

**WORDS AND THINGS IN ARISTOTLE AND HEGEL**

**“το ον λεγεται πολλαχως”**

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### “το ον λεγεται πολλαχως”

For two thousand years, it has been customary to take distinctively linguistic operations as the paradigms for explanation in theoretical and practical philosophy. The subject matter of philosophy thus turns out to be words and propositions and, on this assumption, logic has been conflated with theory. As I read them Aristotle and Hegel did not make the conflation. But since Aristotle as well as Hegel have tended to be read as participants in the notion of philosophy founded on logic, I shall also have to challenge the received view of these thinkers. The means I have chosen is to consider translations of a well-known phrase in Aristotle: “το ον λεγεται πολλαχως.” I hope to show that the prevailing tradition in the translation of this phrase has been guided by the presumption that logic and language indeed lie at the foundation of philosophy. This presumption has been so strong that it has led to manifestly incorrect translations. To underscore this point I shall draw upon an analogous case of mistranslation guided by strong presumption: how a painting by Poussin led much of educated Europe to mistranslate the phrase “Et in Arcadia ego.” Erwin Panofsky’s eponymous essay was able to expose a powerful iconographic paradigm that enabled Poussin to seduce some of Europe’s most celebrated intellects into a misreading of “Et in Arcadia ego.” The philosophical paradigm established by Chrysippus has been far more powerful. Yet, in spite of its undeniably emancipatory function (perhaps precisely because it has played a critical role in the ideological process of liberating slaves, women, and many other erstwhile more oppressed groups), it needs to be challenged on philosophical rather than on ideological grounds. As I read him, Hegel has already done so. I shall try to make my reading plausible.

Stated most concisely, the Chrysippian paradigm replaces a consideration of things with a consideration of words, both singly and in combination. The attractions of this procedure are considerable. By its means one can reduce the basic *operations* in philosophy to a manageably finite number. If, for example, the focus is upon *terms*, as in Aristotelian syllogistic logic, *predication* is taken to be the paradigmatic operation for the transformation of words into propositions; if the focus is upon *propositions* as the elementary units, as in Chrysippean-Fregean propositional calculus, the operations *conjunction*, *disjunction*, and *if-then conditioning* are taken to be paradigms for the transformation of atomic into molecular propositions. Of course, as Łukasiewicz has made evident, these operations are ‘logical’ only if they are performed on linguistic *variables*, term or propositional.<sup>1</sup> The consummately consistent execution of this general propensity is to be found, when predication is the prime linguistic model, in the *Ethics* of Spinoza, and, when the full array of linguistic operations is at work, in the first *Critique* of Immanuel Kant.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Jan Łukasiewicz, *Aristotle’s Syllogistic from the Standpoint of Modern Formal Logic*, Oxford: OUP, 1951. See pp. 7ff. on ‘variables.’

<sup>2</sup> That Kant, who knew little Chrysippus and no Frege, was able to reconstruct propositional logic alongside syllogistic logic is a key to the completeness of his first nine categories, as I was taught by my principal teacher in graduate school, Wilfrid Sellars. I have an article on the subject in the works. The treatment of teleology in the third *Critique* (like that of virtue in the *Metaphysics of Morals*) obliged Kant to suspend the deployment of his otherwise overarching linguistic paradigm.

The thesis I wish to make plausible in this paper is that there is a systematic alternative to the pervasively linguistic orientation of philosophy since Chrysippus. The two thinkers who make this alternative clear are Aristotle and Hegel. The clue to their difference from the prevalent tradition in philosophy that I shall focus upon is their shared practice of considering being as “spoken of in many ways,” no one of which is even a candidate for correctness.

In the tradition epitomized by Chrysippus, Spinoza, and Kant, the implicit ideal is a ‘correctness’ to be achieved by categorial completeness and deductive transparency. The ideal is reached when one feels empowered to say “quod erat demonstrandum” (QED). In the submerged tradition of Aristotle and Hegel, the ideal is clarity and it is approached by taking a plurality of ‘tacks’ with the constant reminder that no one tack can be ‘correct.’ For Aristotle, an adequate number of tacks has been explored when one can say “φανερὸν,” “it is clear.” For Hegel, too, any single way of speaking about being or entities will be inadequate, but, perspicuously explored, one leads to another, and another, and another, until a cycle of inadequate ways has been explored and one can enjoy a complete circle of education, what Aristotle projected as a liberal arts curriculum<sup>3</sup> and what Hegel completed as an “Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences.”

The tradition of Aristotle and Hegel has been submerged because their philosophies have been most powerfully interpreted in terms of the dominant linguistic paradigm, especially as represented by Spinoza and Kant.<sup>4</sup> Given the dominant paradigm, other interpretations have tended to be, or at least to seem, confused. The problem is how to break out of this paradigm. No one way will be adequate. The way explored in this paper takes as its point of departure the well-known phrase of Aristotle, “λεγεται πολλαχως,” “is spoken of in many ways,” which occurs in many contexts,<sup>5</sup> but most famously as the opening line of Book Zeta of the *Metaphysics*, where it is followed by a consideration of the various predicates or categories attachable to “τὸ ον,” “being.” Taking *Metaphysics* Zeta as the paradigm locus for the locution “λεγεται πολλαχως” has turned out to be systematically misleading, as indicated by the case of Franz Brentano considered below.

The crux of this paper is that “λεγεται πολλαχως” is used in Aristotle sometimes in reference to ‘being,’ sometimes in reference to ‘one,’ sometimes in reference to ‘natural entities,’ and *also* sometimes in reference to ‘words’ or ‘categories.’ The problem is that the dominant traditions of interpretation have simply presumed that all of the “various ways of speaking” refer to words or categories. “The word ‘being’ has many meanings” is accordingly, though dominant, a patent misreading of “τὸ ον λεγεται πολλαχως,” whose plain English counterpart is “Being is spoken of in many ways.” Clearly, the linguistic paradigm mentioned at the outset of this paper has governed this misreading. But, having dominated philosophy for two thousand years, it should be obvious that it will have guided our sense of what is ‘obvious.’ And what is ‘well known’ is normally unknown precisely because it is well known.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Aristotle, *Politics*, Bks. VII and VIII.

<sup>4</sup> Spinozist interpretations of Hegel are to be found in F.H. Bradley and J.M.E. McTaggart, and strong Kantian interpretations have been constructed by Richard Kroner and Robert Pippin.

<sup>5</sup> See Bonitz, *Index Aristotelicus*, 615a41–52.

<sup>6</sup> “Das Bekannte überhaupt ist darum, weil es *bekannt* ist, nicht erkannt. Es ist die gewöhnlichste Selbsttäuschung wie Täuschung anderer, beim Erkennen etwas als bekannt voraus zu setzen, und es sich ebenso gefallen zu lassen; mit allem Hin- und Herreden kommt solches Wissen, ohne zu wissen, wie ihm geschieht, nicht von der Stelle. Das Subjekt

That is why this paradigm cannot be eliminated simply by pointing out that it leads to translations that are grammatically insupportable. Such mistranslations can only be a clue to the radical theoretical reorientation that this paper seeks to make plausible.<sup>7</sup>

By way of an introduction to a more adequate reading of this phrase, we shall take a brief digression to illustrate how another well-known phrase came, by means of a powerful visual-historical paradigm, to have its plain sense twisted out of shape.

### “ET IN ARCADIA EGO”

By the end of the 18th century, a new commonplace had been established among educated European continentals. It was “Et in Arcadia ego” and it was generally understood to mean “I, too, was in Arcadia” (“Auch ich war in Arkadien”). Perhaps its most celebrated use occurred as a retrospective motto for Goethe’s blissful memoirs of his *Travels in Italy*, “I, too, in Arcadia” (“Auch ich in Arkadien”).

The most striking aspect of this emergent topos is that it flies in the face of a most elementary knowledge of Latin, in which there is no possible justification for the insertion of a past tense. Yet, as *The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations*<sup>8</sup> states, the phrase is “usually translated”: “And I too was in Arcadia.” The “I” is taken to be the occupant of a tomb and the tomb in question is found in the paintings of Guercino, Poussin, and Reynolds. The story of how the meaning of the phrase got inverted is told by Erwin Panofsky.<sup>9</sup>

Panofsky’s brilliantly argued thesis is that the inversion was enabled by the iconographic power of Poussin. Well before his time, indeed, in the first century before Christ, Arcadia, which had been for Hellenic and Hellenistic Greeks a byword for rural idiocy, was idealized in Virgil’s *Eclogues*<sup>10</sup> as a never-never landscape of bucolic splendor—what is still ‘well known’ as ‘Arcadian.’ Given this trope, medieval moralists devised a series of *memento mori* to convey the message that ‘even in Arcady death is present.’ Such was the plain thrust of the earlier 17th-century paintings by Guercino and Poussin

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und Objekt usf., Gott, Natur, der Verstand, die Sinnlichkeit usf. werden unbesehen als bekannt und als etwas Gültiges zugrunde gelegt und machen feste Punkte sowohl des Ausgangs als der Rückkehr aus. Die Bewegung geht zwischen ihnen, die unbewegt bleiben, hin und her und somit nur auf ihrer Oberfläche vor. So besteht auch das Auffassen und Prüfen darin, zu sehen, ob jeder das von ihnen Gesagte auch in seiner Vorstellung findet, ob es ihm so scheint und bekannt ist oder nicht.” Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, Hoffmeister, ed., Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1952, pp. 28–29. With these words Hegel states the objective of “Words and Things in Aristotle and Hegel.”

<sup>7</sup> The only thoroughgoing attempt to carry out the radical theoretical transformation suggested in this paper was undertaken by Hegel in his *Phänomenologie des Geistes*; a briefer version of this attempt is to be found in the “Vorbegriff” to the first part of the *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse* (1830), §§ 19–78. Given the fact that the linguistic paradigm in philosophy has gathered strength since these attempts, even among interpreters of Hegel (as well as Aristotle), the difficulty of achieving the reorientation proposed in this paper cannot be underestimated.

<sup>8</sup> *The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations*, 2nd ed., Oxford: OUP, 1953, p. 13 a13–19.

<sup>9</sup> Erwin Panofsky, “*Et in Arcadia ego*: On the Conception of Transience in Poussin and Watteau,” in R. Klibansky and H.J. Paton, eds., *Philosophy and History: Essays Presented to Ernst Cassirer*, Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1936, pp. 223–54; revised edition, “*Et in Arcadia ego*: Poussin and the Elegiac Tradition,” in Panofsky, *Meaning in the Visual Arts*, Garden City: Doubleday, 1955, pp. 295–320.

<sup>10</sup> The story of how pretentious Romans parodied as backward Sicilian peasants in Theocritus were transformed into the idyllic Arcadian shepherds and shepherdesses of Virgil is told by Bruno Snell, “Arcadia: The Discovery of a Spiritual Landscape,” *The Discovery of the Mind*, New York: Dover, 1982, pp. 281–309.

himself, in which the phrase ‘Et in Arcadia ego’ was coined and clearly attached to a skull, the symbol of death, placed in the midst of rustic and blissful Arcady. But in Poussin’s second painting by this same name, which became known to late-18th-century Europe owing to its placement in the Louvre, the skull is absent and the critical words, now inscribed upon a tomb, are shown interpreted for a nubile shepherdess by three well-built Arcadian lads. Hence, from the plain moralistic meaning of the Latin, “Even in Arcady, there am I,” spoken by the symbol of death, emerged the nostalgically sentimental message from the entombed, “I, too, lived in Arcady,” in which the bourgeoisie of 19th-century Europe—including ‘Hegelians’—found encapsulated an irresistible if facile ‘philosophy of history,’ which more critical brethren, now<sup>11</sup> as well as then, take to be a crux whose unmasking constitutes the elementary ritual performed within the modern ‘schools of suspicion,’<sup>12</sup> within the yet more somber ‘post-modernist’ schools, and, quite generally, within any intellectualistic fad that takes as its assignment the juggling of epochs and the disclosing of origins.

Perhaps Panofsky has exaggerated a single painter’s iconic power. For it is difficult to believe that Poussin’s second “Et in Arcadia ego” could have wielded its semantic transformation if it had not been in the Louvre at the time of the French Revolution and had that period not coincided with a powerful yearning—perhaps exceeding that at the time of Virgil—for an idealized past, now irretrievable, in which happiness was sublime. In any event, “Et in Arcadia ego” came, for several generations, despite its clear meaning in Latin, to read “ah, yes, that of which we all now dream hopelessly was once mine too”—“I, too, was in Arcady.”

The heyday of the misguided reception of “Et in Arcadia ego” was the period during which the philosophy of Hegel was also received, analogously, as a ‘philosophy of history.’ The elementary error of any ‘philosophy of history’ that purports to be theoretical is that it attempts to read a ‘plot’ into history. The difference between dramatic poetry, which does have a plot, and history, which cannot, has been well articulated since Aristotle’s *Poetics*. In this respect, too, Hegel is a complete Aristotelian, in contrast with nearly all so-called ‘Hegelians.’<sup>13</sup>

## FROM THINGS TO PROCESSES

In the preserved works of Aristotle there are few phrases that have been more frequently cited and translated than “το ον λεγεται πολλαχως.”<sup>14</sup> Its plain meaning in Greek is “Being is spoken of in many ways.” Nevertheless, a host of our most celebrated classicists, including F.M. Cornford and W.K.C. Guthrie, have taken this and analogous phrases in Aristotle to refer, not to being or entities, but to the words ‘being’ or ‘entities.’ For example, the Loeb translator, Hugh Tredennick, renders our title phrase “The term ‘being’ has several senses”; for Richard Hope, it is “‘Being’ [placed within

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<sup>11</sup> Sophisticated examples include Jürgen Habermas and Charles Taylor.

<sup>12</sup> This apt phrase is Paul Ricoeur’s.

<sup>13</sup> Thus the commonplace unmasking of Hegel’s philosophy, à la Löwith, as a ‘secularization of the Judeo-Christian eschatology’ is a systematic misreading of his Aristotelianism. For further articulation of this point see my “[Hegel and the Secularization Hypothesis](#),” in *The Legacy of Hegel*, J. O’Malley et al., eds., The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1973, pp. 144ff.

<sup>14</sup> *Metaphysics*, VII, 1028a10. This is but one, albeit the most famous, place in which the locution λεγεται πολλαχως is to be found in the works of Aristotle. As noted in the following footnote, Ross’s rendering in the “Oxford Aristotle” is tolerably accurate. But this does not hold for many of the other “Oxford Aristotle” translations.

quotation marks indicating mention rather than use] has many meanings”; and for the often admirable Hippocrates Apostle, it reads “The term ‘being’ is used in several senses.”<sup>15</sup>

If the Neo-Latin case “Et in Arcadia ego” shows how we are led into mistranslation, the mistranslations of Aristotle’s unquestionably Hellenic Greek show the yet greater power of the Hellenistic inversion of logic and theory launched by Chrysippus<sup>16</sup> and indicate the distance we have to go toward an adequate comprehension of Aristotle. It is the thesis of this paper that that distance has already been traversed by Hegel, despite the fact that he, so far as I am aware, does not ever translate the phrase in question. He does, however, translate an analogous phrase from Aristotle’s *De Anima*, 412b8ff.: “το γαρ εν και το ειναι επει πλεοναχως λεγεται, το κυριως η εντελεχεια εστιν.”<sup>17</sup> Hegel’s translation gets the Greek right: “Denn das Eins und das Seyn wird auf mannigfache Weise gesagt: ... das wesentliche Seyn aber ist die Wirksamkeit (Entelechie).”<sup>18</sup> My translation of Hegel’s translation, “For the one and being are spoken of in many ways; but essential being is actuality (entelechy),” differs importantly from the standard Haldane and Simson version: “For though [the words] unity and Being are used in various senses, Being is essentially energy.”<sup>19</sup>

As the Haldane and Simson translation indicates—and many others could be cited—the problem for any accurate reading is that Hegel, like Aristotle, has been silently read as if his philosophy were a variation upon the theme “The term ‘being’ has many meanings” whereas a comprehension of his philosophy is only to be had when we understand the principal argument of his principal work, *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse* (1817, 1827, 1830), to be that “Being is spoken of in many ways.” I should indeed argue that sense can only be made of the *Encyclopedia* when it is seen to be a circle of ways to speak about being, none of which are ‘correct.’

We may take as a given that every translation is an interpretation. When “το ον λεγεται πολλαχως” is translated “The term ‘being’ has many meanings,” it is clear that Aristotle is being interpreted as a philosopher whose subject matter is language and for whom the principal task is to determine, among the many meanings of a word, the ‘correct’ one. Given the countless interpreters who read Aristotle in this way, let us focus for a moment upon one: Franz Brentano—the prize student of Adolf Trendelenburg and the teacher of Ernst Mach and Sigmund Freud—whose 1862 dissertation, “Von der mannigfachen Bedeutung des Seienden nach Aristoteles,” was subtitled “το ον λεγεται πολλαχως,

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<sup>15</sup> There are of course examples of literally exact translations that are nevertheless accompanied by misguided interpretations. For example: “There are several senses in which a thing may be said to be” (W.D. Ross), “We speak in many ways of what is” (David Bostock), and “*Being* or *that which is* is said in many ways” (Montgomery Furth)—each of these is a fairly accurate rendering of the Greek. But giving a literal translation and offering an adequate interpretation are two quite different matters. For a recent example see Bostock’s Clarendon Aristotle Series commentary on “το ον λεγεται πολλαχως,” Aristotle, *Metaphysics Books Z and H*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994, pp. 45–52.

<sup>16</sup> It is worth noting that the words of Aristotle have been located within a Hellenistic Stoic context from the first appearance, in Rome, of the *Corpus Aristotelicum* from the editorial hands of Andronicus of Rhodes in the first century BC. Following Chrysippus, Andronicus places Aristotle’s ‘logical’ writings (the ‘organon’) at the foundation of his philosophy. This ordering has remained paradigmatic for all subsequent generations.

<sup>17</sup> W.S. Hett, in the Loeb edition of *De Anima*, renders the phrase: “... for admitting that the terms [*sic*] unity and being are used in many senses, the paramount sense is that of actuality.”

<sup>18</sup> Hegel, *Sämtliche Werke*, Jubiläumsausgabe, XIV, 371.

<sup>19</sup> *Hegel’s Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, tr. E.S. Haldane and Frances Simson, Vol. II, London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1894, p. 182.

Aristoteles, *Metaphysik* Zeta, 1.” This was the text that Martin Heidegger studied in 1907 and later (1959) cited as the source from which he was awakened to the “question of being.” (We may note in passing that Trendelenburg’s *Logische Untersuchungen* [1840] and his *Die logische Frage in Hegels System* [1843] were, together with Schelling’s Berlin lectures of the early 1840s, decisive in the breakdown of the Hegelian school in Germany—though not elsewhere in Europe or North America.) In any event, Brentano clearly states in the introduction to his dissertation that the phrase “το ον λεγεται πολλαχως” indicates a method of exposition which Aristotle is said to have followed “by distinguishing the various senses which he found the *name of being* to comprise, by separating the proper from the improper senses, and by excluding the latter from metaphysical consideration.”<sup>20</sup>

For the dominant tradition of interpretation represented here by Brentano, the topic of το ον λεγεται πολλαχως is “the name of being” and the research program accordingly becomes the determination of which names, predicates, or, to use the familiar Greek derivative, which ‘categories’ are correctly, and which are incorrectly, attached to being. And this is the research program that Brentano pursues throughout the course of his dissertation. It is drawn to a conclusion that satisfies that research program when he finally displays a ‘graph’ depicting how “the many meanings of the word ‘being’” represent the complete list of ‘categories’ stated by Aristotle in his *Categories*.<sup>21</sup>

For want of a better word, let us say that it is the ‘Hegelian’ tradition in which the topics considered under the rubric “λεγεται πολλαχως” are being and entities, but not necessarily words. I say “not necessarily words” because in the *Topics* and in Book Kappa of the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle does include words among the possible topics of “what is said in many ways.” A survey of Aristotle’s usage clearly indicates that “λεγεται πολλαχως” refers to linguistic entities such as words, predicates, or categories when the inquiry in question is a part of his “organon,” or what we have come to call his “logical” writings: *Categories*, which concerns terms,<sup>22</sup> *On Interpretation*, which concerns propositions, *Prior Analytics*, which concerns the formal structure of deductive inference or syllogism,<sup>23</sup> *Posterior Analytics*, which concerns deductive inferences from premises taken to be true,<sup>24</sup> and *Topics*, which concerns modes of argument for the assessment of premises.

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<sup>20</sup> Franz Brentano, *On the Several Senses of Being in Aristotle*, Rolf George, tr., Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975, p. 2 (emphasis added).

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 117.

<sup>22</sup> The standard misinterpretations of Aristotle’s theoretical philosophy take this text as paradigmatic, à la Brentano. The best corrective known to me is Éric Weil’s “La place de la logique dans la pensée aristotélicienne,” *Revue de métaphysique et de morale*, 56 (1951), pp. 283ff. For the record, allow me to acknowledge here my indebtedness to M. Weil for the clarification of many of my then confusions about Aristotle/Hegel as the fruit of conversations and correspondence begun in Milwaukee in June 1970. His *Hegel et l’État*, Paris: Vrin, 1966, remains one of the truly indispensable works on Hegel unavailable in English.

<sup>23</sup> The only interpretation of *Prior Analytics* that clearly states the distinctive character of deductive inference as discovered by Aristotle is to be found in J. Łukasiewicz, *Aristotle’s Syllogistic*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1951, especially chapter I. For a recent example among Hegel interpreters of a patent and telling misreading of Aristotelian syllogistic inference, see Terry Pinkard, *Hegel’s Phenomenology*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, p. 347 n. 13.

<sup>24</sup> Every contemporary student of Aristotle is indebted to J. Barnes for his work as an editor and translator of works by and about Aristotle, most of which focus upon the *Posterior Analytics*. Nevertheless, it must also be said that no one today better epitomizes the linguistic paradigm in the interpretation of Aristotle—the principal object of this critical exercise.

There is admittedly controversy surrounding the claim I am about to make, but it seems to me clear that Aristotle distinguishes quite unambiguously between those inquiries that concern language and the operations pertaining thereto such as predication and those that concern actual entities. Indeed, he states that one must have mastered the basic operations concerning language *before* one enters upon a consideration of actual entities and, further, that one must not continue to indulge in linguistic considerations *after* one has embarked upon an inquiry into actual entities.<sup>25</sup>

There is, then, in Aristotle, a clear difference between (a) an inquiry designed to determine the proper predicate, or syllogistic series of predications, of *a word* and (b) an inquiry into *a thing*. This difference he marks by the distinction between ‘categories’ and ‘principles.’ The Greek word I have here translated as “principles” is ‘αρχαι.’ The translation, although conventional, is not exact. An exact translation is not to be had. To follow Aristotle’s argument, we must be aware of those contemporary senses of the word ‘principle’ that are out of keeping with an inquiry into the nature of things, as opposed to words.

When the topic of inquiry is being, entities, or things, it is elementary that that topic will be said in many ways. In what shall these many ways consist? Perhaps in the various predicates attachable to the thing in question? Clearly not. For then the inquiry would be ‘logical,’ an aspect of what he has identified as part of his ‘analytics.’<sup>26</sup>

A ‘principle’ must clearly be an aspect of how a being, an entity, or a thing actually is. In Aristotle, a thing is known by how it functions or how it works. Its function or its work is called its ‘εργον.’ That is how it is “spoken of.” But functions differ. And any given thing will exhibit a plurality of functions, no one of which can be presumed, like a predicate or a definition, to capture the essence of the thing in question. That is the principal reason why any thing to be known theoretically<sup>27</sup> must be “spoken of in many ways.”

In the course of any inquiry we must, of course, begin with what we know, with what is initially best known to us. These are things and they are identified by the use of names to which predicates or categories are attached and about which definitions are formulated. But at this level of inquiry, the things remain merely what they are ‘for us’; our knowledge is limited to the particular (καθ εκαστον, *kath hekaston*) and the universal (καθολου, *katholou*) aspects of things, aspects that can be fit into the structures of language, sentences, and syllogisms. What we lack at this level is any insight into ‘principles,’ which are aspects not of *words* and sentences but of *things* and functions.

What, then, is a function? Does a function, like a sentence, have an elementary structure? Is there a structure that is exhibited by all functions? It is in his answer to questions like these that Aristotle formulates his theory of ‘αρχαι,’ of ‘principles’ or ‘starting points.’ These constitute the structure of a function in a way that is analogous to, but importantly different from, the way a subject (υποκειμενον, *hypokeimenon*) and a predicate (κατηγορια, *categoria*) constitute the structure of a sentence. Whereas a

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<sup>25</sup> *Metaphysics*, IV, 3, 1005b3.

<sup>26</sup> In regard to this usage, the “analytic philosophy” which dominated the twentieth century was well named. No ‘school’ of philosophy since Chrysippus has ever been more committed to the conflation of logic and theory.

<sup>27</sup> Hegel’s standard term for ‘theoretical’ is ‘speculative.’

sentence is what says ‘this about that’ (τι κατα τινος, *ti kata tinos*), a function is what a subject (again a υποκειμενον, *hypokeimenon*) undergoes in a determinate process. For such a process to be determinate, different, or contrasting, principles of determinacy are required. These Aristotle calls ‘contraries’ (εναντια).

We may accordingly say that a function is a process structured in accordance with three principles: (1) a subject (*hypokeimenon*) or subject matter (*hyle*) susceptible of undergoing the process; (2) a determinate state or form (*eidos*) from which the function or process proceeds; and (3) a different (i.e., contrary) state or form to which the function or process proceeds.<sup>28</sup> These, then, are the three principles of Aristotelian theory. They are, most succinctly put, two contraries and a substratum. For theoretical comprehension, any thing will have to be spoken of in many ways. Each of these will concern one of the several functional processes that the thing may be said to undergo. It is only these processes that can be theoretically comprehended, for they alone involve principles. The thing itself cannot be known, for the thing itself is not constituted by the three principles that inform each of its functions. That is why the thing must be “spoken of in many ways,” “λεγεται πολλαχως,” over the course of which that clarity which is the mark of theoretical comprehension may be attained.

Aristotle’s favored illustrations of a function are derived from the field of craftsmanship (τεχνη, *technē*). For example, let the subject or material principle be marble. It is susceptible of undergoing the functional transformation from a chunky state (contrary principle 1) to the shape of the god Hermes<sup>29</sup> (contrary principle 2). Here, the three principles of a function are clearly evident. But the contrary principle 2, the shape of Hermes, towards which the subject matter principle, the marble, is shaped by diminution from its initial form, contrary principle 1, its chunky state, is here clearly imposed by a factor that is extraneous to the functions of which the thing, the marble, is itself susceptible. For this shape is, ex hypothesi, imposed by the craftsman.<sup>30</sup> Aristotle nevertheless contends that the process, if the contrary principle 2 were ingredient rather than imposed from without, would illustrate a natural or physical function. Hence, the difference between a natural and an artificial process.

But there is also another difference we must consider if we are to arrive at an adequate understanding of function or process in Aristotle. It is the difference between motion (*kinesis*) and activity (*energeia*).

In both Aristotle and Hegel, motion (*kinesis*, *Bewegung*) is the very mark of a thing *qua* physical or real. What distinguishes a function as motile is that the process it involves uses up the capacity or potentiality of the subject matter principle to undergo the transition from contrary principle 1 to contrary principle 2. Moreover, these contraries are limited to three kinds: (1) contraries of *quality* (sometimes called alteration), e.g., from hot to cold or from green to red; (2) contraries of *quantity*

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<sup>28</sup> Aristotle’s most perspicuous account of functions or processes involving three principles is to be found in *Physics*, I, 7, but it recurs throughout his writings, especially in *Metaphysics*, XII.

<sup>29</sup> Short digression. If Aristotle’s reference to ‘Hermes’ were to be marble unearthed at Olympia in the 1870s, this would add, far more than the testimony of the much later Pausanias, usually cited, to the still controversial argument as to whether the work is an original by Aristotle’s contemporary Praxiteles, whom, alas, he never mentions—Polykleitos, a century earlier than Aristotle, is his standard example of a sculptor, to whom no ‘Hermes’ is attributed.

<sup>30</sup> Praxiteles?

(sometimes called growth and diminution), e.g., from oak sapling to full-grown oak tree; and (3) contraries of *place* (locus), e.g., from Athens to Thebes. What is critical here is to focus upon the nature of the function or process in question. In each of these three kinds of motion, the process simply is the using up of the capacity or potentiality of the subject matter principle to undergo the transition from the contrary principle 1 to the contrary principle 2. Throughout this kind of process, the function realizes the potentiality of the subject matter to be in the contrary principle 2 or the εἶδος (*eidōs*) form, or determinacy toward which it is the determinate process that it is. Once it has achieved that form, contrary, or *eidōs*, the process is over.

The characterization of motile function in this way immediately suggests that motion is not the only kind of process that could exhibit a function in accordance with the three principles requisite to Aristotelian theory. For clearly there are some “ways in which things are spoken of” that are what they are throughout the process. In other words, there are determinate functions that simply are the determinate functions that they are throughout the process of their thus functioning. Consider Aristotle’s favorite example, seeing. Clearly, it is a function. Equally clearly, it is not the function that it is by virtue of any movement from one contrary state to another. Yet the function of seeing does involve the actualization of a faculty, capacity, or potentiality for seeing. But that function fully actualizes the potentiality in question throughout the process in question. Given the nature of the process, we see that it is what it is throughout the process. Nothing is ‘used up.’ Such a process is what Aristotle calls an activity, a function that is *in* its proper function, work, or ἐργον (*ergon*)—hence, ἐν-ἐργεῖα (*en-ergeia*)—insofar as the process is functioning at all.

Aristotle acknowledges<sup>31</sup> that those functions or processes that are, for us, most familiar concern natural or physical things. As the function of physical things, such a process is called a motion (κίνησις, *kinesis*). But there is another process that is, though less familiar for us, more intelligible in itself. And this function is what he calls ἐνεργεῖα (*energeia*), activity, or actuality, and what Hegel will call *Wirklichkeit*. *Kinesis*, then, is a function, one of the several ways of “speaking about beings,” that points to one (πρὸς ἐν, *pros hen*) function that shares its three-principled structure but is more complete, namely ἐνεργεῖα. It is within this context that we can begin to understand the famous—or, rather, within the linguistic paradigm, notorious—definition of *kinesis* (at *Physics*, III, 1) as “the actualization (ἐντελέχεια, *entelecheia*) of a potential *qua* potential.”

That this, one of “several ways of speaking about beings,” namely by reference to their functions, is utterly unintelligible, and thus “notorious,” within the linguistic paradigm, is exquisitely illustrated by John Locke’s gloss upon the text in question in which he, to be sure, simply presupposes that the topic in question is a word. Listen:

What more exquisite jargon could the wit of man invent than this definition:—“The act of a being in power, as far forth as in power”; which would puzzle any rational man, to whom it was not already known by its famous absurdity, to guess what *word* it could ever be supposed to be the explication of. If Tully, asking a Dutchman what *beweeing* was, should have received this explication in his own language, that it was ‘*actus entis in potentia quatenus in potentia*’; I ask whether

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<sup>31</sup> *Metaphysics*, IX.

any one can imagine he could thereby have guessed what idea [i.e., ‘word’] a Dutchman ordinarily had in his mind, and would signify to another, when he used that sound?<sup>32</sup>

So much for Locke on κινήσις. Clearly, he has understood the point at issue to be a word rather than a function. (Locke’s ‘Arcady’ is the mind.)<sup>33</sup> Let us return to the question of how this “way of speaking” about a thing, namely as a certain kind of function, namely a motion, may be seen to “point toward” another “way of speaking” about a thing, namely as that more complete function called activity.

Aristotle himself never offered up a “way of speaking” about those more complete functions he called activities that is parallel to his “way of speaking” about the less complete functions he called motions. But, given an understanding that his “ways of speaking” are plural and that they concern functions, we may quite easily fill this gap. An activity, then, will be “the actualization of a potential *qua* actual.” Like all others, this function will be structured by three principles. In this case, however, the contraries are in the mode potentiality/actuality, and the substratum (material principle, what remains numerically one) is, throughout the function, *in* the contrary form to which (contrary principle 2).<sup>34</sup> For example, if the function is seeing, the contrary form from which (contrary principle 1) is the faculty or capacity of seeing. The material substratum is the eye (which consists of the corporeal organs of sight: lens, retina, ganglia, and the like). And the contrary form to which (contrary principle 2) is the actuated process of seeing, *in* which the material principle is fully engaged throughout the process. Thus, the process can be “spoken of” as one in which the potentiality (here the faculty of seeing) can be “spoken of” as being actualized, not, as in the case of motion, as a potentiality, but as an actuality. That any actual function like seeing is also determinate in virtue of its being informed by the determinate content of what is seen points to the fact, indicated but not developed by Aristotle in *De Anima*, that an actuality or an activity involves an interaction. This is one of many cases in which the incompleteness<sup>35</sup> of Aristotle’s λεγεται πολλαχως procedure is developed in Hegel’s encyclopedia of Aristotelian learning in the modern world.

## THE CYCLE OF PROCESSES: ENCYCLOPEDIA

My proposal is that Hegel’s *Encyclopedia* can be read as the project of completing the fragmentary discussions of principles which we have in Aristotle. The central teaching common to both is that ‘being is said in many ways.’ Entities exhibit a plurality of processes, some more complete than others. But the focus of theory is upon processes, each determinate by virtue of three principles. Hegel

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<sup>32</sup> Locke, *Essay* III, iv, 8 (Fraser 2.34–5)—emphasis upon “word” added.

<sup>33</sup> My more extensive discussion of this topic is in a forthcoming essay, “[Minding our Language](#).”

<sup>34</sup> Aristotle states this most clearly at *Metaphysics*, IX, 1050a15–18: “ετι η υλη εστι δυναμει, οτι ελθοι αν εις το ειδος; οταν δε γε ενεργεια η, τοτε εν τω ειδει εστιν.”

<sup>35</sup> The fragmentary state of the *Metaphysics* has been observed by many, most influentially by Paul Natorp (1888, “Thema und Disposition der aristotelischen Metaphysik,” *Philosophische Monatshefte*, XXIV, 37–65; 540–574) and Werner Jaeger (1910ff. esp. *Aristotle: Fundamentals of the History of His Development*, tr. R. Robinson, Oxford: OUP, 1934). Natorp finds it epitomized by an ‘insufferable contradiction’: the juxtaposition of a theory of divine being (theology) with a theory of being *qua* being (‘ontology’). Jaeger takes this putative contradiction as the point of departure for his genetic reconstruction. But, like Nicolai Hartmann’s, the interpretations of Natorp and Jaeger suffer from the tacit presupposition that Aristotelian theory involves only two principles. When his principles are grasped as three, and when the focus is upon processes rather than entities, the activity of being *qua* being can be grasped as the very same process as the activity of divine being. The one thinker who has grasped Aristotle in this way is Hegel.

elaborates upon the two principles which function as contraries—qualitative, quantitative, and qualitatively quantitative—in the first section of his logic, ‘The Doctrine of Being,’ which may be described as his logic of contrastive determinacy.<sup>36</sup> In ‘The Doctrine of Essence,’ Hegel shows how the principle of subject-in-process preserves its numerical identity, evinces manifestation, and points toward actuality—the three principal aspects of what may be called his logic of determination. Finally, in ‘The Doctrine of the Concept [*Begriff*],’ Hegel considers the three-fold process of the activity of being *qua* being as a whole, first with reference to the original divisions (*Urteile*) of the process into the moments of universality, particularity, and singularity and their unification into an individual ‘*Objekt*’; second, the modes of unity exhibited by individuals (mechanical, chemical, and teleological); and finally, the kinds of telic activity in which the subject-in-process may be said to be in<sup>37</sup> the form toward which the process aims: living, knowing, and the most complete mode of the activity of being, the absolute Idea.

In broad outline, then, the first part of Hegel’s system may be seen as an attempt—the first and only on record—to complete the Aristotelian project of articulating the principles of pure active processes, of being *qua* being. Like Aristotle’s first philosophy, Hegel’s logic must be grasped as a theory of processes rather than entities, namely, the structure and order of processes that are complete, the form of process towards which the process exhibited by any real entity may be said to point, *pros hen*, in so far as it is a determinate being at all. This is the activity of being *qua* being. *Real* entities are *actual* to the degree that the structure of their distinctive processes approximates to the structure of the pure activity of being *qua* being. Otherwise put, real entities are theoretically comprehended by considering how their relatively incomplete processes ‘embed’ the structure of absolutely complete process.<sup>38</sup> Some real processes will embed absolute process to a greater degree than others. For example, physical processes are more complete than mechanical ones, organic processes are more complete than physical ones, and spiritual processes are more complete than organic ones.

The most complete process exhibited by any *real* entity is, in Hegel as in Aristotle, human or spiritual theorizing. But even though the dynamic structure of this process is said to provide us the closest analogy to the activity of being, human theorizing is only absolute *qua* spiritual, not *qua* being per se. Hence, the difference between first and second philosophy in Aristotle and the difference between ‘*formelle*’ and ‘*reelle*’ *Wissenschaft* in Hegel.

Aristotle’s philosophy is potentially and Hegel’s philosophy is actually a complete circle of theoretical education—an *Enzyklio-paideia*, an Encyclopedia—precisely because of the just mentioned difference. A fully articulated account of the structure of complete activity in terms of the three principles of theory yields a comprehension of the form of activity toward which the processes of all real entities point as to their own completion *qua* beings. But we can only grasp this formal activity by

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<sup>36</sup> It will be noted that qualitative and quantitative contraries were definitive of kinetic processes in Aristotle whereas they are taken to be among the kinds of process characteristic of activities in Hegel.

<sup>37</sup> See “εν τῷ εἶδει” in note 34.

<sup>38</sup> That some kinds of process are more complete than others, e.g., *kinesis* vs. *energeia*, is elementary in Aristotle as well as Hegel; that some kinds of *energeiae* are more complete than others, say, seeing vs. theorizing, is also tolerably clear in both Aristotle and Hegel. But the articulation of a principle for distinguishing among the various degrees of completeness among activities remains at this point of the argument a desideratum.

the constant use of analogies with and among the embedded processes, including motions and activities, exhibited by real entities. On the other hand, the very dynamic structure of absolute activity, which Hegel calls the absolute Idea, indicates that it too is, *qua* merely formal, incomplete unless it is embedded in processes involving an element that is other than and external to the formal sphere of absolute activity.<sup>39</sup> Processes involving this external element are theorized in what Hegel calls ‘*Realphilosophie*’ or the Philosophies of Nature and Spirit. *Realphilosophie* is articulated, in turn, into stages of process in which the real subject-matter-in-process—always grasped as determinate because pointing toward the activity of being—exemplifies closer and closer approximations to complete activity. At the extreme moment of completeness among the active processes embedded in real entities, namely theorizing per se or that stage of Absolute Spirit called philosophy, the structure of the process achieves a completeness which eliminates the element of embeddedness—second philosophy becomes first philosophy; *Realphilosophie* circles back into the formal processes of determinacy per se, the activity of being *qua* being.

It must be noted that in following this theoretical procedure—which may be called ‘Hegel’s Encyclopedic Method’<sup>40</sup>—Hegel (like Aristotle and unlike Kant, Fichte, or Schelling) did not purport to *construct* the material dimension that he theorized. As Aristotle was said to have spent much time in conversation with the fishermen of Assos and Lesbos in gathering materials for his theory of marine biological life, so Hegel is known to have been endlessly curious about developments in the empirical sciences of his day. For the point of his kind of theory is not to get the entities (much less, the words) right, but rather to study processes in a systematic order that can then be *exemplified* in entities as they are empirically discovered.<sup>41</sup> For there is, as Aristotle remarks in his *Historia Animalium*, “in the scale of living things ... a sequence in which those at each stage always appear to have more life and motion than those at the preceding stage.”<sup>42</sup> Focusing as it does upon the scale of processes such as motion and life, the question of the *origin* of the species exemplifying these processes does not arise as theoretical topic. Hence, the much bruited ‘refutation’ of Aristotelian (as well as Hegelian) biology by Darwinian evolutionary biology simply misses the point of what theory is. (For those who understand what theory is, Darwin’s ideas are not very ‘dangerous.’) The key to theory is that its topic is process. Entities as well as kinds of entities or species are ‘said in many ways.’ Theoretically, each of these ways is a determinate process, and the aim of theory is to grasp the principles of determinacy in terms of which processes are more or less determinate or concrete or individual.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> This raises the question of ‘interaction’ as a theoretical principle in both Aristotle and Hegel. It will be discussed in a subsequent essay.

<sup>40</sup> Compare and contrast my account of “[Hegel’s Phenomenological Method](#),” *The Review of Metaphysics*, XXIII, 4, 1970, pp. 615–41.

<sup>41</sup> “Das immanente Philosophische ist hier wie überall die eigene Notwendigkeit der *Begriffsbestimmung*, die alsdann als *irgend eine* natürliche Existenz aufzuzeigen ist.” Hegel, *Enç.*, § 276 A.

<sup>42</sup> Aristotle, *HA*, 588b7–11.

<sup>43</sup> An example in modern science of an Aristotelian-Hegelian ‘process’ approach to a subject matter was reported in the Science section (F 3) of the *New York Times* for March 19, 2002, in regard to the use of two satellites for the study of gravitational variations in the earth’s gravitational field. This will surely contribute new insights into the field of study represented by two geophysical studies in which I have had a hand: “The Role of the Geosphere in Climate Change,” with X-Q Gao (Lanzhou: Institute of Plateau Atmospheric Physics, Chinese Academy of Sciences), M-C Tang (Lanzhou), and G.P. Gregori (Rome: IFA-CNR), in press, and “[The Concept of Climate and the Limits of](#)

When these principles are comprehended, a scale of more and less complete processes will take the shape of a system and, as indicated above, the shape of that system will be a circle—an encyclopaedia. Such a system will, of course, involve development. But this development will be anything but historical. Just as genetic evolution may incidentally throw off species whose members exemplify processes of various degrees of completeness, so too human history may incidentally throw off ‘ways of life’ or institutions whose members likewise exemplify processes at various stages of completeness. So although it is true that evolution and history do involve a kind of development, it is of a kind systematically external to the immanent development studied in theory.

Of course the immanently developed hierarchy of processes may, within the sphere of second philosophy or *Realphilosophie*, arrive at a stage where first- or second-nature entities are not at hand to exemplify the process in question. Such, for example, was the case for Aristotle in regard to the institution we know, since Hegel, as Civil Society. As a global ethical institution, it was not at hand for Aristotle. Hence, the level of activity it systematically exemplifies could not be theorized as a matter of second or *Realphilosophie* despite the fact that this level of activity, like the botany later developed by Theophrastus, was systematically required so as to complete the scale of embedded activities. I stress that that scale is developed systematically or immanently, not historically or incidentally. But without the historically developed institution in which the activity is exemplified, the theory of embedded processes or *Realphilosophie* retains a gap. Aristotle’s implicit recognition of this and similar gaps is signaled by his exclusion of ethics-economics-politics from the sphere of theory and his marking it off as ‘practical philosophy’ even though he had discerned many elements in practical philosophy with potential theoretical significance.

The development of ‘second philosophy’ in Hegel proceeds through two main phases of process: natural and human. The three subphases of natural process are mechanical, physical, and organic. The first considers the factors of motile processes which, *qua* mechanical, point toward embeddedness in an individual: a solar system; the second considers the processes embedded in individual physical entities; and the third considers the activities of life as embedded in an ecosphere, in plants, and in animals. A prime difference in the *second* part of *Realphilosophie* is that the kind of entity engaged in process is singular: the human spirit; and of “the many ways in which this entity is spoken,” the most distinctive involve processes that actualize acquired rather than natural capacities—in other words, habits. Spirit is considered in three spheres of activity: *qua* subjective spirit the activities considered are embedded in individual humans susceptible of habit formation;<sup>44</sup> *qua* objective spirit the activities considered involve a plurality of humans which, *qua* individuals, acquire and actualize habits in the well-formed *institutions* of ethical life; and *qua* absolute spirit the activities considered are ends in themselves, from the artistically beautiful to the philosophically theoretical, exhibiting ever closer approximations to the divine activity of being *qua* being. With this culmination of the hierarchy from

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[Mechanism](#),” in *Proceedings of the Erice Conference on the Geophysics of Climate*, Giovanni Gregori, ed., in press. In short, the NASA/DLR project will provide a new source of apt evidence for or against the notion that the earth’s electronic field (otherwise unexplained) can be accounted for by reference to a ‘geo-dynamo.’

<sup>44</sup> The distinctive determinacies of Spirit are second natures or habits; ‘Subjective Spirit’ considers the potentialities of humans (Spirit) for habit-formation. See *Enz.*, §§ 409–410.

less to more complete processes, the encyclopedia completes its circle and returns again to its beginning.

### ARISTOTLE AND HEGEL—RESUME

There is a fairly general consensus that the project launched in what we have as the *Corpus Aristotelicum*, as published by Andronicus of Rhodes in Rome during the first century BC, is incomplete. Certain aspects of its incompleteness are uncontroversial. For example, the topic of botany represents an obvious gap. And we know that his successor as head of the Lyceum, Theophrastus, made an effort to fill this gap. But the larger question concerns the form one may have expected the projected curriculum of liberal education to have assumed. One line of interpretation, represented by the distinguished Aristotle scholar, Jonathan Barnes, contends that a completed Aristotelian corpus would find each of the theoretical sciences, and perhaps even the practical, put into the scheme of axiomatized science outlined in the *Posterior Analytics*. This currently dominant reading is the one that is most directly challenged by the *λεγεται πολλαχως* argument of this paper.

Of 20th-century Aristotle scholars, Wolfgang Wieland, whose study of the *Physics* is a landmark,<sup>45</sup> is nearly alone in the recognition that we have in Hegel an interpreter of Aristotle who speaks of his arguments as with a peer. But Wieland's focus is upon 'second philosophy' in Aristotle. For a comprehension of how Aristotle's philosophy as a whole might achieve completeness, we have only Hegel's *Encyclopedia* as a clue.<sup>46</sup>

The suggestion of this paper is that Hegel's encyclopedic project becomes clear when we realize that he shared with Aristotle the notion that *το ον λεγεται πολλαχως*. Like Aristotle, Hegel understood that things must be comprehended as functions or processes. Like Aristotle, Hegel grasped that the elementary constituents of all functions are three, the three principles of Aristotelian science or theory. Like Aristotle, Hegel knew that a function involved two contraries and a substratum. Like Aristotle, Hegel attempted to spell out the modes of contrariety (the topic of his *Seinslogik*) and the ways of being a substratum (the topic of his *Wesenslogik*), and the varieties of being an individual (the topic of his *Begriffslogik*, which, in turn, is incomplete, requiring a *Realphilosophie*—the philosophies of nature and spirit—in its never-ending cycle toward completeness). What bonds Hegel with Aristotle is the solid sense that "being is spoken of in many ways." What separates Hegel from Aristotle is the determination to carry the Aristotelian project to completion. Whether he has done so adequately must remain, for this paper at least, an open question. But until his project is thus grasped, Hegel will continue to be read, à la Pippin, as the pretender to the completion of Kant's essentially linguistic project or, still worse, as an historian fiddling with the epochal significance of phrases like "Et in Arcadia ego."

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<sup>45</sup> Wolfgang Wieland, *Die aristotelische Physik*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1962.

<sup>46</sup> To the short list of works on Hegel and Aristotle we may now add the detailed and compelling philological study by Alfredo Ferrarin, *Hegel and Aristotle*, Cambridge: CUP, 2001.