

Paul Richard Blum, *Giordano Bruno Teaches Aristotle*,
translated by Peter Henneveld (Nordhausen:
Trautgott Bautz, 2016), 296 pp.

Paul Richard Blum's *Giordano Bruno Teaches Aristotle*, published as part of the *Studia Classica et Medievalia* series, is the English translation of his earlier work *Aristoteles bei Giordano Bruno: Studien zur philosophischen Rezeption* (Munich: Fink, 1980). As Blum notes in the Preface, the translated version adheres closely to the original, as "its main message – the paradigm of philosophy in the making – needs no updates" due to "the limited scope of subsequent research on the book's central theme" (pp. 8–9).

This study examines Giordano Bruno's critical engagement with Aristotle, demonstrating how philosophical inquiry evolves through the reinterpretation of earlier systems of thought. Drawing upon his scholastic training and influences from alternative traditions such as Platonism and Epicureanism, Bruno did not merely document past ideas but reworked them to formulate his own theories. His critique of Aristotle is presented as a method of identifying foundational philosophical issues, reconfiguring them, and proposing innovative solutions. Through his engagement with Aristotelian notions of existence and knowledge, Bruno illustrates how historical philosophical problems can serve as catalysts for intellectual progress.

The central focus of Blum's study is Aristotle, whose ideas Bruno both deeply comprehended and creatively repurposed to align with his distinct philosophical objectives. For example, Bruno challenged the conventional separation between subject and object in cognition, advocating for a unified approach that emphasized reflecting subject as the basis of all subsequent "critique of firmly established systems of theories of any kind" (274). Bruno's work exemplifies how revisiting earlier philosophies can yield groundbreaking insights, cementing his status as a pivotal figure in the development of modern philosophical thought.

Blum organizes his presentation of Bruno's interpretation of Aristotle into four key sections: Bruno's approach to Aristotelian logic, fundamental issues of cosmology, critique of the principles of nature, and the relationship between uniformity and pluriformity. Within these four larger sections Blum analyses more than twenty-five different philosophical topics, showing how Bruno appropriated them from Aristotle and modified them.

To illustrate some of the key points of Blum's analysis, I will isolate a few of these topics. Regarding Aristotelian logic, Blum analyses Bruno's critical paraphrase of Aristotle's *Topics*, particularly in *De progressu et lampade venatoria*, where Bruno underscored the necessity of subjective construction in scientific systems. By synthesizing Lullism and mnemonic techniques, Bruno developed a novel form of logic grounded in the pre-structure of human intellect, aiming to establish a transcendental logic.

In addressing Aristotelian cosmology, Blum explores Bruno's critique of Aristotle's concepts of location and space. Bruno redefined space as a continuous, three-dimensional physical quantity that exists independently of and prior to all bodies. For Bruno, space is a neutral substrate that accommodates all entities without being confined by the conditions of action or passivity. However, the precise relationship between space and localized bodies remains an open question.

In the third section, concerning the principles of nature, Blum discusses Bruno's reinterpretation of Aristotle's teleology. Giordano Bruno's philosophy integrates Aristotelian principles but reinterprets them using his unique method. Bruno bridges unity and multiplicity by resolving diverse elements into an absolute unity, which he sees as both immanent and transcendent. This unity manifests concretely within entities like nature in the universe or the world soul in matter. Bruno's system is not purely atomist or Aristotelian but synthesizes various traditions, reflecting his philosophical goal of mediating and harmonizing opposites.

Finally, in the section on unity and multiplicity, Blum examines Bruno's philosophy of the One, focusing on the tension between immanence and transcendence. Bruno asserted that true wisdom lies in understanding the unity underlying all differentiation. He identified the One as the constant principle of being and cognition, transcending and immanent within all things. Unlike Aristotle's unmoved mover, Bruno introduced the concept of the world soul as a universal principle, encapsulating the perfect and the imperfect within the dynamic structure of the cosmos. By resolving all terms into an absolute unity, Bruno constructed a coherent framework that reconciles the dualities of nature.

Blum's book, now accessible to a broader audience through its English translation, has two significant merits. First, it addresses a notable gap in the history of philosophy by delving into Bruno's reception of Aristotelian thought—a topic that has received relatively little attention. Blum's approach to this intricate subject exemplifies a rigorous philosophical approach, avoiding superfluous contextualization in favour of detailed philosophical analysis. This focus on substantial issues is evident throughout the work, as Blum systemati-

cally addresses over twenty-five specific aspects of Bruno's engagement with Aristotelian philosophy.

Second, Blum's deliberate omission of discussing Bruno's role in the emergence of modern science is noteworthy. Ever since Cassirer's *Individuum und Kosmos in der Philosophie der Renaissance*, it is typical to tackle on the topic of modern science while dealing either with Renaissance Aristotelianism or anti-Aristotelianism, situating Renaissance receptions of Aristotle within the broader trajectory toward modern science. However, Blum's avoidance to directly discuss Bruno's contribution to the emergence of modern science redirects attention to Bruno himself. In this way, the study provides a focused analysis of his philosophical innovations. Such a focus could be inspiring for further researches in Renaissance scholarship.

It should be noted, however, that Blum's book is not an easy read. Yet, as Blum remarks in the Preface, "it is what philosophers do".

Luka Boršić

