and ignorance. For Aristotle, the possibility of revealing something falsely lies in the synthesis character of assertion, which does not belong to the seeing of the being as what it is in itself.

We see, then, that Heidegger also sees in Aristotle a twofold λόγος. If this is the case, then the movement between the two λόγοι would after all, in the end, have to be a διάλογος or dialectic—a certain reinscription of Plato that would go beyond Aristotle and discover the philosopher as the one who dwells in the between. It seems to me that Heidegger's reading of the Sophist dialogue is guided by his attempt to think through philosophically the limits of dialectical thinking. He sees in Aristotle, who achieves his insight only by going through Plato, a philosopher who more radically addresses the question of beings as a whole. We are left with the need, however, to readdress, after Heidegger, the notion of singularity and particularity that Heidegger discovers as central to Platonic philosophy. Perhaps Heidegger's treatise has opened up a way of returning to this singularity in a manner that goes beyond the Aristotelian framework that contrasted it with beings as a whole. Perhaps yet another reading of Plato, one that reads Plato against Aristotle, would permit a discussion of the singularity of the whole, a singularity which, in Platonic terms, would necessarily be doubled and disseminated (διά).

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Thinking Politically beyond Metaphysics


Political philosophy is at a low ebb today—a fact which stands in stark contrast with its pressing urgency. There are several reasons for this state of affairs. One is the dramatic intensity and rapidity of unfolding events in our time which constantly seem to outpace our ability to offer reflectively seasoned accounts. Paralleling this lag, and equally damaging, is the prevalent segregation of philosophy (chiefly its academic variety) from political life—a divorce which transforms the former into the province of technicians or "thought experts" while relegating political accounts to journalism. In slightly attenuated form, the same segregation also characterizes contemporary Continental thought (despite the high political profile of some existentialist thinkers at an
earlier time). In many quarters, Continental philosophy in recent years has tended to be reduced to a “worldless” textualism or else an aestheticizing self-indulgence aloof from practical-political concerns. In this situation one must welcome Bernard Flynn’s book which seeks to recuperate a properly political mode of philosophizing at the “close of metaphysics” (as the latter phrase has been defined by Continental thinkers). Welcome is bound to give way to delight and intellectual excitement once the reader discovers the wealth of insights and novel vistas articulated in the book in a style which combines eloquence and scholarly sobriety.

Flynn’s study is broad in scope, but not in the manner of philosophia perennis. He takes seriously an event or “advent” which marks off our age from previous periods in the history of Western thought: the event of the “closure of metaphysics” (which is not synonymous with its simple erasure). Regarding the meaning of the phrase, he concurs with Nietzsche and Heidegger in locating the “inaugural gesture” of metaphysics in the bifurcation between fact and idea, or between apparent world and “true world”—with the latter serving as the yardstick and ontological foundation of the former. “By metaphysics,” Flynn states, “we mean the philosophical pretension to penetrate appearance and arrive at a knowledge of reality which is ontologically superior to, and epistemologically more certain than, appearance” (2). In varying guises and modalities, this conception formed the bedrock and guiding assumption of much of traditional Western thought—despite the protestations of some pragmatists ready to consign metaphysics to a small band of dreamers and hence to treat its demise as a non-event. Countering the latter view (epitomized by Rorty), Flynn insists with Nietzsche on the theological as well as socio-political salience of the fact-idea bifurcation, especially its importance in shaping major regime-forms and institutions governing premodern and modern Western societies. To the extent that this is the case, the closure of metaphysics bequeaths to the political philosopher a new task: the task of conceiving and articulating political life in postmetaphysical terms and thus of honoring the timeless imperative “to think” in the timely mode “to think otherwise.” Philosophical reflection at this point involves a refiguration of worldly appearance in a manner which succeeds “in opening a space in which the novel becomes intelligible, a space of appearance in which the political can give itself” (6–7).

To illustrate the difficulties and possible directions of such a refiguration, Flynn discusses six prominent political thinkers laboring in the twilight zone of metaphysics. Three of these thinkers—Marx, Habermas, and Foucault—are presented as halfway houses on the road