I

ARISTOTLE
When thinking comes to an end by slipping out of its element it replaces this loss by procuring a validity for itself as techne. (Heidegger)¹

There is a tendency in recent continental philosophy to maintain, following Heidegger, that the form assumed by philosophy in our own time is that of techne. Aristotle was, according to this interpretation, the first thinker to fully formulate the concept of techne, so it is surprising to find how few studies of this concept in Aristotle are to be found in the latter part of the 20th century and up to the present day.²

One of the earliest works to be considered in this period is Karl Ulmer’s Wahrheit, Künste und Natur bei Aristoteles (1953).³ It was quite explicitly indebted to Heidegger, whose Über den humanismus (1947) and Holzwege (1950) are often cited. It is a broadly based study which is largely summative. In the first part Ulmer discusses the varieties of human knowledge, and only in the second part attempts to establish “the philosophical character of techne” (p. 127). It is a work which, though it contains several useful observations on Aristotle’s thought, consists for the most part of exposition.

* Translated from the Italian by Hugh Bredin.

¹ Martin Heidegger, Letter on Humanism, p. 197. In an earlier passage Heidegger wrote, “We must free ourselves from the technical interpretation of thinking. The beginnings of that interpretation reach back to Plato and Aristotle. They take thinking itself to be a techne, a process of reflection in service to doing and making” (p. 194). I intend in this paper to provide some materials for superseding the condemnation of techne which is commonplace in 20th century European thought. I am happy also to dedicate it to an original historian such as Denis O’Brien.

² I have been unable to consult Augusto Ortega’s “Aspectos del concépto di techne en Aristoteles” (1965).

³ This is a revised version of a doctoral thesis submitted during the Second World War in 1943.