

Entelechy and Modernity

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Ghost in the shell: entelechy

OVERTURES FAVOUR definitions and strictures. We need, we are required to be certain of, as Carver titled it, “what we talk about when we talk about” X. X is a word, a coinage, an invention, an incision and insertion of philosophical thought, which now rests forgotten, buried in the terminological subtleties of Aristotelian exegesis, unused, unthought anymore, ended rather than complete, true yet untrue in some way to the meaning it expressed. Whatever is left, if anything, of its conceptual potential awaits excavation. Such endeavours have all the quiet desperation of salvage operations.

Similarly, a text of this same title was written and forgotten, not lost but buried in a drawer, discovered almost *vingt ans après*, found hard copy and soft evidence, flat-lined, cocksure of the entitlement of its titular connection, and reworked, rewritten here. A double salvaging effort, then, now, whose aim has to do with retrieval, relevance, reflection, reanimation, recuperation, the whole range of pre-fixed hindsight. The gist of its proposition, set out here at the beginning, as synthetically as possible is this: entelechy as revenant in modernity, ghostly outcome and haunt of reanimation.

Before the definition, a field. Or rather, instead of the definition, a field. In the sense of “before,” it comes as a pre-caution at once terminological and philosophical:

A word of warning is in order here, however. When I say that Aristotle was careful with his words I do not mean that his terminology is systematic or even consistent. [...] When I said that Aristotle is sensitive to the sense of his words, I had in mind the fact that he usually seems to have some good *prima facie* reason for choosing the way he expresses himself. [...] He is far from having a consistent terminology. He is perfectly happy with a distinction as long as he needs it, but he may be equally happy to give it up as soon as he does not need it any longer.¹

The warning does not merely warn, but indicates the ordering of meanings according to function and intent, directs consistency away from the generally valid and into a field of teleologically charged usage. This dispersal of conceptual coherence, in order

to make it more accurate to its original aims, and therefore more precise, is a symptom of a vaster plurality nested at the core of philosophical conception:

And so we come to the central question of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. This question is posed in the form of an observation from which Aristotle does not begin but very nearly arrives at after a succession of steps—stumbling over it, so to speak, as he gradually moves from the first book to the fourth, where, after having said that there is a science that studies being as such, at the point where one would expect the first tentative definition of the object of this science, Aristotle repeats as the sole possible definition what in the first book (992b 19) had appeared only as a parenthetical observation: being can be said in many ways (*leghetai men pollachos*) and in several senses (1001a 33).²

While it is humorously easy to imagine Aristotle wincing as he answered an unuttered question that is really “What is being, man?” with an uncomfortable “It’s... complicated,” or “Depends,” the tension is there in that beginning of the “sole” definition that has to wrestle with the “many,” reducible though they may be.³ A field of many ways of saying, many senses, relatively scattered, picked up according to what one wishes to speak about, a complexity of constellations seen and tackled by Aristotle, in what we would consider an incomparably more “modern” conceptual acumen. His sensitivity to the precision of meanings led him to the vision of the Hydra of *pollachos legethai*, and ultimately to the polyhedral construction that is his philosophy. A fairy tale of primordial superimposition unravels further with Aristotle, from the remnants of Parmenidean being to the transcendent ballet of Platonic forms, in the long distention of to be and to be said. These two, which in Greek philosophy used to be if not one then “to a considerable extent interchangeable concepts,”⁴ are fanned out into what has been called, with a very modern phrase, “a repertoire of points of view.”⁵ The plurality of usages and senses may in fact eclipse the sense of the unraveling:

The problem of Aristotelian being lay not in the *pollachos* but in the *leghetai*. Whether it is said in one or many ways, being is something that is said. It may well be the horizon of every other evidence, but it becomes a philosophical problem only when we begin to talk about it, and it is precisely our talking about it that makes it ambiguous and polyvocal. The fact that this ambiguity can be reduced, does not alter the fact that we become aware of it only through speech. As it is thinkable, being manifests itself to us right from the outset as *an effect of language*.⁶

It’s hard to tell how much in this diagnosis is, so to speak, “modern,” but undoubtedly it is projected backwards to reanimate Aristotelian being with a view also towards Eco’s concern in the book. Or, it could be said that the problem of Aristotelian being echoes across to us until it is observed, like background radiation, finding its entelechy in it being taken up again. But what is entelechy? One passage more, be-fore.

An effect of language. We’re so used to this, weary and wary, that Eco’s big reveal fails to ignite. But for our word, which is a part of this problem of this field, embedded in

it, enmeshed in it, constellated within, “an effect of language” is its very nature. Invention is an effect of language. Our word, Aristotle’s invention, is an effect of language. X is, famously, chiasmus, dispersal forced po(i)etically into a crossing, but what the invented word resembles more is a cloud. Do you see yonder cloud that’s almost in shape of an entelechy? That is a very Aristotelian, i.e. hylomorphic, question to be asked by Shakespeare. One cannot imagine what it must have felt like, the invention, what it must have meant. Did Aristotle smile? Did he punch the air, did he shout the new word or whisper it? He may have written it down. ἡ ντελέχεια.

Entelechy is its trans-position into English. Instead of the definition, the field, its field, smaller perhaps than the whole *legethai men pollachos* of the problem of being, sparse with usages disseminated in the books that address it. And our own cloud of translated meanings hovering above it. Instead of definition, translations. *Entelecheia* is commonly translated as either “actuality” (for which meaning it competes with another Aristotelian invention, *energeia*) or as “actualization,”⁷ in order to differentiate itself in the triad *dynamis-energeia-entelecheia*. Preliminarily, and a dynamic sense, so to speak, entelechy ends—better yet, *completes*—the triad, and although lesser used, it seems to work for the precision of meanings between potentiality and actuality.

Translations are only as good as the explanations that betray their insufficiency. A more recent one by Monte Ransome Johnson tells us that:

The term *entelecheia* has been translated as ‘actuality’ because Aristotle often uses it synonymously with the term *energeia*, which means ‘activity.’ In this sense, both terms are opposed to *dynamis* (capacity, power, potentiality). But it would be a mistake to equate the terms. What we have are two different neologisms. It seems unlikely that Aristotle would make up two different terms, yet have only one concept in mind. [...]

But clarity on the issue can be had from a consideration of Aristotle’s own account of the meaning of the terms: ‘The *ergon* (function) is the *telos* (end), and the *energeia* (activity) is the *ergon* (function). For this reason the word *energeia* (activity) is said in the sense of the *ergon* (function) and extended to the *entelecheian* (state of completion)’ (*Meta* IX 8, 1050a21–3; cf. 1055A10–19).⁸

The philosopher at neologic play latches the coinages onto words already of philosophical prominence,⁹ and latches together these words in an equivalence of *legein*, saying: the function is the end and the activity is the function, and therefore it “extends” its meaning toward a completion that doesn’t merely mean a completed product (*ergon* has also been translated as result).

It isn’t surprising that for several Aristotelian commentators the age-old translations, newer than Aristotle’s neologisms, completely miss the mark. Naturally so, since the cloud, according to its nature—or should one say substance?—is, well, nebulous:

In the central books of the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle captures the heart of the meaning of being in a cluster of words and phrases that are the most powerful expressions of his thinking. The usual translations of them not only fall flat but miss

the central point: that the thinghood (*ousia*) of a thing is what it keeps on being in order to be at all (*to ti n einai*), and must be a being-at-work (*energeia*) so that it may achieve and sustain its being-at-work-staying-itself (*entelecheia*). In the standard translations of those words and phrases, that rich and powerful thought turns into the following mush: the substance of a thing is its essence, and it must be an actuality, so that it may achieve and sustain its actuality.¹⁰

This is another story of loss and remoteness—a familiar modern narrative of the melancholy origins—that these translations seemingly condemn us to. In it we encounter the obverse of the lack that arguably caused Aristotle’s invention of *energeia* and *entelecheia*: the lack of words whose meanings could be stretched to encompass philosophical insight into the problem of being and motion (that is, change) and its multiple ways of expression. Instead, for us, these translations signal at once lack and surplus (of meaning), as translations are wont to, but in this case they are—if I may—entelechieis of philosophical historical sense, there are weighed down by first having been translated into other (Latin) words and philosophically conglomerated upon through the ages. Tradition and the philosophical talent, to use a pseudo-Eliotic misreading, the talent not buried but exchanged by innumerable philosophical hands and minds, sent thus forth into time towards its completion, while at least pretending to “stay itself.” There is something quite appealing in Sachs’s refreshing, nursery rhyme-like approximation, “being-at-work-staying itself,” which is quite different from the high Modernist utterance of “actuality” with the whole tradition of European philosophy breathing down one’s neck.¹¹

The knife that cuts through the cloud is context. One philosophical context in which Aristotle inserts the connected terms is his famous thesis of the priority of actuality: “So, at Delta 11 when Aristotle begins to talk about priority with respect to potentiality and actuality (*kata dynamin kai kata entelecheian*) it is fairly safe to assume that he wants to introduce a new perspective on substance.”¹² It is here, in the discourse on substance that Aristotelian *entelecheia* finds its weightiest meaning, and also the semantic slide that brings into focus the partial synonymy of *energeia* and *entelecheia*. The priority of this context is not chronological in Aristotle’s works, but philosophical: *entelecheia* is used in tandem with *energeia* as super-imposed over the form/matter distinction

Substance, and in particular form, is associated with actuality (*energeia*), while matter is associated with potentiality (*dynamis*). In some contexts, the form/matter and actuality/potentiality distinctions are used almost interchangeably. However, Aristotle clearly considers the latter to have some explanatory value the former does not. Although *energeia* can have several meanings, the one which is relevant to substance analysis is that in which “it tends to mean *entelecheia*.” The basic notion signified by *entelecheia* is completeness.¹³

Entelecheia seems to be a specific, more precise delineation of actuality in its extension, which takes the being-at-work, in function, i.e. activity, and re-sets it from the perspective of realization and completeness. A shard of the invention of the terms *entelecheia* and

energeia—of their conceptual development, their ghostly history in Aristotle’s train of thought—has survived, in another parenthetical observation in *Meta. IX*:

Here Aristotle mentions the “chief” sense of potentiality as the sense of *kinesis*. He seems to think this sense is less philosophical, or at least less relevant to understanding being in the sense of actuality, which is the subject of the book. [...] Aristotle also makes an etymological-historical comment: “The term actuality (*energeia*), which tends to mean realization (*entelecheia*) has come to apply to other subjects from originally applying to activities (*kinesis*),” for activity especially seems to be actuality.¹⁴

Gazing back at the origin of the word, Aristotle sees it as poorer philosophically, at least for his immediate aim in the *Metaphysics*, but still at work in perception (“seems to be”) and usage. This hindsight, proleptic in the *Metaphysics*, since its end is the accurate grafting of the terms unto the meta-physical job at hand, is accompanied for us by a different gazing back, which goes beyond the formed word, through the word, as it were, to its component parts and to the potential history of their agglutination: etymology. Which is again, partly cloudy. Graham notes:

Aristotle himself endorses the etymology for *entelecheia* deriving from *en telos echein*. Notwithstanding the fact that Aristotle must have coined the word himself, his etymology is false: the term must derive from the phrase *entelos echein*.¹⁵

En [eauto] telos echein can be said in English “having [itself] in the end” or “having an end in itself,” whereas *entelos echein* would be “to be complete,” “to have completeness,” although *entelos* is an adverb so shouldn’t that be, misreadingly, “to have completely?” Ransome Johnson glosses further, pulling back the parts of the complete word:

What then does the term *entelecheia* mean? Etymologically, four alternatives have been defended. The suggestion of Hirzel, which has Aristotle creating *entelecheia* on the model of *endelecheia*, has been refuted by Diels. Diels himself defended the derivation of the term from the adjective *enteles* and the verb *echein*. *Enteles* is a common word, meaning, for example, ‘full-grown’ of men, ‘perfect, unblemished’ of cows, and ‘effective’ of troops and horses. A similar suggestion, perhaps more plausible, derives the term from the adverb *entelos* plus *echein*. The problem with these accounts is that Aristotle only once uses the adjective *enteles*, and never the adverb. Von Fritz’s interesting derivation of the term from *en (eauto) telos echein*, ‘having an end in itself’, does not suffer from this problem. Neither does Ross’ and others’ derivation from *en telei echein*, being in a state (or condition) of completion (or fulfillment, or finality).¹⁶

Finally, what’s in a name? From one certainly “false” etymology to four possible ones, to none probable, is it all potential? Don’t even get me started on the *ergon* of dif-

férance at work here, on the energy of it. Did Aristotle derive a word—dear to him, we might suppose—from another he never used in his works? It would be an extraordinary poetic feat. Did he mean *entelecheia* as process or as state, as one unended (*ateles*) controversy maintains?¹⁷ However it might have been, one thought that detaches itself from most contemporary Aristotelian commentators (from Cleary to Graham, Sachs, Bechler, Ransome Johnson) is the importance of *entelecheia* for Aristotelian teleology, complemented somewhat by the fact that Aristotle did not overuse it (just about 100 occurrences in all of Aristotle, according to Ransome Johnson), but perhaps let it be overshadowed by the flashier *energeia* (which is how Western metaphysics got copious hold of *actualitas*). The centrality of *entelecheia* for Aristotle's thought is mentioned in passing in a famous essay of Heidegger's "On the Essence and Concept of *Physis* in Aristotle's *Physics*," which would merit an article all unto itself. I mention it here more as an *epagogé* for a specific modern narrative enchantment with revealing obscured truths, dispelling clouds, revealing radiance and things themselves. Heidegger's reading/retelling of the *Physics*, included in *Wegmarken (Pathmarks)* is a tale, and it resembles a Holy Grail quest more than anything else, certainly more than a true philosophical piece. Heidegger proceeds by establishing a maddeningly complex web of *pollachos legomena*, linking them into a daisy chain of *physis* (which, naturally, is not nature). In this chain *entelecheia* appears, dynamically, not at the end but somewhere in the middle, as a pendant dependent on the meanings chained before and after (*morphé* and *legein*, the verb that for everyone except Heidegger means saying). Entelechy is outlined materially as a word that is not only responsible for bearing the load of Aristotelian thought, but also indicative of the future alienation:

This term, coined by Aristotle himself, is the fundamental word of his thinking, and it embodies that knowledge of being that brings Greek philosophy to its fulfillment. *Entelecheia* comprises the basic concept of Western metaphysics in whose changes of meaning we can best estimate, and indeed must see, the distance between Greek thought in the beginning and the metaphysics that followed.¹⁸

Then, rather speedily, the word is passed over. Heidegger does provide a conventional etymology,¹⁹ but what remains notable in the proximity of his reference to entelechy—the rest of the tortuous twisty path is for another time—is the mention of "aspect" (*eidōs*) as *telos*, and of the *logos*. The general purpose too, naturally, which is, as one expects, to reveal the fracture between the "Greek way of thinking" and the subsequent "forgetting of Being" perpetrated by "Western metaphysics," and to restore the former by translating Aristotle's authentic meanings. An essential story of the fall from the grace of plenary meaning of being, of a re-translation "back" that would efface the evil Latin translation that first set us thinking erroneously. Heidegger's peculiar blind-spot, throughout his latter works, is to maintain that we, still moderns, need this return, and perhaps to a certain degree he is he right, but if we need it, we need it together with our estrangement which has become not our second, but our first (philosophical) nature. To us, actuality is, in a sense, closer than "having itself in its end."

With this in mind, a reminder that the purpose of this text is not to go into Aristotelian intricacies too deeply,²⁰ but rather to gaze at yonder cloud and, from a certain distance, unto the cenotaph of entelechy. Estrangement qualifies all such funereal gazes, springing not only from the otherness of other languages—Greek, Latin, German—that have extended and zombified these words before delivering them “lost in translation,” not only of philosophical fads that have faded and faltered as crystalline fault lines of tradition, but even from attempting a “drawing near.” Is it not odd that in an admirable drawing near, an attempt at closeness²¹ to the original Aristotelian insight we should also find the strangest voice for us, the uncanniest synthesis, almost a Modernist poem:

The two ultimate ideas that govern Aristotle’s thinking are thinghood (*ousia*) and being-at-work (*energeia*).

The primary fact about the world we experience is that it consists of independent things (*ousiai*), each of which is a this (*tode ti*), an enduring whole, and separate (*choriston*), or intact. Since thinghood is characterized by wholeness (*to telos*), the wholeness of each independent thing has the character of an end (*telos*), or that for the sake of which (*hou heneka*) it does all that it does. This doing is therefore the being-at-work that makes it what it is, since it is what it keeps on being in order to be at all (*to ti ēn einai*). Thus thinghood and being-at-work merge into the single idea of being-at-work-staying-itself (*entelecheia*).²²

We are much more at home—familiar, cosy—with an estranged Aristotelian lexicon than with a retelling of his “chief sense” of *entelecheia* that attempts a difficult proximity. On the one hand, I would say that this is our modern estrangement, on the other, that by itself it produces a new closeness, and new-into-venerable “effects of language” for our conceptual usage, thus staying true to Aristotle’s insight about being being said. Therefore, the question is not “what’s in a name?,” but with a ceaseless old but new, hence quintessentially *modern*, question: what’s in it *for us*?

And modernity: liaison (dangereuse?)

THE HOUSE of theory is full of these conceptual walking dead. They stumble about uncertainly, injected time and again with ephemeral light. The ghost in the shell glimmers, it’s made to do its job, attack, fulfil an *ergon* and doze off.

Almost two centuries ago, still at the beginning of modernity, Emerson saw no point or life in them and condemned the undertaking as mere groping “among the dry bones of the past.” Almost a century ago, T. S. Eliot spoke about the presence of the dead as “simultaneous order.” Earlier this year, Franco Moretti deplored the humanities’s failure to produce “stunning and beautiful theories” and their lack of “conceptual imagination and boldness,”²³ and there is legible perhaps behind his disappointment a certain Emersonian frisson of new and bold descriptions of the world. Still, literary and cultural theory has a hard time competing with the things Moretti mentions because it

has been set up differently. To a great extent, it no longer provides descriptions of the world, or so called first-order observations, such as theories in physics or biology do, and—at least when it is mature enough—it doesn't pretend to. What it offers, in vast smorgasbord that goes from the insipid to the piquantly bold, are second order observations, to use Luhmann's term, observations of other observations, recuperations of dead magic words in dead languages, arrangements of desiccated bones of the past to spell new-cum-old anatomies. What it can do, with a truly Aristotelian conceptual jolt, is *pollachos legomena*. Effects of language. So a certain adjustment of scope is required, and a different understanding of what kind of fascination it can arouse. It seems we are condemned to recirculation, a specific recircling and recycling, gyrating in the "interplay of tradition and the movement of the interpreter."²⁴

These are symptomatic pulses of modernity. For their authors—and even for us when we observe them—they are impulses of modernity that help to trace the contours of its assessment as an archive and a culture. On the one hand, modernity is a great "hoarder," the greatest we've had, on the other it is a ritualistic-rhythmic purger, and these are the extremes of its cultural morphology and historical-effective consciousness. The conjunction signals the sense of the modern historical reflection, and to the partiality of possible reanimations: no one contends that the momentary resuscitation of the concept of entelechy can find any use for it in a description of our physics²⁵ or our biology; these *legomena* are at-work-staying-themselves with too much rigidity and coherence to allow the word back. That way is shut, that *dynamis*, as Aristotle would say, is extinguished.

What can be retained then, and beyond retention what can be proposed? There are two ways in which the conjunction ("and," in this case, but others can be used as well) operates: as a historical discourse, Aristotelian exegesis, sometimes with incidental and temperate suggestions by Aristotelians that such and such idea is still valid, or as a pattern of thought energetically at-work in modernity. In the first sense, the horizon is circumscribed, the note that sounds is "the past, the past, the past," as Whitman put it, the complete state that is taken up again historically, with the place wherefrom one departs and at which one arrives mentioned clearly: in Aristotle.

It seems reasonable to suppose that the second way resonates more poignantly with present concerns. Here, the horizon is undefined and the temporal note sounds muddled: it might turn futural, projective, even when it talks about the distant past, thus seemingly confirming what Eliot's Modernist maximalist phantasm propounded as "simultaneous order" and "presence of the past" or, to quote from his poem 'Little Gidding:': "The faces and places, with the self which, as it could, loved them, / To become renewed, transfigured, in another pattern." One could start to discuss modernist poetics in relation to Aristotle's entelechy (and *The Four Quartets* are a good place to start) from these lines. Suffices to say for now that they are eminently illustrative of a drive in modernity that has to do with the plastic-poetic manipulation of historical and phantasmal time. As Andrzej Gąsiorek notes:

These lines indicate that Eliot was not so much seeking to recreate the past as to sift through history in order to make new configurations out of it so that they

could be made relevant to an altered present. Moreover, the discontinuities between past and present were equally important to his thinking because he believed that to be aware of the ways in which the past differed from the present was to reflect upon modern life and to call contemporary assumptions about it into question.²⁶

New configurations made relevant, inventions needed. Aristotle and the modernists, in an unlikely, seemingly atemporal affinity. Many such stories, such as Heidegger's above, are sacerdotal stories about the purported rediscovery of something already at-work-staying-(approximately)-itself, but de-naturated, and requiring a forced return. I am more enthused by potentialities (*dynamei*) that would not coerce us toward presumable primordially, but toward retentions that open at the same time the space of historical reflection, cultural observation and the unended activity (*energeia ateles*) of the movement of many ways of saying. Let me sketch—with the briefest of gestures—the possibility of one such path (one never escapes Heideggerian analogies), first by its name, a syntagm: entelechic drive. And then by the question: could one follow in what we still call modernity?



Notes

1. Jaako Hintikka, *Time and Necessity: Studies in Aristotle's Theory of Modality* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), 2-3.
2. Umberto Eco, *Kant and the Platypus: Essays on Language and Cognition*, trans. Alastair McEwen (New York: Harcourt, 1999), 21.
3. "The polysemy subsides" to ordering, as Eco notes, the many to happy four, see *Kant and the Platypus*, 22.
4. Wolfgang Wieland, 'Aristotle's *Physics* and the Problem of Inquiry into First Principles', in Jonathan Barnes, Malcolm Schofield, Richard Sorabji (eds.), *Articles on Aristotle*, vol. 1, Science (London: Duckworth, 1975), 133.
5. Wieland, "Aristotle's *Physics*," 135.
6. Eco, *Kant and the Platypus*, 23.
7. In W. D. Ross's translation of the *Metaphysics*, *entelecheia* is rendered either as "actuality" or as "complete reality."
8. Monte Ransome Johnson, *Aristotle on Teleology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), 86.
9. Ransome Johnson, *Aristotle on Teleology*, 86.
10. Joe Sachs, *Aristotle's Physics: A Guided Study* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995), 14-5.
11. Sachs's reading continues engagingly, although it is by no means the first one historically to be irreverent towards the established labels. In fact, since Heidegger, we've had a little tradition all unto itself of providing alternate almost poetic, certainly poetic (mis)readings of Aristotelian concepts. Before anything else, this is a matter of conceptual plasticity, rather than one of fidelity.
12. John J. Cleary, *Aristotle on the Many Senses of Priority* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1988), 49.

13. Daniel W. Graham, *Aristotle's Two Systems* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 61.
14. Graham, *Aristotle's Two Systems*, 184.
15. Graham, *Aristotle's Two Systems*, 184.
16. Ransome Johnson, *Aristotle on Teleology*, 88.
17. Incidentally, *entelecheia* on the model of which some claim *entelecheia* was build, means “maintaining,” “persistence,” see Sachs, 245.
18. Martin Heidegger, ‘On the Essence and Concept of *Physis* in Aristotle’s *Physics* B, 1’, in *Pathmarks*, ed. William McNeill, trans. Thomas Sheehan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 216.
19. “Thus the movedness of a movement consists above all in the fact that the movement of a moving being gathers itself into its end, *telos*, and as so gathered within its end, “has” itself: *en telei echei, entelecheia*, having-itself-in-its-end.” Heidegger ‘On the essence,’ 217.
20. The other text, the architext does, down trodden paths and wayward *Wegmarken*, from one Aristotelian system (atomic substantialism) to a possible second (hylomorphic substantialism), with the first perhaps not entirely abandoned, on through a clearing thick with the obscuring saplings of “many ways of saying,” from non-separability to the abandonment of that non, and beyond.
21. See Sachs’s Introduction to his translation of the *Physics*, 1-30.
22. Sachs, *Aristotle's Physics: A Guided Study*, 31.
23. ‘The Digital in the Humanities: An Interview with Franco Moretti,’ in *The Los Angeles Review of Books*, at <https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/the-digital-in-the-humanities-an-interview-with-franco-moretti/>.
24. Hans Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. W. Glen-Doepel (London: Sheed & Ward, 1975), 261.
25. Except perhaps in the sense proposed by Sachs of a “philosophic physics,” which is a cultural discourse about physics.
26. Andrzej Gąsiorek, *A History of Modernist Literature* (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2015), 451.

Abstract

Entelechy and modernity

The paper considers Aristotle’s concept of *entelechy* (*entelecheia*) and explores possibilities of it being retained as an operative relevant term in theoretical descriptions of modernity. Central to Aristotle’s teleological thought, entelechy is polysemic and somewhat obscure. As such it has fascinated and continues to fascinate Aristotelian exegesis. In its first part, the paper explores the cluster of meanings associated with it, whereas in the second it reflects on how such terms are recuperated in modernity, and sketches a path for further work.

Keywords

entelechy, Aristotle, modernity, cultural history.