

Andrzej Serafin

# STUDIES ON HEIDEGGER



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Unheil als Unheil spurt uns das Heile.  
Heiles erwinkt rufend das Heilige.  
Heiliges bindet das Göttliche.  
Göttliches nähert den Gott.

(GA 5, p. 319)

Die abendländische Metaphysik theologisch  
ist, auch dort, wo sie sich gegen die kirchliche  
Theologie absetzt.

(GA 6.2, p. 59)

Das Nichts sei nicht „nichts“, sondern gerade  
das ganz andere: die Fülle. Nennen könne  
das keiner. Aber es sei – Nichts und Alles –  
die Erfüllung. Das ist es, was ich immer,  
mein Leben lang, gesagt habe.

(GA 16, p. 592)



## Introduction

To study Heidegger is to study metaphysics. Unless we live like Nietzsche in an Alpine refuge, in a cave like Zarathustra, or in a Schwarzwald cottage like Heidegger, with our eyes pointed towards the infinite vastness of the surrounding horizon, or even better, towards the inner, primordial temple of mind, usually we are focused on worldly affairs, businesses, duties and tasks, deterring us from the contemplative capacity of our life. Practising metaphysics is the intellectual equivalent of mountaineering, leading to similar peak experiences, uncomparable inner vistas, irreplaceable mental belvederes. Intellectual summits embodied in the *chefs-d'oeuvre* of philosophy are analogous to mountain ranges that we all attempt to climb when we undertake the study of the textual tradition of philosophising. Philosophical textbooks are nothing else than guidebooks and mountain maps, descriptions of paths hitherto taken by others. But even philosophical masterworks like Plato's dialogues, Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, or Heidegger's *Gesamtausgabe* are not mountains themselves. As a piece of text,



a series of letters, they still remain only traces, pathmarks of other people's thoughts, climbings, ascents toward the noetic realm of mind. My book is no different. I follow the steps of Heidegger, retrace them, looking initially at his footmarks, slowly raising my sight to see the surrounding vastness of the mental space, and finally discover that it is a common domain shared by us all, a space of one single mind, traversed in the intellectual endeavour called philosophy. Finally I look up and behold that which unfolds itself into each form that I have ever encountered, into all words that I have ever uttered, some of them collected in the form of a book like this one, beginning with wonder, and ending in silence.

#### Editorial note

Most of the articles were published in the philosophical journal *Kronos*, with the exception of *Priority of Potentiality* and *Ontotheology of Aletheia* (unpublished), *Heidegger's Phenomenology of the Invisible* (published in *Argument*), and *Barely visible: Heidegger's Platonic Theology* (published in *Forum Philosophicum*).

## Priority of Potentiality

The classical Aristotelian formulation of the relationship between potentiality and actuality is: πρότερον ἐνέργεια δυνάμεώς ἐστίν, actuality is prior to potentiality<sup>1</sup>. This primacy of act ultimately leads to the concept of God conceived as *actus purus*<sup>2</sup>: *Deus est purus actus, non habens aliquid de potentialitate*<sup>3</sup>. Against this ontological principle of primacy of actuality (or *Wirklichkeit*, according to Hegel's translation) Heidegger, guided by "the Imp of the Perverse", formulates the inverse principle: "Höher als die Wirklichkeit steht die Möglichkeit". In *Sein und Zeit* he states it explicitly only as a principle of understanding phenomenology<sup>4</sup>. Nevertheless, it is possible to extrapolate this principle to the *Leitfaden* of his whole philosophical endeavor. Heidegger himself claims its validity "in der ganzen Dimension

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<sup>1</sup> *Met.* 1049b.

<sup>2</sup> *Met.* 1072b.

<sup>3</sup> *S. theol.* I, 3, 2c.

<sup>4</sup> GA 2, p. 51-52.

der Philosophie”, “innerhalb des Ontologischen”<sup>5</sup>. Also his reading of Aristotelian *Physics* and *Metaphysics* is governed by this guideline. From this rule stems the primordially of movement over στάσις and τέλος; the dynamic understanding of *Sein* as κίνησις; the primacy of existence over essence; the nihilistic primacy of nothing over something (nothingness as *potentia pura* in opposition to *actus purus*; cf. the condemnation of David of Dinant for the theology of potentiality); the interpretative movement of *Destruktion* (as the regressive retrieval of other possibilities of interpretation, of the *Ungesagte*); the strategy of violent reading against the grain (i.e. against the prevalent, actualized interpretation: “das Denken muß gegen sich selbst denken”<sup>6</sup>); the lure of ἀρχή, origin, primordially, and radicality (in the Heideggerian sense of rootedness, from Latin *radix*, root); the priority of original *Anschaungswahrheit* over the derivative *Satzwahrheit*; the dynamic, ontological, originary understanding of truth, ἀλήθεια, as disclosure, or unconcealment; the primacy of the unknown over the known; the primacy of the question over any definite answer (in his 1951 *Aristoteles-Übungen* he proposes an alternative reading of κυριώτατον in *Met.* 1051b<sup>7</sup> only to retract it after a *Nachdenken* one week later<sup>8</sup>); the apotheosis of errance over systematic closure (even the title *Holzwege* stands for errant *flânerie* and the Heideggerian dictum “Wir kennen nicht Ziele und sind nur ein Gang” is a rephrasing of the

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<sup>5</sup> GA 24, p. 438.

<sup>6</sup> GA 13, p. 80.

<sup>7</sup> GA 83, p. 655.

<sup>8</sup> GA 83, p. 661.

*Möglichkeitsprinzip*); the understanding of *Dasein* as *In-der-Möglichkeit-sein*, defined by its *Seinsmöglichkeiten* and *Seinkönnen*, with *Möglichkeit* as its “ursprünglichste und letzte positive ontologische Bestimmtheit”<sup>9</sup>. Heidegger reads Aristotle against himself by performing the *Überhellen* of δύναμις and κίνησις in his philosophy. Accordingly he interprets *Met.* Θ 10 against Natorp and Jaeger as the apex of the whole Theta-book, by connecting the primordial understanding of ὄν ὡς ἀληθές with the *Anschaungswahrheit* and the priority of δύναμις. It is possible to track down the genealogy of the Heideggerian *Ereignis* to his 1928 reading of δύναμις as *Eignung zu...* („In der Er-eignung wird anwesend die Eignung zu... als solche”<sup>10</sup>; “Die spezifische Bewegung, die der Eignung korrespondiert, ist das Ereignis”<sup>11</sup>). One is tempted to say that for Heidegger *Möglichkeit* is to *Wirklichkeit* as *Sein-des-Seienden* is to the *Seiende*. Heidegger’s theology of the hidden fullness with the unknown, hidden God, that he is so eagerly awaiting, is a transposition of the primacy of potentiality onto the domain of theology. Were this God to manifest Himself, He would have to cease being *potentia pura* and regain His actuality.

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<sup>9</sup> GA 2, p. 191.

<sup>10</sup> GA 83, p. 12.

<sup>11</sup> GA 83, p. 253.



## Apocalypse and Truth: Heidegger's Aristotle

*Qui sine periculo volet in Aristotele philosophari,  
necesse est ut ante bene stultificetur in Christo*<sup>1</sup>

The University of Freiburg has two inscriptions carved on its facade that could be regarded as the cornerstone upon which the edifice of Heidegger's thought was erected: "Die Wahrheit wird euch frei machen" and, added in 1933, "Dem ewigen Deutschtum." Heidegger's philosophy spans between the quotation from the gospel of John – ἡ ἀλήθεια ἐλευθερώσει ὑμᾶς (John 8:32) – and the appeal to the myth of *Germania Aeterna*, starting with the early reading of Pauline eschatology, the Christian protestant thought of Kierkegaard and Luther, up to his later appropriation of Hölderlinian theology. In other words, those two quotations could well serve as epigraphs for the entire Heidegger's oeuvre. One could argue that Heidegger's philosophy, in particular his reading of Aristotle, is apocalyptic in two senses. First and foremost,

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<sup>1</sup> WA 1, p. 355.

his interpretation of ἀλήθεια, the central concept of his philosophy, is apocalyptic. He rejects the traditional, scholastic understanding of ἀλήθεια in favor of an apocalyptic, or revelatory reading. This reading is also phenomenological, since on Heidegger's account, ἀλήθεια is the *Unverborgenheit*, or the disclosedness of the world, of worldly things, the "Sichzeigenlassen der Sache selbst"<sup>2</sup>, and the locus of disclosure is *Dasein*, as Heidegger interprets the Aristotelian phrase ἀληθεύει ἡ ψυχή (*Eth. Nic.* VI 1139b)<sup>3</sup>. Thereby every manifestation of every phenomenon is an epiphany, albeit one that is not a theophany in the traditional sense, since from this perspective we can no longer speak of any beyond. It is the self-revelation of the world itself, "a work of art without an artist"<sup>4</sup>, an auto-epiphany, a *Sichoffenbaren*<sup>5</sup>. It can only be considered a theophany if the world is identified with God. Indeed, according to Thomas Sheehan, "the ,god' that Heidegger's philosophy awaits is simply the epiphany of world."<sup>6</sup> To put it differently, Heidegger's "last god" is simply the world as such.

It is arguable whether this is indeed Heidegger's ultimate view. How then could one explain his later statements like "Wagen wir noch einmal die Götter und mit ihnen die Wahrheit des Volkes?"<sup>7</sup>, or "die Götter sind immer die Götter des Volkes; in ihnen enthüllt und erfüllt sich die geschichtliche

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<sup>2</sup> GA 11, p. 147.

<sup>3</sup> GA 62, p. 376 and GA 19, p. 21.

<sup>4</sup> KGW VIII.1, p. 117 (Autumn 1885-Autumn 1886, 2[114]).

<sup>5</sup> GA 13, p. 96.

<sup>6</sup> T. Sheehan, *Heidegger and Christianity*, in: D. Patte (ed.), *The Cambridge dictionary of Christianity*, Cambridge 2010.

<sup>7</sup> GA 94, p. 135.

Wahrheit des Volkes”<sup>8</sup>, not to mention his postmortem utterance “Nur noch ein Gott kann uns retten.”<sup>9</sup> This leads us to the second meaning of Heideggerian apocalyptic, or the awaiting and preparation for God. The longed for event is indeed παρουσία, which Heidegger explicitly translates as *Ereignis*<sup>10</sup>. As he explains, the event of παρουσία is preceded by the arrival of the Antichrist, who presents himself as “the god of this world” (2Cor 4:4)<sup>11</sup>. Only a true Christian can recognize the Antichrist, Heidegger adds. The apocalyptic reading of ἀλήθεια and the above mentioned understanding of the “last God” could be meant to introduce “the god of this world,” as a kind of katabasis with the ultimate aim of achieving the παρουσία. Such an intention is confirmed by the epigraph to Heidegger’s Nietzsche-book, an aphorism from Nietzsche’s *Antichrist*: “Zwei Jahrtausende beinahe und nicht ein einziger neuer Gott!”<sup>12</sup> One should not conclude hastily, as Franco Volpi did, that Heidegger is tantamount to Antichrist<sup>13</sup>. Heidegger’s stance is well explained in his 1946 lecture *Wozu Dichter?*, which he begins by repeating the Hölderlinian diagnosis that we are in the “Night of the World”<sup>14</sup> characterized by the absence of God. In order to overcome the Night, it is necessary that there are some who reach “the abyss of the world”<sup>15</sup>. This abyss, or Abgrund,

<sup>8</sup> GA 39, p. 170.

<sup>9</sup> GA 16, p. 671.

<sup>10</sup> GA 60, p. 149.

<sup>11</sup> GA 60, p. 110.

<sup>12</sup> GA 6.1, p. 1; cf. GA 50, p. 107.

<sup>13</sup> F. Volpi, *La Selvaggia Chiarezza. Scritti su Heidegger*, Milano 2011, p. 297f.

<sup>14</sup> SW 2, p. 94; cf. GA 5, s. 272.

<sup>15</sup> GA 5, p. 270.



is also called by Heidegger the open, *das Offene*, which he elucidates further on in this lecture, following Hölderlin's call: "Komm! ins Offene, Freund!", "So komm! dass wir das Offene schauen"<sup>16</sup>. But to enter the open, as Heidegger explicates, is to enter the domain of *Zusammensein*<sup>17</sup>. *Dasein* is thus no longer *jemeinig*, instead becoming "unsere Dasein", "geistig-volkliche Dasein", "volklich-staatliche Dasein"<sup>18</sup> or even "deutsche Dasein"<sup>19</sup> that should undergo a "total transformation"<sup>20</sup>. It is no coincidence that Heidegger started interpreting Hölderlin at the time of his epochal engagement.

In order to understand how Heidegger was able to bring about a transition to a collective *Dasein*, we shall first ask the question: what does he mean by *Dasein* at all, rather than simply condemning him as Karl Löwith did in his 1946 essay<sup>21</sup>. To state it briefly, Heidegger's *Dasein* never meant an individual, a person, a strictly delimited being; instead it was always meant as ecstatic, from *Sein und Zeit* till the last seminar in Zähringen, where Heidegger says that *Dasein* is "wesenhaft ek-statisch"<sup>22</sup>. If "*Dasein* is its openness"<sup>23</sup>, then it is also open towards collective, i.e. *volklich* forms of being. But to grasp what's at stake here, we must remember that Heidegger is constantly trying to develop a theology of

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<sup>16</sup> SW 2, p. 84, 91; cf. Rilke's *Eighth Elegy*: "Mit allen Augen sieht die Kreatur das Offene".

<sup>17</sup> GA 16, p. 728.

<sup>18</sup> GA 16, p. 109-111.

<sup>19</sup> GA 16, p. 184, 238, 766; GA 36/37, p. 13, 89; GA 39, p. 290.

<sup>20</sup> GA 16, p. 192.

<sup>21</sup> K. Löwith, *Les implications politiques de la philosophie de l'existence chez Heidegger*, Les Temps Modernes 1946 Vol. 3 No. 14.

<sup>22</sup> GA 15, p. 383.

<sup>23</sup> GA 2, p. 133.

facticity, following Luther and Paul: “what is invisible in God is seen by thought in His works”<sup>24</sup>. The introduction of a “volkkliche Dasein” is therefore equivalent to stating that “die Götter sind immer die Götter des Volkes”. In other words, if *Dasein* is the locus of manifestation, then a theophany can occur in its *volkklich* mode. This should nevertheless be further clarified by returning to preliminaries.

Heidegger's peculiar use of the term *Dasein* combines at least two diverse aspects. One is the traditional German translation of the Thomistic “*existentia Dei*” as “*Dasein Gottes*”; this is the divine aspect of *Dasein*. Furthermore, in Heidegger's philosophy *Dasein* replaces ἄνθρωπος. This is justified by the claim that “human” is a concept overburdened by unwanted metaphysical load<sup>25</sup>. Thereby Heidegger realizes Nietzsche's postulate that “man is something that shall be overcome”. This replacement is also a consequence of Luther's facticity, which leads Heidegger to question the idea of *homo* as *imago Dei*, introducing instead the analogical relation of *Dasein* as manifestation of *Sein*. One more aspect of *Dasein* needs to be underscored, i.e. Kierkegaard's shift of meaning of the concept of existence from divine to human, providing the link that connects the previous two aspects. In the early twenties, having immersed deeply into Kierkegaard and Luther, Heidegger undertook a large project of interpreting Aristotle phenomenologically. One of the major outcomes is the introduction of the concept of *Dasein*. This can be demonstrated by comparing two subsequent

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<sup>24</sup> GA 60, p. 281.

<sup>25</sup> GA 63, p. 21f.

translations of the statement ἀληθεύει ἡ ψυχή from the *Nicomachean Ethics*, traditionally translated as “die Seele die Wahrheit bekennt”. Whereas in 1922 Heidegger translates this as “die Seele Seiendes als unverhülltes in Verwahrung bringt”<sup>26</sup>, in 1926 he rephrases it as “das menschliche Da-sein als Zu- und Absprechen das Seiende erschließt”<sup>27</sup>. We shall analyze the translation of ἀληθεύει later, but here it is important to notice the replacement of the “metaphysical” concept of soul with the existential-phenomenological *Da-sein* as ecstatic, or transcending itself, and as the place of the manifestation of phenomena.

This interpretation of ψυχή as *Dasein* is further supported by Heidegger’s reading of Aristotle, especially of the treatise Περὶ Ψυχῆς, which he describes in 1927 as “Ontologie des Lebens und des Daseins”<sup>28</sup>. Already in 1922 he states that translating Περὶ Ψυχῆς as *Von der Seele* is misleading, because this is not “psychology in modern sense, since it deals with man’s being in the world”<sup>29</sup>. Instead it should be translated as *Über das Sein in der Welt*<sup>30</sup>. The misleadingly named “faculties of the soul”, perceiving, thinking and willing, are not *Erlebnisse* for Aristotle, as modern psychology would have it, but rather “Weisen des Da-seins eines Lebenden in seiner Welt”<sup>31</sup>. Aristotle does not deal here with an “An-sich-Erleben” of the ψυχή, but with its *Leben*, i.e.

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<sup>26</sup> GA 62, p. 376.

<sup>27</sup> GA 19, p. 21.

<sup>28</sup> GA 22, p. 182.

<sup>29</sup> GA 17 p. 6.

<sup>30</sup> GA 17, p. 293.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

“ein Sein, dem es auf sein Sein ankommt”<sup>32</sup>. This expression from 1922 will reappear in *Sein und Zeit* to characterize *Dasein*. Furthermore, one cannot even conceive of something like the psychology of Aristotle, since the assumption of a possibility of psychology requires the concept of a self-knowing, self-willing, self-certain man, i.e. man as subject, who experiences the world as his object. Such a concept is entirely foreign to the Greeks<sup>33</sup>.

Instead, Heidegger would rather call Περὶ Ψυχῆς the phenomenology of *Dasein*: “Aristotle was really in *De Anima* phenomenological (without the explicit reduction)”<sup>34</sup>. He even calls Aristotle “the first phenomenologist”<sup>35</sup> who thought the self-manifestation of phenomena “more originally than Husserl”<sup>36</sup>. This phenomenological reading, Gadamer recalls, allowed Aristotle “to speak like a contemporary”<sup>37</sup>. What allows Heidegger to issue such a claim? During his reading of Aristotle, Heidegger once again attempted to interpret Husserl’s sixth *Logische Untersuchung*, which was hitherto incomprehensible to him. Through Aristotle he finally understood what Husserl meant by categorial intuition. This needs to be clarified in order to justify Heidegger’s claim. Husserl’s discovery of categorial intuition is the

<sup>32</sup> A. Denker, H. Zaborowski (eds.), *Heidegger und Aristoteles*, München 2007, p. 25.

<sup>33</sup> GA 55, p. 234, 312.

<sup>34</sup> H. Spiegelberg (ed.), *Husserl to Heidegger: Excerpts from a 1928 Freiburg Diary*, Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology 1971 Vol. 2 No. 1, p. 73

<sup>35</sup> GW 10, p. 18, 351; GW 8, p. 404; GW 3, p. 402.

<sup>36</sup> GA 14, p. 99.

<sup>37</sup> GW 3, p. 199, 286.

*Brennpunkt*<sup>38</sup> of his thought, since it allows, as Klaus Held has put it, for the “Vorgegebenheit einer transsubjectiven Offenbarkeitsdimension”<sup>39</sup>. Simply speaking, it allows for the perception of being itself. This is indeed the essence of the phenomenological revolution, since it extends Kantian sensuous intuition to the domain of the categorial: “Für Husserl ist das Kategoriale (das heißt die Kantischen Formen) ebenso sehr gegeben wie das Sinnliche”<sup>40</sup>. One of the books studied by the young Heidegger was Carl Braig’s *Vom Sein*, which opens with an epigraph from Bonaventura’s *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*: “as our eyes, turned towards the multiplicity of colours, don’t perceive the light, so our mind’s eyes, turned towards particular and universal beings, don’t perceive being itself”<sup>41</sup>. Now, thanks to the new Husserlian method, the scales have fallen from Heidegger’s eyes. It is impossible to overestimate the importance of this discovery for it is indeed a breakthrough. In order to realize its far reaching implications, one has to understand that Heidegger is not talking about some form of contemplation that focuses upon an object, albeit a holy one. What he is talking about is the possibility of opening the third, phenomenological eye that perceives something other than beings: being, *esse*, εἶναι itself.

It needs to be properly emphasized why Heidegger regards Aristotle’s analyses as phenomenological. Among

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<sup>38</sup> GA 15, p. 373.

<sup>39</sup> J. E. Faulconer, M. A. Wrathall (eds.), *Appropriating Heidegger*, Cambridge 2000, p. 103.

<sup>40</sup> GA 15, p. 376.

<sup>41</sup> C. Braig, *Vom Sein. Abriss der Ontologie*, Freiburg im Breisgau 1896, p. v.

other reasons, this is due to the fact that they do not presuppose a subject-object framework<sup>42</sup>. Therefore the locus of truth for Aristotle is not the proposition, as the classical theory of truth claims. Locating truth within the sentence, or in the mind that's thinking the sentence, and treating the criteria of truth as external, located in some external reality, requires certain questionable premises that are not obvious for Aristotle and valid for all of his writings. Instead, even in *Metaphysics* one can find a conception of truth that does not operate within such a framework, and of ψυχή that finds itself in a primary, pre-established relation to the things it encounters in the world. Phenomenology requires such an originary mode. Therefore Heidegger regards early Husserl as phenomenological, but he considers Husserl's later shift into idealism a regress. Aristotle's phenomenological analyses of *Dasein*'s Being-in-the-world is what Heidegger finds in *Eth. Nic.* VI and repeats them in a properly crafted language in *sSein und Zeit*, which is phenomenological in its originary sense, i.e. Aristotelian, and not Husserlian.

It is of utmost importance that when Heidegger pinpoints the Husserlian *kategoriale Anschauung* in Aristotle, he doesn't associate it with θεωρία, or contemplation, which would seem to be the most straightforward choice. Heidegger's groundbreaking discovery and the core of this entire thought boils down to his recognition of categorial intuition in ἀλήθεια. This singular choice is more decisive than any translation or elucidation of the meaning of ἀλήθεια as *Wahrsein*, *Unverborgenheit*, etc. Heidegger can

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<sup>42</sup> GA 62, p. 377.

try to explain this decision by translation ἀλήθεια as “die Unverborgenheit des Anwesenden, dessen Entbergung, sein sich-Zeigen”<sup>43</sup>, but in order to grasp its meaning one has to return to the above quoted passage from the sixth book of *Nicomachean Ethics*, which is indeed the Aristotelian equivalent of Husserl’s sixth *Logische Untersuchung*. Heidegger was able to discover in this passage not a statement of intellectual or dianoetic virtues, but a phenomenological analysis of “der Weisen, in denen das menschliche Dasein das Seiende erschließt”<sup>44</sup>, i.e. of *kategoriale Anschauung*. Some of those ways are theoretical, some are practical. In fact the discovery of ἀλήθεια πρακτική stands among Heidegger’s revelations. In other words, *Dasein*’s disclosedness also occurs through practice. This Aristotelian observation is analyzed by Heidegger further in *Sein und Zeit* under the title of *Zuhandenheit*. Once again, since one cannot repeat this often enough: revelation occurs not only in contemplation.

It is necessary to stress the verbal form of ἀλήθεια in the *Eth. Nic.* passage. Translators were hitherto utterly helpless in the face of the fact that contemporary languages don’t have the equivalent verbal forms for Greek ἀληθεύειν. Therefore they replaced it with its nominal form, ἀλήθεια, or *Wahrheit*, and added an auxiliary verb chosen by mere chance, e.g. *bemächtigt*, *trifft* or *bekannt*. Heidegger states explicitly that ἀληθεύειν doesn’t mean “sich der Wahrheit bemächtigen”, but rather “das je vermeinte und als solches vermeinte Seiende als unverhülltes in Verwahrung

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<sup>43</sup> GA 14, p. 99.

<sup>44</sup> GA 19, p. 21.

nehmen"<sup>45</sup>, or "das jeweilig Seiende, mit dem das Dasein Umgang pflegt, unverdeckt zur Verfügung haben", which is the phenomenological description of the process of intuition. Heidegger's translations of ἀληθεύειν as *Wahrsein* and *In-der-Wahrheit-sein*<sup>46</sup>, or *being-true* and *being-in-truth* preserve the verbal, kinetic character of "trueing". Furthermore, as Heidegger observes, ἀληθεύειν doesn't "originally and properly" have a theoretical character in the modern sense of the word. Instead ἀληθεύειν has the primary character of κίνησις, which is confirmed even by the verbal form of the word expressing it<sup>47</sup>. This is why in order to further analyze the movement of ἀληθεύειν Heidegger will have to take recourse to Aristotle's *Physics*. It is also necessary to underscore that even though one can find in *De Anima* expressions like ἡ ψυχή τὰ ὄντα πῶς ἐστί πάντα, i.e. ψυχή is somehow everything (431 b 21), or the identification of ψυχή as τόπος εἰδῶν, the locus of manifestation (429 a 27), those statements are not interesting for Heidegger since they don't describe how the manifestation of beings in ψυχή occurs. Such a description is only contained in *Eth. Nic.* VI which is why Heidegger begins his interpretation of Aristotle with it<sup>48</sup>.

Let us state once again: ἀληθεύειν has the character κίνησις. In other words, *Dasein* is a movement. Even νοῦς, the highest, most "theoretical" of the five modes of *Dasein*'s ἀληθεύειν that Aristotle distinguishes, is kinetic. Yet, Heidegger observes, it is not νοῦς that is "theoretical",

<sup>45</sup> GA 62, p. 378.

<sup>46</sup> GA 19, p. 23.

<sup>47</sup> GA 62, p. 374, 377, 385.

<sup>48</sup> GA 19, p. 21f.; GA 62, p. 376f.



but rather the “theoretical” that is νοῦς-like<sup>49</sup>. He could not have stated otherwise from the perspective of facticity, but to have Aristotle as his ally is indeed an accomplishment. Heidegger explains his claim about the kinetic character of νοῦς thus: as pure apprehension νοῦς is properly movedness, *Bewegtheit*, since in the apprehension of the purely apprehensible it not only does not cease its movedness, but only then – as that what has reached its end – is it movement<sup>50</sup>. As a βάδισις εἰς τέλος, a going-towards or not-yet-having-reached its end, every physical movement is principally different from having-gone or having-arrived: ἕτερον καὶ κινεῖ καὶ κεκίνηκεν (*Met.* Θ 6, 1048 b 32)<sup>51</sup>. However, having seen is simultaneous with seeing, one cannot see without having seen: νοεῖ καὶ νενόηκεν (*Met.* Θ 6, 1048 b 34). This illustrates the idea of pure movedness as pure θεωρεῖν. Hence the etymology of θεωρεῖν: θεωρός is someone who goes to a festival and is “all eyes”. Aristotle regards θεωρεῖν as divine, θεῖον, precisely because it is the purest kind of movement available to *Dasein*. Therefore θεωρεῖν is not divine as the explication of a religious experience, but as the radicalization of the idea of pure *Bewegtsein*. or being-moved. For Aristotle θεωρεῖν is θεῖον only because it satisfies most purely the idea of being-moved as such<sup>52</sup>. This is possible because Greeks understood movedness from the perspective of rest. Movedness is what determines both movement and rest, which is the cessation of movement, its παύεσθαι

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<sup>49</sup> GA 62, p. 378.

<sup>50</sup> GA 62, p. 386.

<sup>51</sup> GA 62, p. 101, 108, 386.

<sup>52</sup> GA 62, p. 389.

(*Met.* Θ 6, 1048 b 26)<sup>53</sup>. Lack of movement, movement = 0, is a boundary case, having movedness nonetheless as its essence. The apex of movement is therefore the moment of rest, however not as cessation of movement, but rather as its summation. E.g. when an object is thrown up and the force of the thrust equals the force of gravity, then in the highest point its movement stops, its kinetic energy equals zero, but its potential energy, or its internal movement is at its highest. Heidegger calls this its *Stillhalten*<sup>54</sup>. One can understand *Dasein* only through this ontological radicalization of this idea of movedness<sup>55</sup>.

This allows us to understand why ψυχή is called by Aristotle ἐντελέχεια. To translate it as actuality or entelechy does not explain a lot. It is a concept upon which the entire philosophy of Aristotle dwells<sup>56</sup>. When in *Zähringen* Heidegger quotes Aristotle's remark on the relation of ἐντελέχεια to κίνησις: ἡ τοῦ δυνάμει ὄντος ἐντελέχεια, ἣ τοιοῦτον, κίνησις ἐστὶν (*Phys.* Γ 201 a 10-11), he observes that Descartes and Pascal ridiculed it, because they were no longer able to see what manifested itself in entire clarity to Aristotle: κίνησις, movement as phenomenon<sup>57</sup>. Heidegger attempts to recover the originary meaning of ἀλήθεια by grasping the manifold unity of movement that presented itself to Aristotle as ἐντελέχεια. When Heidegger comments upon Aristotle's statement that ψυχή ἐστὶν ἐντελέχεια

<sup>53</sup> GA 9, p. 283-284.

<sup>54</sup> GA 9, p. 284.

<sup>55</sup> GA 62, p. 386.

<sup>56</sup> BH, p. 226.

<sup>57</sup> GA 15, p. 343.

(*De Anima* B 412 a 27), he explains that ψυχή as something animate is determined by movement, but not merely “local” movement understood as motion from place to place, but any sort of movement at all, μεταβολή, the coming to presence of a change. Therefore every πράξις and every νοεῖν is a movement<sup>58</sup>. Heidegger translates ἐντελέχεια as Sich-im-Ende-Haben, from the Greek ἐν τέλει ἔχει<sup>59</sup>. Someone sees and seeing he has seen: ὄρᾳ ἅμα καὶ ἐώρακε (*Met.* Θ 6 1048 b 23). This movement of *Sehen*, *Umsehen* and *Nachsehen* achieves the highest point of having seen in *Stillhalten*, in its τέλος, where its movedness does not cease, but only then becomes grasped. *Dasein* thus achieves its summit<sup>60</sup>. One can conclude that if *Dasein* is *Sein-zum-Tode*, then death is the *Stillhalten*, the summation of life. Only having understood the ontological significance of κίνησις can we appreciate Heidegger’s claim that *Περὶ φύσεως* is the fundamental book of Western philosophy, never thoroughly thought through<sup>61</sup>.

The question posed to Heidegger by his friend, “When are you going to write an ethics?”<sup>62</sup>, might seem ridiculous, but it is indeed essential. For if *Physics* and not *Metaphysics* or *Ethics* is the fundamental book, or if we accept Heidegger’s perspective of facticity, then there is no way to sustain the ethics of values, which were traditionally grounded either upon reason, or upon God’s biblical revelation, both rejected by Heidegger. Therefore to accept facticity is to enter the

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<sup>58</sup> GA 19, p. 17-18; cf. GA 62, p. 229.

<sup>59</sup> GA 9, p. 282, 284.

<sup>60</sup> GA 9, p. 284.

<sup>61</sup> GA 9, p. 242.

<sup>62</sup> GA 9, 353.

abyss, or to become post-human. It is not difficult to see how Heidegger's interpretation of Aristotle is Nietzschean from the outset. Or rather, as Heidegger would prefer to say, how Aristotle is originally Nietzschean, perhaps even more radically than Nietzsche (but that would rather apply to the Presocratics). The question is: what is the basis of Aristotle's primordial ethics, or: how does one make decisions if one cannot appeal to reason or norms, since norms are no longer valid in the existential mode of authenticity, where one cannot treat them as objectively binding? Heidegger's solution is to recognize the kairoic moment of φρόνησις, of ἀλήθεια πρακτική<sup>63</sup>. Now, καιρός does not mean here a due measure or an appropriate moment; it possesses, rather, the Pauline, eschatological, and hence Kierkegaardian meaning of *Augenblick*, or *Øjeblikket*, related to Kierkegaardian decisionism. Briefly put, one can make a decision without basing it upon any ground or reason, so that it can be a pure, i.e. purely ungrounded decision. Thereby its *Grund* will be the *Abgrund*. In other words, it will be an abysmal decision, opening *Dasein* to the unknown, the unfamiliar, the *Ungeheuer*. Hence Heidegger could exclaim, as Gadamer recalls, that φρόνησις is *das Gewissen*<sup>64</sup>. But it is not a conscience that opens one to God as *Grund*, but rather to the *Abgrund*.

In an essay on Heidegger printed as an appendix to *The Gnostic Religion*, Hans Jonas observes that Heidegger's God is an unknown God, an ἄγνωστος Θεός<sup>65</sup>. To understand this

<sup>63</sup> GA 62, p. 384; cf. GA 24, p. 409, GA 60, p. 150.

<sup>64</sup> GW 3, p. 200.

<sup>65</sup> H. Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion. The Message of the Alien God and the Beginnings of Christianity*, Boston 2001, p. 324.

claim, and thereby to understand Heidegger, it is necessary to examine to origin of this idea of God. It has been made famous by Paul who found the inscription ΑΓΝΩΣΤΩ ΘΕΩ on an altar in the Areopagus and used it in his famous speech to the Athenians: “Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you” (Acts 17:23). To present the unknown God to the Athenians Paul takes recourse to quoting two pagan poets who were subsequently identified by Clement of Alexandria as Aratos of Soloi and Epimenides of Crete: ἐν αὐτῷ γὰρ ζῶμεν καὶ κινούμεθα καὶ ἐσμέν, ὡς καὶ τινες τῶν καθ’ ὑμᾶς ποιητῶν εἰρήκασιν Τοῦ γὰρ καὶ γένος ἐσμέν (Acts 17:28). “For in him we live, and move, and have our being”, says Epimenides, a pantheistic statement used by Paul to translate his ideas to the Greeks. The entire passage from Epimenides is nevertheless worth quoting: “They fashioned a tomb for you, holy and high one, but you are not dead: you live and abide forever, for in you we live and move and have our being”<sup>66</sup>. Paul only quotes the brief statement “For we are also his offspring” from Aratos, which in its entirety has a similar tendency to Epimenides: “Let us begin with God, whom we mortals never leave unspoken, for every street, every market-place is full of God, even the sea and the harbour are full of this deity. Everywhere everyone is indebted to God, for we are indeed his offspring”<sup>67</sup>. Therefore the unknown God is the omnipresent God, the God whom everything is. The forgotten God, now recalled.

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<sup>66</sup> J. Rendel Harris, *A Further Note on the Cretans*, Expositor 1907 Vol. 3 No. 4, p. 332–337.

<sup>67</sup> Aratus, *Phaenomena*, in: J. Henderson (ed.), *Callimachus: Hymns and Epigrams. Lycophron: Alexandra. Aratus: Phaenomena*, London 1921, p. 207.

To return to Heidegger it is necessary to examine how according to Paul it is possible to find this God: “haply they might grope after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us” (Acts 17:27). There are two interesting clues in this sentence. The first is that one can find him by groping, i.e. by touching (ψηλαφήσειαν). The second is that he is not far from us (οὐ μακρὰν ἀπὸ ἐνὸς ἐκάστου ἡμῶν ὑπάρχοντα). We shall return to touching in a moment, but now let us concentrate upon the second formulation. The interesting thing about it is the usage of the verb ὑπάρχω to describe our relation to God. Ὑπάρχω means to pre-exist, to be ready or at hand, to be the beginning, to be already in existence, to be already there. The interesting thing is that this verb appears in Aristotle’s analysis of movement in *Physics* and Heidegger pays special attention to it in his interpretation. Discussing the concept of φύσις, Aristotle deploys it in a passage translated by Heidegger as follows: “Darnach ist dann die φύσις so etwas wie Ausgang und Verfügung und damit also Urtümliches für das und über das Sich-bewegen und Ruhen von Solchem, darin sie im voraus (ὑπό) ausgänglich verfügt (ἄρχει) erstlich an sich und von sich aus und auf es zu und daher nie so, als stellte sich die ἀρχή eben doch nur beiher (in dem Seienden) ein” (*Phys.* B 192 b 20-23)<sup>68</sup>. The essence of φύσις is formulated here simply and harshly, “Einfach und fast hart”. Heidegger remarks that φύσις does not belong to the “ausgängliche Verfügung”, to the initial disposal over the movedness of that which moves, but rather belongs to that which moves.

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<sup>68</sup> GA 9, p. 254.

The ἀρχή is therefore not an initial point of departure, a primordial thrust that only initiates the movement that it then leaves to itself. Instead, what is determined by φύσις remains in its movedness not only by itself, but it returns to itself in its development according to this movedness. Heidegger gives the example of a plant that sprouts and grows “into the open” thereby returning to its roots. “Das sich entfaltende Aufgehen ist an sich ein In-sich-zurückgehen”, summarizes Heidegger<sup>69</sup>.

But the decisive sentence of *Physics*, according to Heidegger, is: καὶ ἔστιν πάντα ταῦτα οὐσία (*Phys.* B 192 b 32): “und alles Dieses – nämlich das von der φύσις her Seiende – hat das Sein von der Art der Seiendheit”<sup>70</sup>. Why does Heidegger translate οὐσία as *Seiendheit*? This is an interpretative gesture of the utmost importance, for he himself claims in *Sein und Zeit* that philosophy is a γυγαντομαχία περὶ τῆς οὐσίας. As he explains, the term *Seiendheit*, though awkward to ordinary ears, is “the only proper translation” for οὐσία. “It doesn’t say a lot, barely nothing, but precisely in this lies its advantage!”<sup>71</sup>. With this translation Heidegger introduces us to the unknown, the ἀγνωστος, the open. Abyssal language is a means that Heidegger uses in order to prepare for the arrival of the unknown. This translation is even more intriguing, since in his early *Geistesblitz* Heidegger realized that οὐσία means presence. Grasping this requires a broader perspective. Traditionally οὐσία means substance or essence, but as the participle of εἶναι it is the equivalent

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> GA 9, p. 259.

<sup>71</sup> GA 9, p. 260.

of God's name from Exodus 3:14. If we keep this in mind, Heidegger's translations become even more striking. When he first discovered that for the Greeks οὐσία meant property, belongings, that which is available, and decided to translate it as presence, Anwesenheit, it was as though he suggested God's availability and presence, like Paul on Areopagus. Heidegger's second translation of οὐσία as *Seiendheit* was guided, in turn, by an intention to introduce the unknown into the notion of God. Henceforth οὐσία became Paul's Ἄγνωστος Θεός.

One more discovery of Heidegger has to be mentioned here, namely recognition of *Met. Θ 10* as the *corpus al-ienum* within the womb of metaphysics. His analysis of *Θ 10* will allow us to understand why Aristotle uses the verb ἀληθεύειν to name the relation of ψυχή (*Dasein*) to beings. Heidegger translates ἀληθεύειν as *Wahrsein*, or "in Verwahrung nehmen"<sup>72</sup>. Furthermore he claims that Aristotle's analysis of ἀληθεύειν in *Eth. Nic. VI* is the explication of ὄν ὡς ἀληθές, one of the modes of being<sup>73</sup>, the primary one according to Heidegger, since it describes *Dasein*'s being-in-the-world, or, in other words, the primordial, pre-metaphysical relation of beings to being in its particular being-here. In other words, ἀληθεύειν, the presencing of the present, is equivalent to Husserl's "sich-selbst-Bekunden der Phänomene"<sup>74</sup>. As Heidegger notes, ὄν ὡς ἀληθές does not denote the domain of validity of "true judgments", as it has been traditionally understood, but rather "das Seiende

<sup>72</sup> GA 62, p. 378; cf. BH, p. 214f.

<sup>73</sup> GA 62, p. 380.

<sup>74</sup> GA 14, p. 99.



an ihm selbst im Wie seines Daseins als unverhülltes”<sup>75</sup>. He then refers to *Met.* Θ 10 as Aristotle’s *locus classicus* on this topic. Theta 10 contains an analysis of ἀλήθεια that has been rejected by scholars like Jaeger and Schwegler as non-Aristotelian, essentially different from the rest of the treatise<sup>76</sup>. Heidegger takes their argument at their face value but only to reverse their conclusion and claim that it is in fact the most authentic part of the *Metaphysics*, one that could be rejected only by someone who regards traditional metaphysical clichés as Aristotelian<sup>77</sup>. In *Sein und Zeit* he refers to Theta 10 briefly in stating that “for Greeks the originary, preontological (i.e. premetaphysical) understanding of truth was vivid and it prevailed – at least in Aristotle – despite being covered by their ontology”<sup>78</sup>. Heidegger developed this remark into a comprehensive analysis in his two courses in the thirties<sup>79</sup>. He claims there that chapter 10 is the pinnacle of fundamental ontological considerations, “the keystone” crowning the entire book Theta or even the entire metaphysics of Aristotle<sup>80</sup>. It is the proper τέλος of the entire treatise<sup>81</sup>. He who rejects it is not only thinking in a non-Aristotelian way, but also non-Greek, because here ὄν ὡς ἀληθές, *Sein als Wahrsein*, comes to its “first and ultimate radical expression”<sup>82</sup>. In Θ 10 Heidegger finds an analysis

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<sup>75</sup> GA 62, p. 380.

<sup>76</sup> GA 21, p. 182.

<sup>77</sup> GA 31, p. 83.

<sup>78</sup> GA 2, p. 225.

<sup>79</sup> GA 21, p. 171f.; GA 31, p. 81f.

<sup>80</sup> GA 31, p. 106.

<sup>81</sup> GA 33, p. 11-12.

<sup>82</sup> GA 31, p. 82.

equivalent to the Husserlian description of categorial intuition. He refers to it briefly in the *Letter on Humanism*, stating that “der Mensch selber erst im Vernehmen (νοεῖν) an das Sein rühren kann (θιγεῖν)”<sup>83</sup>. Indeed, at the peak of his analysis of ἀληθεύειν Aristotle discovers the possibility of θιγεῖν καὶ φάναί ἀληθές, “Betasten und Ansprechen des Unverborgenen” (Met. Θ 10 1051 b 24)<sup>84</sup>. In other words, it is possible to touch and tangibly grasp “die unmittelbarste”, “die ständigste und reinste Anwesenheit”, “die beständige schlechthinnige Anwesenheit”, “die anwesende Anwesenheit selbst”, “das höchste und eigentlichste Sein”, “das allereigentlichste Sein”, “das Wesen der eigentlichen Wahrheit”<sup>85</sup>, or, as Paul would have said, to “grope after it”<sup>86</sup>.

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<sup>83</sup> GA 9, p. 332.

<sup>84</sup> GA 21, p. 176.

<sup>85</sup> GA 21, p. 192-193; GA 31, p. 102-104.

<sup>86</sup> Acts 17:27.



## Heidegger on Nature

“Nature loves to hide”, says Heraclitus. “If you want to discover Nature, first destroy all its forms”, says Eckhart. “The blessed divine is nothing, a pure nothingness; who sees nothing in everything, he is the one who sees”, says Angelus Silesius. “Form is nothingness; nothingness is form”, says the Heart Sutra of the Buddhist tradition. All those statements point to something original, primordial and hidden beyond every phenomenon, revealed – and mediated – by everything, even by the above statements, through which it is pointing to itself, tautologically self-referencing itself, reflecting.

Heidegger, a descendant of the German Romantic and Greek Presocratic traditions, considered each text a medium, a message, a speech of the Unspoken<sup>1</sup>. From this perspective, all other traditions are also pointing towards the same source, formulating the Unformed, the Uniform. Hence he

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<sup>1</sup> GA 3, p. 203-202; GA 9, p. 46, 203; GA 13, p. 78; GA 15, p. 398, 405; GA 40, p. 179; GA 55, p. 177.

could later find astonishing similarities in Far Eastern currents of thought. In a 1963 conversation with a Buddhist Monk, to his remark that “Nothingness is not nothing, just the opposite, it is everything. No one can name it. But it is – nothing and everything – the fulfillment”, Heidegger replied “This is exactly what I’ve been saying my whole life”<sup>2</sup>. It – the Unnameable – is everything. To find a word for the Unnameable was Heidegger’s relentless struggle ever since he started to philosophize. In one of his last texts – *The Lack of Holy Names* (1975) – he admits that no single word can be the ultimate name, because every word, every phenomenon, overshadows that what it foreshadows, and this fundamental lack is the result of the self-occlusion of that which is named by every name and which is currently (as Heidegger underscores) present only through its absence<sup>3</sup>. Even though the Unnameable expresses itself ultimately only in silence<sup>4</sup>, Heidegger singles out a series of primordial, cooriginal words from the Presocratic tradition, which point toward the ἄρρητον.

Ἀλήθεια is one of the primordial words. It can serve as a good example of the occlusion of the Unnameable (in Heidegger’s own terms: “the oblivion of Being”). For Heidegger logic and ontology are not separate. Therefore the rediscovery of the primordial meaning of ἀλήθεια is equivalent to the revelation of that which has been forgotten and occluded by its derivative meanings. The derivative form of

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<sup>2</sup> GA 16, p. 592; cf. H. W. Petzet, *Auf einen Stern zugehen*, Frankfurt am Main 1983, p. 190.

<sup>3</sup> GA 13, p. 231f.

<sup>4</sup> GA 66, p. 353; GA 69, p. 211.

ἀλήθεια is the epistemological form of truth as correspondence, underlying the metaphysical paradigm that Heidegger attempts to overcome in order to disclose a non-objectifying mode of existence. The discovery of the primordial meaning of ἀλήθεια in his Aristotle interpretation in early 1920s was a breakthrough for Heidegger's thinking. The original meaning of ἀλήθεια is coming out of hiddenness, disclosing, the φαίνεσθαι of φαινόμενα, the appearing of every appearance, the self-manifestation of that which manifests itself<sup>5</sup>. The interesting thing in Heidegger's initial interpretation of ἀλήθεια is how it leads him back from metaphysics to physics, just like ἀλήθεια itself leads him back to λήθη<sup>6</sup>. He starts his analysis of truth in *Being and Time*<sup>7</sup> by stating that the ancient philosophers were guided by the thing itself (αὐτὸ τὸ πρᾶγμα, Arist. *Met.* 984a), or "that which shows itself in itself" (τοῖς φαινομένοις, 986b). This research is called the examination of truth (ἐπιστήμη τῆς ἀληθείας 993b) for it concerns ἀλήθεια (988a, 983b) and consists in speaking on nature (λέγειν τι περὶ τῆς φύσεως, 993b). This research is, however, a contemplation of truth (ἡ περὶ τῆς ἀληθείας θεωρία, 993a), which makes it a difficult one, for truth itself, like φύσις in the Heraclitean dictum, is evasive and the human soul is blinded by it, i.e. by something that is enlightened by nature itself (τῇ φύσει φανερώτατα, 993b), like a bat is blinded by sunlight<sup>8</sup>. One cannot understand

<sup>5</sup> GA 14, p. 99.

<sup>6</sup> GA 15, p. 394-399.

<sup>7</sup> GA 2, p. 212f.

<sup>8</sup> According to Bonaventura this metaphor means that the highest light is so blinding, that it appears to the soul as nothingness (*Itinerarium mentis*

this connection between ἀλήθεια and φαίνεσθαι, or between ἀλήθεια and φύσις (mentioned also in *Phys.* 191a) if one assumes the correspondence theory of truth. In *Metaphysics* Aristotle refers twice to his previous considerations in *Physics* in connection with the investigation of ἀρχαί and ἀλήθεια (988a), as well as referring to a further analysis of the Parmenidean statement “only one thing exists: being, and besides nothing” (ἐν οἷεται εἶναι, τὸ ὄν, καὶ ἄλλο οὐθέν, 986b), famously paraphrased by Heidegger in the 1929 lecture on metaphysics<sup>9</sup>.

Heidegger follows this clue to reconstruct the primordial understanding of ἀλήθεια. His first lecture course on Aristotle, *Phenomenological Interpretations to Aristotle* (1922), boils down to a transition from *Metaphysics* to *Physics*<sup>10</sup>. The first philosophers that Aristotle considers in *Physics* are the φυσικοί or φυσιολόγοι who were guided – like Parmenides in his poem Περὶ φύσεως – by the goddess Ἀλήθεια<sup>11</sup>. Their activity is ἀποφαίνεσθαι περὶ τῆς ἀληθείας (993b), i.e. letting something be seen in relation to ἀλήθεια and within its scope<sup>12</sup>. The key passage that Heidegger uses to elucidate the connection between ἀλήθεια and φύσις is *De coelo* where Aristotle is talking about philosophers inquiring about the creation and dissolution of things (γένεσις καὶ φθορά), namely Melissos and Parmenides, calling them φιλοσοφήσαντες περὶ τῆς ἀληθείας (298b), which Heidegger

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in *Deum*, V, 3. 4; quoted in C. Braig, *Vom Sein*, Freiburg im Breisgau 1896, p. vi).

<sup>9</sup> GA 9, p. 105.

<sup>10</sup> GA 62, p. 115-120.

<sup>11</sup> GA 2, p. 222; GA 54, p. 22-32.

<sup>12</sup> GA 2, p. 213.

translates as “those who have been trying to understand that which is deprived of previous hiddenness (unlightedness)”<sup>13</sup>. Here ἀλήθεια doesn’t refer to correspondence or agreement of a judgment, it is not merely epistemological; it refers to elucidation (*Aufhellung*), being revealing itself, or being-no-longer-in-hiddenness (*Nicht-mehr-in-Verborgenheit-*Sein**)<sup>14</sup>, hence it’s ontological.

Ἀλήθεια in the primordial sense refers therefore to the universal movement of presentation, appearance of φαινόμενα. This is why Heidegger can state that Aristotle is a phenomenologist more originary than Husserl<sup>15</sup> and his fundamental phenomenological (i.e. ontological or simply logical) treatise – “the central book of Western metaphysics” – is *Physics*<sup>16</sup>. One shall therefore look for the examination of the primordial sense of ἀλήθεια not in *De Interpretatione*, but in *Physics*<sup>17</sup>. One cannot overestimate the far-reaching, revolutionary implications of this statement. If the movement of truth is the movement of being and *Physics* is the central (but hitherto hidden and hence never adequately thought through) ontological treatise of Aristotle, then by obfuscating *Physics* the Western tradition has indeed alienated itself from its source – it has alienated itself from Nature.

But what is Nature? Heidegger gives a preliminary answer to this question in his interpretation of *Physics* B1.

<sup>13</sup> GA 62, p. 186.

<sup>14</sup> GA 62, p. 332.

<sup>15</sup> GA 14, p. 99.

<sup>16</sup> GA 9, p. 242; cf. GA 10, p. 92; GA 66, p. 368.

<sup>17</sup> GA 62, p. 391.



Initially he characterises φύσις as the Greek counterpart of the latin *natura*, from *nasci*, to be born, to stem, hence the initial meaning of Nature as that which allows to stem out of itself<sup>18</sup>. It is that which stays within, germinates (stems), and returns to itself. Heidegger distinguishes – after Aristotle – three essential characteristics of φύσις: (1) ἀρχὴ κινήσεως καὶ στάσεως (192b13-15), the beginning and command of motion and rest, where rest (*Stillhalten*) is not the lack of movement but rather its summation<sup>19</sup>; (2) οὐσία (192b32-193a2) or beingness<sup>20</sup>; (3) μορφή (193b18), or coming to appearance and enduring in it, taking form<sup>21</sup>. The second meaning is of utmost interest because it relates to the γιγαντομαχία περὶ τῆς οὐσίας that Heidegger mentions at the beginning of *Sein und Zeit*<sup>22</sup>, suggesting that the struggle for the recovery of the forgotten meaning of being is the struggle for φύσις (the oblivion of being is the oblivion of Nature). Heidegger's justification for translating οὐσία as beingness (*Seiendheit*) is also telling: it says “very little, almost nothing”<sup>23</sup>, thereby pointing towards that which is unknown, that which is hidden, overcoming the apparent familiarity. On the final pages of the essay Heidegger shows the paradoxical character of φύσις: it is “the presencing of the absence of itself on the way from itself and to itself”<sup>24</sup> (this is exactly how he characterizes God as the

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<sup>18</sup> GA 9, p. 239.

<sup>19</sup> GA 9, p. 247, 250, 283-284.

<sup>20</sup> GA 9, p. 259-260.

<sup>21</sup> GA 9, p. 276, 287, 293.

<sup>22</sup> GA 2, p. 2.

<sup>23</sup> GA 9, p. 260.

<sup>24</sup> GA 9, p. 299.

hidden presence<sup>25</sup>). This self-covering of φύσις is necessary for discovering (disclosing) of anything other than itself. In other words, it “belongs to the primordial love of being”: everything is a gift stemming from the initial self-negation of φύσις that allows anything to come into the unhiddenness. Φύσις is ἀλήθεια and hence κρύπτεσθαι φιλεῖ<sup>26</sup>.

Heraclitus speaks about φύσις not only as that which likes to hide (DK 22 B 123). but also as that which never declines: τὸ μὴ δῦνόν ποτε πῶς ἄν τις λάθοι; („how can one hide from that which never declines?”, DK 22 B 16)<sup>27</sup>. What never declines is φύσις, the ongoing growth, that which is constantly growing (τὸ ἀεὶ φύον) out of its self-concealment. It is the eternal flame, the world fire, the utmost light (το ἐκφανέστατον), the original hidden essence of truth and “the event of its lighting if the world”<sup>28</sup>.

At the beginning of his essay on *Physics* B1 Heidegger quotes Hölderlin’s hymn *Wie wenn am Feiertage*, where Nature is described as something “older than times” and “above gods”<sup>29</sup>. Hölderlin’s concept of Nature is further discussed by Heidegger in his speech from the same year. One has to remember that according to Heidegger Nature reveals itself especially through poetic (i.e. creative) utterances, which is why Heidegger puts so much effort into analyzing such discourse. Hölderlin’s hymn can be considered his Περὶ φύσεως, this is how Heidegger is treating it. Nature, or φύσις,

<sup>25</sup> GA 4, p. 170; GA 7, p. 185. He also characterizes Being in this way in GA 10, p. 95 and GA 40, p. 122.

<sup>26</sup> GA 9, p. 301.

<sup>27</sup> GA 7, p. 267f.

<sup>28</sup> GA 7, p. 283; cf. GA 4, p. 53; GA 7, p. 36; GA 9, p. 238.

<sup>29</sup> SW 2, p. 118.

the subject of the poem, is described here as all-present, divinely beautiful. It means growth but not as becoming or developing. It rather stands for coming forth and opening itself that simultaneously retreats and into the forthcoming and thereby hides in that which gives the present its presence. It therefore means coming into the open, elucidating the clearance in which anything can appear and take its form. Nature is all-present, all-creative, and all-living. It is the primordial meaning of φύσις<sup>30</sup>. Nature is the holy. If nature is holy, its holiness doesn't result from its divinity. Just the opposite, it is divine, because it is holy. Holiness is the essence of Nature<sup>31</sup>. As such is immediate and unapproachable, available only as something coming and arising, in the twilight, in creation<sup>32</sup>. When Heidegger describes after Hölderlin Nature as something primordial, originary, holy, prior to times and god, he does not mean Nature as opposite to something, e.g. spirit, history, grace<sup>33</sup>. Nature is all-present and all-encompassing. It is one of the names for that which originates all names. Hence it is not external to anything but rather it is the "eternal heart"<sup>34</sup>. What's interesting, this is how Parmenides has described ἀλήθεια in his Περὶ φύσεως, as heart, εὐκυκλέος ἀτρεμέξ ἦτορ<sup>35</sup>.

To summarize, although φύσις is in movement, or, to be precise, in self-movement, the research of φύσις undertaken in Aristotle's is not only an examination of κίνησις and

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<sup>30</sup> GA 4, p. 54-57.

<sup>31</sup> GA 4, p. 58-60.

<sup>32</sup> GA 4, p. 63-64

<sup>33</sup> GA 9, p. 239.

<sup>34</sup> GA 4, p. 73.

<sup>35</sup> GA 15, p. 396, 403.

μεταβολή but rather in order to understand movement and change it has to enquire about its origins, about ἀρχή τῆς κινήσεως and ἀρχή τῆς μεταβολῆς. Beings (τὰ ὄντα) are in movement, they arise out of that which is nothing in itself and is something only as beings (φαινόμενα). Beings are the self-movement of this ἀρχή. One of the primordial names of ἀρχή is φύσις (192b). What Heidegger is interested in is the relation between the τὰ ὄντα and their ἀρχή. This relation, traditionally called μίμησις or μέθεξις, is a dynamic process of disclosure (φαίνεσθαι). If we call the ἀρχή *das Nichts*, then this relation can be called *nichtung*<sup>36</sup>. It can also be called: the worlding of the world. In the sentence *Es weltet* “Es” denotes ἀρχή and “welten” denotes φαίνεσθαι. One of the fundamental names for φαίνεσθαι is ἀληθεύειν, a key term in Heidegger’s interpretation of Aristotle (he translates ἀληθεύει ἢ ψυχή as “Dasein das Seiende erschließt”)<sup>37</sup>. But the fundamental name for it is simply *sein*, εἶναι.

The shift from κίνησις to ἀρχή τῆς κινήσεως is what Heidegger calls *Kehre*. This shift is described already at the outset of *Physics* as the way from that which clear to us to that which is clear τῇ φύσει (184a16). It is a step into the Unspeakable, into Λήθη. To understand this shift and the first chapter of *Physics* is to make the first step into thinking<sup>38</sup>. Λήθη – the heart of Ἀλήθεια – has been the constant endeavor of Heidegger. But as the hidden heart of disclosure, as that what conceals itself in order to let something appear, it is not at all separate, but rather something that permeates

<sup>36</sup> GA 9, p. 114.

<sup>37</sup> GA 19, p. 21; cf. GA 62, p. 376.

<sup>38</sup> GA 10, p. 93-94; cf. GA 62, p. 123.

everything, and thus Heidegger calls it correspondence or harmony (φύσις is ἄρμονία, *Fügung*). Therefore φύσις is the primordial self-differentiating bringing-together, διαφερόμενον ἑωυτῷ ὁμολογέει (DK 22 B 51)<sup>39</sup>. But this all-encompassing harmonization, primordial gathering is also the original meaning of λόγος. The original sense of ἀλήθεια, φύσις, λόγος is the same but not as the indifferent emptiness of meaning, rather as the original self-gathering in the manifold one: ἔν. This ἔν, the primordial unifying one is λόγος as ἀλήθεια, as φύσις<sup>40</sup>. This unity as the task of the thinker is captured by Heraclitus (DK 22 B 112): to think is to gather (λέγειν) the unconcealed (ἀληθέα) in its forthcoming (ποιεῖν) according to the growth (κατὰ φύσιν)<sup>41</sup>. But, one could object, this all tautology. Indeed, for every primordial thinking is tautological. Tautology is the method of the “phenomenology of the unseen” because what is attempted to think is αὐτὸ ταὐτό, the same in itself. This Unseen and Unspoken, Λήθη, is the self remaining in itself, ταὐτόν τ’ ἐν ταῦτῳ τε μένον καθ’ ἑαυτό τε κεῖται, as Parmenides has stated (BK 28 B 8.29)<sup>42</sup>. Every introduction to thinking must be an introduction, a guiding-towards (ἐπαγωγή) to Λήθη, i.e. φύσις, for Λήθη is the primordial meaning of φύσις<sup>43</sup>. Ἀλήθεια is the self-differentiation, the inner movement of the self (Λήθη), i.e. of Nature. Ἀλήθεια, in other words, is the movement of Nature contemplating, i.e. creating itself

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<sup>39</sup> GA 55, p. 160, 177.

<sup>40</sup> GA 55, p. 359, 371.

<sup>41</sup> GA 55, p. 373-374.

<sup>42</sup> GA 15, p. 398-399, 405.

<sup>43</sup> GA 66, p. 368; GA 73, p. 39-42; GA 76, p. 18-21.

(as Plotinus has observed in *Ennead* III.8). Only from this perspective one can understand why Heidegger starts his analysis of ἀλήθεια in *Sein und Zeit* with the Parmenidean τὸ γὰρ αὐτὸ νοεῖν ἐστίν τε καὶ εἶναι: νοεῖν is Nature contemplating itself; ἐστίν is Nature creating itself; the same differentiating itself.



## Ontotheology of Aletheia

*Wie du anfängst, wirst du bleiben.* This Hölderlinian statement was quoted and paraphrased by Heidegger more than once. Heidegger was constantly attempting to think the beginning. Ἀλήθεια is the figure of the beginning. Heidegger's incipient interpretation of ἀλήθεια remained decisive for the entire development of Heidegger's thought. Not only he remained the thinker of ἀλήθεια throughout his entire life but he also pointed himself to this initial interpretation as the key to his thinking (e.g. in his retrospective essay *My Way into Philosophy*, in his *Dialogue with Japanese on Language*, or in his letter to Father Richardson). He also pointed to the epigraph of Brentano's study of Aristotle (which was his initiation into philosophy) as the key to his thinking. This sentence from *Metaphysics* – τὸ ὄν λέγεται πολλαχῶς – can indeed serve as the guiding thread for it shows the relation of λόγος (λέγειν) to being, the main feature of Heidegger's interpretation of ἀλήθεια. Heidegger's single question – as he has often stated – was the question of being. But it was also the Question of truth. Whoever



tries to understand Heidegger, should pose the question of the relation of truth to being, the question of ὄν ὡς ἀληθές, which was indeed the question he himself tried to answer in his interpretation of Aristotle. This is also the subject of his most important writings, especially his essay on the essence of truth and the central paragraph of *Being and Time* (paragraph 44 on *Wahrsein*; even Heidegger's coinage of the German equivalent to ἀληθεύειν is telling). My claim is that Heidegger's ἀλήθεια – as the figure of the worlding of the world, of the disclosedness of being – is structurally and functionally equivalent to Johannine world-forming λόγος.

But the question one should ask first is: why was Heidegger at all interested in the question of being and the question of truth? This is not evident and obvious. We all now these are Heidegger's most important questions, but why did he ask them? There are several hints given by Heidegger himself that allow us to answer this question. He stated oftentimes that the only question he has ever asked was the question of God's absence, e.g. in his 1937/38 *Rückblick auf den Weg*: “die Eine Frage, ob der Gott vor uns auf der Flucht ist oder nicht”<sup>44</sup>. When we take into account other statements of Heidegger like the epigraph to his Nietzsche-book („Two thousand years and still no new God”), his introductory remarks to the Rilke memorial lecture *Wozu Dichter?* (we are living in the “night of the world”<sup>45</sup> because the divine is no longer here, therefore we should prepare the world for their return), his claim that Hölderlin and Nietzsche were the last

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<sup>44</sup> GA 66, p. 415.

<sup>45</sup> SW 2, p. 94; cf. GA 5, s. 272.

true believers longing for the return of the absent God, or his early distancing from particular confessional forms resulting from his juvenile mystical experiences and the widening of his concept of God, then Heidegger's theological stance becomes obvious. For Heidegger, like for Aristotle, ontology was equivalent to theology.

Close friends of Heidegger like Bernhard Welte acknowledge Heidegger's theological stance. In his speech at Heidegger's burial, Welte reminded of Heidegger's suggestion that Nietzsche was desperately calling to God *de profundis*, from the depths of His absence. Welte says that this call "was surely Heidegger's own as well". That he was "perhaps the greatest seeker of God of this century" who "sought the divine God and His splendor"<sup>46</sup>. Another witness is the great theologian Ramon Panikkar who formulated the concept of a transreligious Christ, the author of the dictum that the future Christianity will either be mystical, or there will be no Christianity at all. Remembering his first meeting with Heidegger in 1953, he said: "A little after the beginning of our conversation, Heidegger forgot that he was Martin Heidegger and I was a beginner; we both began diving into a discussion on the possibility that God was Supreme Being, or was Being. I maintained that the Christian God was Being, like Saint Thomas did, and he that the Christian God was Supreme Being if one accepts the monotheism of Abraham"<sup>47</sup>. In 1974 Panikkar has written what just as well could have been said by Heidegger: "There is no-thing

<sup>46</sup> B. Welte, *Seeking and Finding: The Speech at Heidegger's Burial*, Listening 1977 Vol. 12 No. 3, p. 107-108.

<sup>47</sup> R. Panikkar, *Incontri con Heidegger*, eudia 2013 Vol. 7.

beyond or behind the word. The silence out of which the word comes and which it manifests is not another thing, another being, which then, because already in some way thinkable, expressible, would be in its turn the manifestation of a still more primordial being and *sic in infinitum*. The word is the very silence in word, made word<sup>48</sup>.

Unlike Aristotle, Heidegger has spoken about God in apophatic terms: as that which is present only through its absence<sup>49</sup>. The possibility of any particular manifestation seems to be contradictory to his concept of God. But exactly this question – the question of divine presence – is the single question Heidegger has constantly been posing, as he himself has confessed. In one of his last texts, *The Lack of Holy Names*<sup>50</sup>, he says that whatever name we would choose for the divine, it would never be sufficient. Nevertheless he ends his essay with a statement that the divine is present through its absence “today”, as though this could change in future. Thus, if we understand ἀλήθεια not only ontologically but also theologically – and this is justified when we take into account the importance of Parmenidean understanding of ἀλήθεια in Heidegger thought (e.g. in the 1922 interpretation, in the *Introduction to Metaphysics*, in his Zähringen lectures) – we can perceive his entire philosophical project as an attempt to perform a θέωσις of the world. From this perspective any manifestation – any phenomenon – would be a divine manifestation. If, ἀληθεύειν

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<sup>48</sup> R. Panikkar, *The Silence of The Word*, CrossCurrents 1974 Vol. 24 No. 2/3, p. 158.

<sup>49</sup> GA 4, s. 170, GA 7, p. 185.

<sup>50</sup> GA 13, p. 231f.

is φαίνεσθαι, as Heidegger has convincingly shown, then the world as such becomes a divine manifestation. God is the hidden ἀρχή (λήθη in Heidegger's 1973 reading of Parmenides) and ἀλήθεια is the revelation, the worlding of the world. One could translate Heidegger's famous "es weltet" to λήθη ἀληθεύει.

If we accept the fundamentally theological attitude of Heideggerian thinking, then the primordial unity of λόγος, ἀλήθεια and φύσις attains a deeper meaning. We could even say that the λόγος which manifests itself in Heraclitus is the primordial λόγος of John, the Ephesian λόγος (the same holds for ἀλήθεια and φύσις). In fact, this is explicitly claimed by none other than Natorp in one of his last utterances: "The λόγος of Heraclitus and Plato is coincident with the λόγος of John [...] it is not only the λόγος of revelation, but also of salvation and creation, and as such it transcends being and knowing [...] by power and dignity (*Resp.* 509b), that is, by originality. In the threefold infinity of indifference, differentiation and their coincidence, it grounds the full, not abstract, but concrete universality of the λόγος, not only encompassing everything [...] from without, allowing everything to flow out of itself, but also developing everything in itself"<sup>51</sup>. The divine λόγος of John stands for the preincarnate Christ, the primordial ἀρχή. If, as Heidegger says, everything is a manifestation – a divine manifestation – then perhaps some manifestations are particular – not every φανεῖν is ἐπιφανεῖν – like not every

<sup>51</sup> R. Schmidt (ed.), *Die Philosophie der Gegenwart in Selbstdarstellungen*, Leipzig 1921, p. 176

οὐσία is ἐπιούσιος. One shall regard ἐπιούσιος (Mt 6:11, Lk 11:3) as an abbreviated form of ἐπέκεινα τῆς οὐσίας. This would open a way to looking at some phenomena as particular reflections of the primordial structure of the divine, i.e. presence through absence (as Christ's presence in absence is the precondition of His universality). When one adds to this John's statements on λόγος as equivalent to ἀλήθεια (J 1:17, 14:6), and Paul's understanding of God as "everything in everything" (1Cor 15:28), "that in which we live" (Acts 17:28), we end up with what Eliade called the Cosmic Christ, or the θέωσις of φύσις, thereby confirming Heidegger's position. This equivalence of λόγος and ἀλήθεια is, nevertheless, only a point of departure, for the crucial achievement of Heidegger is the phenomenological analysis of ἀλήθεια retrieved from Aristotle.

## Heidegger's Phenomenology of the Invisible

Heidegger paradoxically characterizes his own entire philosophy as “phenomenology of the invisible”<sup>1</sup>. He only gives a brief explanation of this statement. He claims that every original phenomenology, i.e. any attempt to phenomenologically describe the origin, is by necessity a tautology. It is so because what it endeavors to express is not something that can be conceptually captured. Henceforth a different, metaphoric mode of speaking must be developed in order to express that which is tautological in its essence. Heidegger's remarks conclude his interpretation of ἀλήθεια in Parmenides where he observes that the “immutable heart of truth” is characterized by Parmenides as tautological *par excellence*: ταῦτόν τ' ἐν ταῦτῳ τε μένον καθ' ἑαυτό τε κεῖται (DK 28 B 8, v. 29), or “Selbes im Selben wohnend liegt in ihm selbst”<sup>2</sup>. In other words, it refers to that which Plato calls αὐτὸ ταῦτό (e.g. in *Alc.* 129b). In order to understand those

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<sup>1</sup> GA 15, p. 399.

<sup>2</sup> GA 15, p. 398.

statements, I'd like to show how the question of the relation between the hidden and the revealed permeates Heidegger's entire thinking.

First of all it is the essence of Heidegger's concept of ἀλήθεια which he explains as the disclosure of that which is hidden, or the negation of λήθη, thereby claiming that the primordial meaning of truth is both ontological and phenomenological, denoting the movement of the manifestation of all phenomena out of what by itself remains hidden. This understanding of aletheia can be traced to his initial interpretation of Aristotle in the early nineteen twenties. This interpretation was preceded by Heidegger's early interest in Luther, especially the *Heidelberg Theses*, where interpreting *Romans* 1:20 (a classical passage on the relation between the hidden and the revealed) Luther claims that theology should concentrate on the manifest aspect of God, i.e. manifested in the phenomena of the world, or *id quod est*<sup>3</sup>. Furthermore, Heidegger's often repeated interpretative credo is to reveal "that which is unsaid in that what has been said"<sup>4</sup>. Finally, in one of his rare statements on God, he claims that "God is present only through his absence"<sup>5</sup>, or by the "absence of the hidden fullness"<sup>6</sup>. From this perspective I'd like to interpret Heidegger's phenomenology of the invisible.

Heidegger's question – as he has often stated – was the question of being. But it was also the question of truth. Whoever tries to understand Heidegger, should pose the question

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<sup>3</sup> GA 60, p. 282.

<sup>4</sup> GA 9, p. 203; cf. GA 3, p. 201

<sup>5</sup> GA 4, p. 170-171

<sup>6</sup> GA 7, p. 185.

of the relation of truth to being, the question of ὄν ὡς ἀληθές, which was indeed the question he himself tried to answer in his interpretation of Aristotle. But what one should ask first is: why was Heidegger at all interested in the question of being and the question of truth? There are several hints given by Heidegger himself that allow us to answer this question. He confessed several times that the only question he has ever tried to answer was the question of God's absence, e.g. in his 1937/1938 *Retrospective glance on the way*: "die Eine Frage, ob der Gott vor uns auf der Flucht ist oder nicht"<sup>7</sup>. When we take into account Heidegger's introductory remarks to the Rainer Maria Rilke memorial lecture *Whereto poet?* which formulate a diagnosis that we are living in the 'night of the world' because we have lost our relation with the divine and therefore our task is now to restore it<sup>8</sup>, then Heidegger's theological stance becomes evident. It does not mean however that Heidegger wants to become a prophet, although in his voice one can sometimes sense prophetic and apocalyptic tones, but rather that his philosophical project is constantly motivated by this ultimately theological interest.

Heidegger speaks about God only in apophatic terms: as that which is present only through its absence. God as such is unattainable for us and remains hidden. Only beings (phenomena) are given in our worldly, finite experience. Any positive statement about God would be reductive since it would reduce God to something particular, one among many. It would reduce the origin of all phenomena to a particular

<sup>7</sup> GA 66, p. 415.

<sup>8</sup> GA 5, p. 269–272; cf. SW 2, p. 94.



phenomenon. This observation, combining the apophatic idea of *Deus absconditus* with the phenomenological attitude towards the world, is the point of departure of Heidegger's thinking. We can try to reformulate Heidegger's question about God's absence (or hiddenness) in a different language. If all that is given are phenomena (beings) in their φανεῖν (being), and the domain of beings is the world (φύσις), then Heidegger's single question becomes the question of the possibility of metaphysics. In other words, Heidegger does not accept metaphysics as given. Heidegger's question would therefore be: is it at all possible to move beyond the domain of φύσις, from beings to their origin, to their ἀρχή? Or, to restate it once more: is it at all possible to conceive a phenomenological analysis of the invisible?

In order to answer this question Heidegger performs what he calls a detour (*Umweg*), or a shift in thinking. If the only thing given is phenomena (appearances, beings) and their origin is hidden due to the mere nature of phenomenality (every phenomenon covers its source), then we cannot perceive or express the origin as such. But phenomena are not given statically. They are given in their φανεῖν (appearing, being). The shift that Heidegger undertakes – a sort of ontological ἐποχή – is to shift the attention from beings (phenomena) to their being (φανεῖν). To summarize: what is given (revealed) are phenomena. What is hidden (invisible) is their origin, or that which gives. What Heidegger attempts to do is to shift the attention not to that which gives, and not to that which is given, but to the mere act of giving, to givenness. This dynamic relation is the focus of Heidegger's thinking. Furthermore, if we accept Heidegger's

understanding of ἀληθεύειν as φανεῖν (i.e. appearing of phenomena), only then can we understand why ἀλήθεια played such an important role in his thinking as the intermediary between that which is closed, hidden, occluded (λήθη, literally: forgotten) and that which is revealed (beings): the opening, or the disclosure.

I'd like to concentrate now on the initial interpretation of ἀλήθεια as something decisive for the development of Heidegger's thought. Not only did he remain a thinker of ἀλήθεια throughout his entire life but he also pointed himself to this initial interpretation as the key to his thinking<sup>9</sup>. He also pointed to the epigraph of Brentano's study of Aristotle – τὸ ὄν λέγεται πολλαχῶς (*Met.* 1003a33) – as crucial<sup>10</sup>. This quotation from *Metaphysics* can indeed serve as a guiding thread since it shows the relation of λόγος (λέγειν) to being, one of the core features of Heidegger's phenomenological interpretation of ἀλήθεια. I will try to show how this interpretation is Heidegger's first attempt to develop a phenomenology of the invisible in which *Dasein* (ψυχή) reveals (ἀληθεύει) that which is hidden (λήθη), which in itself is nothing, revealing it as something (beings or phenomena). A brief sketch of this interpretation is presented in two chapters of *Being and time*, the chapters on phenomenology and on truth<sup>11</sup>.

First Heidegger enquires about truth in the conventional meaning, i.e. he tries to examine the roots of the correspondence theory of truth. Tradition has always referred

<sup>9</sup> GA 11, p. 145–152; GA 14, p. 93–101.

<sup>10</sup> GA 12, p. 88.

<sup>11</sup> GA 2, p. 36–52, 282–305.

to Aristotle's *De interpretatione* to justify this understanding. Therefore Heidegger undertakes an interpretation of this treatise in order to examine the original Aristotelian understanding of λόγος and its relation to ἀλήθεια. It turns out that the classical theory of truth is absent in Aristotle. Moreover, as Heidegger points out, the ontological concept of truth is an essential part of *Metaphysics* (the final chapter of the book Theta). Furthermore, Heidegger develops an ontology of *Dasein* on the basis of *Nicomachean ethics*. *Dasein* is the term that he uses to translate ψυχή. Heidegger translates the Aristotelian statement ἀληθεύει ἡ ψυχή (*Eth. Nic.* 1139 b 15) as "*Dasein* reveals beings".

Why *Dasein* instead of *Seele*? According to Heidegger, soul is a metaphysical concept overburdened with traditional understanding that obfuscates the phenomenon of ψυχή instead of clarifying it. The introduction of a nontraditional term (*Dasein*) is an attempt to phenomenologically describe the phenomenon of *psyche* anew. Its understanding is developed on the basis of interpreting Aristotle's *De anima* and *Nicomachean ethics*. In the etymological underpinning of the native German *Dasein* Heidegger was able to discover a meaning that he could only reveal by applying this term to translate the Greek ψυχή. Henceforth Heidegger's statements from *Being and time* that *Sein* manifests itself through *Dasein*, or that *Sein* is always *Da*, stem from this interpretation. If *Dasein* (or ψυχή) is the place of the manifestation of phenomena, and being (*Sein*) is ἀληθεύειν, or the manifestation itself, then *Da* is the singularity of each manifestation in its particular thisness (τὸ καθ' ἕκαστον).

This is related to the fundamental feature of manifestation: it is always a manifestation as-something. Pure self-manifestation would be equivalent to manifestation as nothing, or to annihilation. Therefore presence is always a presentation as something. Heidegger performs an analysis of this aspect of manifestation (ἀληθεύειν) in his analysis of the as-structure of λόγος ἀποφαντικός, *i.e.* λέγειν as ἀληθεύειν (manifesting). This is the subject of his interpretation of *Metaphysics* Theta 10 (he repeats it twice<sup>12</sup>). It concerns the relation of ἀλήθεια to λόγος and constitutes the cornerstone not only of Heidegger's entire interpretation of Aristotle but also – as he claims – of the entire *Metaphysics*. It is not only a phenomenological analysis of the as-structure of λόγος (manifestation as something) but also a proof of the ontological and phenomenological understanding of ἀλήθεια by Aristotle. In other words, it confirms the Heideggerian claim of the cooriginality of being and truth, or, to state it differently, it shows that ἀληθεύειν as a manifestation of being takes place not only in language as speech but also on the ontological level (λόγος is ontologized here).

To summarize, Heidegger's interpretation of *aletheia* in Aristotle starts with *Dasein* (ψυχή) and its relation to the world in its manifestedness (in its beingness). Various forms of this manifestation (ἀληθεύειν) are analyzed in *Nicomachean ethics* VI<sup>13</sup>. This is a step beyond a merely linguistic understanding of truth towards ἀλήθεια πρακτική, *i.e.* any

<sup>12</sup> GA 21, p. 170–182; GA 31, p. 73–109.

<sup>13</sup> GA 19, p. 21–18.

form of embodied world experience (e.g. τέχνη, φρόνησις). From this analysis of various modes of *Dasein*'s being (which is always *Da*) Heidegger moves to the analysis of manifestedness as such, or to the condition of possibility of *Dasein*'s being in the world. According to Heidegger's analysis of the as-structure of manifestation, the fundamental condition for any manifestation is the possibility of synthesis of something separate. From this Heidegger goes on to the analysis of the unity of a manifestation. If something manifests itself as something, then it is equivalent to it. But at the same time that which it manifests itself as must be separate in order for the relation to take place. Therefore this unity is from the outset divided within. This conclusion leads to an ontological claim that the condition of possibility of any manifestation is the division of unity, or ontological negation, privation (στέρησις). The self-negation of that which is nothing in itself is necessary for its manifestation as something. Hence Heidegger's analysis of ἀλήθεια leads him to what he later called λήθη, or that which is hidden as such, which reveals itself as something in any manifestation, but manifests itself always as something and never as itself, since in itself it is nothing.

Λήθη, the hidden fullness, is the "immutable heart" of ἀλήθεια, of any manifestation, as Heidegger has stated in his late remark. He had this intuition early on in his thinking and his reading of Aristotle only helped him to develop a language to formulate this thought. He stated it for example in the motto to the final remarks of his 1915 dissertation on Duns Scotus: "Wir suchen überall das Unbedingte und

finden immer nur Dinge”<sup>14</sup>. The *Unbedingte* is the unconditioned, the “un-thinged”, the non-thing, or even the no-thing. Now we can clearly see how Heidegger follows the apophatic tradition of identifying God with nothingness (cf. Eckhart’s gesture of identifying *nihil* of the Pauline *aper-tisque oculis nihil videbat* in Acts 9:8 with *Deus* in *Sermo 71*). This nothingness is the divine light appearing to the soul as nothingness, as Bonaventura has noticed in the motto to Braig’s *Vom Sein*, one of Heidegger’s formative readings in his early years (cf. Plato’s figure of blinding light in *Phaedo* 99d). In other words, from the worldly perspective, or, in Heideggerian terms, from the perspective of thrownness and facticity (Luther’s *theologia crucis*) behind everything there’s only nothing. The path towards this forgotten hidden fullness, towards λήθη, is the path through which goddess *Aletheia* leads in the Parmenidean poem *On nature*. This is the path that Heidegger follows in his entire thinking.

One of Heidegger’s most important discoveries was the demonstration of the primordial unity of λόγος, ἀλήθεια and φύσις<sup>15</sup>. The essence of ἀλήθεια as manifesting, as being, is movement, i.e. ceaseless differentiation, unfolding, unconcealing (ἀληθεύειν) of the hidden unity (λήθη). Therefore Heidegger can claim that Aristotle’s analysis of ἀλήθεια is to be found not in *De interpretatione* (that would be a superficial, non-originary understanding of truth), not in *De anima*, not even in *Metaphysics* Theta 10, but

<sup>14</sup> GA 1, p. 399.

<sup>15</sup> GA 55, p. 359, 371–374.

in *Physics*, which is the essential metaphysical treatise of Aristotle as Heidegger states in several places, including his most important essay on Aristotle, *On the essence and concept of Physics*<sup>16</sup>. Hence in the early 1922 draft of his Aristotle interpretation Heidegger can say that “in *Physics* the primordial meaning of ἀλήθεια is revealed”<sup>17</sup>. This primordial meaning is movedness as manifestedness. Φύσις is the domain of movement and change understood both ontologically and phenomenologically. Φύειν denotes the essential trait of φύσις, *i.e.* being-moved, or, in phenomenological terms, being-revealed. Φύειν is cooriginal with ἀληθεύειν, as φύσις is with ἀλήθεια. This is why Aristotle describes the early physicists as φιλοσοφήσαντες περὶ τῆς ἀληθείας (*De cael.* 298 b 12–14.; cf. *Met.* 993 a–b). Therefore Heidegger ends his 1922 lecture course on Aristotle with a detailed analysis of *Physics* A 1–4. During a lecture given in this course on June 2nd, 1922 he translated ἀλήθεια for the first time as *das, was nicht mehr verborgen ist, or Nicht-mehr-in-Verborgenheit-Sein*<sup>18</sup>.

Only from this perspective can one try to answer Heidegger’s only question: whether God is fleeing from us or not, and what are the causes of his hiddenness. Heidegger’s answer is related to the way we as humans are relating to φύσις (*i.e.* the world as such). His criticism of technology can only be understood from the perspective of his fundamental theological question. The attitude towards φύσις is not of accidental interest to Heidegger but it stems from

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<sup>16</sup> GA 9, p. 239–301.

<sup>17</sup> GA 62, p. 391.

<sup>18</sup> GA 62, p. 112.

his aim to reconstitute the divine (as expressed *e.g.* in the Rilke lecture). To state it briefly, objectification of φύσις and the development of the subject-object paradigm was a possible road humanity could take. We have witnessed its advantages and disadvantages (scientific and technological progress), but the fundamental consequence of this approach is that φύσις became objectified, petrified, depersonalized and de-theologized. Heidegger's proposal of another beginning is a proposal of retheologizing or reanimating φύσις, *i.e.* assuming a primordial relation towards it, treating it as an animate, living organism that responds to us, that we are a part of, that we interact with, without distancing ourselves to it with gestures of objectification<sup>19</sup>. Φύσις becomes thereby a medium between the invisible and the revealed (manifested through φανεῖν, ἀληθεύειν). In other words, φύσις is functionally equivalent (or cooriginal in Heideggerian terms) to ἀλήθεια, serving as a go-between, an intermediary between nothing and something, as that which originates the phenomena.

Furthermore, one shall emphasize that Heidegger never identifies ἀλήθεια or φύσις with God. God is something beyond, hidden, absent, but paradoxically present through this absence. What's more, the absence of the absolute is the condition of the possibility of any particularity. What is God, then? *Unbekannt*, answers Hölderlin in one of Heidegger's favorite poems, *dennoch voll eigenschaften*<sup>20</sup>. Everything, every phenomenon is a property, a modus, an aspect of the

<sup>19</sup> GA 4, p. 49–77; GA 13, p. 87–90; GA 77, p. 3–159; GA 7, p. 5–36.

<sup>20</sup> SW 2, p. 210.



divine nothingness, of the hidden fullness, as Heidegger describes it. Or, as Angelus Silesius pointedly formulated it:

Die zarte Gottheit ist ein Nichts und Übernichts:

Wer nichts in allem sieht, Mensch, glaube, dieser  
sieht's.

Gott ist ein lauter Nichts, ihn rührt kein Nun noch  
Hier:

Je mehr du nach ihm greifst, je mehr entwid er  
dir.

Heidegger's nihilism is therefore not atheism. Just the opposite. It is an attempt of relating to that which is hidden – to the hidden fullness – from the perspective of that which is revealed. *Aletheia*, the central figure of Heidegger's philosophy, is not only a reformulation of the concept of truth. It is an attempt to phenomenologically describe the hidden, or the invisible, in its movement of disclosure, i.e. in the manifestation of phenomena. But even if we treat each manifestation as a revelation, then we are still left only with a multitude of phenomena. Their origin remains hidden. Heidegger was painfully aware of this: *Alles Seiende mögt ihr durchstreifen, nirgends zeigt sich die Spur des Gottes. Frage das Seyn! Und in dessen Stille, als dem Anfang des Wortes, antwortet der Gott*<sup>21</sup>.

Having sketched the fundamental tenets of Heidegger's ontological position, we can now briefly describe his attitude towards the tradition which is a direct consequence of his

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<sup>21</sup> GA 66, p. 353.

ontology. The notorious “destruction of metaphysics” has a reconstructive undertone, clear for everyone who realizes the scope of Heidegger’s project. A restatement of his goals may be necessary, though, in order to clarify this sufficiently. For this purpose the Platonic figure of the cave – which Heidegger has often commented upon<sup>22</sup> – will prove useful as a guiding thread. Heidegger uses two intertwined terms to diagnose the crisis of metaphysics: *χωρισμός* and *ζυγόν*. *Chorismos*, or separation, denotes the unsurpassable gap between the physical and the metaphysical (in theological terms: the absence of the Divine); *ζυγόν*, a term taken from Plato’s description of the cave allegory, denotes a yoke, a junction, or, in Heidegger’s analysis, a constant gaze fixed upon the sun. To state is allegorically, philosophers (metaphysicians) may have adapted their eyes to this unworldly light, but lost the ability to perceive the cave (*i.e.* the world), and henceforth detached themselves from life, from mere human existence, which should be the point of departure and constant reference for any metaphysics (a possibility, of course, anticipated by Plato). In other words, they have never returned. Heidegger’s project can be clearly understood from this perspective. The aim of his metaphysical *ἐποχή*, or the ‘destruction of metaphysics’, is a part of the strategy whose ultimate goal is to reestablish the connection. For this purpose the Heideggerian philosopher has to start the ascent anew, thereby joining *φύσις* (the cave) with that which can only reveal itself, but is never readily given. Another feature of Heidegger’s stance is the vindication of the

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<sup>22</sup> GA 9, p. 203f.; GA 34; GA 80.1, p. 327f., 457f.

cave, of δόξα as deception, appearance, and the demonstration of its essential relationship to truth (of the relation of *Schein* to *Sein*)<sup>23</sup>. The ultimate question that Heidegger was constantly asking is: Why is there a cave (*i.e.* something), and not only the sun (seen from the cave as nothing)?

This restatement allows us to understand Heidegger's fundamental standpoint. *Dasein* is not only ψυχή; *Dasein* is not only being-here; *Dasein* is – first and foremost – being-here-in-the-cave. This clarifies Heidegger's strategy of interpretation, his retrieval of the tradition. This also explains why he never comments *e.g.* on *Timaeus* or *Metaphysics* XII, which constitute a discourse unacceptable by the cave. One must first be led out of the cave, out of the domain of δόξα. The purpose of all Heideggerian *Einführungen* is leading from physics towards metaphysics. The possibility of such a transition is Heidegger's fundamental problem. This perspective allows us to clarify Heidegger's relation to Husserl (why he favored the early *Logical investigations*), to phenomenology (the domain of *phainomena* as the domain of δόξα), and to existentialism (the concentration on finite being-in-the-world). Heidegger's ἐποχή is therefore different than Husserl's, because instead of bracketing the "natural attitude", we are left at the outset with nothing other than φύσις. This is why Heidegger can counter Husserl's "return to the things" by saying "how can we return where we already are". In other words, *Dasein* as being-in-the-cave is being-with-the-things, being-with-others, being-embodied, being-affected. The entire existential analysis of *Sein und*

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<sup>23</sup> GA 40, p. 105-122.

*Zeit* is a polemic with the detachment of traditional metaphysics. At stake is nothing less than the meaning of worldly human existence which Heidegger aims to reconstitute. Simultaneously he attempts to reroot (radicalize) metaphysics in existence, which is best seen in his existential interpretation of Aristotle<sup>24</sup>. All this leads us to the ultimate theological stake of Heidegger's thinking, the question of God's relationship to man: whether God is some abstract, detached entity, away, beyond, or just the opposite, present here, for man, in man, as man. Heidegger clearly claims that *Dasein*, the domain of the cave, is the scene of presentation, the scene of *Sein*.

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<sup>24</sup> GA 18.



## Heidegger's Patricide

*La lotta continua*, the struggle continues, the struggle for the οὐσία, which I would like to consider here as the struggle between the father and the son. Two foremost figures are of interest to me: Plato and Heidegger. Traditionally the former is regarded as the founder of metaphysics, someone who stands on the side of the father, staring with the eye of the soul towards the heaven, despising the world, while the latter is situated on the opposite anti-metaphysical pole as the defender of φύσις, a “son of the earth” (*Sophist* 248c). At first glance Heidegger seems to confirm this dichotomy by situating himself as an anti-platonic thinker, the destroyer of metaphysics. This boisterous, Nietzschean gesture of patricide, as I would like to claim, is nevertheless aimed towards the ultimate restitution of that which is occluded by multifarious idols. Heidegger’s “principal atheism” <sup>25</sup>is the philosophical κατάβασις that he performs in order to reconstitute the divine, and not some otherworldly deity, but the divinity

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<sup>25</sup> GA 62, p. 363.

of the world. Paradoxically it may turn out that Plato's goal – despite the traditional readings – is not at all far off.

What is at stake in this struggle of giants? If the good is beyond οὐσία, and it is equivalent to the sun beyond the cave, then what is at stake is the status of the cave, or of the world in its sensual givenness. The question is whether we should despise the cave and long for some other reality, eternal and perfect, or rather affirm it as what is given, with awe, θαῦμα – since it stems out of nowhere, from nothing. I would like to keep in mind Nietzsche's suggestion that "eternal life is no other life, it's the very life you are living"<sup>26</sup>. Nevertheless both Plato and Heidegger are out for something hidden beyond that which is sensually available, for something invisible, for something that may not even be a thing. In order to reach it, they first have to remove the appearances, the δόξαι, or – according to the literal meaning of the Greek word – all the expectations, opinions, judgments, and conjectures, to purify oneself and remain with nothing left. Whether this nothingness is the goal, the ultimate point of arrival, or rather the veritable point of departure of any true knowledge, one cannot decide in advance. This intellectual κάθαρσις is performed by the act of patricide, the removal of all representations of the absolute and undertaking a detour, μετά-όδός, *Umweg*, an indirect way towards that which is beyond any name and reference and henceforth cannot be directly attained, only through errant blindwalking within the cave.

This method of purificatory patricide is therefore two-fold. What is negated is the figure of the father in two senses:

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<sup>26</sup> KGW V.2, p. 411.

“the father Parmenides” in the case of Plato, and the father Plato in the case of Heidegger. This negation boils down to the overcoming of a set of inherited metaphors attributed to the father figure. But what’s more important, and this is the second aspect of the patricide that I’d like to stress, the metaphors themselves have a patricentric character that needs to be undermined. Let me recapitulate briefly some of the metaphors from the Platonic imagery that bear this character. *Timaios* introduces a distinction between the invisible father and the visible living son begotten in the father’s image. *Politeia* uses the image of the sun in place of the figure of the father and furthermore identifies it with the good. The cave would therefore be the figure of the son. Plato is also using arithmetical metaphors inherited from the Pythagorean tradition, identifying the one with the sun and multitude with the cave, although this straightforward attribution is questionable, as shown in *Parmenides*. Furthermore there is the Parmenidean tradition of ontological metaphors, being and nonbeing, that are the subject of *Sophist*. In order to fully realize the consequences of Heidegger’s patricidal “principal atheism”, one has to negate the paternal poles of the above mentioned opposites. What we’re left with is a cave without the sun, the multitude without unity, an orphan son, or the world in itself with nothing beyond. Such a gesture of identifying the father with nothingness is not devoid of consequences since together with the father we are getting rid of the good. When Descartes in his radical skepticism attained this stance, he felt it necessary to adopt a temporary morality. Those who don’t tend to end up as “altogether mad” (*Sophist* 216d).



Such a reading of Plato and Heidegger seems congruent and tenable but it does not make Heidegger a nasty nihilist. Just the opposite, nihilism is merely a way of restituting the divine in a world destitute of it. It is a philosophical counterpart of the mystical “*noche oscura del alma*”. When Heidegger is repeating the Leibnizian “why is there something rather than nothing” he is alluding to the radical opposition of the world and nothingness. But when he’s quoting a similar phrase of Leibniz, “*nihil est sine ratione*”, he performs a significant shift of attention towards the indeterminate nothingness by asking the question “*quid est sine ratione*” and finding the answer in the initial sentence: “*nihil*”. His thematization of nothingness is a way to overcome the impasse of metaphysics without posing linguistic and conceptual idols, but it risks the danger of forming another idol by substantiating merely nothing. A thoroughly nihilistic patricide is not an attempt to pose anything beyond. Whatever is a thing – anything – is a part of the cave. Such a radical standpoint can be rephrased in various ways. It can be formulated as the phenomenological principle of accepting what is given within the limits of its givenness. But what is given to us is the world. The cave is the domain of givenness. Sheehan confirms this when he summarizes Heidegger’s obscure considerations on the “last God” by stating that:

The “god” that Heidegger’s philosophy awaits is simply the epiphany of world (...) as the utterly groundless source of all meaning. The arrival of such a world (...) would also be the arrival of the

“last god,” i.e., world as such, and with that the possibility of secular-philosophical salvation.<sup>27</sup>

If this is indeed what Heidegger was up to, it would make him similar rather to Socrates, who according to the official charge was a nihilist (knew nothing), corrupted the youth (was immoral), negated the gods of the city, and introduced new gods. But what were those new gods? According to Aristophanes they were the forces of nature. In other words, he divinized nature, φύσις. But this is exactly what Heidegger seems to be doing. His patricide would therefore make him prone to the accusation of ἀσεβεία. A claim of such an essential affinity between Heidegger and Socrates needs to be further examined. Heidegger explicitly admits that he wants to introduce a new divinity, e.g. in his motto to the Nietzsche book: “two thousand years and no new God”, or in the Spiegel interview: “only one more [*noch ein*] God can save us”. He also attributed the lack of God to the objectification of nature and suggested “a mysterious response of nature” against our mistreatment. What is objectified by the contemporary attitude of mischievous humanity is the “visible living creature”. Φύσις, nature, is then equivalent to the world, or the son, or the last God. No wonder that Heidegger praises Aristotle’s *Physics* as a book of utmost importance, and treats his *Metaphysics* as footnotes to *Physics*.

This Socratic image of Heidegger and – reciprocally – the Heideggerian image of Socrates can be reconciled with the brief characterization of Socrates given by Aristotle (*Met.*

<sup>27</sup> T. Sheehan, *Heidegger and Christianity*, in: D. Patte (ed.), *The Cambridge Dictionary of Christianity*, Cambridge 2010, p. 503.

1078b), who assigns two things to Socrates: ἐπακτικοὶ λόγοι and ὀρίζεσθαι καθόλου. The traditional reading of those two attributions as inductive arguments and universal definition is problematic. The λόγοι of Socrates are inductive not in the modern mathematical sense, but rather as the words that induce the interlocutor towards nothing as that which must ultimately be known. The attribution of universal definitions to Socrates is much more troublesome. He undermined definitions with his subversive irony rather than posing universally valid formulas. But if we take into consideration the fact that Heidegger's nothingness was not only emptiness, but rather a "hidden fullness"<sup>28</sup>, then we can interpret Aristotle's statement ontologically and understand ὀρίζεσθαι καθόλου as the self-delimiting movement of the hidden fullness which is disclosed only by imposing a limit upon itself, by becoming finite. Such a reading would allow us to ontologically harmonize not only Heidegger with Socrates, but ultimately also with Aristotle and Plato. We would therefore have a tripartite model of the nothingness as the hidden fullness on one side, the phenomenal world on the other, and in between the movement of self-delimitation, ὀρίζεσθαι. This model is astonishingly concordant not only with Heidegger's posing of ἀληθεύειν as the revelatory movement of nothingness, ἀλήθεια being the figure of the in-between, but also with the Platonic schema from *Politeia*. The in-between is the domain between the cave and the now-occluded sun.

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<sup>28</sup> GA 7, p. 185: "Der Fehl Gottes und des Göttlichen ist Abwesenheit. Allein, Abwesenheit ist nicht nichts, sondern sie ist die gerade erst anzueignende Anwesenheit der verborgenen Fülle." Cf. GA 4, p. 169-170: "Der Gott west nur an, indem er sich, verbirgt!"

This situation is only a point of departure for any serious understanding of Plato and Heidegger. But first we have to consider one more aspect of the Socratic teaching, namely its political consequences, since we came to the conclusion that the nihilistic destruction of idols, his apparent ἀσέβεια, is only a means for the disclosure of a deeper piety which is only understandable by the few, as the inner treasure that he reveals only to the closest and dearest to him, while the majority perceives it as blasphemous immoralism and consequently persecutes it. The hidden treasure – we can assume – is that which is cannot be reduced to any system or dogma, to any set of axioms, or to a secret doctrine of ἄγραφα δόγματα. No one would kill Socrates for promulgating abstruse teachings about the ἀόριστος δυάς. But rejecting all the traditional divinities, teaching nothingness and the unity of nature as a living being – that is troublesome and subversive for those who are in power in the cave. Plato's dialogues can be therefore seen as an attempt to retain the nihilistic Socrates, but also to preserve the hidden treasure, albeit aporetically and apophatically. Unfortunately the pointers that he left behind, all the metaphors, myths and dialectical reasonings, have been petrified into a systematic teaching, forming another idol: metaphysics. This is the core of Heidegger's argument. For this reason patricide is necessary. One has to kill Plato in order to reconstitute Plato, or rather that towards which he is pointing, the truth itself.

But if Heidegger is fighting the metaphysical idolatry and performing the iconoclastic destruction of idols for the sake of recovering the occluded divinity, then the eclipse of the sun, of the good, of the father – to use a few Platonic

metaphors – is only a strategic gesture, a stratagem, and not a dogma. Nevertheless such a Heideggerian maneuver can easily turn against itself, and Heidegger was well aware of it. What we have to do in order to remain true to Heidegger’s intentions is to remove the idol of Heidegger himself. This doesn’t mean burning his books or moving them to the bookshelves labeled “history of nazism” or “history of madness”. Instead I would suggest trying to recover the metaphysical imagery by showing its convergence with Heideggerian metaphors. This reconstructive movement would amount to showing that towards which they point. Ultimately, if Heidegger was right, that which he was ceaselessly attempting to describe is the same as that towards which metaphysics was pointing. In other words, a restitution of Plato would be an attempt to return from the Heideggerian *κατάβασις*.

Any attempt to harmonize Heidegger, Plato, and Socrates must rely on the assumption that they are all arguing for the same. Whatever differences there are, if any, they must be superficial and allow for reconciliation. Let us start with Heidegger. His thinking is centered around a particular interpretation of the Greek *ἀλήθεια*, which he understands as disclosedness in an ontological sense. He claims that this meaning is equivalent to the presentation of phenomena, their coming out of hiddenness. The source of manifestation remains hidden, though, and is available only under the guise of phenomena. The phenomena, or simply the world in its manifestedness, constitutes the revelation. *Ἀλήθεια* is therefore the relation between nothingness of the source of appearance as such and the appearances themselves. That which is hidden, occluded and revealed by the

phenomenality of the world, can also be called the *lethe* of ἀλήθεια. This model is structurally equivalent to the ontologized interpretation of Socrates, with ἀληθεύειν as the counterpart of ὀρίζεσθαι καθόλου. The manifestation of phenomena is the self-delimitation of the unlimited fullness, presenting itself only as particular, finite forms. The movement of particularization would therefore be ἀληθεύειν. The λήθη, the nothingness, the utmost potentiality of being is therefore realized in any particular phenomenon. An equivalent structure is also to be found in Plato. The cave constitutes the domain of phenomena, of θαῦμα, of the spectacle. The sun would be the counterpart of nothingness or λήθη. The intermediary region – the wall of the wonder-makers, θαυματοποιηταί (*Resp.* 514b) – is the domain of transition from indifference to difference: formation, manifestation, differentiation. This area is of the highest interest to philosophy. The phenomenological ἐποχή shifts the attention towards it. It is the subject of *Parmenides*, thematized as the relation between one and many. In *Timaios* it is called χώρα, the womb, or the receptacle of being, the ontological female part, positioned between the hidden absolute father and the living world-son. In *Symposion* it is considered the daemonic region connecting gods and humans. Diotima leads through it from πολλοί towards πᾶν.

Such an interpretation, although congruent, leads to a serious ἀπορία due to the fact that the origin is indeterminate in itself and every phenomenon is regarded as its manifestation simply for the sake of having a particular form. This leads to an ethically radical consequence aptly formulated by W. F. Otto:

It is a world in the full sense... and not some fragment of the total sum of existence. All things belong to it.... What occurs in it comes as though from heaven and entails no obligations; what is done in it is a virtuoso performance, where enjoyment is without responsibility. Whoever wants this world of winning and gains... must also accept losing; the one is never without the other... The spirit of a form of existence which... knows both gain and loss, both shows kindness and takes pleasure in misfortune... must appear questionable from a moral point of view, it is nevertheless a form of being which with its questionable aspects belongs to the basic images of living reality, and therefore... demands reverence... for the totality of its... being.<sup>29</sup>

Otto describes a stance destitute of judgment, accepting everything as it occurs with delight and rapture. Nothing is considered unworthy, imperfect, despicable, or fallen. The world with its vicissitudes and misdemeanors is reappraised, risen from demise, restored to its primordial splendor. Augustine expressed this thought by justifying evil for the sake of the divine ability to elevate it into a further abundance of the good. Here we are only speaking of the mere acceptance of things as they are.

This thought occurs several times in Plato, despite its apparent negation in the orphic visions of postmortem judgment of the souls. Whether they are the “noble lie” of a guardian, or

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<sup>29</sup> K. Kerényi, *Hermes: Guide of the Souls*, Putnam 2003, p. 31-32.

the reminiscence of someone who saw the sun and the plain of truth, it is impossible to tell. Nevertheless the dialogues contain several hints confirming the interpretation sketched above. In *Parmenides* 130c Plato suggests that hair, mud, dirt and other things “vile and worthless” are also forms of the absolute. What is at stake is the presence of the absolute in the world: whether one has to reject the world, even some parts of it, or affirm it as the countenance of the divine. The classical approach favors the first answer, claiming that rejection of the sensuous, the bodily is a necessary step, and that chastity is a prerequisite of an ascent, as though the world was unworthy as such. Although Plato suggests a ὁμοίωσις θεῶν, his descriptions of this process are ambiguous and suggest a struggle and interplay rather than a simple rejection, as in *Phaidros* 254, where the *visio beatifica* occurs only when the sublimated libido of the frenzied horse, too strong to withhold, is ultimately released. A little further, in *Phaidros* 255, he says that it is nowhere stated that bad people can engage in intercourse, while good men can't. This sheds a different light on the commonplace understanding of *amor platonicus*. Perhaps what Diotima is leading to through the steps of a gradually expanded love is not some pure unworldly beauty but rather beauty embodied, present in all forms of being, especially human, attainable in an all-encompassing glance, a σύνοψις.

Thereby what Plato is up to, not only in *Symposion* but also in other dialogues, is the conceptual formation of an image of a πανάνθρωπος. In *Parmenides* 130-131 he suggests that there exists a figure of man apart from each particular man, present in all its parts while retaining its own unity, like a sail extended above each person. This figure appears also in



*Timaios* as the one and only visible living creature, containing within itself all the living creatures (30d), παντελής, all-complete (31b), one single whole (33a), a perceptible God, most great and good and fair and perfect, made in the image of the invisible father (92c), a movable image of immovable eternity (37d). Such a schema is in accordance with the initial proposal under the condition that the nothingness, or the “hidden fullness” is identified with the model from which the visible and begotten son is copied (49a). What’s important is that Plato considers it necessary to introduce a third intermediary element that performs the copying: the χώρα, the receptacle and nurse of all becoming, baffling and obscure, wet and burning with fire (49a, 52d). When Plato performs his analyses of this “strange nature interposed between motion and rest” (*Parmenides* 156d-e), later known under the deceptive name of the “theory of ideas”, he focuses his attention on this third, female, intermediary element. I would like to claim that this is what Heidegger calls ἀλήθεια.

It may seem, therefore, that Heidegger’s absolutization of nothingness is a detour, a way of restituting the hidden divinity, or pointing towards the unspoken. It may also seem that Heidegger is trying to conceptually model the situation of emptying the sky and establishing the divinity of the world as the last God. It may seem that Heidegger’s patricide is a cathartic gesture devised in order to purify us of our δόξα and let the ἄρρητον reveal itself through the world in its givenness. It may seem as well that Heidegger’s fallen existence was fleeing from the father, who waited all the time for the return of his prodigal son that erred so greatly. There is one hint, though, that can be helpful in clarifying all this seemingness. “Once the father is

found, it is impossible to reveal him to others”, says Plato in *Timaios* 28c. This paradoxical statement could serve as the key to the riddle of Heidegger's patricide. A platonic solution would be: because the knowledge of the father is the knowledge of oneself, and any relation – as Plotinus noticed – is a relation of the same to itself, then from such an absolute standpoint there are no others to reveal the father to, for what remains is “alone with the alone” (*Enn.* VI.9.11). This was also the meaning of the Delphic “E”: “there can be no question that the entrance to the temple of Apollo at Delphi was literally a Sundoor, a way into the house or temple of the Sun. The superscription, »Know thyself«, demands a knowledge of the answer to the question, “Who art thou?” and may be said, in the veiled language of the mysteries, to ask this very question. The injunction, as Plutarch says [*Moralia 384d*], is addressed by the God to all who approach and the famous »E« he takes to be their right answer. If now, as he also suggests, E stands for EI, and if we take from his various interpretations the meanings (1) the Sun (Apollo) and (2) »thou art,« and assume that both these meanings are contained in the one enigmatic syllable, we have the *signum* »Who art thou (at the door)?« and the *responsum*, »The Sun thou art (am I).« It is certain that no other true answer could have been given by anyone »qualified to go in unto union with the Sun«. ... »Since thou art I, come in, O myself«<sup>30</sup>. The platonist Ibn Arabi states this explicitly in the aphoristic formula: “whoso knoweth himself, knoweth the Lord”<sup>31</sup>. In other words,

<sup>30</sup> A. K. Coomaraswamy, *The “E” at Delphi*, in: *Selected Papers II*, Princeton 1977, p. 43-45.

<sup>31</sup> Ibn Arabi, “*Whoso Knoweth Himself*” from the *Treatise on Being (Risale-t-ul-wujudiyah)*, Abingdon 1976.

not only the visible living son imitates the invisible father, but even more: the father is the son (which is explicitly stated in the last sentence of the *Timaeus*). But then the fundamental question has to be posed: what does “is” mean? According to Heidegger’s suggestion it means ἀληθεύει, or *weltet*. From such a perspective the “noble lie” that that the son is other than the father is not merely a myth invented by a guardian for political purposes. Instead, the “noble lie”, ontologically conceived, denotes the world-formative movement of the θαυματοποιηταί (*Resp.* 514b), the formation of all particularity and this-ness, the constitution of *Dasein*. The ultimate “noble lie” is the cave itself as a separate entity.

To conclude the above considerations I would like to quote a brief text by Heidegger and two poems by poets that he was fond of, Rilke and Celan. The first text, *Über die Sixtina*, written by Heidegger in 1955 on the occasion of returning Raphael’s *Sistine Madonna* to the Gemäldegalerie in Dresden, is given in a slightly abbreviated, paraphrased form, in my own translation. The remaining two poems are *Buddha in Glory* (1908, tr. Stephen Mitchell) and Celan’s *Mandorla* (1961, tr. Pierre Joris). What occurs in Heidegger’s reading of Raphael’s *Sixtina* is the birth of *Dasein* out of the womb of ἀλήθεια.

This painting focuses upon itself all the hitherto unanswered questions of art and the work of art. Initially the Sixtine Madonna was supposed to be an element of a church. The fact that it became a museum object hides within itself the destiny of western art since the Renaissance. Theodor Hetzer,

the author of an exquisite monograph on the Sistine, claims that she is not related to any church of any manner of exposition. From an aesthetic viewpoint this is correct, but it conceals an essential truth. As long as this painting remains only “exposed”, it will be devoid of its proper place. Its errancy threw it into exile, into a museum, turned it into a “work of art”, an object of aesthetic contemplation that lost its own essence. The Sistine Madonna belongs however to the altar of a church in Piacenza not only in a historical-antiquarian sense, but in an essential sense. It shows the coming. A mother brings a child that comes to the world through her. She is a gateway through which her son enters the world. The gateway is the painting upon which the incarnation takes place, where God becomes man. What happens in the painting is the transformation, the transfiguration that constitutes the essence of a mass, that is the giving, the offering. During the transfiguration that takes place on the altar a gift is given to us. The painting is the altar itself upon which the offering is celebrated. Thereby the painting constitutes the place of the disclosing closure, of the occluding splendor of God-man’s arrival.<sup>32</sup>

Center of all centers, core of cores,  
almond self-enclosed and growing sweet—

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<sup>32</sup> GA 13, p. 119-121.

all this universe, to the furthest stars  
and beyond them, is your flesh, your fruit.  
Now you feel how nothing clings to you;  
your vast shell reaches into endless space,  
and there the rich, thick fluids rise and flow.  
Illuminated in your infinite peace,  
a billion stars go spinning through the night,  
blazing high above your head.  
But in you is the presence that  
will be, when all the stars are dead.<sup>33</sup>

In the almond – what stands in the almond?  
Nothing.  
What stands in the almond is Nothing.  
There it stands and stands.  
In Nothing – what stands there? The King.  
There the King stands, the King.  
There he stands and stands.[...]  
And your eye – what does your eye stand on?  
On the almond your eye stands  
Your eye, on Nothing it stands.  
Stands on the King, to him remains loyal, true.  
So it stands and stands.[...]  
Empty almond, royal-blue.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> R. M. Rilke, *Ahead of All Parting: The Selected Poetry and Prose of Rainer Maria Rilke*, ed. S. Mitchell, New York 1980, p. 75

<sup>34</sup> P. Celan, *Selections*, ed. P. Joris, Berkeley 2005, p. 88.

## Heidegger on Plato's Originary Good

He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good

Matthew 5:45

“It is evident also that, just as the ἀληθές deteriorated [*verfiel*] into the *verum* and *certum*, so the ἀγαθόν undergoes a characteristic process of deterioration [*Verfallsprozeß*] even into the present age, where it is determined as value. ... But even this history of deterioration is not sufficient to get us in the right place to see.”<sup>1</sup> This claim, stated by Heidegger in his *Einführung in die phänomenologische Forschung* lecture course (WS 1923/24), is the guiding thread of this essay. Heidegger is speaking here “with all the pride of science (ἐπιστήμη). ... There is in him nothing of the so-called modest attitude of this science towards other spheres of knowledge, nor of man towards God.”<sup>2</sup> He knows what he is talking about, and the fall of ἀγαθόν and

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<sup>1</sup> GA 17, p. 276.

<sup>2</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, tr. E. S. Haldane and F. H. Simson, vol. 2, Lincoln 1995, p 22.

ἀλήθεια is evident to him – he sees them both as fallen in an “originary presentive intuition.”<sup>3</sup> Heidegger’s statement suggests a process of falling, a fallenness that occludes the originary meaning of ἀγαθόν and ἀλήθεια. It also assumes a possibility of gaining access to them in an unobscured, originary disclosure. It is a discourse of the one who sees and the one who wants to put others into a position allowing to see. Such a seeing, traditionally called θεωρία, consists in a “reverent paying heed to the unconcealment of what presences.”<sup>4</sup> Heidegger suggests, furthermore, a temporal process, both historical and psychological, and a possibility of its reversal by means of “an innermost change in the Being of man,” “a transfiguration of the whole human essence.”<sup>5</sup> The occlusion and fallenness is a given point of departure, preceding a possible uncovering of the original state of affairs with regard to ἀγαθόν and ἀλήθεια.

Heidegger’s statement is all the more striking for it recognizes not only the deterioration and oblivion of ἀλήθεια (usually associated with the Heideggerian narrative of *Sein-svergessenheit*) but also of ἀγαθόν, the good, a concept of strong historical connotation, of Platonic provenance. In the retrospective *Mein Weg in die Phänomenologie* (1963), he points to ἀλήθεια in order to explain phenomenological seeing by means of Greek conceptuality. The chapter on “*Da-sein, Erschlossenheit und Wahrheit*” constitutes the core of *Sein und Zeit*. In *Besinnung* (1938-39), he gives an indication

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<sup>3</sup> E. Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy: First Book*, tr. F. Kersten, The Hague 1983, p. 44.

<sup>4</sup> GA 7, p. 47.

<sup>5</sup> GA 36/37, p. 205.

on the *Wahrheitsfrage*, listing all the important passages in his writings concerning ἀλήθεια, directing the reader, as it were, to the essence of his thought.<sup>6</sup> The *Gutesfrage* is of minor importance in the Heideggerian corpus. There are some scattered remarks, though, on the occlusion and fallenness of the ἀγαθόν. Furthermore, there is an analysis of its meaning in Plato and Aristotle in Heidegger's lecture courses. I would like to use this material in order to reconstruct the originary meaning of the ἀγαθόν as Heidegger conceives it.

The correspondence between ἀγαθόν and ἀλήθεια in their deterioration allows us to surmise the originary meaning of the former by analogy with the latter. Heidegger distinguishes two fundamental conceptions of truth: unconcealment (the originary, ontological meaning) and correctness (the non-originary, derivative meaning). "The originary conception as unconcealment gave way."<sup>7</sup> Ἀλήθεια is to be understood primarily "not as a property and determination of seeing, of knowledge, nor as a characteristic of knowledge in the sense of a human faculty, but as a determination of what is known, of the things themselves, of the beings."<sup>8</sup> To state it even more radically, ἀλήθεια is primarily not "a feature of correct propositions which are asserted of an ,object' by a human ,subject' and then are ,valid' somewhere"; it is, rather, the "disclosure of beings," their being.<sup>9</sup> In order for the *adaequatio* to be possible at all, there must be something prior, a primordial relation that enables it, an

<sup>6</sup> GA 66, p. 107.

<sup>7</sup> GA 36/37, p. 127.

<sup>8</sup> GA 34, p. 103.

<sup>9</sup> GA 9, p. 190.



antecedent disclosedness or unconcealedness.<sup>10</sup> A similar relation conjoins, according to Heidegger, the originary and the derivative concept of ἀγαθόν. One can nevertheless not find an explicit elaboration of this analogy in Heidegger's writings. Before we proceed to its reconstruction, let us first summarize the Greek understanding of ἀγαθόν.

The earliest usage of ἀγαθόν indeed confirms Heidegger's claim that the moral meaning is secondary and derivative.<sup>11</sup> The initial meaning was "excellent" and "useful," not necessarily in a moral sense or even, according to some authors, initially not moral at all. The original meaning was fit to perform a specific function (ἔργον). What is ἀγαθός has ἀρετή, which is the original abstract noun for goodness (ἀγαθότης is a later coinage). Ἀρετή is, then, perfect (τέλειος) fitness or excellence. Being ἀγαθός, having excellence, indicates capacity or achievement. The good man (ἀγαθός ἀνὴρ) does what he does well and finely.<sup>12</sup> An ἀγαθός citizen is "most capable (δυνατότατος) of acting and speaking on the affairs of the city."<sup>13</sup> Excellence is not necessarily moral; it can be morally neutral or even contrary to morality: one can speak of an ἀγαθός thief<sup>14</sup> or ἄδικος

<sup>10</sup> GA 2, p. 282f.

<sup>11</sup> A. Laks and G. W. Most (eds.), *Early Greek Philosophy*, vol. 1, *Introductory and Reference Materials*, Cambridge 2016, p. 220; J. Ritter et. al. (eds.), *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, Basel/Stuttgart 1971-2007, s.v. "Gut, das Gute, das Gut"; C. Horn and C. Rapp (eds.), *Wörterbuch der antiken Philosophie*, München 2008, p. 10-14; see also F. E. Peters, *Greek Philosophical Terms. A Historical Lexicon*, New York 1967, p. 4-5; J. O. Urmson, *The Greek Philosophical Vocabulary*, London 1990, p. 10-12.

<sup>12</sup> *Gorg.* 507c.

<sup>13</sup> *Prot.* 319a.

<sup>14</sup> *Met.* 1021b20.

as ἀγαθός.<sup>15</sup> Ἀγαθός, therefore, primarily means being fit to perform a certain function in an excellent way, being efficacious, capable. Nietzsche was aware of it when he translated ἀγαθόν as useful (κρεῖττον τ' ἀγαθὸν ἀληθείας = *nützlicher ist das Nützliche als die Wahrheit*).<sup>16</sup> In this sense, ἀγαθόν is translated into German as *tüchtig* or *tauglich*. Hence *Tugend* for ἀρετή, also based on the stem \*dug, cognate with English “doughty.”<sup>17</sup> This meaning is used by Heidegger to elucidate the ontological signification of ἀγαθόν by translating it as *das Taugliche* („that which suits”) or *das Tauglichmachende* („that which makes useful,” “that which enables, effectuates”).

There is another meaning of ἀγαθόν related to θαῦμα, θαυμάζειν, and θαυματοποίησις,<sup>18</sup> suggested by the cognate ἄγαμαι (to wonder), ἄγη/ἄγαν (wonder, awe), and ἄγαστός (admired, admirable), as explicitly stated by Plato<sup>19</sup> and confirmed by the *Suda* (s.v. “Ἀγαθός”), although the derivation of ἀγαθός from the common prefix ἀγα- is questioned by contemporary linguists. This is, nevertheless, one of the primary meanings of ἀγαθόν, denoting something to be praised (ἐπαινετός) or to be prized (τίμιος). Hence the Aristotelian distinction of the ἀγαθά (goods) into things praised (ἐπαινετά) and prized (τίμια).<sup>20</sup> Ἀγαθόν is first elaborated

<sup>15</sup> *Resp.* 348d.

<sup>16</sup> KGW V.1, p. 443 (Summer 1880, 4[53]), cf. p. 527 (Autumn 1880, 6[18]).

<sup>17</sup> “Purism would insist on »doughty« to translate *tauglich*, but the humorous connotation makes it incongruous.” W. Richardson, *Heidegger: Through Phenomenology to Thought*, The Hague 1963, p. 304.

<sup>18</sup> *Resp.* 514b.

<sup>19</sup> *Crat.* 412c.

<sup>20</sup> *Eth. Nic.* 1101b.

philosophically by Plato and Aristotle with Socrates as the possible source of their ἀγαθόν doctrine. The central position of the ἀγαθόν for Plato is certainly a sign of his Socratic heritage. One of the Socratics, Euclid of Megara, identified ἀγαθόν with the one (suggesting a further identity with νοῦς and θεός).<sup>21</sup> This identity is the central claim of Plato's ἄγραφα δόγματα as reconstructed by the Tübingen school; it is attested by Aristotle<sup>22</sup> and later post-Platonic philosophy, most prominently Proclus<sup>23</sup> and Plotinus.<sup>24</sup> This identification opens up the way for an ontological interpretation of ἀγαθόν, conceiving it as that "whence all things come into being (τὰ πάντα γίνεσθαι) and whither they are resolved (ἀναλύεσθαι),"<sup>25</sup> which "sets everything in motion" or "swayeth all things" (πάντα κραδαίνει),<sup>26</sup> or, to use the classical Aristotelian formula, the οὗ ἕνεκα of all, that for the sake of which everything is, the ultimate ἐρώμενον. One should emphasize: everything without exception and reserve, indifferently to its moral worth.

The amoral stance, necessary, according to Heidegger, for understanding the originary meaning of ἀγαθόν, is pre-figured by Heraclitus in two of his statements: "to god everything is beautiful, good, and just (τῶι μὲν θεῶι καλὰ πάντα καὶ ἀγαθὰ καὶ δίκαια), only humans consider some things

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<sup>21</sup> *Diog. Laert.* II, 106.

<sup>22</sup> *Met.* 1072b.

<sup>23</sup> *Elem. Theol.* 13.

<sup>24</sup> *Enn.* VI.9 (*On the Good or the One*).

<sup>25</sup> *Diog. Laert.* I, 3 = 5 [B 9] Colli. This Orphic statement attributed to Musaios was "common coin by the 6th century" according to W. K. C. Guthrie (*In the Beginning: Some Greek Views on the Origins of Life and the Early State of Man*, Ithaca 1965, p. 19).

<sup>26</sup> DK 21 B 25.

unjust and others just.”<sup>27</sup> The amoral perspective is divine; therefore, to perceive things from the divine perspective, one has to consider them amorally, impartially, indifferently, without judgment, without dividing things – as humans do – into good and bad, according to a particular interest. Only from such a perspective can one say that ἀγαθὸν καὶ κακὸν ἓν ἔστιν, the good and bad is one.<sup>28</sup> While Heraclitus identifies the amoral stance with the divine, Heidegger performs a double movement of (1) claiming that morality is an obstacle to understanding the originary meaning of ἀγαθόν, and (2) suggesting that the originary meaning of the ἀγαθόν is ontological, related to being as the origin of all phenomena, which the Greeks identified with the divine. He is, therefore, in agreement with Heraclitus, supplying his remark on the amoral stance with the linguistic maneuver of calling the origin ἀγαθόν. This is baffling for our contemporary immediate association of the ἀγαθόν with the ethical and the moral. It wasn't, though, for the Greeks, as Heidegger incessantly reminds us. One cannot stop thinking in this context of the sophistic praise of immorality, articulated famously by Thrasymachus and Callicles in Plato's dialogues, and Heidegger's own transgression of morality. Ἐνωσις as the collapse of antinomies leading to anomic immorality is what Plato had in mind when he warned against the danger of dialectics.<sup>29</sup> It is not within the scope of this essay to address this problem thoroughly. Let us just recall a statement

<sup>27</sup> DK 22 B 102.

<sup>28</sup> DK 22 B 58.

<sup>29</sup> *Resp.* 537e-539a.

issued by Gershom Scholem, published as a letter titled “Zen-Nazism?” that touches upon exactly this point:

I asked Dr. Suzuki point-blank whether someone who had passed through a true Zen experience could have become a Nazi, he flatly denied this possibility. At the same time, however, he also denied having known any Westerner who – in his opinion – had achieved true Zen illumination or satori. This left me not a little baffled – which of course may be just the right state of mind for a student of Zen, or for that matter, for any student of the history of mysticism in general.<sup>30</sup>

We will only conclude that a reformulation of the *ἀγαθόν*, a fundamentally regulative concept, is not devoid of practical consequences as it determines our attitude toward the life-world, and certain operations on the fundamental categories of thought can destabilize or disturb the entire conceptual framework undermining our actions and thereby the actions themselves. The shift of meaning associated with the concept of *ἀγαθόν* that Heidegger is suggesting, from the moral to the ontological, does not come down, though, to accepting a nihilistic, immoral stance, although Heidegger admits that the originary *ἀγαθόν* is formally equivalent to nothing.<sup>31</sup> On the contrary, for one has to remember that nothing, as Heidegger understands it, is

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<sup>30</sup> G. Scholem, *Zen-Nazism?*, *Encounter* 1961 Vol. 16 No. 2, p. 96.

<sup>31</sup> GA 36/37, p. 199.

not an empty concept but just the opposite; it denotes fullness beyond utterance: “this Nothing is not nothing; it is just the opposite – fullness. No one can name this. But it is nothing and everything.”<sup>32</sup> This is exactly how Heidegger explains the transcendence of the ἀγαθόν, its *Jenseitigkeit*. Furthermore, he identifies that which is truly transcendent (i.e., ἀγαθόν) with the world as such.<sup>33</sup> How are we to understand such a statement and make sense of it? The guiding clue may be found in Natorp's remark that “ἐπέκεινα signifies ... the unity of the primitively living thing ... the whole psyche itself ... the primitive being of the ἀγαθόν,”<sup>34</sup> as well as Hegel's understanding of the goal of dialectics not as an empty, abstract, all-encompassing concept but as something vivid and concrete,<sup>35</sup> thereby making it possible to identify ἀγαθόν with παντελής ζῶον, the all-complete living being, the world conceived as a unitary organism.<sup>36</sup>

Heidegger is rarely that explicit. Only sporadically does he allude to such a heavily loaded, strong conceptuality – for example, stating in the final chapter of *Die Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie* (1927) that, “without entering further into this matter, we offer only the hint that the ἰδέα ἀγαθοῦ is nothing but the δημιουργός, the producer pure

<sup>32</sup> H. W. Petzet, *Encounters and Dialogues with Martin Heidegger 1929-1976*, tr. P. Emad and K. Maly, Chicago 1993, p. 180.

<sup>33</sup> GA 24, p. 425-26.

<sup>34</sup> P. Natorp, *Plato's Theory of Ideas. An Introduction to Idealism*, tr. V. Politis, Sankt Augustin 2004, p. 401-2.

<sup>35</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy. The Lectures of 1825-26*, vol. 2, *Greek Philosophy*, tr. R. F. Brown and J. M. Stewart, Oxford 2006, p. 202.

<sup>36</sup> *Tim.* 27a-31a, 92c.

and simple.”<sup>37</sup> It seems that he fully accepts this perspective, but for a certain reason he refrains from such explicitness in speech. At the outset he agrees with Plato that ἀγαθόν is μόγις ὀρᾶσθαι,<sup>38</sup> it can be viewed only with difficulty, and “it is therefore even more difficult to say anything about it.”<sup>39</sup> This does not mean it is not possible to grasp it discursively, although this can be done only indirectly and symbolically. Discursive grasping is secondary to seeing; one has to attain it in a theoretic glance in order to be able to conceptualize it in speech. This seeing, however, is not straightforward, and Heidegger’s interpretative maneuvers, including the supposition of pre-given occlusions that need to be overcome, are ancillary to the purpose of letting the ἀγαθόν be seen. This is possible “not when I take it as a thing, but when I submit myself to the power ... so that I adjust myself to the power and so that power as power addresses me” (Heidegger is fully aware that such a statement can never be grasped by “sound common sense”).<sup>40</sup> Nevertheless, he firmly emphasizes that his aim is not to introduce a mystical discourse: “Rationalistic explanations fall short, as does the »irrationalist« recourse that takes flight in the »mystery.«”<sup>41</sup> Heidegger’s position is therefore peculiar: he rejects both an objectifying rational discourse (ἀγαθόν is not an object one can grasp by means of a definition) and an irrational intuition (ἀγαθόν is not “a »mystery,« i.e., something one arrives at only through

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<sup>37</sup> GA 24, p. 405.

<sup>38</sup> *Resp.* 517c.

<sup>39</sup> GA 34, p. 96-98.

<sup>40</sup> GA 36/37, p. 199-200.

<sup>41</sup> GA 9, p. 160.

hidden techniques and practices, perhaps through some kind of enigmatic faculty of intuition, a sixth sense";<sup>42</sup> it is not "something mysterious, some sort of remote thing that you can get to only with tricks, or with an extraordinary vision based on an enigmatic faculty").<sup>43</sup>

Heidegger puts himself in the position of a *ψυχαγωγός*, of a *Seelenführer* that guides the *ψυχή* toward the *ἀγαθόν* for he himself has attained it, submitted himself to its power, which is, as he claims, the necessary condition of seeing it. Seeing is, therefore, associated with a position of submission or even readiness for service, *Dienstbereitschaft*.<sup>44</sup> Submission is also related to being led and following. An objectifying discourse is dominant and therefore precludes attaining the *ἀγαθόν*, which is "neither something objectively present nor something subjectively construed."<sup>45</sup> We are dealing here with the problem of signification since *ἀγαθόν* is not a mere linguistic construct, "it is not sayable like other things."<sup>46</sup> It is possible to express it in language by someone who has seen it and who knows the means of expression that serve the purpose of leading toward it: "only he who knows how to correctly say the sayable can bring himself before the unsayable."<sup>47</sup> We are dealing here, therefore, with something graspable only in a non-objectifying discourse, which cannot ultimately define that which it refers to, it can only serve as a metaphor, a pointer, a road sign (*Wegmarke*).

<sup>42</sup> GA 34, p. 96-98.

<sup>43</sup> GA 36/37, p. 190-91.

<sup>44</sup> GA 36/37, p. 215.

<sup>45</sup> GA 34, p. 109-12.

<sup>46</sup> GA 34, p. 98-99; cf. *Ep.* VII 341c5.

<sup>47</sup> GA 34, p. 98-99.



Language can be used metaphorically as a guiding thread leading to something pre-linguistically present. It does not construct an object in speech. Ἄγαθόν is not a mere linguistic construct or something reducible to a formula that defines its essence. A desire to see it (by means of νοῦς), to transcend the linguistic mediation, is necessary, for ἄγαθόν “does not show itself except to those seriously striving after it.”<sup>48</sup> It is attainable only “when νοεῖν is not a διανοεῖν but a pure onlooking,”<sup>49</sup> “when we pass beyond the dianoetical” (discursive), “suspend the hypotheses in which our linguistic interpretation of the world is set down,” and “inquire what lies behind them”: the non-hypothetical ground.<sup>50</sup>

The position of language is, therefore, ambivalent: it points toward the ἄγαθόν when properly used but nonetheless simultaneously covers it. Heidegger’s approach concentrates on the occlusions whose removal is a prerequisite to seeing. This phenomenological gaze, seeing matters themselves, is what Heidegger learned from Husserl.<sup>51</sup> Phenomenology, as Heidegger understands it, is not a “knowledge of positions and opinions”; it is rather “bringing oneself into position” to see the matters at issue, which is equivalent to understanding them (νοεῖν as seeing by means of νοῦς, that is, *verstehen*).<sup>52</sup> This seeing is, therefore, noetic and – as

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<sup>48</sup> GA 80, p. 80; BH, 226; cf. *Eth. Nic.* 1113a15f.

<sup>49</sup> GA 19, p. 180.

<sup>50</sup> H.-G. Gadamer, *The Idea of The Good in Platonic-Aristotelian Philosophy*, tr. P. C. Smith, New Haven 1986, p. 90; cf. GA 22, p. 198, and *Resp.* 510b, 511b.

<sup>51</sup> GA 14, p. 97-98.

<sup>52</sup> GA 19, p. 8-9.

διανοεῖν – mediated by logos, dia-logical.<sup>53</sup> It is not something given, a faculty of mental vision; it has to be formed, educated<sup>54</sup> by means of methodic procedure, “in all sobriety and in complete disenchantment.”<sup>55</sup> This noetic paideia has a negative movement of progressive clarification of sight by removing the prejudices of thinking, which occlude the vision. This cathartic aspect is supplemented by a positive moment of directing the attention toward the matter in question: “stepwise philosophizing,” “asking one’s way through” in “the rigour of questioning.”<sup>56</sup> Heidegger distinguishes three aspects of this procedure: reduction, construction, and destruction.<sup>57</sup> Reduction or being led away (*Rückführung*, *Zurückführung*) consists in a turning of sight, in “leading of our vision from beings back to being.”<sup>58</sup> This turning away must be accompanied by a positive moment of being directed toward, of “being brought to view.” This view is, however, occluded and must therefore be cleared in a movement of destruction “in which the traditional concepts, which at first must necessarily be employed, are deconstructed down to the sources from which they were drawn.”<sup>59</sup>

Let us now analyze the obstacles and occlusions that need to be destroyed in order to remove the scales from the eyes, enable the phenomenological gaze, and, ultimately, see the ἀγαθόν itself. Not all modes of discursive speech

<sup>53</sup> GA 19, p. 59.

<sup>54</sup> GA 17, p. 275-76.

<sup>55</sup> GA 24, p. 404.

<sup>56</sup> GA 34, p. 98-99; GA 36/37, p. 190-91.

<sup>57</sup> GA 24, p. 29-31.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

let things appear as they really are – not every logos is revelatory (οὐ πᾶς λόγος ἀποφαντικός).<sup>60</sup> Everyday speech is not aimed at letting-be-seen, pure showing of the things themselves. Logos can, therefore, conceal through prevalent, common opinions held about things. Such a preliminary occlusion may be only partial and hence allow for a simultaneous preliminary disclosure of a partial view of matters. Furthermore, there is a concealment due to plain ignorance, unfamiliarity with matters (*Nochnichtvertrautsein*) that are entirely concealed and can only be revealed for the first time. Finally, there is a third type of concealment, the most dangerous, which Heidegger calls *Scheinwissen*, apparent knowledge, counterfeit ἐπιστήμη. This third type is of utmost interest to us when we consider the occlusive aspect of the tradition and the necessity of its destruction, not for the sake of negating it but rather to positively appropriate it. Such a knowledge is deemed to be genuine and presents itself as a self-evident truth that requires no questioning. It has its origins in genuine knowledge, in an authentic discovery that then became something commonly understood, accepted, repeated, and valid, thereby losing its ground in an originary experience and becoming a mere formula. *Scheinwissen* is ἐπιστήμη turned into δόξα yet retaining the validity of ἐπιστήμη, hence its danger. The task of destruction is to retrace *Scheinwissen* back to its original source.

This can be achieved by taking the traditional conceptuality (which Heidegger considers worn out) and replacing it with a phenomenological description of the matters

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<sup>60</sup> GA 80, p. 66-67; BH, p. 219-22; cf. *De Int.* 17a3.

themselves, which in turn requires seeing the matters first. This entails tracing the basic concepts of philosophy, especially the basic concepts of ontology, back to Greek ontology as its original source. Further development of these concepts resulted in the occlusion of their primordial, worldly meaning („all the basic concepts of Greek ontology are concepts taken from the being of the world”).<sup>61</sup> In the course of the evolution of ontological conceptuality, being was “elevated to a supersensory realm,” opening up a chasm “between the merely apparent beings here below and the real Being somewhere up there.”<sup>62</sup> The same happened to ἀγαθόν, which was conceptualized as the highest being, *ens entium creans*, a being creating other beings.<sup>63</sup> Such an objectifying concept of ἀγαθόν is one of the occlusions that need to be overcome. Furthermore, otherworldliness is not the proper, originary meaning of its transcendence. “Transcendence cannot be unveiled or grasped by a flight into the objective, but solely through an ontological interpretation of the subjectivity of the subject.”<sup>64</sup> “If we ask about the good as we would ask about a good thing, then we will not find it.”<sup>65</sup> Ἀγαθόν is not “an objective thing buzzing around (*Herumschwirrendes*).”<sup>66</sup> A nonobjectifying understanding of transcendence, “in keeping with one’s primary being-together with the world,”<sup>67</sup> is necessary in order to grasp the originary meaning of ἀγαθόν

<sup>61</sup> BH, p. 228.

<sup>62</sup> GA 40, p. 112-13.

<sup>63</sup> GA 66, p. 90-91.

<sup>64</sup> GA 9, p. 160.

<sup>65</sup> GA 36/37, p. 199-200.

<sup>66</sup> GA 18, p. 69.

<sup>67</sup> BH, p. 224.

as the “how of being-there itself,”<sup>68</sup> “a determination of the being of human beings in the world.”<sup>69</sup>

A fundamental occlusion of ἀγαθόν is its name itself, which entails the associations and concepts entangled with it that need to be removed in order to eliminate the obfuscation. Ἀγαθόν is usually immediately translated with the “apparently understandable” and exactly for this purpose “quite misleading” term “the good,” bound with various associations that constitute the *Scheinwissen*.<sup>70</sup> Such a translation is misleading because it prompts thinking of ἀγαθόν morally in terms of values, which is not how it was originally conceived. The notion of value is a modern concept, originating from the nineteenth century, “the weakest offspring of ἀγαθόν.”<sup>71</sup> An interpretation of the ἀγαθόν that associates it with moral good and moral law, with being “well-behaved, decent, keeping with law and order,” distorts the originary meaning.<sup>72</sup> Heidegger strongly emphasizes that we should not “take the path that is particularly tempting today, simply to read our concept of value into the idea of the good.”<sup>73</sup> The concept of value must be “reduced to ὄν”<sup>74</sup> in order to overcome this occlusion. Values entail judgment, *Urteil*, a dichotomic division imposed upon being. What Heidegger aims at is a concept of being (and of ἀγαθόν) that precedes this division, that enables it just as it enables and

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<sup>68</sup> GA 18, p. 69.

<sup>69</sup> GA 18, p. 65.

<sup>70</sup> GA 9, p. 215.

<sup>71</sup> GA 9, p. 227.

<sup>72</sup> GA 6.2, p. 224-26.

<sup>73</sup> GA 26, p. 236-37.

<sup>74</sup> GA 22, p. 284.

sustains everything without qualifications or restrictions, not just a particular region of being, its chosen, privileged subset: the origin of all (ἡ τοῦ παντὸς ἀρχή) and its τέλος (the οὐ ἕνεκα). Valuative thinking is as occlusive and foreign to the originary ἀγαθόν as the conception of man as a subject that objectifies the world and treats ἀγαθόν as a value or an object.<sup>75</sup>

The removal of occlusions, or “scales” that obfuscate our seeing, involves a reformulation of the concept of the divine associated by the tradition with the ἀγαθόν. Heidegger analyzes the entanglement of valuative, objectifying attitude with certain theological concepts on the example of Augustine, for whom God conceived as *Deus creator* is identified with *summum bonum* and human freedom is understood as submitting oneself to God and being determined by God.<sup>76</sup> Such a God is, however, associated with moral goodness, which is opposed to evil and sin: “The good, for the Greeks, is not the opposite of the evil, much less of the ,sinful.’ There is sin only where there is Christian faith. ... It is hopeless to want to comprehend the essence of the good on the basis of the Christian concept – this concept will not take us one step closer to understanding what the good actually means.”<sup>77</sup> This “sentimental” conception of ἀγαθόν as moral good, “belonging to Christian morality and its secularized corruptions (or any kind of ethic),” distorts the original Greek concept, which is “not at all a matter of ethics or morality, no more than it is a matter of a logical or

<sup>75</sup> GA 48, p. 302-3.

<sup>76</sup> GA 17, p. 154-55.

<sup>77</sup> GA 36/37, p. 191-93.

epistemological principle.”<sup>78</sup> Therefore, when Heidegger is talking about the necessity of philosophy being “principally a-theistic”<sup>79</sup> for the sake of removing occlusions of seeing, his behest is to reject not God but only the moralistic conception of God.<sup>80</sup> The postulated a-theism of philosophy is neither a rejection nor an acceptance of any given concept of God. It is rather the attempt to see that from which any possible concept of God originates.<sup>81</sup> “Out of the holy sway of the godhead (*Gottheit*), the god appears in his presence or withdraws into his concealment.”<sup>82</sup> Heidegger’s thinking aims at the *Gottheit* prior to God, beyond words and beyond forms, impossible to capture objectively. Such a thinking “can be theistic just as little as atheistic”;<sup>83</sup> it “must not presume to possess or determine God.”<sup>84</sup>

As Susan Taubes aptly remarked, “no discussion of Heidegger can fail to observe that he uses and neutralizes theological categories.”<sup>85</sup> His neutralization is a removal not of the theological concepts but rather of their ethical content by means of ontologizing them. This “conversion of ethical into ontological categories serves to heighten rather than to diminish their significance.”<sup>86</sup> According to Susan Taubes, Heidegger’s transethical concept of the divine has

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<sup>78</sup> GA 34 p. 100.

<sup>79</sup> GA 61, p. 197.

<sup>80</sup> GA 43, p. 190.

<sup>81</sup> GA 9, p. 351.

<sup>82</sup> GA 7, p. 180.

<sup>83</sup> GA 9, p. 352.

<sup>84</sup> GA 61, p. 197.

<sup>85</sup> S. Taubes, *The Gnostic Foundations of Heidegger’s Nihilism*, *The Journal of Religion* 1954 Vol. 34 No. 3, p. 155.

<sup>86</sup> S. Taubes, *The Gnostic Foundations of Heidegger’s Nihilism*, p. 168.

its roots in the gnostic idea of divine retraction, which influenced Heidegger through German idealism, in particular through Schelling. The crucial thought, which can be traced back to the kabbalistic concept of *zimzum*<sup>87</sup> and which also resurfaces in Christian apophatic mysticism, is that, “by holding back and resting in itself,” the divine “gives itself as the place for the presence of the world,” or to state it in Heideggerian terms: the divine (or any equivalent category that denotes the origin of all things, e.g., Being or ἀγαθόν) withdraws (*entzieht sich*) as it reveals (*entbirgt*) itself in beings.<sup>88</sup> “The phenomenological gaze sees that that-which-is is, that beings are owing to being, which gives itself in them (goodness).”<sup>89</sup> The divine (that-which-is, being) is the giving itself “which gives only its gift, but in the giving holds itself back and withdraws.”<sup>90</sup> Such an understanding of the world as the primordial manifestation of the divine is not only a gnostic heritage mediated through German idealism. It is the original claim of Greek philosophy that Heidegger aims to retrieve against its subsequent misinterpretation. Heidegger’s interpretation of ἀγαθόν and the prerequisite removal of occlusions is aimed at uncovering this originary relation. When the ineffable seeing of that which

<sup>87</sup> This affinity was noticed by Daniel Dahlstrom in his paper *Heidegger, Scholem, and the Nothingness of Revelation* presented at the conference *Heidegger et “les juifs”* (Paris, January 25, 2015). Cf. C. Schulte, *Zimzum: Gott und Weltursprung*, Berlin 2014, and E. R. Wolfson, *Heidegger and Kabbalah*, Bloomington 2019.

<sup>88</sup> GA 5, p. 337; cf. GA 6.2, p. 353; GA 7, p. 185; GA 65, p. 255.

<sup>89</sup> R. Schürmann, *Report of His Visit to Martin Heidegger*, tr. P. Adler, *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal* 1997 Vol. 19 No. 2/Vol. 20 No. 1, p. 70.

<sup>90</sup> GA 14, p. 12.



gives beings is granted, one no longer needs philosophy.<sup>91</sup> Philosophy is only preparatory and ancillary for the event of a theoretic glance.

Thus far we have established that the originary ἀγαθόν is not an object; one cannot grasp it in an objectifying discourse, for example, by means of a precise definition: “It is not by accident that the ἀγαθόν is indeterminate with respect to its content, so that all definitions and interpretations in this respect must fail.”<sup>92</sup> Neither is it a subjective construct.<sup>93</sup> One has to escape the subject-object dichotomy in order to attain it. Furthermore, it is hidden behind various occlusions, veils. The status of being-veiled as a precondition for revealment is well captured in Kant’s metaphor: although we “cannot lift the veil,” nevertheless we can “make it so thin that one can surmise the Goddess behind it..., however not so thick that you can make anything you like out of the apparition: for otherwise it would be a seeing which indeed should be avoided.”<sup>94</sup> We assume, therefore, that there is something behind the veil, which we tentatively call ἀγαθόν, and that there is a possibility of seeing it by means of νοῦς, in what Heidegger calls the phenomenological seeing (or gaze) and what the Greeks call θεωρία.<sup>95</sup> Such a glance in the Greek philosophical tradition – as ἐποπτεία in Greek

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<sup>91</sup> R. Schürmann, *Report of His Visit to Martin Heidegger*, p. 71.

<sup>92</sup> GA 9, p. 160; cf. GA 34, p. 104-5.

<sup>93</sup> GA 34, p. 109-12.

<sup>94</sup> GA 24, p. 469 (Heidegger’s *Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie* lecture course closes with this quotation from Kant’s essay *Von einem neuerdings erhobenen vornehmen Ton in der Philosophie*).

<sup>95</sup> H. Rausch, *Theoria: Von ihrer sakralen zur philosophischen Bedeutung*, München 1982.

mystery cults – was always preceded by a purificatory, cathartic procedure, an act of entering the unknown, whether by ἔλεγχος, σκέψις, or ἐποχή, resulting in a state of noetic alienation. Clement of Alexandria puts it thus:

Not unreasonably do the Mysteria of the Greeks begin with purification (καθάρσις), just as those of the barbarians also begin with bathing. After this there are the Lesser Mysteria, which have a function of teaching and preparation for the Mysteria to come, but the Greater (Mysteria) concern everything, where it is no longer a matter of learning but contemplating (ἐποπτεύειν).<sup>96</sup>

If we liken this schema of initiation into contemplation to Heidegger's threefold description of the phenomenological method, then the destructive step, consisting in the removal of obstacles and occlusions (*Scheinwissen*), would be equivalent to the initial purificatory rite, with the result of entering the domain of unknowing, a darkness, a space of errancy, in the middle of nowhere, in the untrodden, "off the beaten track."<sup>97</sup> There are those, however, "who know these paths"<sup>98</sup> and can lead toward the proper act of seeing. This leading is equivalent to the positive movement of constructive guidance, accompanying the reductive turning of vision (περιαγωγή). That which is to be seen is not "accessible like

<sup>96</sup> *Strom.* 5.70.7-5.71.1; cf. C. Riedweg, *Mysterienterminologie bei Platon, Philon und Klemens von Alexandrien*, Berlin 1987, p. 5-8.

<sup>97</sup> GA 5, motto.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*

a being, we do not simply find it in front of us ... it must always be brought to view” in the act of a phenomenological construction.<sup>99</sup> Ἄγαθόν performs in this discourse the function of the figure of the ἄρρητον and ἀπόρρητον, unspeakable and forbidden, nevertheless revealed in the ultimate theoretic glance. The glance itself is ἄνευ λόγου (without words). “That which is genuinely objective for νοῦς is that which it (as ἄνευ λόγου) beholds without the manner of claiming something according to its ‚as-what-determinations’ (οὐ τί κατὰ τινος).”<sup>100</sup> Such an insight is the genuine νοεῖν, “a pure and simple apprehension of the matters ἄνευ λόγου, without speech. This pure apprehension, as it is given in σοφία, is the fundamental and highest form of discovering possible for *Dasein*” (i.e., for ψυχή).<sup>101</sup> But in order to “come into the vicinity of the unsayable” and attain “what is primary and ultimate,” one has to follow the offered guidance “rigorously and exhaustively.”<sup>102</sup>

The νοητά, things seen ἄνευ λόγου by νοῦς in the act of νοεῖν, constituting “the unsayable in the strict sense,” are attainable only by means of that which “is sayable in the highest sense.”<sup>103</sup> It does not only mean to follow blindly (for example an argument or a doctrine) but also to question and “to follow this questioning to wherever it may lead, to stand by this questioning instead of avoiding it through cheap solutions.”<sup>104</sup> The projected result of the phenomenological

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<sup>99</sup> GA 24, p. 29-31.

<sup>100</sup> GA 62, p. 381.

<sup>101</sup> BH, p. 226.

<sup>102</sup> GA 34, p. 98-99, 109-12.

<sup>103</sup> GA 36/37, p. 190-91.

<sup>104</sup> GA 34, p. 109-10.

method is not “an extraordinary vision based on an enigmatic faculty” but rather something to be attained “in the rigour of questioning,”<sup>105</sup> “in proceeding through what is proximally questionable,”<sup>106</sup> through “serious, step-by-step philosophizing, by asking one’s way through.”<sup>107</sup> This preparatory discourse has, therefore, an indicative, deictic function. It is not, however, equivalent to the seeing itself. Strict and rigorous following of its guidance is, nevertheless, a necessary prerequisite of seeing. In Heidegger’s case, this is done by means of interpretation. His phenomenological periphrasis fulfills the psychagogic function of guiding the vision. Ἀγαθόν is that which is to be seen by pursuing the track indicated by Heidegger’s and Plato’s pathmarks. The ultimate θεωρία, preceded by κάθαρσις, has a salvatory, liberating effect, causing an “innermost change” and “transfiguring the essence” of the one who sees by means of establishing a “relation of man to what authentically liberates him.”<sup>108</sup> Let us now follow closely Heidegger’s preparatory guidance.

The task of educating the noetic seeing that leads to the attainment of ἀγαθόν is difficult.<sup>109</sup> We are dealing here with “the extreme boundary of philosophical inquiry, the beginning and end of philosophy.”<sup>110</sup> An immediate, direct noetic glance is impossible without previous preparation, which is the educatory task of philosophy. Such a preparation is not equivalent to the glance either. The preparatory, indicative,

<sup>105</sup> GA 34, p. 98-99.

<sup>106</sup> GA 34, p. 109-12.

<sup>107</sup> GA 36/37, p. 190-91.

<sup>108</sup> GA 36/37, p. 205.

<sup>109</sup> GA 17, p. 275-76.

<sup>110</sup> GA 24, p. 402-3.

formative discourse can only be indirect and symbolic, and the underlying symbolism must be based on a correspondence (analogy, simile) that concerns seeing itself.<sup>111</sup> This correspondence rests on the division between two realms of sight: the ὀρατόν (visible to the eyes, unveiled by sense) and the νοητόν (visible to thought, unveiled by non-sensory seeing, i.e., νοῦς). It assumes, furthermore, a third element, besides that which sees and that which is seen, *tertium comparationis* – namely, that which enables seeing, which in the sensorily visible domain is the source of the light (i.e., the sun). Seeing (as unveiling) can take place only in the light, due to the light, in the light of something. Illumination is necessary for anything to be seen at all, even if only shadows. The light must shine to enable seeing, although neither the light nor its source must be seen or even consciously realized at all. Nevertheless, seeing requires antecedent illumination. Hence there must be an affinity between the eye and the sun as the source of the light. The eye must be somehow akin to the sun. This kinship allows us to call the eye ἡλιοειδής (of the same εἶδος as the sun, sun-like, *sonnenhaft*, as Goethe translates it).<sup>112</sup> This reasoning is similar to Shankara's *Ekasloki* (or Advaita Vedanta in one verse):<sup>113</sup>

What light lets you see? The sun during the day,  
the lamp during the night. What light lets you see

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<sup>111</sup> GA 34, p. 96-98.

<sup>112</sup> GA 6.2, p. 224; GA 22, p. 102-3, 255-56; GA 24, p. 400-402; GA 34, p. 95; GA 36/37, p. 197-98.

<sup>113</sup> On the analogy between Shankara and Western metaphysics, Eckhart in particular, cf. R. Otto, *Mysticism East and West: A Comparative Analysis of the Nature of Mysticism*, tr. B. L. Bracey and R. C. Payne, London 1932.

the sun and the lamp? My eyes. What light lets you see the eyes? My intellect. What light lets you see the intellect? My self. So you are the light of the lights. I realize that I am.

Here we are dealing with a progression of conditions of possibility, a movement toward the ἀρχή, or that which originates and enables seeing, that reveals itself in a series of successive questions about the enablement of seeing, the original nature and the ultimate source of the light that allows it. This questioning points at each step toward the enabling power (*ermöglichende Macht*, δύναμις). Only in this context Heidegger (following Plato) introduces the figure of ἀγαθόν. In the case of sensory seeing (ὄραῖν), the enabling power is the sun (ἥλιος), hence the eye and all sensory cognition must be ἡλιοειδής. In the case of non-sensory seeing (νοεῖν), the enabling power is, correspondingly, ἀγαθόν. Hence, that which sees noetically (νοῦς) and all noetic cognition must be ἀγαθοειδής.<sup>114</sup> Heidegger is aware that “at first this sounds obscure and unintelligible; how should the idea of the good have a function for knowledge corresponding to that which the light of the sun has for sense perception?”<sup>115</sup> Nevertheless, this is the context in which this idea appears. Further explanations are meant to elucidate the originary

<sup>114</sup> *Resp.* 509a3. For Goethe, the corresponding equivalent of ἀγαθοειδής is θεοειδής: *Wär nicht das Auge sonnenhaft, / Die Sonne könnt' es nie erblicken; / Läg' nicht in uns des Gottes eigne Kraft, / Wie könnt uns Göttliches entzücken?* (Were not the eye a thing of sun, / How could we ever glimpse the light? / If in us God's own power'd not run / Could we in the divine delight?); cf. GA 10, p. 71; GA 42, p. 96.

<sup>115</sup> GA 24, p. 400-402.

meaning of ἀγαθόν, which is provisionally characterized as the enabling power of noetic seeing. The crucial element of the correspondence between the ὁρατόν and the νοητόν is the yoke (ζυγόν, 508a1), the junction that joins ὁρᾶν and ὁρώμενα (generally: αἰσθητά) on the one hand and νοεῖν and νοούμενα on the other, that which “makes the thing seen and the act of seeing be what they are in their relation,” “spans the space between them,” and “holds the two together.”<sup>116</sup> This yoke “harnesses together the eye and the visible object,” as well as “higher seeing and what is visible in it,” “gives the δύναμις to the perceiving as also to the perceivable.”<sup>117</sup>

Correspondingly to the light (φῶς) that enables sensory seeing, all non-sensible cognition, scientific and philosophical knowledge in particular, requires a specific antecedent illumination enabling it. That which corresponds to φῶς in the τόπος νοητός are the ἰδέαι.<sup>118</sup> The ideas are not representations (*Vorstellungen*) that we as subjects formulate upon the basis of our perception. This modern concept must be eliminated in order to grasp the Greek understanding of ideas.<sup>119</sup> The idea, originally understood, is “the visible form that offers a view of what is present”; it “does not first let something else shine in its appearance; it itself is what shines,” what “brings about ... the coming to presence of what a being is,”<sup>120</sup> what enables “the unconcealment

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<sup>116</sup> GA 9, p. 225.

<sup>117</sup> GA 34, p. 103-4.

<sup>118</sup> GA 34, p. 95, 105.

<sup>119</sup> GA 6.2, p. 217-18.

<sup>120</sup> GA 9, p. 225.

of particular beings in their Being-such-and-such."<sup>121</sup> This enablement of what a being is (*Was-Sein*, *Wesen*, essence) in its suchness (*So-Sein*) is, therefore, a function of the idea necessary for the sake of appearing in a certain outlook.

The idea is that which can shine (*das Scheinsame*). The essence of the idea consists in its ability to shine and be seen (*Schein- und Sichtsamkeit*). This is what brings about presencing, specifically the coming to presence of what a being is in any given instance. A being becomes present in each case in its whatness (*Was-sein*). But after all, coming to presence is the essence of being.<sup>122</sup>

Just as the light enables being seen, the ideas are what enable being at all and being-such-and-such in particular. They are that "in the light of which ... that which individually is, is first of all a being, and is the being that it is."<sup>123</sup> Only such an ontological understanding of ideas allows us to approach the *ιδέα τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ* with the crowning statement that completes the analogy: "The seeing and grasping of the Being of beings also requires a light, and this light, whereby Being as such is illuminated, is the *ἀγαθόν*."<sup>124</sup> This light "is what enables us to comprehend what is; it is Being, *οὐσία*, and at the same time *ἀλήθεια*, openness," not only "the condition for the possibility of thinking and comprehension"

<sup>121</sup> GA 36/37, p. 191-93.

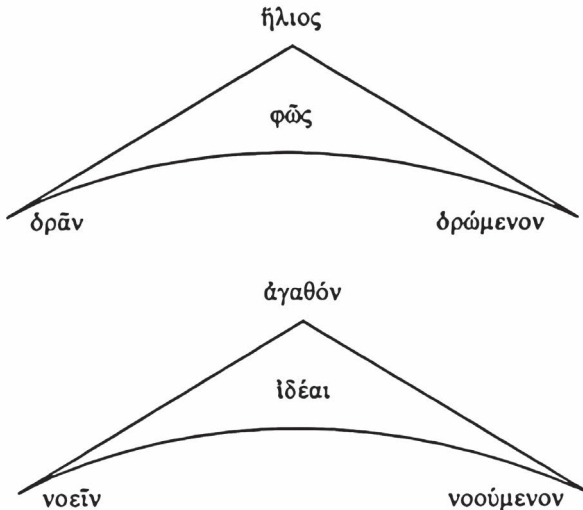
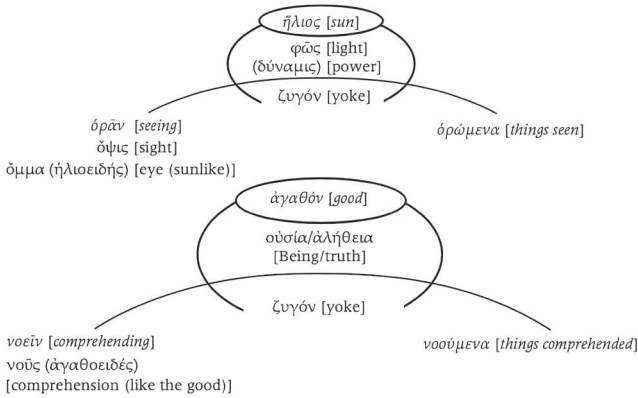
<sup>122</sup> GA 9, p. 225.

<sup>123</sup> GA 36/37, p. 191-93.

<sup>124</sup> GA 22, p. 256.



but rather primarily “the condition for the possibility that something comprehended is given, the condition for beings themselves.”<sup>125</sup> Heidegger summarizes this correspondence by means of the following two figures:<sup>126</sup>



<sup>125</sup> GA 36/37, p. 197-98.

<sup>126</sup> GA 34, p. 105-106; GA 36/37, p. 196.

The above analogy constitutes a basic framework upon which any further remarks on the character of the *ἰδέα τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ* can be made. In Heidegger's analysis, based on two passages in Plato's *Republic* (VI, 506-11 and VII, 517a-e), which constitute "the highest point of his philosophy," "his only communications of what he understands by the idea of the good,"<sup>127</sup> they all concern the transcendence of the *ἀγαθόν*. Heidegger singles out six pivotal statements:<sup>128</sup>

1. ἐν τῷ γνωστῷ τελευταία ἢ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ ἰδέα καὶ μόγις ὁρᾶσθαι (517b8f.),
2. πάντων αὐτῆ ὀρθῶν τε καὶ καλῶν αἰτία (517c2),
3. ἐν τε ὁρατῷ φῶς καὶ τὸν τούτου κύριον τεκοῦσα (517c3),
4. ἐν τε νοητῷ αὐτῆ κυρία ἀλήθειαν καὶ νοῦν παρασχομένη (517c3f.)
5. ἢ τοῦ παντὸς ἀρχή (511b7),
6. ἔτι ἐπέκεινα τῆς οὐσίας (509b9).

The *ἰδέα τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ* is (1) the ultimate (*τελευταία*), the ultimately perceivable, that which lies at the end in the field of the understandable (*ἐν τῷ γνωστῷ*), "that which the understanding finally comes up against, whereby the understanding receives its completion, termination, conclusion."<sup>129</sup> The domain of the understandable or the knowable can even be generalized to "the whole sphere of that which is in any way accessible to us"; the *ἰδέα τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ* is, furthermore, not

<sup>127</sup> GA 34, p. 97.

<sup>128</sup> GA 22, p. 105.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

only “that which lies at the end, toward which all cognition runs back” but also “conversely, from which it begins.”<sup>130</sup> What is more, it is last “in such a way that ... it completes (*vollendet*) everything; it is that which embraces all entities as entities (beings as beings).”<sup>131</sup> It is “properly seen only last” and “hardly (only with great pains) really seen at all” (μόγις ὀρᾶσθαι) because it is the mere “power of visibility (*Sichtsamheit*) that accomplishes all shining forth.”<sup>132</sup> It is ultimate (τελευταία) not “as a finishing and going-no-further of something” but rather “as the all-encompassing, forming, determining limit,”<sup>133</sup> τέλος in the sense of πέρασ (limit, determinateness). It is, therefore, the highest not only as last reached but also in its rank as “that wherein the essence of idea is fulfilled.”<sup>134</sup> In this originary ontological sense, ἀγαθόν is “nothing other than an ontological determination of beings as defined by a τέλος” or, to put it schematically: “ἀγαθόν – τέλος – πέρασ – ἀρχή τοῦ ὄντος.”<sup>135</sup> This having-of-limits, limitability (*Grenzhaftigkeit*), is then determinative of εἶδος, imposing “the outermost aspect of what is there at the moment ... within which the whole of the beings encountered are to be seen.”<sup>136</sup> Ἀγαθόν as πέρασ grants εἶδος to τὰ ὄντα.

The ιδέα τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ is (2) the basic determination (*Grundbestimmung*) of all that is ὀρθός and καλός and

<sup>130</sup> GA 24, p. 403-5.

<sup>131</sup> GA 26, p. 143-44.

<sup>132</sup> GA 9, p. 226-27.

<sup>133</sup> GA 34, p. 95.

<sup>134</sup> GA 34, p. 98-99.

<sup>135</sup> GA 19, p. 123.

<sup>136</sup> GA 18, p. 38-39; cf. *Met.* 1022a4.

thereby of all order (τάξις); in the ontologically radicalized sense, it is the primary bearer and cause (*Ur-sache*, *Grund*, αἰτία) of the belonging-together (*Zusammengehörigkeit*, κοινωνία) of all that exists.<sup>137</sup> It is therefore that which (1) imposes form upon beings and (2) binds them together in their κοινωνία. This occurs both in the domain of the ὁρατά (3), as well as the νοητά (4). In the domain of the visible (ἐν τε ὁρατῶ), it begets (τεκοῦσα) the light as well as the lord (τὸν κύριον) of that domain (the sun). It is, then, “the effective [*wirkende*] power and source of all light.”<sup>138</sup> Even a being seen in the sunlight by means of eyes is seen as a being only by virtue of this power. Ἀγαθόν, therefore, provides the light both for seeing beings visually (it enables αἴσθησις), as well as for seeing beings noetically, in their being (it enables νόησις), constituting the ground of all visibility. In the domain of what is graspable by νοῦς (ἐν τε νοητῶ), she herself holds sway (*ist sie selbst herrschend*, αὐτὴ κυρία – namely, ἰδέα τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ), she herself is mistress (*sie selbst ist Herrin*), and her mastery (*Herrschaft*) determines and enables everything (*bestimmt alles und ermöglicht*). In this *Ermöglichung* (δύναμις) and *Bestimmung* (τελείωσις) of being, ἀγαθόν bestows truth, that is, disclosedness (*Unverborgenheit*, ἀλήθεια) on what shows itself, as well as understanding, that is, apprehension (*Vernehmen*, νοῦς) of what is disclosed (*des Unverborgenen*).<sup>139</sup> This granting (παρέχειν) is not mere bestowing but “both a bestowing

<sup>137</sup> GA 22, p. 106; GA 26, p. 143-44.

<sup>138</sup> GA 22, p. 106.

<sup>139</sup> GA 9, p. 229-30; GA 22, p. 106; GA 24, p. 403-5; GA 26, p. 143-44; GA 34, p. 109.

and a holding – giving (and letting go) and in giving, holding”; hence “the good gives and it binds” in its mastery; in particular, it binds or yokes together ἀλήθεια („that which pertains to the seen, openness”) with νοῦς („the capacity for the understanding of Being”) and fulfils itself in free human beings.<sup>140</sup>

The *ιδέα τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ* is, furthermore, (5) the beginning, ground, cause, and origin (ἀρχή as *Ausgang*, *Grund*, *Ursache*) of all (τοῦ παντός), of both beings and Being.<sup>141</sup> As such, it (6) “lies beyond beings and Being,” “transcending even beings and their being.”<sup>142</sup> “This, in the whole of the Platonic corpus, is surely where Plato expresses his decisive thought about the good.”<sup>143</sup> We are dealing here with the question of the transcendence of *ιδέα τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ*. Here “the question of Being transcends itself.”<sup>144</sup> Ἀγαθόν is “beyond Being ... and therefore = nothing.”<sup>145</sup> This statement allows us to suppose that in his considerations of nothingness Heidegger is pointing the attention to that which is here provisionally called *ιδέα τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ*. At this point, “Being refers beyond itself to the ἀγαθόν.”<sup>146</sup> This transcendence of *Sein* is to be understood as none other than the transcendence of *Dasein*. Being (*Sein*) as Being-Here (*Dasein*, i.e., ψυχή) refers beyond itself toward the ἀγαθόν in its self-transcending movement. “The ἐπέκεινα belongs to the *Dasein*’s own most

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<sup>140</sup> GA 36/37, p. 200.

<sup>141</sup> GA 22, p. 106; GA 26, p. 143-44.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> GA 36/37, p. 199.

<sup>144</sup> GA 22, p. 106.

<sup>145</sup> GA 36/37, p. 199.

<sup>146</sup> GA 22, p. 261.

peculiar structure of being. This transcending does not only and not primarily mean a self-relating of a subject to an object; rather, transcendence means to understand oneself from a world. ... The selfhood of the *Dasein* is founded on its transcendence. ... The original nature of transcendence makes itself manifest in the basic constitution of being-in-the-world"<sup>147</sup> (in being open for..., in being free-to...). Being-in-the-world as an unveiling projecting of being is the primordial activity of human *Dasein*, conditioned by ἀγαθόν as the unitary origin of truth, understanding, and being.<sup>148</sup> Ἐπέκεινα points, therefore, both to ἀγαθόν as the condition of the possibility of being and its disclosedness (that which enables it), as well as to the worldly, self-transcending character of *Dasein*. It is, then, the world as a whole that has the fundamental character of οὗ ἕνεκα (that for the sake of which everything is, i.e., ἀγαθόν): "world shows itself to be that for the sake of which *Dasein* exists"; "»*Dasein* transcends« means: in the essence of its being it is world-forming," that is, demiurgic.<sup>149</sup>

The transcendence of ἰδέα τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ is, nevertheless, primarily related to its δύναμις, understood as sovereign power (*Mächtigkeit*) and empowerment (*Ermächtigung*).<sup>150</sup> The sun grants to visible things not only the capacity (δύναμις) to be seen but also their becoming, growth, nourishment, even though the sun itself is not something that

<sup>147</sup> GA 24, p. 425-26.

<sup>148</sup> GA 9, p. 160.

<sup>149</sup> GA 9, p. 157-58.

<sup>150</sup> GA 34, p. 110: Plato "went farthest" in the *Sophist*, where he found the essence of being "in empowerment (δύναμις) and nothing else (247d-e)"; cf. GA 19, p. 474-76.

becomes.<sup>151</sup> Ἄγαθόν bestows upon things “not only their visibility, but also the fact that they are,”<sup>152</sup> and in this bestowing it surpasses them. Similarly, the known not only receives its being known from ἄγαθόν („the good establishes for beings not only knownness [*Erkanntheit*] and thereby world-entry [*Welteingang*]”), but also being (*Daßsein*, the fact that it is, *daß es ist*) and being-a-what (*Wassein*, *was es ist*, “that it is something composed in this and that way”) is assigned to beings by ἄγαθόν, although ἄγαθόν is not being itself but surpasses being inasmuch as it outstrips beings in dignity and power.<sup>153</sup> “This surpassing, however, is not simply an indifferent lying over and above, a being-situated somewhere or other for itself”; rather, it means the “empowerment for being, the making manifest of beings (*Ermächtigung für Sein, Offenbar-machen von Seiendem*).”<sup>154</sup> Ἄγαθόν is “the enablement (*Ermöglichung*) of being as such and of unhiddenness as such”; it is “that which empowers being and unhiddenness to their own essence”; its originary meaning of ἄγαθόν is, therefore, the empowerment of being as that which “is prior to everything else, that upon which everything else depends” (*das, worauf es vor allem anderen und für alles andere ankommt*) and that which “is prior to and for all being and every truth” (*das, worum es vor allem Sein und für alles Sein und jede Wahrheit geht*). Ἄγαθόν is, therefore, both the ground of empowerment (enablement) of seeing (or knowing) and of being seen (or known), being in general.

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<sup>151</sup> GA 24, p. 400-402; GA 34, p. 107; cf. *Resp.* 509b2-b4.

<sup>152</sup> GA 34, p. 107.

<sup>153</sup> GA 24, p. 402-3; GA 26, p. 284; GA 36/37, p. 198-99; cf. *Resp.* 509b6-b10.

<sup>154</sup> GA 34, p. 107-9.

In this sense of “what befits (*ertüchtigt*) a being and makes it possible (*ermöglicht*) for it to be a being,” it is that which “makes suitable (*tauglich*)” in the ontological sense, that is, enables being to be.<sup>155</sup> Still, the essence of the ἀγαθόν lies in its “sovereignty over itself as οὐ ἔνεκα,” in its being “the source (*Wesensquelle*) of possibility as such.”<sup>156</sup>

What is being, then, as that which ἀγαθόν empowers in its sovereignty over being and itself as its οὐ ἔνεκα? Answering this question may elucidate the peculiar identification of ἐπέκεινα with both the world and the ἀγαθόν. For the Greeks, being means being present, presence (οὐσία, *Anwesen*) or, more precisely, “presence of what endures in the unconcealed.”<sup>157</sup> Being thereby reveals itself as φύσις, nature, in the sense of “emerging presence (*aufgehendes Anwesen*),”<sup>158</sup> “the emerging-abiding sway (*das aufgehend-verweilende Walten*)” of that which “emerges from itself,” “the unfolding that opens itself up, the coming-into-appearance in such unfolding, and holding itself and persisting in appearance.”<sup>159</sup> Heidegger emphasizes here the self-unfolding of the world, its emergence from itself. This is also how he characterizes ἀλήθεια as “the self-manifestation (*sich-selbst-Bekunden*) of phenomena.”<sup>160</sup> Similarly, the idea “is what shines, it is concerned only with the shining of itself.”<sup>161</sup> The world (or φύσις, nature) conceived in

<sup>155</sup> GA 6.2, p. 222.

<sup>156</sup> GA 34, p. 107-9.

<sup>157</sup> GA 6.2, p. 217; GA 22, p. 140-41; BH, p. 225.

<sup>158</sup> GA 9, p. 189-90.

<sup>159</sup> GA 40, p. 15-18.

<sup>160</sup> GA 14, p. 99.

<sup>161</sup> GA 9, p. 225.



such a way, as that which emerges from itself, is, to quote Nietzsche, like a “work of art without an artist,” where “the artist is only a preliminary stage. The world as a work of art that gives birth to itself.”<sup>162</sup> The artist is hidden behind his work, or rather present in this work, revealing himself as his work of art, “neither as something opposite us nor as something all-encompassing”<sup>163</sup> but as that which is, as it is, as *Da-sein*. The artist “withdraws in favor of the gift which he gives,”<sup>164</sup> “withdraws in the face of beings in order that they might reveal themselves with respect to what and how they are,” in a liberatory gesture of letting beings be (*Sein-lassen des Seienden*).<sup>165</sup> His self-concealment pertains to the world he empowers “as λήθη belongs to ἀλήθεια” – namely, “not as shadow to light, but rather as the heart of ἀλήθεια.”<sup>166</sup> In his self-withdrawal, the artist appears as that which is given, withdrawing himself as that which enables the gift, “which empowers all objectivity and subjectivity to what they are,”<sup>167</sup> as “that which enables as such (*das Tauglich-machende schlechthin*),”<sup>168</sup> “the most original possibility, originally making possible everything,”<sup>169</sup> which “withdraws in revealing itself in the world,”<sup>170</sup> and which, therefore, “somehow always constantly stands in view wherever any beings at all show themselves,” since “where people see

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<sup>162</sup> KGW VIII.1, p. 117 (Autumn 1885-Autumn 1886, 2[114]).

<sup>163</sup> GA 14, p. 28.

<sup>164</sup> GA 14, p. 12.

<sup>165</sup> GA 9, p. 187-88.

<sup>166</sup> GA 14, p. 88; cf. DK 28 B 1.29.

<sup>167</sup> GA 34, p. 109-12.

<sup>168</sup> GA 9, p. 228.

<sup>169</sup> GA 22, p. 106.

<sup>170</sup> GA 5, p. 337.

only the shadows ... there too the fire's glow must already be shining.”<sup>171</sup> “This is all that Plato says concerning the ἀγαθόν. But it is enough, indeed more than enough, for whoever understands.”<sup>172</sup> Heidegger's phenomenological reconstruction of the originary ἀγαθόν allows us to surmise that what is to be understood is that “Plato was essentially a pantheist, yet in the guise of a dualist.”<sup>173</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> GA 9, p. 228-29.

<sup>172</sup> GA 36/37, p. 109.

<sup>173</sup> KGW V.1, p. 478 (Summer 1880, 4[190]).



## Barely visible: Heidegger's Platonic Theology

If there is a datum "God,"  
phenomenology shall describe it.

Edmund Husserl<sup>1</sup>

### I. Occlusion of the Origin as Deterioration of Original Conceptuality

Heidegger's interpretation of Plato and Aristotle is focused on the concept of ἀλήθεια, nevertheless, in his reading also the ἄγαθόν, represented by the figure of the sun, is present,

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<sup>1</sup> Husserl's statement („Wenn es ein Datum Gott gibt, werden wir es beschreiben") is a part of an anecdote reported at least twice by Leo Strauss, in a conversation with Jacob Klein (*A Giving of Accounts*, The College 1970 Vol. 22 No. 1, p. 2) and in a letter to Karl Löwith, supplemented by Strauss with an ironic comment: "Die Schwierigkeit ist, daß die die etwas von Gott zu wissen glauben, bestreiten, daß er ein beschreibbares Datum ist" (*Hobbes' politische Wissenschaft und zugehörige Schriften – Briefe*, Stuttgart 2008, p. 664), countered in turn by Hans Blumenberg: "Es ist aber wohl das, was Husserl hätte sagen müssen und daher auch gesagt hat, mit dieser kindergläubigen Zuversicht auf die Leistungsfähigkeit der Phänomenologie" (*Das Datum*, in: *Begriffe in Geschichten*, Frankfurt am Main 1998, p. 30).

although not as visibly and explicitly as his interpretation of ἀλήθεια, just like, according to Plato's claim in the *Republic*, ἀγαθόν itself is barely visible, μόγις ὀρᾶσθαι (517c). Heidegger's early lecture course from 1927 ends with the following statement: "To gaze into the sun (into the supra-sensible) without becoming blind may not be possible, but to see it adequately in reflection [...] is quite feasible; we cannot lift the veil, but we can make it so thin that one can surmise that which is behind it [...]; not so thick that you can make anything you like out of the apparition: for otherwise it would be a seeing which indeed should be avoided"<sup>2</sup>. This very Platonic thought suggests that we can see something behind the veil of the sensible, and what we see there is not arbitrary, it is not a product of mere imagination, but rather something truly existing, making itself available, present. A certain seeing must be possible, noetic seeing, that allows us to see the non-sensible. In fact this postulate constitutes the core of phenomenology<sup>3</sup>. There must be a faculty of non-sensual seeing, of seeing the invisible (i.e. sensually invisible). Hence the phrase coined by Heidegger: "phenomenology of the invisible"<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> GA 24, p. 329-330; Heidegger paraphrases here Kant's 1796 essay *On a genteel tone recently sounded in philosophy*.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. GA 15, p. 373-4 on Husserl's "categorical intuition" (opposed to sensual intuition) as the seeing of being. "For Husserl, the categorial (that is, the Kantian forms) is just as given as the sensuous. There is therefore a thoroughly CATEGORIAL INTUITION. [...] the categorial, the forms, the »is,« are able to be encountered, that they are given accessibly— whereas with Kant they are only deduced from the table of judgments. [...] the category can be encountered just like something given to the senses. [...] there are two visions: sensuous vision and categorial vision" (GA 15, p. 376).

<sup>4</sup> GA 15, p. 399.

Heidegger's fundamental claim is that being itself is forgotten, and our human being is conditioned by the fundamental fact of the forgetfulness of being, of one's own being. The epigraph to *Sein und Zeit* starts with a quote from the *Sophist* (244a) where already Plato claims that we have forgotten the meaning of being („we, who used to think we understood it, have now become perplexed”<sup>5</sup>). The forgetfulness of being is, then, not Heidegger's own idea, but a repetition of Plato's thought that we have forgotten it and we must assume that we don't know it in order to be able to recover the originary, true meaning of being. Although it is in the nature of being that it hides itself, it is nevertheless possible to overcome this hiddenness<sup>6</sup>. One of the consequences of the fact that being is hidden, being as ἀλήθεια or being as ἀγαθόν, is that we only have a superficial, secondary, derivative, deteriorated understanding of it. For example, we understand truth as correspondence (*adaequatio*) according to the so-called classical definition of truth. Truth understood as ὁμοίωσις, as the agreement of thought or sentence (proposition) with the factually given reality, is only a superficial understanding of ἀλήθεια, according to Heidegger. Behind there is a deeper one: truth as

<sup>5</sup> GA 2, p. 1. Cf. Arist. *Met.* Z 1, 1028 b 3-4: “And indeed the question which was raised of old and is raised now and always, and is always the subject of doubt, viz. what being is?” (tr. Ross).

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Heraclitus DK B 123: φύσις likes to hide itself. On Heidegger's identification of φύσις with being see e.g. GA 40, p. 16: “what does the word φύσις say? It says what emerges from itself (for example, the emergence, the blossoming, of a rose), the unfolding that opens itself up, the coming-into-appearance in such unfolding, and holding itself and persisting in appearance”.

manifestation, as disclosedness of being<sup>7</sup>. By analogy, there must an originary understanding of the ἀγαθόν.

Heidegger claims that the Greeks could see the truth in its original meaning<sup>8</sup>, and so they could see the good (ἀγαθόν) as the self-revelation of the world<sup>9</sup>. Heidegger formulates this explicitly: “It is evident also that, just as the ἀληθές deteriorated into the *verum* and *certum*”, into truth understood as correctness (of a sentence, a dogma, a statement on the nature of the world), “so the ἀγαθόν undergoes a characteristic process of deterioration”<sup>10</sup>. Nevertheless, it is in the nature of being as such that for the sake of hiding its originary meaning it has to deteriorate conceptually into

<sup>7</sup> GA 2, p. 284; GA 36/37, p. 127: “the tradition of two fundamental conceptions of the essence of truth, both of which emerged among the Greeks: truth as unconcealment or truth as correctness. The originary conception as unconcealment gave way”. Cf. ὄν ὡς ἀληθές in Arist. *Met.* VI.2 (1026a33) and IX.10.

<sup>8</sup> Heidegger restates the traditional claim that what the Greeks saw was the divinity itself. C. Kerényi maintains that the Greeks had “a natural capacity” to see the divine, hence the “axiom of the Eleusinian religion [...]»: »He who sees the god is great, he who does not see him is small«” (*Eleusis: Archetypal Image of Mother and Daughter*, Princeton 1991, p. xxxvi). R. Calasso concludes from the hymn to Demeter („Difficult are the gods for men to see”, v. 111) and the *Odyssey* („The gods do not appear to everyone in all their fullness”, XVI.161) that “Only to the select few, chosen by divine will, do they show themselves” (*Literature and the Gods*, 2010, p. 5). Also according to W. F. Otto “in the cult, the human community meets the godhead [...]; even the most enlightened observer no longer doubts the real presence of the supernatural” (*The Meaning of the Eleusinian Mysteries*, in: J. Campbell (ed.), *The Mysteries: Papers from the Eranos Yearbooks*, Princeton 1955, p. 29-30). Substituting the divine (god or gods) by a philosophical figure to be seen (ἀλήθεια or ἀγαθόν) is, after all, Plato’s gesture (ιδέα replaces θεά).

<sup>9</sup> Cf. GA 14, p. 99: “What occurs for the phenomenology of the acts of consciousness as the self-manifestation of phenomena is thought more originally by Aristotle and in all Greek thinking and existence as ἀλήθεια, as the unconcealedness of what-is present, its being revealed, its showing itself”.

<sup>10</sup> GA 17, p. 276.

secondary, superficial meanings, which are necessary for us to operate, because to evaluate, to judge, to formulate certain statements as correct we need those derivative meanings, e.g. of truth as correctness. Still, behind them there is a deeper hidden meaning, which Heidegger tries to disclose, suggesting that this is the proper goal of philosophy, in particular phenomenology understood as noetic seeing of the originary meaning concealed behind superficial conceptuality. This deterioration and occlusion occurs, therefore, “even into the present age, where it [ἀγαθόν] is determined as value. [...] But even this history of deterioration is not sufficient to get us in the right place to see”<sup>11</sup>.

Hence the question of method arises: how to see, to disclose this originary meaning of the ἀγαθόν? According to Heidegger, not by searching the dialogues, the texts, to see how the word ἀγαθόν is used. On the contrary, one can claim that in the Seventh letter Plato is constantly talking about the ἀγαθόν even though this word is not used there. Plato, instead, is talking explicitly about the ἄρρητον, the ineffable, the unspeakable, but in fact what he means is the originary meaning of ἀλήθεια and ἀγαθόν. Yet this originary meaning is non-discursive, and therefore one can only hint towards it, one cannot formulate it or define it explicitly, one cannot speak directly about it, as an object; objectifying speech is unable to grasp it; it is accessible only beyond λόγος (ἄνευ λόγου), beyond discursive speech. Such claims are in agreement with Plato's reservations at the end

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.



of the *Phaedrus*<sup>12</sup>. This philosophical stance thematizes the ἄρρητον of the Greek mysteries as something unspeakable, beyond speech<sup>13</sup> (in opposition to ἀπόρητον, forbidden to reveal). It is the goal of dialectics to lead towards this originary meaning, towards the meaning of the origin itself.

Heidegger comments on this difficulty of grasping the idea of the origin, of the ἀρχὴ ἀνυπόθετος (*Resp.* 510b): “this idea is μόγις ὀραῖσθαι, that it can be viewed only with difficulty”, it is hardly visible, very difficult to see, and “it is therefore even more difficult to say anything about it”<sup>14</sup>. So “one straightaway wants to know what the good is, just like one wants to know the shortest route to the market place”<sup>15</sup>. This is not how we get there. In this way, inquiring directly, one does not get an answer. This is also a Platonic figure: we cannot go directly towards “that which is great”, we need to “take a detour” (*Phdr.* 274a). When we address it directly, “we always run up against nothing”<sup>16</sup>. A different way of approaching it is, therefore, necessary.

“Ἀγαθόν in itself”, when approached directly, “is indeterminate with respect to its content”<sup>17</sup>. This indeter-

<sup>12</sup> Cf. GA 19, p. 339-348 as well as T. Szlezák, *The Acquiring of Philosophical Knowledge According to Plato's Seventh Letter*, in: G. W. Bowersock et al. (ed.), *Arktouros*, Berlin 1979; *Platon und die Schriftlichkeit der Philosophie*, Berlin 1985; *On the Meaning of the Key Concepts in Plato's Criticism of Writing*, Platonic Investigations 2015 Vol. 2; G. Agamben, *The Thing Itself*, SubStance Vol. 16 No. 2.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. T. Szlezák, *Platon*, München 2021, p. 578-579 and C. Schefer, *Platons unsagbare Erfahrung*, Basel 2001.

<sup>14</sup> GA 34, p. 96; cf. *Resp.* 517b8f.

<sup>15</sup> GA 34, p. 97.

<sup>16</sup> GA 36/37, p. 199.

<sup>17</sup> GA 9, p. 160. Heidegger elaborates on this here: “the good is understood as τέλος without content, i.e., as a future which grants us the possibility of

minateness of the ἀγαθόν is its essential trait, but it is not something irrational, nor something mysterious. One can grasp it through dialectics, which initiates an inner shift towards the ἀγαθόν, a movement of “submitting oneself to its power”<sup>18</sup>, because one of its characteristics is that it is the empowerment “of being as such and of unhiddenness as such”<sup>19</sup>. It is this character of δύναμις what one has to submit oneself to in order to access it. Furthermore, ἀγαθόν itself has the character of submission, of *Gelassenheit*, of letting-be. Therefore, submitting oneself allows us to know the ἀγαθόν by becoming ἀγαθοειδής (*Resp.* 509a; cf. *Ep.* VI 343e), by means of a ὁμοίωσις ἀγαθῶ. Its character of δύναμις as that which empowers by letting things be what they are is that which is to be imitated, by assuming a position of being ἀγαθοειδής,<sup>20</sup> “so that I adjust myself to the power and so that power as power addresses me”<sup>21</sup>.

## II. Phenomenological Seeing as Retrieval of Original Conceptuality

Only from such a position one is able to see the ἀγαθόν. Phenomenological seeing, as Heidegger understands it, is equivalent to νόησις, to noetic seeing described by

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existing as [free] worldly Dasein”. For the liberatory aspect of seeing the originary light of the ἀγαθόν see *Resp.* 515e-516e and GA 34, p. 38-79; GA 36/37, p. 140-179.

<sup>18</sup> GA 36/37, p. 199-200.

<sup>19</sup> GA 34, p. 109.

<sup>20</sup> GA 34, p. 108-109; cf. *Resp.* 509b9-10.

<sup>21</sup> GA 36/37, p. 200.

Plato and Aristotle, to seeing the thing itself by means of νοῦς (cf. *Resp.* 475e and *Phaedr.* 247d: philosopher as φιλοθεάμων, fond of seeing, who rejoices in seeing being). Such a method of philosophizing was taught to Heidegger by Husserl “in the form of a step-by-step training in phenomenological »seeing«”<sup>22</sup>, “by long practice and exercise [...] of a seeing in thinking”<sup>23</sup>, “by approaching the same [thing] from the most diverse perspectives”, in a “viewing or intuition [*Anschauung*] that is [...] achieved when a thing is seen comprehensively with one beholding”<sup>24</sup>, in “a simple originary apprehension” of its being<sup>25</sup>. There are, nevertheless, various concealments of seeing, among them the simple fact that we don’t yet know that what we are looking for. The thing itself, that which is to be seen, once discovered, though, is initially not hidden, but becomes occluded again by means of petrified language, by taken over, worn out concepts<sup>26</sup>. Certain conceptual purifications are, thus, prerequisite to seeing. Noetic seeing, in order to be possible, needs to use certain pre-given concept as a point of departure, a launching-point taken over from the tradition, the Platonic tradition among others. This includes in particular the tradition of metaphysics, which is a pointer, a sign that instead of pointing occludes that towards which it should point<sup>27</sup>. This is what motivates Heidegger’s

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<sup>22</sup> GA 14, p. 97.

<sup>23</sup> GA 16, p. 589

<sup>24</sup> HW, p. 17-18

<sup>25</sup> GA 20, p. 107.

<sup>26</sup> GA 80.1, p. 67.

<sup>27</sup> In the Buddhist parable, a finger is pointing to the moon, but we are only able to notice the finger. Rilke extends this metaphor even further in an

strategy of destruction, ultimately leading to a reconstruction (repeating Plato's patricidal attitude to Parmenides, or Aristotle's stance towards Plato<sup>28</sup>), leading to an originary seeing beyond any "doctrine that could have been learned, reproduced, and handed on"<sup>29</sup>, "freeing the original Aristotelian text so thoroughly and effectively from the overlay of the scholastic tradition and from the miserable, distorted picture the critical philosophy of the period had of Aristotle [...] that he began to speak in an unexpected way"<sup>30</sup>, to the point of being "confronted with matters [*Sachen*] in such a way that we no longer knew if the matters [*Sachen*] he was speaking of were his or Aristotle's"<sup>31</sup>. According to Heidegger, speech is disclosing and, simultaneously, occluding. In speech (λόγος ἀποφαντικός) there is a possibility of pointing, revealing, but that which it points to is ultimately beyond λόγος. Such a seeing beyond or without speech, ἄνευ λόγου, is given in σοφία, in pure νοεῖν<sup>32</sup>. For ultimately "God answers in silence"<sup>33</sup>.

Hans Blumenberg in his erudite study of light as the metaphor of truth remarks that "in constantly having

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intuition similar to Heidegger's motivation behind the "destruction of metaphysics", claiming that we are "like dogs that do not comprehend the meaning of an index finger and think they have to snap at the hand" (*Letters on God*, Evanston 2012, p. 21).

<sup>28</sup> GA 24, p. 29-31.

<sup>29</sup> H. Arendt, *Martin Heidegger at Eighty*, in: M. Murray (ed.), *Heidegger and Modern Philosophy: Critical Essays*, New Haven and London, p. 294

<sup>30</sup> HW, p. 32

<sup>31</sup> HW, p. 115

<sup>32</sup> GA 19, p. 57-64, 182; GA 80.1, p. 69, 76, 78; cf. *Eth. Nic.* VI.6-7; *Met.* I 981b.

<sup>33</sup> GA 66, p. 353; GA 69, p. 105, 211, 221. Cf. O. Casel, *De philosophorum graecorum silentio mystico*, Giessen 1919.

to confront the un-conceptual (*das Unbegriffene*) and the pre-conceptual (*das Vorbegriffene*), philosophy encounters the means of articulation found in this non-conceptual and pre-conceptual, adopts them, and develops them further in separation from their origin. [...] This preliminary stage of a concept is, in its »aggregate state,« more vivid, more sensitive to the ineffable, and less dominated by fixed traditional forms”<sup>34</sup> Only the pre-conceptual phase is sensitive to the inexpressible, therefore in order to attain the thing itself one has to, so to speak, retreat from the conceptual phase to that which precedes it. Julius Stenzel traces the Platonic concept of light to the pre-conceptual experience of the Eleusinian mysteries. Stenzel remarks that “this seeing points us towards something so bright, that it overflows us with its light, so that we don’t see the world anymore”<sup>35</sup>. A polemical statement is formulated by Rudolf Bultmann: “this primordial light should be seen as the ἀρχή, the origin of the world, and not something that is posited against the world”<sup>36</sup>; the world should be seen as the aspect of the original light, its manifestation. Mircea Eliade collected evidences of such an experience from various traditions worldwide, both spontaneous and induced. According to a handwritten note in Eliade’s archives “everything in the universe is a unique embodiment of the absolute Reality; everything is a mirror

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<sup>34</sup> H. Blumenberg, *Light as a Metaphor for Truth: At the Preliminary Stage of Philosophical Concept Formation*, in: *History, Metaphors, Fables. A Hans Blumenberg Reader*, Ithaca 2020, p. 130 (modified).

<sup>35</sup> J. Stenzel, *Der Begriff der Erleuchtung bei Platon*, *Die Antike* 1926 Vol. 2, p. 242.

<sup>36</sup> R. Bultmann, *Zur Geschichte der Lichtsymbolik im Altertum*, *Philologus* 1948 Vol. 97 (1), p. 22.

reflecting the supreme Light. And all the mirrors, each reflecting in itself the same supreme Light, reflect each other in such a way that each one of the mirrors reflects all the rest of the mirrors. The whole universe is represented as a limitless number of luminous mirrors facing one another so that the world is made to appear as an infinite mass of light"<sup>37</sup>. Such a vision is in line with Heidegger's reading of Plato. One can even consider Platonic dialectics as one of the means of leading towards it.

This tackles the question of dualism. Plato is sometimes understood as a dualist, hence the primordial light is posited in an originary, otherworldly domain. Transcendence is understood spatially, as a different space, another place, an otherworldly domain<sup>38</sup>. Certain expressions in Plato allow for such a reading, but there is also a possibility of another interpretation and this is the crucial part of Heidegger's approach, in conjunction with Nietzsche's claim that "Plato was essentially a pantheist, yet in the guise of a dualist"<sup>39</sup>. There are reasons for this disguise: political, for example. The persecution of Socrates is an obvious reference. Also later in the course of history Spinoza and Descartes had to be careful in revealing their metaphysical concepts, for it is politically dangerous to express certain beliefs, monistic

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<sup>37</sup> Mircea Eliade Papers, University of Chicago, Box 55, Folder 6: Notes and research, "Light", 1969. Cf. M. Eliade, *Experiences of the Mystic Light*, in: *The Two and the One*, New York 1969; *Spirit, Light, and Seed*, History of Religions 1971 Vol. 11 No. 1.

<sup>38</sup> This is common not only in the history of Platonism, cf. I. P. Culianu, *Out of this World: Otherworldly Journeys from Gilgamesh to Albert Einstein*, Boston and London 1991.

<sup>39</sup> KGW V.1, p. 478 (Summer 1880).

or pantheistic, identifying nature with the divine<sup>40</sup>. This could be the reason for Plato's reservations and his "guise of a dualist".

There are various occlusions and one of them is the default dualist mindset, framework of thought and the consequential understanding of the ἀγαθόν in opposition to something other than itself. Heidegger objects, attempting to interpret the dualistic passages in Plato's *Republic* in terms of monism: we cannot understand the ἀγαθόν as opposed to κακόν, to something other than itself. All otherness, all difference is within it, as in the absolute sense ἀγαθόν is identical with the all-encompassing unity<sup>41</sup>, differing with itself and thereby encompassing all the otherness within itself<sup>42</sup>. Such an understanding of the ἀγαθόν has ethical consequences which Plato himself addresses in the *Republic*. The entire problematic of the ἀρχαί is based on this unresolvable paradox: ἀγαθόν is both opposite to κακόν (in the »fallen«, deteriorated meaning of the ἀγαθόν) and encompasses it (in the absolute, originary sense of the ἀγαθόν)<sup>43</sup>.

<sup>40</sup> Spinoza's "caute" and Descartes' "Iarvatus prodeo" are most famous examples; another is the case of Al-Hallaj, persecuted for the proclaiming oneness with God); cf. L. Strauss, *Persecution and the Art of Writing*, Social Research 1941 Vol. 8 No. 4.

<sup>41</sup> The identity of ἐν and ἀγαθόν, suggested by Plato in *Resp.* II and explicitly formulated in his controversial public lecture (cf. K. Gaiser, *Plato's Enigmatic Lecture »On the Good«*, *Phronesis* 1980 vol. 25 no. 1), was also claimed by other Socratics than Plato, e.g. Euclid of Megara (cf. *Diog. Laert.* II.106).

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Heraclitus DK 22 B 51 (= *Symp.* 187a): τὸ ἐν ἑαυτῷ διαφερόμενον αὐτὸ αὐτῷ συμφέρεσθαι (ἑαυτῷ ὁμολογέει).

<sup>43</sup> Aristotle emphasizes this paradox in *Met.* XIV 1091b-1092a: τὸ κακὸν τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ χῶραν εἶναι („The evil is the receptacle of the good"). George Meredith tries to resolve it: "You must love the light so well that no darkness will seem fell" (G. Meredith, *Poems and Lyrics of the Joy of Earth*, London 1894, p. 11).

### III. Heidegger's Retrieval of Original Conceptuality in the *Republic*

There are six passages from Books VI-VII of the *Republic* that I would like to address in order to show how Heidegger's reading is an attempt to overcome the dualist understanding of Platonic metaphysics towards something which can be conceived as the original meaning of metaphysics. As Heidegger says in his reading of Aristotle's *Physics* B1, the original core of metaphysics is physics<sup>44</sup>. Plato's philosophy is likewise situated in the tradition of Pre-socratic, monistic philosophy of nature, where φύσις is the name of being itself. But φύσις, according to Heraclitus, κρύπτεσθαι φιλεῖ, likes to hide itself (according to Heidegger: behind the veil of metaphysics which has to be removed to reveal its physical essence). The supposedly Platonic division between κόσμος αἰσθητός and κόσμος νοητός<sup>45</sup> does not refer to two separate domains. When Plato is using the terms ἐν τῷ νοητῷ and ἐν τῷ ὀρατῷ (508c), he is rather addressing two aspects of the same, single, unitary reality. This confirms the monistic interpretation of Plato suggested by Nietzsche.

There is another formulation, though, which is problematic here: in 517c2 the ἀγαθόν is understood as the cause of of whatever is right (ὀρθός) and fair (καλός). Hence what is not right and not fair has to be understood as not originated

<sup>44</sup> GA 9, p. 241.

<sup>45</sup> This binary pair of opposites, often mistakenly attributed to Plato, imposing a dualistic framework upon the understanding of Platonism, is in fact of much later coinage, i.e. Philo's (*De opificio mundi* 25).



by the ἀγαθόν, which suggests another, second principle. A far consequence of this assumption is the problem of theodicy, to formulate it in modern terms<sup>46</sup>. But according to Heidegger's reading, this is merely one of the guises or occlusions<sup>47</sup> that Plato (or perhaps the ἀγαθόν itself) creates, and overcoming such a dualistic understanding of the ἀγαθόν entails a certain transgression, or rather descent, κατάβασις, which is already signalled in the initial phrase of the *Republic*: Κατέβην, "I have descended" (into Piraeus to take part in the rite of an unnamed goddess)<sup>48</sup>. This downward movement of entering the abyss is stated in various ways in Plato, as a kind of non-dualism<sup>49</sup> with problematic ethical consequences. Hence the danger of dialectics as disregard for the laws, or what we nowadays call antinomianism<sup>50</sup>.

<sup>46</sup> See Schelling's dualistic interpretation of Plato in his *Freiheitsschrift*, especially relying on the identification of matter with evil (*Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*, Albany 2010, p. 41), against which Plato formulates his monistic (pantheistic) reading; cf. Arist. *Phys.* 192a and *Enneads* I.8.7.

<sup>47</sup> GA 34, p. 100: "the necessity of freeing ourselves at the very outset from any kind of sentimental conception of the idea of the good, but also from all perspectives, conceptions [...] where the good is conceived as the opposite of the bad and the bad conceived as the sinful"; cf. Heraclitus DK 22 B 58 (ἀγαθόν καὶ κακόν ἓν ἐστίν) and B 102 (τῶι μὲν θεῶι καλὰ πάντα καὶ ἀγαθὰ καὶ δίκαια).

<sup>48</sup> *Resp.* 327a. This goddess, presumably of Eastern, Thracian origin, according to the commentators (e.g. Adam), could also be identified with the Eleusinian divinity, often described simply as "the Goddess" (ἡ θεὰ or ἡ θεός); cf. *Phaedr.* 250b; Euripides *Hel.* 1365; Aristophanes *Ran.* 401; Herodotus IX 65. Gershom Scholem also attributes antinomian tendencies to certain matriarchal goddess cults of Eastern origin (*Redemption through Sin*, in: *The Messianic Idea in Judaism*, New York 1970, p. 114).

<sup>49</sup> J. A. Planas shows Platonism as a technique of achieving a non-dualistic state of mind in his *History of Non-dual Meditation Methods*, Madrid 2014.

<sup>50</sup> *Resp.* 537e-538d (tr. Shorey): "Do you not note how great is the harm caused by [...] dialectics? Its practitioners are infected with lawlessness [παπανομία]".

Now let us proceed to the core of Heidegger's analysis: the ἀγαθόν is the ultimate (τελευταία), the ultimately perceivable, that "which lies at the end in the field of the understandable"<sup>51</sup> (of that which is to be understood; ἐν τῷ γνωστῷ does not stand here for another domain but for "the whole sphere of that which is in any way accessible to us"<sup>52</sup>). According to Heidegger τελευταία means that which is perceived ultimately, at the end, "that which the understanding finally comes up against, whereby the understanding receives its completion, termination, conclusion"<sup>53</sup>. More than that: it is not only the completion of the understanding, the final thing to be understood in the movement of dialectics, but also that from which everything begins, it is the origin of everything, ἡ τοῦ παντὸς ἀρχή<sup>54</sup>, the beginning, ground, cause and origin („Ausgang, Grund, Ursache"<sup>55</sup>) of all, of everything that exists, "of both beings and being"<sup>56</sup>. Ἀγαθόν, then, is the first and the last, but also the in-between, or, to use Spinoza's term, the "indwelling cause", *causa immanens*<sup>57</sup>.

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It is a harm, though, only "to the novices of dialectic", to whom the law "is no more honorable than it is base", for such a novice "ceases to honor these principles and to think that they are binding on him, and cannot discover the true principles". In *Parm.* 130c-e young Socrates wonders whether hair, mud, dirt and other base things participate in the one, afraid "of falling into some abyss (βυθός)". Parmenides responds to Socrates: "you are still young, philosophy has not yet taken hold upon you", but when it does, "you will not despise them" (tr. Fowler).

<sup>51</sup> GA 22, p. 105. Cf. *Resp.* 517b8f.

<sup>52</sup> GA 24, p. 403-405.

<sup>53</sup> GA 22, p. 105.

<sup>54</sup> *Resp.* 511b7.

<sup>55</sup> GA 26, p. 144.

<sup>56</sup> GA 22, p. 106.

<sup>57</sup> *Ethica* I Prop. XVIII; cf. *Leg.* 715e.

Thereby we address the question of transcendence, of ἀγαθόν as ἐπέκεινα τῆς οὐσίας<sup>58</sup>. The transcendence of the ἀγαθόν means that it “lies beyond beings and Being”<sup>59</sup>, “transcending even beings and their being”<sup>60</sup>. It is “beyond Being [...] and therefore = nothing”<sup>61</sup>. It is not a thing<sup>62</sup>. It is not a being. It is not a certain being, it is not the being of beings, it is not even being itself. Thus “the question of Being transcends itself”<sup>63</sup>. What’s more, “the ἐπέκεινα belongs to the *Dasein*’s own most peculiar structure of being”<sup>64</sup> as its world-formative power. “»*Dasein* transcends« means: in the essence of its being it is world forming”<sup>65</sup>. Transcendence of the ἀγαθόν refers, then, to the demiurgic aspect of *Sein* as *Dasein*<sup>66</sup>. *Dasein* incessantly transcends itself in the ecstatic movement of being towards the ἀγαθόν. Ἀγαθόν, thus, is the self-transcending movement of being, i.e. the world in its being-here (*Dasein*). Such an understanding of transcendence is in line with Natorp’s remark formulated in his postface to the second edition of *Platons Ideenlehre*: “ἐπέκεινα signifies [...] the unity of the primitively living

<sup>58</sup> *Resp.* 509b9.

<sup>59</sup> GA 22, p. 106.

<sup>60</sup> GA 26, p. 144.

<sup>61</sup> GA 36/37, p. 199.

<sup>62</sup> This elevation of the ἀγαθόν reminds one of the ἀφαίρεσις method in *via negativa*. Cf. the Novalis motto in early Heidegger: “Wir suchen überall das Unbedingte und finden immer nur Dinge” (GA 1, p. 399) and Eckhart’s claim in *Predigt 71*: “sah er mit offenen Augen nichts, und dieses Nichts war Gott”.

<sup>63</sup> GA 22, p. 106.

<sup>64</sup> GA 24, p. 425.

<sup>65</sup> GA 9, p. 158.

<sup>66</sup> GA 24, p. 405: “[...] the ἰδέα ἀγαθοῦ is nothing but the δημιουργός, the producer pure and simple. This lets us see already how the ἰδέα ἀγαθοῦ is connected with ποιεῖν, πράξις, τέχνη in the broadest sense”.

thing<sup>67</sup> [...] the whole ψυχή itself [...] the primitive being of the ἀγαθόν<sup>68</sup>.

Ἀγαθόν, therefore, is the horizon of *Dasein* understood as the πέρας, the limit of our being-here, that is to be transcended in the perpetual, world-forming movement of self-transcendence. In this constant movement of self-transgressing and self-overcoming ἀγαθόν is revealed. "The world shows itself to be that for the sake of which *Dasein* exists", since ultimately the world is that which has "the fundamental character of the »for the sake of ...«"<sup>69</sup>. Therefore, ἰδέα τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ is τελευταία "in such way that [...] it completes everything; it is that which embraces all beings as beings"<sup>70</sup> as their world-forming horizon, not "as a finishing and going-no-further of something" but rather "as the all-encompassing, forming, determining limit"<sup>71</sup>, granting not only being to beings (that they are) but also their εἶδος (what they are). Ἀγαθόν, then, itself barely visible (μόγις ὀρᾶσθαι), grants visibility to beings, grants being to beings, but also it grants structure, imposes form upon beings, gives them their being as something. This is how Heidegger interprets ὀρθός and καλός in Plato's phrase πάντων αὕτη ὀρθῶν τε καὶ καλῶν αἰτία<sup>72</sup> not in the ethical but in the ontological sense.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. *Tim.* 30c-31b, 33a-d, 92c.

<sup>68</sup> P. Natorp, *Plato's Theory of Ideas*, tr. V. Politis, Sankt Augustin 2004, p. 401-2.

<sup>69</sup> GA 9, p. 157. Heidegger is referring here to the Aristotelian phrase οὐ ἔνεκα („worumwillen", „umwillen", „for the sake of which"), used in a nominalized form τὸ οὐ ἔνεκα in *Met.* 1072b (Ross and Apostle translate it as the "final cause"; Sachs, in the Heideggerian manner, as "that-for-the-sake-of-which").

<sup>70</sup> GA 26, p. 143.

<sup>71</sup> GA 34, p. 95.

<sup>72</sup> *Resp.* 517c2.

Ἄγαθόν empowers beings to be what they are: being [*Daβsein*, the fact that it is, *daβ es ist*] and being-a-what [*Wassein*, *was es ist*, that it is something composed in this and that way] is assigned to beings by ἄγαθόν<sup>73</sup>. This empowerment constitutes the δύναμις of the ἄγαθόν, hence it surpasses beings in power (ἐπέκεινα δυνάμει). Such a surpassing empowerment of the ἄγαθόν “is not an indifferent lying over and above, situated somewhere or other for itself” but “empowerment for being, the making manifest of beings”<sup>74</sup>.

Ἄγαθόν, then, bestows upon the things not only their visibility, their understandability, knowability, but also their facticity and whatness, the fundamental fact that they are and what they are. In this granting (παρέχειν<sup>75</sup>) it surpasses them. Hence it, or rather she, ἰδέα τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ, is the mistress, *Herrin*<sup>76</sup>, that determines and enables everything and in this mastery she holds sway (*sie ist selbst herrschend*<sup>77</sup>, αὐτὴ κυρία). Such granting is not merely bestowing, but “both a bestowing and a holding – giving (and letting go), and in giving, holding”<sup>78</sup>; hence “the good gives and it binds”<sup>79</sup> in its mastery. In particular it binds, or yokes together ἀλήθεια (,that which pertains to the seen, openness”<sup>80</sup>) with νοῦς (,the capacity for the understanding of Being”<sup>81</sup>) and ful-

<sup>73</sup> GA 24, p. 404-405; GA 26, p. 284; GA 36/37, p. 198-9.

<sup>74</sup> GA 34, p. 108.

<sup>75</sup> *Resp.* 508e-509b.

<sup>76</sup> Heidegger seems to refer to the Parmenidean personification of the female goddess Ἀλήθεια; cf. GA 54, p. 7-8, 14.

<sup>77</sup> GA 22, p. 106.

<sup>78</sup> GA 36/37, p. 200.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

fills itself in free human beings. For it is the enablement (*Ermöglichung*) of beings in their unhiddenness, unconcealedness (*ἀλήθεια*), the coming of things out of hiddenness (concealment), in their being what they are. *Ἀγαθόν*, then, is the *λήθη* of *ἀλήθεια*, or, in other words, it is in such a relation to the beings it empowers “as *λήθη* belongs to *ἀλήθεια*”, “not as shadow to light, but as the heart of *ἀλήθεια*”<sup>82</sup>; it “withdraws in the face of beings in order that they might reveal themselves with respect to what and how they are”<sup>83</sup>, it “withdraws in favor of the gift which it gives”<sup>84</sup> (the being of things in their being what they are), “withdraws in revealing itself in [as] the world”<sup>85</sup>. But even though it is hidden behind its gift, *ἀγαθόν* still “somehow constantly stands in view wherever any beings at all show themselves”<sup>86</sup>. But first and foremost, in the wake of its withdrawal, it makes place for beings, among them for the being-here of man, unveiling itself as being-in-the-world, in the projecting, self-transcending, world-forming activity of *Dasein*, in the ultimate gift of its own embodiment<sup>87</sup>.

To summarize, in Heidegger's interpretation we encounter theologoumena like self-negation and incarnation of the absolute, inscribed into the phenomenological reading of the Platonic *loci classici*<sup>88</sup>. It is certainly remarkable to find such ideas in Plato, perhaps even (as Heidegger would

<sup>82</sup> GA 14, p. 88; cf. DK 28 B 1.29: “the unshaken heart” of *ἀλήθεια*.

<sup>83</sup> GA 9, p. 188-189.

<sup>84</sup> GA 14, p. 12.

<sup>85</sup> GA 5, p. 337.

<sup>86</sup> GA 9, p. 228.

<sup>87</sup> GA 13, p. 121: “Menschwerdung Gottes”; “Her-kunft des Gottmenschen”.

<sup>88</sup> GA 83, p. 128: “*imago dei* without creation and the original sin”.

see it) to discover the original meaning of Plato's dialogues, against the misleading, deteriorated interpretation criticized by Heidegger<sup>89</sup>, which could not retrieve the original content due to the misinterpretation of the fundamental concepts like ἀλήθεια and ἀγαθόν, now restored into their primordial splendour. To state it otherwise: the traditional interpretation of Plato (in theologico-political terms: katechonic<sup>90</sup>) is based on dualistic, "metaphysical" oppositions, including the opposition of transcendence-immanence, of here and beyond. What Heidegger attempts in his (apocalyptic) reading, aiming to see the divine in everything, is a dismantling of these in order to diminish the distance, the metaphysical divide (χωρισμός) between the divine and the world, for the sake of, so to speak, divinizing the world<sup>91</sup>, and, ultimately, man, suggested already in the initial statement of *Sein und Zeit* that *Sein* (being itself) is given only as *Dasein* (the being of man), a far interpretative consequence of the Platonic ὁμοίωσις θεῷ. But, after all, this is explicitly stated by Natorp: "The ultimate point for which all striving strives, the striving for which alone has sense, is this very »being« of essence, in which rest and blessedness are wholly enclosed, which in itself encloses everything and hence is absolutely without needs and consequently pacified. The process of endowing with essence (Tagore's *sadhana*, realisation) is

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<sup>89</sup> Of course there are exceptions, most notably in the pantheistic and monistic undercurrents of Western thought, of Platonism and the "Aristotelian left" (to use Ernst Bloch's phrase).

<sup>90</sup> Cf. 2 Thessalonians 2 and its contemporary interpretations (Schmitt, Peterson, Agamben).

<sup>91</sup> This goal is stated explicitly in GA 5, p. 269-270.

the meaning of the Platonic ὁμοίωσις θεῶν<sup>92</sup>. Heidegger's "last God", identical with "the world as such"<sup>93</sup>, is none other than Natorp's "last Agathon": "The ultimate *agathon* [*das letzte Agathon*] is at bottom [*im Grunde*] nothing other than ultimate [*letzte*] »being« and the ultimate [*letzte*] »one« itself, as the only comprehensible goal towards which everything strives that is not itself the goal"<sup>94</sup>. Natorp identifies it with the primordial world-forming, ever-creative power (λόγος) that manifests itself in Plato, Heraclitus and John<sup>95</sup>. Such an identification can be reconciled with Plato's cave allegory by recognizing that after the philosopher's eyes get acquainted to the blinding splendour of the divine light, in the liberatory revelation it takes the shape of the world – as the cave resplendent.

<sup>92</sup> P. Natorp, *Plato's Theory of Ideas*, p. 429.

<sup>93</sup> T. Sheehan in D. Patte (ed.), *The Cambridge Dictionary of Christianity*, Cambridge 2010, s.v. *Heidegger* (p. 503); cf. GA 65, p. 288-293; GA 79, p. 73–77.

<sup>94</sup> P. Natorp, *Plato's Theory of Ideas*, p. 429

<sup>95</sup> R. Schmidt (ed.), *Die Philosophie der Gegenwart in Selbstdarstellungen*, Leipzig 1921, p. 176.





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