figal had characterized BT as a “consequential interlude” (*Heidegger zur Einführung* (Hamburg: Junius, 1992), 51). Meanwhile, D. Yfantis (*Die Auseinandersetzung*, 145) also indicates the absence, after 1923, of the reflection on the history of philosophy. Yfantis remarks that BT does not pose the problem of history from the start, but only in part 2.5, after care has emerged as Dasein’s Being and temporality as the meaning of Being. According to Yfantis, this trend is already visible in GA 19.

⁸⁸ GA 62: 368 / PIA 124.

⁸⁹ GA 24: 455–61.

few years later, Heidegger will describe any reference to a “fundament” and even “fundamental ontology” as metaphysical divergences and will renounce these notions. The anticipation of Dasein as a steadfast fundament for philosophy as ontology, however, was not only an adoption of traditional metaphysical claims; above all, it proved incompatible with the whole notion of Dasein in BT. Dasein cannot be a “fundament”—and particularly not a “firm” one—if its main characteristic is to rupture all traditional determinations applied to human existence, especially those descriptions that speak in terms of substance. These descriptions, the traditional notions of existence as a substance or a subject altogether, are contested in BT by a “decentralized” Dasein, always “open” to (and sometimes dispersed in) the surrounding world.

This rupture and dissolution was the ultimate result of historical destruction. This project failed in its declared aim, namely, in the demonstration of the Aristotelian concepts as expressions of factual experience—and the reason for this failure is probably that concepts are not derived from facticity at all; philosophy, rather, prefers to emerge ἐξ αὐτόφνης. On the other hand, destruction permitted a radical restructuring and rectification of those concepts in a context which is not that of Aristotle, but that of Heidegger. The philosopher from Meßkirch failed to come together with his predecessor from Stagira, but the frictions of his “destructional” project allowed him to develop and sharpen his own conceptuality. This new formation appears as a result of his confrontation with Aristotle, but does not constitute an importation, an imitation, a replication, a redoublement, a correspondence, or an equivalence. I am inclined to believe that the interpretative value of such parallelisms, in view of BT, is negligible and can sometimes bear a negative sign. There finally remains a basic, fundamental, unbridgeable gap between the two philosophers: Aristotle constantly seeks distinctions, whereas Heidegger attempts fusions and reductions. This difference is apparent and can be pointed out when Heidegger interprets Aristotle, but when he attempts to articulate his own philosophy, this difference is so fundamental as to render unproductive the search for similarities and parallels. What I mean, deviating to some extent from my own earlier position,⁹⁰ is that,

⁹⁰ See the publications mentioned in note 8 above.

concerning BT, the contribution of descriptive terms such as “radicalization,” “correspondence,” “resumption,” “appropriation,” “reversal,” “analogy,” “reformulation” is of minor hermeneutical effectiveness.⁹¹ As Yfantis has recently stressed, “Aristotle’s presence in BT cannot be determined by means of such a doxographic undertaking.”⁹²

To use an example: Kontos is right, when he criticizes Taminiaux’s position that BT’s pair “authenticity-inauthenticity” reflects the Aristotelian distinction between *πρᾶξις* and *ποίησις*, while *σοφία*, due to its origination from *τέχνη*, also remains a version of inauthenticity. Kontos counterproposes a tripartite array: “τέχνη—φρόνησις—σοφία” vs. “inauthenticity—(neutral) care—authenticity.”⁹³ This tripartite scheme is more convincing than the bivalence proposed by Taminiaux (who, moreover, in facing the relation between “authenticity” and “inauthenticity” as an opposition, overlooks Heidegger’s key assertions about this relation). Contrary to Volpi and Taminiaux, Kontos attempts to rescue *σοφία*. Nevertheless, what is the value of such a “rescue,” if we bear in mind that:

- a. in the lectures of 1924–25, as we have seen, Heidegger has attempted a clearly anti-Aristotelian dissociating of *σοφία* from the field of theory?
- b. the most frequent warning in BT refers to the danger of the theoretical component and its autonomy?

If BT’s authenticity “represents” the Aristotelian *σοφία*, this representation deforms and falsifies both the representative and the

⁹¹ All these terms appear in Volpi’s several publications. B. Minca (in *Poiesis. Zu Martin Heideggers Interpretationen der aristotelischen Philosophie*, (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2006), 36–7) correctly notes the inadequacy of these terms, but, certainly, his proposal to replace “radicalization” and “ontologization” with “critique” is also inadequate, since it seems to lack (as does Minca’s interpretation in its entirety) any content related determination. R. Bernasconi, in turn, rightly points out (“Heidegger’s Destruction of Phronesis,” 130) that an interpretation consisting in the plain correlation of terms is problematic. W. McNeill, for his part (*The Time of Life: Heidegger and Êthos*, 79), warns emphatically against a “claim that the 1927 treatise is nothing more than a rendition of Aristotle.”

⁹² D. Yfantis, *Die Auseinandersetzung*, 468.

⁹³ J. Taminiaux, *Heidegger and the Project of Fundamental Ontology*, 116. P. Kontos, “L’éthique aristotélicienne et le chemin de Heidegger,” 135–40.

represented;⁹⁴ and if Heidegger's permanent aspiration is a kind of unifying fusion of φρόνησις and σοφία, such unity is lame, since φρόνησις has been deprived of its content, the εὖ πράττειν; it is not a unity of distinct parts, since the distinction itself has been abolished.

I will conclude with two questions and an attempt to answer them. The first has frequently been formulated: why is Aristotle hardly ever mentioned in the published part of BT? I hope that, after the preceding analysis, the answer to this question has become simple: Heidegger does not refer to Aristotle, firstly because (in this part) he has abandoned the task of historical destruction and, secondly, because the conceptual configuration generated in this encounter has in the meantime been emancipated from its Aristotelian origin. The recognition of this emancipation, and thus the destruction of all superficial correlations and "homologies," is a main prerequisite for understanding both BT and Heidegger's confrontation with Aristotle in the 1920s. BT is a book on Aristotle, but that applies only to its genesis; in terms of its content, this characterization is misleading. Heidegger raises the question about philosophy with the help of Aristotle, but his answer in BT is not only anti-Aristotelian, but has also released itself from this confrontation. In terms of the relation between σοφία and φρόνησις: BT is a type of theory that denies the legitimacy of any theoretical stance—and in this respect BT proves self-defeating.⁹⁵

The second question to pose might be this: why should Heidegger's interpretations of Aristotle still interest and occupy us?

⁹⁴ T. Sadler is right in his reservations, when he stresses that "it is not enough to notice only the methodological affinities . . . between Aristotelian φρόνησις and Heideggerian existential understanding"; one must also "take account of the structural position of these within the respective total philosophies of Aristotle and Heidegger" (*Heidegger and Aristotle: The Question of Being*, 145). However, I cannot follow him in his insistence that this existential understanding has "nothing above it (such as σοφία)." Sadler will finally acknowledge that Heidegger "wants to preserve the 'rank' of σοφία in his own existential ontology" (ibid. 157); and he rightly warns that, if we abolish σοφία, then Heidegger's philosophy becomes a sort of *Lebensphilosophie* (ibid. 148).

⁹⁵ As Figal maintains, BT is the expression of a theoretical stance, which, however, in the context of this work, is given no place in the world ("*Zu Heidegger: Antworten und Fragen*," 169). This does not mean that "a ranking of σοφία above φρόνησις is . . . presupposed by the project of BT," as Gonzalez believes ("On the Way to Sophia," 31).

More specifically, if these interpretations have some importance after all, are they important as an interpretation of Aristotle or as landmarks in Heidegger's own development? Do these interpretations mostly interest Aristotelians or Heideggerians? Beginning from this latter version of the question, I would deny both: they are of no interest to Aristotelians, if Aristotelians limit their attention to a doxographic renarration of Aristotelian thought, nor to Heideggerians to the extent that they remain convinced by and satisfied with the smoothly evolutionary scheme put forward in Heidegger's own self-description. These interpretations ultimately interest only those open to the very *Sache*, the subject matter, the point at issue, which remains at issue and retains its philosophical significance only insofar as it delineates a still subsisting sphere of tensions.

Heidegger does not simply fail to come together with Aristotle in his project of historical destruction. He fails even more clearly and undeniably in his next undertaking, the "fundamental ontology" he sought to establish in BT. It seems, however, that failures have (sometimes great) importance in the history of philosophy. It is perhaps not accidental that one of the most important students of both Heidegger and Aristotle, Hans-Georg Gadamer, pointed out in his straightforward manner a fundamental failure of Aristotle himself: "Aristotle never achieved, or perhaps never sought, to precisely expose the relation between theoretical and practical knowledge."⁹⁶ Heidegger's "failure"⁹⁷ proved ultimately successful, since his confrontation with Aristotelian philosophy revealed problems that concern but are not limited to it. The relation between σοφία and φρόνησις, theoretical and practical knowledge, is one of them, as well as the very concept of practical knowledge and practical truth. Another is the dual description of σοφία, first as a self-sufficient activity (NE) and then as the upshot of a cognitive process of practical-technical origin (Met.). Why is this metaphysical genealogy of σοφία absent in NE? Could we assume that, in view of this elimination, Heidegger's aim lies finally in reviving and rehabilitating

⁹⁶ H.-G. Gadamer, *Aristoteles. "Nikomachische Ethik" VI* (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1998), 63.

⁹⁷ BT was described as a "failure" by Heidegger himself in a letter to Max Kommerell; see M. Kommerell, *Briefe und Aufzeichnungen 1919–1944* (Freiburg: Olten, 1967), 405.

this genealogical scheme? In contrast to Aristotle, who defines σοφία on the basis of its *object* in order to distinguish it from φρόνησις, can we conclude that Heidegger identifies it on the basis of its *origin*, and that it is exactly this reorientation that assigns practical significance to σοφία? These issues are clearly and plainly brought up by Heidegger, because they arise from his own philosophy and with respect to it. The significance of his Aristotle-interpretations cannot vanish until these issues have been conclusively settled.⁹⁸

Aristotle University of Thessaloniki

⁹⁸ I would like to thank Philon Ktenides, Dionysis Goutsos and Kenneth Knies for their help in smoothing out the prose of this text, and Pavlos Kontos for the invitation to present this text at the University of Patras and for his perceptive comments.—Research for this article was supported by the *Research Promotion Foundation of Cyprus*.