

## PHILOSOPHICAL JOURNAL

VOLUME VIII / 2019 / ISSN 2392-0963

**Thomas Alexander Szlezák**, On Karl Kerényi's Humanistic and Existentialistic Platonism

**Karl Kerényi**, Platonism

**Henry Corbin**, Theology of Aristotle

**Kevin Corrigan, Syed A.H. Zaidi**, On Henry Corbin's *Theology of Aristotle*

**Piotr Nowak**, I Die, Therefore I Am: *Phaedo* as a Political Dialogue

**John Sallis**, Socrates's Second Sailing: The Turn to *Logos*

**Eva Brann**, Courage Nailed Down: Plato's *Laches*

**Peter Kalkavage**, Poetic Science in Plato's *Timaeus*

**Richard Bodéüs**, Theological Science and Its Object According to Aristotle

**Françoise Dastur**, Some Remarks on Heidegger's Reading of Aristotle's *Physics*

**Jeff Love, Michael Meng**, Heidegger's Silence

**Andrzej Serafin**, Heidegger on Plato's Originary Good: A Phenomenological Reconstruction

**Giorgio Agamben**, Aristotle's *De Anima* and the Division of Life

<b>Andrzej Serafin</b> , Editorial Introduction . . . . .	3
---	---

## PRESENTATIONS

<b>Thomas Alexander Szlezák</b> , On Karl Kerényi's Humanistic and Existentialistic Platonism . . . . .	5
<b>Karl Kerényi</b> , Platonism . . . . .	9
<b>Diego De Brasi</b> , Karóly Kerényi and the Platonic Dialogue . . . . .	14
<b>Peter Lamborn Wilson</b> , Introduction to Corbin's <i>Theology of Aristotle</i> . . . . .	23
<b>Henry Corbin</b> , <i>Theology of Aristotle</i> . . . . .	24
<b>Kevin Corrigan and Syed A. H. Zaidi</b> , On Henry Corbin's <i>Theology of Aristotle</i> . . . . .	30

## ESSAYS

<b>Piotr Nowak</b> , I Die, Therefore I Am: <i>Phaedo</i> as a Political Dialogue . . . . .	36
<b>John Sallis</b> , Socrates's Second Sailing: The Turn to <i>Logos</i> . . . . .	49
<b>Eva Brann</b> , Courage Nailed Down: Plato's <i>Laches</i> . . . . .	57
<b>Burt C. Hopkins</b> , Dividing Madness and the Appearances of Eros in the <i>Phaedrus</i> . . . . .	72
<b>Peter Kalkavage</b> , Poetic Science in Plato's <i>Timaeus</i> . . . . .	84
<b>Richard Bodéüs</b> , Theological Science and Its Object According to Aristotle: A Few Remarks . . . . .	100
<b>Mark Shiffman</b> , How the Prior by Nature Comes to Light in <i>Categories</i> 12 . . . . .	135
<b>Joshua Kerr</b> , Phytology: Between <i>Phūsis</i> and <i>Zoē</i> . . . . .	144
<b>Françoise Dastur</b> , Some Remarks on Heidegger's Reading of Aristotle's <i>Physics</i> : Matter, Form, and Production . . . . .	151
<b>Francisco J. Gonzalez</b> , Grounding the Principle of Non-Contradiction Existentially: Heidegger on Aristotle's <i>Metaphysics</i> Gamma in an Unpublished Seminar from 1928/29 . . . . .	158
<b>Claude Vishnu Spaak</b> , Phenomenological Interpretations of Aristotle's <i>Physics</i> in the Works of Heidegger and Patočka . . . . .	185
<b>Jeff Love and Michael Meng</b> , Heidegger's Silence . . . . .	197
<b>Andrzej Serafin</b> , Heidegger on Plato's Originary Good: A Phenomenological Reconstruction . . . . .	214
<b>Giorgio Agamben</b> , Aristotle's <i>De Anima</i> and the Division of Life . . . . .	233

## USED BOOKS

Antoni Szwed, *A Long Way to John Locke's Concept of Toleration in Seventeenth-Century England* ..... 239

## REVIEWS

Cordell D. K. Yee, *Translation among the Liberal Arts: On Joe Sachs's Aristotle* ..... 256  
Marek Sławiński, *Husserl, Plato, and the Historicity of the *Eidē** ..... 272  
Jakub Wolak, *Gemma Platonica: On Heinrich Dörrie's Philological Platonism* ..... 281

**ABOUT THE AUTHORS** ..... 293

**SUMMARY** ..... 297



free at [www.kronos.org.pl](http://www.kronos.org.pl)

Editor in Chief: Wawrzyniec Rymkiewicz  
Deputy Editor in Chief: Piotr Nowak  
Editorial Assistance: Krzysztof Rosiński, Andrzej Serafin, Jakub Wolak  
Proofreading: Dobrochna Fire

Reviewers: Steffen Huber, The Jagiellonian University in Kraków  
Eric Salem, St. John's College, Annapolis, MD  
Sergey David Sistiaga, The University of Erfurt  
Tadeusz Stawek, The University of Silesia in Katowice  
Krzysztof Ziarek, The State University of New York at Buffalo

Published by Fundacja Augusta hr. Cieszkowskiego  
ul. Mianowskiego 15/65, 02-044 Warszawa, Poland

ISSN 2392-0963 (print)  
ISSN 1899-9484 (online)

All material remains © copyright of the respective authors. Please address all queries to the editor at the following address.  
[redakcja@kronos.org.pl](mailto:redakcja@kronos.org.pl)

# EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION



How are we to read the ancients? How are we to affiliate with them? How to avoid imposing ourselves upon them? Nietzsche was one of the first to accuse us of inscribing our own ideals into the remains of classical antiquity buried under the ruins of the past. Instead, he chose a strategy of revealing what is buried inside us, under the ruins of the contemporary. It would seem that the past is doomed to be involved in an endless struggle with the present, and the present – to ceaselessly use and abuse history. Is there a way out of this vicious hermeneutic circle? One attempt was made by

another German thinker, who developed a peculiar technique of interpretation aimed at dismantling this circuit. By means of this method, the position of the reader is undermined, and the entire load of subjective prejudices is meticulously discharged, especially those surpassing individual subjectivity, accumulated over the centuries, ruling secretly under the guise of a prevalent doctrine, tradition, paradigm, or, to state it in Platonic terms, a historicized δόξα. A retroactive movement of disassembling the historically configured position of the self serves the purpose of overcoming the hermeneutic gap that drives the circle. This short-circuiting, according to Heidegger, is the essence of phenomenology: to achieve a stance that would make it possible to attain not even the text but that which speaks through the text, the unspoken behind that which is said. Not to impose ourselves upon the ancients and the inherited textual corpus, not to have it imposed upon us, but rather to engage with the matter of thought. “In Heidegger’s lectures we were confronted with matters in such a way that we no longer knew if the matters he was speaking of were his or Aristotle’s” (Gadamer). “Plato was not talked about and his theory of Ideas expounded. ... A single dialogue was pursued and subjected to question step by step, until the time-honored doctrine had disappeared to make room for a set of problems of immediate and urgent relevance. ... No one did so before Heidegger” (Arendt). What is at stake in this hermeneutic endeavor is, therefore, neither to reconstruct a doctrine nor to attribute a system to a historical figure. Rather, it is to cope with the text in a way that would draw attention toward something vivid by means of an exercise in thinking, in φρονεῖν and νοεῖν, and, consequently, an exercise in being.

Many have followed Heidegger’s steps; many were led astray, off the beaten, foot-worn path. One was Henry Corbin, a renowned scholar of Arabic and Persian Platonism, an early translator of Heidegger into French, guided by the Spirit, as he put it, toward Freiburg, Teheran, and Isfahan. Heidegger, with his phenomenological parlance of *Erschlossenheit*, *Entdecktheit*, and *Unverbogenheit*, paved the way toward the hierophantic vocabulary of Persian illuminism. What Corbin owes to Heidegger is the understanding of the long-lost connection between hermeneutics and theology, even though Heidegger’s phenomenology gave him the impression of a theology without theophany. Corbin

used to translate the term “phenomenology” to his Persian students as *kashf al-mahjub*, or “rending asunder of the veil to reveal the hidden essence.” It is no longer a mere act of textual interpretation. Instead, such a hermeneutics of *Dasein* is a kenotic act of self-revelation, summarized by Corbin in a Neoplatonic manner: “In revealing Himself to the human being, the personalized God of the personal theophany reveals the human being to itself, and in revealing the human being to itself, He reveals it to Himself and reveals Himself to Himself.” Still, this revelation occurs in the wake of a gesture constitutive of the *Da* of *Dasein*, of being present to the world in its givenness and suchness. The humble, worldly, phenomenological revelation occurs as a manifestation of that which is presented to us, within the limit in which it is presented.

One cannot succeed in writing on Plato except on condition of being a Platonist, Corbin once remarked. But what is Platonism? Neither a doctrine nor a dogma, as both Heidegger and Corbin would agree. A figure of conversion, perhaps? Certainly, but not in the doctrinal or institutional sense. A way of seeing? Definitely, but not in a way that one can know in advance what is to be seen, not to speak of describing it. Historians of Platonism attempted to define it negatively, by saying what it is not: materialism, mechanicism, nominalism, relativism, skepticism. This would make Platonism a large tent, yet a tent, to quote Lloyd Gerson’s witticism, too impossibly small for a modern inhabitant. What are we left with, then, in this reduction of Platonism to a negative, apophatic figure? A body of texts, undoubtedly. A manifold tradition of reading them, a plethora of interpretations, unfolding into a plexus of bifurcating paths, some of them followed in this issue. Among them is the Heideggerian way of approaching the obscure (Plato) through the clear (Aristotle). This attitude assumes that behind the superficial layer of discrepancy between the thinkers there is a harmony, that they are both carriers of the Parmenidean gaze “at that which, though absent, is so reliably present to the mind” (DK 28 B4). We could, of course, proclaim an open structure of the text, an infinite task of interpretation. Plato himself, though, regarded dialectics as finite, with the nonhypothetical ἀρχή as its ἀκμή and τέλος, and with Socratic unknowing lurking behind, incessantly subverting all possible dogmatizations, pointing beyond λόγος toward the ἄρρητον. But we are like dogs that don’t grasp the meaning of an index finger, to use Rilke’s metaphor, thinking they have to snap at the hand. We don’t understand that λόγος is like a raft, meant for crossing over, not for clinging to. This issue of *Kronos*, nevertheless, proves that some of us do.

Andrzej Serafin  
Editor

Thomas Alexander Szlezák

## ON KARL KERÉNYI'S HUMANISTIC AND EXISTENTIALISTIC PLATONISM

In the article by Karl Kerényi, reprinted here after almost 80 years, the short essay “Platonism”<sup>1</sup> from 1940, and in the “Introduction to the Reading of the Works of Plato,”<sup>2</sup> written six years later, we encounter a picture of Plato conceived by a classicist and historian of religions, a man of vast erudition. What Kerényi aims at – obviously as a final goal of human education, even as a goal of human existence as such – is a human culture growing from two roots: from the “conscious command of language” and from the “conscious humane encounter with reality” or, more precisely, from “being aware of the force of love, of the divine around us and generally of truth.”<sup>3</sup>

The second of these roots is the decisive one for Kerényi, for the first one runs the risk of deteriorating, if existential passion is absent, into nihilism. The other root leads to existential authenticity of our desire to acquire knowledge<sup>4</sup>, provided we make ourselves disciples of the Great Ones (as Kerényi says in the motto of the “Introduction,” taken from Romano Guardini). This belief has clearly to be taken in the light of Heidegger’s concept of “authenticity” in his ontological analysis of human existence (though Heidegger is not mentioned by name). “Conscious philosophical humanism” conceived in this way proves for those who turn to Plato

<sup>1</sup> K. Kerényi, “Platonismus,” in *Apollon und Niobe* (Munich: Langen Müller, 1980), 138-45 (pp. 9-13 in this issue of *Kronos*).

<sup>2</sup> K. Kerényi, “Zur Einführung in das Lesen platonischer Werke,” in *Apollon und Niobe*, 146-60; first published as an introduction to Schleiermacher’s translation of Plato’s dialogues: *Über Liebe und Unsterblichkeit: die Sokratischen Gespräche, Gastmahl, Phaidros, Phaidon* (Zürich: Rascher, 1946), 5-32.

<sup>3</sup> Kerényi, “Zur Einführung in das Lesen platonischer Werke,” 156-58.

<sup>4</sup> Kerényi, “Zur Einführung in das Lesen platonischer Werke,” 148.

to be “one of the greatest experiences of mankind in general”<sup>5</sup>. It is the experience of being irresistibly drawn toward the world of the Intelligible by the force of Eros, who leads through beauty (which is the immediate object of his desire) to the Good qua source of everything.

For Kerényi, the expert on ancient religion, a mental “experience” that would transform your human existence was the suitable way to confront Plato. There was no possible way to turn further away from the analytical reading of Plato, which was about to get more and more popular in his time and finally became the leading approach in the second half of the twentieth century.

What kind of image of Plato and his dialogues lies behind Kerényi’s attempt to grasp what is essential in Plato?

For Kerényi, the dialogues are “historical documents” of the philosophizing of Socrates. After analyzing the frame dialogues of the *Symposium* and the *Theaetetus*, which both discuss the necessity of controlling the accuracy of the text by asking Socrates himself, Kerényi takes it for granted that each and every word spoken by Socrates in the dialogues and each and every argument proposed by him belongs to the historical Socrates himself and not to Plato. This is according to him the result of a “historical analysis.” Therefore, we have to read the dialogues as “reports of discussions that really occurred” if we want “to read them in accordance with Plato’s intentions”<sup>6</sup>.

Next to the dialogues, of which “the three masterpieces” *Symposium*, *Phaedo*, and *Phaedrus* are for Kerényi the most important, the autobiographical *Seventh Letter* is also taken into account in both of Kerényi’s essays<sup>7</sup>. (*Theaetetus*, *Charmides*, *Lysis*, and *Protagoras* – and also Plato’s main work, *The Republic*, though this one without pointing out its importance – are treated more marginally because of their narrative form.)

In his use of the *Seventh Letter*, Kerényi avoids two mistakes, one of which was committed in the twentieth century by very many interpreters, the other one by nearly all. First, he does not care for the usual empty insinuations concerning authenticity but treats the letter as a very important testimony for the intentions of Plato qua philosophical writer. Second, in Plato’s famous statement where he declares that there is no σύγγραμμα of his about the things that are of the greatest importance for him (Epist. 7, 341c4-5), Kerényi translates the word σύγγραμμα not, as was usual in his time, as “systematic treatise” but correctly as “writing.” He had thus understood that this testimony of Plato’s about himself is not concerned with excluding a particular literary form of writing on the most important issues, that is, the systematic treatise as opposed to the dialogue. Instead, Plato here declines to write anything on the highest topics for now and for all time to come. Once one has grasped the correct – that is, the ancient Greek – meaning of the word σύγγραμμα, one is no longer liable to believe the erroneous view, popular in Kerényi’s time (and, with some people, even today), that Plato’s criticism of writing is not relevant for his own dialogues, as they are – allegedly – not συγγράμματα.<sup>8</sup> Fortunately,

<sup>5</sup> Kerényi, “Platonismus,” 145 (13).

<sup>6</sup> Kerényi, “Zur Einführung in das Lesen platonischer Werke,” 159.

<sup>7</sup> Kerényi, “Platonismus,” 141, 145 (11, 13); “Zur Einführung in das Lesen platonischer Werke,” 146-47, 158.

<sup>8</sup> On this question, see Th. A. Szlezák, “Die Bedeutung von σύγγραμμα,” in *Platon und die Schriftlichkeit der Philosophie* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1985), 376-85 (= Platone e la scrittura della filosofia [Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 1992], 463-71).

in Kerényi there is no trace of this creed, which was formerly unchallenged and is hard to eliminate up to this day.

Does that mean that Kerényi has also correctly understood the main message of the autobiographical *Seventh Letter*?

Unfortunately, though quoting passage 341c verbatim, he does not ask what the content would be of the written exposition that Plato declines to give. He renders the words  $\pi\epsilon\pi\iota\ \acute{\omega}\nu\ \acute{\epsilon}\gamma\omega\ \sigma\pi\omicron\upsilon\delta\acute{\alpha}\zeta\omega$  (the things I am seriously concerned with) as “those matters,” by which translation he misses the crucial point: what is meant is Plato’s oral philosophy of principles, a shortened version of which was contained in the  $\pi\epsilon\tilde{\iota}\rho\alpha$ , the test talk with Dionysios II (Epist. 7, 340b-341b). Kerényi thus arrives at a total misunderstanding of the passage when he claims that Plato distanced himself from anything written, including his own writings. In reality, the refusal is aimed precisely at a written exposition of the unwritten philosophy of principles.

We must therefore say that Kerényi prevented himself from getting a glimpse of that about which Plato was serious. In the essay on Platonism, however, one could suspect at a certain point that he did after all have some knowledge of the oral theory of principles, which had long since received important interpretations by Léon Robin (1908), Julius Stenzel (1917, 1924), and Paul Wilpert (1941).<sup>9</sup> I am referring to the passage in which Kerényi maintains that “Platonism remains essentially polytheistic” insofar as it teaches “the vision of ideas in plurality,” “although he [Plato] recognizes the highest rank of the One”<sup>10</sup>. It would have been helpful if Kerényi had entered a detailed analysis of Aristotle’s report on Plato as a thinker of principles in *Metaphysics*, book 1, chapter 6, where we read about the identity of the principle of the Good with the One as part of Plato’s doctrine and about the “generation” of the Ideas by the principles. Unfortunately, we find the same omission when Kerényi discusses the Idea of the Good<sup>11</sup>. Having declared that for Plato “‘good’ and ‘is’ are synonyms,” he mentions nevertheless the transcendence of the Good, that is, its position “beyond being in rank and power” (*The Republic* 509b9). Nor does Kerényi omit the fact that for Plato the Ideas owe their existence to the Good. But he does not tell his reader that the partners in dialogue urge Socrates repeatedly to answer the question concerning the essence (the  $\tau\acute{\iota}\ \epsilon\sigma\tau\acute{\iota}\nu$ ) of the Good and that Socrates declines to treat this most important question of all (506d8-e4). Here Kerényi keeps repeating the failure we could observe in his treatment of the crucial passage of the *Seventh Letter*: he fails to pose the decisive questions to the text – something that in a concise way would have been possible even in this short essay – and thus hinders himself (and his readers) from seeing what was essential for Plato, namely, to keep out of the published *Republic* his unwritten theory of principles, which no doubt contained also an answer to Kerényi’s problem with “polytheism.”

Now this kind of blindness toward Plato’s clear hints about what stands behind his published texts was by no means unusual in the first half of the twentieth century. It was in

<sup>9</sup> L. Robin, *La théorie platonicienne des idées et des nombres d’après Aristote* (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1908); J. Stenzel, *Studien zur Entwicklung der platonischen Dialektik von Sokrates zu Aristoteles* (Breslau: Trewendt & Granier, 1917; 2nd ed. Leipzig: B. 1931); J. Stenzel, *Zahl und Gestalt bei Platon und Aristoteles* (Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1924, 1933); P. Wilpert, “Neue Fragmente aus ΠΕΡΙ ΤΑΓΑΘΟΥ,” in *Hermes* 76 (1941): 225-50.

<sup>10</sup> Kerényi, “Platonismus,” 139 (10).

<sup>11</sup> Kerényi, “Platonismus,” 142 (11-12).

fact the standard attitude of Platonic studies at that time. Not before Hans Joachim Krämer had insisted rigorously and convincingly on the philosophical importance of Plato's oral theory of principles and on its presence (by way of hints and echoes) in the dialogues in his *Arete bei Platon und Aristoteles* (1959) did it become possible to understand Plato's philosophy as the foundation of the metaphysical heritage of Western philosophy (see also Krämer's *Platone e i fondamenti della metafisica* [Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 1982]). It would thus not be fair to reproach Kerényi personally for his blindness concerning Plato, the thinker of ἀρχαί.

Instead of this kind of criticism, I would like to stress the positive aspects that allow us to see these essays, and particularly the one on Platonism, as an interpretation of the Platonic approach to reality that is worth studying to this very day.

First of all, I would like to point to Kerényi's insistence on the difference between Idea and notion. The Platonic Idea is not just a general notion, a καθόλου in the Aristotelean sense. It is Form (ιδέα, *Gestalt*), which presents itself to the view of the mind and is, therefore, to be seen in conjunction with other specifically Greek forms of experiencing the world, particularly with the gods of Greek religion. Equally important is the insight that Platonism is a weltanschauung of discrimination (in the old sense of the word) and differentiation of qualities, lastly a hierarchical worldview<sup>12</sup> – making all things equal and leveling all differences would result in a lasting obstacle to the ascent of the soul to the world of the Ideas. Soul in its multiform appearances is itself, as Kerényi remarks, a Form (*Gestalt*). It is able to get a vision of the Ideas, and this vision is “a shining forth of Eternity.” The Soul has Eternity in it; the moment when it gets to see the Idea, it is no longer subject to Time.

Few interpreters, if any, were able to demonstrate as clearly and impressively as Kerényi the importance of beauty in the philosophy of Plato and of Eros as the force that leads us to beauty and further on to the Good. On this topic, too, Kerényi points out the kinship of Plato's mind with the structure of Greek thinking and being.

We should even be grateful to Kerényi for his reflections on the fact that for Plato the vision of the Ideas is a beatifying experience. No doubt this was in full contradiction to the spirit (the zeitgeist) of Kerényi's time – just as it is incompatible with the spirit of the early twenty-first century – but it is in full accordance with Plato's concept of experiencing the reality of the intelligible world through the vision (θέα) of the Idea, as expressed in passages such as *The Republic* 490b or the end of Diotima's speech in *Symposium* 212a.

In summary, Platonism, in Kerényi's interpretation, is not just one philosophy beside other philosophies, not a mere conjecture about the structure of reality, nor a theoretical “model” requiring no commitment; nor is it, on the other hand, a religion. Platonism is the force that unites religion, philosophy, art, and all attempts at higher intellectual activities. It is the possibility to rise to things more than human, a possibility that has to be lived through as a personal experience transforming one's life, but it is at the same time an experience of mankind, without which our world would be infinitely poorer.

We have to thank the editors of *Kronos* for their rediscovery of this broad-minded and stimulating, undeservedly forgotten essay.

<sup>12</sup> Kerényi, “Platonismus,” 142 (12).

# PLATONISM<sup>1</sup>

The thinking of great philosophers has an appearance bound by its time and one that is timeless. According to the first of these aspects, they are always trailblazers of a new worldview. Above all, they blaze a path in themselves. At the same time, however, they open a path for those who follow them and by whom they are necessarily surpassed in some respects. Seen from this aspect, they are first in accord with their own time. With the passing of time, they fall victim to later generations, whose advantage consists solely in their belatedness. It is an error of our age, according to Hebbel, that every moron has some learning. Merely by going to school, a child today can outdo Plato. Thinking develops along methodic-formal lines as well, and as soon as a seminal figure enters a new stage, those who come later are able to triumph over him as easily as over any other illustrious forbearer.

According to its other aspect, every great philosophy is also timeless. The great philosopher always grasps a timeless possibility of the world: the possibility that at any moment the world can be viewed just so, in antiquity as today. And it can be viewed this way for good and proper reasons. The world has a numerical appearance: the Pythagoreans viewed it thus, as do modern physicists. The world shows itself in eternal fluctuation: thus the view of conscious and unconscious Heracliteans of every era. It has an appearance perceived by Platonists – never entirely extinct – and avowed by them. It can be said that even Plato is just a Platonist and is the “first” only in the sense that every subsequent Platonist *should* also be the first. Those who come later should perceive the ideal appearance of the world as if they were the very first, as if no one else before them – neither Plato nor anyone else – had ever perceived that appearance.

There is an ideal appearance of the world: we call Platonism the perception of this worldview. Already before Plato, the Greeks saw it in their gods. If we take the Greek understanding of existence as our starting point – as did Plato and his practically indistinguishable predecessor, Socrates, although in a more natural and unconscious fashion – then we will not make the mistake of equating the *ιδέα* as such with the “concept.” *Ἰδέα, εἶδος*: two words that stem from the same root and originally mean the object of perceiving (*ιδών* is he who has perceived something). This object is not, however, of a merely corporeal perceiving but rather of a spiritual perceiving and knowing (*εἰδώς* is he who knows). Rather than “concept,” the correct translation of *ιδέα* is “form” – a form

<sup>1</sup> A lecture given in the Autumn of 1940 to the Hungarian Philosophical Society as an introduction to a discussion on Platonism. First printed in Hungarian under the title “Platonizmus” in *Athenaeum* 27 (1941): 64-69, then in German in *Europäische Revue* 17 (1941): 619-23.

that is known and seen with the mind's eye.<sup>2</sup> The gods of the Greeks are “forms,” just as according to Plato the world is a “form” to the extent that it *is*. Yet the gods are more fertile forms. They are closer to seeds containing in themselves the structure of an entire organism, or to a complicated mathematical formula, than to a Platonic idea.<sup>3</sup> In contrast, Plato's ideas are simpler: they are akin to the “One.”

Thus, it was ideas of a different kind that Plato had perceived than the sublime ideas seen earlier in the gods of Greece. And yet he, too, was a seer of ideas like the celebrated seers of classical god-forms before him, the original poets and artists who laid the foundation for the Olympic religion without intending to be its founders. Platonism is essentially related to this kind of seeing, the kind we associate with a Homer or a Hesiod. It is also essentially related to the ideal view of the great poet and artist in that it is not exclusively the perceiving of the One that is identical with the Being of every being, as seen by Thales in water and Heraclitus in fire (and these philosophers always saw *only* this). Instead, Platonism is a vision of the multitude of ideas: although it recognizes the supremacy of the One, it remains in its essence polytheistic. What kind of a seeing and perceiving (ἰδεῖν and εἰδέναι) of knowledge is it? We will only recognize what Platonism is by holding tightly to the faculty of ἰδεῖν and εἰδέναι and not simply to the substance of what is seen and known.

The perceiving of an idea is then only real if it is truly a perceiving [*Er-blicken*]! Only if it is the first, fresh penetrating glance through what for us had previously been impenetrable. We may have seen this same figure, that symbol a hundred times – and to the eye of a Platonist our world is *all* symbol, everything transitory only a copy. We may have been told a hundred times which *idea* this or that is supposed to “imitate.” And yet, as though for the first time so to speak, the idea must be perceived by us, as if previously it had never been perceived – neither by us nor by anyone else. We have perceived it and... (this “and” entails a fundamental paradox that beatifies the Platonist just as much as the Christian's “He is dead and... lives.”). It is perceived for the very first time and... recognized. Recognized, because we knew it already. We remind ourselves of it.

As with almost all the Platonic dialogues, we follow this inquisitive Socrates. He is always searching because he does not know. How will he know whether he has found the answer? How does he know what he is looking for if he does not already know it and recognize it as such? Some way or other, he must already possess what he is looking for. Platonists argue thus, concluding that all knowing is recognizing, remembering an idea clearly perceived. When and where did we clearly perceive it? It is in our earlier existence, originating not from our body but from an older portion without beginning: from our soul. However, even if this conviction obtains absolutely, it would be insufficient for beatification. The sequence of events is rather reversed. The conclusion here is secondary and beside the point, something for the argumentative sort. The conviction has deeper roots: it stems directly from the lived experience of perceiving *and* remembering. This lived experience “beatifies” inasmuch as through remembering the soul is freed from all temporal constraint and so to speak released into a boundless past, a preexistence without

<sup>2</sup> Cf. K. Kerényi, *Die Antike Religion* (Leipzig: Pantheon, 1940), 105; *Antike Religion* (Munich: Langen Müller, 1971), 105.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. the ending of the study “Hippolytos,” in *Apollon und Niobe* (Munich: Langen Müller, 1982), 46-55.

beginning. The Orphic doctrine of transmigration suited Plato well, even if he relied on it as little as he did on mere argumentation. His entire “dialectic” was called forth by the desire for a true, blissful perceiving.

Ανάμνησις (remembering) belongs structurally to the perceiving of ideas. For Platonism, the complexity of what is perceived has the same necessity as the complexity of the soul that does the perceiving. With an Apollonian passion for purity, the Platonist defends the sensibility of that innermost, purely spiritual core: the acuity of the eye that has seen the ideas. The soul of his antithesis – the powermonger with hardened scabs covering the scars of his passions – is an abomination to him. The soul is form, according to Plato: neither a diffuse substance, nor the harmony of material elements, but rather an eye for what is not merely material. Clearly, it is also sensible to the impurities of this life, especially by those who live only for such things. They would store up enough that an entire underworld could be outfitted with them. Those who are open to ideas, on the contrary, awaken in the lived experience of perceiving that they contain eternity within themselves in the form of a wonderful capacity for remembrance.

Both seer and seen – both soul and idea – are eternal for the Platonist. They are eternal, even if both – the soul at the pinnacle of experience, in perceiving an idea; the idea in the moment it is recognized – are but a flash of the eternal in our fleeting world. Plato’s *Seventh Letter* addressed to the “friends and followers of Dion” speaks of this majestic experience, this flashing of the eternal: “There is no writing of mine about these matters, nor will there ever be one. For this knowledge is not something that can be put into words like other sciences; but after long-continued intercourse between teacher and pupil, in joint pursuit of the subject, suddenly, like light flashing forth when a fire is kindled, it is born in the soul and straightaway nourishes itself” (341c).<sup>4</sup> It is as though a well shaft opened onto the deepest level of the soul; there a source springs forth in the perceiving of an idea. The world becomes translucent, and the soul alights on the full possession of its memory. The idea bursts simultaneously through both the world and the soul, pouring out the sole source of knowledge: that which *is*.

The world *is* to the extent that it is “form” – that is, to the extent that it is ideal appearance. This appearance is one of its aspects (the other is called “non-Being” by Plato and the “dead face of the world” more recently). *Is*: this greatest of words can be spoken of in its full sense only of the ideas. For Plato, there is only one other word that can measure up to it in weight and importance: *the Good*. The highest Platonic idea is the idea of ἀγαθόν. Understanding Platonism from this departure point, the risk of error is greatest. It arises when we take it to mean any good (either sensuous or moral) that can be avowed by us in our world. What is good in the world of ideas? There everything “is,” whereas everything in our world comes to be and passes away. *Being* is the “good” of ideas in contrast to the “bad” of transitory beings and things, to their inferiority. “Good” and “is” are synonyms for Plato, not in the sense that all Being has arisen from “loving kindness” in the Christian sense but rather because the only true ἀγαθόν is the nobility of Being. It *is* that higher rank of Being above everything transitory. Or more precisely, Being as such appears in

<sup>4</sup> Plato, *Letters*, trans. G. R. Morrow, in: *Complete Works*, ed. J. M. Cooper (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1997), 1659.

its absolute nobility as exemplar, without relation of any kind – a Being beyond the Being of every being; the “good” is Being originating in the ideas.

He who has no inkling of the rank of Being will never understand Platonism. And no one can have more than an inkling of it, since Plato’s ἀγαθόν is so far removed from this transitory world. Before him is Parmenides and after him are Aristotle and the other great ontological seekers and witnesses to the idea of Being that the Greeks called the ὄν. A characteristic feature of Plato’s thought is that he saw in the ὄν itself a higher quality: the absolute quality by which Being ideally “is Being,” that is, the Good. Platonism is the worldview of quality, understood always in a positive, value-bestowing sense. In view of the differences between values (due either to their different qualities or to the absence thereof), we could also call it the worldview of hierarchy. Considered thus, Platonism does not follow as the consequence of mistaken thinking or a metaphysician’s oppressiveness. Instead, it is based on the conviction that the highest quality is the most complete Being and that a lack of quality (“quality-lessness”) is non-Being. Despite the fact that this conviction belongs to the intellectual framework of the Platonist, it is not merely a subjective opinion. The world gives reason enough to view itself thus. According to the structural characteristics of Greek thinking and existing, this worldview is necessarily conceived as follows: purest form is pure Being; formlessness, non-Being. The eye of the Platonist looks for quality and sees pure form.

To take but one example: in looking at a fire, he would like to see the fieriness in all fire and perceive the idea of heat. The world in which we live and die is fleeting. The Platonic conception of the world is no different from Heraclitus’s. Indeed, only the πάντα ῥεῖ is actually true of our world, as Heraclitus perceived the eternal one in the alternation of opposites. All is flux in this world according to Plato, flowing and transforming itself like the primal elements of the Ionian philosophers. The *Timaeus* describes the four elements as “passing on to one another ... in an unbroken circle the gift of birth” (49c).<sup>5</sup> They are transformed and still find their way back to themselves. They are always submitting themselves to the form of fire and being consumed by it. For only this *is*: the primal form, the idea – in this case, the idea of fieriness. It is eternal and persists outside of the changing and transient world of nature: “ungenerated and indestructible ... invisible and otherwise imperceptible” (52a).<sup>6</sup> Plato also sought to express these primal forms mathematically in the symbol of the tetrahedron. All geometric bodies and constructions are for him merely preparations for a vision of the ideas. In this respect, as well, the most recent physics shares features with Platonism.

Everything in this world is an inferior image of the ideas, an insubstantial reflection of the archetypes. The mind’s eye sees through the imitations to Being, penetrating to the archetypes. At the same time, this eye is memory. There is no primal form so subtle and hidden that the soul did not already have contact with it in eternity. And there is one form alone, a singular quality, that the corporeal eye perceives in the reflections of this world: the beautiful. This form, this quality, is closest to us, lying on the border of our world of ideas,

<sup>5</sup> Plato, *Timaeus*, in *Plato in Twelve Volumes*, trans. W. R. M. Lamb, vol. 7 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1929), 115.

<sup>6</sup> *Plato’s Cosmology: The Timaeus of Plato*, trans. F. Macdonald Cornford (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1997), 192.

between the transitory unreal and the eternal real world. The purpose of the beautiful is not to separate but to bound over the border. “Beauty is nothing but the beginning of terror, which we still are just able to endure,” in the words of a modern poet.<sup>7</sup> He names the sphere of the divine terrifying. In Plato’s view, beauty is the beginning of the divine sphere whose peak forms the ἀγαθόν. Even bodies can partake of this beginning directly: bodies of beautiful beings, the objects of our love. Beauty sends us over the edge. It fills us with longing, with ἔρωc. Thereby, everything is set in motion by the beautiful on the way to the good.

Platonism’s conception of the world would be rigid if ἔρωc were not an essential component of it. This is not a flaccid “Platonic love” contrary to nature but a motive force permeating body and soul, liberating the spirit. Our world of coming to be and passing away would waver between Being and non-Being, the ideas and nothing, as does dawn or dusk between *day* and *night*. We would glimpse the realm of Being, the eternal forms, only in the distance high above the stars. The mathematics of the movement of celestial bodies would give us some notion of it and, even less clearly, perhaps also of our hazy world of imitations. We would have to await our death still and helpless until passing over to the heavenly realm of ideas. Such an image would be lifeless – indeed, contrary to life – if we had no knowledge of the light of beauty that pierces through all darkness and of forsaken ἔρωc that sets it ablaze.

For those whom ἔρωc has set in motion and beauty turned toward ἀγαθόν, the ideas no longer abide at an inaccessible distance beyond the stars but have made their way to them. And if ἔρωc does not extinguish itself on the constricted borders of the corporeal sphere, if in fact beauty is only a foretaste of the good, then there is no idling along the way. The vision of him who is in such movement reaches the ideas, and his memory recognizes it as his own. Knowledge once aroused becomes an unquenchable fire that consumes everything corporeal. The world of eternal forms fits him to form: not as a dream world of heavenly gratification, but as true Being whose wealth was unimaginable and remains inexhaustible.

Plato himself did not create a system of Platonism. He did not want it, declaring that he had not written about the most important matters. The systematizers succumb all too easily to the error of taking literally what are only similes, mistaking the scaffolding for the building. This sketch also does not seek to offer a system of Platonism. It does not even attempt to illuminate certain choice characteristic elements, such as the ideas, in each of their associations and historical development. To the contrary, it is restricted to its experiential preconditions. For Platonism is a perpetually recurring experience that fulfills the existence of philosophers, scholars, and artists – one of humanity’s greatest experiences *tout court*. And it belongs to the dearest hopes of man that it always *will be able* to recur – a hope that makes human life still worth living, even in the darkest night.

Translated by Joel Feinberg

<sup>7</sup> R. M. Rilke, “*Duino Elegies*” and “*The Sonnets to Orpheus*,” trans. Stephen Mitchell (New York: Vintage International, 2009), 3.

# KARÓLY KERÉNYI AND THE PLATONIC DIALOGUE

## INTRODUCTION<sup>1</sup>

Karóly Kerényi is certainly better known for his studies on ancient mythology and religion than for his interpretation of Plato's dialogues. But his interest in Plato and Platonism is well documented<sup>2</sup> and goes back at least to his doctoral dissertation, *Platon und Longinus – Forschungen zur Geschichte der antiken Literaturwissenschaft und Ästhetik*, which he defended in 1919 at the University of Budapest.<sup>3</sup> The essay presented here for the first time in English translation is an expression of his phenomenological approach to ancient texts, inspired mainly by Walter Friedrich Otto but also by Carl Gustav Jung.<sup>4</sup>

Kerényi wrote "Platonism" originally as a lecture to be held in the fall of 1940 in Budapest. It was published first in Hungarian (*Athenaeum* 27 [1941]: 64-69), then in German (*Europäische Revue* 17 [1941]: 619-23), and eventually revised and published with the title "Platonismus, ein phänomenologischer Versuch" in a *Festschrift* in honor of Salvador de Madariaga (Bruges: De Tempel, 1966). Additionally, it was included in the second edition of *Apollon* (Amsterdam, Leipzig: Verlag Franz Leo, 1941, 163-72) but then again excluded from the third edition. Another essay on Plato, "Introduction to the Reading of Plato's Works," was originally the introduction to a reprint of Friedrich Schleiermacher's German translation of Plato's *Symposium*, *Phaedrus*, and *Phaedo* (Zurich: Rascher Verlag, 1946). In 1980, Magda Kerényi, considering these essays complementary, included them in the fourth volume of the *Gesamtausgabe* of Kerényi's works.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise specified, translations from Kerényi's works and letters are mine. Numbers in parentheses indicate the volume and page of Kerényi's *Gesamtausgabe*, published between 1966 and 1988 by Albert Langen & Georg Müller Verlag, Munich.

<sup>2</sup> Besides the essays presented here, see "Astrologia Platonica. Zum Weltbild des Phaidros," *Archiv für Religionswissenschaft* 22 (1923/24): 245-56; "Unsterblichkeit und Apollonreligion" (originally in Hungarian [*Athenaeum* 19 (1933): 106-18], later in German [*Die Antike* 10 (1934): 46-58], since 1937 reprinted in all editions of *Apollon*); *Der große Daimon im Symposion* (Amsterdam, Leipzig: Pantheon, 1942).

<sup>3</sup> Cf. K. Kerényi, *Tessiner Schreiftisch. Mythologisches, Unmythologisches* (Stuttgart: Steingrüber-Verlag, 1963), 153; *Neuhumanismus und Anthropologie des griechischen Mythos. Karl Kerényi im europäischen Kontext des 20. Jahrhunderts*, ed. R. Schlesier and R. Sanchiño Martínez (Locarno: Rezzonico Editore, 2006), 203.

<sup>4</sup> A. Magris, *Carlo Kerényi e la ricerca fenomenologica della religione* (Milan: Mursia, 1975) offers, inter alia, a thorough analysis of Otto's and Jung's influence on Kerényi.

<sup>5</sup> M. Kerényi, "Nachwort der Herausgeberin," in K. Kerényi, *Apollon und Niobe* (Werke in Einzelausgaben IV, Munich, Vienna: Albert Langen & Georg Müller Verlag, 1980), 445-46.

In the following pages, I will briefly examine, first, the aspects of Platonism and of Plato's literary style highlighted by Kerényi in the first of these essays. Second, I will focus on some methodological aspects of his reading of Plato and examine them within the broader context of his dissociation from traditional philology. In order to do so, I will briefly analyze some of the programmatic claims made in his prefaces to the first two editions of *Apollon* and in his "Bericht über die Arbeiten der Jahre 1939-1948."<sup>6</sup> Then I will consider some critical remarks that clearly set both essays at odds with the interpretation of Plato that was dominant in Germany at that time. I will next show the continuities between "Unsterblichkeit und Apollonreligion" – in which Kerényi uses Plato's *Phaedo* to elaborate on the characteristics of the Apollonian – and "Platonism." Finally, I will critically assess Kerényi's reading of Plato from the perspective of the contemporary scholarly debate on Plato.

### KERÉNYI'S INTERPRETATION OF PLATO AND PLATONISM

In "Platonism," Kerényi offers a religious reading of Plato's thought and focuses on some aspects of Platonism that have since antiquity been considered the metaphysical core of Plato's doctrine. Notably, he mentions five features of Platonism: (i) the theory of ideas, (ii) anamnesis, (iii) philosophical eroticism, (iv) a simplified version of what is usually labeled as Two-Worlds Theory, and (v) the preeminence of τὸ ἀγαθόν, the Good. Three elements, however, are symptomatic of his reading: first, a refusal to acknowledge any kind of systematic tendency in Plato's work; second, an existential or, more properly, phenomenological approach, which aims to connect those features; and third, an emphasis on Socrates's central role in the dialogues. While I will deal with the first two of those elements later, in sections (b) – (d), I will first make some observations about Kerényi's emphasis on the importance of Socrates. This feature of Kerényi's reading of Plato can be properly understood only with the help of his "Introduction to the Reading of Plato's Works."<sup>7</sup>

#### (a) Kerényi's Interest in the Literary Aspects of Plato's Dialogues

In "Unsterblichkeit und Apollonreligion," Kerényi is already sympathetic to a documentary reading of the dialogues, like that advocated by A. E. Taylor in his monograph of 1926.<sup>8</sup> In the "Introduction," he develops this approach further and advances a reading that we might label as fictional-documentary. Kerényi essentially blends Taylor's documentary approach with a basic aspect of Plato's dialogues in particular and of Greek literature in general

<sup>6</sup> Originally published in *La nouvelle Clio*, 1-2 (1949): 23-31; now in *Wege und Weggenossen 2 (Werke in Einzelausgabe)*, V/2 (Munich: Albert Langen & Georg Müller Verlag, 1988), 437-45.

<sup>7</sup> K. Kerényi, "Zur Einführung in das Lesen platonischer Werke," in *Apollon und Niobe* (Munich: Langen Müller, 1980), 156-58.

<sup>8</sup> In the 1980 edition of "Platonism," there is a reference (452n13) to A. E. Taylor, *Plato: The Man and His Work*, 3rd ed. (London: Methuen & Co., 1929), 174ff. In the first published version, any reference to scholarly literature is missing, and Kerényi just speaks of those "excellent scholars, advocates of *common sense* in Plato scholarship." That Kerényi refers to Taylor's book is, however, beyond question. Taylor claims, "there can be no doubt that Plato intends the reader to take the dialogue as an accurate record of the way in which Socrates spent his last hours on earth." This finds an almost verbal equivalence in Kerényi's remark: "Die Darstellung tritt in ihrem ganzen mit dem Anspruch der historischen Treue auf."

– namely, their dramatic character. He understands *dramatic* in its etymological sense – that is, as concerning an artistic depiction of the interaction among different characters. In this way, he places a spotlight on the fictional aspects of the dialogues but still considers them within a traditional pattern of interpretation. Dialogues such as the *Phaedo*, the *Phaedrus*, and the *Symposium* are, for instance, philosophical documents that aim for historical veracity but not for one-hundred-percent accuracy. At first sight, such a literary approach resembles contemporary dramatic readings of Plato, which stress Socrates’s importance in the dialogues and understand these as a bildungsroman in several episodes.<sup>9</sup> Despite this superficial similarity, however, Kerényi’s approach is quite different, since he seems to take each dialogue to be a faithful depiction of a real-life encounter between Socrates and his counterparts. In order to support this interpretation, Kerényi reads the narrative frames of the *Phaedo*, the *Phaedrus*, and the *Symposium*, with their meticulous chronology, as Plato’s attempts to corroborate their value as historical sources. Indeed, Kerényi seems to overestimate the importance of historical references in Plato. It is true that they contribute to constructing what Michael Erler has recently called “simulated historicity” (*fingierte Historizität*), that is, the depiction of a realistic historical setting in which the characters of the dialogues interact.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, it is simply not true that Plato avoids any historical inconsistency in his dialogues, as Kerényi claims,<sup>11</sup> and it is presumably gratuitous to consider Diotima to be a real historical figure.<sup>12</sup>

From this perspective, the extent to which Kerényi’s approach to the dialogues is still committed to ancient and traditional interpretive patterns is surprising, although he acknowledges and anticipates a pivotal feature of current Platonic scholarship – that is, a belief in Plato’s artful creation of a fictional reality. Let us now turn to the philosophical aspects of Kerényi’s approach to Platonism.

### (b) Kerényi’s Method

In his preface to the first edition of *Apollon* (Vienna, Amsterdam, Leipzig: Verlag Franz Leo 1937)<sup>13</sup> and in his “Bericht über die Arbeiten der Jahre 1939-1948,” Kerényi makes some programmatic claims that may shed light on his interpretation of Platonism. In these writings, he professes, on the one hand, his support for an analysis of ancient cultures in which contemporary cultural phenomena – such as, for instance, phenomenology, cultural morphology, and the poetics of the so-called George-Kreis – play a role. On the other hand, he breaks with traditional classical philology and especially with Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff’s method. Particularly interesting in this regard are Kerényi’s

<sup>9</sup> On this, see, e.g., G. A. Press, *Plato: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: Continuum, 2012), 63-73. For such a reading, the dialogues should be read in their dramatic order, beginning with the *Parmenides*, which depicts a young Socrates, and ending with the *Phaedo*, that is, with Socrates’s death.

<sup>10</sup> M. Erler, *Platon* (Basel: Schwabe Verlag, 2007), 69-71.

<sup>11</sup> Cf., e.g., *Meno* 90a (to compare with *Respublica* 336a and Xenophon, *Hellenika* 3.5.1), and see Erler, *Platon*, 80.

<sup>12</sup> See, however, D. Nails, *The People of Plato. A Prosopography of Plato and Other Socratics* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 2002), 137-38.

<sup>13</sup> The preface to the second edition (into which Kerényi integrated “Platonism”) confirms that the programmatic claims of the first are still valid: “[...] the author cannot and does not wish to change anything in it [the book]. It shall only be complemented with those essays that belonged to it. [...] What matters to me is that the reader experiences a personal path, which [...] comes closer to that center from which Antiquity appears to be really new and alive.”

opening remarks in the preface. He describes his essays in *Apollon* as “meditations on ancient religion and literature, on fundamental questions of religious and cultural studies, on the possibility for us to reach an existential point of view about antiquity, and on ancient views on the human condition at all” (IV, 9). This stress on the meditative character of his essays and on the need to approach antiquity from an existential point of view anticipates the more detailed explanation of his method provided in the “Bericht.” Here he points out that his analysis of ancient mythology rests on a method that mixes historical and existential concerns. In particular, he claims to focus on those aspects that make mythology attractive for us humans (V/2, 439). His definition of historical approach is in clear opposition to Wilamowitz’s idea of philology,<sup>14</sup> since he looks at historical questions only as a corrective for Walter Friedrich Otto’s more formalistic approach to ancient religion.

Even more important, however, is Kerényi’s explanation for his existential approach. In a passage that seems to anticipate Gadamer’s hermeneutical principle that interpreters’ historically effected consciousness influences their analyses,<sup>15</sup> Kerényi recognizes in every type of research a subjective aspect, which researchers should recognize and account for. Later, speaking about ancient mythology, he applies this concept to his own research. While emphasizing the fact that every mythological subject reveals something not only about the divine but also about the human, he claims that the chronological order in which a scholar addresses specific works and topics and the objective data provided by mythological texts always converge. In other words, Kerényi proposes what we might call a protreptic-esoteric reading of ancient texts by claiming that scholars can ask ancient texts only those questions that these texts allow them to ask and that the perspicacity of these questions depends on the stage of a scholar’s progressive training. This merging of objective and subjective perspectives is what keeps mythology (and, we may assume, ancient literature in general) alive (V/2, 441-42). Thus, we can explain Kerényi’s existential or phenomenological approach to ancient culture in the 1940s as an analysis whose aim was to reveal those aspects of Greek and Roman texts that were still relevant to contemporary times.

We find precisely this attitude at the beginning of “Platonism” (and it runs through the whole essay). Kerényi indeed distinguishes between a historical and a timeless Platonism and recognizes in timeless Platonism a philosophical *weltanschauung* whose characteristic is, in brief, the ability to see the ideal appearance of the world [*das Ideengesicht der Welt*

<sup>14</sup> There is no explicit mention of Wilamowitz in the “Bericht.” Kerényi only speaks of those “historical works that have been written because of the need for a complete collection and chronological ordering of ancient religious material” and of the “disapproving” attitude the authors of those works held toward those who, like Walter Friedrich Otto, focus on other, structural aspects of Greek religion. Nevertheless, Kerényi’s letter to Thomas Mann dated February 3, 1945, leaves almost no doubt that Wilamowitz and his method were the target of his criticism. There Kerényi reports to Mann the whole text of a letter he wrote in reply to a review of his book *Töchter der Sonne*. Specifically, he says about Wilamowitz, “... to distract from the meaning of the texts by accumulating material left inanimate: in this Wilamowitz was a master. [...] Would you ever have noticed that Wilamowitz remains trapped in the narrowest experience of his dictatorial Prussian self-confidence...?”

<sup>15</sup> A point made also by F. Graf, “Philologe, Mythologe, Humanist. Vor hundert Jahren wurde Karl Kerényi geboren,” *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, January 18, 1997, 65.

*erblicken*] (IV, 138). Plato was the first person in history who could see the ideal world, but any Platonist, at any historical moment, can do this and thereby be the first detector of the forms. As a perennial philosophy, Platonism acquires in Kerényi's interpretation the status of a religion: Plato's forms are structurally similar to the ancient Greek gods, albeit more straightforward in their nature. Plato's world of forms, whose principal feature is its true being, is as polytheistic as the traditional Greek pantheon. Contemplating the forms is a mystical experience, as the *Seventh Letter* might suggest. More precisely, it is a mystical experience that enables two eternal elements, the soul and the forms, to interact and consequently to let the light of the eternal briefly shine in our ephemeral world. The genuinely religious basis of Platonism is meaningful, however, especially in light of its perennial character. Platonism thus becomes in Kerényi's view the most authentic form of humanism, as the end of "Platonism" and the beginning of the "Introduction" suggest. Platonism is, indeed, a "pervading event," "one of the greatest events for humanity," whose regular reappearance in cultural history is a source of "hope even in the darkest night" (IV, 145). As a form of existential philosophy in search of truth, Platonism is, in the end, the basis for a thoughtful humanism.

The question remains, on what basis does Kerényi develop his interpretation of Platonism? Basically, he advances a mystical analysis of what Plato's forms are and of how human beings interact with them.

### (c) Philological Remarks: What Are Forms?

Kerényi condemns those interpretations of Plato's theory of forms that highlight their logical character and deprive them of almost any metaphysical aspect. He explicitly rejects, in fact, a translation of the Greek terms εἶδος and ἰδέα as "concept" [*Begriff*] as advanced by Friedrich Schleiermacher in his influential translation of Plato's dialogues. Nevertheless, a closer look at his remarks hints at a multifaceted engagement with various polemical counterparts. His main target is most likely Paul Natorp and the neo-Kantian interpretation of Plato's forms he advances in *Platons Ideenlehre*, but another possible antagonist might (again) be Wilamowitz. Kerényi's line of argument rests, like Wilamowitz's and Natorp's, on the etymological observation that the Greek terms εἶδος and ἰδέα are cognate to the verb εἰδέναι (IV, 139).<sup>16</sup> While Wilamowitz stresses the importance of these terms in common language and focuses on their logical and ontological connotations in Plato,<sup>17</sup> Kerényi apparently sides with Natorp, who points to the act of (intellectual) seeing. However, unlike Natorp, Kerényi does not take intellectual seeing to be a logical process and, consequently, does not accept Natorp's conclusion that Platonic forms are concepts of the mind.<sup>18</sup> Instead,

<sup>16</sup> Cf. U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf, *Platon. Leben und Werke*, 2nd ed. (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1920), 346-50; P. Natorp, *Platons Ideenlehre. Eine Einführung in den Idealismus*, 2nd ed. (Leipzig: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1921), 1. Kerényi analyzes the concept in greater detail in *Antike Religion* (Munich: Albert Langen & Georg Müller Verlag, 1971), 100-103.

<sup>17</sup> Wilamowitz-Moellendorf, *Platon*, 347. Wilamowitz argues, rightly, that idea is synonymous with thing-in-itself but that Plato adds to this usual meaning an ontological aspect insofar as, for him, ideas are not just logical concepts but separate, truly existing objects.

<sup>18</sup> In the second edition of *Platons Ideenlehre*, Natorp adds a well-known appendix to the book (*Metakritischer Anhang: Logos – Psyche – Eros*, 457-514), in which he recognizes the importance of the religious aspects of Plato's

following Wilamowitz, he accepts their objective reality. While partially agreeing with each of them on different points, Kerényi differs from Wilamowitz and Natorp in one central respect. Both Wilamowitz and Natorp, in fact, interpret the act of seeing the forms as a mere cognitive act and focus on the metaphysical and logical implications of human knowledge of the forms. Kerényi underlines, instead, the existential and, for him, profoundly paradoxical moment of this seeing: to perceive [*Er-blicken*] an *idéa* for the first time is to remember it; to find something is to discover that we already possess it (IV, 140). The emphasis on this mystical approach is even stronger in the “Introduction,” where Kerényi explicitly links humanism with Socrates’s method, speaks of them together as a “humanly conscious, existential contact [*Berührung*] with what is real,” and defines the real as “the divine, love, truth and being as it is” – that is, as the realm of forms (IV, 158). In this regard too, as with his interest in the literary aspects of the dialogues, Kerényi uses traditional interpretive patterns but modifies and integrates them.

**(d) Continuities between “Unsterblichkeit und Apollonreligion” and “Platonism”**

That Kerényi’s existential and humanistic reading of Plato hinges upon an approach inspired by his interest in religious studies becomes even clearer if we look at “Unsterblichkeit und Apollonreligion.” The aim of this essay is to analyze the characteristics of Apollonian religion. Unlike Nietzsche, Kerényi does not understand “Apollonian” as a category within aesthetics but rather as a purely religious concept. Following Karl Otfried Müller and Walter Friedrich Otto, Kerényi sees Apollo as a transcendental “quintessence, which the Greeks recognized as the metaphysical form of realities experienced by the soul and of vividly perceived natural realities” (IV, 38). However, he goes further than Müller and Otto and stresses the duplicity of Apollo with regard to human experiences: on the one hand, Apollo is the symbol of transcendence, of the brightest light; on the other hand, he is the symbol of the darkest darkness (IV, 40). Nevertheless, “Unsterblichkeit und Apollonreligion” is not a mere analysis of Apollonian religion. It is, rather, a “meditation” on Plato’s *Phaedo* (IV, 31), which Kerényi likely considers its utmost expression. In the second section of the essay, we find the following passage (IV, 34-36):

The Greek gods – the “wide-ruling forms” of the pre-Socratic cosmos, the statuary forest of archetypes and prototypes – are best compared, considering the degree and significance of their reality, with the Platonic forms. Knowledge of the gods is of a loftier sort than the *πίστις* of Platonic epistemology, sheer faith. [...] The object of *πίστις* can at its most sublime be divinely inspired revelation, encouragement, promise, or an appropriate doctrine, but for the acknowledgment of its existence, for religion in this sense, there is, in general, no Greek word. This is precisely because the Greeks considered the reality of the gods to be no less substantial than the reality of the world whose aspects they form. [...] The world of the gods, then the world of Forms: they stand not only in historical and logical sequence before the new myth of the soul but also according to their quality

---

concept of the forms, but he still refuses to see the *εἶδη* as things that objectively, really exist (466-71).

of reality. Historians of philosophy have until now inquired to what extent Socrates's proof of immortality obtained its force from the theory of Forms. This is a question that corresponds closely to our problem, which we now venture to formulate quite specifically: To what extent is this same proof of immortality rooted in Socrates's personal vision of the Greek gods?

This master of raising consciousness does not leave us a moment for doubting what that powerful reality was, the experience of which provides him with all his resolute convictions about the soul. [...] The approaching toward the purely immaterial and spiritual, the intense longing for the intelligence detached from the senses, the consciously progressive release from corporeal restraint of which Socrates speaks act as a single surge toward active and passive transcendence. This attitude could be synthesized in the succinct Latin translation of Paul's maxim: *non contemptantibus nobis quae videntur, sed quae non videntur*<sup>19</sup> [...]. The soul is already exalted through its transcendence – the invisibility according to the text of the *Phaedo* – to the divine; indeed, the truth (the Forms themselves) is invisible. [...] Kant's counterproof for the simple soul reducible to nothing is surely not to be implied here because to be simple up to the point of invisibility is from the very beginning the most intensely and persistently sought objective of the soul, which aspires to perfect consciousness. Such an imperturbable consciousness of direction feeds itself on the intellectual and ascetic life's foundation of experience and on the striving for its goal: to be invisible is the way of the supernatural (not subnatural), the way of divinity.

What a spiritual reality, the reality of the forceful attraction of a superior clarity of understanding, is inherent in the *Phaedo*! [...] As a spiritual reality, even unavowed, it dominates Socrates's train of thought, and in it originate these otherwise inexplicable analyses of the theoretical argument. [...] We understand now how Socrates, the great lover of conceptual clarity, could agree with the doctrine of immortality that he expresses in the *Phaedo*. We have not found the biographical, psychological explanation of why Plato has presented us with this particular portrait of Socrates, nor have we been able to specify the position of the *Phaedo*'s philosophical content in the history of ideas. We proceed from the self-contained world of this work of art and come now upon the path of a completely human understanding to a greater reality, which is conjured up through Plato's talent. To this greater reality, the life and death of Socrates have bestowed a historical body, and its effect continues because it is itself timeless. Its action and effect remain still without limit.

(Translation by Jon Salomon, 1983, slightly modified)

All those elements we have encountered in "Platonism" and in Kerényi's approach to Plato are here at hand:

<sup>19</sup> 2 Corinthians 4:18 (ed.).

- (1) his criticism of Wilamowitz's historical approach and his rejection of any analytical method;
- (2) his comparison of Greek gods with Platonic forms, from a structural perspective;
- (3) his religious or mystical reading of the *Phaedo*, which preludes and corresponds to an existential experience of Platonism.

### CRITICAL ASSESSMENT

In the previous sections, I have tried to reconstruct Kerényi's views on Platonism and place them in the context of the intellectual history from which they may have originated. Next, I will try to assess them from the viewpoint of contemporary scholarship on Plato.

Thomas Alexander Szlezák remarks in his comments on these essays that Kerényi, like most interpreters of Plato in the first half of the twentieth century, did not understand the importance of the unwritten doctrines, although he was partially aware of Plato's self-criticism in the *Seventh Letter*. For those who, like me, still struggle with the analysis advanced by the so-called Tübingen school, and even more with metaphysically dogmatic interpretations of Plato, there are other points of criticism. I have already addressed one, Kerényi's historical approach to the fictional character of the dialogues, in section (a). A few more will follow now.

1. By stressing the mystical or existential aspects of Platonism, Kerényi consciously misrepresents and almost denies the intrinsically political or social nature of Plato's philosophy. While there were good reasons to explain and justify his silence on Plato's political thought (it had been instrumentalized by Nazi propaganda),<sup>20</sup> Kerényi's reticence on the social character of the dialogues runs counter to a popular assumption in today's scholarship on Plato – namely, that the dialogue form itself is for Plato the mirror of his philosophical method.<sup>21</sup>

2. Kerényi explicitly refuses to examine the logical implications of the forms and their mutual relationships (except for the hierarchical superiority of the Good). It is true that Plato does not present in his dialogues a detailed theory, but this has been, since antiquity, the Gordian knot of Platonic scholarship, even in those cases, such as Neoplatonism, that leaned toward a religious understanding of Plato's system. Thus, Kerényi's meditations offer an oversimplified interpretation of Platonism, which not only fails to correspond to questions asked by modern scholars but also fails to reflect historical examples of Platonism.

3. Kerényi seems to ignore all ethical implications of Plato's thought in his mystical approach: we may assume that any person who sees the world through the lens of Platonism will also live the virtuous life advocated in the dialogues. However, Kerényi

<sup>20</sup> On this, see, e.g., A. Kim, "An Antique Echo: Plato and the Nazis," in *Brill's Companion to the Classics, Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany*, ed. H. Roche and K. Demetriou (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2018), 205-37. But cf. also, in the same volume, S. Rebenich, "'May a Ray from Hellas Shine upon Us': Plato in the George-Circle," 178-204. Rebenich argues that some aspects of George's approach to Plato, such as its antidemocratic character, might have influenced future Nazis.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Christopher Gill's overview of modern interpretations of Plato: C. Gill, "Dialectic and the Dialogue Form," in *New Perspectives on Plato, Modern and Ancient*, ed. J. Annas and C. Rowe (Cambridge, MA: Center for Hellenic Studies, Trustees for Harvard University, 2002), 145-71.

never explicitly states this. Plato's unequivocal interest in issues such as the unity of the virtues, the importance of knowledge for a virtuous life, and, above all, the equivalence of a virtuous life and happiness simply does not appear in Kerényi's depiction of Platonism.

What should we think, then, of Kerényi's analysis? Certainly, it does not seem to be a scientifically founded analysis suitable to advance our understanding of Platonism. This, however, was not Kerényi's aim. As he states in his preface to the first edition of *Apollon*, he only meditates on the topics of antiquity in order to stress how essential they still are for understanding the human experience. In this regard, Kerényi's semi-identification of Platonism with humanism might still be of interest, not, of course, because it improves an interpretation of Platonism as *philosophia perennis*, nor because it could serve as an argument in the contemporary debate about the utility of classics in particular and of the humanities in general. It could provide, instead, a start for a renewed critical discussion about humanism and its core characteristics.

# INTRODUCTION TO CORBIN'S *THEOLOGY OF ARISTOTLE*

When Henry Corbin wrote this text (1976), I had the honor of being his (very minor) colleague in Teheran, where he spent part of every year working on manuscripts and other projects at the French and the Iranian Academies. Inspired by his presence, I read most of his books, sat in on his rare lectures, and interviewed him a number of times. Although I've repudiated some of my other influences from this period, I still consider Corbin one of my true mentors. Above all, it was his teaching on what might be called the doctrine of the Imagination that shaped my spiritual universe. This little text summarizes that teaching.

In Iran, Corbin delved into a number of what he here calls oriental philosophies: Ishraqi gnosis, Sufism (and especially Shiite Sufism), 12-Imam Shiism, 7-Imam Shiism (especially Ismailism), and Shaykhism. Here he emphasizes that *Luminism* is not limited to the geographical "East" but extends over an *Orient* that includes the West as well – Neoplatonic Greece. A remarkable aspect of his writing and personality, which were in a sense indistinguishable, was that adherents of all these sects were convinced that Corbin was *secretly one of them*, so completely did he enter "phenomenologically" into each of his enthusiasms!

I believe that in fact Corbin never cut ties with the religion of his birth, French Protestantism, but rather expanded it existentially by an intellectual praxis that some of his fervent admirers saw as essentially *heretical*. Thus, as a Protestant he was (in a sense) a Swedenborgian – or rather, a Shiite Protestant! – a Sufi Huguenot! I'm certain that the institution he helped to run in Paris, the College of St. John of Jerusalem, had a profoundly initiatic aspect.

As for his politics, there are many who would say Corbin had none, or was vaguely "Traditionalist" (but not a "follower" of any Guénonist sect). However, years ago I met someone who knew a journalist who had been interviewing him in his apartment in Paris in May 1968. Suddenly there was a noise outside; they went to the window and looked out at one of the famous street riots of that famous month. "You know," Corbin mused, "many people might be surprised to know that my sympathies are with those throwing the stones – not with the police!"

It is worth remembering the slogan that was scratched all over the walls of Paris at that very moment:

ALL POWER TO THE IMAGINATION

January 2019

# THEOLOGY OF ARISTOTLE<sup>1</sup>

To ease our audience's task, I wish to recall something essential: the extraordinary fate, in both the Islamic and the Scholastic philosophical traditions, of a text titled *Theology of Aristotle*. While this text is surely a theology, Aristotle is not its author. It comprises, rather, a compilation of the last three books of Plotinus's *Enneads*. Explaining how such an assemblage came into being would be too complicated. At any rate, the text was available in Arabic, thanks to the Syriac-Christian translators of the ninth century. This version of Plotinus's work occupied an extraordinary place in the meditation of the Islamic philosophers and mystics.

The attribution of the text to Aristotle provoked a formidable confusion. Indeed, it introduced Aristotle as a Platonic philosopher. Therefore, even the most decided opponents of the Peripatetic school were unable to maintain a straightforward position against Aristotle.

In all the indices that we have preserved, particularly those of the Iranian-Islamic philosophers, the opposition between the two schools is unmistakably marked. Indeed, the Peripatetic philosophers, or *Machaons*, those, in other words, who philosophize while walking about, are clearly opposed to the Platonic Persians, the *Ishrâqiyyun*, who are the disciples of Suhrawardi.

The late Peripatetic philosophers, in particular those of the Islamic tradition, were held responsible for such strong opposition. Aristotle, on the contrary, was not, precisely because of his supposed writing of this *Theology*. Yet some thinkers had voiced suspicions about the text's attribution to Aristotle. Similarly, starting in the thirteenth century in the Occident, one could read some reservations concerning the authorship of the text.

Nonetheless, the *Theology's* fame thrived among the oriental philosophers, among those philosophers called *Ishrâqiyyun*. Let me briefly remind you of the origin of the term *Ishrâqiyin*: the word *Ishrâq* refers to light, or to the rising star – that is, the sun emanating light on the Orient. Such elucidation is crucial to grasp the sense of the expression “oriental philosophy” as it is expressed, for instance, by its founder, Suhrawardi.

Indeed, Suhrawardi considers his philosophy to be oriental because of its specific metaphysical content and not according to the geographical position of the philosophers. The knowledge of such oriental philosophers, in other terms, wasn't oriental because they were Orientals, but, on the contrary, they were Orientals because their knowledge was

---

<sup>1</sup> A lecture by Henry Corbin first presented on December 12, 1976, in the show “Les chemins de la connaissance” on the radio France Culture under the title “Plotin et la transparence. Henry Corbin raconte à Michèle Reboul l'histoire de la diffusion du néoplatonisme en Iran,” later published as “La Théologie d'Aristote” on the audio CD “Henry Corbin: La philosophie islamique” (Vincennes: Frémeaux & Associés, 2006).

oriental. For Suhrawardi, obviously, the most prominent sources of oriental philosophy were the wise men of ancient Persia, whose philosophy he wished to revive in Islamic Iran.

Among the writings of the oriental philosophers, *Aristotle's Theology* is a constant reference. Despite many variations, the identity of the text can always be discerned, and referring to it is easy, as these oriental philosophers never fail to cite expressly the *Theologia Aristotelis*.

Suhrawardi shares the most eminent of all these citations, which is the passage in which Plotinus states, “many times it has happened: lifted out of the body into myself; becoming external to all other things and self-encentered; beholding a marvelous beauty.”<sup>2</sup> The philosopher reports this account of ecstasy, which is not Aristotle’s account, and knowingly gives credit for it to Plato.

It is very interesting to notice that in the West, the good fortune of *Aristotle's Theology* is considered to have faded at the end of the Middle Ages; my God, in Iran, the fame of this text continued way longer!

Let’s not forget that Iran had been the sanctuary of philosophy in the Islamic world and that an eminent philosopher from the school of Isfahan, Qazi Sa’id Qommi, devoted a huge volume to a commentary on *Aristotle's Theology* as late as the seventeenth century. This *Theology* is indeed the fundamental book of what we call Iranian Platonism. From the beginning, Suhrawardi has profoundly influenced such thought, and his wish to revive the philosophy of light and darkness of the wise men of ancient Persia has nuanced this Platonism. A sort of Platonic and Zoroastrian Neoplatonist thought then characterizes oriental Islamic philosophy in Iran.

Pertinently, the importance of *Aristotle's Theology* can be seen in one of Mīr Dāmād’s ecstatic confessions. Mīr Dāmād was the main authority in the school of Isfahan. This school was part of the Safavid renaissance in the sixteenth century, and its influence persists; this traditional philosophy is, indeed, still perfectly alive.

It is evident that I appreciate the different tonalities in the readings of the *Theology* offered by the two great mystic personalities. They respond in very different ways to the meditation on this text.

In the writing of Suhrawardi, the *sheikh al-ishrāq*,<sup>3</sup> there is a tonality that harmonizes with Plotinus’s ecstasy: it is, indeed, the description of a celebration of joy, a triumphant entrance into heaven or into the realm of light. The mystic returns from this with nostalgic feelings, hoping to be able to renew such magnificent experience again soon. In contrast, what is striking in Mīr Dāmād’s account is an aura of profound sadness; he utilizes the marvelous expression of “this immense occult clamor” to convey it.<sup>4</sup>

All this is very important in order to avoid picturing this traditional philosophy as something monolithic, uniform, and monotonous. Such a characterization appears false when the exceptional diversity among oriental philosophers is taken into account. Indeed, each of them reacts with his whole personality and with his specific vocation. We still have

<sup>2</sup> Plotinus, *Enneads* IV, 8 (1), trans. Stephen MacKenna.

<sup>3</sup> Suhrawardi’s nickname, which means Master of Illumination.

<sup>4</sup> “Cette immense clameur occulte,” as this sentence reads in French. This is Henry Corbin’s translation of Mīr Dāmād’s second ecstatic confession. Cf. H. Corbin, *En Islam iranien, aspects spirituels et philosophiques*, 4 vols. (Paris: Gallimard, 1971-73), 43-45.

a great deal to learn from all the texts that have hitherto remained unseen and unpublished. I have devoted my life to this study, and I think that many of my colleagues, especially in Iran, are aware of the task that lies ahead. In any event, let us begin with what is noticeable about this text by Plotinus, which has engaged our attention.

I will now emphasize another passage of *Aristotle's Theology*. In order to understand what our mystic philosophers wish to say, I shall start with something essential. Let us not separate this philosophy from the mystic experience. It is a fact that there are many different types of spiritual entities, and some of them dwell beyond the starry heavens. What is crucial in *Aristotle's Theology* is that beyond this world there is another heaven, and another earth, and another sea, animals, plants, and celestial human beings. Each being in this other world is a celestial being; there are indeed no earthly things. These few lines can become our leitmotif in introducing an essential aspect of our mystic's metaphysics, something that we can assemble around the theme of what we can call the physiology of the subtle body.

Human beings present themselves as composed of three elements: the bodily dimension, the psychic dimension, and the intellectual or the spiritual dimension. Such intuition is common to all traditional gnosis.

However, as Suhrawardi was the first to insist, there is an intermediate world that is situated in the middle and bridges the divide between the material and the intellectual worlds – between, put differently, the world perceived by our five senses and the intellectual world that we access in a few privileged moments by the virtue of what our mystics call the fine tip of the soul.<sup>5</sup>

Such an intermediate world, called in Arabic *'ālam al-mithāl*, is the one we profoundly wish for. I use a term translated from the Latin, *mundus imaginalis*, because I need a technical term and, moreover, because I have been committed for years to avoiding any confusion between the imaginary and the imaginal.

I believe that Western philosophy has been weakened for the past three centuries by the loss of such an imaginal and intermediate world. As a consequence of this loss, we are reduced to identifying as imaginary, or as unrealistic fantasy, all things that we cannot perceive through our senses or that we cannot grasp with our intellect. Some time ago, I stumbled upon Paracelsus's insistence on the necessity of a clear distinction between the imaginal dimension – *imaginatio vera*, or true imagination – and the imaginary or fantastic dimension, which pertains to folly.

Please consider in what has just been said, in those few lines in *Aristotle's Theology*, which the Arabic translation has preserved, this idea of our entire perceptible world being doubled by an immaterial world. Such a world is freed from materiality, it is imponderable, but it maintains the extended character of space. When one enters this world, the richness of the perceivable world is, indeed, not lost – on the contrary, it is precisely there that we can find it in its eminent state.

This world is truly freed from all the laws, from all the constraints imposed by materiality and the limitations of the senses that apprehend it. At the same time, this world occupies an intermediate place in relation to the intelligible world. It is, therefore, the place of projections of a superior world, and it is this world that has the privilege of showing

<sup>5</sup> The highest, divine aspect of the soul, identified by traditional theology with νοῦς (ed.).

us what we can call metaphysical images, or intellectual images. Moreover, the visions of the mystics, the visions of prophets, and all the eschatological events of, for instance, resurrection happen in this intermediate world. Therefore, it is a world that comprises a heaven and a hell, and for this reason it is not surprising if those that enter it may have a heavenly or a hellish vision. Suhrawardi's and Mīr Dāmād's testimonies are striking examples of these different visions.

However, what is common and important to hold on to is that it is in this intermediate world that the entire dramaturgy of the mystic experience is played out. In these experiences, images played an extraordinarily important role, a role that we cannot conceive of any longer in the West because we have denigrated the meaning of images by transforming them into figments of our imagination. Such fantastic images are without order, they are abandoned to the fantastic, to the macabre, to the funereal; such a surrealist's conception of images is very distant from the imaginal world of the ecstatic experience. In the latter, great discipline regulated the images.

Suhrawardi, who was the first to really formulate an ontology of this intermediate world and who assured its metaphysical validity, rightly remarked that if we lose the reality of such a world then none of the prophetic visions and eschatological events will happen anymore. Indeed, if the world of their manifestation gets lost, then these visions and events will lack a place for their appearance. This is why, mind you, there is a profound difference between the presuppositions of oriental philosophy and the more ordinary principles of classical philosophy. The current endeavors will not restore such an ontology nor such an intermediate world. On the contrary, I think that these endeavors will only amplify its loss; they will lead a journey toward hell rather than open up our dwelling in this intermediate world.

Another great master of the metaphysics of the intermediate world, alongside Suhrawardi, is Ibn Arabi, and this is why I devoted a book to this great figure fifteen years ago – there is indeed currently already a second edition – which I titled “Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn Arabi.”<sup>6</sup>

I think that, in order to read this book correctly, we must focus on the questions that are at the center of today's reflection. We can indeed find extraordinary accounts by Ibn Arabi of his penetration into the intermediate or imaginal world. During his visions, our mystic is introduced to this world, which is perfectly real, or even more real than our perceivable world. We can enter this same world through a small, simple entrance, as it were: in our most beautiful dreams. As Ibn Arabi underlines, it is in this world that those who die awaken. It is, indeed, only in this world that we can understand and conceive the accounts about the afterlife. Therefore, if we are denied such a world, then all these accounts will lose their meaning; they will only be a fable or a bad novel.

You all realize, then, the importance of the intermediate world, as it is indeed the world in which the apparition and concretization of the divine figure is possible. Indeed, a human being could never have direct contact, a vis-à-vis, or a relationship with the God Himself. To find this contrast between the *Ein Sof* of the Kabbalists and the revealed god is the permanent truth that Ibn Arabi voices.

<sup>6</sup> H. Corbin, *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn Arabi* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969).

The reply given to Moses when he asks to contemplate God's face, both in the Bible and in the Koran – there is indeed an extraordinary identity between these texts – is “You won't see.”<sup>7</sup> No one will see God without dying.

However, we also have an extraordinary account in which the prophet shares a vision. The prophet recounts: I have seen my God in the most beautiful form. The description is magnificent and enchanting; a century-long meditation is focused on this description. The mystical and metaphysical contributions to this vision are extraordinary. But what a contrast between the first interdiction and such a vision! I think that we may find the secret and the paradox of the mystical experience in this contrast.

In the Koran, the book in which the prophet is the messenger, God's reply to Moses, “You won't see me,” is registered. How to reconcile it with this other affirmation of the prophets: “I saw my God in the most beautiful form”?<sup>8</sup> Those who understand such a contrast, such a paradox, those who understand where the solution to such a paradox is – those, I think, have understood everything.

But then, what is the main question? I believe that the necessity of a theophany is here at stake, the necessity, in other words, of an intangible divine manifestation, which can never occur within human history. This never occurs throughout history. It does not happen in this historical dimension that today's poor thinkers try stubbornly to follow, but it is something that happens in the intermediate world.

Moreover, in this theophany, in this paradoxical visibility, an unheard-of relationship can be instituted between a personal god and the one of whom he is the god. This means that the form of such a manifestation corresponds to the aptitudes and the preparation of those in front of whom the god appears. It is remarkable to consider that there is such a link, such solidarity, such extraordinary interdependency between the god appearing in the belief or in the ecstatic experience and those to whom he manifests himself.

Ibn Arabi wrote some memorable pages, and they have an extraordinary consonance with the most beautiful couplet of a mystic that, without a doubt, you know as well: Angelus Silesius. Angelus Silesius says, God cannot live without me a second, therefore his soul will die when I die.

What does this mean, and which god is mentioned here? We cannot even approach the mysteries of God himself, of the divinity, of the master of all masters, and of the mystery of all mysteries. The god that takes part in a theophany is a different, personal god, one whom we can encounter and with whom we develop a personal relationship of interdependence; it is a god who appears to me – indeed, he wants to manifest himself specifically to me because of the aptitude or the capacities that I have. This theophany corresponds to my pre-eternal being, which also means, you'll concede, that I am endowed with the responsibility of such a theophany, of such a manifestation. Such is the relationship of interdependency between the human being and his god. If our contemporaries could imagine the mystery, the secret, that our great mystic philosophers, such as Ibn Arabi, wished to express, we would understand

<sup>7</sup> Exodus 33:20, Qur'an 7:143 (ed.).

<sup>8</sup> According to *hadīth al-ru'yā*, the Prophet said, “I saw my Lord in the most beautiful form like a youth with abundant hair on the throne of grace, with a golden rug spread out around Him” (ed.).

all philosophical problems from a different angle. For instance, we always talk about God's death, without understanding that the death of humanity would not follow but precede it.

Please consider this link of interdependency, which is the foundation, I would contend, of a mystic chivalry: a man is responsible for his god, for his god's death, and he is the partner of his god in a larger struggle. His god struggles with him, and he struggles for his god as well. Each of them needs the other. This is the magnificent meaning of praying, and because all this is the case, a prayer is both for God and for a human being at the same time.

I think that I am telling you all the essential aspects of this mystic tradition about which I have written a great deal. But I think that we will still need some time before an appropriate number of researchers will contribute to such questions and continue to shed some light on oriental philosophy.

For instance, it is important to underscore that in the end, what I was evoking about Plotinus cannot be isolated from the general destiny of Neoplatonism. While we cannot assume a direct knowledge of his work, Suhrawardi's thought engages in similar developments as Proclus's work. However, such research would lead us astray, and we cannot simply say that Suhrawardi did know Proclus's work. Moreover, as you all know, there exist considerable differences between Plotinus and Proclus, who are both Neoplatonic philosophers. To consider some affinity would be a new direction for research. I have tried to do this recently, without forgetting what happens when thought like Plotinus's is organized and interpreted by a man such as Proclus. Indeed, Proclus restores the theogony, the entirety of the Hellenistic religion in a more intelligent and profound fashion than anyone had before. It is a similar situation when Plotinus's philosophy comes into the circle of Abrahamic thought.

There is something in common between the reaction to Plotinus in Jewish philosophy, among the Kabbalists, who are not Platonic, and the traces of Plotinus's thought among the thinkers and mystics of Islam. We can also attempt a comparison with our Christian mystics. However, such comparative research has not yet been attempted.

These are dreams for the future, even more tasks that we have to fulfil if we are to rediscover the sources and traces of our spirituality and face all the problems that call upon us today.

Translated by Giada Mangiameli

# ON HENRY CORBIN'S *THEOLOGY OF ARISTOTLE*

What is the *Theology of Aristotle*? The Arabic *Theology of Aristotle* (*Ūthulūjīyā Aristū*) and other collections (dubbed the *Plotiniana Arabica*) contain extracts from Plotinus's works, originally collected and systematized by Porphyry into six groups of "nines" or "*Enneads*" (see Porphyry, *Life of Plotinus*),<sup>1</sup> and were translated into Arabic by Syriac Christians, part of the Muslim al-Kindī circle (d. 260/873),<sup>2</sup> in the ninth century.<sup>3</sup> The *Theology* played an integral role in the philosophical thought of Muslim and Jewish thinkers such as al-Kindī, al-Fārābī (d. 339/950), Ibn Sīnā [Avicenna] (d. 429/1037), the Brethren of Purity (*Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*, c. ninth-tenth century), Isaac Israeli (d. 320/932), Natan'el al-Fayyūmī (d. 1165), Ibn Gabirol (d. 1050 or 1070), and Ibn Ezra (d. 1167). How and why this *Plotiniana Arabica* work was wrongly attributed to Aristotle remains unknown, for these collections clearly contain paraphrases of *Enneads* IV-VI (which have been given a partial English translation by G. Lewis in *Plotini Opera*, vol. 2, ed. Paul Henry and H.-R. Schwyzer, 1959). They include the following: (1) The so-called *Theology of Aristotle* itself, in long and short, or vulgate, recensions (whose interconnection is unclear), which comprises a prologue followed by 142 topics that are then addressed in longer passages, each titled "chapters" (*maqāmir*) in Syriac. They are paraphrased interpretations of *Enneads* IV-VI, perhaps belonging to Porphyry's lost commentaries or summaries, which are to be traced either to a Syriac original or to the Christian translator of Plotinus into Arabic from Syriac known as al-Himṣī<sup>4</sup> or to al-Kindī himself.<sup>5</sup> (2) There is also another work, titled *The Letter of Divine Science*, which contains a paraphrase of V.3-5 and V.9, attributed wrongly

<sup>1</sup> P. Henry and H.-R. Schwyzer, *Plotini Opera*, vol. 1 (Paris: Desclée De Brouwer, 1951).

<sup>2</sup> Numbers in parentheses signify the Islamic (AH) and Gregorian (AD) dates.

<sup>3</sup> For a study of the translation movement, see P. Adamson, *The Arabic Plotinus* (London: Duckworth, 2002); D. Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 23-25; R. Walzer, "Arabic Transmission of Greek Thought to Medieval Europe," *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 29 (1945): 160-83; S. Hossein Nasr, *Islamic Philosophy from Its Origins to the Present* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2006), 31-49; and Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1964), 9-10.

<sup>4</sup> F. W. Zimmermann, "The Origins of the So-Called *Theology of Aristotle*," in *Pseudo-Aristotle in the Middle Ages: The "Theology" and Other Texts*, ed. J. Kraye, W. F. Ryan, and C.-B. Schmidt (London: Warburg Institute, 1986), 110-240 (131).

<sup>5</sup> C. D'Ancona, "The Origins of Islamic Philosophy," in *The Cambridge History of Philosophy in Late Antiquity*, ed. L. P. Gerson, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 869-94 (875n2).

to Al Farabī.<sup>6</sup> (3) Finally, there are various materials attributed to the “the Greek Sage” (*al-Shaykh al-Yūnānī*), paraphrases of *Enneads* IV-VI and, thus, parallel to the *Theology*.<sup>7</sup>

It has been argued that the Arabic tradition perhaps retained traces of Plotinus’s oral teaching preserved by Amelius (Plotinus’s colleague at Rome in the third century CE), that is, an alternative textual transmission to that of Porphyry’s edition with its characteristic Enneadic structure: “... *Le Livre de la Théologie* ... n’est qu’un fragment des notes de cours d’Amélius.”<sup>8</sup> However, the Enneadic edition of Porphyry is, in fact, the one presupposed by the *Theology of Aristotle* that actually cites Porphyry in the title of the first chapter and that bears traces of the κεφάλαια, ὑπομνήματα, and ἐπιχειρήματα that Porphyry had added to his own edition (*Life of Plotinus*, 26, 28-40, confirmed by Aeneas of Gaza, *Theophrastus*, 45, 4-9 Colonna).<sup>9</sup> So in the ninth century, in Baghdad, it was possible to read a complete manuscript of the *Enneads*, and either al-Himsī (if there was a Syriac translation of the *Enneads* before an Arabic version) or al-Kindī or both had the entire *Enneads* before their eyes. The *Theology of Aristotle* and related works, then, go back, through the work of al-Kindī and Syriac Christians, to Porphyry’s edition of Plotinus’s *Enneads* IV-VI. We still await a proper edition of the *Theology*, an edition that is currently under preparation by a team directed by Cristina D’Ancona.<sup>10</sup>

What is the importance of the *Theology* for Henry Corbin (1903-1978) in this talk written two years before his death? It is first important to note that Corbin had a very thorough knowledge of the *Theology*. He dedicates six pages of the first chapter of his *History of Islamic Philosophy* to the Greek texts that were translated into Arabic and writes that the *Theology* could have been based on “a Syriac version dating from the sixth century, an epoch during which Neoplatonism flourished both among the Nestorians and at the Sasanid court. (To this epoch, too, belongs the body of writings attributed to Dionysius the Areopagite.)”<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, he notes that Ibn Sīnā had suspected that this is not a work by Aristotle<sup>12</sup> and that “Suhrawardī ascribes the ‘ecstatic confession’ of the *Enneads* to Plato himself.”<sup>13</sup> Finally, both Mīr Dāmād (d. 1041-42/1631-32) and Sa’id Qummī (d. 1103/1691) also wrote commentaries on the *Theology*.<sup>14</sup>

The implications of these commentaries are far-reaching. The *Theology* communicates the heritage of antiquity in the thoroughly confusing and ambiguous form of Platonism under the name of Aristotle and complicates the Peripatetic transmission of Aristotle, apparently presenting a “Platonic Aristotle” and preventing any unreserved

<sup>6</sup> Adamson, *The Arabic Plotinus*, 7.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> P. Henry, “Vers la reconstruction de l’enseignement oral de Plotin,” *Bulletin de l’Académie Royale de Belgique, Classe des Lettres* 23 (1937): 310-42 (326); P. Henry, *Études plotiniennes*, in *Les états du texte de Plotin*, vol. 1 (Brussels: Edition Universelle, 1938), xiv.

<sup>9</sup> For other problems in reaching this conclusion, see K. Corrigan, “Plotinus and Modern Scholarship: From Ficino to the Twenty-First Century,” *Plotinus’ Legacy: The Transformation of Platonism from the Renaissance to the Modern Era*, ed. S. Gersh (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 2018).

<sup>10</sup> For information on progress, see <http://www.greekintoarabic.eu>.

<sup>11</sup> H. Corbin, *History of Islamic Philosophy*, trans. Liadain Sherrad (New York: Kegan Paul International, 1993), 18.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 18; D. Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 145.

<sup>13</sup> Corbin, *History of Islamic Philosophy*, 18.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

demarcation lines between Platonic and Aristotelian thought. It thus transmits Greek learning in a way that will often be questioned in the subsequent tradition. But its influence is far-reaching, for it does not stop in the Middle Ages, with Islamic, Jewish, and Christian adaptations of this heritage, as is commonly thought even today. It moves through Suhrawardī's (d. 587/1191) ontological cosmology of light. Suhrawardī's school of Illuminationism (*Ishrāq*) was based on four primary sources: Sufi works as based on the works of al-Ghazālī (d. 504/1111) and Maṣṣūr al-Hallāj (d. 310/922); Muslim Peripatetic philosophy (*al-Mashshā'īyyūn*); Hermeticism, Pythagoreanism, and Platonism as transmitted by the Sabians of Ḥarrān and the *Theology*; and, finally, the religious and philosophical thought of the Zoroastrians,<sup>15</sup> which was transmitted through Ferdowsī's *Epic Book of Kings (Shahnameh)*.<sup>16</sup> Suhrawardī once asked Plotinus in a dream if the real philosophers were al-Fārābī or Ibn Sīnā or both.<sup>17</sup> Plotinus responded, "Not a degree in a thousand. Rather, the Sufis Bayāzīd Baṣṭāmī [d. 261/874] and Tustarī [d. 283/896] are the real philosophers."<sup>18</sup> For Suhrawardī, Plotinus's response to his question was not surprising in the slightest. Although he began with Peripatetic premises, Suhrawardī's philosophical thought was radically different from that of his predecessors. Not only did he break away from Aristotelian hylomorphism, instead seeing everything outside of God (as the Light above lights [*Nūr al-anwār*]) as a composite of light and darkness, but he also saw the journey back to pure light as a road paved by the Sufis. Furthermore, Plotinus's declaration of Plato's superiority over all other philosophers and his vigorous defense of him confirmed his conversion from affiliation to his Muslim predecessors to the theoretical thought of the ancient Persians and Greeks. Finally, the author's declaration of the ecstatic Sufis as the true inheritors of Platonic thought cemented his belief in the practice of the Sufis. In the famous instance noted by Corbin, Suhrawardī cites the famous ecstatic passage from Plotinus, *Ennead* IV.8 [6] 1, 1-11 ("Often have I woken up to myself out of the body and entered into myself ... seeing a beauty of great wonder and trusting that then above all I belonged to the greater part"). This passage is paraphrased prominently in the *Theology of Aristotle*,<sup>19</sup> and Suhrawardī puts the accent on its Platonic heritage – or, as Corbin characterizes this, "a sort of Platonic and Zoroastrian Neoplatonist thought" for the Islamic-Iranian world.

Later still, this heritage is of major importance for Mīr Dāmād (d. /1631-32), the foremost figure (together with his student Mullā Ṣadrā [d. 1050/1640]) of the intellectual and cultural rebirth of Iran under the Safavid dynasty, the founder of the School of Isfahan, the Third Teacher (*al-mu'allim al-thālith*) after Aristotle and al-Fārābī. He was known as the "Master of the Learned" (Sayyid al-afāḍil), becoming an integral part of Islamic philosophy, and, as Corbin rightly notes, his thought is still alive in Iran today.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, 60-61.

<sup>16</sup> H. Corbin, *En Islam Iranien*, vol. 2 (Paris: Gallimard, 1971-72), 212-14.

<sup>17</sup> J. Walbridge, *The Leaven of the Ancients* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2000), 224.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> For translation, see Lewis in Henry and Schwyzer, *Plotini Opera II*, 225, lines 1-26.

<sup>20</sup> For an examination of the state of Islamic philosophy today, see S. Hossein Nasr, *Islamic Philosophy from Its Origins to the Present: Philosophy in the Land of Prophecy* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2006), 235-73. It is important to note that various figures, living both in and out of Iran, currently represent these philosophical strands. For example, Gholāmreza Aavani (b. 1943), who is known as the "Wayfarer of Wisdom" (*Sālik-e-Ḥikmat*), is

Mīr Dāmād's pen name was Ishrāq, another reference to Suhrawardi's Illuminationist philosophy and to his substantial adherence to Platonic and Neoplatonic thought. What is an ecstatic confession in Suhrawardi is, in Corbin's view, colored by a profound sadness in Mīr Dāmād – something that shows the diversity of reception. Here it is not clear to us exactly what Corbin had in mind.

In the final part of his talk, Corbin picks out several influences from the *Theology* that lead to several claims that will seem extraordinary if not absurd to most modern readers. First, there is the claim that there is an interworld ('*alām al-mithāl/khayal* or *mundus imaginalis*) of the imagination between the sensible and the intelligible worlds in the thought of Ibn 'Arabī. In his *Spiritual Body and Celestial Earth*, Corbin summarizes his views on this inter-earth as “the land of nowhere” (*na-koja-abād*) or “the eighth climate.”<sup>21</sup> This is the land where dreams and miracles exist, where images exist in their actual reality, and the place of the celestial mountain *Qaf*.<sup>22</sup> Second, the claim that in the inter-world there is an intimate theophany represented by the biblical and Qur'anic paradox that no one will see the face of God and live (Exodus 33:20; Qur'an 55:26), on the one hand, and yet that the prophet sees his god in the most beautiful form (according to the famous *hadīth al-ru'yā*) – a paradox that, in Corbin's view, entails that the death of the human being makes him responsible for the death of his god in that theophany and that human prayer and divine prayer are two sides of a single coin.

What does Corbin appear to mean by these two claims? On the first count, Corbin claims that the *Theology* posits behind the terrestrial world a celestial inter-world, a *mundus imaginalis*, in which heaven, earth, sea, animals, and human beings are celestial. This real world of the imagination – far from mere fantasy, a world freed from matter but not from extension – is situated between the terrestrial and the intelligible worlds. It is, for Corbin, the source of mystical, eschatological, and prophetic visionary insight, as well as heavenly and infernal visions, and a crucial feature transmitted by the *Theology of Aristotle* to Islamic-Persian thought. This inter-world, in Corbin's estimation, has been entirely lost in the West, and so Corbin devoted two of his most important books to recovering it, both the one he notes here, about the thought of Ibn 'Arabī, *L'imagination créatrice dans le soufisme d'Ibn Arabi*, and *Terre celeste et corps de resurrection: de l'Iran mazdéen à l'Iran Shi'ite*.<sup>23</sup>

What does Corbin mean, and to which texts in the *Theology* does he refer? Unfortunately, he gives no references (besides Ennead IV.8.1), but perhaps we could point

a leading exponent of the school of Ibn 'Arabī, Rūmī, and Mullā Šadrā. Gholām-hossein Ebrāhīmī Dīnānī (b. 1934), known as the “Wayfarer of Thought” (*Sālik-e-Fikrat*), represents the school of Avicenna, Suhrawardi, and Ḥafiz. Seyyed Moštāfā Mohaqqiq Dāmād (b. 1945) represents the school of Mullā Šadrā but is best known for his work on interfaith dialogue. Living abroad, Seyyed Hossein Nasr (b. 1933) represents the schools of Avicenna, Suhrawardi, Ibn 'Arabī, and Mullā Šadrā. In his *History of Philosophy without Any Gaps*, Peter Adamson dedicates an episode on Islamic philosophy in the modern world to the relevance of such figures; see <https://historyofphilosophy.net/after-sadra>.

<sup>21</sup> Corbin, *Spiritual Body and Celestial Earth*, 85.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> H. Corbin, *L'imagination créatrice dans le soufisme d'Ibn 'Arabi* (Paris: Flammarion, 1958); Corbin, *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn 'Arabi* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969, with preface by H. Bloom, 1997); Corbin, *Spiritual Body and Celestial Earth: From Mazdean Iran to Shi'ite Iran*, trans. Nancy Pearson (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989).

to such texts as *Ennead* IV.3.18 (not reproduced in Lewis's translation), where Plotinus observes cryptically that, although the souls "there" do not use discursive reasoning and speech, they "would know by understanding what passes from one another ... for ... there all their body is pure, and each is like an eye, and nothing is hidden or feigned, but before one speaks to another that other has seen and understood" (18, 18-22). And there are other passages, such as the apparently intermediate "true heaven, the true light, and the true earth" in the myth at the end of Plato's *Phaedo* (109e-110a), that made an impression upon Plotinus in *Ennead* V.8.4 and also upon Sethian Gnostics in *Zostrianos* (*Zost.* 47.27-48.29; cf. also 55.13-25).<sup>24</sup>

However, the central difference between modern usage and Ibn 'Arabī is that, while we tend to make imagination and its images into unreal fantasies, an image for Ibn 'Arabī and Corbin is not to be reduced to external things or simply to nothing but rather uploaded, as it were, into its broader significance – not on the discursive level but as a manifestation of the divine imagination or theophanic compassion, which wants to reveal itself to us as an individual theopathy *in* our experience. In other words, the creative imagination is not a modern tag for some nebulous faculty but a real experience of the divine yearning in us that stands between sense experience and understanding. This noetic value of the imagination means that there is "more" in our images than we can unpack and this "more" has to be lived on its own terms as part of the divine yearning to reveal Itself to each of us in our experience, however differently, indeed uniquely, it is experienced in each individual. Corbin often quotes the famous hadith: "I was a hidden Treasure, I yearned [loved] to be known. That is why I produced creatures, in order to be known in them" (see, for example, *Alone with the Alone*, 184).

If this seems completely outside the range of modern consciousness, Corbin's second claim will seem just as, if not even more, absurd – namely, his claim about the death of God and the bi-unity (a term Corbin uses in his other works) of divine-human prayer. We take Corbin's claim about the death of God in the light of Ibn 'Arabī's views: first, that in death we wake up into ourselves and into God; and, second, that since, in the creative imagination, God's theophanic imagination entrusts Itself into our care, we have a responsibility for the Divine Being so entrusted in Its vulnerability, a responsibility not to annihilate or reject God. It is in this sense, we think, that Corbin intends the listener/reader to understand the citation from the mystic Angelus Silesius (1624-1677), as he also does in *Alone with the Alone*, where he cites Silesius to emphasize the radical mystical interrelation between God and man – an interdependence, in fact, that is also reflected, according to Corbin, in Ibn 'Arabī's practice of prayer. Here, for Ibn 'Arabī, the mystic prototype of prayer consists in Abraham "offering the mystic repast to the Angels under the oak of Mamre," where the faithful one has "a divine service which consists in feeding his lord of love on his own being and on all creation."<sup>25</sup> Ibn 'Arabī describes prayer as "theophanic," "a dialogue between two beings," "a means of existing and of *causing* to exist," and "the process of creative creation."<sup>26</sup> For Ibn 'Arabī, as for Corbin, prayer

<sup>24</sup> For the broader Platonic antecedents of this Zostrinian conception, see *Phaedo* 109a9-112a4, *Phaedrus* 247 ff.

<sup>25</sup> H. Corbin, *Alone with the Alone* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 247.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 267.

is an active and continuous exchange between God and the human being, where the act of creation occurs in the process of conversation. Prayer, therefore, is less a request for something than “it is the expression of a mode of being, a means of existing and of *causing to exist*, that is, a means of causing the God who reveals Himself to appear, of ‘seeing’ Him, not to be sure in His essence, but in the form which precisely He reveals by revealing Himself by and to that form.”<sup>27</sup> Corbin puts this in slightly different terms here, but the sense is similar: “Man is a fighting partner of his god who fights with him for whom he fights, and each has need of the other’s service. This is the magnificent sense of prayer – a prayer of god and a prayer of man.”

If we think of all this in terms of common binaries in philosophical-theological language (uncreated-created, Creator-creature, hypostatic union of two natures, etc.), then it will certainly seem absurd. In Corbin’s view, we cannot reduce the creative theophanic-theopathic imagination to such schemas, for the pathos of Divine Love in our love is more immediate, more intimate, and more personal than such structures can ever allow.<sup>28</sup>

What does any of this have to do with Aristotle – or even with Plotinus? On the surface, not much. In fact, Corbin’s talk will seem alien to most readers of Aristotle in the contemporary world. In his closing paragraphs, Corbin himself is fully aware of this. On the one hand, how can we separate Plotinus from his subsequent Neoplatonic “destiny,” he asks? On the other hand, Suhrawardi himself seems so close to Proclus but we cannot easily demonstrate a link. Yet again, we cannot forget, Corbin insists, how Proclus “restores” theogony and a Hellenistic religious sensibility to Plotinus or how Plotinus goes right to the heart of Abrahamic thought. In Corbin’s own time, this penetration of “Plotinus” into Jewish, Islamic, or Christian thought seemed “like a dream” and, despite all the scholarship since his death 40 years ago, it still seems difficult. Nonetheless, if Porphyry is correct in his view that “Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* is concentrated” in Plotinus’s writings (*Life of Plotinus*, chap. 14), then until Porphyry’s seminal insight from over 1700 years ago is understood more fully, the connection between Aristotle, Plotinus, and the subsequent remarkable history of “Neoplatonic” thought, across the range of the Abrahamic religions, will continue to remain, unfortunately, “like a dream.”

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 248.

<sup>28</sup> For a detailed study of the nature of Divine Love in the Islamic tradition, see W. C. Chittick, *Divine Love* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003).

Piotr Nowak

## I DIE, THEREFORE I AM: PHAEDO AS A POLITICAL DIALOGUE

*The waking have one world in common;  
sleepers have each a private world of his own*  
Heraclitus<sup>1</sup>

### ORPHIC SUPERSTITIONS

Orphics were first to claim that the world as experienced by our eyes, nose, palate only appears good, whereas it is being consumed by worms of decay. An exemplary life should thus be as brief as possible and lived in virtue, while thoughts that come to our mind while we are alive should be sent back where they came from (the Orphic ritual of “purification”) or directed toward the contemplation of death. In other words, life, if it is not death itself, is a constant gravitating toward it, a constant longing for death.

The notion of immortality in the face of which death is an almost negligible moment of eternal time seems to belong to the main corpus of Orphic theses. The escape from this world’s phantoms is based on the belief that death is only a good beginning of the real life afterward. Yet, the true life is not available to all. Because “... the fate of a dead person is decided in the moment the soul quenches its thirst: it can be quenched with the water of ‘remembrance,’ or with the water of ‘oblivion.’ In the first instance, the soul liberates itself from the ‘circle of births’; in the second, it returns to earth to suffer the yoke of mortal lives.”<sup>2</sup> Everything – life and death, pain and happiness – depends on what we drink.

<sup>1</sup> Trans. P. Wheelwright (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1959), 20, frag. 15

<sup>2</sup> A. Krokiewicz, *Studia orfickie* [Orphic studies] (Warsaw: n.p., 1947), 70-71. All translations in this essay, unless indicated otherwise, are by the author.

Why is it so hard – and according to Orphics, it is hard – to find the right source whose miraculous power is capable of lifting the burden of eternal damnation and suffering from the shoulders of the penitent, exhausted by the endless circle of earthly lives? Why is it so hard for the soul to regain the broken link with the deity? Because even after death it is entangled in the body and suffers for its sins; because the body (σῶμα) is an eternal grave (σῆμα).<sup>3</sup> The trapped soul has to endure the pains of the moribund body: the wind blows straight in its eyes, and heat and cold make it either feverish or frigid. The soul's penance reminds us of a man chained to a corpse he has to drag with him whether he wants to or not.<sup>4</sup> The soul humiliated by the body knows that the latter is inhuman, is not the soul's *property*, which means – if we use “property” in its broadest sense – that it does not reflect anything that the soul is. The Orphics, on the other hand, believed that the body is the estate of Dionysus himself,<sup>5</sup> therefore they balked at the thought of suicide, which they treated as a misguided attempt at desertion from life. They taught us that one has to live as if one were already dead. Some help in washing the soul of “the earthly excrements” was to be found in ritual mysteries and diet – hollyhock with asphodel.<sup>6</sup> But it is only the mystery of death that will bring man a full purification. In other words, death will bring what life cannot give us.

The magical mysteries in honor of Orpheus were quite an extravagance in the world of the Greeks, and the Orphics' dogmas were simply an offence. For instance, Herodotus points to the barbarian (“Egyptian”) origins of many Orphic ideas, which can hardly be reconciled with the Achaeans' healthy frame of mind. He writes then that “[t]his doctrine certain Hellenes adopted, some earlier and some later, as if it were of their own invention, and of these men I know the names, but I abstain from recording them.”<sup>7</sup>

Herodotus ignored the Orphics because, having been infected with “Egyptian” barbarism, they posed a threat, at least potentially, to the “logical” coherence of the Hellenic world. Plato saw it differently. In his Seventh Letter he wrote that “we must always firmly believe the sacred and ancient words declaring to us that the soul is immortal, and when it has separated from the body will go before its judges and pay the utmost penalties.”<sup>8</sup> The author of these words knew that myth weakens rational thinking, which was the very reason for his uncompromising attitude toward poets. He was also aware of myth's political use: mythical images in the service of the state, that is, questioned by philosophy, just like rhetorics used to consolidate the state, may be utilized to consolidate the polis. They may, but not necessarily. Myth, used merely for a practical purpose, as an instrument, even

<sup>3</sup> Σῆμα is also “sign.” See Plato, *Cratylus*, trans. C. D. C. Reeve, *Complete Works*, ed. J. M. Cooper (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing 1997), 118 (400c).

<sup>4</sup> Krokiewicz, *Studia orfickie*, 46. Nietzsche's Zarathustra, whom pity makes hoist the corpse on his back and carry it, expresses an intuition that is to an extent Orphic, when he speaks to “his” dead body: “Come, my cold and stiff companion! I shall carry you where I will bury you with my own hands.” F. Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. A. Del Caro (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 12 (7).

<sup>5</sup> Krokiewicz, *Studia orfickie*, 57.

<sup>6</sup> J.-P. Vernant, *The Origins of Greek Thought* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1982), 70.

<sup>7</sup> Herodotus, *The History*, trans. G. C. Macaulay, vol. I (London: Macmillan, 1890), 173 (II, 123).

<sup>8</sup> Plato, *Letters*, trans. G. R. Morrow, in *Complete Works*, ed. John M. Cooper (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing, 1997), 1,654 (335a).

though it can be quite useful short-term, soon becomes dead – it loses its proper reality, that is, such as constitutes its essence. The myth is now “off topic.”

We have then before our eyes a philosopher sceptical of philosophical explications, which, though interesting, can at most induce a drug-like stupor in thousands of half-witted Athenians. Yet there is also Plato about whom Olympiodorus writes that “Plato borrows everywhere from Orpheus.”<sup>9</sup> Let us listen.

## PRISON

The dialogue opens with Phaedo’s assertion that he was with Socrates until the latter’s last moments – with him and the other “apostles,”<sup>10</sup> “friends”: Crito (the same who in *Crito* encouraged Socrates to flee), Apollodorus, Cebes, Simmias. The only one missing was Plato as he succumbed to the flu (who knows, maybe he was already composing his great treatise on the death of his master?). Phaedo also talks about himself: no, he did not feel pity for the fettered Socrates. Pity is a trait of soft personalities. Rather, he experienced a mixture of pleasure and sadness. This “strange state” is a kind of solemn enthusiasm (if you allow me this pleonasm) linked to the simple fact that the master is only moving house: he is going from the state of being an ordinary mortal toward immortality.

In the first scene, Socrates himself is depicted as an “ordinary human,” a down-to-earth character. He knows already that today the Council of Eleven decided to free him from the fetters through death. It turns out then that the exit is always on *this* side. And the entrance? Well, the entrance is on *that* side. This is why he chases out Xanthippe for the hullabaloo she and the children make. He wants to stay with his friends. And it is to them that he addresses these words, as if lifted straight from the *Symposium*: “What an odd thing it seems, friends, this state that men call ‘pleasant’; and how curiously it’s related to its supposed opposite, ‘painful’: to think that the pair of them refuse to visit a man together, yet if anybody pursues one of them and catches it, he’s always pretty well bound to catch the other as well, as if the two of them were attached to a single head” (60b).<sup>11</sup> It is a remark that fits halfway between philosophy and common sense. Everyone knows that satisfaction inevitably breeds insatiability, pleasure breeds pain, life – death. This is also how Diotima depicts Eros in her story: an embodiment of a beautiful life, he also contains death and ugliness.

<sup>9</sup> Olympiodorus, *In Platonis Phaedo*, 10.3.13.

<sup>10</sup> Throughout the Middle Ages, due to the idea of death as an overcoming of life, *Phaedo* was considered pre-Christian, whatever it may mean. This misunderstanding proved extremely productive, encouraging many historians of ideas to make a risky juxtaposition of two figures: Socrates and Christ. Some of their conclusions are worth mentioning: Both Socrates and Christ claimed that in fact they knew nothing, they chose ignorance in favor of a self-important “knowledge.” Directly linked to this approach was the idea of renunciation, of poverty (including the material one). They were both “illiterate,” and their death and teachings were glorified by their usually literate disciples. Exactly – they both had disciples (the former had “friends,” the latter, apostles). They taught that real life is elsewhere. They enjoyed divine grace. Yet only after they died did it become clear how revolutionary (“seditious”) their teachings were (incidentally, they were both sentenced on charges of impiety). Their teachings had a universal character. They differed a lot, too, however: just as much as Athens differs from Jerusalem. Moreover, Jesus rose from the dead, whereas Socrates did not (though he became immortal). For more on this subject, see T. Deman, *Socrate et Jésus* (Paris: L’Artisan du livre, 1944).

<sup>11</sup> Plato, *Phaedo*, trans. D. Gallop (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press 1975).

We also learn that Socrates's nightmares demand a poetic articulation during daytime. Now the dream tells him to make "art in the popular sense" (61a).<sup>12</sup> It masks a need to turn philosophy into art, something easy that anyone can absorb, since even a lazybones or a half-wit can listen to music. One only needs to replace disquisition and speculation with a story, an anecdote, a tragedy. But Socrates promptly adds that he is "no teller of tales." He tells the truth: a philosopher does not know how to be a poet because he cannot narrate life. He is no good at composition either. The only thing he mastered is dying – as he had been dying his entire life. "... for some people ... it is better ... to be dead than alive" (62a). Philosophy appears, then, to be a ceaseless killing of oneself in one's lifetime. Philosophy is a slow agony that nobody is allowed to hasten. It is a chronic "suicide" or "euthanasia" performed on "the youth" (cf. *Apology* 24b-c). "We men are in some sort of prison, and one ought not to release oneself from it or run away ... it is gods who care for us, and for the gods, men are among their belongings" (62b). But one can, or even should, philosophize – namely, "to follow the dying" (61d). Let us try to briefly reverse – even if it is futile – the flow of Plato's thought. "Truly then ... those who practise philosophy aright are cultivating dying, and for them least of all men does being dead hold any terror" (67e). These words may lead to the following conclusion: he who professionally deals with the question of life's finality is less terrified at the thought of his grave than one focused on "hyletics" and deafened by life's racket. Is it the right conclusion? Do one's attempts at understanding man's finite nature diminish the terror of existence at least a little? I will leave the question unanswered. Or rather: everyone has to look for his own answer because a ready-made one will always seem arbitrary.<sup>13</sup>

Meditations on death have always been accompanied by an invariable question: Very well, but what happens next? Next "... I expect to join the company of good men, who know what they drink," Socrates remarks ironically, and adds, "that point I shouldn't affirm with absolute conviction." He is only sure that gods await him there, and there is as well "something in store for those who've died..., something far better for the good than for the wicked" (63c). A question presents itself: What is this thing that is better for the good than for the wicked, that Socrates longs for so much? This thing is truth, ἀλήθεια, "unconcealment" available only to those who bypass Lethe, "the river of forgetting,"<sup>14</sup> and quench their thirst with "the water of remembrance." "[M]emory triumphs even at the price of death! To die is to remember, to remember is to die. ... To remember at all costs!

<sup>12</sup> Gallop's translation makes it clear that what is meant is not "making art" but "making music."

<sup>13</sup> The idea was given the right proportions by Woody Allen in "My Apology." See his *Side Effects* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1991), 17-24.

<sup>14</sup> "The consequence for man of the concealment of Being," writes Martin Heidegger in his commentary to *Phaedrus*, "is that he is overcome by λήθη, that concealment of Being which gives rise to the illusion that there is no such thing as Being. We translate the Greek word λήθη as 'forgetting,' although in such a way that 'to forget' is thought in a metaphysical, not a psychological, manner. The majority of men sink into oblivion of Being, although – or precisely because – they constantly have to do solely with things that are in their vicinity" (M. Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, trans. D. Farrell Krell, vol. 1 [San Francisco: Harper Collins 1991], 193-94). Hence the conclusion that we drink of Λήθη already when we are alive; see P. Florensky, *The Pillar and the Ground of the Truth: An Essay in Orthodox Theodicy in Twelve Letters*, trans. B. Jakim (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press 1997), especially Letter Two.

To conquer oblivion even at the price of death.”<sup>15</sup> Those who want to remember what they did, who say “yes” to their life, will be forever remembered, whereas those vile, avoiding even themselves, will be forever forgotten.

Finally, Socrates introduces into the dialogue an element that is heteronomous (“Egyptian”) to the Achaia culture: the soul. He does not do it in order to place it in a central position (this was done later by the Doctors of the Church who liked repeating, “Plato, to incline to Christianity”).<sup>16</sup> For it is only the soul that lets him push the body into the abyss of “Tartarus” conceived by philosophers. Losing the body is no great loss since the body is “fleeting” and quickly turns into “nothingness.” If the soul, however, were to suffer eternally – well, the very thought makes one cringe and sends shivers down the spine. But, apart from the body and the somatized soul, the “social body,” the non-philosophising rest of society, is pushed down to the Erebus as well and poses a threat for the philosopher as it is willing to pass an unsatisfactory verdict on him. It is not merely a clash between two ways of passing your spare time – thinking and fiddling around with tools – but a “war of worlds” that proves very dangerous for the philosopher.

According to Socrates, a philosopher should not prance around smelling of expensive perfume and shop in chic boutiques. Let him shop at Tesco and think of sex as a casual straying from the norm. Therefore, “it does seem to most men that someone who finds nothing of that sort pleasant, and takes no part in those things, doesn’t deserve to live; rather, one who cares nothing for the pleasures that come by way of the body runs pretty close to being dead” (65a).<sup>17</sup> Please note that the two judgements are not divergent. Socrates expresses his distaste for the body, while the Athenian public merely say this: “[L]ook, Socrates expresses his distaste for the body.” The trouble is that the philosopher will never stop at that. He will preach a maximalist program for the eradication of human flaws. “You cannot see, because you have eyes. You cannot hear, because you have ears,” he will say. Therefore, we must free ourselves from the body. “[H]e would be separated as far as possible from his eyes and ears, and virtually from his whole body..., will attain that which is” (66a). Is it possible? To what extent is a philosopher capable of rejecting the body, particularly when it torments him, follows him, and won’t leave [the soul] alone? “[I]f we do get any leisure from it, and turn to some inquiry, once again it intrudes everywhere in our researches, setting up a clamour and disturbance, and striking terror, so that the truth can’t be discerned because of it” (66d).

## A CONVERSATION WITH SCHOLARS

The Greeks allowed for one more concept of existence, most fully expressed by Homeric protagonists, in particular by the divine Achilles:

Mother tells me,  
the immortal goddess Thetis with her glistening feet,  
that two fates bear me on to the day of death.  
If I hold out here and I lay siege to Troy,

<sup>15</sup> O. Mandelstam, “Pushkin and Scriabin: Fragments,” *The Collected Critical Prose and Letters*, ed. Jane Gary Harris, translated from the Russian by J. G. Harris and C. Link (London: Collins Harvill, 1991), 93-94.

<sup>16</sup> B. Pascal, *Pensées*, trans. W. F. Trotter (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 1944), 37 (219).

<sup>17</sup> Plato, *Phaedo*, trans. D. Gallop.

my journey home is gone, but my glory never dies.  
 If I voyage back to the fatherland I love,  
 my pride, my glory dies ...  
 true, but the life that's left me will be long,  
 the stroke of death will not come on me quickly.<sup>18</sup>

Achilles eventually made his choice. He chose a brief, tempestuous, and heroic life. He descended into Hades as a victor and until Socrates's times remained a role model for the Athenian youth. Soon enough, however, his heroic death was eclipsed by a long – lasting seventy years – agony of the philosopher who renounced the lust for life, who instead of affirming life, joyfully affirmed death. According to Hegel, Socrates strained the structures of the polis with his individualistic view of life.<sup>19</sup> I would rather look for a different explanation of the fall of Athens. I think its dissolution is mysteriously linked to the spread and triumph of philosophy. And if we assume that the city died with Socrates,<sup>20</sup> it happened because he infected it with death, philosophy.

The most important part of the dialogue happens between Socrates and his “Pythagorean”<sup>21</sup> friends, Cebes and Simmias. They are, as we would say today, scientists. They possess a knowledge of nature, biology, medicine. Still, Socrates, who keeps repeating that he is only interested in moral problems, decides to confront the scientists. Why? The reason is the conviction – later adopted by Gnostic strands of Christianity – that knowledge is necessary for salvation, that science is intertwined with humanity's great moral dilemmas.<sup>22</sup> Simmias and Cebes, however, are not only scientists; they represent a philosophical “enlightenment,” which is easy to see because of their lack of subtlety in their approach to matters of life and death. It is therefore not dialectic skill but their ignorance that makes them turn the Pythagorean prohibition of suicide into a criticism of the philosopher's lack of readiness to die.<sup>23</sup> When Socrates abides by his views, that is, when he says that death is the task and the destiny of the philosopher, Simmias laughs (64a-b). They do not comprehend that Socrates is after a purification of the soul, freeing it from the constraints of the body, which is also a Pythagorean condition for gaining knowledge. “The other things you say, Socrates, I find excellent; but what you say about the soul is the subject of much disbelief” (70a). In this sentence, Cebes expresses the apprehensions of common sense; its first response – when everyone is healthy and financially successful – is areligious and materialistic. If our common sense thinks about death at all, it is as of a complete destruction of the human soul. That is why Socrates has to present *proofs* for its immortality – that is what Cebes and “common sense” demand of him.

<sup>18</sup> Homer, *The Iliad*, trans. R. Fagles, bk. 9 (New York: Penguin, 1991), 265, lines 497-505.

<sup>19</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, trans. J. Sibree (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1861), 281.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 282.

<sup>21</sup> On the connections between Pythagoreanism and Orphism, see A. Krokiewicz, *Studia orfickie* [Orphic studies], 15, 23-24, and the monographic issue of *Kronos* 4 (2011) devoted to Orphism.

<sup>22</sup> H-G. Gadamer, “The Proofs of Immortality in Plato's *Phaedo*,” *Dialogue and Dialectic: Eight Hermeneutical Studies on Plato*, trans. P. C. Smith (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1980), 21-38.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

The first proof is that after we die things turn around 360 degrees and “living people are born again from those who have died” (70c). It seems that Socrates uses this argument because of its “incongruity” and a sort of impropriety in the context of human fear for life. He then derives from this proof not only the existence of souls of the dead but also that life after death is better for good souls and worse for bad ones (63c). Is it a justified conclusion? Well, I do not think so. It does not follow from the assertion “living people are born again from those who have died” that the soul exists after death. It is only said that *living* people are born from those who *have died*. Nothing more. It is not even said what dead and what living. Yet the argument enables Socrates to voice the anamnesis theory that claims that we had existed – as souls – long before. Even before we were born, we enjoyed the fullness of being, accessing knowledge from the world of ideas, knowledge that is certain and anterior to empirical knowledge (75d-e). A question arises: How can we make sure of the existence of a priori knowledge, hidden inside us? It seems there are two ways. The first is a conversation in the course of which the philosopher, like an interrogation officer, can extract the Pythagorean theorem even from an ignoramus (73a; also, *Meno*, 81c-d). “Yet we also agree on this: we haven’t derived the thought [an *a priori* one, given in anamnesis] of it, nor could we do so, from anywhere but seeing or touching or some other of the senses – I’m counting all these as the same.” (75a). Thus we can reconstruct the memories given to us when we were still dead, as yet unborn souls (this would be the second way), only by living in this world, experiencing its beauty with every fiber of our body (interestingly, this sentence, because of its “somatic” factor, is in conflict with the almost confessional Orphism of Plato himself).

In his next proof for the soul’s immortality, Socrates is trying to answer the question of whether death is the opposite of life. It is; it is obvious, just like running is the opposite of standing still. If, then, we have declared a sharp dualism of life and death, running and standing still, and so on, we only did it in order to overcome this dualism: “To wiemy, że bieg się skończy/ I rozłączone się złączy” [We know that at our journey’s end / what was separated will be joined again].<sup>24</sup> But how? Socrates uses an argument that seems to be a modified version of the last proposition. He proclaims then that anything always emerges from its opposite, “all things come to be in this way, opposite things from opposites” (71a). This is why death is not only the beginning of an (at least numerically new) life, but it also gives meaning to our own, finite, “one-day” existence.

The third proof for the soul’s immortality is actually a consequence of the two previous propositions. If the body is visible, Socrates says, the soul then, being its opposite, *must be* invisible. It holds the citizenship of the kingdom of ideas, which is, just like the soul, “not of this world.” As opposed to the extended and endlessly divisible body, the soul is simple. This is also the stance of Plato’s Socrates. The soul of the philosopher is immortal: the philosopher does not renounce sensual testimony, but, disembodied it, he turns the senses against themselves. And knowledge, which, like the soul, is indivisible and one, is given in anamnesis.

In his essay “The Proofs of Immortality in Plato’s *Phaedo*,” Hans-Georg Gadamer argues that the proofs are a joke on the philosopher’s part as Plato is playing with traditional

<sup>24</sup> Cz. Miłosz, *To* (Kraków: Znak, 2001), 99.

religious customs.<sup>25</sup> Because indeed they are not convincing proofs. Rather, they point to our childish fear that “as the soul goes out from the body, the wind may literally blow it apart and disperse it” (77d-e), especially when the weather is bad. They are then used to play (the question is, how innocently?) with human naïveté, especially in those passages where Socrates talks about wraiths walking the cemeteries at night and about wicked places (81b-e). Yet such as they are, the proofs for the soul’s immortality cannot “overthrow” a certain human (“childish”) fear of death.<sup>26</sup> Besides, Socrates promised to present incontrovertible proofs for immortality. He focused on refuting the erroneous conclusions drawn from a misguided understanding of the human soul.<sup>27</sup> It is visible particularly well in the polemic with “the Pythagoreans,” which is a dramatic peak because of the fact that both Simmias and Cebes rely in their charges on truly scientific foundations. The former’s arguments are based on mathematical investigations into the universe’s harmony, the latter’s on biologists’ studies of the inexhaustibility of life’s resources.

Here Simmias is forcing a hypothesis that the soul is a harmonious, attuned “mix” of spiritual and corporeal elements. “If, then, the soul proves to be some kind of attunement, it’s clear that when our body is unduly relaxed or tautened by illnesses and other troubles, then the soul must perish at once” (86c). If, then, we agree to the view that the soul has a corporeal component, that the soul only acquires meaning when it is coupled with the body; moreover, if we agree that it has parts, is complex, we also have to agree that any disruption of its harmony spells the soul’s end. “The argument that Socrates uses to refute Simmias’s skepticism,” Gadamer writes, “goes to the core of Pythagorean mathematics. It turns on the distinction between *being* harmony and *having* harmony. The soul which is a harmony, i.e., the soul conceived of in terms of number theory and which is said to participate in the indestructible harmony of the world, is vulnerable to the ‘scientific’ objection that it is dependent upon a material substrate.”<sup>28</sup>

Simmias’s stance is unacceptable for Socrates for one simple reason: the soul is not, and cannot be, made one with the body. It is one thing to claim that the soul is in tune with its corporeal shell (as Simmias claims) but quite another thing to believe, as Socrates does, that, since one has acquired harmony, one has to care for it constantly as one can lose it even during one’s lifetime.<sup>29</sup> It is most striking how Simmias behaves here, he, who has introduced into Pythagorean science a decidedly non-Pythagorean element: the body. It seems he strives – like Gorgias and other Sophists – to triumph in the discussion *at all* costs. Socrates can see it and warns Simmias so that he does not fall prey to scepticism and misology (89d).

<sup>25</sup> Gadamer, “The Proofs of Immortality in Plato’s *Phaedo*,” 21-38.

<sup>26</sup> “The fear of death which is never quite to be put to rest is in fact correlative to our having to think beyond the surrounding world given to us in sense experience and beyond our own finite existence. Plato certainly does not want to say that he has proved the same immortality of the soul which is basic to the religious tradition. But what he does want to say is that the spreading skepticism resulting from the scientific enlightenment does not at all affect the sphere of our human life and our understanding of it” (ibid., 36-37).

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 21-38.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 31-32.

<sup>29</sup> “... the soul can have a harmony and lose it, for it is characteristic of the human soul that it must endeavor to maintain its own order” (ibid., 32).

Next Cebes speaks. “You see,” he says, “the argument seems to me to remain where it was.” He is right. They have only managed to demonstrate “the existence of our soul even before it entered its present form” (87a), which agrees both with the anamnesis theory and with the Pythagoreans’ “apriorism.” Yet neither Socrates nor Simmias has managed to prove the soul’s “still existing somewhere when we’ve died” (ibid.). Even though Cebes can see in the soul a self-regenerating life force that animates the passive body and moves it, he is far from claiming that the soul should last forever, that its force never expires. The soul is therefore not immortal; it is at most *long lasting*.

Indeed, allowing ... not only that our souls existed in the time before we were born but that nothing prevents the souls of some, even after we’ve died, from still existing and continuing to exist and from being born and dying over and over again – because the soul is so strong by nature that it can endure repeated births – even allowing all that, if one were not to grant the further point that it does not suffer in its many births and does not end by perishing completely in one of its deaths, and one might say that no one can know this death or detachment from the body that brings perishing to the soul since none of us can possibly perceive it. (88a-b)

In this exactly consists his nihilism. After we die, we are not to expect a punishment or a reward but either *another life* or (if the battery of our soul has died) nothingness.<sup>30</sup> Socrates has never fully recovered after this attack. He did abide by the argument – an elaboration of his second proof for immortality – that the soul cannot “accept” death because death is its ontological denial; and that the very “form of life” (106d) must be by definition indestructible. It seems, however, that Socrates himself was not convinced of his arguments’ persuasive power. This view is supported by his final conversation with Simmias:

“[T]hough in view of the size of the subject under discussion and having a low regard for human weakness, I’m bound to retain some doubt in my mind about what’s been said.”

“Not only that, Simmias,” said Socrates; “what you say is right.” (107b)

*Phaedo* is not a dialogue on death or dying. Neither is it an opinion on immortality in a narrow sense – that is, whether there is life after death or not, whether it hurts to live in Tartarus or not. Rather, *Phaedo*’s content is, according to Gadamer, “not immortality at all but rather that which constitutes the actual being of the soul – not in regard to its possible mortality or immortality but to its ever vigilant understanding of itself and reality.”<sup>31</sup>

<sup>30</sup> In order for force to exert influence and not just destroy, it must be finite, it must have limits: “... it is the essence of force to be finite. Presupposing that force is ‘infinitely waxing,’ on what should it ‘feed’? ... [W]e forbid ourselves the notion of an infinite force as incompatible with the very concept ‘force.’” (Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, trans. D. F. Krell, vol. 2, 87).

<sup>31</sup> Gadamer, “The Proofs of Immortality in Plato’s *Phaedo*,” 29.

## PHAEDO AS A POLITICAL DIALOGUE

Presently I would like to recommend the *Phaedo* as the second greatest, right after *The Republic*, political treaty of antiquity. It is my strong conviction that its lesson has been written as if in between the parts of the philosopher's soul – the philosopher who is willing to serve the state with his wisdom. I think the best way to reconstruct the political drama is to employ the structure of the cave parable borrowed from Book Seven of Plato's *Republic*.

Let us first ponder the place at which we meet Socrates. It is a prison – that is, the very bottom of humanity (if we understand humanity as “being a citizen”). The dungeon smells of mold, the lack of light is also a nuisance. Cornered by (the verdict of) the polis, Socrates has been entangled in the corporeality of the everyday – “it is heavy and earthy and is seen” (81c). Thus, prison becomes a metaphor of the polis where the philosopher, and other citizens, dwell. “Now this is just what has happened to us,” Socrates says, “living in some hollow of the earth, we think we live above it” (109d). Wraiths roam the streets “confused and dizzy, as if drunk” (see 79c, 81d). These are rhetors and sophists as well as common people. Their souls, tainted by greed and desire, do not crave wisdom but money, power, and fame. Wearing the weight of the phantoms, human shadows lack actuality. One can spot their bodies, but they themselves remain invisible, which means (especially for Plato) unjust. Like the mythological Gyges who could disappear every time he wanted to commit an injustice,<sup>32</sup> they are flawed beings, illusions of real existence. Because justice, that is, the *human* world, requires a multiplicity of perspectives.

Living with an illusion of truth is contrary to the philosopher's taste. The bitter taste of illusions sooner or later turns him into a misanthrope. “Misanthropy develops when, without skill, one puts complete trust in somebody, thinking the man [the reference is rather to the reality of the polis than to a single person] absolutely true and sound and reliable and then a little later finds him bad and unreliable; and then this happens again with another person” (89d). Misanthropy then is the result of a wounded sense of justice. The wound is the source of one's first feeling of repulsion upon seeing the world as it “really” is. One should, therefore, Socrates advises, adopt a position of being outside of this world, “released from the body [from the polis], as from fetters” (67d).

“[T]hey [the souls] do exist in that world, entering it from this one, and ... they re-enter this world and are born again from the dead; ... living people are born again from those who have died” (70c), we read in *Phaedo*. The fragment is not just another one of Plato's Orphic songs; it actually is the metaphor, phrased differently, of the cave from Book Seven of *The Republic*. As we know from elsewhere, the cave is not only the bottom; it is also the space of the cave. “Death,” that is, the illusory existence in *this* world, is accompanied by a process that is its opposite and results from a “dynamic,” “shifting”

<sup>32</sup> Plato, *The Republic*, bk. 2, 359d-360d; see also E. Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity. An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. A. Lingis (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1991). We find Cain in a similar situation: after killing his brother, he stops being visible not only to God but also to himself. Therefore, God's call “Where are you?” is not an expression of God's ignorance but an admonition: “Why can't I, God, see you? Why are you not where you should be?” Cain cannot be where he should be because *he is not*, at all; he does not exist – he has fallen into the abyss of nothingness because he “is” unjust. For more on the subject, see Martin Buber, *The Way of Man: According to the Teaching of Hasidism* (London: Routledge and Paul, 1950).

constitution of man who, like Baron Münchhausen, tries to pull himself up out of the swamps he fell into.

Greece is a large country, Cebes, which has good men in it, I suppose; and there are many foreign races too. You must ransack all of them in search of such a charmer [i.e., a philosopher able to lead the lost misanthrope toward the clearing of truth], sparing neither money nor trouble. ... And you yourselves must search too, along with one another; you may not easily find anyone more capable of doing this than yourselves. (78a)

Socrates wants to convince us to make a conscious effort and turn our eyes away from the world (of shadows) toward the light of truth – one enters heaven fully awake, instead of “being marched asleep” (Wilfred Owen, “Dulce et Decorum Est”). “[T]he philosopher,” Hannah Arendt writes, “having liberated himself from the fetters that bound him to his fellow men, leaves the cave in perfect ‘singularity,’ as it were, neither accompanied nor followed by others. Politically speaking, if to die is the same as ‘to cease to be among men,’ experience of the eternal is a kind of death, and the only thing that separates it from real death is that it is not final because no living creature can endure it for any length of time.”<sup>33</sup> Περιπαγωγή, which is the essence of philosophising, must have death written into it – philosophy has a sense of danger. Why? Because the philosophical foray, this trip into the netherworld, distances us from ourselves, that is, the ourselves as we – with increasing difficulty – remember. “While ascending, Zarathustra must constantly overcome the ‘spirit of gravity.’ ... But as he climbs, the depths themselves increase and the abyss first becomes an abyss – not because the climber plunges into it, but precisely because he is ascending. Depths belong to heights; the former wax with the latter.”<sup>34</sup> In the course of this journey, not only the body changes (“disintegrates”), but the soul is also subject to change, that is, it constantly changes its position. “Rid of human ills,” man dies in the light of truth, losing the remnants of his individuality – he forgets why he came and who he is. Or conversely: capturing ideas in their invariability – “those [ideas] that are constant you could lay hold of only by reasoning of the intellect” (79a) – he remembers everything.<sup>35</sup> Yet you cannot live too long right “next to” truth; man also needs his illusions in order to recognize the power of truth and his own limits. So he descends into the cave of human things to realize everything he has seen: “What will this be?” “Coming to life again” (71e).

Let us recapitulate. Man is born twice: the first time, for truth; the second, for the world. As a philosopher, he is called upon to change this world according to what he knew and remembered. “[H]aving gotten them before birth, we lost them on being born, and later on, using the senses about the things in question, we regain those pieces of knowledge that we possessed at some former time,” Socrates says (75e). Philosophers who

<sup>33</sup> H. Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1976), 20.

<sup>34</sup> Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, vol. 2, 40.

<sup>35</sup> A “man” for whom time is completely incomprehensible because he automatically remembers everything he sees, has been portrayed by Jorge Luis Borges in his short story “Funes the Memorious.” J. L. Borges, “Funes the Memorious,” trans. J. E. Irby, *The Paris Review* 28 (Summer-Fall 1962): 148-54.

are returned to this world lose the knowledge that is the summa of an intellectual insight into “things as they are,” that is, ideas. They lose it, but not forever. They regain it *on their first attempt* at establishing the just, “good” rules for governing the state. The event of this “reestablishment” happens in the polis, among people because only the political reality, which is all too human, is a remedy for Lethe’s poison. One regains the capability to act and think only among other citizens. Who is a just citizen? Is he a philosopher? It is he who stands between the small and the large, “submitting his smallness to the largeness of the one for it to overtop and presenting to the other his largeness, which overtops the latter’s smallness” (102c-d). Here Plato reveals the gist of Greek politics, which consists in a self-limitation of citizens who are equals and know everything about both their largeness and smallness. Wisdom then protects them from the disease of resentment – “And similarly, the small that’s in us is not willing ever to come to be, or to be, large” (102e), though as the poet reminds us, “in every one of us a mad rabbit is thrashing about and a pack of wolves is howling, and we are worried that others will hear it.”<sup>36</sup>

The remarks made by Cebes – who, as we remember, argued for the soul’s longevity but not its immortality – are also a warning of sorts. Even though the soul “after death” goes on living – that is, it can know things as they are – one of our many descents (because the movement of thinking never stops) can turn to be the last. “[I]ts very entry into a human body [meaning: to the very bottom of the polis] was the beginning of its perishing, like an illness” (95d). These mysterious words refer to the condition of the philosopher struggling with the city’s political tissue. Descending into the “cave of human trouble,” he must calculate the risk of being disrespected, or even actively resisted by all these “half-villains” who are only able to be half just.<sup>37</sup>

We always die alone, in the drudgery of thinking. A philosopher, we read in *The Republic*, “is most of all sufficient unto himself for living well and, in contrast to others, has least need of another” (387e).<sup>38</sup> Death and thinking – they are the same thing, because they effectively free us from life’s oppression – should be experienced in solitude, without anyone’s help. In conversation with friends, Socrates warns them against all kinds of helpers because he knows that he who one day comes to liberate us will turn out to be a sophist or our executioner.

## THE LAST REQUEST

*Phaedo*’s “political” message is intertwined with the fate of Socrates (the historical figure). Sentenced and eventually poisoned, he refused to flee, claiming that it is utterly impossible to leave the city and remain oneself.

... Athenians judged it better to condemn me, and therefore I in my turn have judged it better to sit here and thought it more just to stay behind and

<sup>36</sup> Cz. Miłosz, *Na brzegu rzeki* (Kraków: Znak, 1994), 5.

<sup>37</sup> It is interesting that for Plato a man who is evil by nature and unjust lives (if he exists at all) outside the city because he is unable to perform any acts or activities (*praxis*) that require him to take responsibility for his deeds (see Plato, *The Republic*, 352d).

<sup>38</sup> Translated by A. Bloom.

submit to such penalty as they may ordain. Because, I dare swear, these sinews and bones would long since have been off in Megara or Boeotia, impelled by their judgement of what was best, had I not thought it more just and honorable not to escape and run away but to submit to whatever penalty the city might impose. (98e-99a)

As a young man, Socrates was a misanthrope (96a) – instead of reflecting on the human condition, he practiced, as we would say today, natural sciences. He soon realized, however, that one cannot save that which is human while one is far away from the city. Therefore, already in *Phaedrus*, he could say, “landscapes and trees have nothing to teach me – only the people in the city can do that” (230d).<sup>39</sup> “[A] cock to Asclepius” (118a), who, as a patron of all doctors, has the power to raise the dead, would be a preparation for the great philosopher’s return among the living, even if he were to return as an apparition. It might also confirm the immortality of Socrates’s thought whose movement, even though restricted by the space of the cave, is never restricted by time. Socrates has not wasted a single second of his life that was – but this is another matter – an incurable disease pestering thinking (namely, dying).<sup>40</sup> That is why he asks Asclepius for a new life in which he can chronically die.

O to disengage myself from those corpses of me, which I turn and look at  
where I cast them,  
To pass on, (O living! always living!) and leave the corpses behind.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Plato, *Phaedrus*, trans. A. Nehamas and P. Woodruff, in *Complete Works*, ed. J. M. Cooper (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing, 1997), 510.

<sup>40</sup> “Socrates ... was not only the wisest chatterer of all time: he was equally great in silence. ... Whether it was death or the poison or piety or malice – something loosened his tongue at that moment, and he said, ‘O Crito, I owe Asclepius a rooster.’ This ridiculous and terrible ‘last word’ means for those who have ears: ‘O Crito, life is a disease’” (F. Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, trans. W. Kaufmann [New York: Vintage, 1974], 272 [340]).

<sup>41</sup> W. Whitman, “O living Always, Always Dying,” *Selected Poems*, ed. H. Bloom (New York: Library of America, 2003), 203.

# SOCRATES'S SECOND SAILING: THE TURN TO *LOGOS*

The centerpiece of Plato's *Phaedo* is the discourse in which Socrates tells of himself. In this autobiographical discourse, Socrates retraces the path that led him to the inception of philosophy in the distinctive Socratic-Platonic sense. This discourse is thus a story of beginnings, of the beginning from which Socrates set out toward philosophy and then of the beginning that he thus reached, the beginning of philosophy as such. This beginning that had first to be reached, this turn with which philosophy commences, Socrates describes as a second sailing (δεύτερος πλοῦς).

The passage in which Socrates describes this second sailing constitutes the very center of the autobiographical discourse and indeed of the entire dialogue. My intention in this lecture is simply to read this remarkable passage carefully. Thereby we will see just how Socrates characterizes the turn with which philosophy properly begins.

Yet before turning to the passage on the second sailing, it is imperative to note how this passage is anticipated and how the way to it is laid out by various earlier passages. First of all, it needs to be noted that the entire conversation that takes place in Socrates's prison cell on the day of his death is narrated at a later time by Phaedo. Indeed, the narration also takes place elsewhere than the events told of in the narration: Phaedo narrates the story to Echecrates in the city of Phlius, which was renowned as a center of Pythagorean thought. Hence, the dialogue consists in a discourse, a λόγος, that is separated in both time and space from the deeds and events told of in that λόγος. Thus, the very form of the *Phaedo*, in which the λόγος is set apart from the reported, mirrors the turn from things to λόγος that Socrates describes in the dialogue as the beginning of philosophy.

Socrates's autobiographical discourse leading up to the passage on the second sailing comes at a point in the dialogue where the efforts to show that the soul survives after death have broken down. The ensuing discourse, which is central and decisive for the entire dialogue, is treated – ironically, no doubt – almost as if it were merely a detour taken in order to answer the objections that at that point have brought the demonstration of immortality to a standstill. In the wake of the difficulties, with the demonstration at a standstill, here is what happened, according to Phaedo the narrator: “Then Socrates paused for a long time and within himself considered something” (95e). It is as if – in the face of his imminent death and in the face of the breakdown that threatens even his composure in the face of death – Socrates looked into himself, back into his past. And so he tells, first, of how as a young man he set about inquiring: “For I, Cebes,” he said,

‘as a young man was wondrously desirous of that wisdom they call inquiry into nature [περὶ φύσεως ἱστορία]. This wisdom seemed to me magnificent – to know the causes of each thing, why each thing comes to be and why it perishes and why it is’” (96a). Thus, Socrates began by investigating nature; this could be called his first beginning, in distinction from the second sailing with which he began again, made a new beginning. In his first beginning, he investigated nature in the effort to determine why things – natural things – come to be and pass away and why they are.

What is to be understood here by nature, φύσις? Even the translation of φύσις as *nature* is problematic. For φύσις is not just one region of things to be distinguished from other regions. Rather, it includes all things that come to be and perish; all things, in the usual sense of the word, are things of nature, are natural things. Yet φύσις is not even just the totality of things. Rather, it is that from which natural things come forth, their origin, their ἀρχή (as Aristotle will say explicitly). At least for certain earlier Greek thinkers, this coming forth of natural things (τὰ φύσει ὄντα) from nature itself (φύσις) proved to be such that φύσις itself remained withheld, did not come forth into manifestness. Here one should recall especially Heraclitus’s saying: φύσις κρύπτεσθαι φιλεῖ (conventionally translated: nature loves to hide itself). In any case, it was with a desire animated by wonder that the youthful Socrates undertook the investigation of nature.

His autobiographical discourse continues: “I looked into the processes by which these things pass away and the affections that pertain to heaven and earth until finally it seemed to me that my natural fitness for this ‘looking into things’ was next to nothing” (96b-c). Thus, by pursuing the investigation of nature, Socrates came to realize that he was not fit by nature for such investigation. In other words, by investigating nature, Socrates gained a certain insight into his own nature, namely, that it was not suited to such investigation. But here it was a matter of insight, not just into his own singular nature, but rather into the human incapacity as such for investigating nature in this way.

Socrates explains how he came to this insight, what provoked it: “I was so intensely blinded by this ‘looking’ that I unlearned even what I thought I knew before about many other things and about why a human being grows. Before I used to think this was clear to everybody: that a human being grows because of eating and drinking” (96c). In other words, previously he took the growth of one thing, for instance, a human being, to be accounted for by the addition of some other thing, such as food or drink; but once he began looking into things, he unlearned this – that is, he came upon aporias that put such accounts in question. The aporias he mentions have to do with *ones*. Here *one* must be understood as in Greek mathematics: *one* is not a number, but rather it is from *ones* that all numbers are composed, so that every number, from two on, is a number of *ones*. Here, then, is the first aporia, in the form of a question: When a one is added to a one, does the one to which it is added become two, or does the one added to it become two, or do they both become two by the addition of each to the other? Whatever the answer, it is addition that is the cause of one becoming two. But, on the other hand, if somebody splits a one apart, then this splitting is the cause of one becoming two. Yet – and this is the major aporia – this cause (splitting, dividing) is the contrary of the former cause (addition, bringing together).

It is highly significant that the aporias encountered by Socrates have to do precisely with ones, with what happens to ones when, in accounting for the genesis of things, the

ones are themselves taken to undergo genesis. For eventually the Socratic strategy will prove to be that of setting the ones (regarded as one-beings) over against the genesis and perishing of things. And thus, instead of accounting for natural things by reference to other natural things, he will account for them by referring them to one-beings. It is precisely the space of such accounting that will be opened up through Socrates's venturing upon his second sailing.

Socrates continues by recalling having heard someone read from a book by Anaxagoras, which said that νοῦς puts in order and causes all things. As Socrates then considered what had been said of νοῦς (let us translate it simply as: the power of thought, or intelligence), he drew the following conclusion: that “νοῦς, at least, in ordering the universe, would order all things and position each thing in just that way that was best” (97c). It would follow, then, that, in investigating the cause of anything, one would need only to look to what is best. Yet Socrates's hopes of having discovered a teacher were dashed as soon as he read the book and found that Anaxagoras, despite what he said of νοῦς, accounted for things in just the same way as the others who investigated nature, namely, by referring them to air, aither, water, and other such things as their cause. Instead of accounting for things by reference to what would be apprehended by νοῦς, Anaxagoras simply fell back into the same kind of accounts as others had given: accounting for things by reference to other things. Nonetheless, by mentioning νοῦς, Socrates broaches the schema of a different kind of account: one that would account for things by reference, not to other things, but to a cause apprehensible by νοῦς rather than by the senses.

It is at this point, against the background of these failures, that Socrates comes to speak of his second sailing. He asks Cebes: “Do you want me to make a display [a showing-forth: ἐπίδειξις] of the way by which I have busied myself with the second sailing in search of causes?” (99d).

Long before this scene, indeed almost from the beginning of the *Phaedo*, the figure of sailing is in play. When, at the outset of the dialogue, Echecrates asks Phaedo to tell him about the death of Socrates, he inquires in particular as to why Socrates's execution took place so long after the trial. Phaedo answers, “A bit of chance came to his aid, Echecrates. For by chance the prow of the vessel that the Athenians send to Delos was crowned on the day before the trial.” Echecrates asks, “Now what vessel is that?” Phaedo then explains in detail: “This, as the Athenians say, is the vessel in which Theseus once went off leading those Twice Seven to Crete and both saved them and himself was saved. So, it is said, the Athenians at that time made a vow to Apollo that if they were saved, an embassy would be dispatched to Delos every year – which always and still now, from that year and every year, they send to the god. Now once they have begun the embassy, it is their custom to keep the city pure during that time and to execute no one publicly until the vessel has arrived in Delos and come back here” (58a-b).

Two related sailings are thus invoked at the outset of the dialogue. The first provides one of the primary μῦθοι, mythical stories, against which the entire dialogue is set. It is the story of Theseus, of how he sailed to Crete with the fourteen would-be sacrificial victims that were to be offered up to the Minotaur. According to the story, Ariadne, daughter of the Cretan king Minos, fell in love with Theseus and instructed him as to how, as Daedelus had explained to her, he could escape from the labyrinth where the Minotaur was kept and

where he and the others were imprisoned. Thus, says the story, Theseus killed the Minotaur, escaped from the labyrinth, and, taking Ariadne with him, sailed back to Athens and became king. Not only is this mythic sailing reenacted in other registers in the course of the *Phaedo*, but also in the mythic labyrinth there is mirrored the labyrinthine course followed by the discourse itself in its engagement with the Minotaur of Minotaurs, death itself.

The other sailing invoked at the outset of the dialogue is explicitly said to be linked to Theseus's sailing. It is the annual sailing of the Athenians to Delos in fulfillment of their vow to Apollo and allegedly in the very same vessel that Theseus used. It is this sailing that has the effect of deferring Socrates's execution. In effect, this sailing and the prohibition connected with it grant the very time of the conversation reported in the *Phaedo*.

The figure of sailing also comes into play at another juncture, at the point where Simmias and Cebes begin to express their suspicions about the demonstration concerning immortality, the suspicions that lead to the breakdown of the demonstration and that bring the entire discourse to a standstill. It is Simmias who introduces the figure. Referring to the question of the immortality of the soul, he expresses his conviction that to know anything certain about such matters is in this life either impossible or very difficult. He speaks then of a certain recourse that must be taken in the face of such impossibility or extreme difficulty. He declares that a man "must sail through life in the midst of danger, seizing on the best and the least refutable of human λόγοι, at any rate, and letting himself be carried upon it as on a raft – unless, that is, he could journey more safely and less dangerously on a stronger vessel, some divine λόγος" (85c-d).

Socrates's second sailing was also a matter of having recourse to something else in the face of a certain impossibility or extreme danger. The phrase δεύτερος πλοῦς designates the recourse that is had at sea when there is no wind to fill the sails, namely, recourse to the oars. Since in the situation that Socrates has described autobiographically (as well as that in the *Phaedo* itself) the usual way of driving the inquiry forward has broken down, Socrates has recourse to another way. Since inquiry that would account for natural things by referring to other such things as their cause has broken down, has ended up in aporias, Socrates takes another way, launches upon a second sailing. Along the same lines as Simmias proposed, Socrates has recourse to human λόγοι.

Here, then, is the passage on the second sailing. Socrates says, "Well then, after these [that is, after these other ways had been tried and had failed], since I had renounced [that is, given up on] this looking into beings [τὰ ὄντα], it seemed to me that I had to be on my guard so as not to suffer the very things those people do who behold and look at the sun during an eclipse. For surely some of them have their eyes destroyed if they don't look at the sun's image in water or in some other such thing. I thought this sort of thing over and feared my soul would be blinded if I looked at things [τὰ πράγματα] with my eyes and attempted to grasp them by each of the senses [αἴσθησις]. So it seemed to me that I should have recourse to [or: flee for refuge, take refuge in – καταφεύγω] λόγοι and look in them for the truth of beings" (99d-e).

Note how the passage begins. It refers to other ways that had been tried without success. What are these other ways? They are those ways of accounting for things that are carried out by referring them to other things, as when the growth of a human being is accounted for by reference to food and drink. Socrates says that since he had renounced,

given up on, this looking to beings, this looking into beings, he had then subsequently to be on his guard – that is, on guard against a certain danger. So, the danger is one that became threatening *after* Socrates had given up looking to beings. It is not merely a danger involved in looking to things but a danger that threatens precisely when he renounces such looking and moves on toward something else. But toward what would he move on? Instead of looking for a cause of things among other things, he would look for the cause beyond things. He would move on toward a cause that, from beyond things, would let things come forth, would let them come into being and be illuminated. Yet that which, beyond natural things, is most responsible for their coming forth is the sun. Thus it is that the passage begins by referring to those who look at the sun and to the need to be on guard against the danger of blindness that such looking involves.

However, strictly speaking, one cannot sustain looking at the sun itself. One can see the sun's light as it illuminates things, but one cannot sustain looking into the origin of light except during an eclipse. Only then can one look directly at the sun and sustain that look for more than an instant. Yet one does so only at the risk of blinding oneself. And even then, even if one resolved to endure blindness, such looking would have been in vain. During an eclipse, the sun is covered over, so that even then – and even at the cost of blindness – one would not really have beheld it. The blindness that would result could not even claim the compensation of a preceding vision of the origin of all visibility.

In the figure of looking into the sun, an analogy is clearly in play. For it is a matter not just of the visibility of things but of their being the things they are, a matter of their determination as such. Here, then, is the analogy: just as the sun is, from beyond things, the cause of their visibility, so something else, even more decisively beyond things, is the cause of their being as they are and as they are called. What is this something else? Socrates does not yet say, though his mention – in connection with Anaxagoras – of what is best for each thing, that is, its good, provides a hint. In any case, Socrates is saying that to look into such an original cause is just as dangerous as looking into the sun. In this case, too, there is the threat of blindness.

Having marked the danger of blindness involved in looking directly into the origin, Socrates then turns again to the danger of blindness involved in looking to natural things. He says, “I thought this sort of thing over and feared my soul would be blinded if I looked at things with my eyes and attempted to grasp them by each of the senses.” This is the blindness of which he spoke earlier in the autobiographical discourse when he indicated the aporias that arose in accounting for things by reference to other things. Thus, there is a *double threat* of blindness, both in looking to things and in looking away from things to their original cause.

As a result, the turn that constitutes the second sailing proves to be more complex than it might initially have seemed. On the one hand, it is a turn away from things, away from accounts of things by reference to other things. But, on the other hand, it is a turn that also holds back from venturing a direct look into the original cause of things; it is a turning away from the vision of origin. Rather than turning from things to their origin, the second sailing turns from things to λόγοι. Socrates says that this turn to λόγοι is analogous to looking at the sun in the only way really – and safely – possible, namely, by looking at its image in water or in some other such thing. He concludes, “So it seemed

to me that I should have recourse to λόγοι and look in them for the truth of beings.” Thus, he takes refuge in λόγοι, refuge against the danger of blindness that would threaten if he were to look directly at things or into their origin. In λόγοι he looks, then, for the truth of beings (σκοπεῖν τῶν ὄντων τὴν ἀλήθειαν).

But what is to be understood here by *beings*? The pertinent sense has been prepared in several earlier discourses in the *Phaedo*: the word *beings* (τὰ ὄντα) does not designate natural things, which as τὰ πράγματα Socrates differentiates from τὰ ὄντα. What are designated simply as beings (τὰ ὄντα) are, rather, the beings that are what they are, that are the same as themselves. They are, more precisely, the selfsame beings that determine natural things so that both may be called by the same name. They are the selfsame beings that constitute the self-identical determinations in reference to which natural things are determined as what they are. In this precise sense, beings constitute the origin (ἀρχή) of natural things.

What, then, is the truth of beings? Here the word that comes to be translated as *truth*, ἀλήθεια, has that more originary sense that Heidegger has shown to be still operative in Plato and even more operative in earlier Greek thinkers: the sense of unconcealment, that is, the negation or removal of what obscures and conceals. Hence, the truth of beings is not something other than these beings but is rather these very beings in their unconcealment, these beings as they announce themselves once whatever would have obscured them is cleared away. Thus, in the λόγοι to which Socrates turns in launching his second sailing, what is to be apprehended is simply the beings themselves.

On the basis of what Socrates says in the passage on the second sailing, one might suppose that these λόγοι are images of the beings themselves, just as in water one can see the image of the sun. However, immediately following the passage, Socrates explicitly denies that this is the case. He says, “Now perhaps in a certain way it is not quite like what I am likening it to. For I do not at all concede that somebody who looks at beings in λόγοι looks at them in images any more than somebody who looks at them in deeds” (99e-100a). So, λόγοι are not merely images of beings; they are not merely images that one would behold in the absence of the beings themselves or in the wake of their concealment. Rather, the λόγοι serve to open up a way of access to beings, a way appropriate to human knowing, the raft of human λόγοι, as Simmias called it. One could say that the λόγοι let beings become manifest in something like the way that a deed makes manifest something about the soul of the person who performs the deed. The λόγοι to which Socrates turns are like images *only* in the sense that it is in and through them that beings become manifest.

But how exactly does this happen? How does Socrates turn to λόγοι in such a way that thereby beings themselves become manifest? Socrates explains: “In any case, this is how I begin: on each occasion I put down as hypothesis whatever λόγος I judge to be the most vigorous” (100a). In this new beginning undertaken as a second sailing, Socrates begins by taking up a new comportment to speech. Yet precisely as human, which for the Greeks means as a living being possessing speech (ζῶον λόγον ἔχον), he already – even before this beginning – constantly comports himself to speech. Thus, in this new beginning, he doubles his comportment to speech, to λόγος. The new comportment consists in hypothesizing in the precise sense of laying down or setting out a λόγος so as

to place it under something. In this setting out of a certain λόγος – of the “most vigorous λόγος” – Socrates sets out explicitly what is said, what is meant, in speech. He sets out explicitly the one-beings that are always already meant when one says, for example, beautiful, good, large. Thus, as he goes on to say, he sets out the “beautiful itself by itself and the good and the large and all the others” (100b). He sets out the beings themselves, not primarily as seen (at least not in the beginning), but *as said*, as already operative and manifest in speech.

Socrates identifies the things-set-out as, in his words, “the very thing I have never stopped talking about” (100b). Ostensibly, he is referring to the earlier part of this conversation and to conversations at other times. But, more to the point, these are *always* the very things one will have been talking about, that is, they are what speech is about, what it means, what is intended through it.

At precisely this point Socrates introduces the word εἶδος, referring to the look of the cause (τῆς αἰτίας τὸ εἶδος). There follows a series of decisive statements regarding the relation between the look of the cause – that is, the look of the one-being laid down from λόγος – and the natural things that are called by the same name. In one of these statements, Socrates says, “I hold this close to myself: that nothing makes a thing beautiful but the presence of [παρουσία] or communion with [κοινωνία] that beautiful” (100d). So, something is beautiful and can be called by the same name as the beautiful because it has something in common [κοινόν – κοινωνία] with the beautiful. What does such a thing have in common with the beautiful? It has the look in common. It has the look of the beautiful, looks like the beautiful. In its look, the look of the beautiful is present, is presented – just as, in a horse that is present to the senses, the look of a horse is present and determines the thing seen as a horse rather than some other kind of thing.

Here it is imperative to insist, as does Heidegger, on the more literal and concrete sense of εἶδος rather than falling into the traditional, now quite empty, translations going back, for instance, to the Latin *forma*. An εἶδος is a look, something looked at, something that shows itself when one looks at it. More precisely, it is the look that shines forth in and through things so as to make them look as they do, so as to make them have the look of a certain determinate thing. It is because these looks make things have the look of certain determinate things that these looks constitute the being of things. The looks are the beings themselves as placed under things, supporting them as origin precisely by shining in and through them so as to give them the look of what they are. The second sailing, turning to λόγος, enacts this placing-under, enacts it precisely from λόγος, enacts it by setting the one-beings, the looks, out from λόγος.

It is with the second sailing, with the turn to λόγος, that philosophy in its distinctive Socratic-Platonic sense begins. This beginning is a turn from the sensible, from natural things. Yet this turn is no flight into the beyond, no pure – yet self-annulling – vision of origin. Rather, as a turn to λόγος, it is an engagement in the manifestation of being in λόγος.

But what, then, finally, about nature? Is one to conclude that the Socratic turn is a turn away from nature? Can one say even that the basic impulse of what becomes Platonism is one of flight from nature? And inasmuch as it is determined by Platonism, can one say the same of metaphysics as such, confirming its very name?

Certainly, the second sailing, with all that it sets under way, prescribes a turn away from natural things. It also prescribes, no less rigorously, a turn away from nature taken as the ἀρχή of natural things. What becomes decisive in this regard is the way in which the Socratic turn to λόγος can, at the limit, issue in a certain return to nature, in a return of nature. As Socrates himself, in his very last speech in the *Phaedo*, in the immediate face of death, comes around to telling a story about the earth.

# COURAGE NAILED DOWN: PLATO'S *LACHES*

Euripides, it is reported, was “Socrato-nailed-down” (σωκρατογόμφους) – that is, patched up, bolted together, by Socrates.<sup>1</sup> I understand this term as a reflection of Socrates’s way, his peculiar moderation, which contained Euripides’s emotional excess to the advantage of his expressiveness. This Socratic mode appears in the dialogues as terminal definitiveness moderated by ultimate self-doubt, an uncertainty that, far from being a psychological malady, is an unperturbed unsettledness, serene wonder.

A consequence of this view of Socrates is my belief that every Socratic/Platonic dialogue contains either the answer to the question proposed or a revision of the question that is a direction to the answer. This is not the common opinion about the dialogues in general or the *Laches* in particular.<sup>2</sup> I mean that no dialogue is “aporetic” (from ἀπορέω) – that is, unprovided, wayless, passage-deprived – but all are “poristic” (ποριστικός) in that they provide some means to approach knowledge or even contain the thing itself.

The *Laches* bears, besides its main title, which is the interlocutor’s name, the subtitles “On Courage” and “Midwife-ish” (μαϊευτικός), from the matter and its mode, respectively, given by one Thrasylos.<sup>3</sup> Thus arise the questions: Why “Laches”? Why “On Courage”? Why “Obstetric”?

Even supposing this Thrasylos to have been more attached to devising categories than to thinking things out, his main titles have been generally accepted, perhaps at least partly because they were plausible. The *Laches* has, in fact, two main interlocutors: the two generals, Nicias and Laches. Of these, the former had by far the larger reputation. But not only had Laches and Socrates been comrades at the Delian retreat (424 BCE, *Laches*

<sup>1</sup> Diogenes Laertius II 18.

<sup>2</sup> For example, G. Santas, “Socrates at Work on Virtue and Knowledge in Plato’s *Laches*,” *The Philosophy of Socrates*, ed. Gregory Vlastos (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1971), 208.

<sup>3</sup> Diogenes Laertius III 56-59. The bestower of the titles was Thrasylos, a Neopythagorean of the reign of Tiberius (42 BCE-37 CE), who, Diogenes says, used “double headings” (διπλάζ...ἐπιγραφῶν) besides the main title. The first of these indicated the particular topic, “Courage” for the *Laches*, and the second the more general area, mixing subject and approach. Thus: “tentative, ethical, logical, obstetric, refutative, critical, political,” in Diogenes’s order and Hick’s Loeb translation. The *Laches* has the subheading “maieutic” or “obstetric” or, as I say, “midwife-ish.” There is no heading “aporetic,” perhaps because it is a fairly common opinion that almost all dialogues end in ἀπορία. Diogenes Laertius also lists a different set of classifications on his own account (49). His chief division is between dialogues of instruction and dialogues of inquiry.

181b, *Symposium* 220e ff.), but in his own dialogue this general is, of the two soldiers, by far the more responsive to Socrates.<sup>4</sup>

Why the subtitle “On Courage”? That is obvious: It is the excellence Socrates himself proposes for the inquiry as “a part,” easier to survey than excellence entire. The choice is natural when three quondam warriors are in conversation. What is purposefully problematic – more so as the search proceeds – is whether excellence, virtue, effectiveness (ἀρετή) does indeed have parts or whether, to put the perplexity up front, all cardinal virtues are mutually involved, perhaps identical. That question is what shows this generally sidelined dialogue to be seriously central.

Finally, why *maieutic*, obstetric – a Socratic “delivery”? Whatever Thrasylos meant by the term, it does not seem very definitive. The *Theaetetus*, for example, is headed “testing” (πειραστικός), but in it Socrates explicitly calls his art “midwifing” (ἡ μαευτική ἡμῶν τέχνη, 210b).<sup>5</sup> Its effect, however, is not to bring a solution to birth but mere “wind eggs” (ἀνεμιαῖα), vaporings. The obstetric product may thus be aporetic; the outcome may be perplexity in need of continuance. And so it would seem to be in the *Laches*. When the get-together breaks up, Lysimachus, one of the two undistinguished fathers who have sought the generals’ opinion concerning the best care to be given their adolescent sons’ upbringing, invites Socrates to come by his house next morning to teach them and their boys. Socrates says, “I will do so, Lysimachus, and will come to you tomorrow morning, *if God wishes*” (201c, my italics).

Will he go? Will his inner divinity let him? I don’t think so. We know that neither of the boys, named (as we would say, “aspirationally”) Aristides and Thucydides,<sup>6</sup> seems to have achieved much; Socrates tells of Aristides that he was with him but left too soon to be delivered of the fine things he was bearing within and came to no good (*Theaetetus* 150e ff.). Socrates there says that many who left him too soon want to come back, but his divine sign, his δαιμόνιον, forbids it. Moreover, in the *Apology* he says most definitely, “I was no one’s teacher ever yet” (33a).

Why is it imaginable that Socrates won’t continue this get-together? The lesser, more circumstantial reason is that he divines that these boys aren’t his proper charges. The deeper cause is, I think, that the apparently maieutic conversation is actually complete. It contains all that is needed to think out Socrates’s view of courage and its relation to the canonical three other excellences: justice, soundmindedness, and – wisdom. I put a dash before “wisdom” because the dialogue will throw in doubt *whether wisdom is one among four – since it is all of them*.

My task is thus to explicate the following:

<sup>4</sup> Thucydides does not even report by name Laches’s death in the Battle of Mantinea (418 BCE, bk. V 74), while Nicias appears in bks. III, IV, V, and particularly VI and VII of *The Peloponnesian War*. Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf, in his biography *Platon* (1918), says that Laches was of the two generals “*der bessere Menschenkenner*.”

<sup>5</sup> Aristotle says that “dialectic is fit for testing [the opinion of others] concerning those things about which philosophy is knowledgeable” (*Metaphysics* 1004b 25).

<sup>6</sup> Lysimachus’s son Aristides, after his grandfather “the Just”; Melesias’s Thucydides, after his grandfather, a general, not the historian.

I. What, in Socrates's understanding, courage is, presented, as Socrates's highest thoughts always are, as conjecture and opinion – the reason why Socrates is ultimately the one with whom we live.<sup>7</sup>

II. How the dialectical details of the dialogue bear on this understanding, on the hypothesis that such logicistic argumentation, the notorious Socratic refutational mode, recedes, as a mere preparatory cleansing of the mind for genuine philosophy, in which knowledgeable ignorance and clear-eyed self-contradiction are the *modus operandi*.

III. Why the *Laches* seems to be in harmony with the *Protagoras* and *The Republic*, and why these can corroborate surmises about that wisdom/knowledge which unites the virtues/excellences. I make the Platonic references hesitantly, since I think that each dialogue is its own world and is not necessarily consonant with the others; however, here cautious cross-references seem to be permissible. Ultimately though, the most trustworthy references are, I think, each receptive reader's own experience.

### I. WHAT COURAGE IS IN SOCRATES'S UNDERSTANDING

The precise object of inquiry of the *Laches* is reached through concentric circuits of generality as delineated by Socrates:

1. We must find out who among us or anywhere is an expert (τεχνικός, 185d) in the matter under investigation, which is, *What ought our children to study?*
2. This study must be delineated *as being for the sake of young souls* (185e).
3. We can narrow the inquiry by concentrating on that which *when added to souls makes them better – namely, virtue* (190b).
4. And we can further focus our inquiry by *concentrating on a part of virtue – namely, courage* (190d).
5. So, finally, we can pinpoint our inquiry on the practical question: *How can our young come by it?*

A little more than half the dialogue has gone by at that point (178-90, 190-201). What has been gained?

Laches delivers the first of two comments that entitle him to give his name to this dialogue. He shows that he, much the lesser of the two participating generals, is much the better interlocutor, a “*philologos*” rather than a “*misologos*,” in his own words. He “regards the speaker and the things spoken *together*” (188d). That is, I think, just how Socrates himself looks at and listens to his interlocutors and how Plato, in turn, intends his readers to live with and take in his dialogues.<sup>8</sup>

Laches is thus the enabler of this Socratic dialogue on courage since he himself was eyewitness to Socrates's courage during the Delian retreat (181b); he testifies to Socrates's lived experience of the virtue. Hence courage will be the topic among two generals and

<sup>7</sup> Example: In *The Republic* 517b, Socrates, telling Glaucon of the soul's ascent to the “place of intelligibility,” interrupts his account: “God, perhaps, knows if it [my hopeful expectation, ἐλπῖς] happens to be true.”

<sup>8</sup> Heraclitus, when he says, “Listening not to me but to my λόγος” (D-K 50), *seems* to demand the opposite way of being heard, that of setting aside human circumstance. Not, however, to my mind. I think a good reader allows both approaches their moment – if the composer of the text seems to invite this duality. As for teaching actual students: Always make evident your full attention to their thinking; let your appreciative awareness of their persons occasionally flash out.

one foot soldier; as ever, there is nothing “abstract” about this conversation. Moreover, because he “is inexperienced in Socrates’s arguments” (λόγων, 188e), Laches makes the usual mistake of Socrates’s new conversationalists: he gives a facile reply mentioning a particular example with its perspectival description rather than the nature common in any light to cases falling under the term that is the topic (190e). However, he holds up willingly and even happily, and with courage rather than overconfidence, under Socrates’s usual confounding refutation. In fact, Socrates, the youngest of the three main speakers, treats him with, I think, unironic deference: “I’m responsible for your not answering well, because I didn’t question well.” For he didn’t make it clear that he wanted to know what courage was, not only in all kinds of war making but in *any* human condition (191e, also 190e).

The conversational stretch with Laches has two serious results, which seem to exhaust his energies for the moment:

1. Courage is a *certain kind of endurance* (καρτερία, 192b); it is Laches’s second, more reflective definition, which Socrates thinks is persuasive “to some extent” (193e).
2. Laches modestly frames a state of mind that is crucial to a Socratic inquiry: “*For though I seem to have insight into what courage is, yet I don’t know how it has escaped me just now, so that I can’t collect it into an account and say what it is*” (194b). It is, I think, the pre-verbal thinking, the pre-articulated *logos* in the soul that Socratic questions intend to deliver as intelligible language. This report is valuable as a simple, candid man’s freshly observed self-description.<sup>9</sup>

Socrates now draws in Nicias, with Laches’s approval. He makes a point of declaring Laches his partner in the inquiry: “For Laches and I have the argument in common” (κοινοῦμεθα, 196c). Soon Nicias produces a very significant negative precondition to the understanding of courage:

3. “I surmise that *the Fearless* (τὸ ἄφοβον) *and the Courageous* (τὸ ἀνδρεῖον) *are not the same*” (197b). It puts Nicias, and thus Socrates, who does not seem to disapprove, into direct opposition with Aristotle, who says bluntly, “The courageous man is someone fearless.”<sup>10</sup> I think human experience is with the soldiers: courage is being scared but undeterred.

Before that, however, Nicias reminds Socrates that he, Socrates, and, of course, Laches aren’t defining courage well. Nicias has often heard him say:

<sup>9</sup> See *Theaetetus* 189e, 206d; *Philebus* 38e. The *Philebus* passage refers to a “scribe” and a “book” in the soul. It is a tricky, open problem whether this text, written in accordance with the sensations received, the memories stored, and the feelings aroused (39a) is a pre-uttered *logos* waiting to be voiced or silently articulated speech ready for sounding, or whether these modes are actually distinct. The *Laches* passage stands out for referring to *pre-articulated thinking*, the sense that one has something in mind that must be captured in words.

<sup>10</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1115a 17. I believe he reasons that, since courage is the mean between fear and confidence (1107b 1, 1115a 7) and the mean certainly is one negation of the extreme, courage is not-fear or fearlessness; so viewed, it is less opposed to confidence than to fear. Aristotle prepares such reasonings in his introduction of the moral mean (N.E., bk. II vi).

Socrates is, to be sure, said to face death “fearlessly” (ἀδεῶς, 58e) in the *Phaedo*. But that is because he is beyond courage as a part-virtue. Courage is not named in the *Phaedo*’s final encomium: best, most mindful, most just (118). See text, below.

4. “Each of us is good insofar as he is wise (σόφος), and insofar as unlearned (ἄμαθής), we’re bad (191d). Socrates has indeed said this; he agrees to it in *The Republic* (349d), where φρόνιμος, “thoughtful,” appears instead of σόφος.

At this point the two scrappy generals go at each other, with Socrates in between, trying to persuade them to listen to each other. For, since neither quite understands what Socrates means, both the ingenuous Laches and the sophisticated Nicias can’t really come to grips with Socrates’s conversion of an ethical into a cognitive term. Nonetheless, this interlude, this friendly refutative squabble, which neither of them is quite up to, does produce, with Socrates’s help, an important refutation:

5. The wisdom in question is not (as it often is in common speech) know-how, an expertise, such as belongs to the self-proclaimed expert (τεχνικός, 185d) in the treatment of the soul for whom they were looking in the first half of the dialogue – the kind of whom sensible Laches said that some people become more expert (τεχνικωτέρους, 185e) without them as teachers than with them. This technical wisdom, cleverness, about what is to be feared, they agree, belongs to people, such as physicians and farmers, who would not, for all that, be called courageous (195b ff.). The wisdom in question is not that of one knowledgeable (ἐπιστήμων) in how to effect some result but of one who knows: *Is this a condition to be feared or not?* A doctor may thus know how to keep you alive, but he doesn’t, as a doctor, know whether you wouldn’t be better off dead (195d-e).<sup>11</sup>

Socrates takes the inquiry back and reminds Nicias that at the beginning of the argument they had taken up courage as a “part of virtue” (μέρος ἀρετῆς, 198a). Then he names, enumerates, canonical virtues that “altogether are called ‘virtue’” (198a). He does it twice; once he says, “I mention, in addition to courage, sound-mindedness (σωφροσύνη) and justice (δικαιοσύνη) and other such.” And again, “sound-mindedness or justice, and also holiness” (199d). The so-called canonical virtues are usually taken to be the four set out in *The Republic*: wisdom, courage, sound-mindedness, and finally justice; these are the object of their search (427e, 434e).

Here is the crux of the *Laches* as I see it:

6. Consider Socrates’s second listing of the virtues: He throws in holiness (δσιότης), not one of the standard four, as if to mark an absence: *Wisdom is absent from the set*. It is, I think, the reason why Socrates will say, close to the conclusion of the conversation, “So then we have not found, Nicias, courage – what it is” (ἀνδρεία ὅ τι ἔστιν, 199e) – though it is fully there for collection, dispersed among the interlocutors and throughout the dialogue.

Socrates, now again master of the inquiry, examines Nicias, showing Laches that his friend’s views and the man himself are worthy of “consideration” (ἐπισκέψεως, 197e). Nicias has often heard from Socrates that the good are wise, and as soldiers they believe that the courageous are good. Therefore, since courage is good and goodness is wisdom,

<sup>11</sup> This pair, “knowledge how” and “wisdom whether,” is sometimes called “first- and second-order knowledge.” I’m not sure that is accurate, since the “second-order” judgment of the *Laches* is not actually piggybacked on the first-order know-how. I take “second-order” to mean just such piggybacking: If flute playing is a know-how, then knowing how to know how to play the flute is a second-order know-how – knowing the general art of having a skill.

courage is wisdom (194d). Now Socrates elicits from him the admission that this wisdom is atemporal, or at least all-temporal:

7. “Courage, you say, is knowledge (ἐπιστήμην) of which things are terrifying (δεινῶν) and which are confidence inspiring (θαρραλέων, 196d)?” The former cause fear but not the latter, and fear is expectation of future bad things. Knowledge, however, is one and the same of things past, present, and future; it comprehends good and bad at all times: So *courage is*, Nicias agrees, not only knowledge of what is to be dreaded in the future and by what we are to be encouraged but *knowledge of all good and bad things “as they always are”* (πάντως ἐχόντων, 199e).

This is the moment when one of the fathers, Lysimachus, invites Socrates to become their sons’ teacher. Socrates responds that he is in the same perplexity (ἀπορία, 200e) as the other four adults, so why should he be the man for the task?

I think that Socrates’s perplexity is not that of being ignorant of the answer to the question “What is courage?” but that of knowing the limitation of mere argument, mere *logos*, for giving an answer, though he has shown, logicistically but sketchily, that *courage as wisdom is not distinguishable from any other virtue and the wisdom that is not just expertise and know-how can’t be one of the four virtues*. Moreover, he has provided, as I discern them, seven elements to hold in mind while approaching the question dialectically.<sup>12</sup>

So let me collect what the *Laches* contributes. Courage has certain salient specific features, among which is endurance, perseverance in the face of difficulty (1) and in the face of a positive affect of fear (3). Behind these psychic conditions arises a sense, formulable but not easily, of a being, Courage Itself, to be comprehended (2). Consonant with that sense is the notion that human goodness is connected to wisdom and thoughtfulness (4). This wisdom, however, is not technical know-how but envisioned finality (5). As such it stands beyond the, now three, cardinal virtues and is not listed among them (6). However we may understand this wisdom that is at once a part of and beyond the virtues, it is not attached to any time phase; it is atemporal (7).

All this is what Courage means to Socrates: *it is descriptively distinct from and essentially identical with all the virtues*. For us this “paradoxical” outcome sets a task: We are to figure out how it might become intelligible.

## II. WHAT BEARING SOCRATES’S REFUTATIONAL LOGIC HAS ON THINKING ABOUT VIRTUE AND WHEN IT RECEDES (OR ADVANCES) INTO OTHER MODES

Socrates’s refutation, or better, his refutational maieutic, begins at 190b. By “refutational maieutic,” I mean that he elicits and “delivers” Laches of opinions that he then shows not to be quite viable. Laches agrees that if they are going to give advice on how virtue can be made “present to, added to” (παραγενομένη) Lysimachus’s and Melesias’s boys’ souls so as to make them better, they must first know “Whatever is virtue?” (ὃ τί ποτ’ ἔστιν ἀρετή;).

<sup>12</sup> “Approaching the question dialectically” is, to me, a tautology, since dialectic may be said to be *aporetic ontology*, questing ascendingly. By these terms I mean that it is the inquiry into being, pursued not as constructive and comprehensive system building but out of a personal and particular perplexity, supported by hope.

Socrates is subtly misleading Laches by implying that virtue is primarily a sort of effectiveness, a functionality that makes things, souls among them, work as they should.<sup>13</sup> Be that as it may, he also gets Laches to agree that we could say in words what we know (εἴπομεν, 190c). But they should hold off from the great task of saying what the whole of virtue is by seeing if they know some part of it. Socrates is once again leading Laches astray. Whether at all, or in what way, virtue truly has parts will itself be the crux of the dialogue.

Again, whatever the true case, Socrates suggests very aptly that, since three veterans of proven courage are conversing, courage should be the first focus of inquiry. As I have intimated, Socrates's assumption here is that the parts of virtue are generally known: wisdom, courage, justice, temperance, as set out in *The Republic* (427e, also *Symposium* 196d). At least, they are probably known to Nicias, who has spent time with Socrates.<sup>14</sup>

Now Laches is bidden to answer the question "What is courage?" (τί ἐστὶν ἀνδρεία; 190e). He thinks that's easy: It's to stay put and not to flee. Socrates readily refutes this version because it doesn't cover all cases; it often works for foot soldiers but not for Socrates himself or for Laches, a general, a pair whose courage showed itself in retreat (181b). Nor does it always apply to cases of moral courage.

Laches tries again: Courage is a certain endurance (καρτερία τις, 192b) of the soul.<sup>15</sup> Socrates pounces on this attempt from the other side. "Staying put" was too narrow, now endurance is too broad, for some stick-to-itiveness is plain foolish, yet more nobly courageous than a wise – that is, a calculating – endurance.

Having thrown Laches into confusion, Socrates concedes that endurance might be courage after all (194a). With Laches's agreement, they draw Nicias into the conversation, and for a moment Laches – almost – becomes his questioner (194e). Nicias has heard Socrates say things from which it follows that courage is a kind of wisdom (σοφία). What kind? For σοφία has a broad range of meanings: wisdom (see below), knowledge (ἐπιστήμη), know-how (τέχνη), mindfulness (φρόνησις).

Socrates, speaking for Laches, determines that for Nicias courage is not a technical know-how,<sup>16</sup> but it is a knowledge, a competent comprehension – namely, of things terrifying or confidence inspiring in all contexts (195a).

<sup>13</sup> This is how virtue is first presented in *The Republic* (352e-353e). There each thing has its proper function, its excellence, such as a pruning knife, which is better at cutting away dead branches than a whittling knife. The German *Tugend* supports this meaning since it is related to *tüchtig*, "able," and *taugen*, "fit for." Soon virtue will be said to be σοφία, "wisdom," one of whose narrower senses is "knowing competence."

<sup>14</sup> *Republic* 427e may be the first such list, so that Plato may be attributing the canonization of the foursome to Socrates. James Adams, in *The Republic of Plato*, has a long note to this passage, collecting possible earlier references to the four and their variations. Among them is Aeschylus in *The Seven Against Thebes*, 610, who anticipates one of Socrates's diversionary lists later on in the dialogue. Aeschylus omits wisdom and lists εὐσέβεια instead; Socrates substitutes ὁσιότης, "holiness." The omission of wisdom will be crucial.

The problem concerning the canonical parts of virtue is thus, in sum, whether they were fixed by Socrates/Plato or derived by them from common usage and, in either case, why just these stood out. For example, my freshmen wondered why kindness was missing.

<sup>15</sup> "Endurance," the usual English translation for καρτερία, is misleading, since it suggests a temporal element of duration, while the Greek word, related to κράτος, "strength, power," connotes self-control.

<sup>16</sup> This is an inference: Nicias agrees that courage is *not* αὐλητική, which is usually understood to imply τέχνη, the flautist's technique.

Laches is taken aback: “What outlandish things (ἄτοπα) he says ... Surely wisdom is apart from courage” (195a).

This is a crucial moment. For Laches, the naïvely sensible, is quite right. We are presumably to think of him too as somehow familiar with the four virtues, of which wisdom and courage are two separate items. Nicias, on the other hand, is thinking of a wisdom quite distinct from a particular cardinal virtue, and Socrates is encouraging this view by *never enumerating wisdom* among the part-virtues.

Nicias opposes Laches by attributing to him a self-misunderstanding: Laches himself, without realizing it, has Nicias’s expanded view of true wisdom, that it is not a technique for operating, such as a physician’s skill in healing, but a higher judgment, such as whether the patient is better off alive or dead (195c).<sup>17</sup> Laches doesn’t recognize himself; the wisdom Nicias is describing seems to belong to “some god” (196a).

Now Socrates takes back the argument. Nicias is brought to say that fearless folly is not courage but “mindful things are courageous” (197c).<sup>18</sup> By “mindful” Nicias means having promethean “foresight” (προμηθία); few people have this capacity. This view of wisdom as future directed introduces a seer-like quality into courage, which Socrates will now refute, as I have reported. Wisdom is atemporal. It thus describes not a part of virtue, the futural, “but all of it together” (199e). *Here Socrates declares the inquiry a failure.*

The shifting refutations have long ceased to be effective; the switch from Socrates to Laches is half-hearted, and his own refutation is soon rescinded. What has supervened is *allusion* – the tacit presence of the unspoken.

Here is what speaks loudly by being tacit: 1. Socrates’s omission of wisdom from the four virtues; 2. Socrates’s subversion of Nicias’s “wisdom as virtue entire” from a solution to a perplexity, with this consequence: He twists the conversation of the *Laches* from being within one short step, within one further thought of his answer to the question “What is courage?” into an abortion. So why, we should ask, is he here the willing midwife of a wind egg (ἀνεμᾶϊου, *Theaetetus* 151e)?

I think it is because Plato through his Socrates is summoning a new mode of producing conviction: our participation, “reader response” in the language of literary criticism. The truth is to dawn on those of us who care enough. I say “care enough”

<sup>17</sup> This wisdom is referred to in the scholarly literature as “secondary,” another misnomer, I think (see note 11), for this wisdom is not piggybacked on a primary know-how but lives in a different psychic mode, one I hope to delineate in section III. Such misdescriptions, arising from a latter-day vocabulary, abound – for example, “concept,” “fact-value distinction,” “Socratic paradoxes,” and “definition.” Take the last: students are apt to think of Socrates as seeking definitions in the dictionary sense – short verbal compactions. Socrates does, to be sure, speak of ὀρίξειν, “drawing a boundary” (ὄρος), “delineating.” I think, however, that what he means is closer to Heidegger’s use of *Horizont* in *Being and Time* (p. 1), a territory *within* which understanding takes place – minimally, a denotation *plus* its connotations. Apropos “Socratic paradoxes”: They are surely not paradoxisms but rather astounding collocations.

<sup>18</sup> This last version of courage appears here most prominently as a modifier, not as the common noun ἀνδρεία but as the neuter plural adjective ἀνδρεῖα. That serves as a reminder that the literal translation of the virtue is manliness, from ἀνὴρ, ἀνδρός. I think the apparent gendering can be discounted; there is evidence that the term is used, though differentiatedly, of women. (Examples: Aristotle, *Politics* 1277b 22, though *Poetics* 1454a 23 says that being manly does not befit a woman.)

German: *tapfer* originally meant *gedungen* (“sturdy”) and is cognate with “dapper” (“trim”) – so both stable and agile. English: *courage* from Latin *cor*, heart, so “heartiness,” “wholeheartedness.” The Greek, German, and English terms all contribute to the connotation of courage as a particular, a part-virtue.

because I think that this Socrates (if not Plato) is a democrat of the intellect: In *The Republic*, right at the introduction to the philosopher-kings' education, he says plainly, "Our account signifies ... that there is a power within the soul of each of us and the tool by which each effectively learns" (καταμανθάνει, 518c, my italics). So it is not to make invidious distinctions between those who get it and those who don't that Socrates leaves things unsaid, but to invite us into the *logos* to think it out – us, the latter-day outlanders (*Phaedo* 78a), living to the north and west of Athens.

In this dialogue, the thought seems to me to be that there are two wisdoms: one that concerns knowing how in matters of thinking and doing; the other one concerns finalities and requires that all the part-virtues become identical – all virtue/excellence is wisdom/knowledge.

### III. WHY REFERENCES TO OTHER PLATONIC DIALOGUES, PARTICULARLY THE *PROTAGORAS* AND THE *REPUBLIC*, CAN CONFIRM SURMISES ABOUT THE NATURE OF THE WISDOM/KNOWLEDGE THAT UNIFIES THE PART-VIRTUES/EXCELLENCES<sup>19</sup>

I have misgivings about reaching into other dialogues to clarify the terms of a particular one. The reason is that each such conversation (διάλογος)<sup>20</sup> or set of exchanges delineates its own world of discourse, and in crossing into another setting there is a danger of overlooking the modulations belonging to a different scene. So I'll proceed hesitatingly.

The problem might be put negatively by citing two well-known verses from the Christian Bible:

[T]he spirit indeed is willing but the flesh is weak (Matthew 26:41).

[F]or what I would, that do I not (Romans 7:15).

Both these verse snippets seem to me to say the same thing: We will or would the good but ineffectively; body or ego obstruct the execution. A psychic capability is foreshadowed here, a more explicit forerunner of which is what Aristotle calls "[rational] desire" or wishing, wanting (βούλησις), and whose full-blown faculty is the *will*. It was first identified – as the seat of sin – by Augustine.<sup>21</sup> It is a capacity illuminatingly opposed to Socrates's higher wisdom, which is a supervirtue, one that is itself, to use will terminology, "executive." I mean that Socratic knowledge/wisdom goes immediately over into doing deeds, without

<sup>19</sup> A non-Platonic source is Xenophon in *Memorabilia* IV 6. He is giving a sample of Socrates's making his companions "more dialectical." Xenophon means not the dialectic of the highest sector of the Divided Line in *The Republic* but skill in discussion. In the sample dialogue there is a section on courage (IV 6, 10-11). As in the *Laches*, Socrates holds that one who knows what each thing is, is also able to expound it to others. Courage is a fine thing; it is not fearlessness from ignorance but knowing how to deal well with terrifying and danger-attended situations. Those who can do this are good and thus courageous. Those who cannot are bad.

There follows an ungrounded piece of Platonism: "Then each of these conducts himself as he thinks he must?" "What else?" "So those who are not able to conduct themselves well know how they must conduct themselves?" "Surely not." "So those who know how to conduct themselves, these are the ones who are able to." "Only they." This cannot carry conviction because you can't get from the dubious notion that all people behave as they *deem they must* to the conclusion that only those who *know how* to conduct themselves well are able to do so. Their "deeming" might be very vagrant but their deeds quite decent – within limits.

The Xenophontic dialogue thus asserts but fails to explain Socrates's identification of virtue as a whole with a wisdom that is knowledge – the very issue of this section (II).

<sup>20</sup> Often the conversation is referred to in the plural (διαλόγοι, e.g., *Laches* 200e).

<sup>21</sup> 1. Aristotle, *On the Soul*: "Desire is in the rational part" (λογιστικῷ, 432b 6). 2. Augustine, *On Free Will*, for example: the sin of the will is the deliberate turning away from God the unchangeable to changeable gods (II 20).

any intervening determination to put the choice into effect. It is this wisdom, at once high-level and hands-on, that dialogues other than the *Laches* help me to specify.

First, an example. In the *Phaedo*, Socrates actually applies the instance that he gives of the wisdom in question in the *Laches*: A doctor knows how to cure an illness but lacks the wisdom to know whether death or life is the better choice (195c). On the day of his physical death, Socrates's wisdom tells him that it is better to be dead than alive (*Phaedo* 62 a, 64a). He does not mean just the completed transition to Hades but also a death-in-life, such as one who philosophizes experiences when he puts his body in neutral with a "gain of mindfulness" (τὴν τῆς φρονήσεως κτήσιν, 65a). Socrates is clearly courageous in the face of death, but *Phaedo*'s encomium omits that particular virtue; instead, he is said to have been the "most mindful and most just" of all they've known (118).<sup>22</sup> *Phaedo*'s choice might be taken to mean that Socrates's courage goes without saying, for he has both the best-adjusted soul in life and the wisest soul timelessly, in life and death – that is to say, he has the most life-determining part-virtue and the unique philosophical excellence.<sup>23</sup>

The *Protagoras* presents a very different atmosphere from the deliberately irenic, mutually respectful *Laches*. Its venue, the house of Callias, son of Hipponicus, is practically a house of ill repute.<sup>24</sup> A dubious lot is attendant at Socrates's conversation with Protagoras, which is reported by Socrates himself. It is a younger Socrates than the one of *Laches*. He is among a whole slew of sophists whose chief is Protagoras – a self-styled sophist (317b) – so the dialogue is rightly subtitled "The Sophists." The guests include Alcibiades, Charmides, and Critias – all traitors, subversive of the Athenian democracy.<sup>25</sup>

This dialogue is far more pungent and colorful than the *Laches*. In particular, the younger Socrates's relation to Protagoras is edgy; much of that is, however, worked out before they come to courage in particular (349d). Though the *Protagoras* is roughly twice as long as the *Laches*, whereas the *Laches* takes almost half its length to get to courage, the *Protagoras* takes three-quarters; clearly the main subject is not courage but rather whether virtue is one or many. Callias's House of Hades (see note 24), and thus the *Protagoras*, is not, however, the right venue for forthrightly answering this question.

It is said, in Thrasylos's scheme, to be "probative" (ἐνδεικτικός), possibly meaning "proof providing," or, more weakly, "testing." In any case, the *Protagoras* contains an *implicitly* definitive answer to a question preliminary to the question of what virtue might be and what its features are. That question is, "Can virtue be taught?" Socrates's answer,

<sup>22</sup> Recall that justice is the non-preemptive, non-interfering, well-working of each part of an embodied soul (*The Republic* 433a-b).

<sup>23</sup> But, for future reference, injustice and impiety are also said to be the opposites of "political/civic" virtue; thus justice and holiness are positive political virtues (*Protagoras* 324a).

The last line of the *Phaedo* also echoes what Telemachus says of Nestor: Beyond all others, "he knows judgments (δικας) and wise thought (φρόνιμ, *Odyssey* III 244)." This marks the difference between the poem and the dialogue: Homer speaks in particulars.

<sup>24</sup> In addition to hosting a houseful of sophists and politicians dangerous to the democracy, Callias had living with him, besides his wife, his mother-in-law, with whom he was having an affair. Hence he was called "Hades" in Athens, since Hades harbored in his underworld as consorts both Demeter and her daughter Persephone ("The Origins of Political Science and the Problem of Socrates: Six Public Lectures by Leo Strauss," *Interpretation* 23, no. 2 [Winter 1996]: 177).

<sup>25</sup> "Traitors" is an opinion. Ancient references to these persons' activities are provided in D. Nails, *The People of Plato* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 2002).

delivered by him – at the end, through the voice of the *logos* itself going offstage, making its exit (ἔξοδος) – is that *virtue is wholly knowledge* (361b). But no proof is provided that it is therefore teachable; Protagoras and Socrates *seem* to be mixed up in a terminal muddle (361d).

Not so, however, for a little extra thought shows that virtue as knowledge may be *learnable by us without being teachable by a teacher* – if it is discoverable by going into one's own soul, by *mindfulness* (φρόνησις).

The actual thought effort in this dialogue is made (and reported) by Socrates, so a condensed version can be given in Socratic terms. It amounts to this: Socrates raises to Protagoras, a self-denominated “wisdom monger” (σοφιστής, 317b), the question whether virtue is teachable – a politely impudent intervention, since the more famous older man claims to do exactly that. Socrates himself doesn't believe it, since the excellent Athenians don't make their offspring excellent. Protagoras, in reply, introduces a revealing adjective: “*skill-involved* wisdom” (ἐντεχνον σοφίαν, 321d). He is speaking of an excellence in the old sense: know-how, certainly teachable; technicians have apprentices. Then he sets up a nature-nurture muddle: Aside from particular skills, all human beings “somehow or other” partake of justice, a general political virtue, and rightly participate in public decision making; yet they don't have it by nature, and so there can be and are teachers of that kind of virtue. That opinion delivered, Protagoras “ceases from arguing.”

Socrates slips in an addendum – it is his way when something significant is coming. Protagoras's argument “lacks one little thing” (329b). He has not said precisely how virtue is one thing (ἐν τι, 329c) of which justice, temperance, and holiness are parts (μορία) – that's what he, Socrates, is longing to know. He singles out the pair of courage and wisdom; are these parts of virtue? Yes, says Protagoras, and wisdom is the greatest (330a). Later, he will also single out courage because it alone, he opines, can appear paired with every vice (349d).

These two pinpointings of courage are not haphazard. The fact that courage, so close to overconfidence and rashness, should be a part virtue united with the others by wisdom is particularly thought provoking. The fact that it appears to go in tandem with any and all vice suggests that, if it is or has a wisdom, it would be a special skill-wisdom (ἐντεχνος σοφία, 321d) and that these wisdoms can distinguish the virtues as much as they unite them. But something more: in *The Republic*, Socrates says that features of courage particularly fit people for the “greatest study,” that of the Good (503e). Thus, courage as endurance is crucial to the dialectical disposition; spiritedness is a necessity in the guardian-philosophers (*The Republic* 410e).

Protagoras very reluctantly agrees that the parts of virtue must each *be* all; justice being just must be pious and the converse. After an interlude, Socrates goes into his testing/refuting mode to nail down that all the parts are one (332ff.). As Hume so elegantly puts it, these refutations “admit no answer and produce no conviction.”<sup>26</sup> Well, they do, in fact, admit some probing questions, such as: Does each thing conceived as an opposite in fact have a one-and-only opposite? Is the only opposite to wisdom folly? Might there not be an opposite wisdom: know-*how* versus know-*what*? This is, I think, how this dialogue and its Socratic refutation might illuminate the *Laches*.

<sup>26</sup> *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, sec. 7, pt. 1, n. 1.

Protagoras being thoroughly rattled and Socrates ready to leave for his appointment (not for a moment do I believe that Socrates ever made an appointment), there ensues a long diversionary account of the poets on virtue (339-47).

Protagoras is shamed into returning to the conversation about the unity of virtue (348c). I shall summarize the elements that advance thinking about goodness, the ones that Socrates has inserted by the end of the conversation.

1. Nothing is more potent, not to be overpowered, than wisdom and knowledge. Yet people generally think that *they are impotent* and often worsted, especially by pleasure; they know what is best but do something else (352b-e).

2. All virtues are one, yet each has its “own beingness and matter” (ἴδιος οὐσία καὶ πρᾶγμα, 349b); “matter” here is not a thing or stuff but more like Hegel’s *Sache selbst*, the deed-product of the doing-action. As such, each excellence is itself that which its beingness names, the πρᾶγμα (330c) of an eidetic activity. Thus, *justice is just*, presumably in a superlative degree. Of course, this particularity of each virtue’s beingness is, on the face of it, blatantly at odds with any commonality of its wisdom.

3. The saving of our life depends on a skill and *a knowledge that measures* situations so as to nullify their confusing appearance (φάντασμα, 357a; “false impression”). But whichever skill and knowledge that is, we’ll consider *hereafter* (εἰσαῦθις).<sup>27</sup> Meanwhile, “courage is wisdom concerning the ‘dreadful’ and the ‘not dreadful,’ and it is the opposite of an ignorance of these” (360d).

I think each of the three results tacitly proposes questions to be pondered: 1. Are there two wisdoms – one that can be ignored, another that always rules? 2. Is there a way for each virtue to have its own mode of being, yet for all virtues to be the same? 3. Are know-how and knowledge identical or distinct?

“Hereafter” eventuates in *The Republic*.<sup>28</sup> The *Protagoras* was the take of the σοφ-ιστής on the unity of the virtues; *The Republic* is that of the φιλό-σοφος, the wisdom-plyer versus the wisdom-lover; hence the one is a “testing” and the other what I might call a “poretic” dialogue. The latter offers a positive ontology that tells, as far as telling is possible and desirable, of the knowledge that is behind the *Laches* and the *Protagoras*. I mean “behind” in the sense of implied, extractable, or possessible, quite aside from Socrates’s own condition – whether in each dialogue he is to be imagined as having this knowledge as a mere intimation or as a work well in progress or as an end already achieved.<sup>29</sup>

This is the relevant compositional feature of *The Republic*: The work moves inward through a series of topics considered from the point of view of worldly wisdom through a numerically almost exact center (473c-d), announcing the philosopher-kings and then

<sup>27</sup> I think the sentence hints at the question of whether skill and knowledge are the same.

<sup>28</sup> The dramatic date of the *Protagoras* is 432 BCE, that of *The Republic* just before 420, so “hereafter” is applicable. The *Laches* takes place in 424, not long before Laches will fall in the battle of Mantinea in 418; Nicias was killed by the Sicilians in 413.

<sup>29</sup> The second subtitle of *The Republic* is simply “political,” which is revealing though inaccurate, since, as Rousseau says in *Emile*, *The Republic* is not a work on politics “but the finest treatise on education ever written” (bk. 1, circa 8 pages in); it must serve, since none of the aporetic subtitles apply.

“Possible”: *Republic* 506d-e; “desirable”: *Seventh Letter* 343a.

the image-ontology that underlies their education to an antisymmetrical second half in which these same topics are reviewed, now in the ontological light of cognitive dialectic.<sup>30</sup>

The virtues/excellences thus appear in their probably commonly accepted number before the central high point: “wise, courageous, soundminded, and just” (427e). Their exposition is sensible and practical. Here courage is, in accord with the *Laches*, but more concisely, the defensive, conserving, enduring virtue, the one that preserves the opinions about what is to be dreaded not only in battle but in pleasures and desires, opinions that the lawgiver has called for in the civic community’s education (429b-430c, 442b-c). This courage imbues the citizens like a dye that won’t be washed out by pleasure, pain, fear, or desire, but it is vulnerable to folly, such as Nicias’s superstition (*Thucydides* VII 50).

Thus courage is, at first, not a wisdom, at least not the citizens’ *own* wisdom, but is, as the sayings go, “dyed in the wool” or “bred in the bone” or “learned by heart” – not as an articulated intellectual ethics but rather as a physically absorbed habit. You might call it somatic internality – such as Lycurgus instilled in his Spartans when he insisted that his laws were to be unwritten, learned as sayings (ῥήτραι).<sup>31</sup>

Once past the center, however, courage becomes an intellectual virtue, indeed *the* intellectual virtue insofar as it is a disposition to submit to and persist in a lengthy path of learning. There is, however, more to it. At the culmination of this “dialectical way-to-be-pursued” (διαλεκτική μέθοδος, 531d, 533b, c), the learners come within “sight” of the matter itself, the forms or “aspects”; the soul “makes its way by and through the forms/aspects themselves” (εἶδεσι, 510b; especially 507b). Recall Socrates has already said that each being, each εἶδος, is also that of which it is the beingness (οὐσία), so the εἶδος Courage displays courageness most clearly (*Protagoras* 330c).

Glaucon gets it: this is a very different work from that done by the “so-called skills,” “close to the body” and “implanted by habit and exercise” and “geared to human opinions” (*The Republic* 511c, 518d, 533b).

What we are tasked with is thinking this out: How can the “aspect” (εἶδος) “beheld” (θεωρούμενον) have this power, how can “the mind’s sight” (νόησις), how can wisdom<sub>1</sub> overcome the body’s inherent resistance to the *specific* good sense of all the wisdoms<sub>2</sub>? How can this metaphorical sight of Being Itself in a higher realm transit immediately, unhampered by recalcitrance of the flesh or weakness of the will,<sup>32</sup> into this world so that “we may do well-and-good” (εὖ πράττωμεν, 621d) in this world because we have transcended it?

Socrates provides quite a few features of a dialectic that raises us into this realm as a mode of mentation. They are of the “both/and” sort:

1. This dialectic is both synoptic and specific, panoramic and pinpointed (537c). The learners will have to maintain both an overview of the whole eidetic context and a concentration on the individual eidetic being. Now the dilemma of multiple part-virtues versus a single complete virtue (πάσης ἀρετῆς, *Republic* 585c) – namely, knowledge – is

<sup>30</sup> E. Brann, “The Music of the Republic,” 108-245, in the book of the same name (Philadelphia, PA: Paul Dry Books, 2004).

<sup>31</sup> Plutarch, *Lycurgus* (13). On virtue as habit, see Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, bk. 2, chap. 1.

<sup>32</sup> “Will” is anachronistic because there is no faculty of will (understood as a separable executive power adjunct to choice and liable to go feeble) that I know of in the Socratic Dialogues. There are functioning virtues rather than operable faculties.

obviated. For dialectic accommodates both a “conspectus” (σύννοψιν), a simultaneous vision, of the relationship (οἰκειότητος) that these studies, and thus their objects, the various beings, have with each other, *and* a concentration, a looking at *and* into the “nature” (φύσεως) of each “being” (τοῦ ὄντος, 537c) on its own.

2. Philosophers will therefore be at once unbudging in the way of the brave – that is, stable and patient – and they will be agile in the way of the bright – that is, eager and receptive (503c-d).

3. They will have to let go of their eyes and the other senses (537d), but – a wonderful picture of Socrates calling attention to the danger he himself poses – they will not have been untethered by too much refuting and being refuted when too young (537e-539d). In other words, the young dialecticians will be at once naïve – that is, receptive to wide non-ocular vision – and articulate – that is, mentally capable of taking in the beingness of each thing and giving an account (λόγον, 534b) of it to themselves and to another.<sup>33</sup>

4. The most remarkable dialectical ability, after the power of intellectual sight, is “image recognition” (εἰκασία 510e, 511e), meaning the recognition of an image *as* an image, and its recovery (534a). I say “recovery” because on the Divided Line it is the least esteemed human capacity, at the very bottom of the dialectical ascent. But even a little reflection shows that imaging, along with its recognition, is *the most potent ontological activity* and the most pervasive cognitive capability. Socrates intimates this situation by performing some fairly tricky, apparently frolicsome transformations on the proportions of the divisions that constitute the Divided Line.<sup>34</sup> The outcome is that the segment devoted to “thinking things through” (διάνοια) – that is, linear rationality – is now facing image recognition directly in the given ratio relation (λόγος; thinking things through: image recognition).<sup>35</sup> I take that to mean that even our most workman-like mental operation needs to be mindful of the image-cascade whose ontological descent unifies all grades of being and of the image recognition whose cognitive ascent opens up all levels of learning.

So disposed, a human being might come face to face with the – literally speaking – most highly specified beings themselves, the forms (since *species* is Latin for *eidōs*). Why would the sight of these beings prompt unobstructed action? We are not told, yet

<sup>33</sup> Here is an often-practiced malapropism: to credit this young dialectician’s mind with a capacity for “abstractions.” The being that is to be non-ocularly apprehended is not “an abstraction” gotten *by* abstraction (ἀφαίρησις), such as Aristotle proposes for understanding the mathematician’s mental mode of “drawing off” every sensory feature from an item to leave a pure mathematical monad (*Metaphysics*, 1061a 29 ff.). It is not a sense-deprived thing but the most substance-laden, meaning-dense object of “theory” (in the ancient sense of contemplation), and it is itself the bestower of the capacity to appear of the objects we sense.

<sup>34</sup> This ratio relation is achieved by means of the transformations of proportions set out in Euclid’s *Elements*, bk. 5. Three such transformations, composition, alternation, and inversion, are employed; Adams, in *The Republic of Plato*, gives the proof in his note to 534a. Socrates was counting on the brothers’ facility with proportions, or perhaps on their mathematical intuition: If a line is divided in a given ratio, and its subdivisions are again divided in the same ratio, then the antecedents of the subdivisions’ division will be to each other in that given ratio (as will their consequents).

Whether Plato found or invented εἰκασία I don’t know, but that he adopted its meaning to suit his need – “image recognition” – is pretty clear.

<sup>35</sup> The colon symbolizes the ratio relation in quantities. Here it betokens one member of a notional analogy – linear thinking *is to* image recognition as, say, knowledge *is to* opinion.

that does not furnish grounds for dismissal but rather a place for beginning, at least for imagining what Plato and his Socrates might not reject.

I would start with Socrates's confident claim that the forms are themselves that of which they are the beingness – offering *at once* an *in-sight* through which to enter the meaning of courage and an *at-sight* by which to behold a model of bravery. They are *both* ideas and ideals. From the realm of beings in their beingness thus attained there follows practical wisdom in the world of appearances both of the natural world and of the civic community. Hence the question “What is to be feared?” may be definitively answered, perhaps beginning along these lines: whatever degrades these realms and our souls' relation to them.

In particular, “at-sight” (as in Latin *intuere*, “to look at”) puts before our intellectual vision a model (*παράδειγμα*) in the light of which the desire for emulation arises: the disembodied soul's erotic arousal, its desire to assimilate its ideal, to become brave. Dialectic, however, has two ways. Besides arousing the soul with the particularities of goodness, it instructs the soul in the coherence of all beings, with a knowledge uniting depth and breadth. Thus beauty, the uniquely attractive visibility (*κάλλος...λαμπρόν*, *Phaedrus* 250b) of the “looks” (*εἶδη*), is supported by truth, the meanings that these underlying beings derive from their unifying relations.

To me it is plausible that this dual mode of living in the realm of dialectic would compel courageous conduct without any mediation; thus virtue/excellence would indeed be wisdom/knowledge (*Laches* 194d; *Protagoras* 360d). And the residual perplexities left by Socrates's refutations would, I imagine, be resolved in some such transition to an intellectual *experience*.

A brief conclusion will do. I have wished to portray Socrates as one who safeguards his final freedom from dogmatism while “nailing down” for Plato's thinking, as he is said to have done for Euripides's drama, certain doctrines, albeit implicitly. He thus incites us to be copresent at his conversations.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>36</sup> An example of such copresence: I own (don't know how) a German high school edition of the *Laches* published in 1891, thus one-and-a-quarter-centuries old and as good as it gets. In his Preface to this slim volume, the editor and commentator, one Dr. Christian Cron, imagines that German youths, when reading a certain passage in the *Laches* (might it be 199d, the climactic paragraph on knowledge as unifying all the part-virtues?), will be reminded of a recently deceased prince, a brave leader in war and the courageous victim of a fatal illness. This hero appears to be Prince Frederick William of Prussia, later Frederick III, who died in 1888 after a very brief reign. To my mind, this Dr. Cron read dialogues as they ask to be read: for reference to the present as it includes past and future (*Laches* 198d). He may have seen in Frederick a Christian philosopher-king. Opinions differ on how politically effective in the long run his undoubted goodness would have been had his reign been extended. In any case, Socrates himself reserved a warm friendship for people – like Crito – of plain decency, as this *Oberstudienrat* evidently did. I infer this from the tone of his dedications, which include Georg Autenreith, whose Englished version of his Homeric dictionary is on my shelf. The *Laches* and the youngsters were in good hands with him.

# DIVIDING MADNESS AND THE APPEARANCES OF EROS IN THE *PHAEDRUS*

## INTRODUCTION

Perhaps no dialogue of Plato's invites a self-reflexive interpretation more than the *Phaedrus*. Socrates's criticism of writing in the dialogue bears directly not only on the structure of its composition but also on the cognitive limits of the medium itself in which it's composed. Then there's the matter of the dialogue's dramatic portrayal of its philosophical content. In addition to the critique of writing, the dialogue's subject matters of self-knowledge, Eros, madness, moderation, speech (λόγος), beauty, Being, the nature of the soul, recollection, the art of leading souls (ψυχαγωγία), rhetoric, philosophy, and dialectic all invite self-reflexive interpretation. They do so, as has been remarked often enough, because all of these topics are on display in the action presented by the dialogue itself. In what follows, then, I will accept the *Phaedrus*'s invitation to a self-reflexive interpretation, first by considering its literary structure, and then by examining the relationship between the divisions of madness and the appearances of Eros in them.

By self-reflexive interpretation I understand something like this: the application of the results of the dialogue's argumentative function to what is portrayed in its mimetic one in a manner that interrogates the consistency of the dialogue's action with its arguments and conversely. This, of course, is not as easy as it sounds. The application called for has as its presupposition the separation of the λόγος of the arguments that appear in the dialogue from the written λόγος that composes the imitation of the characters' speech. The dramatic imitation of speech in the dialogue, in turn, necessarily is inseparable from images, insofar as the written words that compose the dialogue must somehow conjure up in the soul of the reader appearances that are *like* but *not* what shows up in these appearances: the dramatic originals conjured up in turn by Plato. The λόγος of the arguments, because they have their basis in *thought*, however, necessarily cannot be found in the dialogue's imitation of the characters' λόγος. While the words spoken by Socrates and Phaedrus can be repeated and thus imitated, the thought expressed by them cannot. Whatever the *imitation* of a thought is, it is obviously something *other* than and therefore *not* a thought.

**THE CRITIQUE OF WRITING IN THE *PHAEDRUS***

These considerations bring us to Socrates's critique of writing in the *Phaedrus*. He compares any kind of writing to farming exclusively in quick-growing flower boxes that yield "beautifully in eight days" (276b) rather than in proper soil, whose yield attains "perfection in the eighth month." While the farmer does indeed test the vigor of his seeds (specially prepared) in clay pots, the seeds "he farms seriously employing his art" must be planted in their proper soil. The point here being that, just as no farmer who is serious about sowing his seeds would plant all of them "for the joy of play" in a flower box, so, too, no speech maker serious about knowledge would exclusively present that knowledge in writing.

Socrates's critique of writing arrives at two conclusions. On the one hand, like the images in painting, which "stand there as if alive" (275d) and therefore lead one to "suspect that they would speak as if they understand something" if questioned, the words in written λόγος "remain in complete and solemn silence." This is because, unlike speech (spoken λόγος), which has "its father" (275e) to help someone who has "hopes of learning something" by asking questions, once written down "the words signify only one thing and always the same thing" (275d-e). Written speech's inability "by itself to help or defend itself" (275e), combined with its indiscriminate accessibility, leads to it's being "ill-treated and unjustly abused" when "those who have no business reading it" take it up. On the other hand, in light of these limits on the "lucidity and lasting value" (277d) of writing for "private use or a public cause," things are different "for a person who believes that in a written speech on any subject there is necessarily much playfulness, and no speech, whether written in measured speech or not, can ever be taken too seriously" (277e). Such an author is aware that the case of writing "is really no different for things recited in the way rhapsodies are delivered simply to persuade without any thought of raising questions or offering instructions" (277e-278a). What he knows is "the best of them were really written as reminders for men who know" (275d) about "the things jotted down." And such an author writes "in the joy of play" (276d) in order "to build up a treasure trove of reminders both for himself in case he reaches forgetful old age and for all who walk down the path."

Writing, then, or better, writing "things in black water," even in the best-case scenario, that is, when the author is someone who knows, is incomplete and unable to teach effectively. Another kind of speech, however, "a legitimate brother" (276a) of the written one that is "by nature better and more capable," "is able to defend itself and knows when and to whom it should speak, and when and to whom it shouldn't." This kind of speech is "written with knowledge in the soul of the one who understands (μανθάνωντος)," that is, of "that one who has knowledge of what is just, beautiful, and good" (276c). Such speech is characterized by Phaedrus as "the speech of the person who knows, a speech living and ensouled, the written version of which would justly be called the image (εἶδωλον) (276a). Living and ensouled speech is therefore unlike the speech of the one who has knowledge and in the awareness of the limits of written speeches "sows his gardens of written words ... in the joy of play" (276d). The play of written speeches, however, in contrast to vulgar play that finds "pleasure in drinking parties and whatever is related to these," is characterized by Phaedrus as "very beautiful and noble ... befitting a person who is able to play and

make fables about justice” (276e), beauty, and the good. Socrates adds, “it is far more noble, I think, to be serious about these things when a person uses the dialectical art and selects an appropriate soul, sowing and planting his speeches with knowledge, speeches which have the means to defend themselves and the one who plants them. These speeches are not fruitless but bear seed from which other speeches, planted in other fields, have the means to pass this seed on, forever immortal, and to make the person possessing them as blessed as is humanly possible” (276e-277a).

It is important to note that the critique of writing in the *Phaedrus* isn't a critique of writing per se or, better, of the written speeches composed by one who has knowledge. Rather, it is a critique of the speech maker who has knowledge and who is serious about imparting it to others who would attempt to do so exclusively in writing. Writing that is authored by someone aware of its limits, despite its nonserious and therefore playful mode, has a legitimate purpose: to remind both the author and others of the knowledge they already have. Its inability to impart that knowledge to others, because its mute words signify only one and the same thing, is in no way presented as an obstacle to writing's function to remind those who already know.

In light of this critique, it's legitimate to ask how things stand with the author of the *Phaedrus*. Has he sown all the seeds of his knowledge in the written words of the dialogue? Or perhaps, better, does their μίμησις of the action in the dialogue anywhere provide evidence that their Father is withholding knowledge or engaging in play? Regarding the *idéa* of the soul, Socrates avers, “It would take a god and a long time to examine in every detail what it is, but human beings can describe in a shorter amount of time what she is like” (246a). Socrates here seems to be indicating that a more exhaustive inquiry into the being of soul is both possible and is being deferred in favor of an account of its image. In speaking of speech's capacity to guide the soul, Socrates maintains “someone planning to become a rhetorician must know what forms (εἶδη) the soul possesses” (271d), that is, both that their “number is so and so” and “their quality such and such.” This knowledge, in turn, according to Socrates, is to be combined with knowledge of “the forms of speeches” being “so and so and the quality of each such and such,” to the end of knowing that “people of this sort can be easily persuaded by such and such for this or that reason to do one thing or another, while people of a different sort are hard to persuade for these reasons.” However, neither the number and qualities of the forms of the soul nor the number and quality of speeches are investigated, let alone appear, anywhere in the dialogue. And when examining with Phaedrus the composition of his palinode, Socrates states, “In some way, though I can't say exactly how, we offered an image of erotic experience and perhaps touched upon a truth in some instances and in others were wide of the mark, blending together a not totally unpersuasive account in a playful way” (265b-c). It's curious, to say the least, that Socrates's assessment of his spoken “speech” – whose mimetic medium, of course, is Plato's written words – is that it was playful. The curiosity, of course, stems from this assessment's reversal of the critique of writing's assignment of play to writing and seriousness to spoken speech.

Another curiosity is the treatment by the dialogue as a whole of writing and speaking. Socrates's and Phaedrus's entire discussion is contextualized by their agreement, expressed by Socrates, that “this much is clear to all: writing speeches, at least, is not

in itself shameful” (258d). Rather, what is shameful is, again in Socrates’s words, “not speaking or writing well, but doing it shamefully or badly.” Phaedrus agrees with Socrates’s proposal that they ought “to cross-examine Lysias about these things, and anyone else who has ever written or intends to write anything ... whether he writes with measure like a speech-maker or without measure like an unskilled speaker.” But they never do. That is, the dialogue leaves unanswered the question of “what’s befitting and what’s not fitting in writing; when it is done well and when it’s not fitting” (274b), which Socrates notes near the dialogue’s end still “remains to be considered.” Instead, the question of whether there exists a τέχνη of speaking well is explored and, if not answered, sufficiently investigated to permit Phaedrus and Socrates to agree to this. Spoken speech that comes from one who knows about what is just, beautiful, and good, who uses “dialectical art” (276e) and speech’s capacity to guide souls (ψυχαγωγία), can be clear, complete, and worthy of serious consideration. Moreover, because the λόγος originating in such speech “is able to defend itself” (276a) and because it knows when and to whom to speak, “examining and teaching” (ἀνακρίσεως καὶ διδασχῆς) (277e) “the truth adequately” (276c) may take place.

### **WRITTEN AND SPOKEN SPEECH IN THE *PHAEDRUS***

The critique of written speech, which follows Socrates’s remark that the criteria for good writing have yet to be addressed, brings with it the question of whether that critique has any bearing on the *image* of speech’s spoken original that is extolled by the critique presented in the dialogue – the question, that is, whether the criteria for good spoken speech may also be applicable to good writing. Twice in the dialogue (271b and 277a-b), Socrates indicates to Phaedrus that their discussion of the possible τέχνη of rhetoric has application to writing. Moreover, the structure of their dialogue mirrors Socrates’s stipulation that “every [spoken] speech is like a living creature” (264c). At the dialogue’s head is Lysias, at its feet Isocrates, and in between are Phaedrus and Socrates. In the course of the dialogue, the speech of the absent Lysias is critically analyzed by Socrates and Phaedrus, as are Socrates’s speeches. At the dialogue’s very end, the philosophical promise of the absent Isocrates is prophetically praised by Socrates. And just prior to that end, Socrates remarks that he and Phaedrus “have been playing” (278b) in their discussion of speeches and that they’ve played “enough” (μετρίως), which is to say, “fittingly.” Apparently, then, the true author of their discussion, Plato, thinks it’s fitting that their discussion conclude without explicitly addressing the criteria for assessing when speech that is written is written well. Attentiveness to the dialogue’s μίμησις of the action that moved that discussion forward, however, reveals that that action is instantiating – with two crucial exceptions – precisely the criteria Socrates and Phaedrus agreed characterize written speech’s better and more capable brother’s exemplary mode. Thus, the three speeches presented in the dialogue are analyzed and criticized using the twin measures of their dialectical and *psychagogic* competencies. Socrates, moreover, supports and defends the truth in his speeches, modifying them as he sees fit by adding and taking away words and indeed, as I will show, by freely interpreting them. In a word, then, the action in the written dialogue portrays the spoken word as the force driving the discussion forward.

The first of the two exceptions, already hinted at, are Socrates’s references to the playfulness of both his palinode and his and Phaedrus’s discussion of speeches. This is,

of course, inconsistent with the argument behind the critique of writing. Consistency with that argument would demand that the original spoken speeches be portrayed as serious affairs by the dialogue's λόγος. The second exception, no doubt related to this first, is that Socrates and Phaedrus *peak* about speech that is *written*. I say this in full confidence that nobody can take seriously the claim that Socrates's two speeches are not *written* speeches. He himself doesn't claim authorship for them, saying variously either that he can't remember their author (235c-d) or that the local gods (238c, 241e, 262d, 263d), or Phaedrus, or Stesichorus are their source. Given their complexity, it's obvious that they can hardly have been improvised on the spot, no matter how enthused Socrates was, short of his being the recipient of divine dictation. This possibility, however, is no more believable than than it is now, any more than it's believable that it's not true that Socrates is able to "easily construct stories about Egypt or any other place" (275b) he wants.

### **EROS AND THE STRUCTURE AND CONTENT OF THE PHAEDRUS**

Returning to the action that drives the dialogue forward, what's behind its discussion of writing – Eros – is of course its source. At the head of the dialogue is the Eros uniting Lysias and Phaedrus; at its feet, the Eros uniting Socrates and his "companion" (278e) Isocrates. And in between, there's the Eros uniting Socrates and Phaedrus. Or perhaps, better, we could say the source of the action driving the discussion is the madness whose union with Eros we witness Socrates confronting and in whose grip he himself seems to be. After all, Socrates's bid to get Eros to stop Lysias from making speeches in praise of the non-lover not only has him praising the lover but talking like a lover to Phaedrus and, indeed, treating him as the beloved. And when praying to Eros at the end of his palinode, he connects the cessation of Lysias's making speeches praising the non-lover – by Eros turning Lysias toward a love of wisdom – with stopping Phaedrus from "going in two directions as now" (257b) so he can "devote his life solely to Eros with wisdom-loving speeches." But in what two directions is Phaedrus going? Toward rhetoric and philosophy? That hardly makes sense, since Phaedrus has evidenced little philosophical inclination in the dialogue so far, focused as he is on the beauty of speeches, not their truth. Phaedrus's responses to Socrates's prayer and palinode are telling in this regard. He clearly thinks the prayer is about *them*, saying "I join with you in that prayer, Socrates, if this will really be better for *us*" (my emphasis). And as for Lysias, Phaedrus is seemingly ready to drop him like a cloak, anxious that the beauty of Socrates's speech has made Lysias "seem second-rate by comparison" (257c). Indeed, Phaedrus is ready to enlist to this end the slander of "one of those public figures in the city" who was recently criticizing Lysias.

### **THE APPEARANCES OF MADNESS IN THE DIALOGUE**

If to be "made sick (νοσέω) with desire" (228b) is a sign of madness, madness first shows up in the third person in the dialogue, or, rather, with Socrates speaking about himself and Phaedrus in the third person as he describes Phaedrus's "coming upon the man who is made sick with desire just to hear speeches" and speaking about Phaedrus who, "merely seeing him [Socrates] – was delighted that he should have a fellow bacchic reveler" (228b). By my count, madness appears nineteen more times in the dialogue:

2. In the first speech, written by Lysias, read by Phaedrus, and referred to by Phaedrus late in the dialogue as “our” [his and Socrates’s] (264e) speech: “for lovers certainly agree that they are sick (νοσεῖν) rather than of sound mind” (231d).

3. In Socrates’s account of his response to Phaedrus while he read the speech: “while I was looking at you reading, you seemed lit up by the speech. Thinking that you perceived such matters better than I, I followed you throughout, caught up in a bacchic frenzy, a divine source” (Θείας κεφαλῆς) (234d).

4. In Socrates’s critical question to Phaedrus about the speech he just read, regarding its author’s failure to “argue that the non-lover should be favored over the lover without praising the one for keeping his head and then censuring the other for being out of his mind (ἄφρον)” (235e-236a).

5. In Phaedrus’s response to this criticism, which grants Socrates “the one essential proposition, that the lover is sicker (μᾶλλον νοσεῖν) than the non-lover” (236b).

6. In Socrates’s characterization of Eros in his first speech, as “when desire (ἐπιθυμία) without reason (ἄνευ λόγου) rules over straight minded opinion and is driven towards the pleasure of beauty, when this desire is violently moved by kindred desires toward the beauty of the body and is victorious, it takes its name from that very force and is called Eros” (238b-c).

7. In Socrates’s first speech’s account of the lover as “[a] man who is ruled by pleasures and is a slave to pleasure ... a sick man (νοσοῦντι)” (238e), for whom “anything that offers little or no resistance is sweet.”

8. Again in Socrates’s first speech, when he describes what happens when the lover stops loving, “he adopts a different ruler (ἄρχοντα) for himself and a new champion, mind and moderation replacing love and madness (μανίας)” (241a).

9. Again, in its final appearance in Socrates’s first speech, when the beloved realizes he never should “have yielded to a lover and to one who is perforce out of his mind (ἀνοήτω)” (241c).

10. In the beginning of Socrates’s palinode, where he relates that a speech about Eros “is not a ‘genuine account’ if it claims that one ought to grant favors to a non-lover rather than to a lover *who is near at hand*, just because one is of sound mind and the other is mad (μαίνεται)” (244a, my emphasis). Immediately following is the first division of madness in the dialogue, where, after implicitly separating “madness” (μαίνια) that is “simply bad,” Socrates subdivides the kind of madness through which “the greatest of all good things come to us,” that is, the “divinely given” madness, into four kinds, albeit while articulating at this point only the first three. Here divine madness is divided first into prophecy, second into the source of release from severe diseases whose etiology is “some sort of ancient blood-guilt” (244e), third into “madness and possession ... from the Muses” (245a), and the fourth, Eros, which remains to be specified. Socrates cites the authority of the ancients concerning the good connected with madness (μαίνια) that is connected with prophesy, claiming that they recognized “it’s beautiful when mixed with a divine portion” (244c) and that they also “testify, [madness] is more ennobling than moderation, the one coming from a god, the other from man” (244d). No authorities are cited, however, when Socrates relates that “madness in conjunction with purifications and secret rites” (244e) helps “a person who is mad and possessed in the right way, to find a release from present

ills” or when he avers that “the poetry of those who are mad will obliterate the poetry of a sound and self-controlled mind” (245a).

11. In the imagistic account of the “nature of the soul,” madness first appears, as it first appeared in the dialogue, in the third person. Socrates relates that, “[a]s is just” (249c), among the souls that have seen the truth in the *ὑπερουράνιον τόπον* and therefore “can enter into our human form,” only “the *διάνοια* of a philosopher, the one who is in love with wisdom, grows wings.” This is because the “capacity through memory” of the *διάνοια* to be near to the “beinghood of what is” (*τὸ ὄν ὄντως*), the same beinghood the proximity to which “a god is divine,” allows the man to be “perfect” who correctly handles “such reminders” by being “perpetually initiated into these perfect mysteries.” Such a man, “standing apart from zealous human pursuits and being near to the divine” (249d), appears to the “many” to be “deranged” (*παρακινῶν*). Socrates maintains that “everything about our fourth madness is here” (249d), someone looking at earthly beauty being reminded of the true beauty, followed by their acquisition of wings. He relates, moreover, that unable to “take flight” despite being eager, “he shows no concern for things below,” which provide “reasons to think him tinged with madness (*μανικῶς*.” Socrates then shifts the perspective of his discourse to the one who “has this madness and the one who shares in it (249e), this is the best of all divine possessions, and it comes from the best sources.” He goes on to relate that “the lover hit with this madness (*μανίας*) is called a lover of beautiful people and beautiful things.”

12. In the recent initiate, who fears appearing “excessively mad (*ἀήθης*)” (251a) when, after feeling “something of those old terrors ... when he sees a god-like face or any part of the body which is a good imitation of beauty,” and when, later, “looking more he feels reverence as if he were before a god,” he desires to “sacrifice to his darling boy as if to a statue and a god.”

13. In the “passion (*πάθος*) ... human beings call love” (252b), which appears when “these two are mixed together” (251d): one, the entire soul being stung all over, raging with pain (*ὀδυνᾶται*)” (251d) at being separated (*χωρίς*) from the beautiful boy; and two, “remembering (*μνήσῃν*)” the beautiful boy or looking at him again, “it rejoices.” The former, according to Socrates, comes to pass when desire’s previously “inflowing and invading draughts of beauty” (251c), whose source is the soul’s looking at the boy’s beauty, are “locked” into the soul when it is separated from the boy. In this condition of separation, “the relief from pain and a feeling of joy” (251d) caused by the desire to be present to the boy’s beauty, with its watering and warming of the swollen soul’s sprouting wings, are impossible. The soul, then, is “perplexed (*ἀποροῦσα*) and raging mad (*λυττᾷ*), and raving like a rutting elephant (*ἄμμανῆς*), unable to sleep at night nor remain in one place by day, but, yearning she runs to whatever place she thinks she will see the boy who possesses beauty” (251e). And “[w]hen she has seen him and is bathed in the waters of desire, she loosens those places previously jammed tight and, free from the stings and birth pangs, she draws in a big breath, and once again reaps the fruits, for a moment, of this most-sweet pleasure” (251e-252a). Because of this, “being near as possible to the beloved” (252a) is the soul’s “only doctor for her greatest labors and pains” (252b).

14. In what the gods name the passion the humans call Eros, “Verily mortals call him winged Eros, but gods call him Winged, because he makes things rise.”

15. In the benefit “the love-crazed (μανέντος) friend” (253c) bestows upon the beloved with the initiation rite of imitating a god “in the hope that, trying as they can, they may lead the loved one wholly and entirely to resemble both themselves and the god whom they honor,” “provided, that is, the boy is captured.”

16. In its relation to the supreme good provided the captured boy and his lover, “divine madness (μανία) – and, for that matter, “mortal moderation” (256b) – can provide “no greater good.” The supreme good being their philosophical enslavement of “what enables viciousness to enter the soul” and the accompanying liberation of “what allows excellence access,” together with the captured boy and his lover being “winged and buoyant” when they die.

17. In the no “small prize for their erotic madness (μανίας)” (256d) that is “carried off” by the captured boy and his lover, who “go through life as friends with each other, although not as close as the philosophic couple” (256d). Erotic madness, then, granting no wings to their souls in death but yet the eagerness “to sprout feathers as they leave their bodies” (256d), such that “from their love shall grow, in due time [but after death], common plumage” (256e). No small prize indeed, since all this is granted the lover and captured boy despite adopting a life “that loves honor and not wisdom” (256c), which leads, perhaps, to the drunkenness or carelessness that permits “the couple’s two unbridled horses” to “catch their souls unguarded,” such that they “carry out a course of action which many consider most blissful” and “do so for the rest of their lives, although sparingly” (256c).

18. In the only appearance of madness in the dialogue on the part of the beloved, Socrates addresses his “darling boy” (256e) Phaedrus, informing him that “a non-lover’s intimacy is diluted by mortal moderation and pays meager mortal benefits,” as “[i]t begets in his friend’s soul a slavish economizing which most people praise as a virtue but will cause *your* soul to roam for 9,000 years around earth and beneath it, mindlessly (ἄνοον)” (257a, my emphasis).

19. In Socrates’s picking out “something useful to look at for those interested in examining speeches” (264e). After dropping, at Phaedrus’s request, Lysias’s speech, which, like Phaedrus’s reference to Lysias’s speech as “our” (his and Socrates’s), Socrates goes on to say regarding “*our* other speeches” (my emphasis) that in them “there were two forms (εἶδη) of madness (μανίας), one caused by human illness, the other by a divine upheaval of the customary way of abiding law and tradition (εἰωθότων νομίμων)” (265a). Of the divine form, Socrates goes on to separate “four parts assigned to four gods: a seer’s inspiration coming from Apollo, mystical initiation ascribed to Dionysus, a poetic madness coming from the Muses, and a forth madness coming from Aphrodite and Eros, which we called erotic madness (μανίαν) and the best” (265b).

20. In, finally, its last appearance in the dialogue, madness shows up in Socrates’s discussion of two “things that were mentioned by chance” (265c) in the “play for sport” by which he characterizes his speeches, “which would not be unpleasant to seize upon if someone had the power to capture their power by means of τέχνη” (265c-d). The first “involves someone whose sight can bring into (συνορῶντα) a single form (ιδέα) things which have previously been scattered in all directions so that by defining each thing he makes clear any subject he ever wants to teach about” (265d). Socrates observes “just now

speaking about Eros, we defined what it is, whether well or poorly,” which “allowed the speech to progress with clarity and consistency.” The second, converse power is “to cut up a composition, form by form according to its natural joints and not to try to hack through any part as a bad butcher might.” Socrates’s example of this cutting-up power is “the two recent speeches, which seized upon a common form (κοινή εἶδος) to explain the loss of coherent thought (ἄφρον)” (265e). Comparing the cutting undertaken in the two speeches to the body’s natural division of parts having the same name into pairs of things, for example, “left arm and right arm,” Socrates relates that “so also the two speeches assumed that madness (παρανοία) comes forth (πεφυκός) as one form (ἐν εἶδος) in us, though capable of being divided into two parts (266a).” Thus, Socrates goes on, “[o]ne of the speeches cut the part on the left and did not cease cutting until it found among these parts something called ‘left love’ and then, with absolute justice, abused it; the other speech, however, led us to the madness on the right side and discovered there a love with the same name as the other but of some divine nature. Setting this before us, the speech praised it as the greatest cause of good for us” (266a-b).

### **DISCREPANCIES BETWEEN THE DIVISIONS OF MADNESS IN THE SPEECHES AND IN THEIR EXAMINATION**

To the extent that counting is uncontroversial, it can be said, surveying these appearances of madness, that they don’t add up. Or, better, that Socrates’s account of the content of all three speeches when he and Phaedrus examine them does not tally exactly with their content as originally delivered. Granted, if we straightforwardly go along with the dialogue’s μύμησις, this examination is only in a position to return to the original in the case of Lysias’s written speech – which, in fact, they do, making its beginning repeat itself two times, word for word. But even then, the account doesn’t add up. For instance, Socrates’s first speech attributes the claim to Lysias’s speech “that one ought to grant favors to a non-lover rather than to a lover who is near at hand” (244a), the latter part of which is inaccurate, as Lysias’s speech makes no mention of a lover being nearby. But there are much bigger discrepancies that in my view are sufficiently obvious as to rule out the interpretation that their source is in Plato’s lack of concern for exact statements.

Perhaps the biggest discrepancy is how exactly madness itself is being divided. In Socrates’s palinode, the first cut separates madness that is “simply bad” (244a) from “divinely given” madness (μανία). Nothing further is mentioned about simply bad madness in the dialogue. In the examination of the speeches, Socrates relates to Phaedrus that in the dialogue’s second and third speeches, which he calls “our other speeches” (265a), “there were two forms (εἶδη) of madness (μανία), one caused by human illness, the other by a divine upheaval of the customary way of abiding by law and custom (εἰωθότων νομίμων)” (265a). These two forms of madness, of course, do not track the division Socrates made in the palinode, and, like the madness that is simply bad, nothing further is heard about the form of madness caused by human illness in the dialogue. And then there’s the final division of madness (παρανοία) into left and right, whose cutting is reported to terminate in “left love” (266a) and “right love,” respectively. Again, not only has there been no previous mention of this division, but the divisions themselves are attributed by Socrates to different speeches. Indeed, one of the speeches is Socrates’s first speech, which earlier

in the dialogue his δαίμων warned him had “committed some offence or other against the divine” (242d) but which now, in the final discussion of madness in the dialogue, Socrates characterizes as having abused left love with “absolute justice” (266a).

### **INCONSISTENCIES IN THE DIVISIONS OF THE FORMS OF MADNESS**

Then there’s the matter of the divisions of divinely given madness itself. In the palinode, Socrates initially divides it into four forms: prophetic, healing, possession by the Muses, and Erotic. Later in the palinode, the erotic form of Eros is further divided, into the philosophical and the honor loving. Recounting these divisions in the examination of the speeches, Socrates leaves out the healing form of madness and further divides the palinode’s third form, separating out Dionysian mystical initiation from the madness coming from the Muses. Moreover, the fourth madness is now also said to come from Aphrodite and not just Eros as presented in the original speech.

Compounding these inconsistencies between the divisions of madness in the speeches and their recounting in their examination is Socrates’s claim that he and Phaedrus had “defined what it [Eros] is” (265d) in a manner that made it sufficiently clear as a subject to allow teaching about it. Yet one will search Socrates’s speeches in vain for a single account of it, which is to say, a definition of Eros as “one.” Not only does Socrates’s palinode explicitly criticize Lysias’s speech for trying to convince Phaedrus that Eros is *one* thing, but the discrepancies in divisions just noted present prima facie evidence that nobody in the dialogue is presented as having the “sight” (265d) capable of bringing Eros “into a single form (ιδέα).”

All these discrepancies go away, however, or so I want to argue, if two points are taken into account: one, despite its written medium, the proper criteria for judging Plato’s dialogue *Phaedrus* are those spelled out in the dialogue itself for judging proper and improper speech; and two, the partners in the dialogue’s conversation are not only lovers of speech but also lovers of beauty.

Taking into account the first point, the written medium of the dialogue can be seen to effect the graphic legerdemain of not only imitating but giving rise to spoken speech. The imitation of spoken speech becomes apparent the moment the εἶδος of spoken speech is recognized in the give and take between unitary definition, the necessary positing as *one* by λόγος of that which is being spoken about, and, when the speech imitated is philosophical, the inevitable fractioning of that unity with its critical examination. In a word: division and synthesis are not each one and both together two discrete movements of διάνοια and λόγος, but rather inseparable moments of the higher unities that each must necessarily presuppose in order to be what they are – to wit, the unities of the εἶδη.

### **THE APPEARANCES OF THE ΕΙΔΗ OF EROS, MADNESS, AND BEAUTY IN THE ΛΟΓΟΣ THAT CAPTURES, SACRIFICES TO, AND WORSHIPS THE BELOVED**

Taking into account the second point, the *beinghood* (τὸ ὄν ὄντως) of these higher unities can be seen to appear, and necessarily only to so appear in the dialogue, in the speech of two erotically aroused partners in conversation. Moreover, that appearance is conditioned by their speech providing reminders for those who are already knowledgeable about what it is speaking about. That would be us, or so I want to argue. Since the fulcrum of their erotic

speech is about the seduction of the beloved Phaedrus by the absent Lysias and the “lover who is near at hand,” assuming the Father of the words in the dialogue is knowledgeable about what he writes and assuming, too, that we are in some sense knowledgeable about such things as well, we should have the power to make apparent what their speech is about. What it seems to me to be about above all is Phaedrus’s desire for his lovers to “carry out a course of action that many consider the most blissful” while yet offering genuine friendship and Socrates’s desire for “a regimented life and a love of wisdom,” which would allow him to be “self-composed” and “master” of himself when confronted by the beauty of his beloveds. Socrates’s desire, it seems to me, only makes sense within the context of his defining question, “whether I happen to be some sort of beast even more complex in form and more tumultuous than the hundred-headed Typhon, or whether I’m something simpler and gentler, having a share by nature of the divine and unTyphonic” (230a). Confronted with Phaedrus’s overwhelming beauty in an idyllic setting, Socrates’s answer to his question doesn’t appear to be a foregone conclusion.

Lysias’s absence from this scene, moreover, means that Socrates has the advantage over Phaedrus’s other lover, since Lysias cannot defend his written words from his competitor’s abuse. Taking full advantage of this, Socrates seems to win Phaedrus’s affection, not only by criticizing both the form and content of Lysias’s speech but of course by besting it not once but twice. Indeed, the last words of Socrates’s palinode, addressed to his “darling boy,” are that the price for intimacy with a non-lover is a soul that wanders “mindlessly” (ἄνοον) around and under the earth for 9,000 years. And, of course, since Socrates’s palinode has exposed the non-lover as a concealed lover, it seems to me that Socrates is suggesting that *this* is the price Phaedrus will pay for intimacy with Lysias.

It seems significant to me that this is the only place in the dialogue that madness is attributed to the beloved – significant, above all, because Socrates’s palinode characterizes the captured beloved’s soul as “filled with Eros” (255d), by the “return Eros,” the “image” of the lover’s Eros, which returns the boy’s beauty “into the beautiful one through his eyes” (255c). But it is an Eros without madness, and in fact Socrates says the beloved “calls and considers this to be friendship, not Eros” (255d-e). Indeed, Socrates reports that the beloved desires “less intensely” (255e) than his lover.

Surveying the appearances of madness in the dialogue, we note that it first appeared in Lysias’s speech without an argument. We note, too, that when Socrates explicitly criticized that point, Phaedrus granted him the proposition “that the lover is sicker than the non-lover.” Thus Socrates’s first speech doesn’t make an argument either. In fact, an argument for this is never made in the dialogue. It’s simply assumed that sickness and madness are inseparable from Eros and, thus, that the εἶδη of each are inseparable as well. What about, then, the divine portion of Erotic madness? Does the dialogue present an argument for that? I find it significant in this regard that Eros’s divine madness first appears in the third person, in the judgment of the many who think the lover of wisdom, smitten by the beauty of the beloved and reminded of true Beauty, is mad because he neglects his earthly affairs. When Socrates’s palinode refers to the lover being “hit” (249d) with this madness, as something he either “has” or “shares in,” the madness in question is still only that which has its basis in the judgment of the many that the philosopher is mad.

I don't think this is an accident. Not even the divine Plato is capable of presenting an argument for the inseparability of the "invisible looks" – as I prefer to translate εἶδος – of Eros from the invisible looks of sickness and madness, let alone divine madness. Or better, the divine Plato knows not only that an argument capable of establishing the community (κοινωνία) of the εἶδη of Eros and madness is impossible but also that it would be superfluous. We, of course, also know it and are necessarily reminded of this knowledge when we read Plato's written words. But from this it doesn't follow that our knowledge of the εἶδη in question is *exact*, that their unities, like their quantitative counterparts, are homogeneous, each one discrete, itself by itself everlastingly what it is. Rather, their "unity" notwithstanding, they are anything but exact, given their appearances through the soul's unlimited motion, the erotic ἀρχή of that motion and its τέλος in the invisible looks of the Beauty itself that is inseparable from the sensuous beauty of the face and body parts of the beloved. Or better, given their appearances in and through the λόγος spoken *not* to some "beloved in general" but to *this* beloved nearby; or, if the lover and beloved are separated, to *this* image of the beloved. Or even better, given their appearances in the λόγος through which *this* beloved is captured and, once captured, sacrificed to and worshipped. This, it strikes me, is the reason both Phaedrus and Socrates refer to *all* the speeches in the *Phaedrus* as "our" speeches, and it is the reason as well that those speeches, despite being playfully written by their Father in a garden of words, pass into the soul of the dialogue's reader without a word being spoken.

### **CODA**

We are bothered, or at least I am, by the question: Who or what does Socrates really desire? In his final division of erotic madness in the palinode, into the love of wisdom and love of honor, he suggests that the lover's and the beloved's souls' philosophical victory over their dark horses amounts to winning the first of three rounds in the true Olympic games, with the prize being their winged and buoyant souls at death. Given such a prize, what could possibly be at stake in the true Olympic games' next two rounds and what prizes in store for the souls of the victors?

# POETIC SCIENCE IN PLATO'S *TIMAEUS*

*She was the single artificer of the world  
In which she sang. And when she sang, the sea,  
Whatever self it had, became the self  
That was her song, for she was the maker.*  
[Wallace Stevens, *The Idea of Order at Key West*]

The *Timaeus*, one of Plato's strangest and most enigmatic dialogues, is arguably the single most important work for anyone interested in bridging the gap between physical science and the humanities.<sup>1</sup> The dialogue engages in massive bridge building, as the fictional Timaeus brings together an astonishing array of sciences in the course of his long speech. These include arithmetic, plane and solid geometry, the theory of ratio (λόγος), astronomy, harmonics, physics, stoichiometry, physiology, pathology, and psychology. Last year, this dialogue played an important role in our discussion of mathematics, physics, and astronomy. This year, it comes to our aid once more, this time bridging the gap between cosmology or physics and biology. The *Timaeus* can do this because, within the context of its account of the visible whole, the cosmos is an animal – a living thing composed of body, soul, and intellect (30b-c).

Timaeus presents his grand scientific synthesis in what he calls a “likely story” or εἰκός μῦθος (29d). This is the most fascinating bridge the dialogue constructs for the reader – a bridge between science and poetry, λόγος and μῦθος. But in fact, it is far more perplexing than a bridge. A bridge takes you from one point to another: it bridges a gap between two points while keeping them distinct. But in the likely story, *there is no gap*. As a mysterious third kind of speech, the story blurs the distinction between science and myth, mathematics and poetry. Plato, here, has not so much built a bridge as he has concocted a magic potion that casts over the whole physical world the spell of mathematical enchantment and divine purpose.

---

<sup>1</sup> This essay is a revised version of a lecture presented at Notre Dame University in May 2004. The lecture was part of a three-year NEH grant to promote interdisciplinary teaching and learning at colleges and universities across the United States. The program's title was “Bridging the Gap Between the Sciences and Humanities.” The focus of the third and final session, during which the lecture was given, was biology.

Another way in which the likely story connects the sciences and the humanities is the bond the story forges between mathematics and ethics as the study of the human good. As we know from the prologue, Timaeus is not only a professional cosmologist; he is also a statesman from Locri, an Italian city famous for its strict adherence to law, and hales from one of the city's best and wealthiest families (20a). Timaeus, as we discover, is an aristocrat in his cosmology as well. This shows itself in how often he uses the word *καλόν*, noble or beautiful. At one point, fairly late in his speech, Timaeus sums up his aristocratic physics in a motto: "All the good is beautiful, and the beautiful is not disproportionate" (87c).<sup>2</sup> Throughout the likely story, goodness is associated with the beautiful structures of mathematics and badness with the ugliness of disorder. The Timaeian physicist is the champion of all that is decent, healthy, and beautifully constituted. These virtues are summed up in that resonant Greek word *κόσμος*, which means not order simply but beautiful order and adornment.<sup>3</sup>

Yet another way in which the likely story fits our current project of connecting science and the humanities is that humanity is the goal of the likely story. In the dramatic prologue, Critias, with much self-aggrandizing, promises to give a speech about the heroism of ancient Athens in her battle with the insolent kings of Atlantis (21a ff.).<sup>4</sup> In this way, by identifying his own city with the best city we hear about in *The Republic*, Critias seeks to gratify Socrates's desire for a speech about his best city engaged in the deeds and words of war (19b-c). Timaeus will provide, as it were, the cosmic background music for this speech. Critias tells Socrates, "It seemed good to us that, since Timaeus here is the most astronomical of us and has made it his special task to know about the nature of the all, he should speak first, beginning from the birth of the cosmos and ending in the nature of mankind" (27a). As we see in the story of Timaeus, man is the completer of the cosmos. The artful making of the world order starts with the highest things and goes *down*; it proceeds from better to worse. As Timaeus takes us on this downward journey, he always makes sure that the lower things we encounter are as beautifully ordered as possible. To borrow a saying from Aristotle's story about Heraclitus in *Parts of Animals*, "there are gods even here."<sup>5</sup> Man is the most important step in this downward motion, since he alone, as the unstable unity of god and beast, contains all the animal possibilities within himself.

My goal in this essay is to say what the physical world looks like in light of Timaeus's motto that connects the good, the beautiful, and the proportionate. What happens when one mixes science and poetry in the way that Timaeus does? What can we learn from this strange mix? My intention is to place before us some important themes that connect poetry and science. I begin by noting that the likely story is really three separate stories,

<sup>2</sup> The phrase in Greek has an especially musical sound: *πάν δὴ τὸ ἀγαθὸν καλόν, τὸ δὲ καλὸν οὐκ ἄμετρον*.

<sup>3</sup> In keeping with the formality of the drama, Socrates has dressed up for the occasion. He is *κεκοσμημένος* (20c) and therefore suitably attired to hear Timaeus's speech about the *κόσμος*.

<sup>4</sup> The story recalls Athens's glorious role in the Persian War and, ominously, her own insolence during the war with Sparta, when an imperialistic Athens sought to conquer Sicily and suffered miserable defeat.

<sup>5</sup> I. 5. 645a19-23. Aristotle is warning his high-minded students not to be snobs when it comes to the inquiry into "low" living things and their parts. He tells the story of visitors who went to the home of Heraclitus and found him in the kitchen warming himself by the stove. Seeing the godlike man in such humble circumstances, they hesitated to enter. Heraclitus then urged them to take heart and come in, "for there are gods even here."

which Timaeus never weaves together into a coherent whole – an odd fact, given the story’s concern with wholeness. This incoherence is one of the dialogue’s central themes and seems to point to what is no doubt an incoherence in the cosmos itself. It is part of Plato’s complex reflection on the problem we come up against when we try to depict the cosmos as though it came to be in successive steps with a clear-cut “before” and “after.” I shall call Timaeus’s three stories The Story of the Soul, The Story of the Body, and The Story of Human Nature.

Before proceeding to the first story, I must say a word about the speech that introduces the famous phrase “likely story.” Socrates calls this speech the “prelude” (προοίμιον) to Timaeus’s “song” (νόμος) (27c-29d).<sup>6</sup> Timaeus gives two reasons why the song, or νόμος, he is about to perform is a likely story. The first is that the world is an image, or εἰκών, crafted in the likeness of a purely intelligible archetype by a good and noble god. If, in our theorizing, we are to respond fittingly to cosmos as image, we must employ a mode of speech that relies on images. But the likely story does not simply use images; it actively, and often elaborately, constructs them. For Timaeus, physics, most especially when allied with mathematics, is model building. It is a form of ποιησις, making, from which we get the word “poetry.” The artist-god is for this reason not merely a mythical character in the story; he is also the divine model for our human act of scientific poeticizing.

The second reason for a likely story is our human nature. Here is how Timaeus puts it, as he addresses this part of his speech directly to Socrates:

So then, Socrates, if, in saying many things on many topics concerning gods and the birth of the all, we prove to be incapable of rendering speeches that are always and in all respects in agreement with themselves and drawn with precision, don’t be surprised. But if we provide likelihoods inferior to none, we should be well pleased with them, remembering that I who speak as well as you my judges have a human nature, so that it is fitting for us to be receptive to the likely story about these things and not to search further for anything beyond it. (29c-d)<sup>7</sup>

The judges to whom Timaeus refers are the men who judge the contests in the performances of music and poetry that took place during Athenian religious festivals. The greatest of these festivals is being celebrated at the time of the dialogue – the Great Panathenaea, the feast in honor of Athena (21a). The topical reference to poetry contests fits with the opening of the dialogue, *Critias*, where Socrates refers to Timaeus as “the former poet” (108b).

In spite of his god-like intelligence, the cosmologist must acknowledge that he has a human nature, that he is a man and not a god. This reminder of our humanity, and

<sup>6</sup> Socrates uses this same language in *The Republic*, when he calls the mathematical art of turning the soul from becoming to being as the “prelude” to the “song itself that dialectic performs” (7. 531d-532a).

<sup>7</sup> Translations are from my edition of the *Timaeus* for Hackett Publishing Company (2nd ed., 2016).

of the need to be moderate, is the first indication that Timaeus's poetic science does not have a purely theoretical end. As a form of ethical, quasi-political music that aims above all at moderation, the song of Timaeus will not just explain the cosmos but praise it and, through a kind of intellectual music, establish the right relation between man and cosmos. Here, we see the other meaning of νόμος coming into play – νόμος as law, as well as song. To judge the likely story correctly, we, like Socrates, must accept it in the right spirit and not confuse it with dialectic as the study of what is, acknowledging that whatever peculiar power the story has will be released only if we respect the limits to which human judge and human poet are subject. If we put this together with the first reason for a likely story, we get an important result: for Timaeus, cosmology rightly understood – as noble image making or model building – is a proper expression of our human nature, limits, and sound-mindedness. As a song in honor of the god Kosmos, the likely story is also an act of piety. Timaeus's poetic science is intellectual piety toward the divine whole, which is not only our theoretical object but also our inescapable and divine fatherland.<sup>8</sup>

### **PART ONE. THE STORY OF THE SOUL**

The song of Timaeus begins with the divine craftsman, or demiurge, whose existence is postulated rather than proved. This is Timaeus's way of deifying τέχνη, or art, which the divine craftsman personifies. The god gazes upon a perfectly stable and utterly intelligible archetype, or παράδειγμα: the idea of the world. This archetype, which contains the forms of all the animals that will eventually populate the world, simply is and has no becoming. It is that being which the cosmos imitates in the guise of regular periodic motions and the laws that govern these motions. As the not-yet-actual structure of a moving and living world, the archetype, which Timaeus calls the "noetic animal," provides the cosmic blueprint and divine plan that guides the construction of the cosmos (39e ff.). According to this plan, the various forms of motion, power, and life find their prophecy and their fate.

By consulting the archetype, the god tries to make the shifting realm of becoming as beautiful, orderly, and stable as possible – as *being-like* as possible. Like the modern philosopher Leibniz, Timaeus will try to depict the cosmos as the "best of possible worlds." Before the act of ordering, becoming is in a state of disorder. In Timaeus's formulation, the pre-existing chaos moved "unmusically," πλημμελῶς (30a).<sup>9</sup> In order to regulate and tune the primordial discord, the god consults both the archetype and his own goodness of intellect. The god, we are told, is non-envious or ungrudging (29e) – a trait that distinguishes him sharply from the jealous gods of Homer, Hesiod, and Herodotus. Our new, improved god is not stingy with his divinity but desires that the world imitate him as much as possible. To this end, he constructs intelligence "within" soul and soul "within" body (30b). The cosmos at this crucial point becomes a living thing – an animal that resembles us, in that it both lives and thinks.

<sup>8</sup> God, for Timaeus, is νοῦς, intellect, which, in the likely story, is presented as productive rather than contemplative. At 40d-e, Timaeus seems to dispense with the traditional gods of the city with a circular argument. Of course, we must believe that these gods, like the intellectual star-gods, had birth! After all, who can doubt the testimony of those who claimed to be their sons and offspring?

<sup>9</sup> More precisely, it moved in a way that was not in step and in tune with a μέλος, or song.

The cosmic soul is one of the most exquisite pieces of architecture in the likely story. A stunning display of τέχνη, the account of the soul is based on a remarkable premise: that a soul can be built. The construction of the divine soul, the soul of the cosmos as a whole, takes place in three stages. In the first stage, the god mixes together the forms of Same, Other, and Being. He does so with the aid of βία, force (35b), whose presence in the structure of the soul tells us that there is something not entirely rational about even this most beautiful of begotten things. In the second and most fascinating stage, the god shapes this mixture into a band and proceeds to mark off segments that correspond to a string tuned to several octaves of the Pythagorean scale.<sup>10</sup> Finally, in the third stage, the god slices and bends this spine-like band into the circuits of Same and Other. These are the circles that we find in Ptolemy's *Almagest* and Dante's *Paradiso*. The circle of the Same represents the circular, daily rotation of the entire cosmos around its axis; the contrarily moving circle of the Other represents the motion of the sun in the plane of the ecliptic. In Ptolemaic astronomy, this motion is the sun's annual orbit around the earth.

The circuits that we see in the heavens constitute the moving image of the eternal that we call *time* (37d-e). For Timaeus, time is not the ravager and eater-up of mortal things but the fixed order of the moving heavens. Time is *good* by virtue of its close connection with circularity, intellect, and measure. It is because of time that the motions of the physical whole imitate the utterly unmoving realm of being. Time is to the cosmos what rhythm is to a piece of music. Thanks to the beautiful ordering of the cosmic soul, which allows λόγος as ratio to permeate the whole, the world becomes steeped in the noble enchantment I spoke of earlier – the spell of mathematical intelligibility. The world has a bond with being because it is musical – that is, because its intelligible structure is *tuned* like a musical scale and because, in its temporal structure, all its motions are *rhythmic*. Unlike being, the world moves. But as the image of being, it moves in always-stable, reliably periodic ways. At one point, Timaeus compares this periodic motion to the choric dances of Greek tragedy (40c).

We should note that the circuits of Same and Other, although most manifest and purely themselves in the motion of the heavens, are not confined to this realm. This is another instance of “there are gods even here.” The soul, Timaeus tells us, is “woven” throughout the body of the cosmos from center to extremity (36e). The *entire world*, therefore, is filled with the soul's perennial music of mathematical order. The heavenly circles are present, for example, in what we now call simple harmonic motion. This sort of motion is present in a pendulum, a vibrating string, a vibrating column of air, and anything else that exhibits the motion of a wave, including light and the electron in quantum mechanics. Add to these the various circulations we find in living nature – notably in the circulation of the blood, first described by William Harvey – and the periodic picture of nature is complete. All these phenomena exhibit the back-again experience that we enjoy in music: in the recurring, circular pattern of the musical scale, and the recurring pulse of underlying rhythms.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> For a description of the god's construction of the cosmic scale, see Appendix A in my edition of the dialogue (*ibid.*, 157-62).

<sup>11</sup> Even at the stage at which the world-soul is still a linear band, it exhibits, as all musical scales do, circularity in the phenomenon of the *octave*. As we move, step by step, away from a given tone in the scale, we are approaching that same tone an octave higher or lower. Musical “space” is inescapably circular.

Timaeus's account of the soul is a potent mythic transformation of ordinary experience. This transformative power, which is characteristic of myth, derives from the identification of the astronomical circles of Same and Other with the inner revolutions of thought. As the world turns, it thinks, and it thinks unceasingly about everything in the realms of being and becoming (37a-c). The mythic account invites us to see the physical world through the eyes of the imagination and, in that sense, to see it anew. Normally, we distinguish sharply between the inner and the outer, the non-extended and the extended, mind and body. This is our Cartesian heritage, our habit of thinking in terms of strict oppositions. But in the counter-Cartesian enchantment of Timaeus's myth, the soul's act of thinking and the world's act of turning in circles mirror one another and, in a sense, are one another. This mythic speech renders literal our metaphoric way of talking about the act of thinking. Thinking, we say, is reflection, a bending back. To think is to turn inward, to be a living circle.

Timaeus's mythic transformation of the external world gives the likely story a power that more sober, scientifically objective accounts lack. The likely story, unlikely as it often seems, saves the phenomenon of the cosmologist himself. If one starts with the assumption that nature is nothing but matter in motion, chance and necessity, then, when it comes to explaining intelligence, one must either reduce it to matter in motion or assert, as Descartes does, that thinking substance has nothing to do with physical nature, that the physicist qua physicist is a complete alien in the external world he seeks to know: his autonomy as *res cogitans* is the necessary condition for his clear and distinct knowledge of *res extensa*. In the likely story, intelligence is posited as constitutive of the physical world right from the start: the world has a soul, and the act of this soul is to move and think. By engaging in physics intermittently, the human cosmologist taps into the divine thinking that goes on eternally and silently. The cosmologist, in this worldview, gives human utterance to the world's silent self-reflection, its act of perpetual thought. He is a singer of sorts, because his various λόγοι do not merely account for the world in appropriately likely fashion but also celebrate it.

Later in the likely story, we hear that the circuits of sound judgment, or φρόνησις, the circuits of Same and Other, are housed in our heads (44d). This intelligent circuitry is the true, original self of each of us. Our divine intelligence is planted in a star before being submerged in the violent flux of becoming (42d). As we gaze out and into the heavens on a starry night, we are in fact beholding our original celestial home, which is an image of our most intimate, reflective selves. A star looks perfectly precise and always brilliant. Unwavering in its motions and constant in its shining form, it has every appearance of being deathless and divine. Timaeus would tell us that it is no wonder that stargazing fills us (or, at least some of us) with admiration and longing. In this act, we experience a wistful recollection: we are remembering, from within the turmoil and woe of mortal life, what it was like in our "glory days" to be healthy, perfectly formed, brilliant, and musical. By studying astronomy, thereby activating our capacity for ordered reflection about the most orderly things in the visible world, we bend our natures back to what Timaeus calls "the form of our first and best condition" (42d). In the likely story, astronomy in this way becomes the true homecoming of the human soul.

## PART TWO. THE STORY OF THE BODY

In Timaeus's first story of origins, time plays a crucial role. Time is a moving likeness of eternity (37d-38b). In the second story, we encounter that other necessary dimension of a world – χώρα, space or room (52a-c). In the likely story, space is far more perplexing, far more difficult to speak about and define than time. Indeed, the inherent and necessary indeterminateness of space precludes such definition. Timaeus also calls space the receptacle and the mother of becoming (51a). It is the fluid, ever-elusive, and all-receptive medium of change, appearance, and cosmic birth.<sup>12</sup> In connecting the receptacle with birth and maternity, Timaeus signals the fact that, in turning from the first to the second story of origins, we are moving from the celestial, nonorganic life of intelligence to the organic life of mortal creatures.

In Timaeus's first account of body, the craftsman took the four elements of body – water, air, earth, and fire – as the uncuttable or atomic simples out of which the cosmic body was composed. He arranged these elements in a geometric proportion (ἀναλογία) with two mean terms.<sup>13</sup> The elemental “extremes” of the world's being visible and touchable – fire and earth, respectively – were mediated by the “means” of air and water (31b-32b). In the second major part of his speech, in which Timaeus makes a “new beginning” (48a-b), Timaeus corrects this simple view of the elements. In the region below the heavens, the elements are observed not to remain steadfast in their integrity but to change into one another. Fire acts on water to beget steam, a form of air. Water evaporates, steam condenses, and fire goes out, leaving its descendants, earth and smoke. In order to save the perplexing phenomenon of constantly shifting elements, Timaeus builds beautiful models of the four elements out of four of the five regular platonic solids: the pyramid or tetrahedron for fire, the octahedron for air, the icosahedron for water, and the cube for earth (53e ff.). Once again, the Timaeian physicist is enacting his role as musician; he is building models that are designed not so much to explain the phenomena as to harmonize with them.<sup>14</sup> The goal is not to give a λόγος or account in the strict sense but to compose a set of beautiful geometric poems.

Timaeus's geometric poetry about body is the second most exquisite construction in the likely story, the first being the musical construction of the soul. It accomplishes two things. First, it reveals the so-called elements as having parts – the various faces of the regular solids. These parts can be rearranged and recombined to form other elements. Timaeus's ingenious model building in this way accounts for how the elements can have individual identities while at the same being able to suffer transmutation. The second

<sup>12</sup> Space is a “third kind” (52a-b). The other two are the form, or εἶδος, which is purely intelligible and unchanging, and the sensed thing that has the same name as the form and is similar to it but is “always swept along, coming to be in some region and again perishing from there.” The crucial point, here, is that whereas time is constructed and artificial, space, χώρα, is primordial and eternal and predates the cosmic founding.

<sup>13</sup> The construction of this proportion is another instance of Timaeus's aristocratic concern with beauty: “But it's not possible for two things alone, apart from some third, to be beautifully combined: some bond must get in the middle and bring them both together” (31b-c).

<sup>14</sup> The dialogue's preoccupation with ἀρμόττειν, making things fit, first comes on the scene with Critias, who boldly claims that the citizens of Socrates's city in speech will be precisely those of ancient Athens, whose praises Critias intends to sing: “In all ways they will fit (or harmonize with) one another (ἀρμόσουσι), and we won't be singing out of tune if we say that they're the very ones who existed at that time” (26d).

thing the construction does is to account for body, which would otherwise seem irrational and meaningless, in terms of principles that are beautiful and good. The regular solids are chosen as models precisely for this reason: they are, according to Timaeus, “the most beautiful bodies” (53d-e). If you have ever seen or held physical models of these figures, you know what Timaeus is talking about. Timaeus here puts to work once more the motto I quoted earlier: All the good is beautiful, and the beautiful is not disproportionate. The mathematical poetry of Timaeus will attempt to make the study of mortal body almost as ennobling as the study of the heavens. There are gods even here.

But more important to our purposes is what Timaeus in this section has to say about *cause* (αἰτία). The second attempt to account for the world’s beginning unveils a new cause at work in the world. The first account had presented the good causality of intelligent purpose. This is what Timaeus sometimes calls *πρόνοια*, or providence (30c, 44c). The second agency he calls necessity, or “the form of the wandering cause” (48a). Fire does not act on water purposefully; it does not “look ahead” to an end. Fire burns because it has to, and water evaporates because it must. No intelligent purpose is at work here. As Timaeus thus revises his account of causality and makes a new beginning, the world acquires a double origin, a double parentage: it is the work not of the good alone but of the good and the necessary working together. The good is identical with intelligence – more precisely, with the ordering power and stability of intelligence. Using one of those mystifying metaphors with which the likely story abounds, Timaeus says that the world had its origins in the *persuasion* of necessity by intelligence – that is, in some sort of cosmic rhetoric (48a).<sup>15</sup> The implication is that god is not a tyrant. Divine intelligence did not force itself on the mother of becoming but instead appealed to her receptivity to beautiful adornment. Beauty functions as the bridge between the two great causes: the good as (paternal) intelligence and the necessary as material (maternal) efficiency.

Necessity, for Timaeus, is the realm of power, δύναμις. The need for power is evident in the construction of our bodily organs. Indeed, it is here that the gods discover their need for necessary causes. When the gods make our eyes, for example, they do so for reasons that are beautiful and good: we have eyes so that we may learn the mathematical rhythm of the heavens and return to our divine origins. But unless our eyes have the actual power of seeing, no good can come of them (45b ff.). To bring about the good of the eyes, the gods must enlist, harness, and guide all the material powers that inhere in the realm of bodily necessity. They must work, in particular, with the natural power of fire, for fire is the element and root of all that is visible. To grasp the totality of our world and to reach our noble ends, we must become students of the necessary as well as the good. Timaeus at one point connects the two causes with human wisdom:

For this very reason, one should mark off two forms of cause – the necessary and the divine – and seek the divine in all things for the sake of gaining a happy life, to the extent that our nature allows, and the necessary for the sake of those divine things, reasoning that

<sup>15</sup> We recall that in the initial, eidetic phase of soul building, the craftsman god had to use *force* to get the Other to mix with Same.

without the necessary it isn't possible to discern on their own those things we seriously pursue, nor again to apprehend them, nor to partake of them in any other way whatsoever. (68e-69a)

### **PART THREE. THE STORY OF HUMAN NATURE**

As we saw earlier, human nature is the goal of the likely story (27a). In the construction of human nature, Timaeus presents his view of all organic life, since all the lower animals are derived, mythically, from the “descent of man.” Timaeus’s path is Darwin’s in reverse: for Timaeus, it is not evolution but devolution. Here, in the construction of the human animal, the likely story deals directly with the biological work of our current seminars.

In what I have called the first story, the story of soul, the offspring of the demiurge begin to make human nature. Here is how it happened. After making time and the circuits of the whole, the demiurge constructed beings that were like him – noble, healthy minded, and brilliant – that is, the stars. These star-god sons were enjoined by their father-craftsman to make man, the being below *them* (41a-d). You recall that the craftsman god or demiurge was gazing at the purely intelligible archetype that embodied what I called the prophecy and fate of the beings within becoming. This idea of the world contains all the forms of animality. The animals are divided according to the four elements. The star-gods are made of fire. Then, lower in the hierarchy, there is organic life, which has three basic forms: animals that live in the air, animals that live on the earth, and animals that live in water (39e-40a).

Humankind, we must note, is not one of the basic classes. Man, since he is not simply celestial or simply mundane, does not fit into the fourfold scheme of animality. Man is not a separate, distinct kind but a hybrid – the most complex and unstable of all creatures. This very instability, this tendency to degenerate and devolve, turns out to be a useful and necessary means by which the cosmos comes to be perfect and whole, as Timaeus reminds us at the very end of his speech (92c).

The story of human nature begins just before the gods confront the problem of the necessary cause, the cause of power. The star-gods put us together piece by piece, organ by organ. We witness all this and, in following the story, playfully take part in our own construction. Once again, we find ourselves building models, biological ones, but this time they are not so noble. Throughout this part of his speech, Timaeus seems bent on showing us that human nature is neither whole, nor natural, nor especially attractive. Man is something of a monster. From the cosmic perspective, he is a creature of alarming vulnerability and multifarious needs. It is to this, our extreme vulnerability and neediness, that the likely story is addressed.

Our neediness is summed up in the simple fact that we are not shaped like spheres.<sup>16</sup> When Timaeus first described the body of the cosmos, he rubbed our noses in the fact that the cosmic body, in its smooth sphericity, was invulnerable and non-needy, that it was not

<sup>16</sup> It is instructive to compare the sphere as the image of perfection in the *Timaeus* with our once-upon-a-time ancestors in Aristophanes’s myth in the *Symposium* (189c ff.). Originally, we were sphere shaped – like the heavenly bodies. When these sphere-shaped creatures, who were fast and ambitious, tried to assault the gods, Zeus punished them by cutting them in half, in this way destroying their circle-like perfection and inflicting on them erotic longing. The punishment for ὕβρις, in other words, is linearity.

us. He tells us that “of eyes it had no need at all, since nothing to be seen was left over on the outside; nor of hearing, since there was nothing to be heard; nor was there any atmosphere surrounding it that needed breathing; nor again was there need of any organ by which it might take food into itself or send it back out after it was digested” (33c). The cosmos has no hands, or feet, or anything it needs to stand on. And although Timaeus demurs to say so, the cosmos also lacks organs of generation. It also suffers neither disease nor old age, although Timaeus does not go so far as to say that it cannot die. It doesn’t need any friends, because, we are told, it is its own friend (34b). The cosmos is self-sufficient and therefore happy – happy because it lacks all the human organs that express vulnerability, need, and dependency.

It becomes obvious that this part of the likely story, the part that is about man, has a very different tone from what has preceded. As we make our way down to man, and even farther down to the beasts that are derived from man, we descend from the dignified tone with which Timaeus spoke of the heavens. The gravitas of heavenly discourse gives way to a long series of philosophic jokes. These jokes, at times reminiscent of Aristophanes in Plato’s *Symposium*, have their dark side, as we are made to confront, often in grotesque detail, the complexity and even absurdity of our mortal life in our various bodily organs.

We have already seen that the construction of the eyes obliged the gods to make use of causes that are necessary in order to accomplish their noble end of completing the whole. The high purpose of seeing is impossible without the material mechanism of seeing. This “drama of the two causes” – the necessary and the good – will be enacted in all the constructions that follow.

The first story to which I draw our attention is the story of the head. It makes sense to start here because that’s where the gods started (44d). Recall that making, for Timaeus, is always a descent. In making human nature, the gods start with what is spatially the highest part of us – our heads – and work their way down. Timaeus’s stories make us self-conscious about our bodies. Through this self-consciousness, we perhaps reach deeper self-knowledge regarding the precise way in which we are, necessarily, children of the cosmos and victims of our fall from the divine.

Why are our heads shaped like spheres? We may never have thought of asking this question, but it is precisely what the likely story compels us to ask. Our head is shaped like a sphere because it houses our brain, which holds within it the globular circle-complex of Same and Other, the circuits of intelligence. Shape, for Timaeus, always accommodates itself to the nature of the thing shaped, and so a perfect nature ought to have a perfect physical shape. This is another way of saying that, in the world of likely stories, physical things are what they look like. Some years ago, a student once said to me after class, “Mr. Kalkavage, I think I know why you like the *Timaeus* so much; it’s because you have such a round head.” This personal remark showed that the student had grasped the causality of shape in the likely story: inward nature is mirrored in outward look. She furthermore grasped that Timaeus’s cosmology of man combines the perception of likenesses with wit.

The story of the head is very witty, indeed – and far-reaching. As a sphere, the head represents the healthiest part of human nature, the part that is, as we say, well rounded. The head is our sacred vessel, and the rest of the body as a whole is a kind of chariot that carries the head where the head wants to go. From Timaeus’s darkly comic perspective,

the demigod in our head keeps lifting us up toward the celestial gods, to whom the demigod in our head is akin and longs to return. But the elongated and grosser part of us, our torso, along with everything it contains, keeps dragging us back down to the earth. This explains why we have upright posture. So long as we cultivate our intelligence, the upward vector gets the better of the downward vector, and we remain vertical, suspended between the goodness of intelligence and the necessary aspects of our bodily being. Our uprightness, however, is still a compromise, a sign that we are not fully divine and are still drawn earthward.

At one point, Timaeus calls us a “heavenly plant,” a φυτόν οὐράνιον (90a). He does so because our roots are in the heavens. Just as a plant grows and draws its nourishment from the earth, so a human being grows and draws his nourishment from the sky, or οὐρανός. We are an upside-down plant. Education is the means by which we water the human plant and cultivate our bond with heaven – our attraction to, and kinship with, higher things. As we hear early on in the likely story and again at the end, when man neglects his education, his human culture, and yields to ignorance and beastliness, he degenerates in his next birth into the form of beast he made himself resemble (42b-d, 90e ff.). He yields to the downward-pointing vector in his nature, loses his upright posture, and grows ever closer to the earth. In the most extreme cases of educational neglect or what Timaeus calls “unmusicality” (πλημμέλεια, 92b), man loses the privilege of breathing pure air and is transformed into a shellfish. In one sense, degenerate man deserves blame: he failed to fulfill his divine destiny, failed to water and prune the heavenly plant. But in another sense, he is beyond blame: if man did not degenerate, the cosmos would not have gotten its full range of animals and would be incomplete and imperfect. This is the final paradox with which Timaeus ends his long speech.

Timaeus’s stories of the human body draw on Socrates’s account of the soul in *The Republic*. In that dialogue, we hear that the soul has three parts, vertically arranged like notes in a musical scale (4.443d). The highest part calculates and reasons and is therefore by nature fit to rule. The lowest part is full of mindless, bodily desires. The middle part, called “spirited,” can make an alliance with either the rational part or the bodily desires. If it does the former, the result is moderation and orderliness; if the latter, then the result is ultimately tyranny.

Having taken up the threefold nature of the human soul, the gods must now confront the following aporia: how to put these parts together and house them in one body in the best possible way, the way that is most conducive to the well-being of the whole animal. The solution of this problem is another instance of cosmological wit. In order to join together the best parts of us with the worst, the gods invent – the neck. The neck is ingenious, and we should all be grateful we have one. It is an isthmus, as Timaeus calls it, that joins the head to the torso while keeping them apart (69d-e). Thanks to the ingenious neck, the divine circuits of intelligence can be connected with our spiritedness and bodily desires in such a way that the lower parts of our souls will be minimally disruptive to the life of the mind.

The invention of the neck is a good example of what Timaeus means by providence. The neck is providential because the gods knew beforehand what would happen when the head was in any way attached to the rest of the body. Timaeus’s gods possess what Henry

James called the “imagination of disaster,” and it is precisely this imaginative anticipation of falls and catastrophes that gives Timaeus’s teleology its peculiar stamp.

Purposiveness throughout the likely story is providential; it represents the gods’ intelligent care for the world and their guardianship. Such care requires three things: the tendency toward the best (the most intelligently ordered), the anticipation of future evil, and the means to make that evil into something either less bad or even good. This is not the teleology we find in Aristotle, for whom nature proceeds to its ends without the will of a god. Finality, for him, is not providence. In Aristotle’s view of nature, although there is an argument for a first mover, on which the heavenly motions depend, there is no argument from design, an argument from the order of nature to a god who intended that order. The simple reason for this is that god did not make the world and therefore has no designs. Natural ends are not intended; they simply happen spontaneously if nothing impedes them. And in the ethical sphere, man strives to be virtuous, not through any divine intent but simply because it is his nature to be so, because virtue is a condition for his happiness.

The neck as the work of providence shows us that, in his glorification of divine art, Timaeus constructs a cosmos that is governed by divine intention, the will of god. This way of speaking has the rhetorical effect of making human virtue ultimately an act of obedience to divinely established νόμος. The cosmos is like a city or regime, and the artist-god is like a lawgiver. Plato in his *Timaeus* is more worried about potential disorder than Aristotle is in his writings: he has the imagination of disaster. That is why art as the *making of order* is so important to the cosmology we find here, why nature for Timaeus is the divine art of staving off chaos. Also, unlike Aristotle, he wants piety – a revised, enlightened form of piety – to be a virtue. This is perhaps why Timaeus reminds Socrates that we humans must accept the likely story and not seek for anything else beyond it. We must know our place and not question the laws of our cosmic fatherland.

Another telling example of witty providential making is our hair. Once again, the gods must confront and solve a head-related problem (76b-d). In this case, they must guard the life of the mind against the ravages and risks of bodily becoming. If the gods leave our heads unprotected, the circles of intelligence inside would be vulnerable to blows and weather. But if they protected our heads with a thick blanket of flesh, they would have rendered us safe but stupid, or rather insensate (76d). Hair is the ingenious compromise between the conflicting demands of self-preservation and intelligence, toughness and sensitivity. Like the neck, the hair on our head reminds us of how vulnerable we are, how complicated our life is, and how our nature is defined as a conflict between the good and the necessary.

Many of Timaeus’s stories are about how the gods prevented the body and bodily desire from being the destroyer of intelligence. Indeed, the wit and outrageous humor of the likely story derive from precisely this attempt to assert the final cause of intelligence within the realm of organic life. This turns out to be a tall order. One of the funniest stories in this respect has to do with the intestines. Why do we have intestines? Timaeus does not even consider the possibility that it might have something to do with digesting food in order to stay alive. On the contrary, the purpose of the intestines is to slow down the passage of food and drink through the body, thereby staving off desire and

allowing man some leisure for philosophy (72e-73). In moments like this, it seems that Timaeus's sole interest in his mythic physiology is to give the body an exclusively intellectual purpose.

Then there is the story of the mouth (75d-e). This organ fits nicely into Timaeus's agenda and gives him the chance to combine the good and the necessary in an especially elegant and intimate way. The mouth is defined in terms of two *streams*: the stream of nourishment that flows in, and the stream of intelligent speech that flows out. The first is the stream of necessity, the second the stream of goodness. The fact that the two streams flow in opposite directions, coupled with the fact that we cannot really eat and speak at the same time, offers a telling example of how our nature is defined by contrariety and conflict. Artful construction, in the likely story, does not do away with conflict: it only tunes and beautifies it.

No catalogue of philosophic jokes in the *Timaeus* would be complete without mention of the liver. This is one of the most elaborate body-stories we hear. The liver is situated where it is and is made of a dense and shiny stuff because it is the *movie screen* for the lower part of the soul (71a ff.). When the intellect wants to soothe or terrify the desirous, childish part of us, it knows that arguments won't work. Instead it uses the power of images. The liver is the seat of both imagination and prophecy (71d-72d). It is invented for the purpose of ministering to the irrational part of the soul in order to make this part as good as possible – to give it some anchor in the divine. The spleen is where it is, close to the liver, so that it can serve as a sort of napkin that cleans the liver when it becomes full of impurities (72c). This whole cosmic comedy of liver and spleen has its serious purpose: to give an account of the body that allows soul and body to have an intimate interaction and that puts the necessary causes of the body in the service of the higher good of the soul.

I now reach the end of my journey through the likely story with the topic with which Timaeus ends his – the invention of sex (90e-91d). This is the most perplexing part of the likely story and the most outrageous. In the biblical account of creation, sexual reproduction is good. God tells all living things, “Be fruitful and multiply!” Timaeus gives no such blessing to procreation. But he does give his own version of a *fall*. For Timaeus, sexuality and the distinction of the two sexes come about because the first race of men, who in some bizarre way are male without being sexual, “fell” from their originally virtuous condition. Those who were cowardly and unjust, we are told, were, in their second birth, transformed into women (42b-c, 90e-91a). This outrageous derivation of the female, the view of the female as a degenerate male, is opposed to the account Socrates gives in *The Republic*, where it is asserted that men and women have pretty much the same natures and are therefore capable of engaging in the same activities, including that of ruling the city (5.454d ff.).<sup>17</sup>

Timaeus's dark view of the female nature, and his corresponding preference for de-sexualized masculinity, points out one of the recurring themes in the likely story: the critique of erotic love. Timaeus repeatedly connects this form of love with tyranny. In speaking of all the “passions terrible and necessary” that the gods had to pour into our

<sup>17</sup> Socrates reiterates this view in his summary at the beginning of the *Timaeus*, when he says that in the best city the natures of women are “tuned” to the men (18c).

souls, he calls this love “all-venturing” (69d), implying that erotic love stops at nothing, respects no boundaries, in striving for what it wants. There seems to be a natural antipathy between the cosmic and the erotic. To recall the Greek meaning of the word, what is cosmic is decent, fitting, orderly, discrete, respectful of boundaries. But eros is lustful, defiant, insolent, and disorderly – everything that is associated with profound disorder. In Hesiod’s *Theogony*, the world came about through sexual passion and begetting. Timaeus seeks to correct this traditional, violent story of divine origins. He does so by grounding the world in the nonsexual, dispassionate productivity of art.

The tyrannical nature of erotic love is colorfully depicted in Timaeus’s account of the sexual organs, the last bodily parts to be grafted onto human nature. I say grafted because these organs do not seem to sprout naturally from our human nature. Instead, they are separate animals, *wild animals*, which are attached to our bodies to accommodate our fall from god to beast. The male organ is said to be “unpersuadable and autocratic, like an animal that won’t listen to reason and attempts to master all things through its stinging desires” (91b-c). The reproductive organ of the female, the matrix or womb, is “an indwelling animal desirous of childbearing; and whenever this comes to be fruitless long beyond its due season, it grows difficult and irritable” (91c).

It is worth noting here that, although women for Timaeus are depicted as degenerate men, men come off much worse once the sexual distinction is present. Women, in Timaeus’s account, are hysterical – that is, they are victims of their *ὄστέρα*, or womb, which, for Timaeus, wanders through their body like the necessary cause (91c-d). Men, by contrast, are dangerous in their sexual impulse. The tyranny of erotic love, the lust for mastery and domination, is concentrated in the sexual male. In Timaeus’s view of the sexes, women want children, men want power. In the dramatic prologue, we hear that it was this lust for power – *ἔρως* in its political guise – that caused the ancient war between Athens and Atlantis (25b).<sup>18</sup>

In his description of the cosmic body, Timaeus praised the cosmos for its autonomy or self-sufficiency. The cosmos is not a creature of need. How different we are from the cosmos is most clearly seen in the tragic-comic account of sexuality and erotic love. Nevertheless, in our very degenerateness, we are part of the cosmos – indeed, a necessary part. If it were not for the fall of man, the lower animals would not have been born and the cosmos would be incomplete. And if it were not for sexual reproduction, the cosmos would not be constantly replenished with a store of animals and would again be incomplete. As I mentioned earlier, this is the paradox with which Timaeus ends the likely story. From the cosmological perspective, moral evil makes sense within the cosmos because it is interpreted, not as an abomination, but as a temporary mismatch of soul and body, an asymmetry. Through the transmigration of souls, this asymmetry is corrected, as the souls of men who made themselves into beasts are transplanted into the bodies of those very beasts. Such reshuffling is what Timaeus calls justice or retribution (92c). In the end, Timaeus’s attempt to harmonize the moral order and the physical order justifies evil by making evil a necessary, structural feature of the whole – the wellspring of subhuman life.

<sup>18</sup> Thucydides refers to the political *ἔρως* in his *History*, where the erotic and ambitious Alcibiades arouses the Athenians’ *ἔρως* for the Sicilian expedition: “And upon all alike there fell erotic longing (*ἔρως*) to set sail!” (6.24).

As I pointed out earlier, as the likely story goes on, it suffers an erosion of tone: it descends from gravitas to Aristophanic humor. Plato has crafted the tale in such a way that this erosion imitates the descent in the being and worth of the object under discussion: tone mirrors nature. But at the very end, Timaeus recovers, abruptly, his noble tone in describing the cosmos that has been perfected through the gradated fall of man:

For by having acquired animals, mortal as well as immortal, and having been all filled up, this cosmos has thus come to be – a visible animal embracing visible animals, a likeness of the intelligible, a sensed god; greatest and best, most beautiful and most perfect – this one heaven, alone of its kind that it is. (92c)

### CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The poetic science of Timaeus may be best characterized as Plato's poetic effort to dramatize, through the fictional and highly impressive Timaeus, a grand rehabilitation and ἀπολογία or defense of becoming in light of the critique of becoming in *The Republic*. In that dialogue, Socrates speaks of the need for some art that will turn the soul from becoming to being (7.518d) – from the dark confines of our cave-life, most especially our absorption in politics, to the purely intelligible region of forms that is illuminated by the Good (6.508e). The conversionary arts that Socrates describes occur in the likely story. They are arithmetic, plane and solid geometry, mathematical astronomy, and harmonics (the study of intervals as ratios of whole numbers). But whereas for Socrates the mathematical studies point “up” to being and the forms and are part of our effort to transcend our mere humanness, they are, for Timaeus, part of the “downward” path by which the sound-minded cosmologist beautifies, adorns, and, in a sense, justifies the realm of becoming. Through an utterly ingenious form of intellectual poetry, Timaeus presents and celebrates the world as the cosmic status quo – the “regime,” to whose laws all other things within becoming are subject. The craftsman god, who resembles a lawgiver and political founder, gives the world order a divine origin and divine authority. It is an order not to be disobeyed. This rigorous cosmic conservatism finds its parallel in Timaeus's political origin: he comes from and has held high offices in a city known for its strict observance of law.

In the course of this essay, I have emphasized the poetic, transformative character of Timaeus science and the close bond between mathematical studies and the pursuit of virtue and happiness. It is very difficult to say what Plato wants us to conclude from the likely story. My guess is that he wants us to be entertained and amused by it, as I am sure Socrates is, and also to take seriously the possibility that in the structures and motions of the physical world there is a divine hand, or something analogous to it, that crafts all things for the best and aims at goodness and beauty – that the physical world exhibits purposeful design.

Furthermore, there is something compelling about getting at nature in the way Timaeus does: through the building of models. A model or image does seem to capture something of the truth, if only in a series of happy correspondences or harmonies, like Ptolemy's epicycles. And the building of models, as some of us may remember from our

early youth, is an intensely pleasant and gratifying human experience. The desire to make images lies deep in our being and often comes to our aid when we seek knowledge of nature (say, in the molecular model of DNA). The building of beautiful models, the poetic science of becoming, saves becoming from degenerating – in our souls, in our imaginations, in our very lives – into a meaningless Lucretian hubbub of matter in motion, chance and necessity. Finally, as I mentioned earlier, the likely story re-creates the world in such a way that thinking is not alien to it.

But Plato surely wants us to be skeptical as well and to explore why the likely story, for all its inspired songs of structural beauty and its admirable concern with a genuine cosmos, is also at times incoherent, troubling, and inadequate. This is especially evident in *Timaeus's* treatment of the sexes, the attack on erotic love, and the cosmic justification of evil – that is, the transformation of moral evil into a cosmic necessity. We can only wonder what the silent, receptive, and unusually well-behaved Socrates has made of this story, which, after all, is designed to be his feast of speech. Our wonder is made all the more acute since, in the cosmos of *Timaeus*, for whom mathematical astronomy is the highest and most important science, there is no place for Socrates, the philosopher, as dialectician and lover of what is.

# THEOLOGICAL SCIENCE AND ITS OBJECT ACCORDING TO ARISTOTLE: A FEW REMARKS

It is well known that Aristotle's works are challenging for current readers, especially when they concern particular questions, such as those brought about by the evocation of a "theological science." Indeed, in these controversial inquiries, some of Aristotle's main philosophical arguments are at play.

I will not be able to consider all these difficulties anew here.<sup>1</sup> However, I hope that the remarks that follow will touch upon the most important ones and that, while they will not bring as much clarity as might be desirable, they will shed some light on what I believe to have been purposely overlooked in current studies – in particular, the close relationship between Aristotle's and Plato's philosophies.

For the sake of clarity, I have divided the remarks that follow into several independent sections. At the beginning of each section, I account for their internal subdivisions; each specific argument is indeed treated in independent subsections. All these segments form a coherent whole, and the reader may consider them to be a series of steps leading toward the conclusions.

## I

In this first section, I will consider (1) Aristotle's surprising, if not enigmatic, choice, in one particular instance, to use the word "theological." I will further reflect on (2) the assumptions that may provide an explanation for such a choice and on (3) the project, which originates in Plato's philosophy, that such a word may designate.

---

<sup>1</sup> I have previously considered these questions in another work (*Aristote et la théologie des vivants immortels*, Québec-Paris: Bellarmin-Les Belles Lettres, 1992; revised version: *Aristotle and the Theology of the Living Immortals*, translated by J. E. Garrett. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000), where I defended the thesis according to which Aristotle did not leave us the exposition of a proper theological science but used the core of the Greek tradition (the ideas that the gods are immortal and living beings) in order to make his ideas about celestial objects, the first immaterial substance, and the highest good explicit and clear. Twenty years later, in this essay, I cannot hope to correct my whole analysis, as it would be appropriate to do. The present study limits itself to the most important points and corrects my position, which was a little too radical, on a delicate point. It seems to me today that Aristotle, in studying the celestial bodies and the first substance given to them for a reason, perhaps offers them, at least in part, some disparate elements of a theological science capable of refuting Plato, even though he has not tried to put together all these elements in a synthesis.

## 1.

In a famous passage at the beginning of Epsilon (*Metaphysics*, Epsilon 6, 1026 a 19), as well as in a passage of Kappa (Kappa 7, 1064 b 2-3) that seems to paraphrase it, Aristotle argues that there should be “three philosophies” or, according to the paraphrasing of Kappa, “three kinds of theoretical sciences: physics, mathematics, and theology.” It is the only passage in the works of Aristotle that have reached us in which theology is mentioned and, moreover, aligned among the sciences or (which amounts to the same) those philosophical disciplines called theoretical. This mainly means that theology considers, in order to study it, an aspect of reality that it does not generate but that, on the contrary, possesses its own principle of being and/or of movement.

The passage and the paraphrase I have cited, as well as their comparison, bring about numerous very annoying problems.<sup>2</sup> One of these problems consists in explaining the word “theological,” utilized here by Aristotle in order to qualify a science, which has a determined object and also appears in contrast with the physical and the mathematical sciences, respectively.

So, this is not self-evident. According to our passage, in fact, which is corroborated by other passages,<sup>3</sup> physics considers multiple realities in movement, regardless of the scale, and studies them in their movement, while mathematics, because it uses abstraction, only considers scale and numbers as immobile realities and studies them detached from natural realities. According to what is affirmed in our passage and repeated also elsewhere, the science called “theological” is concerned specifically with “some separated and immobile (beings)” (E, 1026 a 16), “a separated and immovable being” (K, 1064 a 33-34), “a certain nature of this kind,” that is to say, separated and immovable (E, 1026 a 20 and 25), “a certain nature of this kind that takes its place among beings” (K, 1064 a 36-37), “a certain substance of this kind” (K, 1064 a 35), a “certain immovable substance” (E, 1026 a 29), “a certain different substance next to those occurring naturally” (E, 1026 a 28), or “a nature and a substance separated and immovable” (K, 1064 b 11-12). There seems to be enough here to be quite puzzling: Why does Aristotle all of a sudden call “theology” a science that does not deal with gods, at least not in any explicit fashion?

Obviously, centuries of commentaries have followed, which lead us today, at the simple evocation of a being separated and motionless, to say candidly, as Thomas d’Aquinas did, “everybody knows that this is god!”<sup>4</sup> However, forgetting the centuries of commentaries would be a good way to understand such an elusive passage. Aristotle would hardly have used the word “theological” in order to qualify a science devoted to the consideration of motionless separated realities without giving further explanations if he

<sup>2</sup> An excellent consideration of all these problems can be found in E. Berti, *Aristotele: Métaphysique Epsilon* (Paris: Vrin, 2015), 79-131 (complete commentary of E, I), and E. Berti, *Aristotelismo* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2017), 266-67 (cursory notes).

<sup>3</sup> In particular, *Physics*, II, 2, 193 b 22-194 a 11; 7, 198 a 28 et seq.; *On the Heavens*, III, 7, 306 a 18 et et seq.; *Metaphysics*, Mu, 1, 1076 a 32-3, 1078 b 6; Nu, 3, 1090 a 29 et seq.

<sup>4</sup> See Thomas Aquinas, *ST*, I, Q.2 art. 3. We will not forget Gilson’s old warning (*Le Thomisme: Introduction à la philosophie de saint Thomas d’Aquin* [Paris: Vrin, 1965], 4): “The names that [Saint Thomas] gives to [God] are generally chosen according to the facet of nature on which it is important to focus attention in each particular instance”; and p. 7: “theologian, saint Thomas asks that philosophical language speak about an object [God] situated beyond the boundaries of philosophy.”

could not have counted on the fact that his readers could have immediately related it to the gods and to some of their characteristics. However, was the conviction that gods were supernatural and immutable beings part of this immediate understanding?

In the passages we are discussing, such a problem is doubled by another difficulty, which has been considered for a long time and has even raised doubts about the very use of the word “theological.”<sup>5</sup> The adjective, as I have already mentioned, appears only here, even though it is derived, as have other, similar terms (θεόλογος, for instance, or θεολογεῖν),<sup>6</sup> from the word “theology,” which Aristotle knew<sup>7</sup> and which seems to have been invented by Plato.<sup>8</sup> In Plato, as is the case also in Aristotle, this word designates a type of discourse that clearly talks about gods but that conveys some quite suspicious “myths” about them, such as those that are fabricated by the poets Homer and Hesiod. In short, theology talks very explicitly about gods but with some lightness, one may say, and can therefore hardly pretend to be part of the philosophical science. In consequence, either theology is part of the three sciences that Aristotle enumerates in Epsilon without the explicit consideration of the gods and therefore it does not warrant its name of theology, in appearance not very flattering, or, more likely, something in this naming is unclear to us.

I will briefly have the opportunity to come back to the “theology” later.<sup>9</sup> For now, however, I wish to offer some suggestions that may allow us to lift the veil on these questions, which became strange and paradoxical to us but where undoubtedly quite evident for Aristotle, Plato, and educated Greeks in general.

## 2.

If there is a common belief that Aristotle declares to share with all those who believe in the gods, it is that gods are living beings (ζῶον) as much as men, horses, dogs, all other animals, if not also all the plants and without any differentiation.<sup>10</sup> Apparently, this belief

<sup>5</sup> See P. Natorp, “Thema und Disposition der aristotelischen Metaphysik,” *Philosophische Monatshefte* 24 (1888): 37-65.

<sup>6</sup> These rare terms are used in *Metaphysics*, Alpha, 3, 983 b 29; Beta, 4, 1000 a 9; Lambda, 6, 1071 b 27; 10, 1075 b 26; Nu, 4, 1091 a 36.

<sup>7</sup> This word is only employed in *Meteorology*, II, 1, 353 a 35, when Aristotle engages in the study of the origin of the sea (domain of the gods Oceanus and Tethys, which in the *Timaeus* [40-D-E] are mentioned among the gods about which Plato refuses to say anything too serious and in favor of which he considers the credit that a long tradition has). Aristotle highlights, in passing, that the ancients and with them “those who spend their time with some ‘theologies,’” had attributed some strange sources to the sea.

<sup>8</sup> *The Republic*, II, 379 A (first occurrence and the only one in Plato).

<sup>9</sup> See below, section IV, note 10.

<sup>10</sup> See *Nicomachean Ethics*, X, 8, 1178 b 18-19; *On the Soul*, I, 1, 402 b 5-7; I, 5, 409 b 31-410 a 1; *Metaphysics*, Delta, 26, 1023 b 32; Nu, 1, 1088 a 10; and others. I have highlighted and commented on the main texts that testify to such an understanding in “Théologie, cosmologie et philosophie première chez Aristote” (*Essais sur la théologie d’Aristote. Actes du colloque de Dijon*, ed. M. Bastit and J. Follon [Louvain-la-Neuve: Peeters, 1998], 70-71), among which there is the famous assertion in *Metaphysics*, Lambda, 7, 1072 b 28-30: “accordingly we assert that a god is a perfect eternal living being.” The Greek text at the beginning of the passage reads δέ (“or”), and not δὴ (“therefore”), which had been substituted by a portion of the indirect tradition, bringing about some ambiguities; cf. Thémistius, *Paraphrase de la Métaphysique d’Aristote, Livre Lambda*, trans. R. Brague (Paris: Vrin, 1999), 143: “Aristotle does not decide what the relationship between his God and life is. Is it a relationship of possession? In that case, God would be a ‘living being,’ a ‘being imbued with life’ (ζῶον)? Or is it a relation of pure identity, God being life itself (ζωή)?” After comparing all the parallel texts, one cannot have any more doubts: the first hypothesis, based here on the manuscripts, is the right one, as I have suggested in the past: cf.

seems banal, if not trivial, but this is not at all the case. It means that a god, contrary to the stone that rolls, the water that flows, or the wind that swirls, is not simply a body but a living body. We can even think that this opinion is what overcomes the prevailing atheism of strong spirits, for whom the gods recognized as such by tradition are, in fact, bodies without a soul. It is against this suspicion of atheism that Socrates defends himself in Plato's *Apology* ("Do I not even recognize, as some people do, that the Sun and the Moon are gods?"), and it is this suspicion that Meletus insinuates against Socrates ("By Zeus, judges, he does not recognize them as gods, as he says that the Sun is a stone and the Moon is an earth").<sup>11</sup> Even in the *Laws*, Plato, loyal to tradition and an enemy to atheists, defends the opinion that those recognized as gods are not mere bodies but animated bodies.<sup>12</sup> Aristotle, we will see, takes the opinion that gods have bodies as indisputable evidence: it is a necessary implication because of the recognized fact that they are living beings.<sup>13</sup> When the existence of gods is put into question, the discussion revolves around the hypothesis that the body may or not be animated in some fashion.

It is impossible to imagine Aristotle's thought about the gods with some correctness without considering the gods, in his opinion, as having a body. One cannot doubt this because he declares it himself in the most obvious fashion by, moreover, comparing gods to humans: "We believe, therefore, that the gods surpass human beings, with respect both to their bodies and to their souls."<sup>14</sup> We just read it: "with respect to their bodies"! Only a regrettable a priori could cast doubt on the seriousness of such a declaration.

Needless to say, this implies a representation according to which a god, bringing together a body and a soul, is for this very reason composed, and such a representation is exactly the one that Plato defends when he declares that a god is "an immortal living thing which has a body and a soul, and that these are bound together by nature for all times."<sup>15</sup>

It is important to insist on the clarification that Plato gives here in an explicit manner and that can be heard in Aristotle's text, even though the latter leaves it implicit, in the passages that we have just cited: the gods, unlike men, are living "immortals." This clarification is naturally valid for both the body and the soul of the gods. Aristotle indicates this, once again explicitly, concerning a god's body when recalling the "immortality" that everyone attributes as being proper to the gods, that "an eternal *movement* has necessarily to belong to god."<sup>16</sup> Aristotle mentions movement, which is what one affirms of a corporeal mass, even though this one is eternal and cannot, therefore, be of the same order as the

R. Bodéüs, "En marge de la théologie d'Aristote," *Revue de philosophie de Louvain* 73 (1975): 22-23, and also F. Volpi, "La détermination aristotélicienne du principe divin comme ζῴη," *Les études philosophiques* 3 (1991/3): 385, who cites my remarks.

<sup>11</sup> Plato, *Apology*, 26 D. A significant detail is that the reference is here to celestial bodies and not to the sublunary ones that swirl and in which no one, according to Aristophanes (*Clouds*, 366; cf. 1470), was still prepared to recognize Zeus.

<sup>12</sup> *Laws*, X, 886 A and following.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. *Topic*, V, 1, 128 b 39-129 a 2: "What is proper is what is always truthfully said and never omitted, for instance, about the living that they are composed of a soul and a body."

<sup>14</sup> *Politics*, VII, 14, 1332 b 17-20.

<sup>15</sup> *Phaedrus*, 246 C-D.

<sup>16</sup> *On the Heavens*, II, 3, 286 a 10. Similarly, in *Physics*, VIII, 8, 262 a 2-4, when in his analysis of the continuous movement of a body he distinguishes among three things (the moved, time, and that in which movement resides), Aristotle suggests "man or god" as an example of the moved.

movements proper to corruptible bodies. In this context, Aristotle views the movements of celestial bodies, the same bodies that Plato attributes to the worldly gods (to the world itself, taken as a whole, and to the “celestial race of gods” that it contains),<sup>17</sup> as being modeled on those “living eternally” and offering, according to Aristotle, a “mobile” image of eternity.<sup>18</sup> The two philosophers’ agreement on the mobile bodies of the gods is perfect.

Here we need to leave aside what is specific to Plato and what Aristotle obviously resolutely opposes in other passages – namely, the hypothesis of an ideal model. This hypothesis – and in general Plato’s ideal forms, which in this context Plato calls “the eternal gods”<sup>19</sup> – suffers, for Aristotle, from the unforgiving fault of needlessly doubling reality.<sup>20</sup> If then, as Plato admits along with all believers, there are corporeal gods that move, it is entirely useless to postulate the existence of other gods: eternal gods that are at the same level as ideal forms will not be among Aristotle’s beliefs. On the contrary, Aristotle only shares those beliefs that are common to Plato and also to all other believers; among these, there is the belief that the gods are corporeal and in motion.

Plato, moreover, adopts the most universal belief. It is important to painstakingly observe this in order to appreciate the fact that, by putting such a belief in the foreground, the philosopher makes explicit what everybody already understands when speaking of the gods and, moreover, what is probably tacitly assumed in the passage of Epsilon that indirectly references the gods when talking about theological science.

When Plato suggests that it is easy to prove that gods exist, he simply takes into account those that are already, and in a consensual manner, considered as such: “the earth, the sun, and the stars,” as well as the ensemble of cosmic connections, and then he adds, “indeed, all men have an idea of the gods, and all assign to the gods the most elevated place, barbarians as well as Greeks,”<sup>21</sup> using therefore this universal faith as proof of the divinity of the stars. Aristotle also considers the most widespread ideas about the celestial bodies and echoes Plato when he explains that “all men have some conception of the nature of the gods, and everyone who believes in the existence of gods at all, whether barbarian or Greek, agree in allotting the highest place to the divinity, surely because they suppose that immortal is linked with immortal.”<sup>22</sup>

“Everyone ...” It is remarkable that he attributes this belief not only to all the Greeks, despite their veneration for local gods, but also to barbarians, who have a multiplicity of beliefs. Everyone, in fact, lives under the same sky and sees the same Ouranian gods over their heads.

A rigorously universal religious belief in the Ouranian gods can obviously only be founded, according to the philosophers that evoke it, if the celestial bodies are not mere bodies but animated bodies; without such a condition, the visible traces that we perceive in the sky would not be those of living beings. We are circling back to the considerations I put forward at the beginning of this section.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. *Timaeus*, 40 A.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 37 D.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 37 C.

<sup>20</sup> About this critique, see *Metaphysics*, A, 9, 990 b 1 et seq.

<sup>21</sup> *Laws*, X, 885 E-886 A; cf. 887 E.

<sup>22</sup> *On the Heavens*, I, 3, 270 b 5-9.

In a famous passage in the *Laws*, book X, Plato attempts to demonstrate precisely this. “When you and I present our proofs for the existence of gods and adduce what you adduced – sun, moon, stars, and earth – and argue they are gods and divine beings, the proselyte of these clever fellows,” says Plato, “will say that these things are just earth and stone.”<sup>23</sup> It is then necessary to refute these ideas. And the philosopher engages in the demonstration that the celestial bodies have a soul that has essential power over the body. It is, indeed, a self-moving soul or a self-moving movement,<sup>24</sup> which carries the celestial bodies in its own revolution and whose feature<sup>25</sup> is to be in between the physical and the intelligible.

Aristotle shares a similar conviction and considers the celestial bodies not to be mere bodies. When he considers these bodies, the philosopher finds himself confronted with the diversity of their movements; he suggests, then, that in order to understand these phenomena correctly, it is important to convince oneself that the celestial bodies are not mere bodies. “We may object that we have been thinking of the stars as mere bodies and as units with a serial order indeed but entirely inanimate; but we should rather conceive them as enjoying life and action.”<sup>26</sup> The same injunction is later repeated and further explained: “We must, then, think of the action of the lower stars as similar to that of animals and plants.”<sup>27</sup> The conviction that the sky is, in general, an animated body, like that of any other living being, is also confirmed elsewhere by the idea that it has a left and a right side. The beings that find themselves in this situation, says the philosopher, “being animate, have a principle of movement within themselves,”<sup>28</sup> and adds, “heaven is animate and possesses a principle of movement.”<sup>29</sup>

We would be wrong if we did not pay attention to such phrases as “not mere bodies,” which recall Plato’s preoccupations. Only, let us repeat again, a regrettable a priori could really cast doubt on the seriousness of these affirmations.<sup>30</sup> These affirmations are brief, and one might find it strange that Aristotle shares his core ideas in such a fashion; he appears ungenerous when it comes to explaining the animation of the celestial bodies, but there is probably a reason, which I will clarify later,<sup>31</sup> that explains his silence.

I believe that the few remarks I have put together here will be sufficient to show that Aristotle does not avoid but on the contrary participates in the hypothesis that the gods, like all living beings, have bodies (always in movement as is appropriate for immortals) and that this hypothesis, which corresponds to the universal beliefs that pertain to the divinity

<sup>23</sup> *Laws*, X, 886 D.

<sup>24</sup> Compare, in particular, *Laws*, X, 896 A.

<sup>25</sup> Clarification of the *Timaeus*, 34 et seq., and 41 D.

<sup>26</sup> *On the Heavens*, II, 12, 292 a 18-21.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 12, 292 b 1-2.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 2, 284 b 33 (as well as what precedes it).

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 2, 285 a 28-29.

<sup>30</sup> Pellegrin (Aristote, *Traité du ciel*, trans. C. Dalimier and P. Pellegrin [Paris: Flammarion, 2004], 25-29) has the important merit of not giving in to this a priori; of course, he does not take literally the affirmations that we have proposed and gives of them a “low interpretation,” or a “largely analogical reading,” or else a “weak reading,” but he refuses to judge them as simple metaphors because of the importance recognized by Aristotle of the perfection of the “living being.” It is, therefore, even more puzzling that he would later write (p. 45) that “the allusions to the divine that we can find in the treatise *On the Heaven* could not become the basis of a possible theology.”

<sup>31</sup> See below, section III, 6.

of the stars, in a certain sense supports, as in Plato, what one can say about the celestial bodies: those are, as Plato says, animated bodies composed of a “visible body” and an “invisible soul.”<sup>32</sup> I believe that these are the shared beliefs, unknown today, that tacitly constitute the evidence on which Aristotle can count when he proposes his perspective of a “theological” science in Epsilon.

### 3.

If this is the case, two possible conclusions follow, one negative and one positive. The negative conclusion is that, according to Aristotle, the gods cannot be reduced to those immovable and separated realities he assigns to “theological” science. The second conclusion, the positive one, is that these same realities nevertheless constitute the astral gods, which are also corporeal; this conclusion is in harmony with Plato’s project, as outlined in book X of the *Laws*; indeed, Plato aims, at the very least, at showing that the celestial bodies are not merely bodies.

Several clarifications may be needed in order to consider this conclusion plausible and to accept it; the assessment of Aristotle’s critiques of Plato, which I have put aside until now, is one of these indispensable clarifications. However, let us first consider the elucidations that Aristotle’s affirmations in Epsilon give us.

In context, in fact, the realities that “theological” science is supposed to consider are not only separated and unchanging but also “eternal” and “causes” – that is to say, “for those of the divine realities that are manifest” (φανερῶς), says Aristotle (E, 1, 1026 a 18). These considerations lead him to affirm, immediately after, that separated and unchanging realities are a fortiori divine: “If there is Divinity anywhere in the universe,” Aristotle says, “then it is in the nature studied by First Science that It is to be found” (E, 1, 1026 a 20-21; cf. K, 7, 1064 b 4-5).

It is remarkable to observe that the divine (or, rather, those realities considered divine) is here divided into two parts: a manifest one (φανερὸν) and one that, while it is not manifest, is however preeminent because it is, in one way or another, the cause for the manifestation of the divine. Undeniably, this subdivision seems to match exactly the one suggested by Plato between the visible (or corporeal) part and the invisible (or psychic) part of the astral gods, in which the soul is obviously preeminent.

This correspondence can be affirmed. Indeed, in our passage, the phrase “manifest divine (realities)” undeniably points to celestial bodies.<sup>33</sup> In order to gather more evidence in favor of this interpretation, it is sufficient to read our passage in connection with another text, which mentions “the heavenly sphere and the divinest of visible things”<sup>34</sup> and distinguishes them from the animals and plants that we find on earth. As a consequence, the most divine portion of beings that are said to be manifest or visible (be they close or distant) has to coincide with the so-called manifest portion of divine beings considered in our passage. In all likelihood, therefore, it has to represent the heavens and the celestial bodies. There is no other way of understanding these two passages we are bringing

<sup>32</sup> In *Timaeus*, 36 E.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. E. Berti, *Aristotelismo* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2017), 266n11: “Namely, of the stars [...] Which is to say that the separated and immovable objects are the causes of the stars.”

<sup>34</sup> *Physics*, II, 4, 196 a 33.

together. Moreover, according to such a reading, the invisible portion of divine beings that is shared by immutable and separated beings will most probably correspond, *mutatis mutandis*, to the intelligible part of the astral gods that Plato had recognized.

Before exploring these correspondences further, it is important to consider the critiques that Aristotle addresses to Plato, more precisely, those about the conception that Plato had of the astral gods. The critique I am referring to is devastating because it disrupts Plato's understanding of the gods' physical and intelligible dimensions. Nevertheless, at the root of this disruption we find the refusal to adopt Plato's vision of celestial bodies. In order to defend the gods, Aristotle seems to deem that a precondition would be necessary; moreover, before considering that the celestial bodies are not merely bodies but that they also have souls, it would be necessary to understand that these bodies are unlike any others. In fact, without this previous understanding, it would be impossible to determine both the type of soul that would be appropriate to attribute to them as a cause and the kind of causes that would be intended for their type of soul.

This is briefly the position Aristotle defends and that touches upon the nature of the celestial bodies, as well as the reason why he fundamentally rejects Plato's viewpoint. Contrary to Plato, for whom the celestial bodies are composed of one or another of the four elements that combine in the terrestrial bodies, Aristotle believes that the celestial bodies are exclusively composed of a "fifth substance" that is completely distinct from the four elements, which are suitable only for the sublunary world.<sup>35</sup> In the "anisotropic"<sup>36</sup> Universe, all the eternally turning spheres in the sky are made of this substance, rigorously "separated" from the simple bodies displayed beneath the moon. The main reason for the existence of a fifth bodily substance is relatively simple: the elements of the sublunary world could not become part of the stars, which move circularly, without adopting an unnatural movement, as they naturally go either downward or upward in a rectilinear fashion.<sup>37</sup> Aristotle, therefore, postulates a fifth bodily substance (later called "quintessence") in opposition to Plato that is neither light nor heavy but has one natural property: moving circularly, or, in a word, rotating.<sup>38</sup>

According to Aristotle, then, the celestial spheres are composed of a divine substance; they are therefore already divine bodies in themselves, the only ones that can correspond to the immortal gods, and cannot be put on the same level as any other body. If, moreover, these "manifest divine realities" are not merely bodies but are also connected to invisible divine realities of a psychic order that are their causes, they necessarily differ from the type of souls that Plato attributed in his work to the celestial bodies.

<sup>35</sup> *On the Heavens*, I, 2, 269 b 14-18 (and the entire chapter).

<sup>36</sup> I borrowed this expression from Aristotle, *Du ciel*, trans. M. Federspiel (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2017), 8.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. *On the Heavens*, I, 2, 269 b 1-2: "there must necessarily be some simple body which revolves naturally and in virtue of its own nature with a circular movement." *Meteorology*, I, 3, 340 b 6; *On the Generation of Animals*, II, 3, 737 a 1.

<sup>38</sup> Aristotle denies to the fifth body all the other characteristics that plants and animals share on earth: this body will be ungendered and indestructible and exempt from increase and alteration (*On the Heavens*, I, 3, 270 a 13- b 4); it is obviously not a way to downgrade this fifth body but, on the contrary, to establish its superiority vis-à-vis the terrestrial bodies. Moreover, Aristotle considers it the "primary bodily substance," the only divine one: "if then there is, as there certainly is, anything divine, what we have just said about the primary bodily substance was well said" (270 b 10-11). I will come back to this point in section III, 7.

Aristotle's critique of Plato's celestial soul becomes increasingly clear, as indeed this soul, supposedly intelligent, is in reality composed of properties that are suited to bodies, more precisely those properties that are suited to the rotation of the celestial bodies themselves – namely, to auto-moving circular movement!

Plato, indeed, who was only able to recognize those simple bodies that were on earth and sought an explanation for the movements they presented in the heavens, attributed these movements to a self-moving soul that was attached to them. Moreover, Aristotle straightforwardly objects that “it is not right to say that the soul is a magnitude,” and in such a fashion he multiplies the arguments<sup>39</sup> against the soul that Plato associated with the celestial bodies and that he believed stretched out along their entire magnitude. Plato, by incorporating the celestial soul into some physical dimension, thus, according to Aristotle, unduly gave it properties that pertain only to the physical reality that has magnitude in the sky: the celestial bodies themselves. But then what is the essential property that Plato gave to the soul that moves the celestial bodies in their specific circular movements? It is self-movement. From this perspective, we can see that the Aristotelian invention of the fifth bodily substance corresponds to the attempt to correct Plato's error: the fifth bodily substance, the divine substance, inherits in some ways the prerogatives of Plato's celestial soul. Plato's error, according to Aristotle, was to attribute to a soul that which actually pertains only to the body itself.<sup>40</sup>

The implication of such a rectification is worrisome. The celestial bodies, which naturally turn, have, according to Aristotle, no need of a self-moving soul, as Plato claimed, in order for their circular movements to come about: they already turn by themselves, naturally.<sup>41</sup> Would this mean, therefore, that they are strictly unanimated bodies – in other words, simple bodies and therefore bodies declared divine only because of an abuse of language – and not the bodies of gods? Aristotle, we have seen, continues to deem that the sky is animated in a certain way and that, once this is accepted, there is really no need to be surprised.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Cf. *On the Soul*, I, 3, 407 a 2 et seq. (critique of the *Timeous*, 36 D-E et 40 A-B; cf. *Laws*, X, 896 A, and *Phaedrus*, 245 C).

<sup>40</sup> I have discussed this heritage, the result of a critique of Plato, at length in *The Political Dimensions of Aristotle's Ethics*, trans. J. E. Garrett (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), 239-62, and *Aristote, la justice et la cité* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1996), 81-88; I am referring to these articles because they take into consideration the relevant literature.

<sup>41</sup> F. Solmsen, *Aristotle's System of the Physical World: A Comparison with His Predecessors* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1960), 291, already underscored that the fifth body, material element, assumes the functions previously reserved for the soul. The temptation, which we have to resist, is for this reason to suppose that Aristotle could not defend two apparently incompatible positions: the one of a celestial body that moves naturally and the one of a soul that moves it. In reality, we can say it once and for all: it is precisely because the movements of the celestial bodies are naturally continuous that Aristotle supposes that there have to be moving souls.

<sup>42</sup> After noticing (p. 234) that Aristotle invariably believes that the celestial movements are the expression of a soul, S. Broadie, “Heavenly Bodies and First Causes,” in *A Companion to Aristotle*, ed. G. Anagnostopoulos (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), shares his surprise (p. 240): “We might expect this theology [evoked in Epsilon] to demote the eternal corporeal and moving substances to non-divine status; but we would be wrong. Aristotle continues to assume that the heavens are divine. In fact, he sees this as giving us a special reason to affirm the eternity of the incorporeal, separate causes of celestial motion.” But the author continues later to distinguish between animated spheres and the unmoved mover, that is to say, to double celestial soul and moving intelligence, which I consider to be impertinent.

Aristotle, like Plato, in fact maintains that a soul of an intellectual nature has to be added and that this soul needs to be appropriate; however, once freed from a function that it cannot perform (intelligence, which is not mobile, cannot transfer movements to bodies) and that it has no need to perform any longer (the body turns by itself), this intellectual soul is in a certain way liberated and destined only to the activity of thinking, which is its purpose.

Not surprisingly, we then have to admit that this is the kind of intellectual soul that is mentioned in Epsilon when Aristotle talks about immobile and separated realities: invisible divine realities, causes for certain types of visible divine realities, are the same as celestial souls united with celestial bodies. Aristotle has not boldly doubled the material bodies and has not insisted in separating the divine bodies that circle in the heavens from the terrestrial bodies in order, afterward, to stupidly double the divine souls that correspond to them by placing some immobile and separated realities on top of the celestial souls; on the contrary, they are one.<sup>43</sup>

This can be accepted without further doubts because the opposite is impossible. Celestial bodies, even though mobile, could obviously not have a mobile soul, except by accident; indeed, even though inseparable from the body of which they are the formal cause, as for instance for the galloping horse, the soul is not mobile except by accident, in the same way that an immobile passenger is moving in a sailing ship.<sup>44</sup> Additionally, could celestial bodies also have a soul that is not separated? Is their soul nutritive, like the one that is specific to plants and common to plants and animals?<sup>45</sup> This is impossible because celestial bodies do not nourish themselves, they do not grow, and they do not reproduce themselves.<sup>46</sup> The nutritive soul can only be shared by mortal beings, and celestial bodies are not such beings. Would it be more likely that these beings shared in sensory soul, which is proper to animals?<sup>47</sup> This is equally impossible, because the senses are always conditioned by the presence, in the sensory organs, of one of the four elements of the sublunar world.<sup>48</sup> Yet the celestial bodies are not composed of any of these elements and do not have any sensory organ that is proper to them. The possibility of a noetic soul like the one that characterizes human beings remains. Aristotle also hints that such a soul may be shared by any other living things there might be that are “of that sort or more appreciable.”<sup>49</sup> However, celestial bodies lack sensibility, and they therefore also lack imagination. Yet in human beings – Aristotle insists on this point – it is imagination, and only imagination, that makes it possible to say that intelligence is not “separable” from the

<sup>43</sup> An incoherent duplication but often taken for granted, which consists in overlaying separated souls onto celestial souls, ends up, in F. Baghdassarian’s recent work, *La question du divin chez Aristote: Discours sur les dieux et science du principe* (Leuven: Peeters), 2016, to believe that Aristotle proposes, in Epsilon, to study “a divine” that would be superior to the gods and that “the science behind it can be called ‘theology’ ... because its objects are beings that are the eternal causes of celestial beings because they are motionless” (p. 12)! The author believes, however, that this study would be more appropriately called an “archeology” because she considers it to be (p. 304), “a theology that is not theological” [*sic*]. About this work, see L. Derome, “Aristotle’s Thoughts on the Divine,” *The Classical Review* 2 (2017): 359-61.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. *On the Soul*, I, 3, 406 a 4 et seq.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, I, 5, 411 b 28-29; II, 3, 414 a 33 et seq.

<sup>46</sup> I will consider this more in detail in section III, 7.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. *On the Soul*, II, 3 414 b 3 et seq.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. *Sense and Sensibility*, 2, 437 a 29 et seq.

<sup>49</sup> *On the Soul*, II, 3, 414 b 19.

body because intelligence does not have a proper organ.<sup>50</sup> Therefore, without imagination, if it is the case that the celestial bodies have a soul, the intelligence associated to them has necessarily to be separated.

Therefore, there is no further doubt: celestial souls, if they exist, are the same as the immobile and separated realities on which Aristotle's "theological" science should focus.<sup>51</sup>

To begin with, the interpretation I have given, before being proven by different arguments, rests on many advantages. It indeed leaves room for the "corporeal" dimension, as the tradition suggests, in approaching Aristotle's thought about the gods. In this regard, such an interpretation considers the importance of celestial bodies beyond the traditional reading and in accordance with the remarkable status that Aristotle attributes to their substance, which he considers divine and separated from other corporeal substances. Because of both its uselessness and its needless complexity, this interpretation immediately disallows research into celestial bodies that would not be identifiable with thoughts that Aristotle considers to be the causes of celestial movements. In this fashion, this interpretation makes it possible to consider in a clarifying way the relationship between celestial movements and noetic acts, which are their causes, as informing the relationship between divine manifest bodies and divine invisible souls. According to such an explanation, it is also possible to measure how much Aristotle's theses are based on Plato's theses on the Ouranian gods, even when he criticizes them. This is a crucial understanding, which, by measuring the Platonic critical background on which Aristotle's thought is developed, further makes it possible, I believe, to give a less enigmatic meaning to the idea of a "theological" science like the one evoked in the passage of Epsilon.

## II

In this second section, I wish first to explain briefly (4) how one can expect to find, if not the exposition, at least some elements of a "theological" science in Aristotle and (5) how we can put together these elements without diverging too much from the main subject.

### 4.

What would be for Aristotle a "theological" science that does not usurp such a name? It is difficult to answer this question in any other way than by a conjecture: it is a science that would have as its objective to show, at the very least, that the celestial bodies are not only bodies but also the bodies of the living gods. This was Plato's principal aim in the *Laws X*. Perhaps if this science were possible, it would also have to investigate divine providence, as does Plato in the *Laws X*.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>50</sup> About all this, see *On the Soul*, I, 1, 403 a 8-10; III, 2, 425 b 25; III, 3, 427 b 14-16, 428 b 11-12, 429 a 1; III, 7, 431 b 2; III, 8, 432 a 13-14; III, 10, 433 a 10. A summary of the arguments here mentioned can be read in Richard Bodéüs, "La théorie aristotélicienne de la connaissance," in *Philosophie de la connaissance*, ed. Robert Nadeau (Montreal: Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 2016), 56-58.

<sup>51</sup> The absurdity of these two distinct intelligences, one that we would imagine as being "immanent" to the celestial bodies and the other that we would imagine as being "transcendent," is even more evident when, in *Physics*, VIII, 10, 271 b 9, the unmoved mover is positioned (at the periphery of the celestial bodies). Making a distinction here between immanence and transcendence is the best way of not understanding anything.

<sup>52</sup> The three arguments defended in *Laws X* against the three errors exposed in 885 B are that the gods exist (893 A et seq.), that they concern themselves with human affairs (899 D et seq.), and that they don't let themselves

Did Aristotle try to achieve the first aim of this science? It is difficult here again to answer this new question, since Aristotle does not explicitly mention “theological” science, evoked in Epsilon, anywhere else. This is a disturbing and embarrassing silence.

We can consider, of course – and I will use this charitable hypothesis that he gives somewhere else, in an implicit fashion – the elements of a doctrine that responds, at least partially, to this objective; for instance, when he makes the effort of proving the necessity of an unmoved mover in order to make sense of the continuous circular and therefore eternal movements of the celestial spheres.<sup>53</sup> But here, too, it is necessary to notice that this kind of consideration is inscribed in a larger context, which is not exactly the one that presupposes a “theological” science. In the example I have just cited, Aristotle considers the possibility of a “motionless substance” in the general but meticulous context of a study dedicated explicitly to such a substance. This study touches upon a point that without doubt should be of interest to a properly defined “theological” science; however, he mentions it only occasionally and without clearly stating that, in passing, he intends to pursue the principal aim of this science.

This indifference is probably not without reason. Indeed, when in Epsilon Aristotle assigns to “theological science” the contemplation of those unmoved and separated realities that could be the causes for the divine manifestation, he does not suppose necessarily that the reality he considers are the exclusive object of “theological science.” Of course, it may be that from a certain point of view these realities may be considered, or need to be considered, by a “theological science”! However, this does mean that the *study* of these realities is exclusivity for such science. Moreover, theological science, even in Epsilon, is barely evoked and quickly gives way to first philosophy (1026 a 30), on which Aristotle focuses because of the resolute separation of the substance from the natural bodies. Without this separation, says Aristotle, physics would be first philosophy. This is, to put it mildly, a change in perspective! Moreover, this first consideration recalls another puzzling one. As Aristotle puts it, “it is really up to physics and Second Philosophy to give us a theory of perceptible substances.”<sup>54</sup>

The broad distinction between first and second philosophy does not exactly correspond to the one that allows for a “theological science” and for a mathematical science to come about. It is clear that physics, or second philosophy, which studies all the perceptible substances, encounters in its path, if I may say so, the eternal perceptible substances, but those that will also correspond to the divine bodies are only a very small part of its object. We can certainly assume that first philosophy, considering everything that goes beyond physics, also encounters some aspects of divine souls, at least partially. Moreover, we can clearly see how we could articulate a theological science at the junction between first and second philosophy. However, after evoking it, Aristotle does not apply himself to articulate it precisely, neither when he is engaged in reflections pertaining to second philosophy, nor when he is engaged in reflections pertaining to first philosophy. After all, Epsilon evokes mathematical science very well, and for all we know Aristotle has never tried to apply himself to a mathematical study somewhere else.

---

be corrupted by the faulty nature of men (905 D et seq.). For the sake of clarity, I gather together these last two arguments under the designation of “divine providence.” About this, see section V, 11.

<sup>53</sup> See *Metaphysics*, Lambda, 6 1071 b 3 et seq.

<sup>54</sup> *Metaphysics*, Zeta, 11, 1037 a 14.

It is difficult, without a clear declaration on Aristotle's part, to decide if within the multiple concerns pertaining to first and second philosophy there may also be some that refer to theological science; and, at the same time, while these preoccupations remain in the background, it is also difficult to figure out if his views were influenced by such a possibility when he talks about a manifestation of the divine or of a divine not manifest. Thus, it is, I believe, methodologically appropriate to consider Aristotle's assertions as at best the elements of a possible "theological science."

## 5.

How can we put together these elements? The previously mentioned possibility of a Platonic foundation for the evocation of a theological science in Epsilon may guide us. Specifically, an Aristotelian position should likely correspond to each argument that Plato lays out in order to justify his views of the celestial gods. Moreover, all of Aristotle's positions about Plato's arguments on this matter put together should lead to a portrait of the gods, which would suggest a more or less underlying "theological science."

This is how I would risk presenting, more or less, Plato's opinion about the Ouranian gods, with the aspects put into question by Aristotle for each point: a (Ouranian) god would have (a) a body made out of earthly elements, but one that is combined, (b) because of divine goodness, with (c) an intelligent soul (d) that turns by itself (e) on the model of the intelligible living.

We already know that point (a) has been contested by Aristotle, who empties the heavens of simple earthly bodies by rejecting the idea that perceivable bodies, which naturally move in a linear fashion, could be forced to turn without end. We also already know that point (d) is contested by Aristotle, who emptied the sky of Plato's soul by rejecting the idea that the natural circling could be anything other than the property of a body – in this case, of a fifth simple body – absolutely foreign to the simple bodies on earth. Moreover, it is obvious that, by refusing to consider circular movement as a property of celestial souls, Aristotle considers that celestial souls, if they exist, have to be different than Plato imagined. That is certainly why Aristotle refuses to consider (c) Plato's hypothesis according to which the celestial soul would be a reality of a third type, a mixture of intelligibility and materiality.<sup>55</sup> We can also already imagine that Aristotle rejects (e) the hypothesis of a unique model for all animated bodies that turn in the sky<sup>56</sup> and (b) the hypothesis of the divine goodness that Plato attributed to the Demiurge, in order to organize the heavens that rotate eternally, according to such an eternal being, thanks to the soul he has conceived.<sup>57</sup>

Before considering these two most evident last points,<sup>58</sup> it is important to carefully clarify Aristotle's rejection of point (c) because it is a little less obvious. In reality, such a rejection also appears obvious and easy to establish. Indeed, Plato's celestial soul, an

<sup>55</sup> See *Timaeus*, 35 A et seq. (about the third form of intermediate substance) and 37 A-C (about the cognitive functions of the soul, that "shares in reason"), as well as *Laws* X, 897 B ("the rational and supremely virtuous kind").

<sup>56</sup> See *Timaeus*, 37 D (the model was itself an everlasting Living Thing) and 39 E (casting the world into the nature of its model).

<sup>57</sup> See *ibid.*, 29 E-30 A.

<sup>58</sup> See below, section IV, 9-10.

incongruous mixture of intelligibility and materiality, had notoriously, for Aristotle, the inconvenience of associating the intelligible and intelligence in the divine soul to something else, something that would have been linked with materiality and with the irrational soul.<sup>59</sup> What is maybe less obvious are the implications of such a refusal.

### III

After having taken away all human features from the divine soul with the exception of intelligence, Aristotle could not have followed Plato in associating to a celestial body a divine soul that had been something different than pure intelligence. Moreover, accordingly, Aristotle could not have spoken about it while considering the celestial bodies from the perspective of a physician, if it is true that the study of intelligence is part of first philosophy. From another point of view, if he associated divine and immobile intelligence with some movements of the celestial bodies, these would have become alive, according to his own beliefs. This would have meant that these bodies would have been animated in a different way, at the risk of recreating a composed soul in the heavens shared by immortals and mortals alike.

We can be certain of all this in multiple ways. In this section, I suggest considering (6) the silence that, in principle, second philosophy maintains about the noetic soul, then (7) the rigorous distinction that Aristotle poses between the living body and the celestial body, and at last (8) the causal union that he established between the celestial bodies and the noetic soul; in this manner, Aristotle brings about a profile of the gods that is, as expected, different than the one of men.<sup>60</sup>

### 6.

Let us start with a few remarks on the silence that second philosophy maintains about the noetic soul. Physics, or second philosophy, considers corporeal magnitudes,<sup>61</sup> while celestial bodies can be compared to plants and animals,<sup>62</sup> their “action” can only be related to that of plants and animals because they are animated in a certain way.<sup>63</sup> Aristotle, in his work as a physician, does not say anything more, but he may have his reasons, according to the distinction I previously underlined between first and second philosophy. This distinction presupposes a line of demarcation between the two. If it is possible to trace such a line, where does it exactly pass?

This is the question that Aristotle poses in his own way when he asks “whether it is the whole soul or only some part of it, the consideration of which comes within the province

<sup>59</sup> Plato attributes different components or “movements,” among which is intelligence, to the celestial soul (cf. *Laws* X, 896 C-897 A: desires, reasonings, true opinions, preoccupations, memories); intelligence and reason are present but only to make sure that the gods are good (887 B, 896 A) and that they have “all the virtues” (300 D-E), in particular, justice, temperance, and courage (ibid.); these virtues are useful when it comes to demonstrate that the gods take care of human beings without the risk of being corrupted by them. Aristotle refuses to attribute all these qualities to the gods (cf. *Nicomachean Ethics*, X, 8 1178 b 8 et seq.); about this, see below, section V, 12.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. the passage in *Politics*, VII, 13, 1332 b 17-20, cited above, section I, 2.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. *On the Heavens*, I, 2, 268 a 1-3: “All natural bodies and magnitudes we hold to be, as such, capable of locomotion; for nature, we say, is their principle of movement.”

<sup>62</sup> See ibid., II, 12, 292 b 1-2 (Aristotle talks here about the movements of the stars, which may in some cases presuppose one or several underlying corporeal movements; Aristotle mentions them when he talks about the “action” of the stars).

<sup>63</sup> See ibid., II, 2, 285 a 28-29 (cited above, section I, 2).

of natural science.” The philosopher responds to this question by discounting physics from the study of the whole soul because “then there is no place for any other philosophy beside it.”<sup>64</sup> This thesis rests on the conviction that intelligence is not the domain of physics, not only because it has as its object the intelligible, which the study of physics does not include, but also because the intellectual capacity is not as such a principle of motion,<sup>65</sup> and that physics studies beings that have the principle of movement in themselves: “for it is not the whole soul that constitutes the animal nature,” concludes Aristotle.<sup>66</sup>

We can wonder why Aristotle, when he writes about the celestial bodies, contents himself with declaring furtively that they are animated without writing more about this subject, leaving us with some unjustified affirmations. This silence, only interrupted in a fortuitous manner, seems even more inexplicable because, according to Aristotle, the physician should talk about the soul, as it is “the governing source of living things.”<sup>67</sup> However, this concern, we have just seen, has limits. And these limits are made more precise at the beginning of Epsilon: “it is also clear why some types of soul fall within the domain of natural science, those types that is, that essentially involve matter” (1026 a5-6).<sup>68</sup> This consideration makes it possible to include in the domain of the physicist all the cases where the soul is added to matter, otherwise it is excluded from it. There are not a thousand ways to understand this distinction because with the term “matter” it aims at the potentialities that the body represents and of which the soul is the principal realization.<sup>69</sup> The soul that the physician considers is therefore the one that presupposes an organized body (matter) of which it is the cause (the formal cause). That said, as we will specify further, the celestial unorganized bodies are not in this situation: they are not living bodies in themselves, and the noetic soul attached to their movements is not their formal cause but only a final cause.<sup>70</sup> Therefore, they are beyond the domain of natural science. As a consequence, it appears rational to leave aside – with the exception of some allusions – specific treatments

<sup>64</sup> *Parts of Animals*, I, 1, 641 a 32-36.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. Aristote, *Les parties des animaux*, trans. P. Pellegrin (Paris: Flammarion, 2011), 488n35: “the rational part of the soul, which is the privilege of the human (and also divine) soul doesn’t, as such, move anything.” Aristotle more precisely says, “the intellectual part” (τὸ νοητικόν).

<sup>66</sup> *Parts of Animals*, 641 b 9-10. About all this passage, see G. Moreau, “Explication d’un Texte d’Aristote: De Partibus Animalium I. I. 641a14-b10,” in *Philomathes. Studies and Essays in the Humanities in Memory of Philip Merlan*, ed. R. B. Plamer and R. Hamerton-Kelly (Dordrecht: Springer, 1971), 91-95, who underscores that, “we can see the philosophical relevance of this conclusion; indeed, it allows to make the relationship between soul and nature explicit, and to put aside the transcendence of a part of the soul, the intellectual soul (...), that cannot be reduced to a function, which activity [in human beings] is not related to a specific organ.”

<sup>67</sup> This formulation, which we can find in *De Anima*, I, 1, 402 a 5-7, is further explained in II, 4, 45 b 8 et seq.; here it appears that the soul is the principle or the cause of the living body in three ways: it is the formal or essential cause, it is the efficient cause or the principle of the movement, and it is the final cause. However, this is only true for the soul of plants and animals, on earth. We will soon see what the situation of celestial and divine souls is.

<sup>68</sup> Cf. *Parts of Animals*, I, 1, 641 a 32-36 (cited above)

<sup>69</sup> For a discussion of this passage, see E. Berti, *Aristote: Métaphysique Epsilon* (Paris: Vrin, 2015), 99-100, who concludes, “physics occupies itself only with the material cause.”

<sup>70</sup> For the animals and the plants on earth, the soul is the body’s final cause, “since all natural bodies are instruments of the soul” and that “they hav[e] being for the sake of the soul” (*De Anima*, II, 4, 415 b 19-20); about this passage, see A. P. Bos, *The Soul and Its Instrumental Body: A Reinterpretation of Aristotle’s Philosophy of Living Nature* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 92 et seq. Mutatis mutandis, the divine (intellective) souls are also a final cause for the divine bodies, insofar as the celestial bodies are instruments at the service of the souls and that they only exist for their sake but despite the fact that the divine souls are not their formal cause.

of the celestial soul when celestial bodies are treated in the physicist's work.<sup>71</sup> In short, the physicist considers intelligence when it is part of the soul<sup>72</sup> and when it is the formal cause of bodies, as is the case for human. However, when intelligence is all that the soul is, as is the case for the gods, the study of the soul is beyond the natural sciences.

## 7.

I arrive now at the distinction within nature between living bodies and celestial bodies that the physicist attaches implicitly to intellect, which is not a natural substance. When Aristotle evokes in some passages "the philosophy that concerns divine realities,"<sup>73</sup> it is second philosophy that he has in mind, the one that, as the philosopher says, takes into consideration "natural substances." More precisely, it is the part of second philosophy that considers the only ones among the natural substances that are eternal and that correspond to the manifest divine. We can observe that Aristotle remarks in another passage, not without some disappointment, that the manifest elements that concern them, those that relate to the senses, are excessively rare. One can conclude, therefore, that the divine, not manifest in various ways, certainly does include more than a noetic soul to which the celestial bodies would be related. However, it does not include any other soul that could be the formal cause of a living body. Aristotle is so convinced of this that he contrasts divine realities, that is, celestial bodies, to "living nature," of which he then recommends the study, despite its unrewarding character.<sup>74</sup> In short, if the celestial bodies were in themselves living bodies, they would not be eternal and they could not be the bodies of immortal gods because the "living nature" (which exists here below) is always, and without any exception, dying.

What then, in the end, are these celestial bodies? Certainly, these are bodies unlike any others, bodies that Aristotle, in a significant way, paints almost always by some negations: they are neither composed, as are the ones on earth, nor simple, in the way simple bodies are, again, here on earth. But what else?

I first want to recall, despite the risk of being pedantic, that the celestial bodies of which Aristotle speaks are not at all, as is the case for us, bodies that turn in orbits in the intersidereal void. On the contrary, their completely transparent orbits fill the sky entirely, like superposed and intertwined loops. These orbits are strictly invisible. It is not possible to find them except indirectly and only by eyes capable of following the traces of light

<sup>71</sup> This conclusion goes in the same direction as the one offered by Pellegrin (Aristote, *Traité du ciel*, trans. C. Dalimier and P. Pellegrin [Paris: Flammarion, 2004], 48), when he explains why the treatise *On the Heavens* doesn't have to deal with the first mover [attached to the first exterior sphere of the Universe]: "these are different points of view."

<sup>72</sup> About this clarification, see *De Anima*, III, 4, 429 a 10 and 23, and *Metaphysics*, little Alpha, 1, 993 b 11.

<sup>73</sup> *Parts of Animals*, 1, 5, 645 a 4. The expression, in this context, designates the study of those "substances constituted by nature [...] ungenerated, imperishable, and eternal" evoked beforehand (644 b 22-23) and presented then as divine (b 25), but about which, says Aristotle, "the evidence that might throw light on them, and on the problems which we long to solve respecting them, is furnished but scantily by sensation" (b 27-28). Therefore, this clearly directs the study that pertains to the physicist to those realities, which are both divine and manifest, while at the same time establishing the narrow limits in which the divine may manifest itself. On the one hand, this diminishes physics' possibilities when it comes to studying these natural substances, and, on the other hand, it appears to open up the domain of the divine beyond these same substances.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 645 a 5-6.

that are left by their movements and that, being of igneous origin, are not the product of the celestial bodies themselves.<sup>75</sup> In short, a celestial “body” is for Aristotle an invisible magnitude, of a spherical configuration, to which is added a circular movement.<sup>76</sup> This invisible magnitude obviously presents the essential quality or the specific difference of the sphere among all geometrical figures.<sup>77</sup> But from the physical point of view, it strictly speaking has no essential quality or specific difference: its parts, sections of the spherical bodies into which this magnitude is potentially divisible, are completely indistinguishable, like those of a portion of air, for instance. In particular, it has none of the organs that allow us to define the living body. Therefore, like all the simple bodies, it is rigorously undefinable. There is more. Not only does it not present any essential quality, as other simple bodies do, but also, contrary to the simple bodies on earth, these magnitudes do not present any perceivable qualities; in this specific case, there are no tactile qualities, which on earth determine the heaviness or lightness of simple bodies, their relative position in the sublunar world, and also their capacity to be generated by one another.<sup>78</sup> A celestial body does not have any of these sensual qualities. A celestial body can therefore not come from another body belonging to the sublunar world, it cannot transform itself into another body, it cannot grow or decrease in terms of quantity. Moreover, because it is neither heavy nor light, it cannot simply ascend, as can a light body, which will place itself higher; nor can it come down, as can a heavier body, which will place itself lower. That means that it does not move

<sup>75</sup> Cf. *On the Heavens* II, 7, 289 a 19-35. “Moved” bodies (stars, planets) are not independent and do not have a movement that belongs to them: in reality, they are nothing more than simple isolated excrescences that the orbs bring about. These excrescences are only apparently luminous; indeed, light has its source in fire, one of the four elements, and therefore, by definition, can only be outside of them. Aristotle seems to think that fire is then produced in their vicinity, in the air, which, being extremely warm and dry, blazes when, in their fast passage, these excrescences of the orbs rub it; cf. *Meteorology* I, 3, 341 a 17 (where this friction is not mentioned). It is a fire that, apparently, lights up and extinguishes itself quickly but sequentially on every part of the trajectory of the orb. We have to admit that none of the hypothesis of interpretation on this question is very clear (cf. Aristotle, *Du ciel*, trans. Michel Federspiel [Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2017], 309-10); however, it is obvious that the celestial bodies are not fiery but completely transparent and invisible – truthfully, more transparent than any other very transparent body, like air or water, which under the light become slightly colored (cf. *De Anima*, II, 7, 418 b 24- 419 a 1). On the impossibility of emptiness, see *Physics*, IV, 6, 213 a 12 et seq.

<sup>76</sup> Mathematics establishes the number of these spheres that the astral movements presuppose (cf. *Metaphysics*, Lambda, 8, to which we will come back: we need to count a certain number of “spheres” in order to explain the movement of the moon, a certain number in order to explain the movement of the sun, etc.). Their respective positions (from the periphery to the lunar regions), their size, the direction of their turning, and, without a doubt, also the axis of rotation are variable data, but all the spheres are translucent and they all turn, without displacing themselves, at a regular and unchanging speed. Those are their common features: the features of a simple body, ungenerated, imperishable, and generally unchanging, of which the “incorporeal” mover, says Aristotle, has a fortiori to be unchanging (*On the Heavens*, II, 6, 288 b 1-6, 22-30; cf. 12, 292 b 5).

<sup>77</sup> On this essential quality, see *Metaphysics*, Delta, 14, 1020 a 33-b 1 (the example of the essential quality of the circle).

<sup>78</sup> The qualities I am talking about are the opposites, warm and cold, dry and humid. It is in this way that air, at once warm and humid, is lighter than water, which is humid and cold. By being lighter, air occupies a superior position than that of water, which is heavier than air (cf. *On the Heavens*, IV [theory of the light and the heavy]); and it can come from the water, potentially warm, if the water is heated up (cf. *Generation and Corruption*, II, 1, 329 a 24 et seq.). The air is therefore generated by the water, it displaces itself with a vertical natural movement from inferior position A (where water places itself naturally) to superior position B (where air positions itself naturally), and if, for whatever reason, it displaced with force, imprisoned in a swim bladder for example, it naturally tends to go up to its place, always with a vertical movement. The mover, in these cases, is a natural disposition defined by upward and downward movements (cf. *Physics*, VIII, 4, 255 b 15 et seq.).

at all. It certainly rotates, but this rotation happens exclusively in place.<sup>79</sup> This movement is as natural for such a body as rectilinear movement is for bodies here below, which are mobile under certain conditions.<sup>80</sup> A celestial body is a spherical magnitude, without any specific difference or perceivable qualities. Of course, a celestial body is indeed a material substance, but only according to one relationship: the natural force of rotation, always starting from and coming back to the same point. Let us try to understand it correctly. Whatever the matter is of which it is composed, a motionless sphere is always a potentiality (passive) for turning if another force (active) can drive it. However, shaped as it is, the celestial substance is not naturally motionless but naturally turning; in this respect, it is the successor of Plato's self-moving soul; it therefore has in itself the principle of movement, like the other simple bodies and like the living bodies on earth, but its natural movement does not look like any other. In the end, the last consideration and the last negation: this movement, which is circular, eternal, and continuous, is not that of a potential being that could actualize itself progressively. Indeed, such a hypothesis would presuppose the contradictory possibility of ceasing to exist. This is the reason why, says Aristotle, "the sun, the stars and the entirety of the heavens are eternally in actuality, and we can chuckle at the concern of the natural philosophers that they may one day come to a halt."<sup>81</sup> In short, this movement is complete, the most perfect that may exist, the one of which the end is achieved immediately and since the beginning, namely, permanently;<sup>82</sup> it constitutes the exception to the reality of all movements, which is to be an unachieved act:<sup>83</sup> the circular movement of the celestial bodies is such that it can be paradoxically assimilated to an act.<sup>84</sup>

Substance without a specific difference, without perceivable qualities, naturally turning, and, moreover, in a never-ending fashion that translates into a permanent activity – this is all that, from the point of view of physical science, can be said about the celestial body. What can be further investigated is, maybe, the fact that the manifest divine has to find its final explanation in a cause, the unmanifested divine, which is not properly physical and constitutes its only attachment to something psychological.<sup>85</sup>

<sup>79</sup> Cf. *Physics*, VIII, 9, 265 b 2-3: "so that a sphere is in a way both in motion and at rest; for it continues to occupy the same place."

<sup>80</sup> Cf. *On the Heavens*, I, 2, 269 a 8-9: "there is one sort of movement natural to each of the simple bodies."

<sup>81</sup> *Metaphysics*, Theta, 8, 1050 b 22-23, and, more generally, b 16-27.

<sup>82</sup> Cf. *On the Heavens*, I, 2, 269 a 19-20, 22-25, 27-28: "the complete is naturally prior to the incomplete, and the circle is a complete thing [...]. And so, since the prior movement belongs to the body which is naturally prior, and circular movement is prior to straight, [...] it follows that circular movement also must be the movement of some simple body."

<sup>83</sup> On this point, see *Physics*, III, 1, 201 a 10-11, 23-24, b 4-5, 31-32; 2, 203 a 3, 7-8; VIII, 1, 251 a 9-10; 5, 257 b 8; *Metaphysics*, Beta, 4, 999 b 10; Theta, 6, 1048 b 29; *De Anima*, II, 5, 417 b 16; III, 7, 431 a 6. The exception to eternal movement is so obvious that Aristotle doesn't consider it when he discusses, in *Metaphysics*, Beta, 4, the necessary implication of its becoming and says, "no movement is unlimited and of all movement there is an end" (999 b 9).

<sup>84</sup> Cf. Aristotle, *La physique*, trans. A. Stevens (Paris: Vrin, 2012), 372n2: "the eternal and continuous movement represents, then, an exception among the different movements, as much as it is seen as an immediate act; in fact, that what is moved in this way is accomplishing its trajectory, at each moment, because there is no specific point on which it will stop" (and *Physics*, VIII, 9, 265 a 17-18: "rotatory locomotion is prior to rectilinear locomotion, because it is more simple and complete").

<sup>85</sup> Which is what is accomplished in *Physics*, VIII, 10, 266 a 10 et seq., when Aristotle explains that this movement is eternal and continuous and presupposes an immobile mover that has no magnitude (considering that a limited

**8.**

I will now consider the relationship that Aristotle poses between celestial bodies and divine thought, which he compares to human thought, which is in turn associated with a living body.

For Aristotle as much as for Plato, perpetual movement cannot be completely explained by itself. As Plato had already done, Aristotle looks for an ultimate cause for this body in an immutable and intelligible reality, but, unlike the ideal forms that cannot move anything, this reality is for Aristotle a pure immaterial act of intellection, eminently desirable, which moves without being moved.<sup>86</sup>

It is not easy to decipher these arguments. But knowing that there is no natural movement for Aristotle without reason (without an unmoved mover), it is very easy to understand that, for the philosopher, the natural continuous movement of the celestial bodies, because it is continuous and does not accomplish itself when these bodies are in place without turning any longer, has something unnatural “in actuality,” even if it is complete: it is, in fact, the only movement that does not go from one contrary to the other and constantly comes back on itself. A simple conclusion therefore suggests itself. If this continuous movement does not have an end in a corporeal action, this end must be sought in an incorporeal action outside itself: one that is purely psychological, unmoved but that permanently moves, as it is that which turns it without end. For the celestial body, this eternal act of immobility<sup>87</sup> constitutes the purpose of reason for which it turns as it does, in a perpetual fashion.

Obviously, this is not the loosely achieved end of its rotation:<sup>88</sup> this latter is not the movement of a body that aims at becoming thought in the end, cannot achieve such an aim, and confines itself to turning in order to do as thought does!<sup>89</sup> Thought is a permanent act, which, outside of the perpetual movement, firmly goes with it, without confusing itself with it. As a permanent act and an eminently desirable one (of the same order as beauty), it is mostly that without which the celestial turning could not be, itself, paradoxically, the

---

power, which can be attributed to the celestial bodies, cannot move it for an illimited time) and that it is necessary to place it at the periphery of the body in question; the quickest part of what is moved and, therefore, the closest to the mover.

<sup>86</sup> All this is the object of the well-known and extremely controversial developments of *Metaphysics* Lambda 6-7 (1071 b 3 et seq): cf. on these two chapters, respectively, E. Berti, “Unmoved Mover(s) as Efficient Cause(s) in *Metaphysics* L 6,” in *Aristotle’s Metaphysics Lambda*, ed. D. Charles and M. Frede (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 182 et seq., and A. Laks, “Lambda 7,” in *Aristotle’s Metaphysics Lambda*, ed. D. Charles and M. Frede (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 207 et seq. Aristotle shows, here, the necessity to pose a sort of substance that is eternal and unchanging, which always precedes, as it is what moves those that continuously move in a circle: a pure immaterial actuality (cf. 1071 b 19-21), desirable and intelligible, that moves without being moved (cf. 7, 1072 a 26-27).

<sup>87</sup> This expression appears in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, VII, 3, 1154 b 26-27, and is, there, explicitly used when speaking about god.

<sup>88</sup> Cf. *Metaphysics*, Lambda, 7, 1072 b 2-3, in which Aristotle makes the distinction between the end of something (which, it seems, is what occupies us here) and the end for something. Despite these parallels (*Physics*, II, 194 a 26; *De Anima*, II, 4, 415 b 2, and *Eudemian Ethics*, VIII, 3, 1249 b 13), the distinction is obscure. W. Kullmann (in “Wesen und Bedeutung der Zweckursache bei Aristoteles,” *Berichte zur Wissenschaftsgeschichte* 5 [1982]: 34) considers, but I believe he is wrong, that in this way Aristotle simply excludes that the moving sphere is necessary to the existence of God.

<sup>89</sup> I will come back to this interpretation, which in reality is Platonic, in section IV, 9.

only movement always actual and desirable that exists in nature; because it is mobile, it is not necessarily what it is.

Let us also note that the natural turning of a celestial body, as a necessary cause, is without doubt also that without which divine thought could not be what it is: an eternal act. Moreover, because it is associated with another body (animated), it would then become mixed with it in a certain way, namely, implicated in the organization of a life other than its own (even though it is in light of its own), as its association with the human soul and the human body witnesses; we will come back to this.<sup>90</sup>

That said, the association of thought (a psychological act) and celestial turning (a corporeal act) seems, according to Aristotle, to be very straightforward, since, indeed, one cannot be imagined without the other. This apparently presupposes that something of the psychological act – by reason of its mere presence, because it is that which is most desirable – permanently communicates itself to the corporeal act, like a vital energy that goes beyond the limits of a strictly corporeal power, which would exhaust itself when becoming useless.<sup>91</sup> One can lose itself in conjectures about this point.<sup>92</sup> But it seems undeniable that if the two acts, that of moving and of being moved, are not identical, as in the relationship between agent and patient that unifies two bodies, they are at least in perfect continuity.

And this translates, in both directions, into the same thing that Aristotle calls the absence of pain, something that can be qualified only by a living being. The moving act is perfectly immutable “because,” says Aristotle, “this way of moving is done without pain,”<sup>93</sup> and the sky does not stop turning because, he adds, “continuous movement is also painless.”<sup>94</sup> The association of the corporeal and the psychological does not have here the unity that characterizes the soul and the body, when the soul is also the form of the body, but the one that comes about when the body is the slavish instrument of the soul (it exists only for the soul) and the one where the well-being of the two is the good of the one for which the other exists.<sup>95</sup>

<sup>90</sup> In order to prove the opposite, W. Kullmann (“Wesen und Bedeutung der Zweckursache bei Aristoteles,” *Berichte zur Wissenschaftsgeschichte* 5 [1982]: 34) considers the assertion that “god doesn’t need anything” (cf. *Eudemian Ethics*, the passage I have previously cited). However, this assertion only means that, unlike human beings, the god doesn’t need to think continuously about taking into account the exterior needs of a body that would have to be sustained. And even this doesn’t necessary mean that the god is incorporeal, rather that god has the advantage of a body that doesn’t need to be taken care of.

<sup>91</sup> I am here considering the reflections shared by G. Moreau (“L’éloge de la biologie chez Aristote,” *Revue des Études Anciennes* 61 [1959]: 64) when he writes that the development of Aristotle’s thinking will lead to “substituting [...] the energy of the first immobile mover for the dynamism of the ether.” In fact, I don’t believe in a development of Aristotle’s thinking on this point: the dynamism of the ether rests on the energy of an immobile mover.

<sup>92</sup> It is without a doubt what A. Mansion was thinking when he wrote, “the rigor of the interpretation that, without a doubt, Aristotle aspires to is more important to him than the conclusion of the interpretation itself” (“Le Dieu d’Aristote et le Dieu des Chrétiens,” in *La Philosophie et ses problèmes: Recueil d’études de doctrine et d’histoire offert à R. Jolivet* [Lyon: E. Vitte, 1960], 28).

<sup>93</sup> *Physics*, VIII, 10, 267 b 3.

<sup>94</sup> *Metaphysics*, Theta, 8, 1050 b 24 et seq.; cf. *On the Heavens*, II, 1, 284 a 14-18; cf. *De Anima*, I, 3, 407 b 3 (against Plato): “also, for the soul to be mixed with the body and incapable of getting free would be burdensome.”

<sup>95</sup> Cf. *Eudemian Ethics*, VII, 8, 1241 b 17 (where the relationship soul-body and the relationship master-slave are assimilated and explained in this way).

Here we arrive at the point with which our work is primarily concerned. After underlining how much the happiness of this being is greater than the fleeting human happiness because of its continuity, Aristotle asserts that, “if the God’s well-being is forever what ours is at moments, then it is a fit object of wonder, and all the more so if it is even greater. And this last is in fact the truth.”<sup>96</sup> This is quite a clear suggestion that, by associating a principle of psychological order with the corporal sky and with nature, Aristotle had in mind Plato’s belief that the gods exist and the celestial bodies are not mere bodies.

Incidentally, the comparison between the divine condition and the human condition is based on a common feature of gods and humans: thought, an act in which intelligence grasps itself while grasping the intelligible. Despite this common feature, the divine condition is deemed superior because thought for gods is a continuous act. But this difference, crucial in itself, is the simple result of a difference that is corporeal: in the gods, thought is actually joined to a simple immortal body that is not animated in any other way and in which thought makes natural movement perennial, while in human beings, it is potentially joined to a body that is not a simple body but a composed one and is also living, eminently mortal, and for this reason has its own needs.

We must insist upon this. Why in fact, according to Aristotle, are animated bodies on earth not simple bodies, as are others on earth, such as water, air, and fire, even when they aggregate, mix, or fuse in some way? We know the answer: it is because they are not simple bodies but bodies composed of simple ones<sup>97</sup> and because unlike aggregates and other composed bodies, the parts of which are equally indistinct, they are constituted of organs suitable for nutrition and reproduction.<sup>98</sup> A soul corresponds to these bodies and to them alone, which allows each of them to both nourish themselves in order to subsist as a whole individual for a certain time and to reproduce themselves identically.<sup>99</sup> Celestial bodies, for their part, are neither composed bodies nor organized ones. They cannot be separated like living bodies on earth, which at their death dissolve into their constituent elements. On the other hand, if they do not nourish themselves to subsist, they subsist without nourishment and are capable of individually perpetuating themselves eternally, which is something that living, mortal bodies on earth can achieve only through offspring of the same specific form, perpetuating themselves eternally. Moreover, it is not helpful to say, in favor of the perishable individuals, that at least they maintain life and give life while the celestial bodies themselves do not have life. The truth is simply that they do not have nutritive life.

Nutritive life is coupled with a perceiving life in all animals, which all, it seems, have a perceptive soul in addition to a nutritive one. In reality, it is fundamentally the same soul but diversified, perception being the supplemental capacity to which animals have

<sup>96</sup> *Metaphysics*, Lambda, 7, 1072 b 24-26.

<sup>97</sup> *Parts of Animals*, II, 1, 646 a 12-20.

<sup>98</sup> About all this, see *De Anima*, II, 1 and 2.

<sup>99</sup> In other words, it allows them, after being born, to maintain themselves alive and to give life before dying. This is their “essential quality” or the specific difference in relation to other bodies: they are living, and the soul constitutes the substantial form in these living bodies. In several places (and with regularity, in the *De Anima* starting in II, 4, 416 b 19), Aristotle qualifies this soul as “nutritive” but sometimes (*Parts of Animals*, IV, 5, 681 a 33, and *Nicomachean Ethics*, I, 13, 1102 a 32) also as “vegetative,” not because it is exclusive to plants, but because plants only have this form of soul. In fact, this soul is common to all living beings on earth, without exception.

access in order to adequately nourish and reproduce themselves. This is why they have access to sensory organs.<sup>100</sup> The perceiving soul aims, as does the nutritive soul, to the same end: the obsessive need of the animal to nourish itself in order to survive, inscribed in the perishable nature of all living creatures on earth. The human animal is equally mortal, and in order to survive, cannot escape the necessity of nourishing itself. For this reason, the nutritive soul is necessary for the human being as it is for all other animals. It is to this soul that intellect adds itself in the human being. The intellectual capacity is, among animals, the essential quality or the substantial form that distinguishes humans from all the other animals.<sup>101</sup> This changes many things, but this change is added to a living and perishable body that does not stop having its own exigencies.

What Aristotle calls “that which is most divine in us”<sup>102</sup> is added, in us, to natural life, that intelligence has to take in charge, whether or not it wants to. Nevertheless, this is not simply a new way to satisfy the necessity of nourishing and of reproducing in new conditions, different than those of the other animals, but mostly a way to attain to a good that is different from that of mere life. A human being’s aim, says Aristotle, is not simply to live but to “live well”,<sup>103</sup> this is not to be understood, as it would if misunderstood, as eating well (and, if possible, reproducing well), as if the aim were to bring nutritive and animal life to perfection. It is something completely different. To live, for human beings, is to persist in being, when the aim assigned to men is to aim at well-being, that is, at happiness, which is the privilege of gods, because no animal can pretend to this, and a fortiori, no vegetal.<sup>104</sup> This is what changes: well-being or happiness is added here to mere being, that is, to mere life, as its ultimate end, and that happens in two ways: either intelligence, intertwined with other virtues of the soul, correctly orients life toward others, or the exercise of intelligence becomes itself an end in life.<sup>105</sup> But in the end, in both cases, happiness is dependent on a living body that has to be tamed and helped to subsist as much as possible.<sup>106</sup>

This is the type of exigency that does not appear in a divine body, such as the one that Aristotle recognizes in celestial bodies. One can probably guess what this can teach

<sup>100</sup> In fact, these organs do not correspond to a different need than maintaining life and, if possible, reproducing but to the necessity of satisfying this same need differently than in plants (cf. *De Anima*, III, 12, 434 a 27 et seq.); the reason for this difference is that animals are constituted differently than plants. Cf. *Physics*, II, 8, 1990 28 et seq.; *De Anima*, II, 1, 412 b 3 et seq., 416 a 4; *Parts of Animals*, II, 3, 650 a 21 et seq. Simply and briefly, animals don’t have roots, which are organs that allow plants to nourish themselves without moving, or without moving any of their parts. Animals, on the contrary, have to find their nourishment in their close or distant environment, and once they have captured it, they still have to bring it to their mouth. Only at that point, after ingestion, can, as it is the case for plants, start what we call the nutritive metabolism. Once the nutritive metabolism is engaged, there is no further need for perception. Before it, however, perception is crucial.

<sup>101</sup> Therefore, human beings can be defined as intelligent animals or, as Aristotle says in some passages, as “capable of acquiring knowledge” (*Topics*, V, 2, 130 b 8). This is demonstrative knowledge, which rests on the intellectual capacity to grasp first and true principles: cf. *Nicomachean Ethics*, VI, 6, 1140 b 34 et seq.

<sup>102</sup> For example, in *Nicomachean Ethics*, X, 7, 1177 a 15-16.

<sup>103</sup> For example, in *Politics*, I, 2, 1152 a 30; III, 6, 1281 a 2; *Eudemian Ethics*, I, 1, 1214 a 30-31; 3, 1215 a 9-10.

<sup>104</sup> Cf. *Eudemian Ethics*, I, 7, 1217 a 22-27.

<sup>105</sup> Cf. *Nicomachean Ethics*, X, 7, 1177 a 11-8, 1178 a 23.

<sup>106</sup> It is meaningful that Aristotle writes that “the two” forms of happiness, political and philosophical, presuppose the satisfaction of necessities, “even if the statesman’s work is the more concerned with the body and things of that sort” (*Nicomachean Ethics*, X, 8 1178 a 25-27).

us about the bodies that are here at issue. A noetic soul cannot be added to these bodies as a potentially assignable finality to their lives because they are not living bodies, but such a noetic soul can be added to them as the perfect life with which they are eternally associated and that they serve by turning as they do, without external intervention. Moreover, as I have just said, Aristotle distinguishes between two forms of happiness accessible to humans: one that is proper to humans, another that is divine. In the first case, intelligence rules over body and soul, allowing human happiness to come about.<sup>107</sup> In the second case, however, it is also and chiefly that in light of which it rules over body and soul by prescribing a strict limit in the search for external goods in order to “perceive the irrational part of the soul as little as possible”<sup>108</sup> and absorb itself in pure meditation; intelligence, which is then said to be “meditative,”<sup>109</sup> or better, its exercise, which is exactly the type of activity that Aristotle imparts to the gods, becomes, for human beings, a final cause (distinguished from the human form per se). It is for this reason that the philosopher places the highest happiness as the end goal, and it is this happiness that he recommends above anything else: it is appropriate to human beings, says Aristotle, “to become as immortal as possible.”<sup>110</sup> Obviously, in these more or less long moments in which humans become immortal in this way, absorbed in thought, they do not die. His animated body does not die; it is not a stone abandoned by its soul; on the contrary, it functions perfectly well, on its own, without presenting any needs, therefore liberating thought from its preoccupation and freeing it to become completely absorbed in itself. In short, in these conditions, the human body and its own movements momentarily find themselves in relation to the act of thinking in exactly the same eternal relation as the one that characterizes divine bodies, which turn in relation to divine thought, as that of a humble servant, so to speak. The difference? Here noetic life is not, as it is for human beings, the promised happiness for whoever knows to keep up momentarily with the exigencies of the body and of the mere needs of life proper to the mortal animal. On the contrary, it is the happiness always guaranteed to the immortals with bodies that have no exigences attached to them and that turn all by themselves, naturally.

If one believes, as Aristotle does, that the gods are happier than human beings and that their happiness belongs in some ways to the thinking that they continuously exercise, it does not seem to be because, unlike human beings, gods have no bodies. We can with certainty hypothesize that this is because they have bodies that, unlike human bodies, do not need nourishment and with which they do not need to preoccupy themselves at all. Aristotle mocked Plato’s gods because of the incongruity of giving them bodies that, composed of the same elements that form the terrestrial bodies, would be forced to turn by a soul and ironically asked how these gods could be happy if they had to spend eternity in bodies that would naturally move in a linear fashion to be forced painfully to turn in

<sup>107</sup> It is then the intellect that, associated with the desire for the good, leads human choice and action (cf. *Nicomachean Ethics*, VI, 2, 1139 a 33- b5; *De Anima*, III, 10, 433 a 14 et seq.) and that the irrational part of the soul obeys, because it is morally disciplined (cf. *Nicomachean Ethics*, I, 13, 1102 b 26-27).

<sup>108</sup> *Eudemian Ethics*, VIII, 15, 1249 b 22-23.

<sup>109</sup> Cf. *De Anima*, III, 2, 413 b 25; 3, 415 a 11; *Nicomachean Ethics*, X, 7, 1177 a 17 et seq. (about contemplative activity).

<sup>110</sup> *Nicomachean Ethics*, X, 7, 1177 b 33.

a circular manner.<sup>111</sup> It is this painful job, which is contrary to the happiness of the gods, that Aristotle seems to spare them, not by detaching them from all bodies, like the Ideas, another of Plato's incongruities, but, in a more probable way, by giving them bodies they do not have to take care of.

#### IV

What I have just said so far about the gods portrays the living immortal in a way that does not quite fit with the idea of a supranatural being that is rigorously identifiable with some thought and is not attached to a body. Absorbed continuously in a thought that is separated from the body, the god is not for this reason without a body. I would almost dare say that, on the contrary, it is this being of the body, eternally moving and without a life of its own, that manifestly has continuous thinking as its only aim.

The well-known position that Aristotle defends against Plato's judgment concerning the Ouranian gods also orients us toward this conclusion. In this section, I propose to come back to these points by showing, in the first case (9), that a divine body and a divine soul, the one separated from the other, are still united in an appropriate way and, in the second case (10), that the goodness of the gods is not separable from the multiplicity of the gods.

#### 9.

We have said before that Aristotle refutes Plato's thesis (e) according to which the perpetual movements of the Ouranian gods would imitate the immutable model of an eternal Living.<sup>112</sup> Again, this does not need to be shown. But what is its consequence?

In truth, what for Plato is the image or the imitating copy, whatever an ideal paradigm amounts to, this same ideal paradigm becomes for Aristotle the imitated model from afar by the living beings from here below. We have just observed that, even though celestial bodies are vaguely comparable to those living here on earth, as the sky is considered to be animated, and even though Aristotle manages then to find a right and a left in the ultimate sphere that includes a universe like the one living beings have on earth,<sup>113</sup> it remains that celestial bodies in themselves do not give any sign of the life that the latter presents. The analogies noticed between the celestial bodies and the living here below, if in part enlightening, also seem to reveal less about the resemblance of celestial bodies and those living on earth, animated as they are. Because, in this case, all living

<sup>111</sup> Cf. *On the Heavens*, II, 1, 284 a 27-29 ("Nor, again, is it possible that it should persist eternally by the necessitation of a soul. For a soul could not live in such conditions painlessly or happily ..."), and *De Anima*, I, 3, 406 a 34 ("And happiness is not possible for those who have to accustom themselves with necessitation, instead of enjoying a simple existence").

<sup>112</sup> Paradoxically, this typically Platonic vision of a heaven that imitates the unchanging god constitutes a very common interpretation of Aristotle. This, however, leads to the hypothesis, which I consider unacceptable, according to which the heavens would have their own soul; see, for instance, E. Berti, "La teologia di Aristotele," in *Teologia razionale, filosofia della religione, linguaggio su Dio*, ed. M. Sanchez Sorondo (Rome: Herder, 1992), 41: "for Aristotle the celestial bodies have a soul, which makes it possible for them to know and to wish for their respective immobile movers, by imitating their immobility through that movement that most resembles them, namely the rotation *sur place*," and p. 44: "each celestial sphere, having an eternal and continuous movement, is moved by an immobile mover because it desires it, which means that it knows it, thanks to its own soul, and imitates its motionlessness thorough the rotation on itself."

<sup>113</sup> Cf. *On the Heavens*, II, 2, 285 a 27 et seq.

beings, although alive, are mortal – all without exception – and they only imitate, in their own fashion, the eternity of their form, given to them by generations, the eternity of divine individual bodies, eternal in their case, as is proper for immortals beings.<sup>114</sup>

But the model imitated from afar by the living species on earth is also and mostly the model proposed for the imitation of the living being who resembles it, being gifted with intelligence.<sup>115</sup> For the human who is a living animal but who is moreover intelligent, says Aristotle,<sup>116</sup> the model that offers the god is not the inimitable one of a pure intelligence but more the one that together constitutes a body and a noetic activity that never mixes, even though it is always associated with it.<sup>117</sup>

Does this mean that for Aristotle a certain unity could exist between a celestial body and a noetic soul, two substances that are, however, separated? One should not fear recognizing that a god could be the union of two substances,<sup>118</sup> as if to acknowledge that this would mean conceding that they cannot in any way constitute just one individual. The impossibility would be evident in numerous cases, but in the case of a soul and a body, of which we are told that the soul is for the body a final cause or a principle, the rule of unity is not exclusive. It is the same rule according to which the soul is for the body an end, in this case the end for which it exists.<sup>119</sup> When it comes to the separation of the soul and the body that we are discussing here, it consists in saying only that, to a celestial body that turns endlessly but finds its aim outside itself in the pure act of intellection, it

<sup>114</sup> Cf. *Generation of Animals*, II, 1, 731 b 33-732 a 1: “Now it is impossible for it to be eternal as an individual [...], but it is possible for it as a species. This is why there is always a class of men and animals and plants.”

<sup>115</sup> Cf. *Metaphysics*, Alpha, 2, 982 a 25-983 a 10, and *Nicomachean Ethics*, X, 8, 1178 b 21-23, 25-26: “Therefore, the activity of God, which surpasses all others in blessedness, must be contemplative; and of human activities, therefore, that which is most akin to this must be most of the nature of happiness. [...] For while the whole life of the gods is blessed, and that of men too insofar as some likeness (ὁμοιωμα) of such activity belongs to them.”

<sup>116</sup> *Nicomachean Ethics*, X, 7, 1178 a 7.

<sup>117</sup> See J. Moreau, “Arché et aitia chez Aristote,” in *L'Attualità della problematica Aristotelica. Atti del Convegno franco-italiano su Aristotele*, ed. Carlo Diano (Padua: Antenore, 1970), 150; here Moreau opposes, on the one hand, the living beings that “because of the reproductive function, contribute to the perpetuity of the generations, to the image of the celestial revolutions,” and on the other hand, human beings, who “do not simply engage in functions that contribute to the image of intellection, but directly participate in intellection”; however, it is by forgetting that human beings are also living beings and that they share in intellection (in a certain sense), it is not to divine intellection; the relationship of human beings to intellection is analogous to the relationship of celestial revolutions to divine thinking.

<sup>118</sup> In *Metaphysics*, Lambda, 1, 1069 a 30-34, in which three sort of substances are distinguished, the celestial corporeal substance corresponds to a subdivision of the “sensible” substance, the one that is said to be “eternal”; the other, said to be “unmoved” and also “separated,” but clearly not in the sense given to this word by those who, according to this passage, claim to distinguish Ideas, the objects of mathematics, or both from the sensible. About this passage, see *Aristotle's Metaphysics Lambda*, ed. M. Frede and D. Charles (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) 54 et seq. The Ideas in particular are, for Aristotle, a false sort of substance: they are universal, common to several things, and as unchanging forms unduly separated from the multiplicity of things. What Aristotle considers as a “separated” substance is not a universal that is common to several things, but a particular thing; nor is such a thing the immutable form of what it is separated from, but its final cause: such is the substance of the divine soul, an activity that, in this instance, is separated from the substance of the divine body, in this very precise sense that it doesn't have anything corporeal, unlike the activities of the soul, when the soul is the form of a body.

<sup>119</sup> Cf. *De Anima*, II, 4, 415 b 18-20: “But the soul is such an end by nature in living things, since all natural bodies are instruments of the soul, the bodies of plants in just the same way as those of animals, as though having being for the sake of the soul” (already cited above).

does not correspond, as in other cases here on earth, to a soul that would also be a formal cause.<sup>120</sup> For the gods, the noetic soul is not the form of a living body but its finality, and it is separated as much as, in its exercise, it has no attachments to sensibility. The separation of the soul from the body, therefore, is here eternal movement and the eternal act that it has as a finality.

The same separation, but this time temporary, of corporal movement and intellectual activity becomes a finality in human beings gifted with intelligence, who attempt to immortalize themselves as much as possible, as we have said already and must repeat. The intelligence that adds itself to a vegetative and sensitive soul is a guarantee of simple human happiness when it is associated with moral virtues and allows him to live well with others; however, when purely intellectual activity is the purpose for which a human being lives and in light of which he nourishes himself, then, between his well-nourished body that keeps life independently and his intellectual activity, there is the same separation as that which exists between a celestial body and a noetic soul, perfectly freed from every bodily necessity and for which it moves.<sup>121</sup> A human being can then, for a time, reach the same happiness that a god has all the time, a time during which his body, like the body of a god, does not ask anything and is without any exigencies. It is not, then, because of the mere fact of having a body that the human being is not a god, nor for the fact that he would be incorporeal that the god is always happy. A human being is not a god because he has a living body, which can die, and the god is always happy because its turning body is immortal, unlike that of someone who lives on earth.

In the end, all this is impressively simple, and if one had asked Aristotle to say what ultimately a god is, he might have declared, in order to make us understand and to trace the right path for us, that it is a simple body, completely at the service of thought for eternity. But he did not say that, maybe on purpose, if he did not have the same preoccupation for theological science as Plato. Whatever the reason may be, without these clarifications, he has left the readers of today with a big mess.

In particular, he has left them imagining that the gods move, especially one,<sup>122</sup> like some sort of free electrons, incorporeal, high above nature. The god's freedom, however, is not that of an incorporeal being; rather, it is the freedom of a liberated being, liberated from the exigencies of the body; more exactly, it is the freedom of a being with a body

<sup>120</sup> As we know, we can observe the coming together of the final cause and the formal cause (and, for that matter, also the efficient cause) in "all things which cause movement by being themselves moved" (*Physics*, II, 7, 198 a 24; on this text, see P. Pellegrin, "De l'explication causale dans la biologie d'Aristote," *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale* 95 [1990]: 211). This doesn't occur in intellection, which is what concerns us here.

<sup>121</sup> The only reservation, to which we will come back later, is related, in the two cases, to the object of thinking: in the case of divine intellection, which has no connection to sensibility, this object is exclusively the thinking itself, whereas in the case of human intellection, the object is the thinking as well as, at the same time, the multiplicity of intelligibles.

<sup>122</sup> Identified as the "prime" mover and associated with the ultimate sphere of the universe, which englobes all the other spheres: cf., *Metaphysics*, Lambda, 6-7. According to the *Timaeus* 39 E, this sphere, which, first of all, is animated, contains all living beings. The importance of this "prime" mover, in relation to the others, has nothing to do with the nature of the particular thought it represents, but rather exclusively with the position (the limit) of the sphere with which it is associated and that determines time through its regular movement; this movement is useful, as we have already highlighted, to establish the left and the right in the Universe.

without needs, which therefore allows the god to be lost in thinking.<sup>123</sup> This union of body and thought, where the body always offers the conditions necessary for thinking, is not less but perhaps more straightforward than the one where the body, animated in other ways, rarely finds itself in the conditions that are necessary for thinking. The soul, noetic or not, is always the principle of the body in one way or another; therefore, it is inseparable from that of which it is the principle. The purely noetic soul is inseparable from the eternal body that allows for its continuous practice.

The necessity of their union is, in fact, what Plato admitted discretely by intertwining a celestial body with a celestial soul.<sup>124</sup> For Aristotle, however, their union is not between two orders of magnitude in movement (of which one compels the other) on the model of the immobile Idea, but one, just as intimate as the other, of a corporeal movement and a psychic act, which is immobile and moves without compulsion. Their intimacy is measured by the fact that the noetic act, by definition separated from the body because it is not mixed with it, is not, however, separated from it in the same way in which immobile Ideas, which make unity of multiplicity, constitute an indissoluble unity with it: a noetic immovable act corresponds to each particular movement. The argument that here favors a final cause inseparable from its finality is the same as that for a formal cause inseparable from its form. Celestial movements surely have in common the same type of final cause (thinking), however this is not sufficient to put them together. Each particular celestial movement has its own finality in the act of intellection, an immobile mover for which only it exists. This refusal to separate (in the same way as Plato's ideas) the noetic act and the corporeal movement of which it is the finality is expressed by Aristotle himself in terms that are not ambiguous, in a passage in which he enumerates the immobile movers and considers them to be equal in number to the celestial movements.<sup>125</sup> It is this passage that continues to intrigue, if not to seriously embarrass, commentators.<sup>126</sup> But it is there, and, if we remain attentive, we can see that by attaching each celestial sphere, one by one, to an immobile mover, the philosopher is conforming to a principle of individualization.<sup>127</sup> In fact, the unmoved movers

<sup>123</sup> In *Metaphysics*, A, 2, 982 b 25-983 10, Aristotle alludes to a knowledge, which he considers to be free, that has no other end than itself. According to Aristotle, gods are eminently capable of such knowledge, while human beings have in many respects a more "servile" nature.

<sup>124</sup> Cf. *Timaeus*, 36 E. However, in other passages, Aristotle clearly reproaches Plato for "mixing" thought and body in such a way that it is then difficult to keep them apart; cf. *De Anima*, I, 3, 407 b 1-5.

<sup>125</sup> *Metaphysics*, Lambda, 8, especially, 1073 a 36 et seq.

<sup>126</sup> Especially those who were eager to find in Aristotle the patented precursor of monotheism considered this embarrassing, because of his polytheistic accents. To the point that, for instance L. Elders, in *Aristotle's Theology: A Commentary on a Book of the Metaphysics* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1972), 57 et seq., did not hesitate to pronounce himself against the authenticity of Lambda 8 by raising expressly "the Problem of Aristotle's Monotheism"!

<sup>127</sup> Incidentally, the principle ("all that is numerically multiple has matter," 1074 b 33-34) is briefly evoked, when, in order to dismiss the possibility of a multiplicity of heavens, Aristotle suggests that the mover of the first celestial sphere is completely immaterial, therefore, numerically one, and that the sky is as well. This consideration is valid for all the movers: regardless of the moving sphere to which they are attached, each of them is numerically one and, therefore, the only mover of the specific sphere they are moving. But, in addition, there are multiple movers, even though they are all immaterial, because they move each a different sphere in the sky; therefore, if they distinguish themselves from one another, that is because they are each the movers of a different *material* sphere: they can be identified not because of the matter that constitutes them but because of the matter of the sphere of which they are the unique mover.

of a psychic order are not distinguished from each other by some matter, but once they are attached to a corporeal sphere, as they each are, and the two divine substances are reunited in this way, it is pretty clear that their unity (the god) is individual. The multiple gods are individualized, not because of their thoughts, but by a precise corporeal movement, which can be seen in the sky or whose presence in the sky is demonstrable by mathematicians.

I have said that no soul, being a principle, can exist on its own, separated from that of which it is the principle. This is true on the individual level of all particular souls and on the general level of all types of souls. It is not for nothing that Aristotle, again against Plato, wants to make us accept that for every type of soul an appropriate type of body necessarily corresponds and, conversely, for each type of body there is an appropriate type of soul.<sup>128</sup> In other words, it is not possible to link any type of soul with any type of body indiscriminately. Incidentally, this remark betrays the metempsychosis imagined by Plato,<sup>129</sup> which indicates to whom a soul could migrate (for instance, from a human body to that of a pig) and also undermines its implication: the soul could exist without a body or it can find a home in it as it wishes because the relation between body and soul does not matter, and the soul can exist by itself. I think that the conviction according to which the soul and the body are always in relation and in a perfectly appropriate relationship to each other should not be lost sight of when we consider the relation between a properly divine body and a properly divine soul.

At first glance, which is that to which imagination can aspire and which easily yields to anthropomorphism, nothing is less appropriate than the relationship between a celestial body that turns naturally and a noetic soul, or any soul! But on second glance?

## 10.

In order to gain a further understanding of the ideas that Aristotle himself has and in order to arrive at the heart of these ideas, we still need to consider the distance that he puts between himself and Plato by abandoning the conception according to which the sky has its organization thanks to the goodness of a god-demiurge. This is the thesis (b) evoked before.<sup>130</sup> In Plato, this thesis of the divine goodness is at the center of the considerations he exposes in the famous passage dedicated to theology and that excludes Homer from the City. It is necessary to say something about this.

According to Plato, who invents the word, “theology” is part of a mythology that stages gods and narrates their exploits.<sup>131</sup> It does not matter to Plato that these exploits

<sup>128</sup> Cf. *De Anima*, I, 3, 407 b 15-19: “They attach the body to the soul and set it into it, determining no further what the cause of this is or what the condition of the body is, and yet this would seem to be necessary, for by the partnership (κοινωνίαν) of soul and body the one acts and the other is acted upon, and the one is moved while the other moves it, but none of these things belongs to just any two things in relation to each other.” Thus, the partnership of the celestial bodies and their souls is determined by a precise disposition of the celestial bodies to receive a noetic soul as their final end.

<sup>129</sup> Cf. *Timaeus*, 41 E-42 D.

<sup>130</sup> According to this Platonic theory, the god-demiurge, who thinks the Intelligibles and takes them as models of his work (*Timaeus*, 39 E), assumes the same efficient character of the Ideas; for this reason, the demiurge, as much as the Ideas, disappears from Aristotle’s horizon.

<sup>131</sup> About all this, see *The Republic*, II, 376 E et seq., A et seq. The significance of the word “theology” (first and only occurrence in Plato) has been fully recognized by V. Goldschmidt, *Questions Platoniciennes* (Paris: Vrin, 1970), 141 et seq., and G. Vlastos, “Theology and Philosophy in Early Greek Thought,” in *Studies in Presocratic*

are attributed to the gods and that in some cases they are fantastic, completely fictional, as long as they are probable in the sense that they conform to what “a god is supposed to be.”<sup>132</sup> If not, they cannot be told to children and used as a model for their behavior.<sup>133</sup> However, the other theologians, Homer and Hesiod first of all, have not avoided attributing bad and strange actions of all kinds to the gods. It is necessary, therefore, to strictly forbid their narration to children. And Plato proposes to future authors tempted to recount the exploits of the gods, what he calls “the seals to be imprinted on theology,”<sup>134</sup> in other words, the principles that should inspire these narrations. The first of these principles, the most important one (the only one that I consider here), consists in telling that the gods are good. We have to understand: “a god is essentially good.”<sup>135</sup> We cannot, therefore, without becoming implausible, attribute bad actions to them. Plato, in fact, has not only enunciated this principle. He himself has elaborated, with a great deal of care, a theology that was rigorously inspired by it. This is the fabulous narration of Timaeus in the homonymous dialogue. It is a myth, Plato says just as emphatically, but a “likely myth.”<sup>136</sup> He therefore stages a god, a god-demiurge, whose prodigious exploit is to make the world. Maybe no god has ever made the world, but this is not what matters. What matters is that this god’s exploit is likely because it is conforming to what a god, according to the first principle of all acceptable theology, is supposed to be. The demiurge, in fact, is a good god. Plato, again, says it explicitly and insistently: “Now why did he who framed this whole universe of becoming frame it? Let us state the reason why: He was good, and one who is good can never become jealous of anything. And so, being free of jealousy, he wanted everything to become as much like himself as was possible.”<sup>137</sup> The god’s goodness is the cause of its creation, which is created according to its image or, more precisely, according to the image of the intelligible model that he has before him, says Plato.<sup>138</sup> In fact, God and intelligence go together. For this reason, the Universe made on this model is also “animated and has intelligence.”<sup>139</sup>

Aristotle, on the contrary, never recounted the exploits of any god in a theology. And we do not know if the myths told in the *Timaeus* were, according to Aristotle, likely. We know that the world and the sky in particular, according to Aristotle, have always existed as they do and that they have not been organized in some specific past; however, this is probably not the reason why he would have frankly admitted to rejecting Plato’s fiction in its totality. On the contrary, a conviction that is at the basis of this one seems to have certainly not been acceptable: it is the conviction that the perceptible world is not in itself

*Philosophy*, ed. D. J. Furley and R. E. Allen, vol. 1 (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970), 92 et seq., despite what is asserted by G. Naddaf (“Plato’s *Theologia* Revisited,” *Methexis* 9 [1996]: 5 et seq.), without any new argument.

<sup>132</sup> *Republic*, II, 379 A.

<sup>133</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 378 E: “For these reasons, then, we should probably take the utmost care to ensure that the first stories they hear about virtue are the best ones for them to hear.”

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, 379 A.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, 379 B. This theory a priori translates, without a doubt, the preeminence of the Idea of the Good among the Intelligible Forms.

<sup>136</sup> *Timaeus*, 29 D.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, 29 D-E.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, 27 D-28 B.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, 30 B-C.

organized and that the perceptible substances of the celestial world should in particular be constrained from the outside in order to turn perpetually as they do. The invention of a fifth body or of the primary corporeal substance is a clear protestation against the idea that celestial movements are not natural and ordered. According to Aristotle, these movements are natural and the disposition of the bodies that turn in the sky constitutes a natural order. The goodness of the gods, in consequence, if such goodness exists, cannot be sought in a being at the origin of all there is but somewhere else – very precisely, in the multiple acts that are the end goal for each celestial movement.

The explanation could be more or less the following: Each celestial movement is eternal and preserved infinitely in that being because eternal being and absolute good coincide (in pure thought), but the latter, common genre of all noetic acts is not one thought in which all celestial movements would share but a particular thought each time, without which a particular celestial movement would have no aim; in other words, without which they would have no reason for being eternal. And in this inseparable couple (the god, soul and body), eternal movement is the necessary condition of the exercise of thought for itself, as it is, freed of all other reason of being anything but itself, the reason for being of eternal movement.

Divine goodness, for Aristotle, thus resides, it seems, in the fact that the gods are there, in the thought in which being and the good coincide and that gives to each particular celestial movement its reason for being.

The critique that Aristotle makes of the Platonic idea of the Good completes its position by refusing to dissociate the good from all that is good for one reason or another. Aristotle affirms that god and intelligence are, for their part, substantially good.<sup>140</sup> We can presume that god is here put together with intelligence more than identified with it and is placed on the same footing as the act of intellection, which constitutes, in the end, god and intelligence, possibly also the ultimate end for the human being since the human being is above all intelligence.<sup>141</sup> It is because of this final aim that god and intelligence are declared substantially good and not simply good as anything else; indeed, being and goodness coincide in them. They are the “well-being” that rules all the rest, which is considered good only because it admits such ruling.

Furthermore, our attention is drawn to an image that is destined to shed light on the causal relationship between divine thought and the divine body: the latter “moves” the first one, says Aristotle, “like an object of love.”<sup>142</sup> This image, which has made scholars debate for a long time,<sup>143</sup> is taken from Greek erotic relationships. In these relationships, the actions that the pederast accomplishes because of the silent beauty of a young boy

<sup>140</sup> *Nicomachean Ethics*, I, 4, 1096 a 24-25, and *Eudemian Ethics*, I, 8, 1217 b 30-31.

<sup>141</sup> Cf. *Nicomachean Ethics*, IX, 4 1166 a 19-23: “For existence is good to the good man [...] (for that matter, even now God possess the good); he wishes for this only on condition of being whatever he is; and the element that thinks would seem to be the individual man, or to be so more than any other element in him.”

<sup>142</sup> *Metaphysics*, Lambda, 7, 1072 b 3.

<sup>143</sup> Not very well understood, this image is very much responsible for imagining celestial bodies as having their own souls, which have desire for and knowledge of their immobile mover! However, knowing that for a philosopher, life, and especially intellectual life, is a desirable good, we could ask if and how the heart, in a philosopher’s chest, knows that it has to pound without interruption for the sake of such goods? Why should the celestial body know and desire thinking in order to turn without interruption?

(the “eroticized”) are supposed to give an approximate idea of what for a moving celestial body is divine thought, which is itself goodness by the simple fact of existing without needing to command imperatively anything at all. A god, Aristotle says elsewhere,<sup>144</sup> does not command anything, neither his body nor anyone else’s, by giving orders. It is also the case that, in the human being, noetic activity is posited as the end goal of existence, but with a difference. Noetic activity is also, for the human being, the absolute good for which it exists and does not command human behavior in any other way than by being its ultimate aim. But it is still necessary that human beings organize their behavior by considering this end, which is therefore, for them, that for which a form of intelligence (wisdom) gives orders. Whereas a god does not need anything in order to put its body to the service of thought:<sup>145</sup> it operates on its own in a way that divine thought does not need to command otherwise than by simply being the absolute good.

The intelligence that in the human gives orders to the body is executive or practical, and it demands that he obey, first of all, we have seen, by nourishing itself correctly. Intelligence that, in him, commands without giving orders is the contemplative or theoretical one for which the former gives its orders: to nourish itself well so as to study well. In gods, there is no intelligence that orders the body to turn and even less to nourish themselves. The intellection is there, simply, and in light of this the body turns naturally without receiving any order. And I might add that, without the god’s knowing, exactly as in human beings, the body that receives some nourishment assimilates it slowly, in secret, without the subject thus nourished noticing. And further, I might also add that it is in this way that the subject, without realizing it, is maintained in life in order to think at leisure. In an analogous way, the divine body perpetuates its turning because this is the condition necessary for the god to think and be happy. In the gods, the celestial body, which due to necessary cause turns eternally, is inseparably united with ever-current thought as its final cause. It is for this reason that Aristotle enumerates the unmoved movers, according to the number of supposed celestial movements.

And it is for this reason, also, that differences in their importance and dignity can probably be established among the gods, even though they are all perfectly happy, because this importance varies according to the function of their bodies, mainly according to the position their bodies occupy in the sky, the most eminent being the position occupied by the extreme sphere, which encompasses all the others and is not encompassed by any other.<sup>146</sup> This first sphere is, indeed, animated by a “first mover” that is “nowhere,” in no

<sup>144</sup> *Eudemian Ethics*, VIII, 3 1249 b 13-14. In this passage, the god is also the divine in us, “each of us should live according to the governing element within himself.”

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, 1249 b 16; cf. *Politics*, VII, 1, 1323 b 23-26.

<sup>146</sup> A certain hierarchical order exists in the divine world, but such order exclusively rests upon the difference between the divine *bodies*, all composed of the same substance but positioned differently, more or less far from the sublunar bodies: “On all these grounds, therefore, we may infer with confidence that there is something beyond the bodies that are about us on this earth, different and separate from them; and that the superior glory of its nature is proportionate to its distance from this world of ours” (*On the Heavens*, I, 2, 269 b 14-17). This difference is mirrored by the difference among the observable movements: a simple movement at the periphery (the movement of the body that englobes the others), a multiplicity of movements underneath (in the area of the planets), and some movements in the zone between the sun and the moon; this is what Aristotle compares to the difference of human *bodies*, which need physical exercise in order to remain healthy: “Thus, taking health as the end, there will be one thing that always possess health, others that attain it, one by reducing flesh, another by running and thus reducing

place, but constitutes the limit of the Universe and is therefore used to localize the other spheres, which are contained in it. This sphere is also outside of time, and its revolutions are probably what makes it possible to measure, in units of time, those of the other spheres and each movement here below. All these determined corporeal positions, determined corporeal turnings, constitute the order of the Universe.<sup>147</sup>

This is not an order established by the gods, even less so by some god-demiurge that would have thought about it intelligently, in a distant past. It is mostly an order constituted by the bodies of the gods from the outset without having to give it any thought. Thought is the ultimate end of a determined celestial movement and is, therefore, only an act that guarantees this order forever; indeed, each determined movement is necessary for the divine thought and does not exist except for it. The corporeal universe is constituted, so to speak, in a fashion that the gods will be equally happy.

## V

To conclude, I propose (11) putting together the main aspects that make it possible to reconstitute the profile of the Ouranian gods according to Aristotle by evaluating their importance in the perspective of a possible theological science and (12) comparing them to an independent belief maintained by the philosopher and that he does not hesitate to impose.

## 11.

I considered all the (five) points that summarize Plato's conviction about the nature of the Ouranian gods. All these points are refuted by Aristotle and with them Plato's demonstration that the celestial bodies are not simply bodies but the bodies of gods. There is no doubt that this demonstration is false for Aristotle in all its points. But what is the hypothesis that needs to be proven?

Without a demonstration of the new aspects that would clearly respond to the objectives of a "theological" science, would the thesis be abandoned by Aristotle and would it also be disproven? It seems that the opposite is true and that at least the elements of a theological science are maintained by him, starting with the one that consists in considering that the celestial bodies are not bodies like any others. In order to be the bodies of the gods, all they need is a soul suitable for this kind of body, a soul that is strictly noetic.

I assumed that by giving an immaterial thought as an end for each celestial rotation, Aristotle implicitly furnished the only appropriate soul they lacked to the divine bodies. On this basis, disencumbered from Plato's theories about the necessity of an ideal world, he could have also taken for his argument the assertion of the *Phaedrus*, already cited, and could have argued that each god is "a living immortal, having a body and a soul both naturally united forever."

Aristotle being more concerned by the questions raised by the first and second philosophy than by a strictly theological demonstration was perhaps not inclined

flesh, another by taking steps to enable himself to run, thus further increasing the number of movements" (*On the Heavens*, II, 12, 292 a 24 et seq.).

<sup>147</sup> This goes in the same direction as *Timaeus* (39 E-40 A) about the order of the Universe, a Living Thing that contains all other living things.

to respond to Plato's arguments (in *Laws X*); moreover, his perspective on the psychic dimension of the gods was not particularly promising.

In fact, by nature, because it is not associated with imagination, and also out of dignity, because it is not appropriate to get lost in the consideration of intelligible multiplicities,<sup>148</sup> divine thought as it is conceived by Aristotle does not have an object outside itself: it is "the thought of thought."<sup>149</sup> In other words, divine thought, where the good and being coincide, consists in the conscience of a perfect being. It is the happy life where nothing enters except the feeling of happiness. Then, this conception of divine thought is fraught with implication because it prohibits seriously defending the hypothesis of the gods confined in the sky and absorbed in such thought are preoccupied by human vicissitudes: strangers to the sublunar world, the gods ignore it completely. It is therefore impossible to attribute to them either a providential goodness toward human beings or, even less so, a preoccupation to punish those among human beings who would misbehave. This was Plato's ultimate goal when he wanted to establish that the stars were not just bodies: showing in addition that the gods had a punctilious gaze on human behavior and the means to punish their faults in an inflexible manner.<sup>150</sup> Aristotle could not follow Plato on this point. Like Plato, it seems, he made the fundamental elements of the tradition his own by admitting that the gods are up in the sky and that divinity englobes nature entirely, even though he gives a very different account of these traditional elements. However, beyond that, "the further details," he says with contempt, "were subsequently added in the manner of myth. Their purpose was the persuasion of the masses and general legislative and political expediency."<sup>151</sup> It is difficult to forget, when reading these passages, that the demonstration provided by Plato about the celestial gods occupies all of book X of the *Laws*, given according to the "likely myth" and admitted in the *Timaeus*.

If the interest of the theological demonstrations, according to Plato, was to prove not only that the gods existed but also and mostly that they occupied themselves with human beings and that they were inflexible in punishing misbehavior, then what interest could such a demonstration, which would touch upon the existence of the gods, have for Aristotle if it was separated from political theses or, even worse, if its conclusion was the impossibility of rigorously defending these theses? This is why one can ask how much importance Aristotle attached to the theological scope of the ideas that he advanced in respect to the first philosophy or elsewhere. Guided, like Plato, by the general opinion that the visible celestial bodies are the trace of invisible psychic gods and by the awareness that going beyond this assumption is not possible, was Aristotle's preoccupation to underline the fact that this opinion, acceptable a priori, was of such a nature that it could have been the foundation for a doctrine of the heavens and of their principles? I fear that this question remains forever undecidable. It is, however, remarkable that ultimately the principle about

<sup>148</sup> See *Metaphysics*, Lambda, 9, 1074 b 19 et seq.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, 1074 b 34-35. Cf. *Eudemian Ethics*, VII, 12, 1245 b 16-18: "But by this reasoning the virtuous man will not even think; for the perfection of a god is not in this, but in being superior to thinking of anything beside himself. The reason is, that with us welfare involves something beyond us, but the deity is his own well-being."

<sup>150</sup> About the gods as inflexible guardians, see, in particular, *Laws*, X, 907 A.

<sup>151</sup> *Metaphysics*, Lambda, 8, 1074 b 3-5.

the gods explicitly advanced by Aristotle only appears here and there when concluding his expositions about topics other than the gods themselves.

## 12

This is also the case, at the end of a long exposition about happiness, in the context of an enquiry about ethics.<sup>152</sup> The passage is remarkable for several reasons. First of all, because it has a direct and unambiguous impact on the gods; also because the considerations that Aristotle shares about them do not contain any reference to his own vision of the Ouranian gods but rest solely on general conceptions; and finally, because in this circumstance the philosopher does not seem to hesitate to depart from his own sentiment, favoring in this way an opinion defended by Plato.

It is a matter of showing that the happiness achieved is of a purely intellectual order by putting forward the universal opinion, which the philosopher accepts without demonstration, according to which the gods obviously exist, they are living beings, and they achieve the highest happiness. Starting with these beliefs, Aristotle shows that one can only consider their activity as being intellectual by eliminating as absurd all other hypotheses, particularly the hypothesis of a moral activity, but without ever invoking anything that touches upon the nature of the Ouranian gods. After that he goes so far as to say, “If the gods have any concern for human affairs, as they are thought to have, it would be reasonable both that they should delight in that which was best and most akin to them, that is, intelligence, and that they should reward those who love and honor this most with their beneficence.”<sup>153</sup> The premises that justify this conclusion exceeds, if it does not contradict, what Aristotle seemed to think about the Ouranian gods. It arises from an opinion that Plato considered himself able to sustain by a relevant demonstration.

The philosopher perhaps thought that, despite everything, his vision of the Ouranian gods was in some way adaptable and susceptible of harmonizing with those opinions that take for granted the benevolence of the gods?<sup>154</sup> I am inclined to believe that for Aristotle an exhortation to philosophize, inscribed in an ethical injunction, could have legitimately been satisfied with such an opinion without the need of delving too seriously into what first philosophy seemed to advance. But this, at the same time, means that such consideration is limited in weight, as indeed it is not invoked when teaching apprentice philosophers what the gods are.

Aristotle will also repeat that the gods are not jealous.<sup>155</sup> And his denial does not result from the impossibility for the gods to take offence because they do not know humans or they do not know them personally. On the contrary, this denial comes from the conviction, anchored in the public by Plato, that as they are, the gods are absolutely

<sup>152</sup> See *Nicomachean Ethics*, X, 8, 1178 b 8 et seq.

<sup>153</sup> *Nicomachean Ethics*, X, 9, 1179 a 24-28.

<sup>154</sup> Incidentally, it is important to underscore that, if the divine body is instrumental to divine thinking, it is obviously not in the sense that divine thinking would be executive and would aim at using their movement in order to guide the world to the good, because divine thinking doesn't aim at what is exterior. The universal order and the good that results from it on earth exist because the gods exist, certainly, but not because they wish for it or make decisions about it.

<sup>155</sup> *Metaphysics*, Alpha, 2, 983 a 2.; cf. *Timaeus*, 29 D-E.

good in such a way that it would be foolish to suppose a vice in them, even as a mere potentiality or under the pretext that their power would then be augmented. The gods are no more capable of evil than is a good human being: the latter, becoming good, loses all capacity to do evil; the former are strictly lacking it.<sup>156</sup>

A solid conviction remains in Aristotle, I believe, that can be found both in the expression of what the Ouranian gods would be psychically and in the expression of what are essentially men here below; it is the conviction that human beings and gods are related to each other through thinking or, more precisely, through intellection. This conviction is evidently in part taken from Plato, but in Aristotle it loses the aura of novelty, especially if one acknowledges that, in its details, the comparison of divine and human intellection leads to a profound difference between them. Human intelligence (which the philosopher says is “the divine in us”) does not, in fact, truly compare to the intellection of the gods, the superiority, not the weakness, of which consists not in grasping any intelligible present in the perceivable but of grasping only itself. In the human being, there is nothing comparable to this divine act, except the very feeling of thinking and of being oneself while in truth thinking about something else. Intellectual life, which constitutes divine “being,” is unlike human life, and it is solely accessible in a temporary fashion. And moreover, we can see at what cost: it is by ignoring the body, like the gods, or better, by making it, for a certain time, into a docile companion as it always is for the god, this companion that turns independently and leaves you to think.

The accents of veneration for the divine life that one can find in Aristotle are not sufficient to make us forget that the philosopher is talking about a cohort of celestial beings that take advantage of a body that is not like any other. Aristotle thus leaves a crucial problem to the wisdom of succeeding theologians who are tempted to follow him: can we adopt the conception of a divinity without at the same time receiving his invention of a fifth body?

Translated by Giada Mangiameli

<sup>156</sup> See *Topics*, IV, 5, 126 a 38 et seq.

# HOW THE PRIOR BY NATURE COMES TO LIGHT IN *CATEGORIES* 12

In chapter 12 of the *Categories*, Aristotle discusses the different meanings of *πρότερον*, the prior (literally, what is “more first”). There is something odd about the way this chapter unfolds. At the outset, Aristotle tells us that one thing is said to be prior to another in four ways: in time, in necessarily presupposed existence, in order, and in honor (14a26-b9). Yet after enumerating these four ways, he appears to have second thoughts and adds a fifth way: “So then, the ways of the prior being said are this many. But there would seem also, beyond the things said, to be another way of the prior [ἕτερος εἶναι προτέρου τρόπος]” (14b9-11).<sup>1</sup> Accordingly, he concludes the chapter by accepting, at least hypothetically, this fifth way into the fold: “Thus according to five ways, one thing would be called [λέγοιτ’ ἄν] prior to another” (14b22-3).

The initial oddity that begs explanation is the compositional one. Why does Aristotle change his enumeration in the course of this very short chapter? This question opens onto a number of unresolved hermeneutical considerations. We can suppose either that Aristotle writes this way with a tacit rhetorical intention or that the second thoughts represent a later revisiting of the text motivated by an intellectual development occurring in the meantime. This alternative raises a further question about the rhetorical intentions shaping the text itself: Is it meant as an explication of Aristotle’s thought at the time of writing such that the record requires correction as his thought changes, or is it more like a representation of Aristotle’s teaching activity governed by pedagogical considerations? These questions also further put us in mind of the fact that we do not know with certainty that Aristotle wrote or spoke all that is in this text, or indeed any of it.

We will assume that Aristotle is, in some direct sense, the sole author of the *Categories* and that he intended the text to be as we have received it (making allowances for possible lacunae resulting from the transmission history of the text). Our heuristic hypothesis will be that the text represents Aristotle’s pedagogical guidance of potential philosophers and that the compositional rhetoric of chapter 12 tacitly serves his pedagogical aims. The interpretation here offered will seek to provide a rationale, consistent with the pedagogical hypothesis, for Aristotle’s composing the discussion of priority in the *Categories* as he does.

<sup>1</sup> All translations of Aristotle in this article are my own.

## INTERPRETIVE PROBLEMS

Such an interpretation involves, of course, a relevant notion of what Aristotle is trying to teach here and why he goes about teaching it the way he does. This consideration brings us to confront another odd, indeed extraordinary, feature of this fifth meaning of priority offered as an apparent afterthought. In accord with this fifth kind of priority, “of things reciprocally related in the sense that their being follows from one another, the one which is in some way responsible [αἴτιον] for the being of the other would plausibly be called prior by nature [φύσει]” (14b11-13). That which is causally prior by nature occupies a central place in Aristotle’s account of the pursuit of philosophical understanding. At the beginning of the *Metaphysics*, when he is attempting to clarify what kind of knowledge first philosophy seeks, Aristotle characterizes it as “contemplation of the first sources and causes [τῶν πρώτων ἀρχῶν καὶ αἰτιῶν]” (982b10); and in the first chapter of the *Physics*, he famously describes the process of such inquiry into knowledge of causes as a passage from what is first and better known for us to what is first and most knowable *by nature* (184a10-21). It would seem, then, that this fifth kind of priority is nothing other than the fundamental principle guiding and grounding the practice of philosophy itself. If the fundamental principle of philosophical inquiry arises in the rhetorical guise of an unplanned afterthought, it leads us to question in what relationship the text of the *Categories* stands with regard to the teaching of philosophical inquiry.

This, as it turns out, is a question upon which most modern interpreters of the text diverge from most ancient commentators. Beginning in the first century BC with Andronicus of Rhodes (who followed an apparently older Peripatetic tradition in regarding logic as an instrument of philosophy rather than a part of philosophy proper), the *Categories* was considered an introductory text for students, a propaedeutic to philosophy.<sup>2</sup> This remains the consensus view among most of the commentators whose works we possess or know about over the next six centuries, including Herminus (mid-second century), his student Alexander of Aphrodisias (late second century), Porphyry (late third century), Dexippus (mid-fourth century), Ammonius (late fifth century), and Simplicius (mid-sixth century). Porphyry, in his *On Aristotle’s Categories*, informs us that “Herminus says that the subject of the work is not the primary and highest *genera* in nature, for instruction in these is not suitable for young persons.”<sup>3</sup> Dexippus, in a work of the same title, provides the most precise articulation of the philosophical limits of the *Categories*: in this introductory text fitted by its author to his youthful audience of philosophical neophytes, Aristotle speaks not with metaphysical precision but according to common parlance, beginning not with what is first by nature (the causes of things) but with what is first for us (the particular beings we encounter).<sup>4</sup> His aim is to introduce greater clarity into our predications regarding the common objects of our experience by distinguishing both the different categories according to which we say that something “is” and the distinctions within each category.

<sup>2</sup> See M. Griffin, *Aristotle’s Categories in the Early Roman Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 22 and 34.

<sup>3</sup> Porphyry, *On Aristotle’s Categories* 59.21, trans. S. K. Strange (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992), 37.

<sup>4</sup> Dexippus, *On Aristotle’s Categories*, 42.7-9 and 45.1-12, trans. J. Dillon (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990), 77 and 82.

This begins to prepare students to grapple with more adequate philosophical distinctions (for example, between material and form) to be encountered in later works.

Beginning with Porphyry, this interpretive approach serves as the basis of a response to Plotinus, who criticized Aristotle's ten categories as inferior to the basic ontological ordering principles articulated by Plato. The claim of Plotinus's critics is that he has mistaken an introductory, prephilosophical work on predications for a work intended to propose an ontological system. Most modern scholars read the *Categories* as the kind of text Plotinus took it to be. Recognizing also that Aristotle's more mature metaphysics provides a different and richer account of beings, they tend overwhelmingly to provide a chronological account of Aristotle's intellectual development to explain the difference.

One of the more philosophically daring examples of this modern approach is Christopher P. Long's *The Ethics of Ontology: Rethinking an Aristotelian Legacy*. Long explicitly places himself in opposition to Porphyry: by Long's account, Aristotle's procedure in the *Categories* is "to analyze the manner in which words are commonly used to gain insight into the nature of how things are in reality."<sup>5</sup> As Long notes, this procedure is an instance of Aristotle's methodological principle "that all philosophical inquiry should begin from that which is most familiar to us and proceed to that which is first by nature."<sup>6</sup> Unlike Dexippus, however, Long assumes that this itinerary toward the first by nature is intended to arrive at its destination within the confines of the inquiry of the *Categories* itself.

According to Long, the "economy of principles operating in the text" remains within the confines of what he calls "the logic of things," whose core assumption is "that all being depends upon unanalyzable atomic individual *things*."<sup>7</sup> Thus the "foundational principle according to which this economy operates [is] primary οὐσία conceptualized as ὑποκείμενον," since it is in its role as *hypokeimenon* (an underlying thing) that *ousia* (substantial being) qualifies as the only category that is not said of something else and does not inhere in something else. By Long's account, the doctrine of the *Categories* founders upon this foundational principle: "Aristotle himself came to see the theory offered in the *Categories* as inadequate, and so he developed a rather different view in the *Physics* and *Metaphysics*."<sup>8</sup>

Leaving aside the details of Long's interpretation of the *Categories* and its failures, these bare outlines of Long's account are enough to make evident his operative assumption: that Aristotle composes the inquiry of the *Categories* with the intention of attaining an intratext stability of settled doctrine or, in other words, that the text does not unfold under the guidance of a dialogical and propaedeutic intention in relation to what Aristotle plans to teach in later inquiries represented by other texts of the Aristotelian canon.

At the same time, despite the "loyalty to the logic of things" Long attributes to Aristotle, he also notes that Aristotle "hints at his own ambivalence concerning his account of the ontological status of secondary οὐσία" in a way that "anticipates the

<sup>5</sup> C. P. Long, *The Ethics of Ontology: Rethinking an Aristotelian Legacy* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2004), 21 (and 172n12).

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 20-21.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

discussion of the determining nature of form in the *Physics* and *Metaphysics*.<sup>9</sup> If the deficiencies of the principles governing the inquiry are manifest in the text itself in ways that provide anticipatory hints of the more mature doctrine, it is difficult to see on what grounds one could rule out that the text is designed by its author to destabilize its own preliminary and inadequate philosophical horizon in preparation for advancing the student toward a more adequately philosophical account. It is, indeed, quite possible to see in the self-destabilizing dynamic of the text recognized by Long a refinement on the propaedeutic reading offered by the ancient commentators. Perhaps Aristotle's pedagogical rhetoric is more sophisticated and dialectical-aporetic than even the ancients themselves recognized. This sort of reading would seem to provide the basis for a cogent and illuminating account of the strange and feignedly inadvertent appearance of priority by nature late in the text, as I hope to show now.

### **CATEGORIES 12**

The discussion of το πρότερον seems to take place after the main task of the *Categories* has been concluded. Having discussed substantial being (οὐσία), quantity (ποσόν), relatives (τά πρὸς τι), and quality (ποιόν) and having sketchily commented on acting on (ποιεῖν) and being acted upon (πάσχειν), Aristotle remarks that the remaining four categories are obvious and do not need to be discussed further (11b10-16). Since we are at this point only two-thirds of the way through the received text, editors often choose either to expunge this passage or to see it and the remainder of the text (chapters 10 to 15) as a later addition. After this problematic transitional passage, the remainder of the text discusses mainly what might be called subvarieties of πρὸς τι, or relatives. Ammonius argues that the book is divided into *pre-praedicamenta* (uncommon terms necessary for getting started with the topic, such as “homonymy”), the *praedicamenta* proper (the categories discussed in chapters 4 through 9), and the *post-praedicamenta*, terms important to understand clearly once one has discussed the categories.<sup>10</sup> Andronicus already questioned whether these chapters on *post-praedicamenta* properly belonged to the text of the *Categories*.<sup>11</sup>

Hippocrates Apostle, in the commentary to his translation of the *Categories*, justifies such suspicion on the ground that the later material belongs more properly to physics and metaphysics.<sup>12</sup> The assumption is that Aristotle would not choose, two-thirds of the way through a text on grammar and logic, to change course into philosophy. If, on the other hand, we admit the possibility that this is his intention, that what Owens calls the “seemingly strange mixture of metaphysics and logic” in the text might at some point shift its emphasis from logic to metaphysics, the text might make sense as it stands.<sup>13</sup> If

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>10</sup> Ammonius, *On Aristotle's Categories*, trans. S. M. Cohen and G. B. Matthews (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), 14.4-5.

<sup>11</sup> This seems to have been the general view of most of the ancient commentators, while for much of the twentieth century (going, indeed, back to Zeller in 1882) it was common among scholars to reject the authenticity of chapters 10-15. See L. M. De Rijk, “The Authenticity of Aristotle's *Categories*,” *Mnemosyne*, 4th series, vol. 4, fasc. 2, 129-59.

<sup>12</sup> Aristotle, *Categories and Propositions*, trans. H. G. Apostle, chap. 10, n. 1 (Grinnell, IA: Peripatetic Press, 1980), 87.

<sup>13</sup> J. Owens, “Aristotle on Categories,” *The Review of Metaphysics* 14, no. 1 (1960): 76.

Aristotle intends to move beyond the initially promised typology of predications and move in the direction of underlying principles of thought and toward the core of philosophical questioning, then it would make sense that he would take up questions that initially seem to belong to subclasses of these predications but that ultimately reveal principles that underlie our very ability to predicate. Contrariety, for example, is not just another kind of relation; the fundamental contrariety of Same and Other is *presupposed* in all relating. But if we begin to steer our reflections in the direction of what is presupposed by our predicating and distinguishing at all, then we should also reflect on the relationship of that which is presupposed to that which presupposes it – which is to say, we should reflect on priority.

Let us look more closely at how chapter 12 proceeds. The first and most compelling (κυριώτατα) way that something is said to be πρότερον is according to time. A comes first, then B. The second way is when something is required for something else to exist, but not vice versa. There cannot be two of something unless there is one, but there could be one and not two. The third way is within a proper ordering (τῇ τάξει). Axioms are prior to demonstrations, and an introduction has to precede the main body of a speech.

The fourth way is set off as something aside from those that have been discussed (παρὰ τοὺς εἰρημένους). That which is better or more honorable is thought to be prior. Aristotle points to the usage of the many (οἱ πολλοὶ): they call those who are most held in honor and affection by themselves προτέρους, perhaps best translated here as “the foremost” or “the first men in the city.” Aristotle suggests that this usage of the many may be the most divergent or alien of the ways of speaking of priority. More precisely, he says it is ἀλλοτριώτατος, but he modifies this claim with the adverb σχεδόν, which we might translate as “pretty much” or “almost.”

But “almost” can, of course, mean “almost but not quite.” Although this fourth sense of priority is divergent from the others, it is not at all beside the point if we are asking what priority really means. This is indicated by a peculiarity in Aristotle’s discussion of this fourth sense: the better or more honorable, he observes, seems to be prior “by nature.” The underlying logic seems to be that the many attribute to those they most esteem and love the status of being best by nature; they believe, often mistakenly, that those they honor are worthy of honor, that the foremost in their hearts are the foremost simply. We seem to be moving, in this example, out of the realm of logical relations among predications and into the realm of fluid and shifting public opinions and affections, and in that case we would be inclined to see this fourth sense of priority as foreign to the others.

Underneath this swaying opinion of the many, however, lies a profound claim: there is a kind of priority by nature, grounded somehow in the scale of the good and admirable. More than that, while these movers and shakers of the day may not in fact be so high on this scale, they are rightly said to have a priority in the city, inasmuch as they are the movers and shakers, the causes of decisions and actions that affect all those in the city. If there were to be a real coincidence between causal stature and goodness (in this context between rule and the highest excellence), then this sense of priority that points to nature would be sound. This almost wholly foreign way of talking about priority would indicate the direction toward the truest way of talking about priority or toward priority by nature simply.

Let us now listen once again to how Aristotle continues:

So then the ways in which the prior have been spoken of are this many. But there would seem also, alongside those said, to be another way of the prior. For of things reciprocally related in the sense that their being follows from one another, the one which is in some way responsible for the being of the other would plausibly be called prior by nature.<sup>14</sup>

Here we have opened up a landscape hitherto foreign to the text. The question has become what is responsible [αἴτιον] for the being of something – that is, the question of causes. The example Aristotle gives underscores the new vista: “The true statement [that this thing exists] is in no way the cause of the thing’s being, but rather the thing appears to be somehow the cause of the statement’s being true” (14b18-20). The being of something is prior by nature to the truth of what is said about that being. If the truth of being is prior to the truth of speech, the question is implicitly opened of how we move from logic and predication to metaphysics and contemplation.

The sense of priority that opens the way from the horizon of logic to the horizon of metaphysics is not just an afterthought, though it appears to come quite accidentally after the others. It comes after in time but turns out to be first in the order of being. At first, priority of time seems like the meaning of priority simply, even when we are talking about relations of beings (for example, in the cosmogonists or φυσιολόγοι); but when we turn to questions of the good, the honorable, and the causes of the true being of things, the prior by nature emerges into view. Thus the unexpected emergence of priority by nature from the confusion of the last in a series of senses of priority reproduces the way in which, phenomenologically, our insight into causes and thus into natural priority emerges *after* our familiarity with phenomena and ways of talking about them and so how metaphysics takes its dialectical departure from the obscurity of common speech.

## PHENOMENOLOGY OF THE OPENING TO METAPHYSICS

Martin Heidegger’s reflections on the origins of metaphysics can help us to see more clearly why Aristotle might proceed in this way in attempting to open the path toward the prior by nature. According to Heidegger, it is exactly the discovery of the prior by nature that originates metaphysics: “Plato was the first to identify Being with the character of the *a priori*. ... [M]etaphysics means nothing other than knowledge of the Being of beings, which is distinguished by apriority and which ... shapes the essence of Western philosophy.”<sup>15</sup> If we begin “with reference to our everyday perception and observation,” we are inclined to think that in “the temporal order of explicit comprehension carried out by us, the beings – for example, similar existing things – are πρότερον, prior to likeness and equality. ... The order according to which the previous and the subsequent are determined here is the sequence of our knowing.”<sup>16</sup>

<sup>14</sup> *Categories*, 14b9-13 (my translation).

<sup>15</sup> M. Heidegger, *Nietzsche, Volumes Three and Four*, trans. D. Farrell Krell (New York: HarperCollins, 1987), 164.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 160-61.

Heidegger continues:

Πρὸς ἡμᾶς, with reference to our approach to beings, beings are prior as what is known beforehand and often solely, in contrast to Being as the subsequent. If, however, we contemplate whether and to what extent beings and Being essentially unfold of themselves, according to their own proper essence, then we are not asking how it stands with Being πρὸς ἡμᾶς. ... Instead, we are asking how it stands with Being insofar as Being “is.” The Greeks primally and primordially conceived Being as φύσις – as rising forth from itself and thus essentially self-presenting in upsurge, self-revealing in the open region. If we inquire into Being with regard to itself as φύσις, therefore τῆ φύσει, then the result is: τῆ φύσει, Being is πρότερον, before beings, and beings are ὕστερον, subsequent.<sup>17</sup>

As Heidegger’s explanation indicates, our preliminary sense of priority is priority in time, which is the first way of priority in *Categories* 12. In the light of this sense of priority, it will appear that things such as “equality” and “likeness” are “abstracted” from perceived things subsequent to our perception of them. Only if we seek what is responsible for our ability to recognize equality and likeness “in the first place” do we begin to recognize that what is first for us is not first by nature, and only then do we open metaphysics to view.

That this opening of the metaphysical horizon is exactly what Aristotle has performed in *Categories* 12 is further suggested by the fact that, after having done so, he revisits in the very next chapter a topic he has already discussed – namely, what it means to say that two things are “simultaneous by nature.” Already in chapter 7, he had discussed the question whether things relative to one another are simultaneous by nature (ἅμα τῆ φύσει εἶναι, 7b15). This is the only time φύσις occurs in the text before the discussion of priority. In this first discussion, Aristotle’s criterion for deciding this question is whether one of the correlatives can exist as such before the other. In other words, he appeals to the first and second of the four initial meanings of priority, the question of which thing precedes in time and the question of whether one thing has to exist in order for another to exist. How exactly this criterion applies and how broadly becomes a bit tricky right away when Aristotle enters into some of the more puzzling cases: Does the knowable exist before the knowledge, or the sensible before the sensing?<sup>18</sup> Aristotle is only willing to take these questions to the point of explaining what seems to be the case and why such seeming makes sense, always remaining within the initial horizon of this text according to which individual οὐσία is primary οὐσία, or as we may now say, the “pre-metaphysical” horizon of *Categories* 1-11, in which we do not yet raise the question of the cause of οὐσία. Within this pre-metaphysical horizon, the question of whether the knowable and sensible are prior in being reduces to the question of their existence in time prior to being known or perceived (which is to say, the second sense of prior in *Categories* 12 reduces to the first, the temporal).

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 161.

<sup>18</sup> *Categories*, 7b22-8a12.

Then again, at the beginning of chapter 13, Aristotle starts out by making a distinction between, on the one hand, the way “simultaneous” (ἄμα) is said simply (ἁπλῶς) and most basically (κυριώτατα), which is temporal – two things come into being at the same time – and, on the other hand, “simultaneous by nature,” which is a matter of two things each of whose being follows from the other and neither of which is responsible (αἴτιον) for the being of the other. We have now entered into the horizon of metaphysics, in which the guiding question is what is responsible for the being of things.

Heidegger thus far is extraordinarily helpful for seeing that there is a fundamental shift of horizon that occurs in *Categories* 12 between the first for us, which takes priority in time to be fundamental, and the first by nature, which seeks the prior within the causal order of being. He rightly indicates as well that if we remain in the first horizon, then our understanding of knowledge will tend to be Nominalist in character: what is first in time is our perception of individual entities, and subsequently we construct concepts by abstracting from them. This is roughly the character of the doctrine of οὐσία in *Categories* 5. Heidegger is less helpful for interpreting what is happening here when he goes on to discuss how the prior by nature brings us to the Idea of the Good.

Driven by his concern for the covering over of ontological difference or the way in which Being gets interpreted in terms of beings, Heidegger tells the story this way:

It is the essence of ἰδέα to make suitable; that is, to make the being as such possible, that it may come to presence into the unconcealed. Through Plato’s interpretation of ἰδέα as ἀγαθόν Being comes to be what makes a being fit to be a being. Being is shown in the character of making-possible and conditioning. Here the decisive step for all metaphysics is taken, through which the a priori character of Being at the same time receives the distinction of being a condition.<sup>19</sup>

According to Heidegger, this understanding of the prior as the conditioning leads ultimately to the interpretation of beings in terms of will to power.

Heidegger tells us that we find our way to the prior by nature out of the imperative to understand how beings and Being essentially unfold. “In its ownmost essence, Being must be defined on its own terms, independently, and not according to what we comprehend it and perceive it to be.”<sup>20</sup> But Heidegger leaves untouched the question of how we recognize or embrace the need to define Being “on its own terms.” Aristotle, on the other hand, seems to give us indications of the path to this kind of questioning.

As we saw, in Aristotle’s “fourth way” of priority, the “first men” are first because prominently honored in the city and because preeminently loved by the many. Do we have here one scale or two? Are these men causes because efficacious, that is, powerful, or because apparently lovable, that is, good? Political priority harbors within it a question whether to understand importance and preeminence in terms of power or goodness. For Aristotle, this question will only ultimately be answered by recognition of the priority of

<sup>19</sup> Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, vol. 4, 169.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 161.

ἐνέργεια over δύναμις – a relationship prior to motion, which is itself prior to time. The long path to this recognition proceeds through the prior by nature, and *Categories* 12 appears to serve pedagogically as the threshold to that path. Since, however, embarking on this path – the path of a philosophical questioning that asks us to rethink everything we think we know – involves a willingness to let go of much that formerly seemed secure, it would seem to require and presuppose that we already affirm the goodness of truth in preference to the appeal of power. The affirmation of the goodness of philosophy has to be prior in time to the adequate understanding of that which causes the affirmation to be true, an understanding that only the principle of the prior by nature allows us to seek and attain.

Philosophy, as an existential engagement, thus stands or falls by the priority of the good. The path toward the first by nature is the pursuit of the beginning. It takes its own beginning from the recognition that what initially appears to us as first is not properly first. It does not assume that we know what we are seeking when we desire to know, and thus it also necessarily involves an education of desire, a readiness to respond to the Good as we discover it and to conform ourselves to it.

We can only undertake an education of desire on the assumption that the transformation of soul to which we entrust ourselves will lead us to a good we do not yet possess or even know. The idea of the Good is not, as Heidegger asserts, the condition for the issuing forth of beings out of non-being; it is the light in which we submit to the possibility that knowing is not something for us to construct but something for us to enter into as transformed participants.

What could possibly convince us to embark on a path that requires us to trust that it will ultimately lead us to recognize what we have to assume from the start in order to embark upon it? Perhaps only the friendship of one further along, which may seem both as unexpected and as ultimately necessary as a fifth sense of priority tacked on to the four we initially thought we were given a right to expect. The ruling beginning of the prior by nature thus becomes evident as a lovable good in the light of the claim made upon our love and admiration by the teacher able to rule our efforts to become our best selves and thus able to fulfill the implicit promise of the first men in the city.

# PHYTOLOGY: BETWEEN *PHŪSIS* AND *ZOĒ*

*Yet what about the plant? Here already we are uncertain.*  
[Heidegger, *Fundamental Concepts*, 62]

In 1922, Heidegger composed a dense introduction to a projected but never completed book on Aristotle in which he anticipated that his ontology of human being must ultimately be placed within an interpretation of Aristotle's *On the Soul* and the explication of "the domain of the being of *life*."<sup>1</sup> When he returns to these themes in 1929, he defines "life" in an Aristotelian spirit as "the kind of being that pertains to animals and plants."<sup>2</sup> Yet Heidegger appears uncomfortable with plant life. In 1926, just months before the first manuscript preparations for *Being and Time*, he writes that "animals above all, and plants in a certain sense, have a world."<sup>3</sup> The hesitant wavering of this "in a certain sense" is repeated in 1929 when he tentatively suggests that "we comport ourselves toward animals, and in a certain manner toward plants too, in such a way that we are already aware of being transposed."<sup>4</sup> It is when charting the path of his 1929 investigations, however, that he indicates his primary orientation toward vegetal life:

Man has world. But then what about the other beings which, like man, are also part of the world: the animals and plants, the material things like the stone, for example? Are they merely parts of the world, as distinct from man who in addition *has* world? Or does the animal too have world, and if so, in what way? In the same way as man, or in some other way? And how would we grasp this otherness? And what about the stone? However crudely, certain distinctions immediately manifest themselves here. We can formulate these distinctions in the following three theses: [1.] the stone

<sup>1</sup> M. Heidegger, "Phenomenological Interpretations in Connection with Aristotle: An Indication of the Hermeneutical Situation," in *Supplements: From the Earliest Essays to Being and Time and Beyond*, trans. J. van Buren (Albany: SUNY Press, 2002), 143.

<sup>2</sup> M. Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude*, trans. W. McNeill and Nicholas Walker (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 191.

<sup>3</sup> M. Heidegger, *Logic: The Question of Truth*, trans. T. Sheehan (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 181.

<sup>4</sup> Heidegger, *Fundamental Concepts*, 210.

(material object) is *worldless*; [2.] the animal is *poor in world*; [3.] man is *world-forming*.<sup>5</sup>

It would appear that no distinctions manifest themselves – however crudely – concerning the being of plants, which are mentioned only in order to be firmly elided. To the extent that plants remain present, they appear to hold a derivative place in a primarily zoological account: vegetality is *something like* animality, which is perhaps all that can be said. Nevertheless, it is in Heidegger’s very hesitation toward and elision of plant life, no less than his initial turn toward life as the manner of being pertaining to plants and animals, that he most exemplifies his Aristotelian lineage.

When Aristotle sets out in *On the Soul* to discern and articulate the principle of living things (ἀρχὴ τῶν ζώων) – a project he names “one of the most difficult tasks in every way” – he reproaches his predecessors for ignoring vegetal life.<sup>6</sup> To their identification of life with either perception or locomotion, he objects by way of counterexample, for the plant has neither yet is alive. Plants therefore exercise a pivotal role in the development of Aristotle’s line of inquiry into living being: they are the catalyst that rescues the analysis of life from prior errors and sets it upon the right path. By presenting life in its simplicity, plants comprise a site of phenomenal clarity. The very minimalism of plant life, however, makes it enigmatic: Is vegetal life too meager to be that “through which living belongs to all things”?<sup>7</sup> Indeed, Aristotle sometimes characterizes plants as partaking in a “partial kind” of soul (τὸ τοιοῦτον μόνιον τῆς ψυχῆς).<sup>8</sup> Thus, the same bareness of vegetal life that grants it a methodological privilege also entails a deficiency of being. This marks the first occlusion of the vegetal in Aristotle’s account: life as such is hidden in the plant, appearing only in a meager and partial form.

In many ways, *On the Soul* is a book about sensation (αἴσθησις) and its correlates, as Heidegger rightly emphasizes. After the doxography and general definitions, the account of sensation occupies roughly two thirds of the remaining text.<sup>9</sup> The distinctive activity of animals is in large part to perceive (e.g., food), respond to that perception by desire, and travel to their quarry; this is the characteristic zoological activity with which the text is primarily concerned. In this sense, the account of the nutritive soul – which pertains especially to plants – exists only en route to the sensitive soul. At the same time, however, the account of sensation requires the prior account of an *insensitive* form of life, a movement of growth and reproduction that surges forth and withers away of its own accord:

But if one is to say what each of them is – the noetic, the perceptive, or the nutritive – then one must rather primarily say what thinking is and what

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 177.

<sup>6</sup> Aristotle, *De Anima* 402a7-11. I refer to Mark Shiffman’s excellent translation of *On the Soul* (Focus Publishing, 2011) and to the Loeb Classical Library translations of other Aristotelian texts. The translations are frequently modified following the Loeb editions of the Greek texts.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 415a35.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 413b8.

<sup>9</sup> By my count, the doxography occupies roughly five Bekker pages, the general definitions two, nutrition one, perception more than seven, and intellect just over two.

perceiving is. [...] But first one must speak of nutrition and reproduction; for the nutritive soul belongs already to all the others.<sup>10</sup>

The account of the soul, Aristotle here contends, is *primarily* a matter of sensation and thinking, but *first* a matter of nutrition. It is in this spirit that he is able to say at the beginning of *DA* III.3 that “the soul is demarcated mainly by two distinctive features: (1) motion with respect to place and (2) thinking, judging, and perceiving.”<sup>11</sup> What is first (nutrition) has here entirely vanished into what is primary. This marks the second occlusion of the vegetal in his account, which Aristotle shares with Heidegger: nutritive life is hidden in the inquiry into life, appearing only in a privative relation to life in general and its full paradigm, the human animal.

In Aristotle, then, plant life grants access to the being of the living but for precisely this reason is difficult to apprehend in its specificity and remains itself eclipsed. On the one hand, Aristotle wants to account for a nonzoological life; on the other hand, his account remains subservient to and enmeshed within the zoological categories that such an account would serve. By reading with an emphasis on this aspect of the account, I interpret Aristotle’s ambivalence toward plant life as the attempt to articulate a fundamentally different kind of soul than the sensitive soul with which his text is largely concerned: a phytological<sup>12</sup> form of life that has more in common with φύσις than with animal life (ζωή). For all of Heidegger’s attention to the question of φύσις in Aristotle<sup>13</sup> on the one hand and the question of sensitive, animal life on the other, he remains strangely silent concerning the vegetal pivot that for Aristotle holds these two inquiries in relation. It is to this element of Aristotle’s thinking that the rest of this essay turns.

\*

Perhaps Thomas Aquinas best captures the verdict of philosophy writ large concerning plants: “*In plantis est vita occulta et latens.*”<sup>14</sup> Life in plants is latent, hidden, even occult. According to one way of reading, Aristotle sees the vegetal soul as deficient, a “partial kind of soul.”<sup>15</sup> Plants *lack*: they lack locomotion, perception, striving, imagination, and thought:

As we have said, in some living beings all of the potencies of soul that have been mentioned are present, in others a few, and in some only one. The potencies we spoke of were the nutritive, the perceptive, the striving,

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 415a17-24.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 427a18-19.

<sup>12</sup> “Phytology” is constructed from φυτόν (plant) analogously to “zoology.”

<sup>13</sup> For one illuminating overview, see A. Serafin, “Heidegger on Nature,” *Kronos Philosophical Journal* 4 (2015): 171-75.

<sup>14</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae: Volume 10*, trans. W. A. Wallace (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), Q.LXIX, A2.

<sup>15</sup> “τὸ τοιοῦτον μὀριον τῆς ψυχῆς.” *De Anima* 413b8.

mobility with respect to place, and the power of thought. In plants the nutritive alone is present.<sup>16</sup>

On the ladder of being from simple bodies to the divine, plants are most characterized by their lowliness. And yet, Aristotle also shows considerable ambivalence in his treatment of vegetal life. While plants do not seem to perceive, they nevertheless move themselves in complex ways: they turn toward the light, modulate the unfurling of their blossoms according to the time of day, seek out nutritious soil, and so forth. Most importantly for Aristotle, plants *grow*. The frequent and explicit denials of local motion to plants (such as that just quoted) notwithstanding, there are passages in which Aristotle seems less sure on this point. In *Physics* IV.4, Aristotle clarifies that both traveling motion (φορά) and the motion of increase and decrease are varieties of local motion, “for in this [latter] case too what was formerly in such and such a place is now in a larger or smaller one.”<sup>17</sup> The nutritive soul must be responsible for the motion of increase and decrease, but not for traveling motion. That increase and decrease belong to plants is the basis on which Aristotle argues, against Empedocles, that plants are alive and self-moving.<sup>18</sup> It is in this spirit that Aristotle announces, in the account dedicated to motion in *DA* III.9, that local motion is a potency that distinguishes the soul in “both plants and all the living creatures.”<sup>19</sup> And yet in the same passage, just after admitting the thesis of local motion in plants, Aristotle makes that same thesis the subject of a *reductio*: if traveling movement belonged to the nutritive soul, plants would be mobile (ἔτι κἂν τὰ φυτὰ κινητικὰ ἦν).<sup>20</sup> This vacillation concerning local motion in plants – sometimes within the space of a few lines – reflects a basic ambiguity concerning an important hallmark of the living. On the one hand, understanding local motion involves recognizing its close affinity with perception by way of the imagination and striving that belong to perceptive life. From a zoological perspective, we cannot understand the movements of living creatures without invoking the perception whereby they sense the object of their movement and the desire or fascination that gives to that movement its impetus. On the other hand, there are evident forms of life that, lacking perception, nevertheless exhibit *something like* local motion that cannot be understood in quite the same terms.

A similar situation occurs with respect to Aristotle’s account of striving (ὄρεξις), which he is quite clear in denying to the nutritive soul. At the same time, however, he recognizes that, if movement is self-movement rather than the result of external force, it will *have* to involve striving of some kind.<sup>21</sup> Indeed, during the discussion of local motion in *DA* III.9, he digresses concerning the relation between striving and the various parts of the soul. Striving is strange, he reflects, because it is not confined to one part

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 414a31f. See also 432b15f, 413a34-35, 415a2, and *Parts of Animals* 641b8.

<sup>17</sup> *Physics* 211a15-18.

<sup>18</sup> *De Anima* 413a25-28, 415b25-416a2.

<sup>19</sup> “καὶ τοῖς φυτοῖς ὑπάρχει καὶ πᾶσι τοῖς ζῴοις.” *Ibid.*, 432a15-18, 29-30. Does the pairing have the force of contrast (e.g., “both reptiles and fish”) or inclusion in a genus (e.g., “both household pets and all animals”)? While the latter reads more naturally following the “all” (πᾶς), the ambiguity remains important, as I later emphasize.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 432b17-18.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 432b17-18, 433a32-33.

but is rather present in the nutritive, sensitive, and noetic parts alike. “So if the soul is threefold,” he concludes, “there will be striving in each part.”<sup>22</sup> Similar considerations occur in Aristotle’s reflections on reproduction. In a famous passage in *DA* II.4, Aristotle declares that all living creatures aim to produce offspring like themselves, “an animal an animal, a plant a plant.” In this way, they all strive (ὁρέγεται) after eternity.<sup>23</sup> In both of these passages, vegetal striving appears in a basic continuity with all forms of life.

These moments should not be read as contradicting or recanting the primary and oft-repeated passages refusing to the nutritive soul any activities of local motion, striving, or sensation. Nor should they be read as momentary slips in Aristotle’s otherwise coherent systematization of life. Instead, they mark the basic form of Aristotle’s ambivalence toward the vegetal. On the one hand (and properly speaking), such activities do not belong to nutritive life. Plants are sessile and insensible, and in this respect they are strikingly different from animals. The work of nutrition – metabolism, growth, and reproduction – is not driven by the process that moves from perception through striving and imagination to the traveling movement that characterizes animal life. To collapse the distinction between the nutritive and sensitive activities into a facile sameness would be both textually and phenomenologically faithless. On the other hand, however, the vital activities of the nutritive soul nevertheless exhibit *something like* the local motion and striving that is proper to animal life. The movements of plants, whether aerial or subterranean, remain a kind of self-motion with respect to place and exhibit an orientation or polarity that is something like a striving.

\*

Aristotle’s basic ambivalence toward the vegetal is reflected in the terms for “living thing” and “animal,” which are homonymous in the typical neuter (τὸ ζῷον). Thus, whenever he speaks of “living things,” Aristotle cannot help but refer paradigmatically to animals; inversely, whenever he speaks of animals, his words ambiguously include plant life. Plants are a kind of life (ζωή) and living thing, but they are not so in the full and proper sense of being animals (τὰ ζῷα).

To this nexus of animalistic terms, we might contrast a series of terms that all have to do with the peculiar kind of activity belonging to nutrition, understood as a local motion that occurs by a conation that is nevertheless not striving, imagination, and traveling. In its mobile respect, this activity is called growing (φύομαι), from which derives the words both for plant (φυτόν) and for the coming to be and passing away of existing things (φύσις). In this sense, Aristotle’s ambivalence concerning the status of nutrition involves a more fundamental ambivalence in life, indicating on the one hand a life that is sensitive, imaginative, and striving (ζωή) and on the other a life that subsists in a conative movement of growth and decay (φύομαι/φύσις). According to Aristotle’s analogy, this latter form of living would be present implicitly in animal life just as the prior terms of a geometric

<sup>22</sup> “εἰ δὲ τρία ἡ ψυχή, ἐν ἐκάστω ἔσται ὁρεξις.” *Ibid.*, 432b5-8.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 415a29-415b3.

series are in the posterior ones (e.g., the triangle is implicitly in the rectangle).<sup>24</sup> The latter is not implicitly present in the former, however: nutrition enacts an autonomy of the living that is not shared by sensitive life. In his discussion of longevity in certain plants, Aristotle makes the point by saying that plants have a φύσις peculiar to themselves over and against the animals (ἰδίαν πρὸς τὰ ζῷα).<sup>25</sup>

According to the famous definition, the human being is the animal having λόγος. For the reader of *On the Soul*, this might appear an odd definition, for it leaves out the tripartite determination that Aristotle's account of soul requires: where, in other words, is the vegetable? In fact, however, the definition is precise:

For φύσις, as we claim, does nothing in vain: and only man, among the animals, has λόγος.<sup>26</sup>

The human creature belongs “among the animals,” on the side of the ζῷα, under a certain specification (having λόγος). There also remains another order, on the side of φυτά, that is different from that of animal life (ζωή) but nevertheless not strictly separate from it, which bears it up and remains operative within it: φύσις, which does nothing in vain. From the perspective of *On the Soul*, this is the appearance of the phytological element of growth, generation, and decay that persists in the definition of the human animal.

Phytological life is a constitutive part of the soul. From this perspective, the more fundamental distinction in *On the Soul* is not the oft-remarked division of the soul into the nutritive, sensitive, and noetic. Rather, it is the delineation of the sensitive (zoological) from the nutritive (phytological) forms of life. In fact, it is this latter distinction (and not the former) that Aristotle stresses at each of the schematic pivots of his discussion: the conclusion of the doxography, the final passage of *DA* I, the beginning of the proper account of soul in *DA* II.2, the account of the relation of the parts of soul in *DA* II.3, and the final pages of the text.<sup>27</sup> Indeed, this distinction functions almost as a refrain that anchors the organizational hierarchy of Aristotle's account. The considerable diversity in animal powers (i.e., some animals lack local motion or various senses, human beings carry out noetic functions that other animals do not, imagination works differently in different animals, etc.) is secondary to and in contrast with the more basic and reliable distinction between zoological and phytological soul – the dependence of the former upon the latter notwithstanding.

If the basic conceptual division of *On the Soul* concerns the distinction between the sensitive (zoological) and the nutritive (phytological) forms of life (albeit in service of the former), then the beginnings of the text appear in a different light. In this light, the crucial function of the doxography that comprises the majority of book I appears to be the correction of a merely zoological approach to the study of life. In order to make a beginning, Aristotle tells us at the start of the doxography, we must set forth the things

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 414b29f.

<sup>25</sup> “περὶ δὲ τοῦ πολυχρόνιον εἶναι τὴν τῶν δένδρων φύσιν δεῖ λαβεῖν τὴν αἰτίαν· ἔχει γὰρ ἰδίαν πρὸς τὰ ζῷα.” *On Length and Shortness of Life*, 467a11-12. The comment specifically concerns trees, since the subject is longevity.

<sup>26</sup> “οὐθὲν γάρ, ὡς φαμέν, μάτην ἢ φύσις ποιεῖ· λόγον δὲ μόνον ἄνθρωπος ἔχει τῶν ζῴων.” *Politics*, 1253a9-10.

<sup>27</sup> *De Anima*, 410b22; 411b28-30; 413a34-35; 414b1; 415a2; 434a25-29; 435b1-2.

that most of all “belong to the soul according to φύσις.”<sup>28</sup> But this is precisely where Aristotle’s predecessors were misled: they set forth rather those things that belong to the soul according to ζωή – namely, motion and perception – “and it is pretty much these two thoughts that we have inherited from our forebears concerning soul,” for these men “suppose soul to be what gives motion to living creatures [ζῷα].”<sup>29</sup> Here plants have the corrective role, since they are alive but “have no share in local motion or perception.”<sup>30</sup> An account of soul that follows φύσις must give pride of place to the vegetal soul, for “this alone is common to both animals [ζῷα] and plants.”<sup>31</sup> Thus, “We seek to discern and to understand both the φύσις and distinct being [οὐσία] of it, and then also whatever comes along with it (and of these, some seem to be affections belonging to the soul itself, others rather to come about in animals [ζῷα] because of soul).”<sup>32</sup> When Aristotle stresses the φύσις of the soul, we should hear especially that vegetative aspect of the soul that belongs to φύσις, to the realm of growth and decay, and forms the ἀρχή of animal life. This is the role of Aristotle’s phytology in the structure of *On the Soul*: plant life, which constitutes the origin of animal life, is addressed first, followed by “whatever comes along with it” – namely, sensation, striving, intellect, and so forth in animals, including human beings.

In the opening lines of the text, Aristotle justifies his study on the grounds that it will contribute to truth and “most of all the truth about φύσις.”<sup>33</sup> This, he adds, is because soul is “an ἀρχή of animals.”<sup>34</sup> In this initial appeal to truth, we find all the ambiguity between the zoological and the phytological account of soul. If the inquiry into the soul is what first discloses the truth concerning φύσις, it is plant life in particular that situates the soul within the movement of φύσις and constitutes the keystone of this disclosure. Nevertheless, the vegetal soul discloses the truth of φύσις as an ἀρχή of zoological life. Although it must take account of the nutritive soul, Aristotle’s account is driven by a zoological aim and conceptual logic. This is why the activities of growth and reproduction ultimately escape the account even while leaving their mark upon it: “not local motion, but *something like* it,” “not striving, but *something like* it,” and so forth.

If life is hidden in plants, as Aquinas says, the life of plants is also hidden in Aristotle’s primarily zoological account of the soul – to say nothing of its conspicuous oblivion in Heidegger’s texts. But is not the inclusion of plants precisely as hidden the condition by which an account of animal life is possible? Phytology – which here remains only the mark of an open question – would then be the inarticulate Aristotelian fulcrum that constantly realizes the passage from φύσις to ζωή.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 403b25-26.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 403b27-28, 404a8-9.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 410b24, cf. 411b19-20.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 411b29-30.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 402a8-11.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 402a5-7.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 402a7-8.

# SOME REMARKS ON HEIDEGGER'S READING OF ARISTOTLE'S *PHYSICS*: MATTER, FORM, AND PRODUCTION

The importance of Aristotle's philosophy for the development of Heidegger's own thought is well known. Heidegger was engaged very early in a reinterpretation of Aristotle in order to free his thought from the scholastic and traditional interpretation that it had been given since the Middle Ages. He dedicated several lectures, courses, and seminars in the 1920s to Aristotle's *Ethics*, *Logic*, *Rhetoric*, *Metaphysics*, and *De Anima*. In the first chapter of Walter Brogan's book *Heidegger and Aristotle*, which provides an exhaustive exegesis of Heidegger's reading of Aristotle, Brogan says that, since so many of Heidegger's courses in the early twenties were focused on Aristotle, "it stands to reason that Aristotle was the hidden interlocutor of Heidegger's first major published book, *Sein und Zeit*."<sup>1</sup> In fact, there are many references to Aristotle in *Being and Time*, but the most important one can be found in paragraph 81, which gives the first beginnings of a "deconstruction" of Aristotle's analysis of time in *Physics IV*. It has to be recalled here that *Being and Time* is an uncompleted book and that the planned second part was to have consisted in a "phenomenological destructuring of the history of ontology on the guideline of the problem of temporality," the title of the third division of this second part being "Aristotle's Treatise on Time as a Way of Discovering the Phenomenal Basis and the Limits of Ancient Ontology."<sup>2</sup> In paragraph 6 of the introduction, dedicated to "The Task of a Destructuring of the History of Ontology," Heidegger explains that, in order to achieve clarity regarding the question of being, "a loosening of the sclerotic tradition and a dissolving of the concealments produced by it is necessary" so that it could become possible to go back to "the original experiences in which the first determinations of being were gained."<sup>3</sup> It has to be remembered here that *Being and Time* opens up with a quotation of Plato's *Sophist*, saying that the meaning of being was no longer understood in Plato's time.

<sup>1</sup> See W. Brogan, *Heidegger and Aristotle: The Twofoldness of Being*, SUNY Series in Contemporary Continental Philosophy (Albany: SUNY Press, 2006), 3.

<sup>2</sup> See M. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. J. Stambaugh, para. 8, "The Outline of the Treatise" (Albany: SUNY Press, 1996), 35.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

What was in question in 1927 was a deconstructing of Aristotle's concept of being, a task that would lead Heidegger to go back to the pre-Socratic thinkers, to Anaximander and Parmenides, to whom he dedicated his 1932 lecture course, and later again to Parmenides and then to Heraclitus, to whom he dedicated his 1942 and 1943 lecture courses. The question is therefore to understand what the "limits" of Aristotle's ontology are. Heidegger already gives some indications in this regard in his very first essay on Aristotle, the famous "Natorp Report" (*Natorp-Bericht*), a text that was sent by Heidegger in 1922 to Marburg and Göttingen in support of his nomination at these universities but was subsequently lost and rediscovered only in 1989.<sup>4</sup> This essay, titled "Phenomenological Interpretations with Respect to Aristotle," aims at giving important indications concerning the clarification of the hermeneutic situation, making possible a reading of Aristotle that is respectful of Greek conceptuality. But as Heidegger said already in 1922, "hermeneutics accomplishes its task only by means of destruction" since "destruction is the unique way that the present must be encountered," insofar as the present is concerned with the appropriation and elucidation of "radical and fundamental possibilities of experience."<sup>5</sup> In this respect, Aristotle's *Physics* has an advantage for Heidegger since it deals with the question of mobility, which is implied in the conception of being as it is developed further in Aristotle's ontology and logic. The domain of objects in which the original meaning of being can be found is not the theoretical domain but the daily world in which produced objects are encountered and used, such as production and usage, implying mobility. Heidegger declares here that "Being means to be produced" and as such "being available."<sup>6</sup> We must remember here that for Aristotle and even after him, οὐσία, the word for being, conserves its primary signification of possessions or belongings. What constitutes the "fore-having" (*Vorhabe*) from which the fundamental ontological structures of human life are drawn is therefore the ontological domain of the objects of daily use.<sup>7</sup> Heidegger's conclusion in the 1922 essay is that the meaning of being is originally being-produced, which means that being is related to production and circumspection, but that even for Aristotle himself it had already lost its original meaning, which declined further in the course of the subsequent development of ontology, giving birth to the indeterminate signification of "reality."<sup>8</sup>

Heidegger dedicated the final pages of this 1922 essay to a brief analysis of the three first books of the *Physics*, and he would come back to it only much later in the text of a seminar held in 1939-40, first published in 1958, and finally republished in *Wegmarken* in 1967 under the title "On the Being and Conception of Φύσις in Aristotle's *Physics* B1."<sup>9</sup> Heidegger began here by saying that the first coherent explanation of the being of φύσις dates from the time when Greek philosophy reached its fulfillment, that is, with Aristotle,

<sup>4</sup> This essay, considered to be a missing link in the philosophical development of the young Heidegger, was first published in *Dilthey-Jahrbuch für Philosophie und Geschichte der Geisteswissenschaften* 6 (1989): 235-74. Its final version has been included in volume 62 of the complete edition of Heidegger's works.

<sup>5</sup> M. Heidegger, *Phänomenologische Interpretationen ausgewählter Abhandlungen des Aristoteles zur Ontologie und Logik*, Gesamtausgabe 62 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2005), 368.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 373.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 374.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 399.

<sup>9</sup> M. Heidegger, *Wegmarken* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1967), 309-71. See the English translation by T. Sheehan, "On the Essence and Concept of *Physis* in Aristotle's *Physics*, Beta 1," in *Pathmarks*, ed. W. McNeill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 183-200.

Aristotle's *Physics* being "the hidden and therefore never adequately studied foundational book of Western Philosophy."<sup>10</sup> It is not possible to follow the complete analysis given here by Heidegger of the first chapter of the second book of the *Physics* (altogether only three and a half pages). What is principally in question here is the distinction between ὕλη and μορφή, matter and form, from which Heidegger says that it is "the common road that Western Philosophy has traveled for centuries."<sup>11</sup>

What is first to be clarified is the meaning to be given to the word ὕλη, which, before acquiring the technical meaning of "matter," originally meant "forest" but was also the name of wood as a material for construction. This shows that the distinction ὕλη-μορφή belongs to the realm of production (*Herstellen*), which implies the imposition of a form to a preexisting material. In his 1927 lecture course on the *Fundamental Problems of Phenomenology*, Heidegger had already stressed in paragraph 12a that, if the concepts of matter and form played a fundamental role in Greek philosophy, it was not because the Greeks were materialists but because these concepts were required for an understanding of the being of production, since "it is inside production itself that we encounter precisely what does not have to be produced," that is, what is purely subsistent (*vorhanden*).<sup>12</sup> Heidegger said here again that the Greek ontology was constituted on the basis of the daily behavior of *Dasein*, which explains that the leading concepts of this ontology were directly drawn from it. But he stressed also that what constitutes the specificity of productive behavior is the fact that the produced thing is completely detached from the producer and must be understood as something in itself "accomplished" and available for use.<sup>13</sup> But there is in producing another structural moment, which is the necessity of having an image or a model of what is to be produced.<sup>14</sup> This model is what Plato names ἰδέα or εἶδος, since τέχνη is "the ground on which something like the εἶδος can at first become visible," as Heidegger showed in his 1924-25 lecture course on Plato's *Sophist*.<sup>15</sup> He repeats it in 1936-38 in *Beiträge zur Philosophie*, adding that the behavior that is τέχνη "provides in Aristotle the anticipation of beingness as σύνολον of μορφή and ὕλη by which the distinction *formamateria*, form-content, is established," a distinction that, he underlines, "governs from beginning to end the totality of metaphysical thought."<sup>16</sup>

Greek ontology therefore understands being on the basis of production, so that there is "an unbroken line"<sup>17</sup> leading from the Greeks to us, to modern human beings. But it has to be emphasized again that the understanding of being that is based on productive behavior opens up to an understanding of being as simply present at hand (*vorhanden*), so that productive behavior "holds in itself a remarkable extent of possibilities of understanding

<sup>10</sup> *Wegmarken*, 312; *Pathmarks*, 224.

<sup>11</sup> *Wegmarken*, 344; *Pathmarks*, 248.

<sup>12</sup> M. Heidegger, *Die Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie*, Gesamtausgabe 24 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1975), para. 12a, 164.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 162.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 14, 214.

<sup>15</sup> M. Heidegger, *Platon: Sophistes*, Gesamtausgabe 19 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1992), para. 7, 47.

<sup>16</sup> M. Heidegger, *Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis)*, Gesamtausgabe 65 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1989), para. 97, 191.

<sup>17</sup> *Wegmarken*, 368; *Pathmarks*, 248.

the being of beings.”<sup>18</sup> Because in productive behavior we have to do with a being that is not itself the result of the productive process, we can understand that ancient ontology was nevertheless primarily oriented toward the cosmos,<sup>19</sup> the φύσις, which is the unique object of the thought of those who have been named “pre-Socratics.” They understood φύσις – and this is particularly the case with Heraclitus, as Heidegger explains in his 1943 lecture course – as “*reines Aufgehen*,” pure rising or emergence,<sup>20</sup> and it is with the same word, *Aufgang*, emergence, that he had already defined the mode of unfolding of φύσις in his 1939-40 text. From this initial thought of φύσις, which implies that the withdrawal of what could have constituted a permanent substrate necessarily belongs to this emergence, as says Heraclitus’s fragment 123, φύσις κρύπτεσθαι φιλεῖ, it is still possible to find in Aristotle’s interpretation an “echo,” since, as Heidegger declares at the end of his 1939-40 text, “the φύσις that Aristotle conceptualized can only be a late derivative of the original φύσις.”<sup>21</sup>

It should be recalled here that Heidegger mentions in his 1935 course on the *Introduction to Metaphysics* that the word φύσις comes from the same root as *phainesthai*, appearing,<sup>22</sup> and that, in his 1935 lecture on the work of art, he underlines again that φύσις has the same root as the word φάος or φῶς, meaning light. But if φύσις means that which appears from itself and comes to light, it becomes possible to understand Plato’s definition of being as ἰδέα, that is, as that which can be seen. For Heidegger, the interpretation of being as ἰδέα is the result of the experience of being as φύσις, that is, as emerging, appearing, and coming to light; it is therefore a necessary result of the essence of being as appearing and emerging, but the decline begins when the ἰδέα becomes “the unique and decisive interpretation of being.”<sup>23</sup> The result of the primacy given to the ἰδέα and to ἰδεῖν, to seeing, is the famous mutation of the essence of truth that consists in putting being under the control of thought, of νόησις. Metaphysics that sees in the ἰδέα the ὄντως ὄν, the being really being, situated beyond the φύσις, which is itself considered as a μὴ ὄν, a non-being, is therefore, as Platonism, the verbal expression of the ἰδέα, that is, an ideology. As Heidegger says in *Plato’s Doctrine of Truth*, “Since being has been interpreted as ἰδέα, the thought of the Being of beings is metaphysical and metaphysics is theological.”<sup>24</sup>

What Heidegger puts into question in his 1940 seminar is the idea of preexisting matter defined as pure *Vorhandenheit*, pure subsistent presence. Aristotle mentions that, before the term ὕλη was given its technical meaning of “matter,” the sophist Antiphon, belonging to the Eleatic school and living in the same period as Democritus, explained that a distinction should be made between a first elemental substrate devoid of any structure (πρῶτον ἀρρυθμιστον) and what has a particular structure (ῥυθμός), a distinction, as Heidegger underlines, that would constitute the basis of materialism as metaphysical position.<sup>25</sup> But it is nevertheless Aristotle who “gives the interpretation of φύσις that

<sup>18</sup> Heidegger, *Die Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie*, 164.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

<sup>20</sup> M. Heidegger, *Heraklit*, Gesamtausgabe 55 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1979), para. 4, 102.

<sup>21</sup> *Wegmarken*, 370; *Pathmarks*, 268.

<sup>22</sup> M. Heidegger, *Einführung in die Metaphysik* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1953), 54.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 139.

<sup>24</sup> *Wegmarken*, 141.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 338; *Pathmarks*, 244.

sustains and guides all succeeding interpretation of the being of 'nature.'<sup>26</sup> The distinction ὄλη-μορφή that we find in Aristotle's *Physics* does not simply replace Antiphon's distinction between πρῶτον ἀρρῦθμιστον and ῥυθμός, but "it lifts the question of φύσις onto an entirely new level" since Aristotle attributes to μορφή "the honor of determining the being of φύσις."<sup>27</sup> As we have already seen, this entirely new level is the level of production (*Herstellen*), which constitutes the basis of Aristotle's concept of Being.

In spite of the fact that Aristotle takes as a leading thread of his definition of φύσις the productive behavior of the human being, he nevertheless succeeds in showing that there is another mode of pro-duction than making, which is growing. In growing, it is not the material substrate, the ὄλη, that has the primacy but the μορφή, which should not be understood as the fact of giving a form to preexisting matter but as a "placing into the form," a con-figuration.<sup>28</sup> As Aristotle says in *Physics*, B1 193b 6-8, "μορφή is φύσις more than ὄλη is." Μορφή is therefore κίνησις itself, the change (μεταβολή) of the appropriated (δύναμις) as the breaking out (*ekbole*) of the appropriation.<sup>29</sup> But μορφή understood in this way, as the placing into the appearance, is twofold in itself: it is also στέρησις, privation, since it is the becoming present of a becoming absent (*Anwesenung der Abwesenung*).<sup>30</sup> Heidegger explains, "Στέρησις as becoming-absent is not simply absentness but rather is a becoming-present, the kind in which the becoming-absent (but not the absent thing) becomes present."<sup>31</sup> Στέρησις has therefore become the most important concept, since it allows us to understand the κίνησις (movement) or μεταβολή (change) that constitutes the processual character of what we name "nature." Already in his 1922 essay, Heidegger said that στέρησις is "the fundamental category" that "governs throughout the Aristotelian ontology." The best example that can be given of it is precisely a botanical one, the example of blossoming and of fructification, since "when the blossom 'buds forth' (φύει), the leaves that prepared for the blossom fall off" and "the fruit comes to light when the blossom disappears."<sup>32</sup>

This kind of pro-duc-ing, of bringing into appearance, which is growing, cannot be understood with the help of the ontological categories that have been drawn from the domain of daily life. This is what Heidegger showed in *Being and Time* when he explained that everything with which we have to do in everyday life is discovered by us as a "tool," not only the tools made by men, such as a hammer and a nail, but also everything that we encounter in nature, such as a tree or a plant, which is discovered only as something that could be useful to us. The word "plant" is a good example in this respect, because the name that is used to call a vegetal being contains in itself a relation to the human action of planting. This means that nature is at first encountered not as mere subsistent presence but as a tool for our needs and action: "The forest is a forest of timber, the mountain a quarry of rock, the river is water power, the wind is wind 'in the sails.'<sup>33</sup> It is indeed possible to abstract from nature's kind of being as

<sup>26</sup> *Wegmarken*, 312; *Pathmarks*, 248.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 343; *Wegmarken*, 343; *Pathmarks*, 247.

<sup>28</sup> Aristotle, *Physics*, B 193a28-31. Heidegger's translation for μορφή is here "die Gestellung in die Gestalt," "the placing into the form."

<sup>29</sup> *Wegmarken*, 357; *Pathmarks*, 258.

<sup>30</sup> *Wegmarken*, 367; *Pathmarks*, 266.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> *Being and Time*, para. 15, 66.

handiness and discover it as pure objective presence, but even in this theoretical look at nature, nature as such remains hidden: “The botanist’s plants are not the flowers of the hedgerow, the river’s ‘source’ ascertained by the geographer is not ‘the source in the ground.’”<sup>34</sup> Nature as such, nature as the power of growing, what the Greeks named φύσις, remains hidden both to the practical attitude, which sees in it only a tool, and to the theoretical attitude, which considers nature from the scientific viewpoint as objective presence.

If for Aristotle it seems that there are two different modes of producing, one of them being the self-production of nature, for us modern human beings there is only one: the mode of producing that is fabrication, as is shown, for example, by the fact that Kant could have understood “nature” as a “technique.”<sup>35</sup> Heidegger recognized that “we can be tempted to fall back on the idea that beings determined by φύσις could be a kind that make themselves,” as is shown by the vocabulary that we use to name natural phenomena – for example, the word “organism,” which comes from a mechanistic interpretation of technique, or “plant,” by which that which grows is understood as something sown and cultivated.<sup>36</sup> Another good example is given by the Cartesian tradition, which understands the being of animals on the basis of the human artifact that is the machine. All this makes of us “people blind to φύσις” and consequently “people blind to being,”<sup>37</sup> since we conceive being only as a mode of *Vorhandenheit*, of subsistent presence, and not as the coming into presence (*Anwesenung*) of what, coming into the unhidden, can only go back to it, since Being is nothing but φύσις itself, which is “the self-productive-putting-away of itself.”<sup>38</sup>

It is therefore on the basis of στέρησις rather than on the basis of δύναμις that the essential mobility of φύσις must be understood. Δύναμις is a character of ὕλη, which means “capacity” (*Vermögen*) or, better, “appropriateness” (*die Eignung zu*).<sup>39</sup> Heidegger stresses that δύναμις should not be understood as a force or a potentiality and that, even when it is defined as “appropriateness,” the danger remains of forgetting its proper Greek meaning, which is a suspended mode of ἐνέργεια, of the coming into presence, which is “prior” to it (πρότερον).<sup>40</sup> The danger is in fact to think of δύναμις unilaterally, on the basis of human making, as the capacity of a material to adopt a form, whereas it should be thought of as the mode still holding itself back from ἐνέργεια and therefore put in relation to this negative form of coming into presence that is στέρησις. Heidegger’s conclusion in this regard is: “Today we are all too inclined to reduce something like this becoming-present-by-becoming-absent to a facile dialectical play of concepts rather than holding on to the wonder of it. For in στέρησις is hidden the Being of φύσις.”<sup>41</sup> It is therefore this wonderful occultation of φύσις that has above all to be thought of.

But this can be done, as we have seen, not in retaining a practical attitude or a theoretical one but only in placing oneself in an artistic attitude. As Heidegger showed in

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> *Wegmarken*, 359; *Pathmarks*, 260.

<sup>36</sup> *Wegmarken*, 325; *Pathmarks*, 234.

<sup>37</sup> *Wegmarken*, 334; *Pathmarks*, 241.

<sup>38</sup> *Wegmarken*, 368; *Pathmarks*, 267.

<sup>39</sup> *Wegmarken*, 350; *Pathmarks*, 253.

<sup>40</sup> *Wegmarken*, 356; *Pathmarks*, 257.

<sup>41</sup> *Wegmarken*, 367; *Pathmarks*, 266.

1936 in his lecture on “The Origin of the Work of Art,” matter and form are categories that are not relevant in the case of a work of art, which is not the result of a fabrication process. He explained that equipment takes matter, what it consists of, into its service so that the material disappears into usefulness: “The material is all the better and more suitable the less it resists vanishing in the equipmental being of the equipment.”<sup>42</sup> But in the work of art, matter does not disappear into the product but, on the contrary, comes forth for the very first time, not as a mere material waiting for a form that would make it invisible, but as what resists any attempt at penetration, that is, as the earth. In the first version of this lecture, delivered in Freiburg in 1935, Heidegger quoted for the first time Heraclitus’s fragment φύσις κρύπτεσθαι φιλεῖ in order to show that all things in their emerging and rising tend to keep themselves secluded. What is therefore set into the open through a work of art is the earth *as* constant self-secluding. In one of his last lectures, a lecture delivered in Munich in 1959 and titled “Hölderlin’s Earth and Sky,” Heidegger, in his commentary on “Greece,” a late hymn of Hölderlin’s, declared that “the Greeks already knew that clarity is more veiling than obscurity.”<sup>43</sup> And concerning Heraclitus’s fragment 54, which he quoted in his lecture and which states that unapparent harmony prevails over apparent harmony, he added the following remark in the margins of the *Hölderlin-Jahrbuch 1958-1960*, in which this lecture was first published: “This word of the pre-Platonic thinker Heraclitus contains the decisive sign showing how we have to experience the Greek unfolding of being, nature, human being, human work, and the divinity: all the visible on the basis of the invisible, all that can be said on the basis of what cannot be said, all that appears on the basis of concealment. Concealment is nearer to the Greek unfolding of being than unconcealment. The latter lives from the former.”

As Heraclitus said, “Nature likes concealment.” This means that the process of emerging and rising of all things tends from itself to keep itself secluded. The originality of Heidegger’s conception of art consists in the fact that for him a work of art initiates the conflict of world and earth, that is, of clearing and concealment, and opens the free play in which human existence becomes possible. A work of art does not (re)present anything: it is neither representation of something else nor presentation of something absent. It has in fact no relationship at all to a *given presence*; on the contrary, it has a relationship to the becoming or happening of truth, to the *coming into presence* of everything. The difficulty for us is to try not to think of the duality of world and earth as a new form of the ancient metaphysical duality of matter and spirit. The difference between these two dualities is a mere difference in temporality: metaphysics was and remains metaphysics of presence; the thinking to come should be the thinking of the becoming or happening of truth. This thematic of concealment should therefore be put forth in connection with the definition of his thought as a “phenomenology of the inapparent” that Heidegger gives in 1973 in his last seminar.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>42</sup> M. Heidegger, “The Origin of the Work of Art,” *Basic Writings*, ed. D. Krell (San Francisco, CA: Harper, 1993), 171.

<sup>43</sup> M. Heidegger, *Erläuterungen zu Hölderlins Dichtung* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1971), 173.

<sup>44</sup> M. Heidegger, *Four Seminars*, trans. A. Mitchell and F. Raffoul (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 80.

# **GROUNDING THE PRINCIPLE OF NON-CONTRADICTION EXISTENTIALLY: HEIDEGGER ON ARISTOTLE'S *METAPHYSICS* GAMMA IN AN UNPUBLISHED SEMINAR FROM 1928/29**

Among a number of seminars given by Heidegger in the 1920s that remain unpublished in any form is one from the winter semester of 1928/29 titled “The Ontological Principles and the Problem of Categories,” Heidegger’s first seminar in Freiburg after returning from Marburg and a seminar that immediately preceded his famous encounter with Ernst Cassirer in Davos. That the seminar is not scheduled for publication in the *Gesamtausgabe* is presumably due to Heidegger’s own notes for the seminar not having been preserved, but among the papers of his student Helene Weiss currently housed in the Special Collections Department of Stanford University are found protocols for the seminar attributed to different students.<sup>1</sup> The protocols are extensive, amounting to 103 handwritten pages, and show the seminar to have been held in eleven sessions from November 9, 1928, to February 22, 1929. Though this seminar apparently remains completely unknown and undiscussed in the literature on Heidegger, despite Heidegger’s own reference to it in a published address commemorating the sixtieth birthday of Eugen Fink, who was one of the participants,<sup>2</sup> it is of significant importance and for a number

<sup>1</sup> M0631, box 3, folder 8, Helene Weiss Papers. Courtesy of the Department of Special Collections, Stanford University Libraries. References will be to the page number of the notes.

<sup>2</sup> In *Die Grundbegriffe der Metaphysik*, GA 29/30 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1983), 533. Among the seminar participants, Heidegger singles out for mention, in addition to Eugen Fink, Oskar Becker and Käte Oltmanns. The notes of Helene Weiss attribute the protocol of one class to Oltmanns and also preserve notes on Oltmanns’s presentation at the end of the seminar. The first protocol is attributed to Otto Friedrich Bollnow, who, along with Eugen Fink, accompanied Heidegger to Davos and was given the important task, along with another student, of transcribing the exchange with Cassirer. See P. E. Gordon, *Continental Divide: Heidegger*,

of reasons. First, despite the title, the focus of the seminar is almost entirely on *one* “ontological principle,” the principle of non-contradiction, and only briefly addresses the problem of categories. As such, the seminar provides the most extensive discussion of the principle of non-contradiction by Heidegger, a principle he elsewhere calls, despite its supposed self-evidence, “perhaps what is most puzzling in Western philosophy” (*vielleicht das Rätselhafteste in der abendländischen Philosophie*).<sup>3</sup> Heidegger apparently wrote a treatise on the principle shortly after the seminar, though it remains unpublished.<sup>4</sup> He also gave a lecture titled “Der Satz vom Widerspruch” on December 16, 1932, for which his very schematic and opaque notes have been published in volume 80.1 of the *Gesamtausgabe*.<sup>5</sup> Both texts were presumably highly indebted to the seminar.<sup>6</sup> The approach of the seminar is signaled at the very start, when Heidegger asks if principles such as the principle of non-contradiction are only “rules of thought” (*Denkgesetze*) with purely logical content or can be characterized as *ontological principles*. Though Heidegger will first turn to Kant, who will insist on the purely formal and logical character of the principle, the eventual turn to Aristotle, who will occupy most of the seminar, is anticipated when Heidegger notes that with Aristotle the characterization of the principle as ontological proves to be not without justification (Weiss, 1). Another reason for the importance of the seminar is therefore the critique it offers of Kant, which, if in part much more developed elsewhere (specifically as concerns the charge that the crucial role of the imagination is suppressed in favor of reason), is, in the case of the part that concerns Kant’s interpretation of the principle of non-contradiction, more developed here.<sup>7</sup> The final reason is that the turn to Aristotle takes the form of a detailed reading of *Metaphysics* Γ that also, especially as concerns the chapters after one and two, is not

*Cassirer, Davos* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 105-9, as well as Bollnow’s own recollections in *Erinnerung an Martin Heidegger* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1977), 25-29.

<sup>3</sup> *Seminare: Platon – Aristoteles – Augustinus*, GA 83 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2012), 395.

<sup>4</sup> Heidegger refers in the *Black Notebooks* to a treatise of his on the principle of non-contradiction (*Überlegungen II-VI [Schwarze Hefte 1931-1938]*, GA 94 [Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2014], 47), and a note by the editor tells us that this text will be published in GA 91. Since Heidegger’s reference dates apparently from 1931, we can assume that Heidegger wrote this text around the time of the 1928/29 seminar and that it therefore presents and develops the conclusions of the seminar.

<sup>5</sup> *Vorträge: Teil I: 1915 bis 1932*, GA 80.1 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2016), 519-26.

<sup>6</sup> As noted by the editor, the cover of the lecture notes has written upon it, after the title, “vgl. W.S. 28/29.” Furthermore, the editor suggests that the incompleteness of the notes might be due to Heidegger’s having also used material from the 1928/29 seminar for the lecture (GA 80.1, 553).

<sup>7</sup> The book *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, which though published in 1929 originated in its essentials, according to Heidegger, in a course of 1927/28, contains some passing discussion of the principle of non-contradiction that closely parallels that in the 1928/29 seminar (GA 3, 2nd ed. [Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2010], 184, 194-95). In contrast, this discussion is not to be found in the 1927/28 course itself, now published as *Phenomenological Interpretation of Kant’s Critique of Pure Reason* (GA 25 [Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1977]). This suggests that this discussion was new in the 1928/29 seminar and was worked into the Kant book at that time. Kant’s account of the principle of non-contradiction is also discussed in the later course of 1935/36 published as *Die Frage nach dem Ding* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1962) but in a way that largely summarizes Kant’s position without raising the critical question raised in 1928/29: see 134-36, and GA 41 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1984), 174-77. None of these texts contains an interpretation of *Metaphysics* Γ.

to be found elsewhere in Heidegger. It is on this reading of Aristotle that I will focus here, while also reproducing the trajectory of the seminar as a whole.<sup>8</sup>

To anticipate, this reading of Aristotle defends a strong thesis but also leaves us with an unfulfilled promise. The thesis is not only that the principle of non-contradiction is for Aristotle an *ontological* principle and *therefore* to be studied by the science of being qua being but that it is ontological in a distinctive sense. Heidegger is in fact as much opposed to treating the principle as only a principle of beings, inherent somehow in beings themselves, as he is to treating it as only a principle of thought. What he finds in *Metaphysics* Γ is the thesis that the principle characterizes *our relation to beings* and is therefore grounded in *human existence*. To use Heidegger's terminology, it is an ontological principle only by being an *existential* principle. As for the unfulfilled promise, Heidegger raises at the very outset of the seminar the question of the relation between the principle and a certain conception of *time*. The principle, after all, in its traditional Aristotelian formulation, is that the same thing cannot be and not be *at the same time* (ἄμᾶ). The question is provoked by Kant's deliberate exclusion of time from his formulation of the principle in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, against, as Heidegger shows, his own insistence on its indispensability in the pre-critical writings. When he turns to *Metaphysics* Γ, however, Heidegger explicitly postpones consideration of the problem of time *and never returns to it in the seminar*, despite the presence of the ἄμᾶ in Aristotle's formulation. As we will see, this failure of the seminar is lamented by Helene Weiss herself when some years later she returns to her notes for the seminar while working on her own book on Aristotle. Yet the seminar does not leave us helpless in the face of this unanswered question. If the principle of non-contradiction is grounded in our existence, the ἄμᾶ essential to it would need to be interpreted, not from the perspective of the being-in-time that characterizes beings, but from the perspective of our own temporality and specifically in the mode that Heidegger will elsewhere characterize as *Gegenwärtigen*.

## HEIDEGGER ON KANT ON THE PRINCIPLE OF NON-CONTRADICTION

In the section of the *Critique of Pure Reason* titled "System of the Fundamental Principles of Pure Understanding," Kant formulates as follows the principle of non-contradiction: "Nothing can be predicated of a thing that contradicts it" (*Keinem Ding kommt ein Prädikat zu, welches ihm widerspricht*, A151, B190). As Kant notes, the principle as thus formulated is purely formal and negative. It amounts to simply the claim that A cannot be not-A or, in Kant's specific formulation: not-A cannot be predicated of A because it contradicts it. Yet as such it serves as the fundamental principle of all *analytic* judgments. To use Kant's own example, the assertion that "No unlearned man is learned" is analytically true, and the principle that grounds the analytical truth of this assertion is the principle of non-contradiction: the predicate "learned" cannot be predicated of the subject "unlearned man"

<sup>8</sup> In a recently published seminar from 1944, we find some discussion of Book Γ and a raising of the question of how the principle of non-contradiction fits into this ontological context. But the focus is on the first two chapters, in which the "category" problem now receives the most attention, after which the discussion turns to Book Z (see GA 83, 394ff.). The most closely parallel discussion is to be found in the SS1933 course *Die Grundfrage der Philosophie* to be discussed below (*Sein und Wahrheit*, GA 36/37 [Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2001]), but that too contains no exegesis of the relevant chapters of *Metaphysics* Γ.

because it contradicts it. Yet Kant recognizes that the traditional formulation is *synthetic* in adding the condition “at the same time”; he therefore must dismiss this formulation as a careless misunderstanding that goes wholly against the intent of the principle. In the traditional formulation, the principle concerns not the relation between a subject and the predicate it necessarily either contains or excludes but the relation between two predicates that could both be attributed to the same subject *at different times*. Kant objects that this is to limit what he insists is a purely formal principle to the temporal relations of things existing in time.

Presenting Kant’s position, Heidegger then mounts a three-pronged attack. First, he cites Kant against Kant. The text Heidegger cites is from Kant’s “Inaugural Dissertation” of 1770, “De Mundi Sensibilis atque Intelligibilis Forma et Principiis.” Here Kant writes, “So far from its being possible to deduce and explain the concept of time from some other source by force of reason, it is presupposed by the very principle of contradiction, it underlies it by way of condition. For *a* and *not-a* are not repugnant unless thought of the *same thing simultaneously*, that is, at the same time; they may *belong* to the same thing *after* each other, at different times.”<sup>9</sup> Of course, Heidegger is aware that this is the pre-critical Kant writing a decade before the first edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. But the question he wants to raise is why Kant so completely changed his mind on this issue. At the very least this dramatic change points to a profound inner difficulty (*eine tiefere innere Schwierigkeit*, Weiss, 7). Heidegger himself suggests as the reason for the change Kant’s belief that the traditional formulation involves an unacceptable restriction of the principle to things conditioned by time. Before considering how Heidegger responds to this concern, let us consider a second line of attack.

It is evident that Kant’s new formulation of the principle of non-contradiction depends on a sharp distinction between analytic and synthetic judgments. Heidegger, like Quine many years later,<sup>10</sup> though obviously with different motives, here attacks this distinction. Kant’s own example, cited above, clearly invites such an attack. The assertion “The unlearned man is not learned” is analytically true, and the opposite predication is a contradiction, only because I have included “unlearned” in the subject. In this way, any true judgment can be made analytic: “The hot sun is not cold,” “The solid ice is not liquid,” “The brown book is not red,” and so forth. Indeed, since the truth of any judgment depends on the predicate inhering in the subject, “every [true] judgment would be analytic, even if not each one is analytic *to us*” (Weiss, 12). One could, of course, respond that Kant’s example is not a good one because “unlearned” is not an essential attribute of man; a better example would be “The body is not heavy,” where the predicate “not-heavy” would contradict an *essential* attribute of a body. But, Heidegger responds, such a defense amounts to equating analytical judgments with judgments of essence (*Wesensurteil*), and the latter, as substantive (*sachhaltige*) as opposed to purely formal or logical judgements,

<sup>9</sup> Tantum vero abest, ut quis umquam temporis conceptum adhuc rationis ope aliunde deducat et explicet, ut potius ipsum principium contradictionis eundem praemittat ac sibi condicionis loco substernat. A enim et non A non repugnant, nisi simul cogitata de eodem, post se autem (diversis temporibus) eidem competere possunt (14, 5). Translation taken from *Kant’s Inaugural Dissertation of 1770*, trans. W. J. Eckoff (New York: Columbia College, 1894).

<sup>10</sup> W. V. O. Quine, “Two Dogmas of Empiricism,” *The Philosophical Review* 60 (1951): 20-43.

are supposed to be *synthetic*. Indeed, the judgment “The body is heavy” is normally taken as a paradigm of *synthetic* judgments. Heidegger in the end can recognize a distinction between judgments whose truth is grounded in a concept and judgments whose truth is grounded in the object but then insists that the difference is solely in the different forms of grounding and *not* in different forms of judging: “The judgments differ through their manner of grounding and not with respect to how I in each case arrived at the judgment” (Weiss, 14).<sup>11</sup>

The third line of attack addresses Kant’s concern about restricting the principle to things existing in time. It is here that Heidegger raises the *question* of what conception of time is involved in the principle of non-contradiction. Heidegger objects that Kant’s concern is justified only if “at the same time” (*zugleich*) refers here to time in the sense of existing within time. “Against this it can be objected: does the temporality [*Zeitlichkeit*] of the ‘at the same time’ necessarily signify ‘existing-within-time’ [*Innerzeitigkeit*]? Or more generally: can the logical exist simply without time [*kommt das Logische schlechthin ohne Zeit aus*]?” (Weiss, 9). Heidegger therefore ends this first class by describing as “our task, to expound in a concretely phenomenological fashion the meaning of this ‘at once’ [*zugleich*]: it clearly cannot be identified with the simultaneity of two occurrences taking place at the same temporal point within time; instead, it must have some other meaning, to be discovered by us, so that Kant’s argument is not conclusive” (Weiss, 10). In other words, if we can explain the “at once” in a way that does not mean “existing at the same point in time,” Kant’s objection to the traditional formulation is disarmed and his reformulation of the principle of non-contradiction as a principle of analytic judgments, already seen to be problematic, becomes unnecessary. But what can the “*zugleich*” mean if not “at the same point in time”? And can it have a meaning that applies to purely logical relations not conditioned by existence in time?

Unfortunately, the next class, that of November 16, begins with the announcement that the question of time will for the moment be put aside:

We wish, in the investigation of the problem of the fundamental principles, at first to leave what we formulated as the central question, the question of the “at once,” ἄμα, in order to make clear for ourselves the state of the problem with regard to the Kantian teaching of the fundamental principles as a whole, and then along this way to show the extent to which they stand in an inner relation to time. (Weiss, 10)

The seminar never returns to the question of time, neither in the context of Kant’s philosophy nor in that of Aristotle. It thus leaves us with the challenge, to be taken up at the end of this paper, of determining, on the basis of what the seminar shows us, what phenomenon of time makes itself manifest in the principle. The positive outcome of Heidegger’s critique of Kant, however, is to have shown that this challenge cannot be avoided.

<sup>11</sup> This thesis is taken up again in *Die Frage nach dem Ding*: “Die Unterscheidung gliedert die Urteile nach der möglichen Verschiedenheit des Bestimmungsgrundes der Wahrheit der Subjekt-Prädikat-Beziehung. Liegt der Bestimmungsgrund im Begriff als solchem, dann ist das Urteil analytisch; liegt er im Gegenstand selbst, dann ist das Urteil synthetisch” (129).

## KANT'S FAILURE AND THE RETURN TO ARISTOTLE

Nevertheless, the question of time does not disappear entirely from the more general critique of Kant that follows. This is because Heidegger here, as elsewhere, finds what he calls “the original temporality of Dasein” in Kant’s “transcendental imagination.” Yet Heidegger’s critique is that Kant suppresses his own insight into the central role played by the transcendental imagination and therefore his own insight into a temporality more original than mere succession *in* time, with the result that his attempt to overcome dogmatic metaphysics fails. This failure is what necessitates the return to Aristotle, in whose *Metaphysics* both the ontological and (in this seminar only implicitly) temporal dimension of the principle of non-contradiction suppressed in Kant will presumably be found. Here I will only outline the key claims in this turning point of the seminar, a turning point that takes up two classes since, even though the turn to Aristotle is announced at the end of the November 16 class, the next class of November 23 is prevented from immediately turning to *Metaphysics* Γ by what is described in the notes as a “wide-ranging and general digression to which Kant instigated us” (Weiss, 34).

In the class of November 16, Heidegger turns to Kant’s formulation of the highest fundamental principle of all synthetic judgments: “each object stands under the necessary determinations of the synthetic unity of the manifold in a possible experience” (A158, B197). Heidegger’s immediate comment is that this sentence is initially incomprehensible, the whole passage is obscure, and Kant is battling here with insurmountable difficulties (Weiss, 14). Heidegger then specifically asks how the fundamental principle of all synthetic judgments and the principle of all analytic judgments *are related*. They are both presented as *grounds* by Kant, but are they grounds in the same sense? The *difference* as Heidegger formulates it is that the one is “the highest fundamental principle of all synthetic judgments because it is a statement about the essence of truth insofar as it is possible for finite understanding; as ... the principle of non-contradiction is about correctness [*Richtigkeit*], i.e., a determination of our thinking apart from any relation to an object. The one grounds a *logic of truth*, the other a *logic of correctness*” (Weiss, 18). But the question this immediately raises for Heidegger, and which he claims remains open for Kant, is that of the inner relation here between truth and correctness and thus between the two principles – a question that is also about the relation between formal and transcendental logic (Weiss, 18-19). Heidegger opens up, without further pursuing, the prospect of understanding this relation within the phenomenon of time, given that time “plays a decisive and yet completely unclarified role in both principles” (Weiss, 18). The problem of time keeps asserting itself even if explicit discussion of it continues to be postponed.

Time again becomes an issue when Heidegger turns to another problem: that of the unity of the three determinations that for Kant are supposed to constitute the one essence of truth – that is, pure time, imagination, and transcendental apperception. Kant suggests that the sensibility and the understanding have a common root, but one unknown to us (A15). He then places the imagination simply on a level with them, between them. But Heidegger goes further, admittedly beyond Kant, in suggesting the following: “But it can be shown that with the discovery of what he calls *productive imagination* the *root* of spontaneity and receptivity is already exposed; from it spring time, i.e., as Kant defines it, as pure succession, and the transcendental apperception, and indeed in such a way that

we must address the transcendental imagination as *the original temporality of Dasein*" (Weiss, 20). A grounding in the original temporality of Dasein would presumably solve both problems Heidegger has raised: it would explain the unity of the three determinations of truth and the relation between what Heidegger has called the fundamental principle of truth and the fundamental principle of correctness.

Instead of saying more about the original temporality of Dasein, however, Heidegger only wishes to demonstrate here Kant's failure to address it, as is shown by his suppression of his own insight into the central role of the imagination. According to Heidegger, Kant's Copernican revolution has the effect of displacing the primacy of reason in favor of the imagination, but Kant works against this in seeking to bring the imagination under the understanding and thus preserve the primacy of reason – something in which he is followed by traditional Kant interpretation. We thus read in the transcript:

Through the so-called Copernican revolution, the imagination assumes in Kant the central position previously occupied by reason. The concept of reason is in reality already exploded in the central investigations of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, the object of which does not at all remain reason; Kant therefore banishes this consequence. Already in the B edition a shifting of the emphasis towards logic shows itself. The imagination as an independent function is in B generally struck out. (Weiss, 21-22)<sup>12</sup>

Heidegger cites in this context, as a telling illustration, a text in A78 that also appears in B103: "The synthesis in general ... is the mere effect of the imagination, of a blind, though indispensable function of the soul." In his exemplar, Heidegger notes, Kant "corrected" "function of the soul" to "function of the understanding."<sup>13</sup> Something Heidegger does not note but that supports his critique is that this "correction" does not even make sense in the context. This is because the subsequent sentence reads as follows: "But bringing the synthesis to concepts is a function that belongs to the understanding [*Allein, die Synthesis auf Begriffe zu bringen, das ist eine Funktion, die dem Verstande zukommt*]." If the function of the understanding is bringing the synthesis to concepts, then the prior production of the synthesis *cannot* be the function of the understanding.<sup>14</sup> We see, in short, Kant determined to have the understanding take over the role of the imagination, even at the cost of incoherence. In the long digression that takes up the whole of the next class (November 23), Heidegger offers more evidence to show the tendency of the second edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* to eliminate the imagination as an independent phenomenon, namely B151. Here Kant divides the powers of the imagination (*Einbildungskraft*) between sensibility (*Sinnlichkeit*) and understanding (*Verstand*),

<sup>12</sup> As Heidegger asks in *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik*, explaining Kant's step back from the transcendental imagination, "Wird der 'Kritik der reinen Vernunft' nicht durch sie selbst das Thema entzogen, wenn reine Vernunft zur transzendentalen Einbildungskraft umschlägt? Führt die Grundlegung nicht vor einen Abgrund?" (GA 3, 167-68).

<sup>13</sup> Heidegger draws attention to the same "correction" in *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik* (GA 3, 161).

<sup>14</sup> As Heidegger notes in *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik*, what is happening here is that the understanding is assuming the role of being the origin for *all* synthesis (GA 3, 163).

characterizing it as in some respect the work of the former and in another respect the work of the latter, thereby ridding it, Heidegger notes, of any autonomy. The result of this dismemberment of the imagination is the loss of that original temporality that could alone ground and unify the three dimensions of truth and unify the fundamental principle of truth with the principle of correctness – that is, the principle of non-contradiction. Instead, the “I think” (apperception), time (as a form of intuition), and the imagination are simply left standing alongside one another (Weiss, 28).

This critique of Kant is pursued in Heidegger’s detailed readings of the *Critique of Pure Reason* elsewhere and especially in the encounter with Cassirer in Davos that immediately followed the seminar.<sup>15</sup> What interests us here is how this critique motivates a turn to Aristotle. Heidegger is recorded as making this pronouncement regarding Kant’s failure to overcome dogmatic metaphysics: “It is therefore to be said that the overcoming of dogmatic metaphysics in the *Critique of Pure Reason* does not succeed and could not succeed insofar as there is a failure to see that this overcoming cannot exhaust itself in a critique of the ontological use of pure reason, but rather must ground a radical transformation of the meaning and essence of logic overall” (Weiss, 23). To the extent that the principle of non-contradiction is the fundamental principle of logic, what is required is a radical transformation of the meaning and essence of this principle. Ironically, it is this radical transformation that requires a return to Aristotle, since it is in Aristotle, Heidegger claims, that we can approach “the dimension in which the principle of non-contradiction has its genuine meaning.” What is this dimension? All Heidegger says here is that, in returning to Aristotle, “We will see that the principle is not restricted here to a logical function, but rather points back to something else. It will further be shown that that which the principle formulates is not at all the essential meaning and that what is meant is itself not at all a principle” (Weiss, 23). This something else back toward which the principle points will turn out to be human existence itself in its genuine being and, implicitly, its original temporality. But then the principle will mean much more than it says, indeed, will mean something quite different from what it says.

But how can we go beyond Kant’s failure to overcome dogmatic metaphysics in returning to Aristotle? Is not Aristotle the origin of the metaphysics to be overcome? Heidegger immediately asserts that there is no talk of “metaphysics” in the whole of Aristotle’s so-called *Metaphysics* (Weiss, 23-24). Aristotle speaks instead of a science of “beings as beings.” Yet Heidegger, on the other hand, also immediately notes the problems that metaphysics inherits from Aristotle’s science of beings as beings. While noting that “being” is not to be restricted in Aristotle to *essentia* or *existentia* but must somehow

<sup>15</sup> See *Phenomenological Interpretation of Kant’s Critique of Pure Reason* (GA 25, 272-82) and *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik*, especially 126-203. In his lecture at Davos, “Kant’s Kritik der reinen Vernunft und die Aufgabe einer Grundlegung der Metaphysik,” Heidegger, after maintaining that the imagination is in Kant the root of both the sensibility and the understanding, asserts, “The point of departure in reason has been broken asunder. With that Kant himself, through his radicalism, was brought to the brink of a position from which he had to shrink back. It implies destruction of the former foundation of Western metaphysics (spirit, *logos*, reason). It demands a radical, renewed unveiling of the grounds for the possibility of metaphysics as natural disposition of human beings, i.e., a metaphysics of Dasein directed at the possibility of metaphysics as such ...” (GA 3, 273; trans. R. Taft). It is precisely in search of this that Heidegger in the present seminar turns to Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* I.

include both, Heidegger also notes that the “and” that unites them, as well as why they must belong to every being, remains unclarified (Weiss, 25). Turning then to  $\Gamma 2$  and the claim that “being is said in many ways” ( $\tau\acute{o}$   $\acute{o}\nu$  λέγεται πολλαχῶς), Heidegger notes that the  $\pi\rho\acute{o}\varsigma$   $\acute{\epsilon}\nu$  relation that is supposed to unify the senses of being according to the categories, with senses of being such as quality and quantity pointing to substance as the central meaning, is not further clarified but only illustrated with the health example. Heidegger also notes that Aristotle presents four fundamental meanings of being, being according to the categories being only one of the four (the others are accidental being, being as truth, and being in the sense of activity and potentiality), but does so “without making into a problem how they have come together and if and why there are precisely these four” (Weiss, 26). Finally, in the class of November 23, Heidegger draws attention to another problem metaphysics inherited from Aristotle: what he characterizes as a *Zwiespältigkeit* (schism) between *ens commune* and *summum ens* (Weiss, 32) and thus between ontology and theology. Heidegger claims that Paul Natorp was the first to draw attention to this problem in Aristotle in his 1888 article “Thema und Disposition der aristotelischen Metaphysik.”<sup>16</sup> The question of the relation between theology and ontology was later thoroughly examined by Jaeger in his Aristotle book “but not philosophically, rather philologically, i.e. he makes a ‘development’ out of it” (Weiss, 33). Heidegger clearly rejects the developmentalist thesis: “... one can find the most developed ontology right in the earliest writings of Aristotle” (Weiss, 33). Therefore, the relation between ontology and theology in Aristotle is a philosophical rather than a philological problem.<sup>17</sup> But it is clear that despite these problems left by Aristotle’s science of beings as beings, some of which will be further discussed in what follows, Heidegger believes that a return to Aristotle’s defense of this science in *Metaphysics*  $\Gamma$ , and more specifically his defense of the principle of non-contradiction as belonging to the subject matter of this science, promises some insight into the existential and temporal ground of this science that Kant’s attempt to overcome metaphysics overlooked.

### THE SCIENCE OF BEINGS QUA BEINGS IN METAPHYSICS $\Gamma$

It is in the class of November 30 that we have the beginning of the detailed, often line-by-line reading of *Metaphysics*  $\Gamma$  that will occupy the rest of the seminar and that will focus on chapters two to four. The focus in this class is on the unity of the  $\acute{o}\nu$  ἢ  $\acute{o}\nu$  and of the science that corresponds to it. Heidegger finds in  $\Gamma 2$  two arguments for this unity:

1. The determinations of being and the idea of being hang together in some way. The example of health is used to show this.

2. For each  $\gamma\acute{\epsilon}\nu\omicron\varsigma$  there is one “perception” ( $\alpha\acute{\iota}\sigma\theta\eta\sigma\iota\varsigma$  μία) and one knowledge ( $\acute{\epsilon}\pi\iota\sigma\tau\acute{\eta}\mu\eta$ ). Heidegger insists that  $\alpha\acute{\iota}\sigma\theta\eta\sigma\iota\varsigma$  here is not physical perception but “noetic intuition” from which “the Platonic terms  $\acute{\iota}\delta\acute{\epsilon}\alpha$ ,  $\acute{\epsilon}\acute{\iota}\delta\omicron\varsigma$  for the realm of the  $\acute{o}\nu\tau\omicron\varsigma$   $\acute{o}\nu$  are to be interpreted: the  $\acute{o}\nu\tau\omicron\varsigma$   $\acute{o}\nu$  is object of an  $\acute{\iota}\delta\acute{\epsilon}\acute{\iota}\nu$ ” (Weiss, 36).

In addressing the first point, Heidegger launches into a digression on the scholastic treatment of analogy (*nomina analogia*), specifically, the distinction between “analogy

<sup>16</sup> *Philosophische Monatshefte* 24 (1888): 37-65, 540-74.

<sup>17</sup> Heidegger pinpoints the connection between the two in the transition from  $\kappa\alpha\theta\acute{o}\lambda\omicron\upsilon$  to  $\theta\epsilon\acute{\iota}\omicron\nu$  in *Met.* E1 and the parallel K7.

of attribution” (a name common to all the meanings, but a plurality of relations to this name) and “analogy of proportion” (a correspondence of relations within the diversity of meanings named by the analogous name). When he returns to Aristotle’s text, it is to assert (Weiss, 39) that the example of health illustrates an analogy of attribution, though Heidegger adds that the analogy of proportion was not unknown to Aristotle but is mentioned in the *Nicomachean Ethics*.<sup>18</sup> Yet Heidegger again claims that the use of the health example as an illustration leaves the *pros hen* relation as it applies to the senses of being fundamentally unexplained. Indeed, he agrees with the characterization of Aristotle’s mode of demonstration here as primitive for seeking to determine something about the object of first philosophy with an example taken from medicine, though he also notes that medicine at the time ranked with mathematics as having the highest scientific validity and as an anthropological science stood much closer to Aristotle’s sought discipline than does today’s empirical medicine (Weiss, 40).

Heidegger in this class also discusses the meaning of what is identified as the primary sense of being: οὐσία. He importantly notes that we cannot fully capture its meaning with the translation “simply present at hand” (the Aristotelian ὑποκείμενον). Instead he suggests the following characterization: “a thing as present from itself in itself and for itself” (the “for-itself,” he adds, is not any kind of relation but an inner achievement of the respective being). But it would be wrong to conclude that οὐσία is therefore understood in abstraction from any relation to us. Heidegger draws attention, as an important aid in the interpretation of οὐσία, to the meaning the word had in ordinary language at the time of Aristotle: means, household goods, thus “what at each moment stands of itself ready for use” (Weiss, 41). So οὐσία, if being what is present from itself and in itself and for itself, is also what is present in the context of our dealings.

In the next class of December 7, in continuing his reading of Γ2, Heidegger draws our attention to something remarkable: when it comes to expounding what belongs to the unitary field of the sought science, Aristotle “does so on the basis of the ἓν and not the ὄν itself! He gives only an indirect exposition of the ὄν” (Weiss, 42). What Heidegger is referring to is the fact that Aristotle describes the scope of the science of beings qua beings only in describing how a science of *unity* would need to address the different forms of unity, such as “same,” “like,” “equal” (ταυτόν, ὅμοιον, ἴσον), along with its opposite, “plurality” (πλήθος), and its different forms: “other,” “unlike,” and “unequal” (ἕτερον, ἀνόμοιον, ἀνίσον). What Heidegger in general wishes to highlight is how Aristotle, in expounding the science of beings as beings, appears to want to talk about anything but being: first he turns to the example of health in explaining the *pros-hen* relation among the different senses of being, and now he turns to unity in describing the scope of the science.

Aristotle, of course, justifies this latter move by claiming at 1003b23 that the one and being are the same and one nature through [following? grounding? ἀκολουθεῖν] each other. Heidegger asks about the meaning of the verb here and suggests “*Fundierung*,” which of course raises the question of how being and unity could *found each other*. What

<sup>18</sup> The reference is presumably to 1096b28-29, where Aristotle, asking how things that are good in different senses can all be called “good,” suggests the possibility that they are so by analogy and illustrates as follows what “analogy” means here: as sight is good in the body, so intellect is good in the soul.

is introduced here, according to Heidegger, is the fundamental *problem* of the relation between being and unity that runs through the whole history of metaphysics (Weiss, 42-43). A line that therefore receives special attention in Heidegger's commentary on the text is 1003b26-27: ταὐτὸ γὰρ εἰς ἄνθρωπος καὶ ὄν ἄνθρωπος καὶ ἄνθρωπος (For the same is one man and being man and man).<sup>19</sup> According to Heidegger, "Aristotle wishes to show that ἔν follows upon ὄν by showing that it is superfluous" (Weiss, 47) – that is, that "being man" already says "one man." But Heidegger asks, "What is the meaning of ὄν?" when speaking of *being* man. He argues, as in the case of his interpretation of the phrase "beings qua beings," that it cannot mean simply existence or essence but must be understood very generally: "ὄν must have the most general meaning possible, its meaning should not be restricted to 'presence at hand' [*Vorhandenheit*]" (Weiss, 47). As for the meaning of ἔν, Heidegger asserts, "To repeat: ἔν is not number, does not refer to the individual in contrast to the genus, is also not identity, which is not possible when determinations like ὁμοιον belong to it" (Weiss, 48). In other words, "one man" in this context does not mean "one as opposed to two men," nor "an individual man as opposed to the genus man," nor "a self-same, identical man." But then what *does* "one" mean here? In the claim that "being man" and "one man" are the same, the meanings of both "being" and "one" are left completely unclarified. Heidegger makes the important observation in this context: "How do difficulties arise here from the very outset? An ontical relation is taken to be a fundamental ontological determination" (Weiss, 47). In other words, the ontical claim that "the man that is one" is the same as "the man that is" is mistaken for an ontological claim about the relation between being and unity themselves. That the same man should be characterized as both "being" and "being one" does not tell me anything about the meanings of "being" and "unity" themselves.

After a quick tracing of the central role played by unity in Leibniz's monadology, Kant's unity of apperception, and Hegel's claim that "The essence of the substance is the subject," Heidegger raises a question (Weiss, 50) that he will end up answering negatively: Should we not consider Aristotle's ontological formulations in a purely formal way (thereby avoiding the questions of *meaning* Heidegger has raised)? Heidegger in responding negatively emphasizes the problem of the relation of being to the subject (*Seinsverständnis*) and the problem of the relation between being and beings. "We must at first recognize the entire problem that lies in the ἦ. One always already understands the ἦ in some way and is tempted to pass it by; but precisely this awakens the suspicion that there is something decisive here" (Weiss, 51). Noting the many senses that "being" must include in Aristotle, Heidegger suggests:

Such universality of being forced itself on Aristotle as a problem. And in order to see this in an original way, we should not take all the named forms of being merely as in a formal presentation; they are in Aristotle much more substantial, without being represented as things. ... If we interpret

<sup>19</sup> Heidegger notes the different text proposed by Ross: τὸ αὐτὸ εἰς ἄνθρωπος καὶ ἄνθρωπος καὶ ὄν ἄνθρωπος καὶ ἄνθρωπος. But he appears to prefer the other reading as presenting an argument (he even calls it a syllogism) for the sameness of being and unity.

Aristotle in the sense of formal ontology, how can we come to understand that the principle of non-contradiction is meant to be a principle of being? (Weiss, 52)

Here we find clearly expressed Heidegger's conviction that a concrete, substantive understanding of being is expressed in the principle of non-contradiction. It is therefore at this point that Heidegger decides to turn to an interpretation of this principle "in order, through the clarification of this relatively clear principle, to throw some light on this general problematic" (Weiss, 52). That Aristotle is not concerned with formal ontology is shown, according to Heidegger, by his critique of the sophists and the dialecticians: the former for the ἥθος of their philosophizing and the latter for not taking philosophy far enough (Weiss, 52).

### HEIDEGGER ON ARISTOTLE ON THE PRINCIPLE OF NON-CONTRADICTION

The focus in the next class (December 14) is on the third chapter of Book Γ, in which Aristotle turns to the axioms, with special emphasis on the principle of non-contradiction as being by nature the principle of all the other axioms (1005b33-34). Heidegger divides the chapter into two parts: the first in which it is shown that it belongs to the same science to study οὐσία and the axioms; the second in which the nature of the axioms is clarified (without immediate discussion of how they ground other things). The central argument of the first part is that the axioms apply to all beings and therefore cannot be the subject of study for any science dealing with only a part of beings. In then turning to the second part of the chapter, Heidegger discusses Aristotle's characterization (1005b11-14) of the principle of non-contradiction as βεβαιωτάτη, "what lies at the ground of all beings as their foundation," γνωριμωτάτη, "What is least foreign to us, what we are so familiar with that we normally do not think of making it an explicit theme of discussion," and ἀνυπόθετον, that is, not requiring presuppositions or conditions. Bringing these characteristics together, Heidegger concludes, "So does the ἀρχή βεβαιωτάτη truly lie at the ground of all beings and is given to us as familiar self-evidence prior to all possibility of deception and without any other presupposition" (Weiss, 63). But then it is to be studied by that science that makes known beings as beings and by the person most at home in this science – that is, the philosopher.

Of special significance in this part of Heidegger's reading, however, is the way he draws attention to Aristotle's reference to the axioms as "the most stable principles of things" (βεβαιωτάτας ἀρχάς τοῦ πράγματος, 1005b9-10) and takes this as evidence that they are *not* for Aristotle merely logical principles of thought. But already here we also see that Heidegger does not therefore deny that they are still in some sense principles of thought. What he does instead is bring into question *the very distinction* between so-called *Denklogik* and *Gegenstandslogik*, just as his critique of Kant brought into question the parallel distinction between analytic and synthetic judgments. His argument here, citing Husserl, is that even the most formal thinking is still oriented toward a "something," all thinking is thinking *of* something, every νόησις has its νόημα. We will see that for Heidegger we cannot make sense of the principle of non-contradiction without taking into account this phenomenon of intentionality.

Indeed, when Heidegger finally turns in the new year (the class of January 11) to Aristotle's formulation of the ἀρχή βεβαισιότητα as "For the same thing cannot simultaneously belong and not belong to the same thing and in the same respect" (τὸ γὰρ αὐτὸ ἅμα ὑπάρχειν τε καὶ μὴ ὑπάρχειν ἀδύνατον τῷ αὐτῷ καὶ κατὰ τὸ αὐτό, 1005b19), he addresses what he considers *the double character* of the ὑπάρχειν. On the one hand, he insists that the phrase ἀδύνατον ἅμα ὑπάρχειν does not refer to the impossibility of a *positing or saying* but rather to the impossibility of *being* in the sense of the belonging of a property to an underlying subject (ὑποκειμένον). A few lines later, Aristotle does refer to the impossibility of holding (ὑπολαμβάνειν) something both to be and not to be (1005b23-24), but Heidegger appears to take this as confirmation of his reading: "That what is at issue is *not* the impossibility of a positing emerges from the fact that the ἀρχή is discussed in relation to ὑπολαμβάνειν only later" (Weiss, 65). When he turns to the later passage, he indeed claims that the ὑπολαμβάνειν is only a special case (Sonderfall) of the ὑπάρχειν, explaining that the impossibility of holding contradictory opinions is grounded not in psychology but in the being itself (Weiss, 66).<sup>20</sup> On the other hand, however, Heidegger finds *predicative being*, or the "is" of the copula, which gives it a relation to *logos*, already within the ὑπάρχειν. In saying that "A is not-A," I am predicating "not-A" of A, and it is this predication, which is both the belonging of the predicate to the subject and the act of predicating it of the subject in speech, that the principle of non-contradiction asserts to be impossible. Since the "is" of the copula clearly contains a reference to being, this predicative meaning of the ὑπάρχειν is closely tied to the ontological meaning (Weiss, 65-66). We see, therefore, that Heidegger is not so much emphasizing the ontological character of the principle as insisting on the inseparability of its ontological and logical dimensions.<sup>21</sup>

This becomes even clearer in the next class (February 1). Heidegger states his objective clearly at the outset: "The main aim of the interpretation of Γ3 and Γ4 is to examine the ontological character of the principle of non-contradiction" (Weiss, 71). Yet Heidegger proceeds to clarify that his interpretation is responding to *two extremes*: one being the purely logical interpretation and the other seeing in the principle "a rule of beings themselves, so that it is thought of as something like a power working within beings themselves" (Weiss, 71). Heidegger considers this second extreme of a purely ontological interpretation as one equally to be rejected. But why? To see the principle as

<sup>20</sup> And Heidegger appears right about this: Aristotle's argument for why a person cannot hold contradictory beliefs at the same time is that it is impossible for contraries to belong to the same thing at the same time. See also the beginning of chapter 4, where Aristotle's opponents are described as maintaining that the same thing can both be and not be *and* that it is possible to hold (ὑπολαμβάνειν) the same thing both to be and not to be (1005b35-1006a2). Tricot comments, "De la fin du chapitre précédent et du début du présent chapitre, il résulte que, suivant Ar., l'impossibilité *logique* d'affirmer et de nier en même temps le prédicat du sujet, se fonde sur l'impossibilité *ontologique* de la coexistence des contraires (3, 1005b4)" (vol. 1, 197n2). See also E. C. Halper: "Aristotle does not regard logic as autonomous; rather, he hangs logic upon things, as it were. ... Aristotle's ultimate principles of logic are ontological principles" (*One and Many in Aristotle's Metaphysics: Books Alpha-Delta* [Las Vegas: Parmenides Publishing, 2009], 459).

<sup>21</sup> The protocols for the 1944 seminar on *Metaphysics* Γ and Z end by questioning the translation of ἀντίφασις as "*Widerspruch*," making the following observation: "What is at issue here is not 'language,' not 'logic' in the modern sense. But it is no more useful to suggest that the principle of non-contradiction is to be understood ontologically. The genuine difficulty lies in seeing what is dealt with here in a Greek way" (GA 83, 470).

a power working in beings themselves is to ignore its grounding *in human existence*. This constitutes a second central point of Heidegger's interpretation that emerges already in the class of January 11.<sup>22</sup> Indeed, it is this grounding of the principle of non-contradiction, and thus of the very possibility of metaphysics, in human existence rather than in reason that, according to Heidegger, Kant backed away from in suppressing his own insight into the central role played by the imagination.

In turning to chapter 4 of Book Γ, Heidegger of course notes Aristotle's claim that the principle can be demonstrated only indirectly via an "elenctic demonstration" (ἀποδειξαι ἐλεγκτικῶς). Citing 1006a11, Heidegger also notes the condition that the adversary must speak and thus engage in a dialogue (διαλέγεσθαι). "As in the paradigm of the Platonic dialogue, what is at issue in this suggestion of a refuting demonstration is bringing someone to the correct παιδεία through ἐλέγχειν" (Weiss, 69). This condition – and here is the key point Heidegger will emphasize – "pushes the discussion into a *close relation to the essence of man* as ζῶον λόγον ἔχον" (Weiss, 69). This again counts against an interpretation of the principle as a mere principle of "valid meaning" (*vom geltenden Sinn*), but we can also add, as Heidegger does not do explicitly here, that it also counts against the interpretation of the principle as a power working in beings themselves (and thus without an essential relation to the essence of man). That Aristotle describes someone unwilling to speak as being like a plant (100614-15) is for Heidegger yet further indication that "the argumentation in the ἀπόδειξις ἐλεγκτικῶς must refer back to the essential original determination of man" (Weiss, 70) – that is, the essential original determination of man as the being that speaks. To make the point that this "speaking" is to be understood in the sense of living concrete discussion and not abstractly as the "proposition," Heidegger notes Aristotle's use of the word ἀμφισβητεῖν (disputing) in this context.

The starting point of the indirect demonstration of the principle of non-contradiction, as Aristotle says at 1006a18-21, is not that the opponent grant that this or that is the case but that the opponent *mean anything at all* that he and others can understand.<sup>23</sup> We can

<sup>22</sup> See also *Einführung in die Metaphysik* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1976), 143: "Die alte Streitfrage, ob der Satz vom Widerspruch bei *Aristoteles* eine 'ontologische' oder eine 'logische' Bedeutung habe, ist falsch gestellt, weil es für *Aristoteles* weder 'Ontologie' noch 'Logik' gibt. Beides entsteht erst auf dem Boden der aristotelischen Philosophie. Der Satz vom Widerspruch hat vielmehr 'ontologische' Bedeutung, weil er ein Grundsatz des Logos, ein 'logischer' Satz ist." In his notes for the 1932 lecture on the principle, Heidegger makes a distinction between understanding the principle as "logical" in the sense of concerning λόγος (which is his own understanding) and understanding the principle as "logical" in the traditional sense of a "*Denkgesetz*" (GA 80.1, 519-20).

<sup>23</sup> Robert Bolton rejects this interpretation, claiming that the requirement of λέγει τι is the requirement that the opponent answer questions with a definite "yes" or "no"; and as he himself notes, an opponent who failed to meet this requirement would not thereby abandon all reason and coherent thought ("Aristotle's Conception of *Metaphysics* as a Science," in *Unity, Identity, and Explanation in Aristotle's Metaphysics*, ed. T. Scaltas, D. Charles, and M. L. Gill [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994], 321-54; 333). But Bolton, when he cites 1006a18-21 (332), leaves out through an ellipsis the crucial qualification that I add in italics here (in the translation of Ross): "The starting point in all such cases is *not the demand that our opponent shall say that something either is or is not (for this one might perhaps take to be assuming what is at issue)* but the request [for the opponent] that he should affirm at least that he σημαίνει τι, both for himself and for another, since this is necessary if in fact he λέγει τι." Bolton cites the italicized words later in another context (334), but in suppressing them here he suppresses the piece of evidence against his interpretation. The requirement cannot be that the opponent answer questions with a definite "yes" or "no" since this would be to require that the opponent say that something *either is or is not* and, as Aristotle notes here, that would beg the question by simply assuming the principle of non-contradiction in question.

therefore say that the starting point of the demonstration is not this or that true statement but rather truth as a characteristic of human existence. “For human being and thus for the  $\sigma\mu\alpha\acute{\iota}\nu\epsilon\upsilon\iota\nu\ \tau\iota$ , the ontological presupposition is truth, i.e., not the truth of a statement, but the unconcealment of what is at hand, of Dasein itself and of the being-with others” (Weiss, 73). What characterizes the demonstration is not an ascent to ever more general propositions but a return to the essence of human existence. “Spoken in the terminology we have used on another occasion: the possibility of a demonstration of the principle of non-contradiction rests on an existential-ontological basis” (Weiss, 74). This terminology signals the crucial point: for Heidegger the principle of non-contradiction is an ontological principle, but only as an *existential* principle – that is, it is not a law or power to be found in beings themselves but a determination of human existence. Yet Heidegger is careful to distinguish his interpretation from any form of “psychologism” or “physics of thought” by noting that it (1) seeks to present the ontological content of the principle, (2) sees in the return to man a return not to psychological events but rather to the essence of Dasein, and (3) understands this essence in a way radically different from the way it is understood by psychologism. In short, what Heidegger is defending is not the grounding of the principle *subjectively* in some fact of human psychology but rather an *existential* grounding in human existence understood as being-in-truth, as unconcealing beings, and thus in its relation to *beings*. Recall Heidegger’s claim that the word  $\acute{\upsilon}\pi\alpha\rho\chi\epsilon\acute{\iota}\nu$  in the formulation of

---

That is why Aristotle makes the requirement the minimal one of saying, in the sense of meaning, anything at all, a requirement that assumes *only that the opponent is not a plant*. This assumption plays no role in Bolton’s account of the argument since he denies that the argument has the character of what he calls “a kind of transcendental a priori proof” (346) and asserts, “So Aristotle is not introducing here a special form of dialectical argument where the *premises* are necessary presuppositions of what people say, or of the intelligibility or discussability of what they say, rather than what they explicitly grant and take responsibility for” (349); Aristotle’s proof “argues only from what is commonly known and accepted, not, however, from premises no one of which could be rationally given up” (351). Significantly, however, Bolton grants that Aristotle may also have a meta-elenctic argument here that appeals to such necessary presuppositions (349-50), but he does not pursue this possibility and instead concludes that for Aristotle the principle of non-contradiction cannot be known a priori (354). Barbara Cassin and Michel Nancy, in contrast, write of a “refutation transcendente” and interpret, “Dans sa radicalité transcendente, la réfutation ancre donc l’impossibilité de la contradiction dans la nécessité du sens, et la nécessité du sens dans l’essence de l’homme ...” (*La Décision du Sens: Le livre Gamma de la Métaphysique d’Aristote, introduction, texte, traduction et commentaire* [Paris: J. Vrin, 1989], 26). M. Zingano also defends a minimalist interpretation of the  $\lambda\acute{\epsilon}\gamma\epsilon\upsilon\iota\nu\ \tau\iota$  requirement (406-8), rightly insisting that “être déterminé veut tout simplement dire que quelque chose *est dite ou signifiée de manière déterminée*” (“*Sêmeinein hen, sêmeinein kath’henos* et la preuve de 1006b28-34,” in *Aristote, Métaphysique Gamma, édition, traduction, études*, ed. M. Hecquet-Devienne and A. Stevens [Louvain-la-Neuve: Peeters, 2008], 408). And while Bolton bases his interpretation on a strict adherence to the requirements of Aristotelian *elenchus*, Zingano suggests that  $\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\epsilon\gamma\chi\omicron\varsigma$  is understood here not in a strict Aristotelian sense but in a sense closer to that of Socrates (420, n. 13). Zingano also rejects the interpretation that what Aristotle requires of the opponent is that he grant the existence of “essences.” This view is defended by Edward C. Halper, among others, who writes, “The object he [Aristotle] assumes when he assumes that a word ‘signifies one’ is an essence” (425). Halper therefore claims that acceptance of the principle of non-contradiction is not required for ordinary conversation but only for “dialectic” in a technical sense since only the latter requires a noetic grasp of essences (424-25). Halper does not explain how failure to engage in dialectic would make one like a plant. Furthermore, Halper himself notes the problem raised by his account: “If, moreover, his arguments for the PNC depend on the existence of essences, they are deriving a conclusion that no one could really doubt from a highly dubious assumption” (432). Halper simply “bites the bullet” here and asserts that Aristotle is in fact demonstrating the existence of  $\omicron\upsilon\sigma\acute{\iota}\alpha\tau\alpha$  on the basis of the principle of non-contradiction rather than vice versa (432). See also 438-39: “What is presented to us here as the conclusion, the PNC, is the real premise” (439; also 444, 452).

the principle refers both to the predicative character of assertions and to the character of beings themselves.

What Heidegger takes the ground of the demonstration to be is made even clearer when he comments on Aristotle's claim that "if one grants this, there will be a demonstration" (ἂν δέ τις τοῦτο διδῶ, ἔσται ἀπόδειξις, 1006a24). Heidegger insists that translating διδῶ as "grant" (*zugeben*) is too superficial and comments:

Aristotle thereby actually wants to say that the opponent only needs to give himself. He must simply recollect his own essence, understanding and being-in-truth, which he has forgotten in everyday life. But insofar as truth always necessarily brings with it concealment, man thereby gives himself in his original negativity and finitude. Thus, the ultimate ground, the αἴτιος of the demonstration, is being-man, in which the opponent must simply hold out. (Weiss, 75-76)

The comment on negativity and finitude draws attention to an aspect of the principle of non-contradiction that Heidegger noted earlier in first citing its formulation: that it takes the form of a negation, of what *cannot be* and *cannot be said*. Indeed, even before turning to the formulation, Heidegger claims that his interpretation of the principle will be ontological "in the sense that we already encounter the 'not' and 'none' in being in an elemental way, the problem of negation acquires the same central position as the ὄν" (Weiss, 54). Here we can say that, if the principle is grounded in man's essence as being-in-truth, its negative formulation shows this truth to have the negative form of an *un*-concealment: a being must be unconcealed in a determinate and therefore finite way and it cannot be, and one cannot say that it is, other than what it is.

Heidegger proceeds to suggest something of great importance: the "non-contradiction," the "not-being-other-than-it-is," expressed by the fundamental principle is simply another way of expressing the thesis central to Aristotle's ontology that was expressed positively with the claim: "being" equals "being one." To return to the text: Aristotle, after having addressed the possibility of demonstrating the axiom, introduces at 1006a28 some arguments that further our concrete understanding of the principle. Heidegger notes that the first is of special importance to him, and we immediately see why. The argument is the following: "First it is clear that this itself is true: that the name signifies being or not-being this (ὅτι σημαίνει τὸ ὄνομα τὸ εἶναι ἢ μὴ εἶναι τοῦτι), so that not everything will be so-and-so and not so-and-so" (1006b28-31). Heidegger comments that "with every meaning of a word an understanding of being is given at the same time, and completely apart from the truth of the sentence" (Weiss, 76). But what understanding of being in particular is given in the name that signifies something as being so-and-so and not being so-and-so? Heidegger's answer is *an understanding of being as being-one*. The principle of non-contradiction is thereby only the negative formulation of the principle of identity.<sup>24</sup> "In general, one can express this as follows: the ontological relation, that

<sup>24</sup> This is a position also defended later in *Die Frage nach dem Ding*: "Der positiv gebrauchte Satz vom Widerspruch ist der Satz der Identität" (136; GA 41, 177). Cf. Halper: "The PNC is a *negative* way of expressing the unity of

every ὄν is ἔν, as we encountered it in Γ1, returns here in the discussion of the ontological fundamental principles” (Weiss, 77). Without the intending of something determinate and something one, there would be no signifying and therefore no διαλέγεσθαι, no λόγος, no νοεῖν at all. But this means, in short, as Heidegger notes, that “human existence would be impossible” (Weiss, 78). Human existence in its determination as being-in-truth and having-logos depends on intending and unconcealing being as one and determinate. This is clearly one important lesson Helene Weiss learned from her notes on the seminar, since in her own 1942 book she writes, “The being-one and being-the-same of every ὄν with itself is designated there [i.e., Met. Γ3, 1005b 9ff.] as the securest and unshakeable ground on which rests all διαλέγεσθαι and thereby the being of man as such.”<sup>25</sup>

It is in this context that we must understand why Heidegger raises as a textual difficulty the occurrence of the term ἀριθμόν at 1006b4. The context is the following: Aristotle proceeds to claim that it is not a problem if a name signifies more than one thing, provided that these are “ὀρισμένα” (1006b1). Heidegger takes the meaning here to be not “limited in number” but “determinate,” as he takes ἄπειρα at b6 to mean not “unlimited in number” but “indeterminate” (Weiss, 78-79). The point is that what is signified must be one in the sense of determinate, definite, circumscribed, delimited. But Heidegger therefore finds it problematic when Aristotle goes on to express the condition as being that the things signified by a name be “definite in number” (ὀρισμένοι δὲ τὸν ἀριθμόν, 1006b4). Heidegger returns to this problem in the next class of February 8, again insisting that ὀρισμένον does not refer to a numerical limitation of the possibilities of determination and that instead “ὀρισμένοι are determinations of the ὄν with regard to their meaning for its unity and sameness” (Weiss, 82).<sup>26</sup> Similarly, ἄπειρα are determinations not unlimited in number but rather not corresponding to the unity of the being in question. The contrast here is not between “one,” in the sense of “numerically one,” and “many” but between one in the sense of self-same and determinate and what is indeterminate. Heidegger now suggests the possibility that the ἀριθμόν at 1006b4 is a later interpolation but prefers the suggestion that it responds to a possible sophistic objection, that is, that when we use the name “man” there may be a number of possible determinations of man that have not yet been named. The response is that the very possibility of these further determinations presupposes the unity of what is named. “Therefore, a speaking about the ὄν in preservation of its character of sameness is possible without the sum total of its possible determinations having been in fact presented” (Weiss, 83). In the end, I do not see why Heidegger finds ἀριθμόν at

---

the thing: each thing is one essence and not the negation of that essence. In contrast, the *positive* principle of knowledge is just the essence, that is, the unity that is grasped through a single act of the intellect. It is clear that both principles refer to the same unity” (457). But Halper here is not referring to the claim that “what is one” in Book Γ since he takes that claim to involve a weaker sense of unity than the unity of essence or οὐσία he takes to be presupposed by the principle of non-contradiction.

<sup>25</sup> “Das Einssein und Selbigsein eines jeden ὄν mit sich selbst wird dort [i.e., Met. Γ3, 1005b 9ff.] bezeichnet als der festeste, unerschütterliche Grund und Boden, auf dem alles διαλέγεσθαι und damit das Dasein des Menschen überhaupt beruht,” *Kausalität und Zufall in der Philosophie des Aristoteles* (Basel: Verlag Haus zum Falken, 1942), 26 (my trans.).

<sup>26</sup> Cf. C. Kirwan, “Aristotle’s argument does not in fact require that the significations of a name be finitely many, but only that there be unit signification, like points on a line, not themselves further divisible” (*Aristotle’s Metaphysics: Books Γ, Δ and Ε* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971], 94).

1006b4 so problematic for his interpretation and therefore in need of special explanation. If the word “human” has several meanings and these meanings are all determinate, then they must also be a definite number.<sup>27</sup> In contrast, if the word can mean anything whatever, then the possible meanings would be unlimited in number. In any case, we see here the importance for Heidegger of understanding “one” as an ontological determination rather than numerically.

In discussing for the remainder of the seminar Aristotle’s arguments for the principle of non-contradiction, Heidegger focuses on this presupposition that being is being-one, a presupposition that is clear when Aristotle argues that “Not to signify one thing is to signify nothing at all” (τὸ γὰρ μὴ ἔν σημαίνειν οὐθὲν σημαίνειν ἑστίν, 1006b7) and that “it is not possible to understand anything without understanding one thing” (οὐθὲν γὰρ ἐνδέχεται νοεῖν μὴ νοοῦντα ἓν, 1006b10). Aristotle then considers a possible objection: since “musical,” “pale,” and “human” can all name the same man, do they then signify one and the same thing? The idea that these words are “synonyms” (συνώνυμα, 1006b18) in the sense of having the same meaning<sup>28</sup> is of course rejected by Aristotle. He therefore makes a distinction between “signifying one thing” (τὸ ἔν σημαίνειν) and “signifying about one thing” (τὸ καθ’ ἑνός, 1006b15-16). While what the names “musical,” “pale,” and “human” signify are said of *one thing*, they signify not one thing but different things, each one and determinate.<sup>29</sup> Heidegger explains as follows:

In their predicative function they only bring to expression a pre-givenness of the ἔν, but do not first constitute it. Thus, even as thought ideally in as full as possible an enumeration, they constitute as predicates not the first actualization of the ἔν, but, as functioning predicatively, they are first possible if the ἔν is already given beforehand. (Weiss, 86)<sup>30</sup>

When Heidegger returns to this passage in the next class of February 15, he appears to think, wrongly, that “white,” “musical,” and “man” are being called “synonyms” by Aristotle himself and asks how this can be. His answer is the following: “What then constitutes their synonymy is not the substantive meaning of the ὀνόματα in each case, but their common apophantic function” (Weiss, 89). In notes written some years later, apparently by Helene Weiss herself, she rightly objects to Heidegger’s reading here: “H[eidegger]: they are συνώνυμα insofar as they all have the same categorial function (when, namely, one disregards the ἔν of the content peculiar to each). Me: they would, so understood, namely as ἔν, be turned into συνώνυμα, as if each did not have its own peculiar content, as if the categorial ‘is’ were no longer understood categorially, but as an identical

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Tricot: “Peu importe que le sujet (*homme*, par exemple) ait une seule signification ou plusieurs, pourvu que, dans ce dernier cas, ces significations soient nettement déterminées et exprimées par des noms distincts” (vol. 1, 201n2).

<sup>28</sup> For a helpful discussion of the sense of συνώνυμα here, see Cassin and Narcy, 197-99.

<sup>29</sup> Cassin and Narcy speak here of a distinction between “l’unité de signification” and “l’unité d’attribution” (196).

<sup>30</sup> Heidegger is therefore understanding the phrase σημαίνειν καθ’ ἑνός in the second possible sense noted by Zingano and favored by him: in the sense that “la signification délimitée ou déterminée d’un mot trouve son fondement dans le fait que le terme signifie ou renvoie à une chose qui est, elle-même, une” (410).

ἐν.” But the difference in interpretation here is not so significant given that in either case the crucial point is recognized: the difference between the being-one of that of which the names are predicated and the being-one directly signified by each name. Thus, in a later note, dated August 28, 1932, Weiss writes:

When I now read the text of the seminar again, it seems to me that with “categorical function” Heidegger means the same thing as what I see. Perhaps expressed in a shortened and abstract way (perhaps also awkwardly expressed by the writers of the protocols). But our two opinions agree well in what is essential.

Heidegger in the seminar takes the outcome of the argument to be that, if there is to be a ἐν σημαίνειν, there must be such a thing as *Wassein* (Weiss, 90): to “signify one thing” does not mean to refer to the same thing but rather to signify a determinate “what.” *What* “pale” signifies is something one and determinate and other than *what* “musical” signifies. But if Heidegger insists on the common “apophantic function,” it is presumably to insist that the predications, each signifying one distinct and determinate thing, presuppose an already given unity to which they refer. Thus, at the end of the February 8 class, we have the comment: “It does not first become ἐν in being determined, but makes at all possible the determination and is its normative principle. From it the fulfilling determination acquires its meaning and existential sense: truth” (Weiss, 87).

But if we claim that “pale,” “musical,” and “human” signify different things, though all are said of the same thing, cannot one claim that a person can be both human and “not-human” in being both human and pale, both human and musical, and so on? “Pale” does not mean the same as “human,” and, therefore, to say that something is both human and pale is to say that it is both human and not-human. Aristotle’s response is that “those who say this completely destroy being and the what-it-was-to-be” (ὅλως δ’ ἀναιροῦσιν ... οὐσίαν καὶ τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι, 1007a20-21). This is because all being would be rendered “coincidental” or “accidental” (συμβεβηκός)<sup>31</sup> if being-pale is taken to be the opposite of being-human and therefore as much an essential determination as being-human itself. Discussing this claim, Heidegger especially draws attention to how indispensable *negation* is to signifying what something is. Aristotle indeed goes on to say, “If there will be such a thing as what-it-is-to-be-a-man, this will not be what-it-is-to-be-not-a-man or what-it-is-not-to-be-a-man (these are however denials of that)” (εἰ γὰρ ἔσται τι ὅπερ ἀνθρώπῳ εἶναι, τοῦτο οὐκ ἔσται μὴ ἀνθρώπῳ εἶναι ἢ μὴ εἶναι ἀνθρώπῳ [καίτοι αὐτὰ ἀποφάσεις τούτου], 1007a23-25).<sup>32</sup> To signify the being of man is *not* to signify the being of not-man *nor* not-being: every

<sup>31</sup> On the challenges of translating the term συμβεβηκός, see Cassin and Narcy, 207-8, who generally, though not always, stick to the traditional “accident” against Kirwan who consistently uses “coincidental.”

<sup>32</sup> Kirwan claims that “nothing is meant to turn on the difference of these two” negations, taking “being a not-man” as simply the *contrary* of “being a man,” while “not being a man” is the *contradictory* of “being a man” (97). Cassin and Narcy object, rightly in my view, that “being a not-man” is not the contrary of “being a man” but rather “what it means to be a not-man” as distinct from “what it means to be a man” (203). The distinction then is important and for the reasons Heidegger suggests: “being a man” must negate, and in different ways, both *not-being* a man and being a *not-man*; in other words, “being a man” must negate or exclude the *being* of everything *other than* man as well as its own *not-being*.

signification of what something is as both one and determinate thus involves a double negation. As Heidegger notes, these two negations, not being not-man and not being nothing, refer to some one thing that we must understand as οὐσία versus συμβεβηκός: “I.e., when I grant what-being, I thereby grant οὐσία and indeed on the ground of the negations which are already posited with what-being” (Weiss, 92). The negation at the ground of the signification of being is evident also in another important sentence Heidegger cites: τὸ δε οὐσίαν σημαίνειν ἐστὶν ὅτι οὐκ ἄλλο τι τὸ εἶναι αὐτῷ (1007a26-27). Heidegger translates as follows: “the meaning of οὐσία is, that the in-itself-being of something (the what-being) is not something other.” Though Heidegger does not make the point here, it should be clear that this not-being-other of what-is, this negation in being itself, goes hand in hand with what Heidegger has described as the finitude of human existence – that is, that we can signify something as so-and-so only *against* its not-being so-and-so and *against* its being not-so-and-so, that we can unconceal it only against a concealment that threatens it. Note that the negations on the ground of which οὐσία is determined are identified in the passage cited above with ἀποφάσεις: what it is to be something is determined against its *denials*. Heidegger thus takes the essential part played by the negations as showing the close coupling of the problem of what-being here with λόγος. It is on the basis of these negations – that is, through recognizing that to say that F is what something is requires not saying nothing and not saying that it is not-F – that we can distinguish between the what-being of a thing and what is coincidental or accidental to it. Thus, Heidegger concludes the discussion of this part of the text as follows: “In other words: if a what-being is granted, one clearly comes, in thinking to the end what it means to say ‘there is a what-being,’ necessarily to the distinction between οὐσία and συμβεβηκός” (Weiss, 92).

In the final class of February 22, the interpretation of 1007a20-b10 in Γ4 continues. Points already made are first recapitulated and then the line-by-line analysis resumes. One point that receives attention is the important distinction at 1007a31-32 between οὐσία and συμβεβηκός: “being pale” is coincidental to being-human because a human being is pale without being what it is to be pale. When Aristotle proceeds to claim at 1007b1 that without this distinction predication would proceed to infinity (εἰς ἀπειρόν), Heidegger notes the importance of the notions of πέρας and τέλος (understood as limit, end, and not as “aim”) in the structure of οὐσία (Weiss, 100-101). Commenting then on lines 1007b1-3, Heidegger notes the distinction between the genuine “intertwining” (συμπλοκή) that grounds the συμβεβηκός in the unity of the οὐσία and the secondary συμπλοκή that joins one συμβεβηκός with another on the basis of their common, immediate relation to one οὐσία (Weiss, 102). He also notes that this structure is “closed” both from below and from above (ἐπὶ τὸ ἄνω, 1007b9): there is no third term unifying an οὐσία with its accidents nor is there an additional layer of accidents (so that there would be accidents of accidents). All of this serves to further elucidate the ontology expressed by the principle of non-contradiction: specifically, how being is defined in opposition to the indefinite and accidental.

Before the seminar comes to an end, however, Heidegger skips ahead to 1008b10-13, still in Γ4, in order to emphasize once again the way in which the principle, and therefore the conception of being it expresses, is grounded in the possibility of human existence. Here Aristotle is arguing that anyone who denied the principle of non-contradiction could have no reason to walk to Megara or do or avoid anything else. What

Heidegger considers significant in this argumentation is how it transcends the prior frame of a possible διαλέγεσθαι toward the broader one of the possibility of existence as such. He sees this suggestion as supported by the word διακεῖσθαι when Aristotle, referring to someone who says at the same time this and also not this (ἄμα γὰρ ταῦτά τε καὶ οὐ ταῦτα λέγει), claims that no one is in fact disposed in this way (οὐδεὶς οὕτω διάκειται, 1008b9-13). In claiming that not following the principle of non-contradiction is an impossible disposition for a human being, Aristotle is defending the principle as an essential disposition for a human being. The impossibility, furthermore, is shown, as Heidegger notes, by reference to actions rather than merely speech, as with the example of walking to Megara already mentioned. We cannot be disposed in such a way as to deny the principle of non-contradiction because such a disposition would prevent us from acting in any way at all. As Heidegger has insisted, what is at stake in the principle is the possibility of human existence as such.

With this the notes for the seminar come to an abrupt end. Yet the seminar appears to have proceeded a bit further with the reading of *Metaphysics* Γ by way of two student reports. One on Γ5<sup>33</sup> is judged by the note taker to be not worth preserving. Some notes are provided, in contrast, on the presentation on Γ6-8 by Käte Oltmanns, a participant singled out in this seminar for special praise by Heidegger himself (GA 29/30, 533).<sup>34</sup> Oltmanns's presentation appears in the notes indistinguishable from what has been seen to be Heidegger's own reading. The chapters it focuses on deal with the absurd consequences of denying the principle of non-contradiction. Chapter 7 deals with the so-called principle of excluded middle and chapter 8 with a refutation of the thesis that all is true or all is false. A justification is provided for not working through these arguments in detail: they are purely dialectical in attacking sophistry on its own terms (Weiss, 95). What is emphasized is Aristotle's intention in pursuing these elenctic demonstrations: to present the opponent as someone who does not mean anything with his own words, who has no genuine concepts. The crucial conclusion is again this:

Presupposed therefore in a peculiar way for their demonstration is this *situation of comprehending [Verstehen] and understanding [Verständigung]*; presupposed is the *truth of human existence*, but not in such a way that this presupposes, with the help of some decision, the fact that there is such a thing as truth, – rather truth lies before Dasein in the sense that it grounds Dasein in its possibility. (Weiss, 96)

<sup>33</sup> This chapter addresses the argument of Protagoras but also that of Anaxagoras and Democritus. Anaxagoras assumes that, because what is cannot come out of what is not, when we see something become X it must have already been X – that is, at the same time that it was not-X. Aristotle's reply is the distinction between potentiality and actuality: a thing is potentially both contraries while not being actually both at the same time. We see here that the principle of non-contradiction also presupposes this ontological distinction. But this is not something Heidegger draws attention to in the seminar. The chapter could also be characterized as Aristotle's version of the arguments against flux and relativism in the *Theaetetus* (a dialogue that is indeed alluded to at 1010b11-14).

<sup>34</sup> As Käte Bröcker-Oltmanns, she would go on to edit two volumes of Heidegger's courses from the 1920s for the GA, one with her husband Walter Bröcker (vol. 61) and one alone (vol. 63).

Much is therefore made of Aristotle's dismissal at the beginning of chapter 6 of puzzles such as whether we are currently awake or sleeping with the objection that such puzzles seek an argument in the case of things for which an argument neither exists nor is necessary. The truth of the senses does not need to be proven but is already given with the existence of man, which is a being-in-truth. The final point noted then is this: "The truth, as it grounds the so-called axioms of logic, is not primarily the determination of a proposition, but belongs to the transcendence of Dasein; it therefore stands in a relation with the idea of being itself, and its discussion belongs to first philosophy" (Weiss, 97). In short, the truth of the principle of non-contradiction is not "logical" nor even purely "ontological" but *existential*.

### THE QUESTION OF THE ἄΜΑ

To this extent, the seminar does come to a definite conclusion. Yet it must still appear incomplete given its failure to address at all the *temporal* condition that Kant was seen to wish to exclude from the principle in the *Critique of Pure Reason* but that is expressed in Aristotle's formulation through the word ἄμα. If Heidegger postpones its consideration in first turning to *Metaphysics* Γ, the postponement turns out to be permanent. As was already observed, with the protocols of the seminar are preserved notes that appear to have been written by Helene Weiss when she reread the protocols several years later. On the first page of these notes with the heading "Zum Seminar W. 1928/29," we read the following: "The problem of the ἄμα is dropped entirely in the continuation of the seminar!" We can only share Weiss's surprise and disappointment. We also can know no more than she apparently did about the reason for this neglect. Was it simply a question of time? Or a deeper problem? It is striking that many years later, in the seminar of 1944, on *Metaphysics* Γ and Z, we are given the same promissory note, and it is again unfulfilled. In a "Nachtrag" for the class of May 16 we read, "Why Aristotle in his formulation of the principle of non-contradiction must include the ἄμα which Kant will not include, considering it unnecessary and counter to the intention of the principle, is something we will see in the continuation of the questioning concerning the ὄν ἢ ὄν" (GA 83, 401). Yet again, the seminar does not return to the question of the ἄμα and turns for an understanding of the ὄν ἢ ὄν to the initial chapters of Book Z that occupy it to the end.<sup>35</sup>

In any case, it is possible to draw from the seminar of 1928/29 some implications for how we are to understand the ἄμα. If the principle of non-contradiction is grounded in the possibility of human existence and expresses its essential disposition, then the ἄμα must express not only the being-in-time of beings but the temporality of human existence itself. We have already seen Heidegger maintain that the ἄμα does not mean the existing of two things at the same point in time. A passage in Γ5 not addressed in the seminar, while seeming at first to contradict this claim, arguably supports it. Aristotle says of the senses that "each in the same time never says about the same thing that it simultaneously is thus and not thus" (ἐκάστη ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ χρόνῳ περὶ τὸ αὐτὸ οὐδέποτε φησιν ἄμα οὕτω καὶ οὐκ

<sup>35</sup> In the notes for a 1932 lecture on the principle of contradiction (GA 80.1, 519-26) that otherwise appear, as observed above, to be indebted to the 1928/29 seminar, there is no indication of a concern with the meaning of the ἄμα.

οὕτως ἔχειν, 1010b18-19). This appears to count against Heidegger's interpretation since the temporal condition is here explicitly formulated as "being in the same time." On the other hand, we find *in addition* the term ἄμα, which, if it meant the same as "in the same time," would be redundant. Aristotle could have written simply that "each never says about the same thing in the same time that it is thus and not thus"; what, then, is *added* with the inclusion of the ἄμα? The condition "in the same time" qualifies the sense and the object; the sensing of the same object occurs in one and the same time. But what the ἄμα appears to qualify is the being of what the sense "says" to be, where this saying must presumably be understood as the disclosing and making-present of the object. The sense cannot disclose the same object as simultaneously thus and not thus; it cannot make the same object present as thus and not thus in the same making-present. Thus, the temporal meaning of the ἄμα appears to be that of *presencing* or *making-present*. We should recall that the word ἄμα also has the meaning of "together-with," and this meaning is not completely foreign to the temporal sense of the principle, as can be seen if we formulate "the sense never says being-*thus together with* not-being-*thus*." Reflecting the ambiguous logical/ontological character of the principle itself, the ἄμα expresses a "holding-together" that characterizes both the making-present of what is and the self-same presence of what is, a "holding-together" that the principle maintains to be *impossible* in the case of being A and being not-A.

We have seen that, according to Aristotle's defense of the principle of non-contradiction, the very possibility of human existence depends on being able to disclose what it signifies in speech and action as *one* in the sense of a *determinate what* that negates being-other and negates indeterminacy. A thing must be made fully present as what it is and in no way as what it is not. The temporality of human existence in which the principle is grounded therefore appears to be what Heidegger elsewhere, at around the same period, calls *Gegenwärtigen*. A simple definition of this term is provided in the *Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie*: "This comportment towards what is present in the sense of a having-there of something present, a comportment that expresses itself in the Now, we call the *making-present* of something."<sup>36</sup> It is only in and through such a *Gegenwärtigen* that beings can be *present* and present in the way required by the principle of non-contradiction. The ἄμα then would mean not "being present in the same time" as a qualification of beings but

<sup>36</sup> "Dieses Verhalten zu Anwesendem im Sinne des Dahabens eines Anwesenden, das sich im Jetzt ausspricht, nennen wir das *Gegenwärtigen* von etwas" (GA 24, 3rd ed. [Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1997], 367). There appears to be a certain ambiguity in Heidegger's use of the term *Gegenwärtigen* in *Sein und Zeit*. On the one hand, the term signifies the "inauthentic present" in contrast to the authentic present for which he chooses the term *Augenblick* (*Sein und Zeit*, 15th ed. [Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1979], 338). *Gegenwärtigen* is then identified with the temporality of "falling" (*Verfallen*) in the mode of curiosity (Neugier) (346-49). *Gegenwärtigen* in this sense is seen as *closing off* the past and the future (347). This is presumably also how the term is understood when Heidegger later claims, "Die These, daß alle Erkenntnis auf 'Anschauung' abzielt, hat den zeitlichen Sinn: alles Erkennen ist *Gegenwärtigen*. Ob jede Wissenschaft und ob gar philosophische Erkenntnis auf ein *Gegenwärtigen* zielt, bleibe hier noch unentschieden" (363n1). We have here what could be called a narrowing of the temporality of *Dasein* into a mere making-present, into a mere seeing of what is present. On the other hand, however, Heidegger also uses the term *Gegenwärtigen* as a more general term that encompasses both the authentic and the inauthentic present: see 408-12. This use is most explicit in *Die Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie*: "Das *Gegenwärtigen*, sei es eigentliches im Sinne des Augenblicks oder uneigentliches, *entwirft das, was es gegenwärtigt*, dasjenige was möglicherweise in und für eine Gegenwart begegnen kann, *auf* so etwas wie *Praesenz*" (GA 24, 435). Whether the temporality given expression in the ἄμα would be for Heidegger the authentic or inauthentic form of *Gegenwärtigen* is hard to say.

rather self-same making-present as a temporal determination of human existence and self-same being-present as a determination of being itself. In this case, in response to Kant's concern, the  $\alpha\mu\alpha$  would not be a condition restricted to what exists within time but would condition all our signifying and disclosing, whether or not the object exists "in time."<sup>37</sup>

This suggestion receives important confirmation in *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik*, where Heidegger, after repeating the assertion that the "zugleich" ( $\alpha\mu\alpha$ ) need not express "being-in-time" (*Innerzeitigkeit*), goes on to give a brief indication of what it *does* express: "The 'at-the-same-time' expresses rather that temporal character that, as antecedent 'recognition' ('pre-figuration'), originally belongs to all identification as such. This lies at the ground, as a foundation, of as much the possibility as also the impossibility of contradiction."<sup>38</sup> Heidegger is referring here to Kant's "synthesis of recognition," and what he has in mind is expressed more clearly a few pages earlier when he speaks of "a unifying of a being with regard to its sameness. This synthesis towards the self-same, i.e., the holding-before-one of a being as something self-same [*ein Einigen (Synthesis) des Seienden im Hinblick auf seine Selbigkeit. Diese Synthesis auf das Selbige, d.h. das Vorhalten des Seienden als eines Selbigen ...*]" (GA 3, 185). We can say that the qualification "at-the-same-time" refers not to a self-same point in time but to a self-same act of making-present (unifying, synthesis) to which a being appears as self-same and therefore as incapable of being both A and not-A.

### THE PRINCIPLE OF NON-CONTRADICTION AS DECISION IN A SEMINAR OF 1933

In concluding, note should be made of the closest parallel in Heidegger's other seminars to the interpretation of the principle of non-contradiction in 1928/29, though one not repeating the detailed reading of *Metaphysics*  $\Gamma$  and also exhibiting an important development. In the SS1933 course *Die Grundfrage der Philosophie*, Heidegger speaks of "the completely unexpected ground" to which the principle leads, unexpected, that is, to "the entire former formulation, interpretation and way of handling the axiom." This unexpected ground is, as in the present course, "the being of man [*das Dasein des Menschen*]." But in SS1933, Heidegger adds, troublingly given the date of the course,<sup>39</sup> a qualification not found in 1928/29: "and indeed not of man in general, but of *historical* man in his linguistically and spiritually determined being-with-one-another as a people, the being-with-one-another of those who belong to each other and are responsible for each other [*und zwar nicht des Menschen überhaupt, sondern des geschichtlichen*

<sup>37</sup> A similar response is given by one of Heidegger's students, Walter Bröcker, who suggests that the qualification "at the same time" applies to the movement of the word and therefore does not require that the object of our speaking be itself in movement or in time: "Wenn aber das 'zugleich' im Satze des Widerspruchs die Bewegung des Wortes betrifft, und nicht das Wortüber des Sprechens als physisch Bewegtes, so schränkt es den Satz garnicht auf in der Zeit Seiendes ein" (*Aristoteles* [Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1964], 180).

<sup>38</sup> "Das 'zugleich' drückt vielmehr denjenigen Zeitcharakter aus, der ursprünglich als vorgängige 'Rekognition' ('Vor-bildung') zu aller Identifizierung als solcher gehört. Diese liegt aber sowohl der Möglichkeit als auch der Unmöglichkeit des Widerspruchs fundierend zugrunde" (GA 3, 195; my trans.).

<sup>39</sup> The year 1933 is of course the one in which Heidegger assumed the rectorship of Freiburg University and joined the National Socialist Party. In the other course included in GA 36/37, *Vom Wesen der Wahrheit* from WS1933/34, we find the same rhetoric of a people deciding its essence in a "battle" (*Kampf*) of competing powers, rhetoric completely absent from the version of the same course given only a couple of years earlier (published as GA 34 [Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1998]).

*Menschen in seinem sprachlich volkhaften und geistig bestimmten Miteinandersein der Zueinandergehörigen und Füreinanderverpflichteten]*” (GA 36/37, 57). The only reference to Aristotle’s defense of the principle is with the claim “that if what is asserted in the axiom did not hold, man would sink to the level of a plant, i.e., he would not be able to exist in language and in the understanding of being” (GA 36/37, 58), a claim taken to support the grounding of the principle in human existence. But the important addition here is the qualification of this existence as that of *an historical people*. Heidegger furthermore now, and again in the rhetoric of 1933, sees in the principle a *decision* (*Entscheidung*) about whether or not man will exist (GA 36/37, 58).<sup>40</sup> Indeed, and again in the language of this time, he characterizes the decision as one about whether *logos* will be raised to the ruling power (*Macht*) of one’s existence. We read, “The principle of non-contradiction as determinate formulation of a fundamental law of being is no empty principle of logic on which one might exercise one’s sharp wit, but is rather *a fundamental enduring element of the existential structure of our being overall [ein Grundbestand des Existenzgefüges unseres Daseins überhaupt]*” (GA 36/37, 59). We see therefore that, on the basis of the existential grounding of the principle of non-contradiction in the seminar of 1928/29, Heidegger can in 1933 make the principle into the law of a people for which it must decide.

Another similar discussion of the principle of non-contradiction is to be found in the Nietzsche course from the summer semester of 1939, *Der Wille zur Macht als Erkenntnis*.<sup>41</sup> Here Heidegger claims that contradictory assertions lead man to a “collapse into his own counter-essence [*Abfall in das Unwesen seiner selbst*]” (603),<sup>42</sup> thus again drawing the connection between the principle and the possibility of human existence itself. Heidegger also draws attention to the negative character of the principle, as he did in 1928/29, when he characterizes the principle as a thesis about beings that asserts no less than the following: “*The essence of beings lies in the constant absence of contradiction [Das Wesen des Seienden besteht in dem ständigen Abwesen von Widerspruch]*” (603; GA 47, 205). After this brief discussion, Heidegger turns to Nietzsche’s interpretation of the principle as a *command* (*Befehl*): an interpretation not far from Heidegger’s own characterization of the principle in 1933 as a *decision*.

But in a *Wiederholung* of the above discussion not included in the Nietzsche volumes published during Heidegger’s lifetime, Heidegger gives an interpretation of the principle that implies an understanding of its temporal dimension along the lines of what has been suggested above:

The principle expresses, in its standard formulation: being, as presencing and permanence, excludes from itself all absencing and impermanence [*das Sein weist als Anwesenung und Beständigkeit alle Abwesenung und jeden Unbestand von sich*]. This means: what is absent and impermanent belongs to non-essence [*Unwesen*]. All immediate grasping of beings must look away

<sup>40</sup> In this respect, the title of the edition of *Metaphysics Gamma* by Cassin and Nancy is Heideggerian in spirit: *La Décision du Sens* (see 110).

<sup>41</sup> *Nietzsche I* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1961), 597-606.

<sup>42</sup> See also *Nietzsches Lehre vom Willen zur Macht als Erkenntnis*, GA 47 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1989), 204.

from non-essence. The look at beings should not look away toward what is absent and impermanent. The perception of beings as such therefore cannot step out of the given present, the now-at-once [*Jetzt-Zumal*], out of which and in which alone it can make present what is present in its permanence [*aus der es und in der es allein dem Anwesenden in seiner Beständigkeit entgegenwartet*]. Beings close themselves off as such in presencing and permanence, and precisely as thus closed-off [*Verschlossenes*], that is, as framed within the limits of constant presence [*in die Grenze der beständigen Anwesenung Gefügetes*], do they manifest themselves as beings. (GA 47, 210-211; my trans.)

Here the  $\alpha\mu\alpha$ , alluded to in the “*Jetzt-Zumal*,” is the temporal character of a presencing that excludes all absence and impermanence and in which, therefore, a being cannot manifest itself as both A and not-A. The “at-the-same-time” can indeed be interpreted as “in-the-same-present,” but only when “the present” is understood not as a fleeting moment within time but rather as the “presencing” in which beings are made fully and stably present in such a way that we can say they *are rather than are not*. In grasping and perceiving a being as being-A, I cannot in *the same act of presencing* “look away” to its not-being A or its being not-A. The  $\alpha\mu\alpha$  here signifies a “closing-off,” a confining of beings within a constant and self-same presencing that excludes all absence and “inconsistency.”

## CONCLUSION

What in general can we conclude about Heidegger’s view of the principle of non-contradiction? Nowhere in the 1928/29 seminar, nor in any of the other discussions cited, does Heidegger criticize or question the validity of the principle. Indeed, he appears to do the exact opposite: to legitimize it by grounding it in the being and temporality of human existence itself. Of course, this does not rule out the possibility that Heidegger saw the principle, at least in its traditional formulation, as presupposing a naïve and inadequate understanding of being and time and therefore as in need of “destruction.” Specifically, the principle can be seen to presuppose an identification of being with “presence” and a conception of time too exclusively oriented toward the present. Thus, in the 1938/39 text *Besinnung*, Heidegger can characterize it as the fundamental principle of *metaphysics*, that is, “of the interpretation of beingness as constant presence and objectivity for a re-presenting [*der Auslegung der Seiendheit als beständiger Anwesenheit und Gegenständlichkeit des Vor-stellens*]” (GA 66, 396). This implicit critique recalls the passage from the Nietzsche lecture last considered, where Heidegger characterizes the principle as confining beings to constant presence and excluding from their presence any sort of absence or inconsistency. Yet, what we see instead in the 1928/29 seminar is a positive appropriation of the principle that is carried through to at least the 1933 course *Die Grundfrage der Philosophie*, in which, as we have seen, Heidegger asserts, emphatically and seemingly without reservation, that the principle is “*a fundamental enduring element of the existential structure of our being overall [ein Grundbestand des Existenzgefüges unseres Daseins überhaupt]*” (GA 36/37, 59). The 1928/29 seminar

shows in detail what makes this positive appropriation of the principle possible: a reading of *Metaphysics* Γ that interprets the principle as an expression of Aristotle's ontological thesis that being and being-one "follow upon one another." As an imperative demanding the unity of being, the principle can be characterized in 1928/29 as a condition of all speaking and acting and therefore of human existence as such, while in 1933 it can even be characterized as a *decision* for the unity of a people. There is also a clear trajectory from the interpretation of the principle of non-contradiction as a negative formulation of the principle of identity in 1928/29 to Heidegger's attempt in 1957 to locate in the principle of identity that belonging-together (*Zusammengehören*) of man and being that he then names with the word *Ereignis*.<sup>43</sup> It is also important in this context to recall that in 1928/29 Heidegger turns to Aristotle to find what, in the same seminar itself and more widely throughout this period, he was claiming Kant shrank from in suppressing the central role of the transcendental imagination: a grounding of human reason and its principles in the being and temporality of Dasein. As in other cases during this period, the "destruction" of the tradition took the form of a return to Aristotle.

Research for this paper was made possible by a grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

<sup>43</sup> I am referring to the lecture "Der Satz der Identität" from the lecture series *Grundsätze des Denkens* (Bremer und Freiburger Vorträge, GA 79 [Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1994]; see especially 125). Significant in this context is also a remark from a 1937/38 seminar, *Die Metaphysischen Grundstellungen des Abendländischen Denkens* (*Metaphysik*), claiming that "the collapse of *identity* into the 'logical' (truth as correctness)" can be fully measured only when the original determination of *ōv* (ἔν) is understood as grounded in the "*permanence and presence* of what arises as unconcealed [*Beständigkeit und Anwesenheit des Unverborgenen Aufgehenden*]." Heidegger then continues, "It is in *this* context that the question concerning the metaphysical significance of *the principle of contradiction* belongs. So far 'identity' remained a sacrifice of the 'logical' and categorial interpretation, rather than seeing the time-space character and raising the question concerning its own truth" (GA 88 [Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2008], 50). If the principle of non-contradiction came to solidify the collapse of "identity" into the "logical" by itself receiving a purely logical interpretation, the seminar of 1928/29 shows how a different interpretation of the principle can take us back to the "identity" described here as having a temporal/spatial character, that is, as grounded, we can add, in the temporality and the "Da" of Dasein and the interpretation of being in terms of presence. Of course, it is possible that by the end of the 1930s Heidegger came to see his earlier attempt to arrive at a meta-metaphysical conception of identity through the interpretation of the metaphysical principle of non-contradiction as a failure for the same reason he came to see his Kant interpretation as a failure: "Der Versuch, den die Schrift 'Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik' übernimmt, auf 'historischem' Wege einen ganz anderen Anfang der Seynsgeschichte zu erläutern und verständlich zu machen, muß notwendig scheitern ..." (*Besinnung*, GA 66, 88). See A. G. Vigo, "Kehre y Destrucción: Sobre el impacto hermenéutico del 'giro' hacia el Pensar Ontohistórico," *Ápeiron: Estudios de filosofía* 9 (2018): 115-33, esp. 120, 123, and 129-30.

# PHENOMENOLOGICAL INTERPRETATIONS OF ARISTOTLE'S *PHYSICS* IN THE WORKS OF HEIDEGGER AND PATOČKA

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this article is to build a philosophical confrontation between Heidegger and Patočka, two key thinkers of the phenomenological tradition, by focusing on their competing interpretations of the fundamental concepts of Aristotle's *Physics*.

But before anything, one must begin by spelling out the line of agreement: Heidegger and Patočka both perceive Aristotle as a phenomenologist in that he follows the requirement of returning to *the things themselves*, to the things as they appear, without undermining them to the benefit of an intelligible realm beyond appearances. From this point of view, the hermeneutics of Aristotelianism represents, according to Heidegger and Patočka, a first entry into the very *object of thinking* (*Sache des Denkens*), that is, Being, which the pre-Socratics had best identified as φύσις and which Aristotle the *physicist*, following this legacy, rightly conceives as a movement of coming into presence. Thus, movement (κίνησις/μεταβολή) is not reducible to the mere displacement of an entity through space; it is rather the process of unconcealment and of appearing that first opens up the clearing where entities stand, while sheltering them and letting them be present. Aristotle the physicist, already a phenomenologist by anticipation, is thus also a metaphysician in the most dignified and venerable sense of the word to the extent that he sheds light on the *ontological difference* between Being and entities, and this is why Heidegger, no less than Patočka after him, saw the *Physics* as the true *Grundbuch* of Western philosophy.

Let us examine two quotes from Patočka and Heidegger that both confirm this laudatory approach of Aristotle's. The first is from Patočka:

The problem that Aristotle took up: the problem of movement conceived in an ontological manner, of movement that is not a ready-made relation resulting from a constitution but understood as that which constitutes the

Being of entities that are in movement and in becoming, not only from outside and in a relative way, but in their very way of Being.<sup>1</sup>

The second quote is from Heidegger:

Today, with the predominance of the mechanistic thinking of the modern natural sciences, we are inclined to hold that the basic form of movement is being-moved in the sense of motion from one position in space to another, and to “explain” every moving being in terms of that. This kind of being-moved..., being-moved with regard to place or location, is for Aristotle only *one* kind of being-moved among others, but it is in no way distinguished *as movement pure and simple*. ... If we perceive all these overlapping “appearances” as types of movement, we gain an insight into their basic character, which Aristotle fixes in the word and concept of μεταβολή. ... The essential core of what the *Greeks* meant in thinking μεταβολή is had only by observing that in a change, something heretofore hidden and absent comes into appearance.<sup>2</sup>

Thus, it is quite clear that there is a hermeneutical meeting point between Heidegger and Patočka in the way the two thinkers interpret Aristotle’s texts. First, both Heidegger and Patočka, following Aristotle’s lead, refuse to bring down movement to the sole meaning it has acquired since the beginning of modernity, from Galilean and Newtonian physics onward, where it tends to get determined almost exclusively in a mechanistic way as the local displacement of a moving object within space and time. Second, Heidegger and Patočka both share the same concern for thinking movement anew. Movement is not merely an accidental or contingent determination that may happen to an entity “just there” and present-at-hand (*vorhanden*). In a much more fundamental and radical way, movement is to be determined as that which allows entities to appear in their very Being, where something covered up and withdrawn comes to the fore and shows itself for the first time.

Yet one should remain cautious and examine with close attention the differences between Heidegger and Patočka relative to their respective interpretations of Aristotle’s *Physics*. Indeed, they both disagree on the issue of *how* such a movement constitutes entities. The reason for this is that, more fundamentally, Heidegger and Patočka do not understand the Aristotelian theory of substance (οὐσία) in the same way. Admittedly, such

<sup>1</sup> J. Patočka, “*O filosofickém významu Aristotelova pojetí pohybu a historických výzkumů věnovaných jeho vývoji*” (Aristotle’s Conception of Movement: Philosophical Significance and Historical Enquiries), trans. E. Abrams into French (La conception aristotélicienne du mouvement, signification philosophique et recherches historiques), in *Přirozený svět a pohyb lidské existence (The Natural World and the Movement of Human Existence)*, trans. E. Abrams into French (*Le monde naturel et le mouvement de l’existence humaine*, Phaenomenologica (Dordrecht, NL: Kluwer, 1988), 136 (hereafter cited as MNMEH; my English translation from the French translation).

<sup>2</sup> M. Heidegger, “On the Being and Conception of *Phusis* in Aristotle’s *Physics* B, 1,” trans. T. J. Sheehan, in *Continental Philosophy Review* 9, no. 3 (1976): 228-29 (hereafter cited as BCP). For a study of Heidegger’s interpretation of Aristotelian *Physics*, see T. Sheehan, “On the way to *Ereignis*: Heidegger’s Interpretation of Φύσις,” in *Continental Philosophy in America*, ed. H. Silverman, J. Sallis, and T. Seebohm (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 1983), 131-65.

an interpretative divergence could be accounted for as the rather contingent consequence of the numerous ambiguities that stem from Aristotle's texts. It is indeed quite arguable that Aristotle's conception of substance is in itself highly problematic in light of the ambiguous status of the conceptual distinction between form and matter (μορφή and ὕλη). Though it is clear that Aristotle emphasizes the individuated character of a substantial entity as ὑποκείμενον (i.e., the substrate of the different categorial attributions that is not itself a predicate property of the thing), the question is nevertheless open as to whether for Aristotle the individuation of a substance is due to its form, its matter, or a combination of both. In other words, is οὐσία, when taken as the ὑποκείμενον, to be determined as the material substrate that receives, shelters, and grounds all the superstructural formal determinations? Or, on the contrary, is οὐσία in a fundamental way formal, insofar as the "face" of a being, its aspect (εἶδος), in short, its very appearance is what determines it completely, or at least sufficiently, in its essence?

It is of course quite difficult to answer this question in a clear-cut and univocal way, especially when one takes into consideration Aristotle's numerous hesitations in the key texts devoted to this subject.<sup>3</sup> In this paper, what I shall do is leave this philological question aside and instead focus only on the hermeneutical differences between Patočka and Heidegger. In this light, I wish to show that Patočka interprets Aristotelian ousiology in a perspective that grants ὕλη a lot of importance, to the extent that movement according to Patočka defines the process by which the formal determinations aggregate and assemble *on a given material substrate*. For the Czech philosopher, Aristotle's only, yet significant, shortcoming in the conception of movement is to have been unable to account for the very mobility of the substrate. In opposition to Aristotle, who considers the substrate as a bare unchanging and indeterminate residue, Patočka, on the contrary, strives to show that it is dynamic and in a constant process of becoming.

Heidegger, on the other hand, interprets Aristotle quite differently. By laying focus primarily on the second book of the *Physics*, he claims that, not only is there a privilege of form over matter in the characterization of οὐσία (Patočka would grant Heidegger this point with no difficulty); what is more, Heidegger believes that, all things being well considered, the meaning of ὕλη is itself reducible to μορφή to such an extent that οὐσία is really fundamentally and entirely formal (insofar, of course, as form is understood correctly in a phenomenological way as "the movement of placing into appearance"). In order to accomplish this, Heidegger never forgets to mention that ὕλη, in Greek, does not mean matter if one understands a formless entity or dimension of Being itself; rather, ὕλη refers to a specific kind of wood disposed for building, so the very meaning of the word ὕλη contains a reference to a set of formal determinations. We shall now see that Patočka can by no means give in to such a conception of ὕλη being itself necessarily and entirely formal (that is, being endowed with a visible face). Indeed, such a conception goes against what he is really looking for in his reading of Aristotle – that is, the seeds of an onto-genetic theory

<sup>3</sup> For a thorough discussion of this issue, I point to Pierre Aubenque's book *Le problème de l'être chez Aristote*, Quadriga (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1991). I also point to R. Boehm, *La Métaphysique d'Aristote. Le fondamental et l'essentiel*, trans. E. Martineau, Bibliothèque de philosophie (Paris: Gallimard, 1976).

of movement that accounts for the gradual emergence of beings' formal determinations out of an indeterminate and formless ground from which all entities originate.

Thus, the fundamental issue of this article is to unveil, through Patočka's and Heidegger's disagreement on Aristotle, a tension within phenomenology that has gone relatively unnoticed until now. On the one hand, there is the Heideggerian approach, which lays great emphasis on actualization and form in its hermeneutical reading of Aristotle (to such a degree that even matter becomes a formal mode of appearing, insofar as all matter always has an "aspect" or "face" – εἶδος). In so doing, his approach subordinates Being to meaning (λόγος) but then faces the danger of an ontological anthropocentrism (at least this is what Patočka suspects), since human Dasein is precisely defined as a comprehensive openness to the meaning of Being; but if nothing in Being escapes meaning, what in the meaning of Being may escape man? On the other hand, Patočka stresses the irreducibly material dimension at the heart of Being, in Aristotle (πρώτη ὄλη, ὑποκείμενον) and more generally in Greek thinking taken as a whole (ἄπειρον, χώρα, χάος, etc.). In so doing, he is clearly aiming at a phenomenological realism, with a view both to breaking the classical identity of Being and intelligibility (which is the core of idealism) and to thinking the human being as radically decentered so as to overcome the "subject" once and for all. Such is, of course, the purpose of Patočka's famous "asubjective phenomenology." One may, however, ask whether this radical form of realism does not put into jeopardy the phenomenological paradigm of the a priori of correlation between the phenomena and their subjective modes of givenness, and to what extent it calls into question the very possibility of phenomenology by pushing it beyond its own limit.

## 2. PATOČKA AND THE RADICALIZATION OF ARISTOTELIANISM

I have pointed out that Aristotle, according to Patočka, conceives movement as the very process by which the formal determinations of an entity gradually unite and aggregate on the same substrate, which subsists unaltered and unmoved during this process of change. Two passages from Patočka's texts confirm this reading of Aristotle. The first one is from his 1964 article "Aristotle's Conception of Movement: Philosophical Significance and Historical Enquiries":

Movement gathers the substrate's determinations, it relates them to each other ... and makes them actual simultaneously. In this way, the movement by which an apple ripens brings together, on the same substrate, such determinations as softness, size, a specific color, smell, and so forth. Since it is the substrate's determinations that we elucidate when we use the words "is," "there is," it follows that it is movement that allows for things to be what they are – movement is a fundamental ontological factor.<sup>4</sup>

And in 1969, he writes, "Potency is, however, localized [by Aristotle] in a substrate, which makes change possible by enduring unchanged, by lasting in change."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> MNMEH, 129 (my translation into English).

<sup>5</sup> J. Patočka, "The Natural World' Remeditated Thirty-Three Years Later," in *The Natural World as a Philosophical Problem*, trans. E. Abrams, Supplement to the Second Czech Edition, 1970 (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2016), 161. Hereafter cited as NWR.

One should notice that Patočka, in the texts where he analyzes Aristotelian physics, gives way to a two-sided attitude. The first one, as I have mentioned, is a laudatory one: Aristotle's merit lies in the fact that he has shown movement to be an ontological determination of the Being of entities understood as appearances – that is, phenomena. Yet these same texts also express a more critical standpoint in that Aristotle's position does not go far enough in putting Being into movement. Indeed, according to Patočka, Aristotle conceives of the underlying material substrate, under the moving formal determinations, as a sort of bare indeterminate “stuff” that remains without moving or changing. Patočka is critical of such a conception because it seems to reintroduce a metaphysical residue behind phenomena, and thus, with this conception of an immutable, unobservable, and indescribable substrate that never appears, Aristotle is not entirely faithful to his own phenomenological approach. As Patočka writes, “Aristotle's solution, defining movement as a change in a subject, or substrate, made possible by the changelessness of the substrate, is unsatisfactory, since the substrate itself *endures*, that is, undergoes change of its temporal determinations.”<sup>6</sup>

This is why Patočka advocates for a radicalization of Aristotelianism, which he presents as follows: “We can get further only by *radicalizing* Aristotle's conception and understanding movement as the original life which does not receive its unity from an enduring substrate but rather generates itself its own unity as well as that of the thing in movement. Only movement thus understood is the *original* movement.”<sup>7</sup>

But one should then ask what a radicalization of this kind entails. The answer, I think, is that Patočka is quite inclined to keep Aristotle's ὄλη-substrate model for his own onto-genetic theory of appearing, albeit by bringing to this model an important adjustment – namely, to *stimulate* the substrate and set it into motion by insisting on its intrinsically changing and temporal character. This can be confirmed by a certain amount of textual evidence. For example, when he writes that “it turns out that movement is essentially tied not only to bringing determination and individuation to the substrate but also to unconcealing it,”<sup>8</sup> he seems to take over for himself the notion of a substrate, since he is dealing here in this passage with his own conception of movement (the two kinds of movement that he discusses here are relevant to his own theory of movement, but not to Aristotle's). Let us indeed recall here that, according to Patočka, movement is twofold. (1) It first has a cosmological significance and refers to the processes of individuation of worldly entities by which they appear, that is, come into presence (independently of being witnessed by the human gaze; the point is important, since the Czech philosopher admits that things may very well appear without there being anyone to access them, and in this case entities simply appear for themselves, “in the dark,” as Patočka often writes). (2) Second, movement means *unconcealment*; it is the movement of human existence by which individuated worldly entities get revealed in a threefold way, according to Patočka's famous account of the “three essential movements of existence”: enrootment, reproduction, and transcendence.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 162.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 161.

<sup>8</sup> MNMEH, 132 (my translation into English).

<sup>9</sup> Cf. “Idealities of Nature”: Jan Patočka on Reflection and the Three Movements of Human Life,” in *Jan Patočka and the Heritage of Phenomenology*, Centenary Papers, ed. I. Chvatik and E. Abrams (Dordrecht: Springer, 2011).

So, as far as the primary movements of Being are concerned – that is, those movements that account for the incipient appearance of entities prior to the unconcealing movements proper to human existence – Patočka clearly retains the notion of a material substrate. In this same vein, in a more programmatic passage of “Aristotle’s Conception of Movement: Philosophical Significance and Historical Enquiries,” Patočka claims that “it will have to be established that, in the field of the elemental, the conceptual distinction between γένεσις and φθορά makes it unavoidable to maintain the concept of ὕλη as the ultimate and indispensable ὑποκείμενον.”<sup>10</sup> There are thus clear signs that Patočka does not part with the model of an onto-genesis spelled out in reference to ὕλη. A lot of textual evidence on this may also be found in the publication in 2011 of the French translation of Patočka’s second dissertation on Aristotle,<sup>11</sup> where Patočka emphasizes the irreducibility of matter and thus the irreducibility of an ontological dimension of Being that resists form (i.e., meaning) by bringing into discussion such concepts of the Greek tradition as Anaximander’s ἄπειρον or Plato’s χώρα (or the Hesiodic χάος), which all testify to this indeterminate and obscure dimension of Being at the core of phenomenality. On this point Patočka is also in total conformity with the first book of Aristotle’s *Physics*, where the Stagirite writes that ὕλη no less than form and privation (στέρησις) stand side by side as fundamental principles (ἀρχή) of nature (φύσις). Again, what Patočka is really trying to establish as a radicalized approach to Aristotelianism is that the substrate is not immutable but, on the contrary, is essentially in movement, since the ὑποκείμενον is the result of a combined movement, a material, and a formal one.

### 3. HEIDEGGER AND THE DEVALUATION OF MATTER

It is rather difficult to assess in a clear-cut way how Heidegger would appreciate Patočka’s conception of movement and of Being obtained through a radicalization of Aristotelianism. However, what can be affirmed is that he would doubtlessly criticize Patočka’s interpretation of Aristotle’s theory of movement, which, as we have seen, serves as the basis for such a radicalization. Heidegger would simply deny that Aristotle sees the coming to presence of entities as a progressive gathering of formal determinations on a material substrate, which, considered in itself, is immutable. On the contrary, in Heidegger’s hermeneutical approach, not only does Aristotle never make such a claim, but he even explicitly invalidates it in *Physics* II, 1 on the precise occasion of his open criticism of Antiphon’s materialist stance. And it must here, therefore, come as no surprise that Heidegger’s commentary on Aristotle covers this passage of the *Physics* very extensively.

Let us briefly recall Antiphon’s position: οὐσία is more ὕλη than μορφή because Being is essentially that which always remains unchanged and enjoys the highest degree of ontological stability. Now, given that the formal determinations of entities are in movement and are for this reason in a constant process of flux, one cannot count on them to determine οὐσία. Therefore, it is not μορφή but ὕλη, and more precisely the four imperishable

<sup>10</sup> MNMEH, 137 (my translation into English).

<sup>11</sup> J. Patočka, *Aristoteles, jeho předchůdci a dědicové: studie z dějin filosofie od Aristotela k Hegelovi*, trans. E. Abrams into French (*Aristote, ses devanciers, ses successeurs: études d’histoire de la philosophie d’Aristote à Hegel*), Bibliothèque des textes philosophiques (Paris: Vrin, 2011).

elements from which all matter originates, that define οὐσία most accurately. For instance, if one buries a wooden bed, it will get altered by undergoing putrefaction. After some time, the form of the bed will have vanished, and only the wood it was originally made of will remain. Therefore, the bed's essence does not consist in its collected formal determinations (its shape, its size, etc., which are in a provisional configuration: ῥυθμός) but is determined by its matter (which is unchanging: ἀρρυθμιστον).

Now, Aristotle's criticism of Antiphon comports a few points, all of which serve the purpose of showing that an entity's essence is given by its form much more than by its matter. Antiphon the sophist has omitted the linguistic fact that, when we speak of things, we identify them on the basis of their formal determinations. It is because I can see a shaped statue in front of me that appears in a given way (εἶδος) that I can say, subsequently, that it is made of bronze or marble. Similarly, if I am shown bones and flesh, I will not be able to infer that I am in the presence of a living being (φύσει ὄν). In the same vein, Heidegger points out that it is only when I contemplate a work of art (he uses Van Gogh as an example) that I can cry out admiringly, "This is art!" which would be impossible and even nonsensical if I were just observing a set of colors on a palette. Thus, from all these examples, it appears clearly that bronze cannot count as the essence of the statue, nor bones and flesh as the essence of a living animal, nor color as the essence of a work of art. Antiphon's shortcoming is due to his blindness to the fact that the acknowledgement of an entity's material essence is possible only on the basis of a presupposed reference to its formal essence.

But has Patočka not interpreted Aristotle exactly in the same way? Would he not agree totally on this point with Heidegger's commentary? In a sense yes, but in a certain sense only. It is most certainly true that Patočka emphasizes the fact that οὐσία is for Aristotle characterized by "the maximum of [formal] qualifications that determine one given substrate, the maximum of presence."<sup>12</sup> Thus, movement accounts for the way indeterminate Being tends toward formal Being. Moreover, Patočka stresses that this theory of the gradual increase of Beingness is grounded in the Aristotelian conceptual distinction between δύναμις and ἐνέργεια, potentiality and actuality. Indeed, the material substrate contains potentially, that is, latently, the determinations that progressively and gradually get realized through an ontological movement that ends when an entity is fully actual, when it is complete (ἐνέργεια-ἐντελέχεια). So Aristotle's claim that actuality has priority over potentiality<sup>13</sup> means that actuality is endowed with ontological superiority. However, if one follows Patočka's reading of Aristotle carefully, it is clear that potentiality still retains a certain precedence because the movement of giving form (ἐνέργεια/μορφή) proceeds and emanates from an indeterminate material substrate (δύναμις/ύλη) *that must necessarily precede such a movement*, since it is precisely in need of an ontological elevation. Moreover, according to Patočka's interpretation, potentiality is never entirely suppressed by the entity's completed actuality, because the substrate endures under the

<sup>12</sup> MNMEH, 131 (my translation into English).

<sup>13</sup> See, for instance, *Physics*, II, 1: "each thing is said to be what it is when it is actual rather than when it is in a state of potentiality" (193 b 7); see also *Metaphysics* Θ, 6, 1048a 30-b 9.

moving formal determinations. At bottom, even when an entity is completed and fully actual, there is still potentiality at play: the material substrate accounts for the presence of a residue of indetermination, which does not appear, or appears only in an oblique way, and which opens up the *potentiality* of future formal transformations of the entity's essence and among these the possibility of corruption and decay. For example, if one considers finitude (the potentiality of death for human existence), Patočka, contrary to Heidegger, considers death as a possibility that we relate to not only as a source of meaning for our existence. Heidegger was wrong in taking death as a possibility that brings Dasein into its own, frees it from inauthenticity, while finally opening it to taking hold resolutely of its existence as finite. For Patočka this cannot be the full story: if one takes death's possibility seriously, then one is confronted in the face of it with a quasi phenomenon, a phenomenon that does not fully appear, that cannot be fully grasped, and that entails an ontological dimension of materiality that Heidegger never talks about in his famous analyses of Being-toward-death in *Being and Time*: this dimension is Dasein's body, of course, which brings about phenomena of mortality that are absolutely decisive if one wants to account for the movement of dying: aging, disease, sclerosis, bodily pain, and so forth.

Now Heidegger has a very different interpretation of Aristotle's concept of δύναμις. Indeed, one must notice first that, while Patočka wants to maintain the ὕλη-μορφή distinction, Heidegger, on the contrary, gives in to a hermeneutics with a reductionist leaning, where ὕλη ends up by acquiring a *meaning* that then gets entirely spelled out in terms of μορφή. In other words, the very distinction between μορφή and ὕλη gets blurred to the benefit of μορφή, and Heidegger tends to use the Aristotelian distinction between δύναμις and ἐνέργεια in order to carry out this hermeneutical plan of reducing ὕλη entirely to μορφή. For Heidegger, insofar as the phenomenological definition of form is "placement into the visible appearance," it can be shown that entities, to the extent that they necessarily appear, are entirely penetrated by formal determinations, with only subtle variations in the different modes in which they appear *formally*. And matter, understood as a bare indeterminate reality, is not only unconceivable but does not have any ontological or ontical basis. For Heidegger, what we see as an entity's matter is really just a determined way for it to appear and to show itself as visible, that is, as formal.

In this perspective, whereas Patočka uses the concepts of δύναμις and ἐνέργεια to make sense of the ontological relationship between the substrate and the entity's formal determinations, Heidegger uses ἐνέργεια and δύναμις for quite a different and opposite purpose – to reduce ὕλη's meaning to a determinate mode of form. Indeed, the entity's matter – for instance, the wood that the bed is made of – always appears as a "being-appropriate-for" (for example, wood is an appropriate material for shaping a bed). Such a "being-appropriate" is, according to Heidegger, the authentic phenomenological translation of δύναμις. Now Heidegger claims the following:

μορφή is φύσις "to a greater degree" but not because it supposedly is "form" which has subordinate to it a "matter" which it molds. Rather, as the placing (ἐνέργεια) into the appearance (μορφή, εἶδος, ἐντελέχεια) it surpasses "the order-able" (ὕλη) because it is the becoming-present of the appropriation of

the appropriated (δύναμις), and consequently, in terms of becoming-present, is more original.<sup>14</sup>

So it turns out that δύναμις, far from referring to a way of Being of the *phusic* substrate different from the formal determinations that proceed from it, characterizes the entity's matter as *being-appropriate* or orderable to a presupposed plan of φύσις (Being), and it always appears *only retrospectively* when one looks at an entity that has *already* realized itself formally. For example, one never deals with wood understood as a pure indeterminate "stuff" but always with cut wood that appears as appropriate for the making of a bed, where the bed here is already given as an idea (εἶδος) that pre-exists to such a cutting. Similarly, flesh and bones always appear afterward when one looks at a living φύσει ὄν in its formal Being. As Heidegger can then claim, the priority and precedence of actuality over potentiality means in a radical way that "ἐνέργεια more originally fulfills what pure becoming-present is insofar as it means the having-itself-in-the-end such as has left behind all the 'not-yet-ness' of appropriation for (δύναμις)..., or better, has precisely brought it *forth along with it* into the realization of the fulfilled appearance."<sup>15</sup>

It is thus quite clear that Heidegger is not content with simply saying, like Patočka, that there is an ontological superiority of actuality over potentiality if that allows for a chronological or onto-genetic priority of potentiality. Quite to the contrary, if potentiality is the modality by which an entity appears as appropriate to a preordered goal and if the modality of such a goal (for instance, the coming into being of living beings) is itself spelled out in terms of actualization, then this means that potentiality is entirely grounded on actuality. This is why Heidegger can state, correlatively, that "all this declares that μορφή – not only *more* than ὅλη, but in fact *alone* and *completely* – is φύσις."<sup>16</sup> It is then quite evident that ὅλη is just a mode of formal-Being, since it appears.

#### 4. ONTOLOGY (HEIDEGGER) VERSUS COSMOLOGY (PATOČKA)

It is now quite clear that Heidegger's hermeneutical approach to Aristotelian ontology differs from Patočka's. But one could here suspect that Heidegger, by his interpretation of Aristotle, is only trying to anticipate the kind of philosophical position that Patočka is trying to get at by radicalizing Aristotelianism. In other words, can one say that Heidegger and Patočka finally agree on the philosophical goal, that is, on the implementation of a phenomenological ontology where the appearing of entities owes everything to the ontological movement of coming to presence? Can one presume that the kind of radicalization of Aristotelianism that Patočka is looking for, where the substrate itself is supposed to be set in motion, leads to a point of view that lies in very close conformity with Heidegger's own reading of Aristotle? If such were the case, one could expect Heidegger to tell Patočka the following: "Your phenomenological ontology based on a radicalization of Aristotle is quite appropriate, but if you had read Aristotle more

<sup>14</sup> BCP, 259.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 258.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 261.

thoroughly, you would have noticed that what you were looking for is already entirely there and at work in his texts.”

However, even though it can seem that such a philosophical reconciliation between Heidegger and Patočka is tempting, I think that such a move proves to be impossible. As I have suggested, Patočka is looking through the concept of matter for an ontological indetermination that makes it possible to break the Heideggerian identification of Being and meaning, contained in the very concept of *onto-logia*. But this entails a further consequence that I want to explore. Indeed, unlike Patočka, for whom phenomena appear first and foremost by themselves and for themselves (in the night, so to speak), for Heidegger, on the contrary, the entity’s visibility (εἶδος) arising out of a placement into appearance (μορφή) is always and necessarily addressed. In other words, the appearing of Being cannot be conceived as occurring for its own sake. The phenomenon is necessarily oriented toward a receiver, and, according to Heidegger, Aristotle names λόγος the site of such a reception and gathering: “‘Μορφή, and that means τό εἶδος which is in accordance with the λόγος.’ Μορφή must be understood from εἶδος, and εἶδος must be understood in relation to λόγος.”<sup>17</sup>

There is thus, according to Heidegger, a fundamental *correlation* between an appearing entity and the grasping of its way of Being *within human understanding and discourse*.<sup>18</sup> This implies, of course, that λόγος cannot be simply determined as a communication tool. Such a conception inevitably misses the ontological meaning of human understanding: words are not tags that we pin on things already given and present. The word, much more fundamentally, is the very way in which man opens up a space of visibility to receive the appearance as it originally manifests itself:

Why do we lose ourselves in this wide-ranging digression into an explanation of the Being of λόγος when the question is about the Being of φύσις? It is so as to make clear that when Aristotle appeals to *legestai* he is not relying extraneously on some “linguistic usage,” but is thinking out of the original and basic relation to beings.<sup>19</sup>

So there is an intrinsic and constitutive relation between the appearing entity and the human λόγος that shelters and gathers it. In this manner, the eidetic form on the one hand and λόγος on the other can be seen as the two co-originary facets of appearing. And it then follows that Heidegger’s reduction of matter to form, defined phenomenologically as a placing into the appearance, participates in an effort to think phenomenality as having been given to a human opening fit to receive it and *address it in a meaningful way*.

It is clear that Patočka specifically wants to avoid such a reduction of the phenomenon’s appearance to its being-apparent-for-a-subject:

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 249.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. “La question du *logos* dans l’articulation de la facticité chez le jeune Heidegger, lecteur d’Aristote,” in *Heidegger, 1919-1929. De l’herméneutique de la facticité à la métaphysique du Dasein*, ed. J.-F. Courtine, coll. Problèmes et controverses (Paris: Vrin, 1996), 33-67.

<sup>19</sup> BCP, 253.

The appearing of things ... is not an appearing for a subject, but rather appearing as coming forth into individuality, as coming to be. It is an appearing to which the singularized things themselves are inwardly indifferent, an appearing that is not apparent for itself, an appearing plunged in the night and shadow of primal beings and primal Being. Things would then be what they are by virtue not of the secondarily human opening but already of the primordial, “physical” opening of what is by Being.<sup>20</sup>

Contrary to Heidegger’s position, Patočka does not want the movement of appearing to bear solely on the human being’s unconcealing powers. What is here at stake for Patočka is the very possibility of a theory of appearing that overcomes the pitfall of subjectivism, that is, of resisting the phenomenon’s meaning getting entirely determined by an intentional subject. It is certain that Heidegger has doubtlessly made an important leap in the appropriate direction. After all, the phenomenological concept of *Dasein*, thematized in *Sein und Zeit* as Being-in-the-world, then as transcendence in the *Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie* (GA 24), clearly escapes any kind of self-turning-inwardness. By depriving *Dasein* of any kind of interiority, Heidegger avoids the crawling substantialism to which all the different kinds of subjectivistic philosophical idealisms are prey. Nevertheless, by claiming that the phenomenon is essentially directed to a human disclosure, he renews in his own way a certain form of *ontological anthropocentrism* (or at least an ontological *Daseinocentrism* if one argues, correctly so, that *Dasein* is not the same thing as man according to Heidegger).

And here, one needs only to recall Heidegger’s famous yet radical statement, in the *Letter on Humanism*, where he identifies man as the shepherd of Being:<sup>21</sup> man is the only entity that understands Being, and to this extent he is even closer to the gods than to the other living beings. Thus, everything seems to substantiate the thesis that Heidegger conceives of phenomenality as manifest-presence-for-man. Not only do entities originally appear as visible forms (εἶδος, μορφή), but what is more, Heidegger in a number of texts even identifies the Being of entities with ἀλήθεια, that is, unconcealment. The disagreement with Patočka is here evident, since the Czech philosopher, quite to the contrary, envisages the human being’s un-concealing movements as secondary to and derived from the primary physical movements, from whence entities originally receive their constitution as phenomena (through the primary cosmological movements, entities appear but are not unconcealed!). In this light, it would seem that Heidegger, by conceiving Being straightaway and from the start as an alethic un-concealing and un-covering, is blocking for himself the way of a truly asubjective theory of appearing, since in Heidegger’s approach, human *Dasein* is structurally implicated in the ontological movement of presencing, as the addressee of such a movement. And indeed, it seems to be a part of the very grammar of “unconcealment” that there should be included in that term the idea of a reference to someone who witnesses it: an entity always unconceals itself *to* someone able to see it. Thus, against Heidegger, who renews in a phenomenological vein the old

<sup>20</sup> NWR, 159.

<sup>21</sup> M. Heidegger, “Letter on Humanism,” in *Basic Writings* (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), 210.

metaphysical primacy of vision and light in his ontology, Patočka wants to establish the essentially grounded and derived character of visibility. What is actually at stake here is the ambition for Patočka to think the appearance of entities no longer on the grounds of an onto-logy but within an onto-genesis in the framework of a cosmology, where the advent of entities in the light of visibility is the result of a cosmic and physical movement out of the originary night of indetermination. Such a cosmological night of indetermination can of course be traced back in Aristotle's concept of ὕλη, and this is the reason why Patočka is quite against the annexation of matter within the domain of form.

## 5. CONCLUSION

As a result of this analysis, it should come as no surprise that Patočka emphasizes Aristotle's theory of movement in order to pave the way, through a philosophical radicalization, to an asubjective phenomenology where the movement of appearing owes nothing, in its incipient emergence, to the human unconcealing powers. The latter play a role only much later, when entities have acquired their formal determinations; the human unconcealing movements then allow entities to reveal their assembled and unified formal determinations. From Patočka's hermeneutic perspective on Aristotelian *Physics*, ὕλη must be given a great deal of importance because it points to the indeterminate source of Being from whence the genetic movements proceed. In opposition to Heidegger's ontology, where the phenomenal entity's matter tends to receive a meaning spelled out in terms of form on the background of the unconcealing event of Being, Patočka wants to think μορφή as a moving emanation that detaches and frees itself from a formless and indeterminate source, from this cosmological night from whence entities originate. I thus propose to qualify such a theory of appearing as a "phenomenological realism," because it tries in a resolute manner to envisage phenomena as having their meaning construed independently of the human unconcealing powers. Hence, the unconcealing movements of human existence are not originary and self-grounded but are rather to be considered as derived from and grounded on the primal and cosmic movements of Being, which must then be considered as the privileged theme of an onto-genetic theory of appearing.

# HEIDEGGER'S SILENCE

*Those who know me from my published works do not know me*<sup>1</sup>  
[Martin Heidegger, *Anmerkungen I-V (Schwarze Hefte 1942-1948)*]

The epigraph, taken from the most recently published of Martin Heidegger's *Black Notebooks*, raises a crucial question: Why should a philosopher choose to conceal or misrepresent his thought? Why should philosophy avoid frankness? In the case of Heidegger, a ready answer beckons. We may assume that he chose to hide the exact nature and extent of the connection between his thought and National Socialism. Those who support this conclusion have merely to point to Heidegger's studied evasiveness in the postwar period about his association with National Socialism. Moreover, they may also point to the fact that the large body of writings Heidegger held back from publication – the “hidden” writings – originated during the period of National Socialist rule in Germany. Indeed, the entire “esoteric project” in the Heideggerian corpus finds its fullest expression in the 1930s. While this is a tempting answer, it ignores Heidegger's own consideration of the matter, presumably on the same ground – namely, that Heidegger's account of his silence provides an ostensibly philosophical basis for what amounts to political cowardice, at least for Heidegger's many critics. Heidegger, like so many other Nazis, sought to distance himself as much as possible from the disastrously defeated movement out of fear of reprisal. Rather than being true believers, Nazis such as Heidegger revealed themselves as callow opportunists seeking to make their way in a new reality with their accustomed opportunism intact, a particularly repugnant possibility in the case of a philosopher of Heidegger's stature.

We have no intention of overturning this view. Rather, we want to put it in the broader context of Heidegger's philosophical writing. For Heidegger himself makes numerous remarks on his practice of writing during the 1930s when he had no reason to fear his association with Nazism.<sup>2</sup> In these remarks, Heidegger suggests that his lectures and published works (at that time few in number outside of *Being and Time*) are

<sup>1</sup> M. Heidegger, *Anmerkungen I-V (Schwarze Hefte 1942-1948)* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2015), 325. The citation is taken from G. W. Leibniz, who, we might add, published little in his own lifetime relative to the immense size of the writings he left unpublished after his death in 1716 (about 150,000 to 200,000 sheets) and that still await complete publication in the Akademie-Ausgabe.

<sup>2</sup> There is a school of thought that claims Heidegger began to show resistance to National Socialism in the later 1930s. This view allows for another narrative regarding the hidden writings: that they were hidden from the Nazis for fear of reprisal. Why Heidegger kept them hidden after the war is, however, not clear from this account. See R. Polt, “Beyond Struggle and Power: Heidegger's Secret Resistance,” in *Interpretation* 35, no. 1 (Fall 2007): 11-40.

mere *foreground*. The implication is that the “real” philosophy lies underneath for those to discover who have the requisite patience and acumen. If this attitude toward philosophical writing sounds familiar, it most certainly is. The controversial political philosopher Leo Strauss made the distinction between the surface and the depth of philosophical works the cornerstone of his hermeneutic approach to philosophy, which has had considerable influence in the United States. But, as the noted comparatist Michael Holquist once remarked, Strauss seems a bare novice next to Heidegger in the practice of esotericism.<sup>3</sup>

Now that we have Heidegger’s hidden writings before us in significant number, Holquist’s claim does not in the least seem exaggerated. Not only do we have a series of volumes that followed upon the publication in 1989 of Heidegger’s *Contributions to Philosophy*, constituting a large and complexly intertwined group of texts – the so-called Ereignis manuscripts – but we also have another large body of texts, the *Black Notebooks*, which disclose to the public for the first time what may be an even more occluded layer of the philosopher’s work. Heidegger expressly arranged the order of publication for his *Complete Edition (Gesamtausgabe)* to proceed in this way, with stipulations to have all the lectures published first, then the Ereignis manuscripts, and finally the notebooks.<sup>4</sup>

This arrangement brings us back to our opening question: Why should a philosopher choose to conceal or misrepresent his thought? While the suspicions of political expediency can and should not be dismissed, we think that the reasons for this elaborate structure delve even deeper into Heidegger’s thinking and reveal its fundamental – not accidental – connection to politics. The main assertion that we articulate is that Heidegger appears to subscribe to the view that philosophy is inherently dangerous, indeed inimical to political organization, and thus may appear publicly only in a form that is suitable for public life. Students of Strauss may find a striking communality in this respect, since Strauss also holds to the view that philosophy is dangerous, that the philosophical investigation of things leads to a profound skepticism about the political order.<sup>5</sup> But one can trace this view back to Kant, whose famed essay “What Is Enlightenment?” (1784) expresses a similar tension with its strategic result: that one may criticize but must also continue to perform one’s duties as prescribed by the state in which one lives.

In what follows, we examine first Heidegger’s own statements about the nature of his philosophical project as a complicated philosophical pedagogy. We then examine

<sup>3</sup> This claim may seem outrageous given the significance Heidegger attributed to *Being and Time*, even in his most critical comments on that work.

The frankest expression of this point is perhaps in the *Black Notebooks*. In the notebook for 1935/36 (*Überlegung IV*), Heidegger writes, “My lectures ... all, even where they refer to themselves and their task, are always and quite *knowingly* foreground, indeed even a kind of hiding” (*Meine Vorlesungen ... sind alle, auch da, wo sie sich über sich selbst und die Aufgabe aussprechen, immer noch und zwar wissentlich Vordergrund, ja meist sogar ein Verstecken*). See M. Heidegger, *Überlegungen II-VI (Schwarze Hefte 1931-1938)* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2013), 257. But also see M. Heidegger, *Besinnung GA 66* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1997), 421. In this work, Heidegger makes the same claim in the account of his own “development” in the appendix.

<sup>4</sup> See “Editor’s Afterword” in Heidegger, *Überlegungen II-VI (Schwarze Hefte 1931-1938)*, 530-31.

<sup>5</sup> One may argue that philosophers hide their thought largely due to fear of prosecution from intolerant authorities. Strauss certainly expresses this position, but he goes farther to suggest that the philosopher’s work cannot be tolerated by any authority since the philosopher challenges any and all authority and, in doing so, asserts his own. In this respect, Strauss is much closer to Heidegger than, say, to Spinoza, as we shall see.

several levels of his thinking and, in particular, the extremely radical aspects of the hidden manuscripts. In these manuscripts – indeed, in Heidegger’s thinking of the 1930s – he is preoccupied with silence, with the way in which words speak or reveal silence. The oxymoronic pairing, the speaking of silence, is one way of describing a general difficulty in Heidegger’s thought: his attempt to bring what evades speech to speech.<sup>6</sup> We argue that this effort to speak silence is central to Heidegger’s thought and not only an esotericism in the sense given that term by Leo Strauss, a sort of political prudence, but a more fundamental esotericism at the core of philosophy itself. Following Socrates’s famous claim that philosophy is a form of “minding or caring for death” (του θάνατου μελέτη), we maintain that Heidegger’s esotericism reflects a refusal to construct myths in the face of death, the “impossible possibility.” Indeed, Heidegger’s most profoundly radical move is to free death from the various layers of illusion that the tradition has erected to return it to its essential mysteriousness, terror, and wonder, a position that is profoundly revolutionary for the city (as a place of shelter or illusion, of speeches and endless discourse) and politics as an art of illusion encouraging hopes that death defeats.<sup>7</sup>

## I.

One of the most interesting places to start with Heidegger’s own conception of his philosophical pedagogy is the large set of lectures he gave on the thought of Friedrich Nietzsche beginning in 1937. In these lectures, Heidegger paints a remarkable portrait of the philosopher that seems to shed light on his own philosophical work.<sup>8</sup> In this typically indirect way, we are given access to Heidegger’s thought through his interpretation of another, a device that should be familiar to all readers of Heidegger since it has often led to accusations of interpretive violence or arbitrariness or ventriloquy.

The opening lecture course in the Nietzsche series is called “The Will to Power as Art.” In this lecture course, Heidegger explains the most distinctive (and to many, annoying) aspect of his approach to Nietzsche – namely, that Heidegger subordinates the published texts to the “main work” (*Hauptwerk*) drawn from notes first published

<sup>6</sup> See K. Ziarek, *Language after Heidegger* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013). The basic debate is whether speaking silence speaks something known but hidden or not, as we argue. Does Heidegger listen to the voice of being? Is there such a voice? If one insists that Being does speak, then the answer is obvious. If one does not, then the answer may seem stranger. Then the voice of Being might seem to be nothing but a voice negating one’s present circumstances by introducing into them precisely a voice that does not make sense within and is thus silent to those circumstances. Is that not the happening of being (*Wesung des Seyns*)?

<sup>7</sup> In *Heidegger’s Esoteric Philosophy*, Peter Trawny describes Heidegger’s esotericism in terms of the “adyton,” the interior space of the Greek temple that is the precinct of the god. Heidegger’s philosophy in this sense becomes an exploration of the secret and the holy, perhaps mystery itself. We agree with Trawny’s account since Heidegger clearly utilizes this kind of discourse in his account of the silent and esoteric. He also alludes to Christian mystical discourse and apocalyptic discourse (i.e., the last god). While Heidegger deploys these different discourses to open up his thought to different patterns of thinking belonging to the tradition, we try to go farther to isolate the more fundamental communality in these discourses: a thinking of the unthinkable, speaking about the unspeakable – Being and death. Our contention is that this ostensibly darker aspect of Heidegger’s thought is more central to it. See P. Trawny, *Adyton: Heideggers esoterische Philosophie* (Berlin: Matthes & Seitz, 2010).

<sup>8</sup> Babette Babich makes this point as well. See B. Babich, “Heidegger’s Black Night: The *Nachlass* and Its *Wirkungsgeschichte*,” in *Reading Heidegger’s Black Notebooks 1939-1941*, ed. I. Farin and J. Malpas (Cambridge, MA: MIT University Press, 1916), 59-88.

after Nietzsche's death: *The Will to Power*. Heidegger claims that *The Will to Power* is Nietzsche's primary and genuine work:

The genuine philosophy of Nietzsche, however, the fundamental position from which he speaks in these and in all of the writings he himself published does not come into definitive form and not in the form of a published work, neither in the decade between 1879 and 1889 nor in the years prior to that. What Nietzsche himself published in his creative years (*zeit seines Schaffens*) is mere foreground. This applies to his first writing, *The Birth of Tragedy out of the Spirit of Music* (1872). The genuine philosophy remains behind as *Nachlass*.<sup>9</sup>

This may seem at first a puzzling, willful declaration since Heidegger refuses to provide any grounds for it. But it should come as no surprise to those familiar with Heidegger's thought, where one of the reigning patterns is precisely that of concealing and revealing. Few aspects of Heidegger's thought have become more commonplace than this play of concealing and revealing (or, as the truly Heideggerian translator may put it: "unconcealing"). We may thus interpret Heidegger's seemingly outrageous claim as an allusion to the play of concealing and revealing in which the latter term is bound to be the more superficial because the surface *can* blind us to what lies beneath. Indeed, we may be so beguiled by the surface that we forget to consider that the surface hides the relation that, according to Heidegger, is its own condition of possibility.

Another way in which Heidegger describes this kind of concealment in regard to philosophers is by the notion of the "unthought" or the "unsaid." Heidegger beckons us to consider what a philosopher does not or *cannot* consider or say. This pattern may be turned into a sort of "blindness and insight" commonplace, whereby every insight results from a blindness, since every claim contains its own tacit counterclaim or, in the language of German idealism, every position implies or creates its own potential negation. This pattern is not what Heidegger has in mind.

Heidegger writes in his discussion of Plato's doctrine of truth that "The teaching of a thinker is what is unsaid in what he says."<sup>10</sup> Even more dramatically, Heidegger writes in the second major text of his Nietzsche book, "The highest speech of the thinker consists not simply in being silent about what may genuinely be said in speaking but to say it so that it is named in not speaking: the speech of thought is silence."<sup>11</sup> This double affirmation of silence invites us to read the philosophic text differently, as a text that does not speak explicitly but rather implicitly. The philosophic text speaks through its silences, through what the philosophic text must suppress in order for it to be a text that has some meaning to be drawn out from it. To add to these two texts from published sources, we have a third from one of Heidegger's ostensibly esoteric texts, the *Contributions to Philosophy*, written between 1936 and 1938 and published first in 1989:

<sup>9</sup> M. Heidegger, *Nietzsche I* (Pfullingen: Neske Verlag, 1961), 17 (our translation).

<sup>10</sup> M. Heidegger, "Plato's Doctrine of Truth," in *Pathmarks*, ed. W. McNeill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 155-82.

<sup>11</sup> Heidegger, *Nietzsche I*, 471 (our translation).

Remaining silent is the “logic” of philosophy to the extent that it poses the fundamental question from the other beginning. Philosophy seeks the truth of the happening of Being, and this truth is the hinting-resonating hiddenness (the secret) of the event (the hesitating failure of speech).

We can never speak Beyng itself, immediately, especially when it has been leapt to in the leap. For every speaking comes from Beyng and speaks from its truth. Every word and with it every logic stands under the power of Beyng. The essence of “logic” (cf. SS. 34) is thus sigetic. In this logic, the essence of language is first grasped as well.<sup>12</sup>

This text suggests that silence is not merely a rhetorical trick or device by means of which philosophers may communicate the essence of their thought. To the contrary, the essence of thought and speech is silence, a much more complicated and radical position. Indeed, this position is so radical that we need to take it up with care. To do so, we return to Heidegger’s essay on Plato’s doctrine of truth. This essay describes a distinction that is itself most easily grasped by reference to yet another essay by Heidegger that seems to have had extraordinary significance for him given the frequency with which he cites it: “On the Essence of Truth.”<sup>13</sup> We will begin with the essay on Plato and then move on to “On the Essence of Truth.”

The essay on Plato’s doctrine of truth asserts a fundamental distinction between correctness (*Richtigkeit*) and truth (*Wahrheit*). Heidegger maintains that Plato transforms the original concept of truth into correctness. What does he mean by this? Put simply, Heidegger claims that Plato privileges one attitude to beings, that of a particular picture (*ἰδέα*), and ensures that that picture becomes the normative standard by which all other beings of the same kind are judged. One identifies the table with a picture that applies to describe all tables insofar as they resemble this picture and thus for all beings or objects with which we come into contact. If one points to an object, claiming it is a table, that statement is considered true to the extent that the object corresponds to the picture of the table the statement calls up. This correspondence becomes truth. Heidegger spots in this correspondence a serious problem, since the relation cannot account for its origin because to do so would reveal that it has an origin. What is truth in this notion of truth? The answer: the correspondence of object and picture. Yet, on what basis does this relation emerge? What is the truth of truth? Heidegger considers this question far more probing, since it inquires into the ground of the truth relation. Plato provides the ideas as the ground and a doctrine of recollection to explain our initial identification of a being as an object of a particular kind. Heidegger does no such thing. He inquires into the emergence of the picture itself, not as the creation of Platonic myth, but as a putatively open encounter with a being. Heidegger stresses this point: the initial way in which the object is disclosed as

<sup>12</sup> M. Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy*, trans. R. Rojcewicz and D. Villa-Neu (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), 63. Translation modified.

<sup>13</sup> Heidegger, *Besinnung*, 419; *Contributions to Philosophy*, 258. W. J. Richardson famously recognized the significance of this talk as the major ground for differentiating Heidegger I from Heidegger II. See W. J. Richardson, *Heidegger: Through Phenomenology to Thought*, 4th ed. (New York: Fordham University Press, 1993).

such is the crucial condition of possibility of the relation of truth we first described and that Heidegger refers to as the relation of correctness.

Heidegger's claim is that the truth relation as one of correctness assumes a prior relation to emerge as such. This prior relation is the encounter with the being whereby it is disclosed as the object it is. Heidegger then suggests that the doctrine of correctness in effect hides or conceals this initial relation by which the object is disclosed. The truth relation we have described, the relation of correspondence, conceals its origin or, indeed, that it has an origin. It becomes nothing more than an everyday truth to be repeated and accepted without question or reflection. By making the correspondence relation fundamental, Plato in fact conceals the question of the origin of the normative type in the correspondence relation; perhaps Plato even does so on purpose in order to conceal the contingency of his own privileged model. If we understand tableness in terms of a picture of the table, there is no reason to hold that picture for authoritative once we become aware of its origins.

These origins are very difficult to identify. In "On the Essence of Truth," Heidegger develops a series of terms denoting an openness (*die Offenheit* or *das Offene*) in which beings may disclose themselves for what they are. The origins are an openness in which beings may be encountered. The moment beings are encountered, it may of course be possible to identify them by reference to one trait or angle. Yet the dominance of this identification by one trait or angle (a sort of visual cliché) remains at issue, with Heidegger questioning not only the reduction to identification by one trait or angle but also the possibility of doing so without discarding most of the object in favor of one dominating aspect of it. If we pitch the claim here more pointedly, we may say indeed that our inventory of concepts – their standard meanings and usages – are reductions of a complicated whole that we cannot reduce without prejudice to other interpretations that may either be finitely elaborated or not (and, in the latter case, that of an indefinite or infinite thing, the evidence is never fully forthcoming). We reduce objects. Why do we do so?<sup>14</sup>

## II.

This question is one of the most important in Heidegger's thought, although it seldom comes to the fore as such. Heidegger makes strong claims for the necessity of simplification. But on what basis? Why do we simplify? His transparent response is so that we do not have to think. Simplification spares us thought. We take certain things to be the case so that we do not become bogged down or exhausted in the unraveling of the world. The more aggressive version of this claim is that we cannot think at all, even about thinking itself, without making a few assumptions, without laying down a few clichés without which thought would be impossible. We live in simplicity because we have to – we cannot simply question everything all the time. We cannot even do so at any one time since we make assumptions that ground every question, every assumption, every comment at any given

<sup>14</sup> See M. Heidegger, *Basic Questions of Philosophy: Selected Problems of "Logic,"* trans. R. Rojcewicz and A. Schuwer (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 72-74. In this lecture course, Heidegger suggests that simplification is indeed a magnificent achievement, which deadens, however, when that achievement becomes accepted as a norm, thus protecting us from the disturbing openness or silence from which sense or sound has been wrested.

time. To suspend one's reality *completely* at any given time is impossible if one hopes to live in the remainder.

Perhaps we should revisit our opening discussion of Heidegger's esotericism at this point. Heidegger's more powerful and wide-reaching claim is that thinking can never speak completely of what is: silence is not eradicable. Silence is not eradicable because we cannot completely speak (or describe) any one being, and we cannot do so because we are describing that being within the limits of a certain relation to it that cannot exhaust all relations to it.<sup>15</sup> Heidegger says this based on qualitative rather than quantitative considerations. The main problem is that one cannot attain a completely open relation to a being, as the term itself indicates, because one always approaches that being from some direction or point of access. The relation that would be complete would be absolute. But what can an absolute relation be but the denial of all relation, including the very point of view we are discussing now? The absolute is an absence of thought, silence. One is thus forced to choose between relation and the absolute since each relates to the other by excluding it.

As a result, Heidegger insists that thinking is an activity that expresses a remarkable tension between an assumed and essentially automatic layer of correct thinking and something else that emerges in terms of that thinking but is not and cannot be confined to its limits or norms, something else which, so to speak, remains silent to it.<sup>16</sup> Taken to an extreme, Heidegger develops the extraordinarily complicated notion that the relation between the thinking being and the being thought is never exactly the same since the mutual interaction of the two describes a relation that is singular each time, even if it is in some way repeated, this repetition being already a kind of simplification. Heidegger writes:

In philosophical knowledge, on the contrary, a transformation of the person understanding begins with the first step and, indeed, not in the moral-“existential” sense but in Dasein. That means: the relation to Beyng and formerly to the truth of Beyng changes in terms of the dislocation in Da-sein itself. Because in philosophical knowing at any point everything at once – personhood in its attitude to truth, this truth itself, and therewith the relation to Beyng – comes into dislocation, and thus an immediate representation of something present-at-hand is never possible, and thinking in philosophy remains estranging.<sup>17</sup>

How is it possible to think this kind of transformative relation? Must we lapse into silence by facing the sheer complexity of this relation? Does it not also affirm the

<sup>15</sup> One can speak of this as a certain excess, an approach taken by Richard Polt. See R. Polt, “Propositions on Emergency,” in *Philosophy Today* 59, no. 4 (Fall 2015): 587-97.

<sup>16</sup> Heidegger writes in a lecture from 1933/34, “If one interprets [Plato’s] ideas as representations and thoughts that contain a value, a norm, a law, a rule, such that ideas then become conceived of as norms, then the one subject to these norms is the human being – not the historical human being, but rather the human being in general. ... Here all of the powers against which we must struggle today have their root.” See M. Heidegger, *Being and Truth*, trans. G. Fried and R. Polt (Bloomington: Indiana University press, 2010), 129.

<sup>17</sup> Heidegger, *Contributions*, 13. Translation modified.

abject simplicity in which we live? The emphasis on reduction has another antecedent – Nietzsche, who was so much on Heidegger’s mind in the late 1930s. The problem of reduction is virtually a constant in Nietzsche’s thought, and it receives perhaps the most agile and unconventional treatment in *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886). In the second “Act” (*Hauptstück*) of the book, Nietzsche evokes the “sacred simplicity” in which we live based on a will to truth that is itself based on a deeper will to ignorance, *not* to know:

*O sancta simplicitas!* In what strange simplification and falsification people live! One can wonder endlessly if one devotes one’s eyes to such wondering. How we have made everything around us bright and easy and free and simple! How we have given our senses a carte blanche for everything superficial, our thoughts a divine desire for high-spirited leaps and false conclusions! – How we have understood from the start to hold on to our ignorance in order to enjoy a barely comprehensible freedom, thoughtlessness, recklessness, bravery, and joy in life in order to enjoy life! And hitherto science could arise only on this from now on a firm, granite foundation of ignorance, the will to knowledge rising up on the foundation of a much more violent will, the will to ignorance, to the uncertain, the untrue! Not as its opposite but rather – as its refinement.<sup>18</sup>

Nietzsche accentuates the virtual necessity of simplifying, forgetting, reducing our world to a predictable, manageable everyday that we may – or, rather, must – ignore, if we are to do anything at all. Action requires simplification; otherwise, how would it ever be possible to act?<sup>19</sup> The simplifications evoked and imposed by the necessity to act create the reality of the surface, the exoteric reality that is the reality of correctness, of proper imitation or repetition. But this is not the reality of the thinker. Better: this kind of reality does not exhaust the reality available to the thinker. For the thinker, as we have seen, is aware of the vast simplification, aware of the silences that are the unthought and unsaid remainders of the world of simplification. For Heidegger, the project of thinking, precisely as a project, involves the opening up of this closed, forgotten, or ignored silence through speech. Philosophy brings silence to speech, indeed, but only as what seems to be a Sisyphean endeavor. As Heidegger says, in 1927, “Every philosophy, as a human thing, intrinsically fails.”<sup>20</sup>

### III.

What started out as a discussion of silence in Heidegger ends up with a discussion of the nature of philosophy itself as Heidegger interprets it. Esotericism is not merely a prudential practice of the philosopher, not merely the admission of tension between the political order

<sup>18</sup> F. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. W. Kaufmann (New York: Vintage, 1966), 35. Translation modified.

<sup>19</sup> This problem afflicts Dostoevsky’s underground man, who is unable to act decisively precisely because he distrusts simplifications, a decision to believe in something that precludes further thinking. See F. Dostoevsky, *Notes from Underground*, trans. R. Pevear and L. Volokhonsky (New York: Vintage, 1994), 17.

<sup>20</sup> M. Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, trans. M. H. Heim (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 76.

and the philosopher, but a defining condition imposed on the philosopher that recognizes that the relation between any sort of order and the philosopher is fraught, to say the least, if not impossible. For the philosopher recognizes that the very origin of order is not orderly – rather, the origin participates in that order only by its withdrawal from it. By this I mean that the philosopher – or, rather, the thinker – has both to deal with the order of his day and to move beyond it to its origins. The primary task of thinking is to give voice to the unsaid or unthought or what is silent in any given order: thinking of this sort is not accidentally but essentially subversive or revolutionary, because it challenges not only a particular political order but all political orders, no matter of what kind.

Although the depth of Heidegger's involvement in politics is only beginning to become clear, his practice of thinking cannot easily be read otherwise since it challenges the political order in the most radical way from the outset. While Heidegger does give full attention to the surface and to the framework of thought that first allows his own investigations, this element of the Heideggerian approach is mere foreground. One cannot get to the origins without beginning where one is at a given time and in a given space, but the thinker in his investigations dislocates, upsets, and estranges this accustomed situatedness: the thinker both depends on and shakes to the core that framework in which she functions, and she does so by returning to the origin, by creating a history of the framework that shadows and rivals the accepted account:

In all genuine history, which is more than a mere sequence of events, the future is decisive: i.e., what is decisive are the goals of creative activity, their rank, and their extent. The greatness of creative activity takes its measure from the extent of its power to follow up the innermost hidden law of the beginning to carry the course of this law to its end. Therefore, the new, the deviating, and the elapsed are historically inessential though nonetheless inevitable. But because the beginning is always the most concealed, because it is inexhaustible and withdraws, and because on the other hand what has already been becomes immediately the habitual, and because this conceals the beginning through its extension, therefore what has become habitual needs transformations, i.e., revolutions. Thus the original and genuine relation to the beginning is the revolutionary, which, through the upheaval of the habitual, once again liberates the hidden law of the beginning.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>21</sup> M. Heidegger, *Basic Questions of Philosophy: Selected Problems of "Logic,"* trans. R. Rojcewicz and A. Schuwer (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 35. Heidegger's use of the term "revolution" is equivocal. He seems to be leery of the term as describing an upheaval or reversal of a given order (*Umwälzung*), thus merely another move within a given framework: "Revolutions are upheavals of what is already present at hand, but never transformations into the completely other [*in das ganz andere*]." To the extent that Heidegger is truly radically revolutionary, he seeks a more radical and complete toppling of a present order that is not merely a move within a given framework but a new beginning that leaves the framework behind. See M. Heidegger, *Die Geschichte des Seyns* GA 69 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2012), 23; and *Überlegungen VII-XI (Schwarze Hefte 1938/39)* GA 95 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2014), 48, 53. In the *Geschichte des Seyns*, Heidegger writes, "No 'revolution' is revolutionary enough. It remains essentially a half-measure."

This is one of Heidegger's clearest descriptions of the revolutionary nature of his thinking. The "law of the beginning" is simply that there is no law, no normativity that may withstand the return to the beginning. The use of "law" here to refer to what amounts to its opposite is both a recognition of the inherently normative implications of returning to a beginning that denies all normativity and an irony of sorts, for the ostentatious use of the term "law" merely serves to underscore its radical, inevitable contingency.

This "law of the beginning" is a crucial underlying structure in Heidegger's thinking, and it is reflected cunningly in the organization of Heidegger's writings themselves where one has the impression of pulling back different layers of occultation until one enters into the site of a beginning insofar as normativity is thrown to the wind – in Hannah Arendt's arresting phrase, the "wind of thought."<sup>22</sup> This effect seems to be intentional, for Heidegger carefully organized his *Collected Edition* (now an imposing 102 volumes) to reveal the iceberg of which the writings published in his lifetime were indeed only the tip. But he did not want to reveal this iceberg in one fell swoop. To the contrary, Heidegger stipulated that the volumes making up the *Collected Edition* would be published in a specific order.

Heidegger divided the *Collected Edition* into four main sections: (1) published works, 1910-1976; (2) lecture courses, 1919-1944; (3) unpublished treatises, talks, and "thoughts" (*Gedachtes*); and (4) indications and sketches. He stipulated that no works from sections 3 and 4 were to be published until all of the first two sections had been published. He further stipulated that no works from section 4 were to be published prior to the publication of all the volumes in section 3. Heidegger thus created a clear order of publication that sets out an equally clear pattern of movement from surface to the depths, from the foreground philosophy to the genuine thinking. Moreover, even in the two sections that ostensibly contain the most genuine thinking, he makes a distinction between the treatises and the "indications" and "sketches."<sup>23</sup>

This structure implies two crucial points: that one must first become acquainted with the surface, or "foreground," and that the foreground must give way finally to the most genuine or frank thought – the thought that tries most stubbornly to think silence. Even a cursory examination of key works from the various sections serves to underscore

<sup>22</sup> H. Arendt, *Life of the Mind*, vol. 1 (San Diego, CA: Harcourt Inc., 1978), 193. See also M. Heidegger, *What Is Called Thinking*, trans. J. Glenn Gray (New York: HarperPerennial, 1976), 17. Heidegger refers to Socrates as the "purest thinker of the West," who stood in the "draft" (*Zug*) of thinking without the need for supports or, indeed, writing. Heidegger appears to claim that Socrates was the purest (and strongest) thinker of the West because he resisted the temptation to permanence that beset his successors.

<sup>23</sup> The suggestion that the *Black Notebooks* constitute the core of Heidegger's thought or, at least, a crucial supplement to that thought as revealed in the Ereignis treatises is bound to strike many Heideggerians and Heidegger scholars as provocative if not simply shocking. David Farrell Krell, for example, seems to take the position (not so uncommon) that the notebooks are filled with "rants" of a master who has lost his way. This is not a surprising view if one takes into account the radicality of the notebooks in which Heidegger's profound commitment to revolution is everywhere evident and quite robustly so in the notebooks' linguistic experimentation and complexity. One of Heidegger's early guiding statements is this: "*The end of 'philosophy'* – we must bring philosophy to an end and prepare the completely other – Metapolitics." He also suggests that metaphysics is a kind of meta-politics, presumably one that has hidden its political nature under the disguise of eternal truth. Put briefly, it seems to us that dismissal of the notebooks has a protective function – namely, to protect Heidegger as the very kind of philosopher he sought to overcome, the acceptable phenomenologist as against the unacceptable adventurer of the 1930s. See Heidegger, *Überlegungen II-IV*, 115, 116. The quotes come from notebook III, which bears the indication "Fall 1932" on its first page.

this impression. The published works are well known, with *Being and Time* setting out the basic parameters of Heidegger's thought. The lectures are examples of thinking oriented to pedagogy, to philosophical pedagogy.<sup>24</sup> Heidegger deploys the format of the lecture and manipulates the typical expectations of the lecture course – that there is a specific kind of knowledge to be acquired – to masterful effect. As Karl Löwith remarked, Heidegger was a kind of sorcerer who promised a final insight in his lectures that he never provided.<sup>25</sup> Heidegger manipulates the erotic approach pioneered by Plato in the *Symposium* but undermines it by deferring the consummation – and, indeed, this is not a bad way to look at Heidegger's lectures, which fascinate in part because of the consummation they both promise and defer.

The published works and lectures do not, however, prepare one for the radical transformation that occurs in the two latter sections of the *Collected Edition*. The key inaugural volume for these sections is the *Contributions to Philosophy*. Rumors of this work circulated among Heidegger's devotees – some were even allowed to glance at it or make copies.<sup>26</sup> Heidegger seems to have attached great significance to the *Contributions*, which gained the reputation of being a “second main work” or “magnum opus” after *Being and Time*. We might say that the *Contributions* are the hidden or shadow work, the esoteric companion to *Being and Time*.

The opening lines of the *Contributions* strike the esoteric chord:

The official title must by necessity now sound dull, ordinary, and empty and will make it seem that at issue here are “scholarly” “contributions” to the “advancement” of philosophy.

Philosophy can be officially announced in no other way, since all essential titles have become impossible on account of the exhaustion of every basic word and the destruction of the genuine relation to words.<sup>27</sup>

Heidegger expresses in these lines the familiar thought that all has become too familiar, too clear, too obvious – or “dull, ordinary, and empty” – so that it is indeed difficult to escape the surface. If the Greek genius lay in a superficiality that was the product of profundity, as Nietzsche claims, all we moderns have is the superficial.<sup>28</sup> This focus on the superficial, just like the focus on correctness, obscures – it is a forgetting of the origin of the surface that has forgotten itself. In a word, it is a forgetting of *history*. For Heidegger, there is perhaps nothing more disastrous than the forgetting of history. In this respect, Heidegger's esotericism reflects a profound respect for history and histories, for Heidegger's examination of the essence of truth, a historical one that

<sup>24</sup> See M. Heidegger, *Seminare (Übungen) 1937/38 und 1941/1942* GA 88 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2008), 5. See also, Heidegger, *Besinnung*, 419.

<sup>25</sup> K. Löwith, *Martin Heidegger and European Nihilism*, ed. R. Wolin, trans. G. Steiner (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 33-47

<sup>26</sup> Otto Pöggeler famously referred to the *Contributions* in this way in his 1963 book on Heidegger (*Der Denkweg Martin Heideggers*). See O. Pöggeler, *Martin Heidegger's Path of Thinking*, trans. D. Magurshak and S. Barber (Atlantic Highlands NJ: Humanities Books, 1987), 286-87.

<sup>27</sup> Heidegger, *Contributions*, 5. Translation modified.

<sup>28</sup> F. Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, trans. W. Kaufmann (New York: Vintage, 1974), 38.

locates at the origin of truth a foreclosing of possibilities *that could have been realized had another turn been taken*. Heidegger's histories raise the counterfactual, the specter of other possibilities foreclosed by one narrative but retrieved and possibly activated by Heidegger's investigations themselves. This process of liberating possibilities, of going back to a putative beginning to come to a different understanding of the end, is the opening up appropriate to an event or, in Heidegger's complicated parlance, an *Ereignis*.

The *Contributions* are, as the subtitle, "Of the Event," indicates, concerned to propitiate an event, an opening of the past for the future, a salvific opening of the past to revolutionize the present. The Heideggerian revolution is nowhere more evident than in this move: Heidegger returns to the silences in history to make them speak to the present – and misspeak, since every speaking of the silence of the past cannot eliminate that silence as such but only point to it as the condition for the possibility of opening up another possibility in the present. The silence of the past remains silent in the past and speaks only to the present as an exhortation to future action.

For Heidegger, thinking is esoteric to the core because it seeks out the hidden, the silent, the occulted as the wellspring of possibility. Thinking is only possible as esoteric: any thinking that is not esoteric cannot be thinking for Heidegger. It can be only a technical exercise functioning in one or more networks that it either consciously or unconsciously assumes. Thinking that is not esoteric cannot think – here we may consider Heidegger's famous comment about science from an unaccustomed point of view. Disclosed thinking that admits of no hidden or secret layer is complete in and of itself: it permits no other kind of thinking; indeed, any other kind of thinking is either incorrect or fantastic or mad.

This is Heidegger's radical claim: thinking that is completely transparent to itself is not thinking. What exactly is thinking then? Is thinking a mere privileging of mystery, the unknown – the esoteric or silent in itself?<sup>29</sup>

#### IV.

We must ask ourselves: What is the esoteric, the "ownmost," what is most "in" us? This typically Heideggerian way of proceeding through an etymology brings us to a difficult point: to what is silent, invisible, lacking transparency. We may identify this unusual and mysterious being with Being, with the open, with the origin. Heidegger bids us to make these identifications in his writings, but only in *Being and Time* does he clearly direct us to the inmost yet most alienating of all "things," the inmost yet most alienating of all "events": death.<sup>30</sup> Is death not the truly esoteric? It is of course a cliché to describe philosophy in Platonic terms as a preparation for death. Yet, the meaning of this famous Socratic maxim is hardly clear – indeed, if we are to measure by the standard of the *Phaedo*, philosophy is a preparation for death only to the degree that it recognizes the reality of the world of the forms, the world beyond sense perception, the world of the mind alone.

<sup>29</sup> Heidegger, "On the Essence of Truth," 131.

<sup>30</sup> Heidegger writes, "Death is Dasein's ownmost possibility." See M. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson (New York: HarperPerennial, 2008), 308.

Nothing could be further from Heidegger. He asserts no world of the mind, no beyond to which we may aspire. The closest Heidegger comes to this otherness is in his persistent claim to speak the truth of Being, a truth that reveals itself as freedom, the absence of limitation, of relation.<sup>31</sup> Is this not also death? Heidegger is explicit in *Being and Time*:

With death, Dasein stands before itself in its ownmost potentiality-for-Being. This is the possibility in which the issue is nothing less than Dasein's Being-in-the-world. Its death is the possibility of no-longer-being-able-to-be-there. If Dasein stands before itself as this possibility, it has been *fully* assigned to its ownmost potentiality-for-Being. When it stands before itself in this way, all its relations to any other Dasein have been undone. This ownmost non-relational possibility is at the same time the uttermost one.

As potentiality-for-Being, Dasein cannot outstrip the possibility of death. Death is the possibility of the absolute impossibility of Dasein. Thus death reveals itself as *that possibility which is one's ownmost, which is non-relational, and which is not to be outstripped*.<sup>32</sup>

Can Dasein stand before itself in its "ownmost potentiality-for-Being"? Is death not the most esoteric of all "things" Dasein may encounter in its world? Indeed, how is it that Dasein may encounter its own death if death is "non-relational"?

It is fairly obvious, or at least noncontroversial, that Dasein cannot encounter its own death other than as what it cannot encounter.<sup>33</sup> Dasein is no more capable of encountering its own death directly than it is of encountering Being as it is in itself. In both cases, what is sought evades the grasp of our understanding other than as remaining outside that grasp, silent and inscrutable. It does so because our understanding is ceaselessly preoccupied with things, and these things are organized and set into networks of use that allow us to get along with them in an everyday coping made possible by that organization. We are able to cope because things are as they appear to us, the networks of use into which they are imbricated function without interruption. Or, if there is an interruption whereby one comes to be aware of the objects with which one is working, that interruption may be remedied. Even in the case of a more radical and fundamental interruption such as that envisaged by "What Is Metaphysics?" or the chapters on deep boredom in Heidegger's lecture course from 1929, *Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, the interruption comes to an end.

Death is not an interruption. It cannot be experienced and overcome. It does not lead to the restoration or transformation of an order preceding interruption: death is ultimate and, in this sense, non-relational because no relation to it can be established other than the relation of non-relation. Death is remarkably similar to Being since the only relation that

<sup>31</sup> Heidegger, "On the Essence of Truth." Heidegger writes that "[t]ruth reveals itself as freedom."

<sup>32</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 294.

<sup>33</sup> See J. Derrida, *Aporias*, trans. T. Dutoit (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1993), 75-79.

may be established to Being is a non-relation insofar as relatedness, even to define itself, must take a form, and Being as Being cannot have a form. If we return to our discussion of the truth of Being as openness from this perspective, we may see with greater clarity the impossibility that attends that encounter – for how could it be possible to experience the fully open? How could one ever transform oneself so completely as to become a sort of emptiness, a clean starting point from which to experience things anew? One would not even be able to retain one’s language in that case, for language imposes the full weight of the past, of tradition, of customs and rules such that one cannot simply escape or transform them because to do so requires the very language that enables the process to occur in order to start the process of renewal – an obvious contradiction ensuring that no encounter with the open can be completely open. Even the notion of the leap, which Heidegger mentions at several points, is inadequate since one cannot simply leap into oblivion of what one already knows.<sup>34</sup>

## V.

Death and the open are thus twin cases of non-relation or of the contemplation of a relation that cannot succeed in establishing itself without contradiction. Death and the open are the twin sources of the esoteric: to think either is to obey a “hidden law” of impossibility. If philosophy seeks to think its origin or end, it will end up with failure since the esoteric is a silence that may be spoken through words only via their failure to speak. At the core of philosophy – indeed, at the core of Being as spoken by language – is a silence that cannot be overcome, remedied, or eradicated other than by a decision to forget.<sup>35</sup> And just as the forgetting of one’s prior life that seems to be a component of the leap cannot fully succeed, neither can the forgetting of Being achieve such perfection that it cannot be overcome. Curiously, Heidegger does not seem to have much faith in the latter declaration. In his works of the 1930s and 1940s, Heidegger engages in an increasingly shrill attack on the forgetting he associates with metaphysics and, in particular, with technology as the cynosure of metaphysics. That this extensive critique unfolds in highly esoteric writings is itself remarkable. Why would Heidegger deliberately choose to hide or hold back works challenging forgetfulness? How would such an esoteric practice possibly achieve the result of exposing esotericism itself?

Once again, Leo Strauss offers an intriguing example, for Strauss spent much of his career exposing the secret or hidden doctrines of the philosophers. It is difficult to read Strauss in any other way. He exposes the tradition of secrecy (if indeed there was one), and one is compelled to ask why he does so: Why expose the philosophers? Strauss engages in a practice related to Heidegger’s, but he is not inclined to go as far as Heidegger dares to go. That is, Strauss seeks to emphasize the dangerous and subversive aspects of philosophy that have been largely lost: he seeks to revive the image of the philosopher legislator who cannot be timely nor tied down to a specific regime. However, Strauss

<sup>34</sup> See, for example, Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy*, 178-230 (Section IV).

<sup>35</sup> See Heidegger, *Being and Truth*, 84-89.

ventures no farther than the political realm.<sup>36</sup> But this is not quite the case, as Strauss's late essay on Lucretius demonstrates. In that remarkable essay, Strauss emphasizes the profoundly untimely nature of philosophy as resulting from its sober confrontation with death. Philosophy is the recognition that the things closest and most dear to us, the things of our everyday existence, are the most fleeting:

The recourse to the gods of religion and the fear of them is already a remedy for a more fundamental pain: the pain stemming from the divination that the lovable is not sempiternal or that the sempiternal is not lovable. Philosophy transforms the divination into a certainty. One may therefore say that philosophy is productive of the deepest pain. Man has to choose between peace of mind deriving from a pleasing delusion and peace of mind deriving from the unpleasing truth. Philosophy which, anticipating the collapse of the walls of the world, breaks through the walls of the world, abandons the attachment to the world; this abandonment is most painful.<sup>37</sup>

Strauss claims here, and elsewhere, that only philosophy faces what is most painful, most terrible: transience, death. Only the philosopher has the courage to speak of death this directly, without heroism or frill, without glorious narrative or palliating afterlife. The philosopher beckons us to think the hardest thought: complete extinction. That the poet (Lucretius) provides us with this terrible truth in a honey-coated goblet reminds us that fiction adorns the truth or hides it. Philosophy does not hide it. And yet it does, if we are to believe Strauss's claim about the essentially esoteric nature of the philosopher. Yet, in this essay – and perhaps uncharacteristically – Strauss's focus on the philosopher's connection to death suggests – and perhaps never more than suggests – another reason for the esoteric nature of philosophy that returns us to Heidegger. For the philosopher is the one who strives to think not only outside the walls of the city but outside those of the world itself.<sup>38</sup>

Heidegger traces this thinking of the outside to the inside, the ownmost, what is hidden in plain view or nearest to us. As Heidegger claims time and again, what is nearest is farthest – the possibility I hold in myself as my ownmost possibility is the most estranging, the most hidden, the impossible – it is the esoteric itself, a mystery that will never divulge its secrets.

<sup>36</sup> As one of his students complains, Strauss's primary concern with the political shows almost a disdain for philosophical τέχνη. See S. Rosen, *Hermeneutics as Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 121.

<sup>37</sup> L. Strauss, "Notes on Lucretius," in *Liberalism Ancient and Modern* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 85.

<sup>38</sup> In Heidegger's case, one should be careful not to confuse this kind of thinking with a rejection of politics. Heidegger's rectoral speech, "The Self-Assertion of the German University," links this kind of thinking "from the beginning" (*das anfängliche Denken*) to the life of the *polis*, a point that becomes even clearer in Heidegger's interpretation of the first choral ode in *Antigone* from *Introduction to Metaphysics*. See M. Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. G. Fried and R. Polt, 2nd ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014), 169-70. Strauss suggests that even Plato's theory of forms is esoteric, a salvation myth that conceals the hard truth: that the forms in themselves have no place in our lived world.

## VI.

Heidegger is the most esoteric of thinkers because he dares think death directly, without illusion or distance.<sup>39</sup> Heidegger's esotericism tells us that what is most in us, most destinal, most certain is also the farthest, the least predictable, the most obscure: the possibility of impossibility that weighs on us and never releases us from its grip.<sup>40</sup> Unlike those thinkers who strive to render our condition transparent, who seek to bring us to the light glimpsed by the prisoner liberated in Plato's story of the cave – the prisoner who views the idea of the good – Heidegger presents us with a stubborn puzzle that refuses to admit of resolution. The implied connection between the plenitude of the open and the emptiness of death reveals an ambiguity that is basic to Heidegger's thought: the heady, wondrous freedom of truth is not unlike the terrible freedom from knowing that is death's ineluctable obscurity. The "undiscovered country" beckons either to invention or ruin or both.

In his 1936 lecture on Schelling's *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom* (1809), Heidegger quotes Schelling with approval:

He who wishes to place himself in the beginning of a truly free philosophy must abandon even God. Here we say: who wishes to maintain it, he will lose it; and who gives it up, he will find it. Only he has come to the ground of himself and has known the whole depth of life who has once abandoned everything and has himself been abandoned by everything. He for whom everything disappeared and who saw himself alone with the infinite: a great step which Plato compared to death.<sup>41</sup>

Schelling's words are apt: the freedom from convention (of the regime of "correctness") central to philosophy may be compared to death in its radical detachment. If we transpose this notion into the framework of Heidegger's thought, we emerge with a double impossibility within which the philosopher must work if she is to have any work at all. The "craftsmanship" (*Handwerk*) of the philosopher takes place between two astounding impossibilities: that of the origin and that of the end.<sup>42</sup> Philosophy is in this respect inherently esoteric pursuing an impossible completeness or wisdom. Instead, the power of philosophy lies precisely in its esotericism, its stubborn attempt to speak what must remain in silence. To speak silence, the contradiction, the oxymoron, is the challenge that Heidegger refuses to cede – indeed, it is the greatest burden or *Not* that Heidegger wishes us to assume to avoid the decadence of the burden of not having a burden (*die Not der Notlosigkeit*).

<sup>39</sup> Masao Abe gives Heidegger pride of place in this respect, claiming that he is the first Western philosopher to think death as death, just as he is the first to think Being in itself after the great Greek beginning. See M. Abe, *A Study of Dōgen: His Philosophy and Religion* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 108-10.

<sup>40</sup> One is reminded again of the line from *Being and Time*: "Death is Dasein's ownmost possibility."

<sup>41</sup> M. Heidegger, *Schelling's Treatise on the Essence of Human Freedom*, trans. J. Stambaugh (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1985), 6-7.

<sup>42</sup> See M. Heidegger, *Anmerkungen I-V (Schwarze Hefte 1942-1948)* GA 97 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2015), 71, 76, 78. On p. 78, Heidegger describes thinking as the "handwork of being silent" ("*Das Handwerk des Schweigens*").

What truth could be more dangerous and untimely than this? A truth that mocks accounts of origins and ends, epic narratives of art, religion, and metaphysics collapsing before the essential inscrutability they seek to hide. Heidegger's esotericism reveals the esotericism of the tradition in which he works, the great secret it keeps from itself – in this sense, is Heidegger not, as some claim, the great and perpetual destroyer? But Heidegger is more than a figure of negation. To the contrary, Heidegger's silence not only parodies the efforts of philosophers to look beyond the city as ultimately little more than exercises in fiction; it also parodies the fictional impulse itself, the need for permanence and closure that reduces the complexity of transience to the simplicity of final order and form. By doing so, Heidegger seeks to return us to transience, not in despair or loathing, but as a project of becoming a self that accepts the self's inmost nature rather than rejecting it.<sup>43</sup>

---

<sup>43</sup> Heidegger, *Überlegungen II-VI*, 5-7.

# HEIDEGGER ON PLATO'S ORIGINARY GOOD: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL RECONSTRUCTION

*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. ... 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 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

<sup>1</sup> GA 17, 276. Heidegger’s works are quoted from existing English translations with a reference to the original German *Gesamtausgabe* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1975ff.).

<sup>2</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, trans. E. S. Haldane and F. H. Simson, vol. 2 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 22.

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

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

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 *Seinsvergessenheit*) 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 “*Dasein, Erschlossenheit und Wahrheit*” constitutes the core of *Sein und Zeit*. In *Besinnung* (1938-39), he gives an indication 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 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,”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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 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 θαυματοποιήσις,<sup>18</sup> suggested by the cognate ἄγμαι (to wonder), ἄγη/ἄγαν (wonder, awe), and ἀγαστός (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 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

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

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

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

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

<sup>16</sup> Nietzsche, KGW [= *Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, ed. G. Colli and M. Montinari (Berlin, New York: De Gruyter, 1967ff.)] V.1, 443 (Summer 1880, 4[53]), cf. 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: Martinus Nijhoff, 1963), 304.

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

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

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

<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*).

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 οὐ 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 prefigured 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 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 ἐστίν, 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 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>

<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, NY: Cornell University Press, 1965], 19).

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

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

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

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

<sup>30</sup> Gershom Scholem, “Zen-Nazism?” *Encounter* 16, no. 2 (1961): 96.

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 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 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 ὁρᾶσθαι,<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 pregiven 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

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

<sup>32</sup> H. Wiegand Petzet, *Encounters and Dialogues with Martin Heidegger 1929-1976*, trans. P. Emad and K. Maly (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 180.

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

<sup>34</sup> P. Natorp, *Plato's Theory of Ideas. An Introduction to Idealism*, trans. V. Politis (Sankt Augustin: Akademie Verlag, 2004), 401-2.

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

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

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

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

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

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 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 nonobjectifying discourse, which cannot ultimately define that which it refers to, it can only serve as a metaphor, a pointer, a road sign (*Wegmarke*). Language can be used metaphorically as a guiding thread leading to something prelinguistically present. It does not construct an object in speech. *Ἀγαθόν* 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 *ἀγαθόν* “does not show itself except to those seriously striving after it.”<sup>48</sup> It is attainable only “when *voεῖν* 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 nonhypothetical ground.<sup>50</sup>

The position of language is, therefore, ambivalent: it points toward the *ἀγαθόν* when properly used but nonetheless simultaneously covers it. Heidegger’s approach concentrates

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

<sup>48</sup> GA 80, 80; BH [= T. Kisiel and T. Sheehan, eds., *Becoming Heidegger: On the Trail of his Early Occasional Writings, 1910-1927* (Seattle, WA: Noesis Press, 2009)], 226; cf. Eth. Nic. 1113a15f.

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

<sup>50</sup> H.-G. Gadamer, *The Idea of the Good in Platonic-Aristotelian Philosophy*, trans. P. Christopher Smith (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press), 90; cf. GA 22, 198, and Resp. 510b, 511b.

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 (voεῖν as seeing by means of νοῦς, that is, *verstehen*).<sup>52</sup> This seeing is, therefore, noetic and – as 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 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,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> GA 80, 66-67; BH, 219-22; cf. Peri Herm. 17a3.

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 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 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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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 sustains everything without qualifications or restrictions, not just a particular region of being, its chosen, privileged subset: the origin of all (ἡ τοῦ παντός ἀρχή) and its τέλος (the οὐ ἔνεκα). 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 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>

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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 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 *tzimtzum*<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 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 revelation 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

<sup>85</sup> S. Taubes, “The Gnostic Foundations of Heidegger’s Nihilism,” *The Journal of Religion* 34, no. 3 (July 1954): 155.

<sup>86</sup> Taubes, “The Gnostic Foundations of Heidegger’s Nihilism,” 168.

<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: Jüdischer Verlag, 2014), E. R. Wolfson, *Heidegger and Kabbalah* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2019), and M. Chighel, *Kabale. Das Geheimnis des Hebräischen Humanismus im Lichte von Heideggers Denken* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 2020).

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

<sup>89</sup> R. Schürmann, “Report of His Visit to Martin Heidegger,” trans. P. Adler, *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal* 19:2-20:1 (1997): 70.

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

<sup>91</sup> Schürmann, “Report of His Visit to Martin Heidegger,” 71.

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

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

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 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 Mysteries of the Greeks begin with purification (*καθάρσις*), just as those of the barbarians also begin with bathing. After this there are the Lesser Mysteries, which have a function of teaching and preparation for the Mysteries to come, but the Greater (Mysteries) 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 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> *Ἀγαθόν* 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>

<sup>94</sup> GA 24, 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* (Munich: Fink, 1982).

<sup>96</sup> Strom. 5.70.7-5.71.1; cf. C. Riedweg, *Mysterienterminologie bei Platon, Philon und Klemens von Alexandria* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1987), 5-8.

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

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

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

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

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

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

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 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, 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 ὄρατόν (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,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

sun-like, *sonnenhaft*, as Goethe translates it).<sup>112</sup> This reasoning is similar to Shankara's *Ekaslōki* (or Advaita Vedānta 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 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 (ὄρᾶν), 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 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 ὄρᾶν and ὀρώμενα (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

<sup>112</sup> GA 6.2, 224; GA 22, 102-3, 255-56; GA 24, 400-402; GA 34, 95; GA 36/37, 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*, trans. B. L. Bracey and R. C. Payne (London: Macmillan, 1932).

<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, 71; GA 42, 96.

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

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

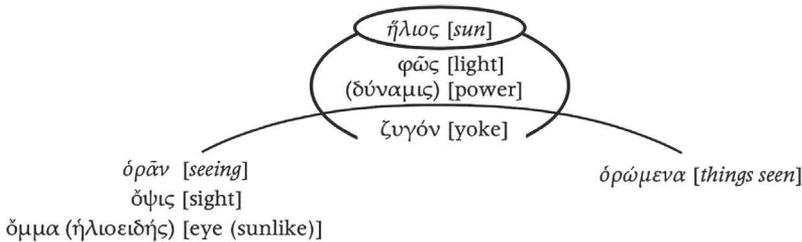
<sup>117</sup> GA 34, 103-4.

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

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 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 *ἰδέα 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” 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 figures:<sup>126</sup>



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

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

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

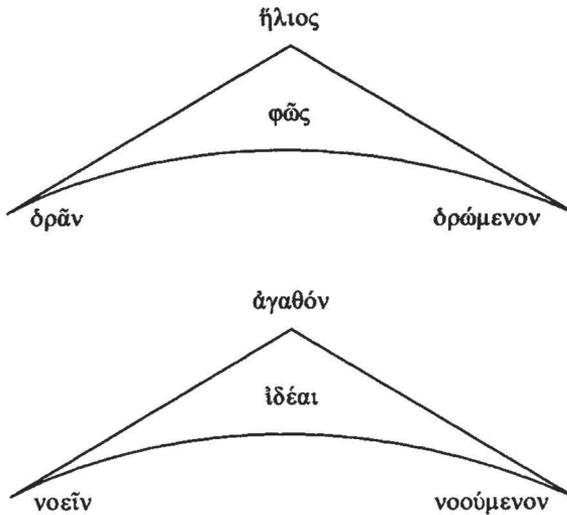
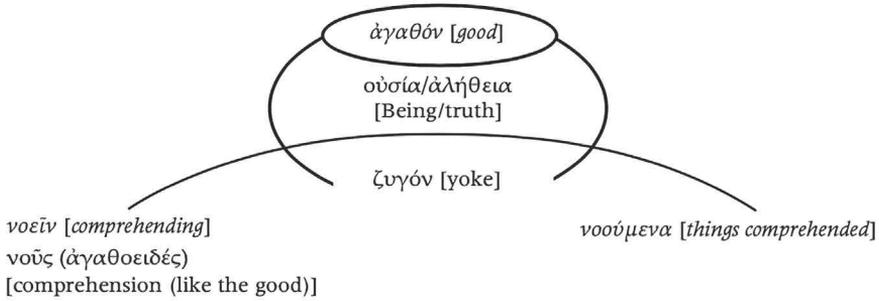
<sup>122</sup> GA 9, 225.

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

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

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

<sup>126</sup> GA 34, 105-6; GA 36/37, 196.



The above analogy constitutes a basic framework upon which any further remarks on the character of the *ιδέα 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 ἡ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ ιδέα καὶ μόγις ὀρᾶσθαι (517b8f.),
2. πάντων αὕτη ὀρθῶν τε καὶ καλῶν αἰτία (517c2),
3. ἐν τε ὀρατῷ φῶς καὶ τὸν τούτου κύριον τεκοῦσα (517c3),
4. ἐν τε νοητῷ αὕτη κυρία ἀλήθειαν καὶ νοῦν παρασχομένη (517c3f.),
5. ἡ τοῦ παντὸς ἀρχή (511b7),
6. ἔτι ἐπέκεινα τῆς οὐσίας (509b9).

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

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

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 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 *ἰδέα τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ* is (2) the basic determination (*Grundbestimmung*) of all that is *ὀρθός* and *καλός* and 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 *ὄρατά* (3), as well as the *νοητά* (4). In the domain of the visible (*ἐν τε ὀρατῷ*), 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 νοητῷ*), 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

<sup>129</sup> GA 22, 105.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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 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 ἰδέα 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 ἰδέα 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 ἰδέα 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 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 οὐ 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>

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

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

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

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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 becomes.<sup>151</sup> Ἀγαθόν 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 ἀγαθόν (“the good establishes for beings not only knownness [*Erkenntheit*] 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 ἀγαθόν, although ἀγαθόν 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> Ἀγαθόν 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 ἀγαθόν 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*). Ἀγαθόν is, therefore, both the ground of empowerment (enablement) of seeing (or knowing) and of being seen (or known), being in general. 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

<sup>150</sup> GA 34, 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, 474-76.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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 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 Tauglichmachende 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 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>

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

# ARISTOTLE'S *DE ANIMA* AND THE DIVISION OF LIFE<sup>1</sup>

Aristotle's oeuvre constitutes more than 20,000 pages. In *De Anima* the term ζωή appears only eight times and never as a technical term. It is never defined and never thematized. On the contrary, in Aristotle's *Politics* one of the two Greek words for life, ζωή, becomes a technical term. It defines the political dimension of the πόλις, which is grounded particularly and specifically on the exclusion of the ζωή as something that concerns the household, while the political life is the βίος.

First of all, the concept of life is not used by Aristotle in the way we moderns use it, as something concerning biology or science, but rather it is initially a political term, and subsequently it will become a theological term. Furthermore, there is the term "life," for instance in the philosophical tradition and perhaps also in the scientific tradition. In the scientific tradition it is never defined. We never find a definition of what "life" means, what a ζωή is. But we find – on the contrary – an operation of division of life. Life is not defined but always divided, and this is from the origin up to now. Life is what cannot be defined and precisely for this reason must ceaselessly be articulated and divided. Let us take this as our starting point.

To examine the original articulation of the Greek concept of life let us consider Aristotle's treatise on the ψυχή, *De Anima*. There, obviously, he has to deal with the concept of life. Let us examine a passage in which there is no definition but only an operation of establishing caesuras, cutting, dividing: "So it is through life [ζωή] that what has soul in it [ψυχή]" – a living being (usually translated as the animal) – "differs from what has none" – from what has no soul, the non-animate, the non-animal. Through life we can differentiate what is living and what is not living. The first is a ψυχή, the second is not. The term "to live" (ζῆν) has more than one sense. This is a characteristic of Aristotle's philosophical strategy. When he has to cope with the problem of defining a crucial concept, he will say this term λέγεται πολλαχῶς – is used in manifold ways. This is what he does in *Metaphysics* for the concept of being: τὸ ὄν λέγεται πολλαχῶς, being is said in many ways (*Met.* 1028a).

But then, like being, the term life is also spoken in many ways, it "has more than one sense" (πλεοναχῶς δὲ τοῦ ζῆν λεγομένου), "and provided any one alone of these" – these five meanings – "is found in a thing, we say that the thing is living," and these meanings are "thinking, sensation, local movement and rest, or movement in the sense

<sup>1</sup> A lecture given at the European Graduate School in Saas-Fee, 2009.

of nutrition, decay, and growth. Hence we think of all species of plants also as living.” Here Aristotle uses the term τὰ φύόμενα, a Greek term for plants, derived from the same root as φύσις, nature. Plants – or the natural beings *in toto* – are φύόμενα, φυτικόν. “Hence we think of all species of plants also as living for they are observed to possess in themselves a principle [ἀρχή] and potentiality [δύναμις] through which they grow and decay in opposite directions” (*De Anima* 413a, tr. Jonathan Barnes).

This is a decisive moment. We say that a being is alive, that it is living, if it has at least one of these features. But which of them is fundamental? And how can this principle be separated from others as that which determines the attribution of life? Aristotle chooses one of these functions of life and calls it the θρεπτικόν, the nutritive power, or the nutritive faculty. First he divides life into nutrition, thinking, sensation, and so forth, then he chooses one as the fundamental: vegetative life, because it can be separated from the others while they cannot be separated from it, or otherwise the being would die. Only this function, potentiality, or δύναμις, can be separated from the others as essential for sustaining life. He chooses the term θρεπτικόν, a very capacious concept in Greek, which means: to nourish, to live, but also, in the analysis of Émile Benveniste, τρέφειν, τρέφω means for a being to reach the state of its natural growth.

Let us examine Aristotle’s strategy. He never defines what life is but only analyzes it by isolating its functions. We see at work one of the main principles of his philosophy, the mechanism of finding the foundation, inherited henceforth by the Western tradition. What does Aristotle mean by foundation? The Greek term is ἀρχή, which means principle, ground, command, or beginning. Here it means the principle in the sense of the original foundation. It consists in reformulating each question concerning “what something is” as a question “through what [διὰ τι] something belongs to another thing.” In order to understand what a living being is, we have to find something, an ἀρχή, through which we can say that life belongs to a being. We have to divide life and isolate something that will function as the ἀρχή. Aristotle does not define what life is. Only several centuries later Aristotle’s commentators, such as Themistius, would define the term φυτικόν as vegetative. Instead of defining, Aristotle divides life and isolates one function for the δύναμις that will act as an ἀρχή, as a foundation in order to describe life, the βίος. What has been separated and divided, in this case nutritive life, is precisely what – in a sort of *divide et impera* – allows the construction of the unity of life as the hierarchical articulation of a series of functional faculties and oppositions.

One should not underestimate the enormous importance of this Aristotelian strategy of division. It seems an innocuous philosophical operation, but if you now consider the development of Western science and medicine, you will see how this apparently innocuous operation constitutes a fundamental event that enables the construction of the entire edifice of modern medicine and science. Modern surgery was made possible only by material separation through anesthesia of vegetative life from consciousness (the ἀρχή from the other function). Medicine transformed this psychical and logical operation of division into a material operation. We are now able to separate vegetative life completely from mental life, thinking, sensation, and so forth. Out of the Aristotelian division of life into nutritive, sensational, thinking, conscious, there is one – φυτικόν – that will act as the ἀρχή and allow for all modern sciences.

I would like to underline the operative meaning of this strategy in modern science. Let us consider one of the foundational texts of modern medicine, *Recherches physiologiques sur la vie et la mort* (1800) by the great French physiologist Xavier Bichat. One could expect a definition of life in Bichat. Not at all. He will push to the extreme Aristotle's strategy of division and distinguish fundamentally two animals: *l'animal existant au-dedans*, the animal within which is organic life, that is, the nutritive life of Aristotle that Bichat defines as a "habitual succession of assimilation and excretion" (Xavier Bichat, *Physiological Researches on Life and Death*, trans. F. Gold [Boston: Richardson and Card, 1827], 13), encompassing all the obscure, blind, unconscious processes of vegetative life, blood circulation, respiration, and so forth, upon which the higher animal is founded; and the *l'animal existant au-dehors*, the animal of the outside, living in a relationship with the external world: social life, thinking, sensation, and so forth. According to Bichat, it is as though two animals lived together in every higher organism. We are accustomed to see them together, but they do not coincide and in fact they are perfectly separable. The life of the first one, *l'animal existant au-dedans*, the internal animal's organic life begins already in the fetus, before the proper animal life starts; it is there without thinking, without relationship to the external world, and it is also the last one to end, surviving *l'animal existant au-dehors*.

One immediately understands the meaning of the split into two animals for modern medicine: surgery, anesthesia, transplantation, life support are all founded upon this. Transplantation must deal with the problem of establishing the border between *l'animal existant au-dedans* and *l'animal existant au-dehors*. When the latter dies, we can keep the former alive through a reanimation machine. In contemporary discussions about the *ex lege* definition of clinical death it is the criteria for identification of bare life, detached from brain activity and subjectivity, that decide whether a certain body can still be considered alive or can be already transplanted into other bodies. Aristotle's strategy of isolating the nutritive life is transformed into categories of life support and transplantation. A metaphysical operation – in this case the idea that life can be separated – is never neutral but always historical, scientific, physical.

I often quote this great biologist, Peter Medawar, a Nobel Prize winner, who writes: "When I enter a room, a colloquium, and I see people trying to define life, I go out: this is a low scientific level in the field of biology. It's not interesting for a scientist to define life and death. These words have no intrinsic meaning that could be clarified by a deeper and more attentive study." But to be able to divide life – this is very interesting. So just to repeat: we never define what life is, also in modern science. Life is never defined, always divided. We completely lack the idea of what life is. There is no possibility to define life as unity. On the contrary, we have at our disposal many strategies to theoretically and practically divide it. Theoretically this goes back to Aristotle and practically to modern science and Descartes, for whom the head, the pineal gland, was problematic in this context.

When I started making a genealogy of the term ζωή, it struck me as odd that in our culture life is never defined and always divided. First I went back to the *Corpus Hippocraticum* and realized there is no definition there. Then I went on, and there was never a definition, always division, in many fields and domains. The concept of a form of life is the negative counterpart of this, an attempt to conceive a model of life that can never be separated from its form, a life impossible to divide, in which it is never possible

to isolate something such as naked life. In modern culture there has always been a dream of undivided, nonseparable life. The clearest example is the cartoon. The cartoon world is a world of a perfect form of life. You cannot divide βίος from ζωή in Mickey Mouse or Donald Duck. How could you divide Mickey Mouse?

Here we are tackling the problem of the body. What is the body? We must not identify it with vegetative life, bare life, or something opposing the spirit. Such an operation of division does not coincide with the body. On the contrary, it can even be regarded as a disembodiment. Ultimately, we do not know what the body is in terms of the form of life perspective. It is not that thing which we now think it is. It is not even a thing but rather a potentiality. Another aspect of the problem that determined my interest in the concept of the form of life is that it has to do with the concept of subjectivity. In some way this concept is an attempt to rethink the problem of subjectivity or to conceive human singularity otherwise than in the form of a subject.

My investigation of Aristotle is, therefore, genealogical. My methodological idea is that you cannot have access to the present, or even understand the present, without a true regressive movement into the past. Otherwise the journalist would be the most appropriate person for understanding the present. But the journalist understands nothing of what he sees. He describes everything he sees without understanding anything of it. I am not interested in antiquarian history either, in reconstructing past events for their own sake. When I perform genealogical inquiries, it is not for historical reasons. It is because this is the only way to obtain access to the present. My aim is to create a contemporary model, but the only way of accessing the contemporary is archeological: through regression. One has to perform this regressive, archeological movement in order to be contemporary. Being contemporary is not easy. It does not mean to adhere, to stick totally to your times. A distance is necessary to face the present, and one can achieve it through an archeological movement. This is how Foucault developed his method. As he said in a very important and clear statement: “my historical investigations are only the shadow cast by my theoretical investigation of the present.” We go back because our inquiry into the present casts a shadow upon the past, so that the past, touched by this shadow, acquires the ability to respond to the darkness of the now. For Foucault, this shadow stretched back to the seventeenth century. For me the shadow is longer.

Furthermore, the present is the most difficult thing to understand because it is traumatic. According to Freud, when a man experiences a traumatic event, for instance, when as a boy you see your parents making love, or you have a car accident, then due to the traumatic shock you completely lose the experience of the present, you forget everything, remove it from the conscious, and only later, after a certain period of time, you will experience what Freud calls the return of the repressed. So the present is, in a way, what we can never experience because it is always traumatic. Not only when you see your parents making love. The present is that which remains un-lived, that which remains unexperienced. Therefore we have to develop a method to relive it, to make this experience lived again. This method is archeology.

We, the moderns, are completely embedded within this idea of division, entangled by it. Politically, medically, scientifically we are accustomed to it, we find it perfectly normal. Simultaneously, we are threatened by the division becoming operative – for instance, by

the fact that biometric identification contains all the biological data, the fingerprint, the genome, by the possibility of using the medical representation of our vegetative life in a totalizing way. In the past identity was rooted in personal and social existence. Even recently our identity still resulted from the recognition of others: being a poet, a lawyer, a neighbor is always relational. When identity is defined by mere vegetative life, there is no relation to another. In biometrics identity is reduced to the nonrelational, the vegetative.

For Aristotle, man's thought, the life of the νοῦς, was the most important aspect, although when considering man as a living being, the ἀρχή is nutritive life. Without nutritive life, man is not alive. Of course, for Aristotle nutritive life, θρεπτικὸν, constitutes the lower level of being, hence plants were the lowest of beings, while the life of the mind was the highest. Now in biometrics it is just the opposite. This great change is happening in front of our eyes, but we do not realize to what extent it changes the model of identity. We have lived for centuries within the concept of personal identity, understanding identity as concerning the person. The word "person" comes from the Latin "persona," which means "mask." The mask is the figure of a social function. In Roman families, each *gens*, each noble family, had a mask of its ancestors kept in the atrium of the house as the foundation of identity. Later it became a synonym of social activity and social function in general, of that which is recognized by others. The identity of an individual depended on the social recognition of the person. In biometrics, identity is something you never can identify with as a person: mere biometric data. I am not defending the concept of personal identity, though. It has its own disadvantages. A serious man never identifies himself completely with his social person, with his being a lawyer or a poet. It is always – so to speak – dialectical, which requires a certain distance. You cannot have such a dialectical relation with respect to biometric identity.

The biometric techniques were invented in the nineteenth century by Bertillon and Galton for the sake of recognizing and controlling recidivist criminals. At that time there were no ID cards, identity was very fluid. Bertillon was the first to introduce measurements for the purpose of similarity analysis, the mug shot, or, as the French call it, *portrait Bertillon*. Now all citizens are subjected to biometrics and treated by the state as potential criminals. The solution of the problem is not going back to personal identity. Each time that we are facing the *dispositif*, the apparatus, designed to determine, model, and control us, the solution is not to come back to something more original, more natural. On the contrary, we have to make the apparatus operative, and the new politics will be a result of our confrontation with it.

I find it difficult but also intriguing to understand why people take pleasure in the biometric apparatus. For there is a kind of pleasure in being recognized by a machine that asks nothing, apparently, from you, while in order to be recognized by another person you have to look into their eyes. The machine is always there, always awake, always working, always knowing who you are. There is also a feeling of relief connected with it, but not due to security, because you are no longer secure, rather because there is an entity that knows everything about you.

Foucault was the first to employ the concept of biopolitics. According to him, it began with modernity in the seventeenth century when the state started considering care of its populace's life as its essential task. This was achieved by means of redefining the concept of vegetative life, henceforth identified with the biological heritage of the nation.

What needs to be examined and questioned is, therefore, the very biological concept of life. Furthermore, I am trying to show that in some way biopolitics is more ancient than Foucault had suggested, it can be traced back to Aristotle. Of course, in his investigation of the *grand renferment*, Foucault was interested in identifying this peculiar moment of *l'age classique*, of the beginning of modernity. Still, in his late work he retraced the Greek foundation of sexuality, so I do not think that Foucault would deny this Aristotelian origin of biopolitics.

The definition of *πόλις* in Aristotle is grounded on the exclusion of the *ζωή*. Natural life, *ζωή*, belongs to the house, the *οἶκος*. Slaves belong to the house, not to the city; they are private property. On the contrary, *πόλις* begins when you have not only natural life, *ζωή*, but a good life. So *πόλις* is based on the exclusion of the *ζωή*. Politics grounds itself on something that must remain outside. Not completely outside, because *οἶκος* is within it. It is one of the main mechanisms of politics, including by exclusion, and *ζωή* is included through exclusion. Another fundamental concept of Aristotle's politics is the concept of *αὐτάρκεια*, autarchy. A good *πόλις* is an autarkic *πόλις*. But *αὐτάρκεια* doesn't mean self-sufficiency in the modern sense, rather in the sense of perfection. It concerns the issues that nowadays we regard as the economy, managing the *οἶκος*. Hence for Aristotle *αὐτάρκεια* is a biopolitical concept.

The problem of life is a great problem that must be thought in a completely different way than it has been thought by our modern tradition, it is much more complex and concerned precisely with fundamental political conceptions. After all, it is a metaphysical problem. Metaphysics and politics must always be seen together. This is why in recent years I have concentrated a lot on law and theology. I do not work on theology because I think that theology is the most important thing – of course, apparently today it is not important at all. Rather, I do it because I saw that in theology I could for the first time understand, for instance, what is governance. It is about the genealogy of the paradigm of governance. Governance is not government. Politics is now reduced to the problem of government. So what is governance? The only way I could understand it was working on the theological problem of the divine governance of the world.

Our culture for centuries thought that God in some way governs the world. Governs, not determines. It is not intervening because to govern is also to let it go. Divine governance acts by leaving the world to itself, to its internal movements. I am not saying that President Bush is an heir to Aquinas, but with the treatises of Aquinas I understood Bush better. Or even better: angelology. In order to understand what bureaucracy is, one has to read treatises on angelology, on the angelic hierarchy. Only then will you discover that our basic political vocabulary, the language of public administration – minister, hierarchy – originates from angelology. The angels are the ministers of divine governance. Through the angels God governs the world. Of course, angelology is not its cause but rather a paradigm that allows us to understand it. I only look for a paradigm that allows me to understand the present.

Antoni Szwed

# A LONG WAY TO JOHN LOCKE'S CONCEPT OF TOLERATION IN SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY ENGLAND

The concept of toleration elaborated by John Locke (1632-1704) in the second half of the seventeenth-century was of great importance for liberal democracy and generally for the liberal culture in the world. His writings titled *Letters concerning Toleration*<sup>1</sup> and earlier *Two Treatises on Government*<sup>2</sup> strongly contributed to the break of a long period of intolerance in English public life. Since the beginning of the Reformation in England, over 150 years had passed before political and religious toleration came into being. It was clearly expressed in the so called Glorious Revolution (1688-1689). Its declaration would not be possible without Locke's ideas on the essence of toleration. By the way, it is worth remembering that John Locke did not make any pure abstract description of toleration, understood as a product of his imaginative social philosophy and without deep knowledge of his contemporary political reality. He was an insightful observer (and to some degree, participant) of public life and a man who wanted to account for his contemporary connections between current politics and religion in its different denominations. Toward the end of seventeenth-century England, the thinker saw that elaboration of a more or less advanced form of toleration had become a historical need in

<sup>1</sup> J. Locke, *The Works*, vol. 6 (London: W. Sharpe and Son, 1823).

<sup>2</sup> J. Locke, *Two Treatises on Government* (London: R. Butler, 1821).

order to end the ruinous political and religious conflicts between various radical Puritan communities (other existing sects) and the monarchy. He was well aware that this political and religious process should be considered from the historical and philosophical point of view, seen in two aspects, which could not be separated from each other. And his description and explanation of that process is still valid for our time as well. How should we understand the motives of the relatively long period of intolerance between Henry VIII's reforms and the beginning of real tolerance, which was declared by the Glorious Revolution? While doing so, we cannot pass over a series of historical events in silence and restrict ourselves to a purely philosophical depiction of the toleration concept. Such conduct would be incomprehensible or even ill-conceived. On the other hand, any purely historical reconstruction of that part of English history deprived of a deeper philosophical sense of that process would not allow us to see the logical necessity of transition from intolerance to tolerance. Thus, we encounter a philosophical problem against the well-defined historical background. From the philosophical (logical) point of view, post-Reformation intolerance can be treated as the main premise for justifying the introduction of toleration. This latter could mean as a conclusion. In other words, it seems impossible to correctly understand the sense of protestant liberal toleration in English public life after the Glorious Revolution in separation from the previous period of intolerance in the history of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England.

The main purpose of this article is to show the passage from intolerance to toleration in the above-mentioned two aspects. It seems that this is the right direction of the cultural transformations that determine this logical implication: intolerance – toleration. In other discussions, one can sometimes notice the opposite direction of that implication. The toleration concept is presumed as an a priori assumption in order to account for the earlier periods of intolerance. Frequently concepts of toleration are elaborated from today's sense of it with various modifications. For example, toleration can be understood as “the action of allowing, permission by authority” or “a license to actions, practices, or conscience.” Moreover, “allowance, with or without limitations, by the ruling power of religion otherwise than in the form officially established.”<sup>3</sup> In that approach, “toleration is no more the ‘solution’ to the ‘problem’ of intolerance than health is the ‘solution’ to the ‘problem’ of disease or peace is the ‘solution’ to the ‘problem’ of war. In each example, what is taken to be a positive or desirable state of affairs is juxtaposed against its opposite, its absence or negation; but a focus on the logical opposition alone serves only to obscure the discursive construction of the binary itself. Indeed, in discursive terms, it is only from inside the standpoint of toleration that the sectarian conflicts of early modern Europe can appear as intolerance.”<sup>4</sup> Here we can see the opposite implication: toleration – intolerance. From the historical point of view, this is not justified conduct, because in such cases we are looking at a historical process and its internal logic with our contemporary eyes. We ascribe our contemporary insight to the people of previous ages. It makes correctly establishing the original forms of thinking and behavior of those persons impossible. Furthermore, it is

<sup>3</sup> Such terms are used, for example, by K. M. McClure, “Difference, Diversity, and the Limits of Toleration,” *Political Theory* 18, no. 3 (August 1990): 361-91; 362.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 365-66.

difficult to maintain any suggestion that John Locke's concept of toleration came from the Gospel<sup>5</sup> – obviously it is true – and that is why toleration should be the first and originally positive criterion for the different variants of intolerance. We have to bear in mind that another man, John Calvin (1509-1564), used Holy Scripture to justify many forms of intolerance, especially against believers of the Roman-Catholic Church. Two men, Calvin and Locke, who belonged to the same Protestant tradition, drew quite opposite conclusions from the same Scripture. Their concepts of Christian liberty were totally different. This is yet another weighty argument against defining “toleration” in a purely philosophical mode of thinking and without due consideration for a concrete historical background.

In this article, we do not want to deal with any detailed analysis of John Locke's concept of toleration. There are numerous articles where this problem was analyzed carefully.<sup>6</sup> In this context, a more interesting question is the following: What kind of factors brought the English state to abandon intolerant political and religious forms of public life and to turn the system of reforms toward toleration at the end of the seventeenth century? It is worth observing that the main principles of the Protestant Reformation (especially in Calvin's version) did not make room for any confessional freedom. In *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*,<sup>7</sup> John Calvin was making necessary revisions of the “old” Roman Catholic faith in many dogmatic questions. According to Calvin, the Roman Catholic Church had abandoned the pure teaching of Scripture in the Middle Ages, falling into a series of dogmatic errors. The faith of the “old” papists was false on many points. The new exegesis of Scripture (especially the New Testament) made by John Calvin was to be the necessary and only true correction of the papists' errors.<sup>8</sup> That is why he accused the Roman Catholic authorities (the popes, the councils) of some formulations of dogma without any sufficient connection with the words of Holy Scripture.<sup>9</sup> In the Roman Catholic Church, many things were performed according to “men's whim,”<sup>10</sup> not in conformity with the concrete quotations of Scripture. It was “contemptuous of God's Word.” And those responsible for such practices were Catholic bishops, called by Calvin “spiritual tyrants.”<sup>11</sup> The Geneva reformer was combatting the Roman Catholic Church's infallibility.<sup>12</sup> He did not agree with the opinion that the primacy of the Roman bishop in the Christian world<sup>13</sup> came from the Apostle Peter, who was thus privileged from among the other Apostles by Jesus Christ.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, Calvin rejected the purgatory teaching because its existence

<sup>5</sup> J. Locke, *The Works*, vol. 6 (London: Thomas Tegg, 1823), 5-6.

<sup>6</sup> For example: J. De Roover and S. N. Balagangadhara, “John Locke, Christian Liberty, and the Predicament of Liberal Toleration,” *Political Theory* 36, no. 4 (August 2008): 523-49; I. Creppell, “Locke on Toleration. The Transformation of Constraint,” *Political Theory* 24, no. 2 (May 1996): 200-40; R. P. Kraynak, “John Locke: From Absolutism to Toleration,” *The American Political Science Review* 74, no. 1 (March 1980): 53-69.

<sup>7</sup> J. Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. J. T. McNeill, 2 vols. (Louisville, KY: The Westminster John Knox Press, 2011).

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, IV. 6. 3; IV. 6. 5; IV. 6. 6-10; IV. 6. 14-15; IV. 6. 17.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, IV. 8. 8-9.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, IV. 8. 1.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, IV. 8. 10.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, IV. 8. 12.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, IV. 6. 3.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, IV. 6. 4.

was not covered by Scripture.<sup>15</sup> One can also find numerous charges that Calvin made against the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church. Then he was calling for the return to the faith of early Christianity uncontaminated by some rulings of the later councils.<sup>16</sup>

Calvin and his protagonists did not hide that Calvinism was to replace Roman Catholicism in God's worship in the sphere of morality and in politics. The "old" faith was to vanish totally as a false denomination. In the beginning, the Protestantism of Martin Luther (1483-1546) and John Calvin did not aim at any pluralism of many Christian denominations. Just the opposite, such an idea was combatted not only by religious reformers but first of all by secular authorities. The struggle for the only religious truth intertwined with the fight for political domination in states, kingdoms, and duchies. The doctrine *Cuius regio eius religio* was known in England as Erastianism. In political practice, this rule did not allow for a legal form of religious pluralism. For a secular sovereign, such a situation was highly desirable because he or she wanted to be superior to the local church. The official religion remained under his/her control, with a strong impact on the election of church authorities, on the forms of official worship, and even (in singular cases) on the formulations of the articles of faith.<sup>17</sup> All the unofficial Christian denominations were pushed into the background of public life. The believers of other religious communities and sects were persecuted (persons were banished from the country, thrown into prison, and even put to death). Such politics brought the people into sharp conflict and finally led to the Civil War (1642-1649 in England).

But these political and religious conflicts were only the results of a certain paradoxical characteristic of the Reformation. Robert Kraynak depicted it in the following way:

The Reformation, however, challenged not only the Roman orthodoxy, but also the very idea of orthodoxy. From its beginning, the principal goal was to transform Christianity from a religion of priestly orthodoxy to one of freedom of conscience. Hence, there arose the Protestant idea of "Christian liberty," which maintained the paradoxical idea that the only Christian orthodoxy is freedom from orthodoxy or the freedom to follow one's own conscience. Locke confronted this idea in its most extreme form as it was developed in turn by Lutherans, Calvinists, and Puritans (or radical nonconformists) [...] In sum, Locke traces the cause of religious conflict to the transformation of Christianity into a religion of priestly orthodoxy and to its later reformation into a religion of individual conscience.<sup>18</sup>

Kraynak has noticed rightly that here we had a religious paradox. Calvin's doctrine had made possible the religion of individual conscience and potentially religious pluralism, but on the other hand the Geneva reformer wanted to determine only one true religion, his religion, which excluded the other interpretations of the Holy Scripture as legitimate. The actual intolerance and potential toleration created insolvable social and political conflicts.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., IV. 9. 14.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., IV. 9. 2; IV. 9. 8.

<sup>17</sup> In England, the *Articles* of Anglican Faith had to be approved by King Edward VI and later by Queen Elisabeth I.

<sup>18</sup> R. K. Kraynak, "John Locke," 55.

## THE ROLE OF RELIGION IN THE SOVEREIGN'S EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE

This paradox appeared fully in the England of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Breaking with Rome, Henry VIII appointed himself the head of the Church of England and at the same time began a long process of reforming the church in the protestant direction. As a political sovereign, Henry VIII subordinated to himself the main religious institution in the country. In England, this rule assumed the form of Erastianism.<sup>19</sup> The king, as a sovereign, subordinated to himself the local clergy (mainly bishops), in fact making them state officials. Through the clergy he appointed, he influenced religious worship and even the content of the articles of faith. Participation in the official church service was obligatory for all subjects under the threat of criminal sanctions. The Church of England became the official one to propagate the official religion. The reforms of Henry VIII, Edward VI, and Elisabeth I were in conformity with the Reformation spirit – a true religion was only one, and a monarch (later, the Puritan majority of the English Parliament) had the duty to be responsible for that state of affairs. That is why the representatives of other Christian denominations had to be politically marginalized; generally, they could not take part in public life and frequently suffered various kinds of persecution by the ruling civil sovereign.

But despite this, there were many representatives of different faiths in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England. Catholics, who were faithful to the pope and scornfully called “papists,” were persecuted to varying degrees. There were also radical Calvinists, Puritans, for whom the reforms carried out in the Church of England were partial and thus, in their opinion, not sufficient. From the 1580s onward, they created separate communities, made up of particularly fervent Protestants. Furthermore, there were many religious communities, both older and newer, because new sects were still being formed. There were also some groups of Anglicans who experienced a tension between faithfulness to their conscience and obedience to the royal power.

Was there any political and religious toleration possible in such a situation? Was it something desirable or, on the contrary, something wrong and detrimental to the monarchy? In the second half of the seventeenth century some people tried to find an adequate response to these questions. The above-mentioned paradox might be solved: either to organize a tolerant state or to defend the form of an absolute state accepted by the sovereign according to the rule of Erastianism. John Locke developed a new concept of toleration, which gained many supporters in England after 1689 and made a significant contribution to the change of the country's political system, especially to reduce the practice of Erastianism. After the Glorious Revolution, the modified political system largely restored the desired peace, extinguished disastrous political and religious emotions, and enabled the more stable development of Great Britain in the eighteenth century.

A great protagonist of the defense of intolerance was the Anglican bishop of Oxford (a former Puritan) Samuel Parker (1640-1688), who claimed in his work *A Discourse*

<sup>19</sup> The name comes from Thomas Erastus (1524-1583), a physician and theologian from Basel, later the courtier of Palatinate elector Frederic III (1515-1576). According to Erastus, religious matters ought to be subordinated entirely to civil authorities, which are to supervise and manage religious clergy. (Cf. also J. B. Marsden, *The History of the Later Puritans* [London: Hamilton & Adams, 1854], 73).

of *Ecclesiastical Politie*<sup>20</sup> that only the rule of a strong sovereign could ensure social peace and put down political and religious rebellions. Parker was not an impartial observer in any sense. He sided with the king and did not hide his negative attitude toward radical Puritans and other sects, even though in his youth, during Cromwell's time, he was an independent Puritan and a "virulent enemy of the Church." Later, he became a conformist, moving on to the Anglican Church.<sup>21</sup> Parker did not abandon his old temperament, writing his *Discourse* in a rather aggressive style<sup>22</sup>; however, the treatise contains a number of non-sophistic arguments concerning Puritan "dissenting zelots." Radical Puritans, after Charles II's *Act of Uniformity* was passed, became strong opponents of the reborn monarchy. There were radical Calvinists who remained outside of the Anglican Church, that is, Independents, sometimes called Congregationalists, and Separatists, simply called Dissenters. In a polemical fervor, Parker called them "wild and fanatique rabble."<sup>23</sup> Similar convictions were also shared by others: the royal publicist Roger L'Estrange (1616-1704), Thomas Edwards (1599-1647), and the Calvinist theologian Daniel Featley (1582-1645).

After the death of Oliver Cromwell (1599-1658), England returned to a monarchy in 1660. The throne was assumed by Charles II, the son of Charles I, who was sentenced to death by the Puritan parliamentary majority in 1649. This period was called the Restoration, in which the problem of the subordination of the official Anglican Church to the monarch arose anew. The conflict between the official (Anglican) faith on the one hand and radical Puritans and increasingly numerous emerging sects on the other remained unsolved. The relations between them became more and more strained.

Samuel Parker was among the greatest opponents of toleration. He combatted all those people (religious communities and sects alike) who wanted to live according to the rules of freedom of conscience, being inspired by their own religious convictions only. Opinions declared in his work *A Discourse of Ecclesiastical Politie* illustrate Parker's very detailed reluctance to accept any concept of common toleration and his readiness to keep up the status quo of monarchy. That is why it is worth analyzing his opinions in more detail.

In his treatise, Samuel Parker puts forward a number of arguments in favor of the authority of a "civil magistrate" exercised on behalf of the king,<sup>24</sup> while showing various threats arising from the view that freedom of conscience in religious matters (and as a consequence, in political ones) may not be subject to any limitations or any higher earthly authority. This freedom was invoked by members of independent religious communities and sects. In their understanding, the conscience of a particular individual was a higher power than that of secular civil law and ecclesiastical law. Hence, by

<sup>20</sup> S. Parker, *A Discourse of Ecclesiastical Politie* (London: John Martyr at the Bell without Temple-Bar, 1670).

<sup>21</sup> J. Hunt, *Religious Thought in England*, vol. 2 (London: Strahan & Co. Publishers, 1873), 9-11.

<sup>22</sup> In his "Preface to the Reader," he presents himself as a detached observer. Indeed, Parker uses "tart and upbraising expressions," but, as he says, "they were not the dictate of anger or passion." In this way, he wanted to direct the attention of his opponents to the importance of the issues raised. (Cf. S. Parker, *On Ecclesiastical Politie*, i).

<sup>23</sup> S. Parker, *On Ecclesiastical Politie*, i-ii.

<sup>24</sup> Magistrate – a high-level official who was entrusted with the administration of state institutions or the state itself.

invoking their consciences, they easily rebelled against sovereignty, causing schisms in the Church of England. Parker was convinced that it was impossible to ensure peace in the Commonwealth without subjecting all religious denominations to the sovereign's authority. At the same time, while referring to historical reasons he wrote that since the Roman emperor Constantine, the Christian Church had been ruled not only by the pope but above all by the emperor.<sup>25</sup> This was to be an argument for recognizing the superiority of civil authority over ecclesiastical authorities in matters of religion. According to Parker, this relationship was further strengthened during the Reformation.<sup>26</sup> He was therefore convinced that the long-lasting conflict between King Charles II and the radical Puritanical factions and other sects was extremely damaging to England. Those who motivated their disobedience to the sovereign with fidelity to their consciences were particularly dangerous. The author of *A Discourse of Ecclesiastical Politie* observed that the multiplicity of religious denominations had the greatest impact on the stability of the state.<sup>27</sup> He summed it up as follows:

Religion then is either useful or dangerous in a Commonwealth, as the temper of mind it breeds is Peaceable or Turbulent: and as there is nothing more serviceable to the Interests of Government, so there is nothing more mischievous: and therefore nothing more concerns Princes, than to take care what Doctrines are taught within their Dominions. For seeing Religion has, and will have the strongest Influence upon the minds of men.<sup>28</sup>

Here, Bishop Parker thinks of religion in terms of ideology, not eschatology as “salutary knowledge.”<sup>29</sup> He also does not consider it in moral terms but believes that, even if religion was a cheat, the world was not able to be ruled without it. That is why he considers the most mischievous enemies of the government to be those who claimed that the world could do without it.<sup>30</sup> He looks at religion from the point of view of the sovereign. The useful religions are those that encourage sincerity and moderation among the subjects and contribute to their gentle and peaceful disposition. For the sovereign, a useful religion is one that teaches the subjects humility, love, meekness, and obedience. In turn, those religions that infect the subjects with pride, irritability, malice, and jealousy, as well as generate in them restless and subversive tendencies, must be eliminated.<sup>31</sup> Parker read out well the desires of English rulers and confirmed the validity of Erastianism. Charles I was to have said, “religion is something to hold subject in obedience.” Oliver Cromwell was of a similar opinion: “no temporal authority could feel secure without a national Church

<sup>25</sup> This was not true. Emperor Constantine was able to demand the Council in Nicea (325) be called, but he did not take part in theological discussions together with the bishops and did not influence the emerging Christian doctrine.

<sup>26</sup> S. Parker, *On Ecclesiastical Politie*, 10.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 145.

<sup>29</sup> In 1652 the Westminster Confession was published with the subtitle “The Sum of Salutary Knowledge.”

<sup>30</sup> S. Parker, *On Ecclesiastical Politie*, 135.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 144-45.

confident in him.”<sup>32</sup> This was consistent with a quite common opinion that the purpose of supreme state authority was not to care for the eternal salvation of its subjects but to take advantage of their strong fear of hell and their strong hope for salvation and effectively use religious means of persuasion to force desirable moral behaviors upon them.<sup>33</sup> Of course, such an approach to religion did not exclude the possibility that the sovereign, as a viceregent of God, gave himself the right to intervene in moral and religious matters that concerned his subjects.<sup>34</sup> There was a kind of division: God intervened inside, in the conscience and thoughts of man, while the earthly sovereign ruled over the people’s external actions.<sup>35</sup> Nevertheless, Parker did not advocate “uncontrolled, absolut and unlimited” power of the sovereign over the lives of his subjects, which did not take the human conscience into account. He took a moderate stance on this, believing that the conscience should be treated with both gentleness and severity.<sup>36</sup> The sovereign should not base his power on naked violence. Conscience and religion were strongly connected with the law he established and were the only support of the government. Without them, the most absolute and unlimited power must be weak, uncertain, and at the mercy of the various aspirations of the subjects and their private interests.<sup>37</sup> On the other hand, “no power or police in the world” can keep peace among people of different faiths until the uncontrollable religious convictions are “rooted out of their minds by the severity of laws and penalties.”<sup>38</sup> Parker notes an interesting thing: the central power must be stricter toward those who claim to be faithful to their consciences than toward people burdened with various moral shortcomings. It is easier for the authorities to deal with the latter.<sup>39</sup>

### **SUBMISSION TO THE SOVEREIGN OR TO ONE’S OWN CONSCIENCE?**

As early as 1629, during the reign of Charles I, a dispute arose as to whether the state and the Church of England were to be controlled by the representatives of radical Calvinists, representing the broadly understood people of England, or only by the king. The synod of the Church of England accepted the principle that resistance to the sovereign (king) was condemned by God’s law in all cases. The Puritans and the parliamentary majority questioned this provision for various reasons, at the same time complaining that Charles I restricted the Puritans’ religious freedom in favor of Anglicans. In the latter the Puritans saw English papists, who were to appear under the mask of the Arminians. This became the origin for the future Civil War in 1642-1649.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>32</sup> C. Hill, *The Century of Revolution: 1603-1714* (London and New York: Routledge Classics, 2002), 76.

<sup>33</sup> Hunt, *Religious Thought in England*, vol. 2, 9-11.

<sup>34</sup> Parker, *On Ecclesiastical Politie*, 11.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 4, 9.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 141.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 145.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 146.

<sup>40</sup> J. Brown, *The English Puritans* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1910) 117-20. Radical Puritans accused Archbishop William Laud of Arminianism. As a main adviser to King Charles I, William Laud (1573-1645), among others, censured most sharp satires against monarchy and had most aggressive Puritan writers (like Prynne) put into jail. (Cf. W. Haller, *The Rise of Puritanism* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1938), 222-25, 230-34.

Of what did radical Calvinists, independent Puritans, and the so-called dissidents accuse the official Church of England? First of all, they accused it of an insufficient departure from Roman Catholic (papist) doctrine and liturgy, as well as a lack of willingness to carry out the full Calvinist reform. According to the Dissidents, the Church should have abandoned the ecclesiastical hierarchy, the prelacy (mainly the bishops), as well as the relatively rich liturgical setting characteristic of Catholicism. Worshipping God and obedience to His law was to be based solely on the Scripture. This meant that nothing should be introduced into the teaching or worship that was not expressly and directly confirmed in the Scripture. The proclamation of the Word of God should also take precedence over any liturgical act. In all of this, the radical Puritans invoked the freedom of their consciences, so that they could freely refer to Jesus Christ, the sole head of the church. Thus, the Calvinist dissenters did not recognize royal sovereignty over the church, acting against the main principle of Erastianism. Christ was the only legislator and there was no one else. Whatever He revealed had to be accepted, whatever He commanded had to be obeyed. "The Holy Scripture is the unique rule of faith and religious practice."<sup>41</sup> "That is why a godly Puritan (the Saint) can break laws constituted by man, but cannot break the laws of Christ. The Dissenter is responsible only before God. He has need of religious freedom and to define it with most simple religious forms. He claimed the right of 'private judgement in all matters of religion.'<sup>42</sup>

However, after the Civil War, many people realized that England needed peace and political stability. "Peace and Tranquility of the Commonwealth" became the most important goal of the monarchy. Parker believed that this would not be possible without subjecting religion to the "Authority of the Supreme Power." As a result, this meant that the "Supreme Magistrate" would have control over the "Conscience of Subjects in Affairs of Religion." It was also to supervise matters of the worship of God,<sup>43</sup> which was the subject of the dispute going on between Anglicans and Puritan dissenters for several decades.

The judgements of their consciences could not revoke the sovereign's decrees or separate them from the official church. Those who led to the death of the king (Charles I) could not invoke their consciences by saying that God had commanded them to do it.<sup>44</sup> The judgements of the consciences of individual people could not have more power than decisions of the sovereign, simply because their minds and consciences were "weak, foolish and ignorant about things, and their absurd principles, come from their faults and passions." Parker did not have a good opinion about "freedom of conscience," simply calling it "religious mystification."<sup>45</sup> It built up the fanaticism of sects. Therefore, tolerating sects and allowing them to act freely was giving them the opportunity for public disturbances and, as a result, to "overturn the established order of things."<sup>46</sup> Moreover, the experience of the past epochs shows that nothing causes more commotion among people than "religious changes and reformatations." Hence the state, even if it is not interested in certain human

<sup>41</sup> J. Bennet, *The History of Dissenters*, vol. 1 (London: Frederick Westley and A. H. Davis, 1833), 88-89.

<sup>42</sup> J. Hall, *The Puritans and their Principles* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1851), 91-92, 94, 270-72.

<sup>43</sup> Parker, *On Ecclesiastical Politie*, 10-11.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 138.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 161.

beliefs or opinions, is still condemned to suppressing the tumults and disturbances that arise as a result of the promotion of their views.<sup>47</sup> Therefore, no religion can acquire the power of law until it is established by the supreme civil magistrate.<sup>48</sup>

Samuel Parker was deeply convinced that the sovereign needed religion not to effectively lead his subjects to eternal salvation but to maintain public peace and tranquility with its help and to control those subjects.<sup>49</sup> He observed that the sovereign used the official religion as a convenient ideological instrument to maintain social and political order. According to Parker, if the king gives up a religion understood in this way, then he weakens his political power, which causes his subjects to become “stubborn,” “prone to incite others to sedition,” and fuel their restless “heads with religious rage and fury.” Then, Parker warns, the monarch will not be able to rule.<sup>50</sup> It follows that the sovereign’s power must be effective, absolute, and “remain uncontrollable” in everything that concerns human interests.<sup>51</sup>

Where does the belief that the sovereign should have absolute power, remaining beyond any control, come from? According to Parker, the sovereign is like a father to his children, who are his subjects. Historically, he proves, the “natural Rights of paternal Authority” transformed over time into royal power, the only higher power over which is held by divine providence. With God over him, the sovereign is the father who maintains discipline among his subjects, and in this sense, he is entitled to exercise absolute rule. The monarch’s power necessarily derives from the constitution of human nature.<sup>52</sup> All civilian governments are founded on “paternal power.” “All Ecclesiastical power” is based on the same foundation. Hence, Parker argues, “Sovereign Power” and “Supreme Priesthood” have co-existed since antiquity.<sup>53</sup> Somewhat earlier, Robert Filmer (1588-1653) was of a similar opinion; he maintained that “regal authority [was] not subject to positive laws. The kings of Judah and Israel were not tied to laws.”<sup>54</sup>

Jesus Christ behaved differently in relation to this ancient union of religious and secular authorities. He established “new Laws of Religion,” without providing new “Models of Politie,” left the world’s governments in the same state as he found them.<sup>55</sup> Nevertheless, according to the Anglican bishop, Jesus Christ proclaimed the need for His followers to submit to secular authority, even if this authority caused them suffering. The secular authority should be obeyed because the Christian religion cannot be accused of being “Factious and Seditious against the State,” except when this authority opposes the “interest of the Gospel.” Parker argues that this religion does not entail “Liberty of Conscience.” He does not agree with those who claim that no means other than those which our Saviour and

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 137.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>54</sup> R. Filmer, *Patriarcha or Natural Power of Kings* (London: 1680), ch. 3, 77.

<sup>55</sup> Parker, *On Ecclesiastical Politie*, 33-34.

His Apostles used to persuade and convert men should be used.<sup>56</sup> “The Civil Magistrate cannot waive punishment for ‘curses,’ blasphemies, and ‘unreligious promiscuities.’”<sup>57</sup> In the Gospel, Jesus Christ did not entrust the promotion of the faith to any civil authority because He did not create any earthly criminal law; however, He did strengthen it with threats of eternity that exert greater compulsion on human consciences than with civil sanctions. They are strong motives for obedience. God’s jurisdiction is stronger than the temporal one. The supreme secular magistrate is the guardian of fundamental moral principles.<sup>58</sup>

Hence, secular power cannot be tolerant of religious fanatics, who first break the ecclesiastical law and then the secular law. Toleration would be “the impunity of criminals against ecclesiastical law.” The sovereign cannot allow this, because he is responsible for civil and ecclesiastical jurisdiction.<sup>59</sup> Therefore, he must be firm in his governance, but he does not have to justify his decisions rationally, because those he wants to control are not rational in their behavior and do not use rational arguments but “noise” and “confidence,” which makes them popular among the “rabble.” The rabble, in turn, is more sensitive to screams than to the “power of reason.” Therefore, the sovereign should not use any “deep reason” against them that can “drill through their thick and inveterate prejudices,” but he should rather “silence” them with his “sharpness” and “severity,” with “zeal, though without their malice.” Secular power will achieve nothing by rational persuasion, but only by applying the appropriate penalties. The opponents of the sovereign’s power are not rational people but “fanatical dissidents.” Their own conscience is a source of “regrettable madness and foolishness of these religious people.” People who adhere to such “gloomy and destructive principles,” which make them “the most brutal and barbaric people in the world,” should not be allowed to take power.<sup>60</sup>

If any official religion were to be an ideology that legitimized the absolutist actions of secular power, then the question arises: Was there any rational justification for resorting to such an ideology? Yes, we find the answer in Parker’s writings. The first one is quite simple and historically understandable. It was the Reformation that confirmed the superiority of the secular authorities (in comparison to the ecclesiastical ones) in religious matters, which was expressed in the doctrine of Erastianism.<sup>61</sup> The second answer given by Parker is somewhat more natural. It refers to the duty to supervise the observance of moral principles by the subjects. Parker combines supervision over religious worship with supervision over the performance of “Duties of Morality.” In both cases, the Magistrate’s authority is linked to the observance of order in both areas and is a necessary condition for “the preservation of peace and the preservation of the Commonwealth.”<sup>62</sup> Moral law and the practice of virtue flow from our reasoning and nature, contributing both to eternal

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 42-43.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, ix-xi.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

salvation and to the preservation of social peace.<sup>63</sup> What is more, moral virtues are a certain reflection of God's attributes. Therefore, every moral virtue has a strong and necessary influence on human happiness, which is the goal of all religions. Thus "every true religion can depend only on the practice of virtue itself, or on the use of all these instruments, which contribute to it."<sup>64</sup> In fact, Parker seems to reduce Christianity (and all religions) to its moral dimension of gaining virtues and being virtuous. Parker thus goes far beyond the views of the fathers of the Reformation. For example, John Calvin underestimated the value of good works, and he regarded a struggle for moral virtues as irrelevant to the attainment of salvation.<sup>65</sup>

### **SECTS OR RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES REMAINING OUTSIDE THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND**

The sects<sup>66</sup> as religious communities, usually called religious unions, usually emerge under the influence of charismatic leaders, who, thanks to their distinctive personality, religious zeal, and more than an average knowledge of religious matters, were able to gather many followers and believers around them. Sometimes sects arose as communities, which left larger congregations. They split into a schism, often becoming intransigent enemies of the communities from which they had separated.

A similar mechanism operated in England. The monarchy began to oppose them under Elizabeth I, who fiercely persecuted radical Calvinists.<sup>67</sup> In seventeenth-century England, there were already many sects, but some new ones were still being created. There were so many of them that it would be difficult to list them all at the end of the seventeenth century. For example, a dozen or so of them can be given: there were Levellers, Diggers, Seekers, Quakers, Anabaptists, Familists, Antinomians, Brownians, Libertarians, Arminians, Perfectionists, and Carnal Evangelists.<sup>68</sup> Socinians and Unitarians appeared somewhat later. The Roman Catholic Church was not a sect, but it was combatted in England as a "papist" sect. During the reign of Charles II and the Restoration, the radical Puritans – the so-called Independent Presbyterians, Congregationalists, and Separatists – were persecuted particularly fervently. Prominent Puritans included Oliver Cromwell, John Milton (1608-1674), Richard Baxter (1615-1691), and John Bunyan (1628-1688). They were also called Dissenters. Those "schismatic sects," as Marsden calls them, multiplied particularly during the rule of the Puritan parliamentary majority and Oliver Cromwell's Protectorate. They were characterized by their inability to compromise, mutual animosity,

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.

<sup>65</sup> J. Calvin, *Institutio Christianae Religionis* (Genevae: Institutionis Christianae religionis, 1559), bk. 3, chap. 21, sec. 1: "Quodsi per gratiam, non iam ex operibus; quandoquidem gratia iam non esset gratia. Si ex operibus, non ex gratia; quandoquidem opus non esset opus." John Calvin cites Paul Apostle: elected people shall be saved by the Divine grace, but the grace excludes good deeds.

<sup>66</sup> Lat. *secta* has many meanings, among them those that come from Lat. *secare* – cut off, dissociate from, chop off.

<sup>67</sup> The first leaders of radical Calvinists (Dissenters), Greenwood and Barrow, were arrested in 1586 and were publicly executed in 1593; see J. Brown, *The English Puritans* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1910), 104-7.

<sup>68</sup> See Th. Edwards, *Gangraena* (London: Ralph Smith, 1646), 16, 125, 156; also, R. L'Estrange, *Dissenters Sayings* (London: Henry Brome at the Gun in St. Pauls Church-yard, 1681), 5.

and aversion toward each other.<sup>69</sup> They considered themselves to be the only defenders of Christ's faith, calling the others Antichrists.<sup>70</sup> Daniel Featley attributed them to a series of misfortunes that had occurred in England and Scotland. He wrote, "The misery of our late and wasting Maladies we have not forgotten: for our Land was surfeted with bloud; and our garments were rolled in bloud: we carryed our lives in our hands; and our Estates were exposed to rapine: Heresies and Schismes did eat like a Gangrene; and Religion was near lost in the Atheism, Blasphemy, Epicurism, and Liberty of those looser times."<sup>71</sup> This was confirmed by the historian John Hunt – the Puritans of the first half of the seventeenth century sometimes caused some trouble for the Church of England and caused great trouble for the state. But, as he observes, this was in line with their seditious principles to be independent in church and state.<sup>72</sup>

Samuel Parker was very blunt in describing the behavior and character traits of the members of contemporary sects. He pointed out that these people were united by a "holy fervour in the Cause of God" with "malice" and "bitterness."<sup>73</sup> He attributed to them "folly and ignorance," which were destructive for "public peace and the settlement of Nation." He meant here first of all Puritan preachers full of "pride and insolence," "ignorant and malepert."<sup>74</sup> Those preachers "were hypocrites who 'traded true piety.'" Parker described them as "peevish" and "sullen" religionists, accusing them of being prone to inciting rebellion against the king<sup>75</sup> and of seeking to "spill blood and cause confusion." The members of the sects were destructively influenced by their preachers, who evoked strong emotions in the listeners. They used "fulsome" and "luscious" metaphors and popular "Biblical expressions." Often their statements were meaningless, drowning in flat and empty nonsense, which resulted in the creation of apparent mysteries and various "fanaticisms." Samuel Parker accused them of so-called "enthusiasm," which he described as "mere imposture."<sup>76</sup> Members of sects lived in fear of the "pain of eternal damnation." Thus, they worked "with all their might to establish the worship of God in its greatest purity and perfection."<sup>77</sup> That is why they treated their religious opinions as "fundamental articles of faith," whereas everything they denied became heathen, infidel, and hostile to their faith. In their zeal, they considered themselves the only defenders of the "Divine Truth."<sup>78</sup> They treated themselves as the truly chosen ones, seeing all the others as "the

<sup>69</sup> Marsden, *The History of the Later Puritans*, 77-78.

<sup>70</sup> "Oh Lord, Thine Honour is now at stake, for now, o Lord, Antichrist hath drawn his sword against thy Christ; and if our Enemies prevail, thou wilt lose thine Honour." Sermon of one of the contemporary preachers, Strickland in Southampton, 9 June 1643. The other was grumbling, "If thou dost finish the good Work which thou hast begun in Reformation of the Church, thou wilt shew thy self to be the God of Confusion." It will cause "the Destruction of thine own Children." (Crosse at S. Mildreds in the Counter, 6 June 1643). See L'Estrange, *Dissenters Sayings*, 7.

<sup>71</sup> D. Featley, "The Introduction," *The League illegal, Publishers Introduction* (London: John Faireclough, 1660).

<sup>72</sup> Hunt, *Religious Thought in England*, vol. 2, 6.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 13-14.

<sup>74</sup> Parker, *On Ecclesiastical Politie*, ii.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, iv.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 76-77.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 163.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 157-58.

wicked and reprobate of the Earth, hated of God,” as those who could not be loved. Parker calls their behavior “holy inhumanity” and considers the Puritan “Saints” to be more cruel than many tyrants.<sup>79</sup>

Parker noted that sects as factions of the main religion are always more rebellious than the communities from which they split. “The Factions of the Religions are ever most Seditious, and the less material their Difference, the more implacable the Hatred. [...] Nothing so vehemently alienates men’s Affections, as variety of Judgement in matters of Religion, here they cannot agree, but they must quarrel.”<sup>80</sup>

Robert L’Estrange expressed himself similarly about sects, using his observations as well as the opinions of others. He saw an intransigent aversion among them toward each other. He perceived members of various sects as “deadly enemies.”<sup>81</sup>

Samuel Parker was not alone in his negative attitude toward sects. Thomas Edwards, at least one generation older, wrote, “For was there ever in our times a generation of greater self-seekers, boasters, proud blasphemers, Covenant-breakers, unthankfull make-bates, heady despisers of those who are good, mockers, scoffers, walking after their own ungodly lusts, despisers of dominions, and speakers evill of dignities, having a forme of godlinesse, but denying the power thereof.”<sup>82</sup>

### **SUPPRESS SECTARIANS. THEY CANNOT BE TOLERATED**

Since members of sects and Dissenters were painted in such dark colors, the conclusion was immediately obvious: such people could not be allowed freedom of action in a state. To tolerate their behavior could cause incalculable losses for the Commonwealth. For that reason, King Charles II was firmly opposed to the fierce religious disputes. He thus struck various Calvinist groups, which were developing in an atmosphere of fervent discussion.<sup>83</sup> He did not want to tolerate them. That is why he prepared the *Act of Uniformity*, at the same time giving an opportunity to many Puritan preachers and pastors (ministers) to return to the Anglican Church. Some took this opportunity to join the official church (among them Samuel Parker). Parker justified this as follows: not all dissidents could be given full freedom of action, because in such a case one could only expect conspiracies against the current established ecclesiastical order. Therefore, all the communities (sects) must be suppressed, leaving only one religion. Toleration toward them had to be abandoned, guided by wisdom and prudence.<sup>84</sup> Moreover, religious (and consequently political) toleration was contrary to the nature of the Reformation. Those processes were diametrically opposed to each other. This was the opinion not only of Parker but also of Edwards and L’Estrange. The latter was convinced that toleration was “the Mother and Nurse of all Heresies, Prophaneness, Blasphemy and Imposture.” He therefore praised the work of the Presbyterians (in the time of Restoration) who prepared the *Act of Uniformity*

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., ii-vii.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 155.

<sup>81</sup> L’Estrange, *Dissenters Sayings*, 12.

<sup>82</sup> Edwards, *Gangraena*, pt. 3, 256-57.

<sup>83</sup> G. R. Cragg, *From Puritanism to the Age of Reason* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964), 32.

<sup>84</sup> Parker, *On Ecclesiastical Politie*, 162-63.

“opposing a toleration with all the might.”<sup>85</sup> They claimed that tolerating people in their mistakes, in this pretended freedom of conscience, is contrary to the judgements of the greatest authorities in the ancient and modern church. The toleration of some sects was to result in godlessness, disdain for orthodox ministers, religious confusion, “frivolous disputes and vain janglings,” but also the disruption of life in families and in bringing up children. Toleration also threatened to weaken the central government of the Commonwealth and even overthrow it.<sup>86</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The political and religious reality of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England (over 150 years of its modern history) shows an essential truth: there was a long historical way from intolerance to toleration. The former was not of marginal significance but a long-lasting serious problem connected with certain religious and political decisions. The Reformation of Martin Luther and John Calvin broke with one official interpretation of the Scripture, which had previously been legally binding in the Roman Catholic Church. It erased the major part of the church's tradition, which provided the one hermeneutical key to maintain one biblical exegesis and one official dogmatic theology. On the other side, those great reformers had not the slightest intention of introducing any religious pluralism. Especially clearly it can be observed in John Calvin's writings. The Geneva reformer wanted to correct a series of “papist's” errors and to recover the original truth of Christianity contained in the literal interpretation of the New Testament. While setting up the Geneva church, John Calvin treated it as a model for a regenerated (in conformity with the New Testament) universal church; it should replace the hitherto existing “corrupted” and simply “heretical” Roman Catholic Church. Calvin was convinced that his Scripture exegesis was unquestionable. Therefore it was to be accepted by all Protestants.

In order to preserve their own exegesis of the Scripture and to originate new Protestant denominations, the first reformers were seeking political support among sovereigns (emperors, kings, dukes, and so on). That is why such practices originated new national systems regulated by the *cuius regio eius religio* rule. That political and religious doctrine was well-known in England as Erastianism. In consequence, it justified the civil sovereign's full control over the Church of England and established the so-called official religion. Other religious denominations (including the Roman Catholic and radical Puritans) were pushed to a sphere of privacy and sometimes were even treated as illegal and forbidden.

But in fact the Reformation activities of the first reformers led to religious pluralism, because they promoted a fundamental role of human consciousness in the religious life of a concrete believer. Contrary to their intentions, the new approach to the interpretation of the Scripture allowed for a private exegesis for practically every student of the Bible. The previous hermeneutics of continuity was no longer in force. One thing remained unchanged. The protestant leaders of the constantly emerging communities and sects were still convinced that their biblical exegesis was the only true and correct one, while those of

<sup>85</sup> L'Estrange, *Dissenters Sayings*, 8-9.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 2-3.

all the other communities were false and heretical. According to Calvin, the Holy Spirit, who was present in the Scripture, was also revealing in the consciousness of a Christian person. The Word of God had a true effect on the individual soul. The English radical Puritans (Independents and Separatists) might cite the Geneva reformer and be in favor of their own exegesis of the Scripture. For them the national or church mediation became useless and even harmful. There was no agreement between them either. This must have led to unending conflicts, disputes, and even hatred among the members of these religious groups. This, especially in England, threatened to weaken the central power and, in the long run, bring about political anarchy.

After Henry VIII's reformation, such a situation caused by the above-mentioned ambiguous approach to the Christian faith created a political and religious paradox difficult to overcome. This ambiguity had to give rise to long-lasting social conflict (including the Civil War). In the second half of the seventeenth century, Samuel Parker was one of the eminent persons who tried to describe those conflicts and find their causes. While siding with Charles II's politics against the radical Puritans, he, in fact, understood the official religion as a convenient instrument or, more exactly, as an ideological tool in the hands of the king useful to guarantee social peace and political order in England. Anglicanism as the official Christian denomination stopped being, in the first place, a certain way to salvation, because it also became an ideological power that could legitimize the absolutistic rule of monarchy. Such a deep interference by secular authorities in the religious life of the country had never occurred before. English monarchs did not only care for the religious and moral life of their subjects but also treated the religion of the Anglican Church as a kind of ideology, legitimizing and strengthening their power.

Samuel Parker was well aware of it. That is why he strongly opposed any toleration of other Christian denominations present in the rising number of communities and sects. He spoke against it for two reasons: the Reformation did not allow for toleration, neither did English Erastianism. Hence, the only solution was to suppress the infidels: killing the rebels, condemning the leaders to banishment, imprisoning them, and, in extreme cases, depriving them of their lives. This gave rise to social unrest and a continued political struggle. Parker defended two things at a time. At first, the one official religion was to reinforce sovereign authority and to contribute to a better observation of the national law by the subjects. Second, he silently assumed that exactly this monarch's religion is the only true one. This supposition, however, was not correct. A hot discussion on which Christian denomination is true in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England failed to be solved, because there were many religious communities and sects that did not acknowledge the priority of the sovereigns' civil magistrate over their own religious convictions and laws. In fact, those people admitted the opposite principle (also characteristic of the people of the Middle Ages) that the civil law should be totally subdued to religious commandments. The radical Puritans accepted even a more rigorous opinion. According to them, all civil regulations were to come from concrete statements directly found in the Scripture.

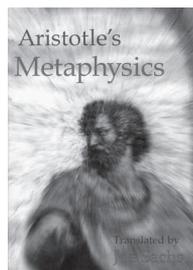
In the history of England, a period of political and religious intolerance was not a short-lived accident connected with marginal sects but a national system chosen on

purpose, the system that was subdued to Erastianism rule. What was a result of that long way to Locke's concept of toleration? While formulating his concept, he had to become aware of some determinants. Now they could not be ignored. In the name of social peace and personal freedom, none of the Protestant communities (sects) could claim its denomination as the only true and infallible religion. The hitherto existing mutual charges of heresy, which provoked conflicts and violent mutual hatred, had to be dismissed. Any official religion was not to be maintained in its ideological sense. There was no room for any discrimination of other Protestant denominations. Simultaneously, step by step (especially because of Latitudinarians' publicists activities), different post-Reformation communities and sects had to admit that their religious opinions were of subjective validity only. Religions were becoming private, not public. In such a situation, John Locke had no doubt that it was necessary to separate the state from the church, civil matters from religious ones, in the name of social stability. Those determinants of objective historical process were the basis for John Locke's concept of toleration.

Research for this paper is part of a project financed by the National Center of Science, decision No. DEC-2012/07/B/HS1/00358.

Cordell D. K. Yee

## TRANSLATION AMONG THE LIBERAL ARTS: ON JOE SACHS'S ARISTOTLE



It has been more than twenty years since the first of Joe Sachs's translations of Aristotle appeared in print. These now number seven and, in Sachs's view, comprise "a trio of theoretical works and a quartet grounded in human life."<sup>1</sup> There has been no lack of reviews of Sachs's work, but now that he has moved on to translate other authors, perhaps this is a good time for a more synoptic view of his Aristotelian translations.

### THE INSTITUTIONAL-CULTURAL BACKGROUND

Sachs was first a student and then a faculty member at the Annapolis campus of St. John's College, where he taught from 1975 to 2005. In a way, his translations of Aristotle grew

<sup>1</sup> Joe Sachs, personal communication, electronic mail to Cordell D. K. Yee, 2 October 2018. Below is a chronological listing of Sachs's translations of Aristotle:

*Aristotle's Physics: A Guided Study* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1995).

*Aristotle's Metaphysics* (Santa Fe, NM: Green Lion Press, 1999).

*Aristotle's On the Soul and On Memory and Recollection* (Santa Fe, NM: Green Lion Press, 2001).

*Nicomachean Ethics* (Newbury Port, MA: Focus Publishing, 2002).

*Poetics* (Newbury Port, MA: Focus Publishing, 2006).

Plato, *Gorgias*, and Aristotle, *Rhetoric* (Newbury Port, MA: Focus Publishing, 2012).

out of the culture of that school.<sup>2</sup> There, students undertake a study of major texts in the Western tradition as directly as possible, without the mediation of textbooks or academic commentary. In the case of Aristotle, the phrase “as directly as possible” means reliance for the most part on translations. The first language of most students is English, which is the language of a small minority of the works in the St. John’s program. All students study Ancient Greek for about three semesters, but that is hardly enough time to read much of Aristotle in Greek. The claim to direct encounter thus depends on the quality of the translation and indeed on the very possibility of translation. Translation, in fact, is one of the central activities of language study at St. John’s. The questions of what makes for a good translation, or even the possibility of translation, is often a topic of discussion.

Even in a community as small and closely knit as St. John’s College (about 450 undergraduates at Annapolis and about 325 at Santa Fe), where there are no academic departments and where faculty teach across the curriculum, there is disagreement on what sort of translations and whose translations serve students best. Even if one takes liberal arts education as a starting point, one can arrive at different answers. The liberal arts might be taken to be preparatory to philosophy, a view with a history of more than eight centuries: “‘philosophy is the art of arts and the discipline of disciplines’ – that, namely, toward which all arts and disciplines are oriented.”<sup>3</sup> If translation is a liberal art and insofar as it involves knowledge of and skill in the arts of language – grammar, logic, and rhetoric – it should serve to help initiate students into the discipline of philosophy. “If, therefore, grammar is so useful, and the key to everything written, as well as the mother and arbiter of all speech, who will [try to] exclude it from the threshold of philosophy, save one who thinks that philosophizing does not require an understanding of what has been said or written?”<sup>4</sup> Understanding philosophic discourse depends on one’s ability to construe sentences, and this ability is developed on a foundation of grammar. When one is dealing with philosophic discourse in a foreign language, becoming versed in practices of translation is part of the process of becoming acquainted with the ways, conventions, and traditions of the discipline. Standard translations of key terms can become part of a technical vocabulary. For newcomers to Aristotle, the technical vocabulary can have the effect of defamiliarization. The words may look like very formal English, say, but it takes considerable effort to work through them. Familiarization with commentaries and academic interpretations are probably needed to get past that initial defamiliarization. This process is part of the initiation into the discipline of philosophy.

Another view of the liberal arts does not necessarily have philosophy as its end. It begins in etymology. According to John of Salisbury, the liberal arts are so named perhaps because they are a way of guiding students to the pursuit of wisdom: “the ancients took care to have their children [*liberos*] instructed in them.” Alternatively, “their object is to effect

<sup>2</sup> In the interest of transparency, I will note that I have been on the school’s faculty for nearly thirty years, have participated in several Sachs-led study groups reading and translating the works of Aristotle, and have previously written on Sachs’s translation of Plato’s *Republic*.

<sup>3</sup> Hugh of Saint Victor, *The Didascalicon of Hugh of Saint Victor*, trans. J. Taylor, bk. 2, chap. 1 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961, repr. 1991), 61. In the quotation cited, Hugh quotes Cassiodorus or Isidore.

<sup>4</sup> John of Salisbury, *The Metalogicon: A Twelfth Century Defense of the Verbal and Logical Arts of the Trivium*, trans. D. D. McGarry, bk. 1, chap. 22 (1955; repr. Philadelphia: Paul Dry Books, 2009), 61-62.

man's liberation.<sup>5</sup> Here liberation can have at least a few senses. The arts can liberate, writes John of Salisbury, in that they free us from cares so that we may devote ourselves to wisdom. John adds, "More often than not, they liberate us from cares incompatible with wisdom. They often even free us from worry about [material necessities], so that the mind may have still greater liberty to apply itself to philosophy."<sup>6</sup> Things have changed quite a bit in the centuries since John wrote. The liberal arts do not seem to be as influential economically as they may have been formerly and are perhaps less able to free one from worry about material necessities. At St. John's, we tend to emphasize the removal of possible obstacles in the pursuit of learning, such as preconceived notions and received opinions.

It could be argued that a standard translation removes a possible obstacle to such a pursuit. It prevents possible confusion arising from misunderstandings about what precisely is being discussed. In a class studying Ancient Greek, for example, one aim of translation might be the attainment of a common understanding. If, however, one takes seriously the connection, via the liberal arts, between translation and freedom, then one might regard the adoption of standardized translations as illiberal and confining. One could also question the notion of standardized or authoritative translations on the grounds that they can prevent readers from confronting a translated text as directly as they could. Even granting that perfect transparency in translation is an impossibility, there can be degrees of success in translation: "there will be loss in translation, sometimes considerable, even fatal, loss, nevertheless, if enough of the structure and relations of the original are preserved, and if the translator is fortunate in his selection of terms, we may penetrate through the words and grasp the meaning – though no doubt less luminously than by way of the original."<sup>7</sup>

This last statement approaches the view that Sachs expresses in his prefaces. In part he is inspired by Martin Heidegger, who also attempted to think and write through the sedimentation of tradition to recover something closer to original meaning and to the force of the original formulation. To adapt what the translators of Heidegger's commentary on Aristotle's *Metaphysics* say of their work, Sachs sacrifices fluency so as to allow English to express Aristotle's philosophical thought.<sup>8</sup> He aims to provide in translation an experience as close as he can to reading the original.<sup>9</sup> As Sachs expresses it, Aristotle's genius consists in "putting together the most ordinary words in unaccustomed combinations."<sup>10</sup> Aristotle engages in wordplay similar to a poet's but directed primarily at the intellect and understanding: he "loves to combine overlapping meanings, or separate

<sup>5</sup> John of Salisbury, *Metalogicon*, bk. 1, chap. 12, 37.3

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>7</sup> W. Darkey, "Translation as a Liberal Art: Notes Towards a Definition," St. John's College Lecture Transcripts (Santa Fe: Meem Library, 14 November 1975), 18-19.

<sup>8</sup> W. Brogan and P. Warnek, translators' foreword to *Aristotle's Metaphysics Θ 1-3: On the Essence and Actuality of Force*, by M. Heidegger (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), xi. It does seem a little peculiar that, in translating Heidegger's counter-traditional treatment of Aristotle, Brogan and Warnek at times rely on traditional renditions of key terms. Sachs also points to Jacob Klein as an important influence, in particular Klein's "Aristotle, an Introduction" (1965), in his *Lectures and Essays*, ed. R. B. Williamson and E. Zuckerman (Annapolis, MD: St. John's College Press, 1985), 171-95.

<sup>9</sup> Sachs, introduction to the *Metaphysics*, xxxv.

<sup>10</sup> Sachs, introduction to the *Physics*, 4.

intertwined meanings, to point to things his language had no precise word for.” The result is a defamiliarization intended to induce a reader to slow down and think: “The reader will need a willingness to follow sentences to places where meaning would be lost if it were forced into well-worn grooves, and will need to follow trains of thought that would not be the same if they did not preserve Aristotle’s own ways of connecting them.”<sup>11</sup> Reading a translation, so conceived, could be a freeing event, an overcoming of one’s own limitations and customary ways.

More generally, translation is an act of carrying over meaning from one language to another. It can be a way of breaking out of the confines of space and time. Even when it is only marginally successful, it can be an art that liberates.

Despite Sachs’s affiliation with St. John’s, his translations have not been adopted as the standard for use in classes. Not everyone at St. John’s concurs with his views on translation. What some regard as sedimentation, some regard as time-honored tradition. Indeed, given the varying views on the relationship between translation and the aims of liberal education, it should be no surprise that, in general, standard translations are not prescribed for seminar classes at St. John’s College. It is not uncommon to see four different translations of a particular text in use among the eighteen or so students in a typical seminar.

Thus, judging by sales figures from the last academic year at the St. John’s College Bookstore in Annapolis,<sup>12</sup> Sachs’s translations seem to be in regular use in seminars on Aristotle’s texts, but they do not have a monopoly. Among translations of the *Physics*, Robin Waterfield’s led with sales of 35 copies.<sup>13</sup> Sachs’s translation sold 15 copies. Some students may have relied on the translation included in Richard McKeon’s *Basic Works of Aristotle*,<sup>14</sup> which sold 18 copies. Price may have been a consideration in the various purchasing decisions: Waterfield’s translation lists for \$12.95, whereas Sachs’s lists for \$41.99. The McKeon collection contains all of the Aristotelian texts read at St. John’s for \$24.00. A similar economic picture occurs with translations of the *Ethics*. Sachs’s translation sold 20 copies at a price of \$18.95 each but was outsold by the translation by Bartlett and Collins,<sup>15</sup> which costs less (\$15.95). Interestingly, Sachs’s translations of the *Metaphysics* and *De Anima* were the leaders, with sales of 37 and 23 copies, respectively, despite bearing higher prices than their competitors. Richard Hope’s translation of the *Metaphysics*<sup>16</sup> and Mark Shiffman’s translation of *De Anima*<sup>17</sup> had lower sales than the corresponding Sachs translations despite lower prices of \$18.95 and \$17.95 (compared with Sachs’s \$24.95 and \$19.95).

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 9

<sup>12</sup> My thanks to Mr. Robin Dunn, manager of the bookstore at St. John’s College, Annapolis, for providing me with sales figures of the various translations. To put the sales figures in context, on the Annapolis campus, there are typically about one hundred students each year in freshman seminars in which Aristotle is read and discussed.

<sup>13</sup> R. Waterfield, trans., *Physics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

<sup>14</sup> R. McKeon, ed., *The Basic Works of Aristotle* (New York: Random House, 1941).

<sup>15</sup> R. C. Bartlett and S. D. Collins, trans., *Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2011).

<sup>16</sup> R. Hope, trans., *Metaphysics* (1952; repr. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1960).

<sup>17</sup> M. Shiffman, trans., *De Anima* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 2011).

## ON MOTION IN THE *PHYSICS*

The pricing of Sachs's translation of the *Physics* is rather unfortunate. It was the first translation that Sachs published and is perhaps the most liberating. It had to work against a considerable weight of philosophic tradition. I refer to the modern reception of Aristotle's notions about κίνησις (motion or change). In the *Physics*, Aristotle defines κίνησις as follows: ἡ τοῦ δυνάμει ὄντος ἐντελέχεια, ἢ τοιοῦτον, κίνησις ἐστίν.<sup>18</sup>

In Edward Hussey's translation, the definition reads, "the actuality of that which potentially is, *qua* such, is change."<sup>19</sup> Rendered as such, the definition on its own seems at best oxymoronic, if not contradictory. Actuality seems to refer to something that is; what is potential seems to be something that is not yet. The difficulty of understanding the translation is reminiscent of Zeno's paradox that an arrow in flight is moving and not moving. The sort of Latinate terms in the translated definition could be off-putting even to one well versed in Latin. To Descartes, for example, Latinate versions of Aristotle's definition are hardly clear and distinct: the definition needlessly complicates what is a simple notion:

when people say that motion, something perfectly familiar to everyone, is "the actuality of a potential being, in so far as it is potential," do they not give the impression of uttering magic words which have a hidden meaning beyond the grasp of the human mind? For who can understand these expressions? Who does not know what motion is? Who would deny that these people are finding a difficulty where none exists?<sup>20</sup>

This passage dates from around 1628. The passage of time, more than thirty years, seems not to have led to a reconsideration. In *Le Monde*, Descartes restates his objection:

[Philosophers] themselves admit that the nature of their motion is very little understood. And trying to make it more intelligible, they have still not been able to explain it more clearly than in these terms: *Motus est actus entis in potentia, prout in potentia est*. These terms are so obscure to me that I am compelled to leave them in Latin because I cannot interpret them. ... By contrast, the nature of the motion that I mean to speak of here is so easily known that even geometers, who among all men are the most concerned to conceive the things they study very distinctly, have judged it simpler and more intelligible than the nature of surfaces and lines, as is shown by the

<sup>18</sup> Aristotle, *Physica*, ed. W. D. Ross (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1950), 201a10-11. Hereafter, Aristotle's works will be cited parenthetically within the text by Bekker page and column numbers and Oxford Classical Text line numbers.

<sup>19</sup> E. Hussey, trans., *Physics: Books III and IV* (1983; repr. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 2.

<sup>20</sup> R. Descartes, "Rules for the Direction of the Mind" (written by 1628, published 1701), rule 12, in *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, trans. J. Cottingham, R. Stoothoff, and D. Murdoch, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 1:49.

fact that they explain “line” as the motion of a point and “surface” as the motion of a line.<sup>21</sup>

Descartes says that it would be no use to abandon the Latinate terminology: “in fact the words ‘motion is the act of a being which is in potency, in so far as it is in potency’ are no clearer for being in the vernacular.”

English translations, at least, seem to support Descartes’s point.

The Oxford translation by Hardie and Gaye,<sup>22</sup> which is included in *Basic Works*, sets off the definition in italics and explicitly labels it as such: “Def. *The fulfilment of what exists potentially, in so far as it exists potentially, is motion.*” The abbreviation for “definition” does not correspond to anything in Aristotle’s text and takes the decision of deciding whether the statement is a definition away from the reader. The usual Latinate “actuality” is replaced with a word with English roots, “fulfilment.” The substitution does not seem to enhance clarity: it implies a state of completion, which seems opposed to motion. The repetition of “potentially” is supplied by the translators, and the addition possibly adds to confusion: it is hard to comprehend how fulfilment applies to something that “exists potentially.” Fulfilment might be taken to be a kind of negation of what is potential.

As if in recognition of the difficulties posed by the translation, it was later revised to read, “the fulfilment of what is potentially, as such, is motion.”<sup>23</sup> The Latinate word “exists” is replaced by “is,” which has English roots. The revision is more concise: “in so far as it exists potentially” is reduced to “as such.” Less does not turn out to be more, as there is still the opposition between fulfilment and potential, and the force of “as such” is difficult to determine: Does it construe with “fulfilment” or with “what is potentially”?

W. D. Ross’s commentary on Aristotle’s definition tries to clarify it by adding on more clauses laden with Latinate terms: “every movement is a realization-of-a-potentiality which is a stage on the way to a further realization of potentiality, and only exists while the further potentiality is not yet realized.”<sup>24</sup> Here more seems to be less, as the additions detract from clarity rather than increasing it. The added clauses call attention to the opposition between potential and realization.

One exception to Descartes’s point about the use of the vernacular might seem to be Hippocrates G. Apostle. In the introduction to his translation of the *Metaphysics*, Apostle writes, “terms should be familiar, that is, commonly used and with their usual meanings.”<sup>25</sup> His translation of Aristotle’s definition of motion reads, “a motion is [defined as] the actuality of the potentially existing qua existing potentially.”<sup>26</sup> It is more Latinate than the Oxford translations cited above. To judge from this example, by “familiar,” Apostle

<sup>21</sup> R. Descartes, *The World* (1664), in his *The World and Other Writings*, trans. and ed. S. Gaukroger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 26.

<sup>22</sup> R. P. Hardie and R. K. Gaye, trans., *Physica*, in *The Works of Aristotle*, ed. W. D. Ross, vol. 2 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1930).

<sup>23</sup> *Physics*, in vol. 1 of *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation*, ed. Jonathan Barnes, 2 vols. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984).

<sup>24</sup> W. D. Ross, ed., *Aristotle’s Physics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1936), 536.

<sup>25</sup> H. G. Apostle, trans., *Aristotle’s Metaphysics* (1966; repr. Grinnell, IA: Peripatetic Press, 1979), x.

<sup>26</sup> H. G. Apostle, trans., *Aristotle’s Physics* (1969; repr. Grinnell, IA: Peripatetic Press, 1980).

means “commonly used and with their usual meanings” to professionals or academics, not to the general reader or academic laity.

Against this background of translation and interpretation, Sachs’s translation of the *Physics* appeared in 1995. Sachs is not content with a definition of motion couched in Scholastic terminology. He agrees with Descartes that the definition results in confusion:

Does it refer to the actuality that belonged to the potential thing before it changed? That is not a motion, but something that precedes one. Does it refer to the actuality that exactly corresponds to the pre-existent potentiality? That is not a motion either, but something left when the motion ends. Does it mean, though it would have to be tortured to give this sense, the gradual transformation of a potentiality into an actuality? That at least could refer to a motion, but only by stating that a motion is a certain kind of motion.<sup>27</sup>

Perhaps referring to Ross’s commentary quoted above, Sachs continues, “Perhaps it means that motion is the actuality of a potentiality to be in motion. This is surely the silliest version of them all, but respected scholars have defended it with straight faces.” The confusions are not to be attributed to Aristotle, as Descartes seems to imply, but result from misleading translations.

As a start to correcting the situation, Sachs translates Aristotle’s definition of motion: “the being-at-work-staying-itself of whatever is only potentially, *just as such*, is motion.”<sup>28</sup> The term “being-at-work-staying-itself” translates ἐντελέχεια. The word, which seems to have originated with Aristotle, fuses ἐντελής, complete or full-grown, with τέλος, end or completion, and ἔχειν, “to be a certain way by the continuing effort of holding on in that condition.”<sup>29</sup> Reinforcing the last connotation of holding on in a certain condition, the word also puns on ἐνδελέχεια, persistence. This last connotation also makes clear that potency remains itself during motion.

Thus, in Sachs’s analysis, the word’s relationship to δύναμις, or potency, hardly implies a tension that borders on paradoxicality. As its English derivatives would suggest, δύναμις does not imply a lack of power; it is, according to Sachs, a tendency to act in a characteristic way, not a mere possibility. It is a source of change. As such, it is connected to ἐνέργεια, which Sachs renders as “being-at-work,” in an attempt to capture in English the morphology of the Greek. This rendition of ἐνέργεια aligns with Sachs’s translation of ἐντελέχεια. The justification for this alignment comes via the *Metaphysics*, where Aristotle says the word is “designed to converge with complete being-at-work” (1047a30).

<sup>27</sup> Sachs, introduction to the *Physics*, 22.

<sup>28</sup> There is something to be said for translating κίνησις as “change.” The Greek word does have wider scope than the modern English word “motion” does. “Change” more easily encompasses the instances of alteration and increase/decrease that Aristotle gives as instances of κίνησις. But change of place, the sort of change most associated with motion, does seem to claim some primacy in Aristotle’s definition of time: “τοῦτο γὰρ ἐστὶν ὁ χρόνος, ἀριθμὸς κινήσεως κατὰ τὸ πρότερον καὶ τὸ ὕστερον” (219b1-2). Sachs translates this definition as follows: “for this is time: a number of motion fitting along the before-and-after.”

<sup>29</sup> Sachs, “Glossary,” *Physics*, 245. As will be discussed below, a word deriving from ἔχειν, ἔξις, has an important place in the *Nicomachean Ethics*.

Because a kind of being-at-work (or activity, a more usual translation) is implicit in δύναμις, its connection to ἐντελέχεια becomes clearer: “motions are all potencies staying-themselves as potencies, not fused into the states of active completion toward which they are potencies.”<sup>30</sup> A potency is fully at work in motion, not something that is diminishing; it persists during motion. In that sense, it has a power.

In light of what Sachs says about Latinate translations, it comes as a small surprise that he translates the dative case of δύναμις in a conventional manner, as “potentially.” It would seem that more in keeping with his views would have been a phrase such as “in potency,” which implies the power in δύναμις, which sense persists in its English derivatives.<sup>31</sup> But perhaps the rendering of ἐντελέχεια by itself is sufficient to achieve the effect that Sachs seeks – to clarify one of the central notions of the *Physics*: “Since nature is a source of motion and of change, and our pursuit is for nature, we must not let what motion is remain hidden. For it is necessary, being ignorant of it, to be ignorant also of nature” (200b12).

Aristotle’s view of nature seems to be opposed to that of early modern science, in which natural bodies seemed not to have an internal source of motion but a resistance to motion, *inertia*. For that reason, his view may have been susceptible to dismissal in the modern world. But translations of his work did not help, either. In the last century, developments in science seem to suggest that Aristotle’s views may not have been as off-base as his modern critics thought. Heisenberg, for example, had recourse to Aristotelian terms in his philosophical treatment of quantum theory.<sup>32</sup>

If Sachs’s translation had been more affordably priced, then perhaps it would have gained somewhat wider use. As it stands, none of the affordably priced newer translations appear to do what Sachs’s does – that is, to break free of academic tradition.

In Robin Waterfield’s translation, Aristotle’s definition of motion reads, “change is the actuality of that which exists potentially, in so far as it is potentially this actuality.” The words “this actuality” do not appear in the Greek text, and the translation does not seem to gain in clarity from this addition. It seems to make actuality more fixed than could be consistent with change. This effect may have been intentional. David Bostock, the author of the introduction and notes to Waterfield’s translation, writes that Aristotle’s definition is a mistake; his general definition “achieves nothing.” Following Descartes, Bostock says that there is no need for a definition of change: “it is one of the most basic and fundamental concepts of natural science, and cannot be defined in terms of anything more fundamental.” Aristotle’s definition verges on tautology, since “it is a perfectly general truth that the actuality of the potentiality of X is X.”<sup>33</sup> As Sachs would point out, however, ἐντελέχεια does not refer to a terminal or end goal.

<sup>30</sup> Sachs, “Commentary on Book III, Chapters 1-3,” *Physics*, 79.

<sup>31</sup> “In potency” is a locution that Sachs employs later in his translation of the *Metaphysics*, for example, at 1014a20 and 1048b11.

<sup>32</sup> W. Heisenberg, *Physics and Philosophy: The Revolution in Modern Science* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1959), 156.

<sup>33</sup> D. Bostock, introduction to the *Physics*, trans. R. Waterfield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), xxxi.

Other recent translators, such as Glen Coughlin and C. D. C. Reeve, may be more sympathetic to Aristotle than Waterfield seems to be, but if so, it is hard to tell. Coughlin translates Aristotle's definition as "the actuality of what exists in potency, as such, is motion."<sup>34</sup> Reeve's translation reads, "actualization of what is potentially, insofar as it is such, is movement."<sup>35</sup> In Coughlin's case, the translated definition seems to be on the verge of lapsing into the tautology that Bostock objects to: "actuality" seems to be the "actuality" of "what is in potency." In Reeve's case, "actualization" is an improvement over "actuality" insofar as it implies activity, but the translation gives the impression that "what is potential" diminishes as it is actualized.

Coughlin follows scholarly convention in retaining "actuality" as the translation for ἐντελέχεια but seems to tend in Sachs's direction in translating δύναμις as "potency." I say "seems" because Coughlin's work is intended in part to correct what he thinks are excesses in Sachs's translation. He rejects terms such as "being-at-work" and "being-at-work-staying-itself" as oddities or curiosities, which despite Sachs's intentions "do not incline the mind to what is in experience or in common speech, especially when the elemental words are united by hyphens."<sup>36</sup>

Coughlin and Reeve aim more than Sachs does at introducing students to the scholarly tradition of Aristotelian studies and append substantial commentaries to their translations. The need for extensive commentary is precisely what Sachs seeks to avoid, in accordance with the St. John's tenet that students should encounter texts with as little mediation as possible.

### **ON THINGHOOD AND OTHER WAYS OF SAYING "BEING" IN THE *METAPHYSICS***

So much of the justification for Sachs's interpretation of motion comes from his work with the *Metaphysics* that it is understandably the next work of Aristotle's that Sachs translates. Through the work of translation, he is able to show more explicitly the connections he sees between the *Physics* and the *Metaphysics*, while continuing his effort to disencumber Aristotle's works from the weight of academic convention.

As before, Sachs replaces standard translations with those that he thinks better capture the meanings of the Greek words. For a preliminary sense of what Sachs has done, here is a list of key Greek words and their equivalents in a more traditional translation<sup>37</sup> and in Sachs's.

<sup>34</sup> G. Coughlin, trans. and ed., *Physics, or Natural Hearing* (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine's Press, 2005).

<sup>35</sup> C. D. C. Reeve, trans., *Physics* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 2018).

<sup>36</sup> Coughlin, introduction to the *Physics*, xxvii. Coughlin also doubts that the meaning of ἐντελέχεια in the *Metaphysics* can be applied to its use in the *Physics*. Even if it were reasonable to do so, "that later development would be a result carefully following out the consequences of the more mundane considerations of natural philosophy" (xxviii). In the *Metaphysics*, however, Aristotle does refer to examples taken from his natural philosophy; whether that working out is careful enough for Coughlin is unclear. For his part, Sachs is not convinced that Aristotle's works represent definite stages in the development of Aristotle's thinking. Aristotle's thinking may have changed over time, but the texts do not necessarily reflect that history. They may be presentations of concurrent inquiries. They might be "products of his whole life of teaching." It's not clear that metaphysical inquiry has to spring from natural philosophy, that thinking has to be unidirectional. It is conceivable that the two areas of inquiry could influence and, in some instances, illuminate each other. Furthermore, if the meanings of terms differed according to field of inquiry, Aristotle could have simply said so, making the necessary qualifications or modifications.

<sup>37</sup> W. D. Ross, trans., *Metaphysica*, in *The Works of Aristotle*, ed. J. A. Smith and W. D. Ross, vol. 8 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1908).

Greek	Ross translation	Sachs translation
τὸ ὄν	being	being/what is
οὐσία	substance	thinghood/independent thing
τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι	essence	what it is for something to be
τὸ εἶναι	being	being
ἐνέργεια	actuality	being-at-work
ἐντελέχεια	complete reality	being-at-work-staying-itself
δύναμις	potency	potency
ὕλη	matter	material

Using vocabulary similar to Ross's, Sachs with some irony summarizes the argument of the *Metaphysics* as follows: "being qua being is being per se in accordance with the categories, which in turn is primarily substance, but primary substance is form, while form is essence and essence is actuality."<sup>38</sup> Sachs's major changes to this account would involve the renderings of οὐσία, τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι, ἐνέργεια, and ἐντελέχεια. The latter two have been discussed above with reference to the *Physics*. Sachs's translations of οὐσία and τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι are inspired in large part by the work of Joseph Owens. Owens objects to the use of "substance" as a translation of οὐσία on the grounds that it masks its etymological connection with "being," since it seems to have been derived from the feminine participial form of the present participle of εἶμι. "Substance" also "conjures up the notion of something 'standing under' something else."<sup>39</sup> This connotation links it to the notion of τὸ ὑποκείμενον, "the underlying thing." The underlying thing is one of the ways in which οὐσία can be meant, but it does not seem to correspond to οὐσία in its more primary Aristotelian senses. Owens would prefer that a translation of οὐσία point more toward those senses, such as "that which is responsible for the being [τὸ εἶναι] of a thing" (1017b15, Sachs trans.). Aristotle himself says that οὐσία is "what is not attributed to any underlying thing" (1038b15, Sachs trans.).

Owens proposes "entity" as a replacement for "substance."<sup>40</sup> It is Latinate in form, but it shows its relationship to the Latin word for "to be," *esse*, in particular its participial form, *ens*. Sachs in the main shares Owens's objections to "substance," but in this case he does not follow Owens and eschews the Latinate. Instead of "entity," Sachs uses "thinghood" when Aristotle uses οὐσία in a general sense and "an independent thing" when Aristotle uses οὐσία to refer to singulars. Sachs believes that his translation captures the character of οὐσία as something that "can stand on its own and be pointed to" and that is "thus independent of what surrounds it as well as of what apprehends it." These two characterizations correspond to Aristotle's "whatever is a this and separate" (τόδε τι ὄν καὶ χωριστόν) (1017b24-25, 1029a27-28). These two characteristics are harder to get

<sup>38</sup> Sachs, introduction to the *Metaphysics*, xxxiv.

<sup>39</sup> J. Owens, *The Doctrine of Being in the Aristotelian Metaphysics: A Study of the Greek Background of Medieval Thought*, 3rd ed. (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1978), 144.

<sup>40</sup> Owens prefers "entity" for "essence" as a translation of οὐσία because the word "essence" in English suggests an opposition to "existence," whereas the Greek word does not. See Owens, *Doctrine of Being*, 147. Owens turns to "entity" after rejecting "beingness" as a possible translation of οὐσία.

at through the word “substance.” In further defense of “thinghood” and “independent thing” as translations of οὐσία, οὐσία referred, before its philosophic use, to inherited property or wealth that could not be taken away from one born with it. It was part of one’s status as an independent person. Sachs, however, admits that his translations of οὐσία do not preserve the possible morphological relationship between οὐσία and other ways of speaking about being.<sup>41</sup>

The fundamental question of “what is being [τὸ ὄν]?” (1028b3-5) becomes, in Sachs’s translation, a question of what thinghood is. Part of the answer, according to Aristotle, lies in τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι (1028b34-35). Following Owens again, Sachs rejects the usual translation of τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι as “essence.” The phrase appears to be of Aristotle’s own coinage, and Owens says that there seems to be no way of expressing the meaning of the phrase in a “simple English verbal form.”<sup>42</sup> To a Greek-less reader especially, “essence” belies the rather curious grammar of the phrase. It has been construed as an instance of the articular infinitive, in which case a translation might yield something like “being for what it was,” treating the τί ἦν as an instance of the dative of possession (τῷ having been omitted from τῷ τί ἦν).

Owens rejects this interpretation on the grounds that it is incompatible with similar, more detailed constructions.<sup>43</sup> This objection does not seem to be decisive, in that the phrase’s construal as an articular infinitive is in accord with Ancient Greek grammar, and there is nothing that limits Aristotle to a particular construction. As his manner of thinking shows, he was aware that something could be said in several ways. A more compelling reason for Owen’s rejection of the phrase’s interpretation as an articular infinitive is the philosophic context. Aristotle is following up on the Socratic question τί ἐστὶ, which can be nominalized as τὸ τί ἐστὶ, or the what-it-is. Owens thus interprets τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι as an expansion of the Socratic formulation, and here Sachs follow Owens.

By analogy, τὸ τί ἦν would form the core of τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι. The imperfect form ἦν can be used with present meaning, but here, according to Sachs, it emphasizes the progressive aspect, or continued action, unambiguously (unlike the present tense form). Under this interpretation, τὸ τί ἦν would yield “what something keeps on being.” The remaining εἶναι then becomes a complementary infinitive indicating purpose. In Sachs’s understanding, the entire phrase thus means “what something keeps on being, in order to be at all.” In practice, Sachs usually renders the phrase somewhat more simply as “what it is for something to be.”

Compared with “essence” or “quiddity” or the other one-word equivalents that have been used for τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι, Sachs’s translation better preserves the morphology of the Greek phrase, which contains two instances of “being.” In addition, Sachs’s translation of the phrase works well with his other renditions of key terms. The sense of persistence implicit in ἦν in τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι relates it to ἐνέργεια, “being-at-work,” and to ἐντελέχεια, “being-at-work-staying itself.” “Being” then is seen more clearly as more than a static state. It is more an active condition, which involves work in the very maintenance of that condition. Something internal to a thing makes it a thing, maintains its separateness. The paradigmatic importance of the internal source of motion of natural things becomes clearer.

<sup>41</sup> Sachs, introduction to the *Metaphysics*, xxxvii.

<sup>42</sup> Owens, *Doctrine of Being*, 184.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 181-82n83.

Such an animated view of metaphysics is difficult to attain when Aristotle's terminology is rendered largely in abstract nouns. A noun-heavy translation also makes it seem that Aristotle is merely tossing around near synonyms. What τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι adds to οὐσία, for example, can be hard to see when the two are encountered as "essence" and "substance."

When one looks at individual lines, the change from traditional translation to Sachs's may not seem that significant. But a series of sentences is sufficient to get a sense of a change in texture, if not a sense of the possibility that the work has some coherence and wholeness. Aristotle's writing seems less technical and considerably more concrete.

In Ross's translation, one exposition of the relationships among τὸ τί ἐστὶ, οὐσία, and τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι runs somewhat as follows: "'What a thing is' [τὸ τί ἐστὶ] in one sense means substance [οὐσία] and the individual"; "the 'what' belongs in the full sense to substance"; "essence [τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι] will belong, just as the 'what' does, primarily and in the simple sense to substance" (1030a18-30).

The corresponding clauses in Sachs's translation are "what-something-is in one sense indicates its thinghood and a *this*"; "the what-it-is belongs simply to the thinghood"; "the what-it-is-for-something-to-be, in the same way as the what-something is, will also belong primarily and simply to thinghood." Compared with Ross's translation, in Sachs's it is easier to see how τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι can be regarded as an extension of the question of τὸ τί ἐστὶν. Ross's use of the word "essence" conceals the question that underlies τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι. With Sachs's renderings it becomes easier to see how the terms and the distinctions they make are responses to the original question about being. On the surface, one can see how being [τὸ ὄν] is "meant in more than one way" (1028a10).

Matters can get worse if translations are interchanged. In Ross's translation, "essence" is the "end of the process of becoming" (1015a11). Here, confusingly, Ross translates οὐσία as "essence" instead of his usual "substance." In Sachs's translation, "thinghood" is the "completion of a thing's coming into being." Ross's reluctance to render οὐσία as "substance" here is understandable. "Substance" does not seem to convey enough particularity to suggest that it might be the result of a process of becoming. In this context, Sachs's "thinghood" makes better sense. Understood generally, οὐσία is something that a thing attains at the completion of its coming into being – namely, thinghood. Understood particularly, an οὐσία is the result of a coming into being – an "independent thing."

### ON THE SOUL IN *DE ANIMA*

Sachs's lexical choices in the *Physics* and the *Metaphysics* reverberate in his other translations. Another definition can serve as an example, one from *De Anima*:

ἡ ψυχὴ ἐστὶν ἐντελέχεια ἢ πρώτη σώματος φυσικοῦ δυνάμει ζωὴν ἔχοντος.  
(412a27-28)

An English translation of William of Moerbeke's medieval Latin translation reads, "The soul ... is the primary act of a physical body capable of life."<sup>44</sup>

<sup>44</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle's De Anima*, trans. K. Foster and S. Humphries (1951; repr. Notre Dame, IN.: Dumb Ox Books, 1994).

In his commentary on *De Anima*, St. Thomas Aquinas seems to sense the difficulty in the terms of his translation. On a first reading, it might seem odd that a being is an act. One might also ask why the soul is a “primary act of a physical body capable of life” and not of a body that is living. To assist the reader, Thomas offers the following commentaries:

Note that he [Aristotle] does not say simply “alive,” but “potentially alive.” For by a body actually alive is understood a living compound; and no compound as such can enter into the definition of a form. On the other hand the matter of a living body stands to the body’s life as a potency to act; and the soul is precisely the actuality whereby the body has life. It is as though we were to say that shape is an actuality; it is not exactly the actuality of an actually shaped body – i.e., the compound of body and shape – but rather of the body as able to receive a shape, of the body in potency to an actual shape.<sup>45</sup>

So he [Aristotle] concludes that soul is the primary act of a physical body potentially alive, where act means the same sort of actuality as knowledge. He says primary act, not only to distinguish soul from its subsequent activities, but also distinguish it from the forms of the elements [i.e., in the body]; for these retain their own proper activities, unless impeded.<sup>46</sup>

Thomas’s account of why compounds cannot enter into the definition of form seems sound, as does its explanation of “primary.” Much of the commentary, however, seems to consist largely of substitutions for “act” and “potential.” In the second comment, for example, “act” becomes “actuality,” which, as has been noted before, seems to imply a condition rather than an action. At one point in the first comment, actuality becomes almost equated to potency: the soul is an actuality of a body “in potency to an actual shape.” Alluding to Aristotle’s previous statement that, in Thomistic terms, form is act, without further explanation, seems to add to the possible confusion: one is left to wonder how a form is an act. It could be argued that Aristotle’s discussion of being and the soul preceding the definition of the soul provides the background and context for understanding it. That claim may be so, but not if that discussion is couched in the same traditional terms of translation as the *Metaphysics*.

Despite the opacity of such terms of translation, subsequent translators have tended to follow William of Moerbeke’s template, relying on Latin equivalents. R. D. Hicks’s translation, coming out of Cambridge, reads, “soul is substance in the sense that it is the form of a natural body having in it the capacity of life.”<sup>47</sup> J. A. Smith’s Oxford translation reads, “the soul is the first grade of actuality of a natural body having life potentially in it.”<sup>48</sup> In Hicks’s translation, the soul seems to lose some of its connection to life, making it almost inanimate: it is “substance” and the form of a natural body; the “capacity of life”

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., sec. 222, 74.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., sec. 229, 75-76.

<sup>47</sup> R. D. Hicks, trans., *De Anima* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1907).

<sup>48</sup> J. A. Smith, trans., *De Anima*, in *The Works of Aristotle*, ed. W. D. Ross (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1931).

seems almost incidental. In Smith's translation, the use of "actuality" as an equivalent of ἐντελέχεια makes the soul seem to be a state or condition.

In Sachs's translation, the definition reads as follows: "the soul is a being-at-work-staying itself of the first kind of a natural body having life as a potency." The oppositions that were implied in earlier translations are much less pronounced. The compound of soul with natural body is not a joining of living and non-living. "Potency" conveys more of the power implicit in δύναμις (as the translators of Thomas sometimes seem to understand when they substitute "potency" for "potential"). A natural body has an internal principle of motion, and one with life as a potency already has a tendency to act. In referring to the soul as form, Aristotle does not mean an arrangement of parts or structure but, as he was quoted earlier, that it is a "gathering in speech" of "what it is for something to be." And one of the ways of speaking about being is in terms of ἐντελέχεια, which implies persistence and the work of maintaining a certain condition.

Since the appearance of Sachs's translation of *De Anima*, academic tradition seems to remain strong. Newer translations are marked by consistency:

... soul is substance as form of a natural body having life in potentiality.<sup>49</sup>

... the soul is the first actuality of a natural body which has life in potentiality.<sup>50</sup>

... the soul is the first actualization of a natural body that has life potentially.<sup>51</sup>

... the soul is the first actualization of a natural body which has life potentially.<sup>52</sup>

... the soul is the completion, the first [one], of a natural body that potentially has life.<sup>53</sup>

One exception to the tendency toward homogeneity is Mark Shiffman's translation: "soul is the *first* being-fully-itself of a natural body that has life as its potency."<sup>54</sup> The term "being-fully-itself," which translates ἐντελέχεια, has a Sachsian look and sound. Not surprisingly, Shiffman praises Sachs's translations for their "exemplary fidelity to the text." Where he differs from Sachs is in not preserving "Aristotle's sometimes extraordinarily long sentences": Shiffman says he doubts the English language "has the kind of resources

<sup>49</sup> R. Polansky, *Aristotle's De Anima* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 154.

<sup>50</sup> C. Shields, trans., *De Anima* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

<sup>51</sup> C. D. C. Reeve, trans., *De Anima* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 2017).

<sup>52</sup> F. D. Miller, Jr., trans., *On the Soul* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

<sup>53</sup> D. Bolotin, trans., *De Anima (On the Soul)* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2018). The bracketed word is part of the translation. Like Sachs, Bolotin is a retired faculty member of St. John's College, having taught at the college for more than thirty years, mostly on the campus in Santa Fe. The difference in approach between Bolotin and Sachs is apparent from their translations of the definition of soul and can be taken as a sign of the range of views on translation among the faculty of St. John's.

<sup>54</sup> Shiffman, trans., *De Anima*.

that enable Greek to maintain clarity amid such extended complexity.”<sup>55</sup> By shortening sentences, he hopes to increase readability. Shortening Sachs’s translation of ἐντελέχεια (being-at-work-staying itself), however, has some cost in fidelity: the relation of ἐντελέχεια to ἐνέργεια (being-at-work) is not as readily apparent.

### ON ΕΙΣ IN THE *NICOMACHEAN ETHICS*

I will consider one more example, one from the *Nicomachean Ethics*, a text not as laden with Aristotlian coinages as the earlier example. As might be expected, Sachs finds that there is some academic sedimentation to break up, particularly in the handling of a few key words. One of these words is ἔξις, which figures in Aristotle’s account of what virtue is. It is one of the three kinds of things that come to be present in the soul. The other two kinds are feelings (πάθη) and powers (δυνάμεις).<sup>56</sup> Aristotle argues that the latter two cannot be identified with virtue since they are not the basis for praising or blaming someone or for calling someone good or bad. In addition, feelings, unlike virtues, are not matters of choice, and capacities, unlike virtues, are something human beings have by nature. By a process of elimination, Aristotle concludes that virtue is a ἔξις (1106a10-12).

In the Scholastic tradition, ἔξις is rendered as “habit” or, in Latin, *habitus*,<sup>57</sup> which derives from the verb *habeo*, “have.” The Latin equivalent thus gives a sense of the morphology of the Greek word, which derives from the verb ἔχω, “have.” *Habitus* also seems connected to Aristotle’s notion of virtue as developing out of habituation. Thus, it might have seemed that the English derivative “habit” was a suitable translation for ἔξις.<sup>58</sup> The connotations of “habit” in English, however, are opposed to what Aristotle means by virtue, or excellence. For example, habitual actions are not a matter of choice as acts of virtue are.

Modern English translations of the *Ethics* tend to avoid using “habit” as an equivalent to ἔξις. Alternatives include “state,”<sup>59</sup> “characteristic,”<sup>60</sup> “disposition.”<sup>61</sup> As Sachs points out, these are not exactly wrong, just incomplete.<sup>62</sup> They also seem to apply to feelings and powers, which Aristotle distinguishes from ἔξις. In addition, such words also mask the verbal force of ἔξις. It is a holding on to a condition; it implies effort and work; it almost

<sup>55</sup> Shiffman, “On the Translation,” *De Anima*, 1.

<sup>56</sup> Sachs uses “predispositions” to translate δυνάμεις, but here I prefer to use “powers” to concord with how Sachs translates this word in other works.

<sup>57</sup> See St. Thomas Aquinas, *Sententia libri Ethicorum*, in vol. 47.1-2 of his *Opera omnia*, [ed. R.-A. Gauthier] (Rome: Ad Sanctae Sabinae, 1969).

<sup>58</sup> “Habit” is used to translate *habitus* and thus ἔξις in C. I. Litzinger’s English translation of Thomas Aquinas’s *Commentary on Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics* (1964; repr. Notre Dame, IN: Dumb Ox Books, 1993). Hippocrates G. Apostle follows this practice in his translation of the *Ethics* (1975; repr. Grinnell, IA: Peripatetic Press, 1984).

<sup>59</sup> Used in T. Irwin, trans., *Nicomachean Ethics*, 2nd ed. (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1999), and in C. D. C. Reeve, trans., *Nicomachean Ethics* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 2014). W. D. Ross uses “state of character” in his translation of the *Ethics*, in *The Works of Aristotle*, ed. W. D. Ross, vol. 9 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1925).

<sup>60</sup> Used in M. Ostwald, *Nicomachean Ethics* (1962; repr. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1999); and in Bartlett and Collins, trans., *Nicomachean Ethics*.

<sup>61</sup> Used in C. Rowe, trans., *Nicomachean Ethics*, intro. and commentary by S. Broadie (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002). H. Rackham uses “settled disposition of mind” in his translation of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, rev. ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1934).

<sup>62</sup> Sachs, preface to the *Nicomachean Ethics*, ix.

seems to lie between motion and rest. Sachs translates it as “active condition” in an effort to capture its dual character. This translation better distinguishes ἔξις from feeling and power, and the suggestion of activity aligns it and thus virtue with Aristotle’s notion of happiness (εὐδαιμονία). Active conditions, such as virtues, come into being from being at work (1103b21-22), and happiness is, in Sachs’s translation, “the being-at-work of the soul in accordance with virtue” (1098a16-17). In W. D. Ross’s translation, it “turns out to be activity of soul exhibiting virtue.” Here Ross substitutes “activity” for “actuality” as the equivalent for ἐνέργεια, as if recognizing a need for a less passive translation. Happiness, like virtue, like ἔξις, is not a static state. They all require work (ἔργον).

### THE WORD AND ITS POWER

As the example suggests, renderings of key vocabulary in Sachs’s translations tend to be more consistent across Aristotle’s works than in more conventional translations. They also make Aristotle’s thinking seem less abstract and static, in a manner consistent with Sachs’s view of Aristotle’s vocabulary, made up of “words and phrases taken from the simplest contents of everyday speech, the kind of language that is richest in meaning and most firmly embedded in experience and imagination.”<sup>63</sup> As a result, Sachs’s translations seem more apt to enable students to begin to think through Aristotle’s work on their own, with less reliance on commentary and footnotes (and Sachs’s translations do tend to have less in the way of philosophico-scholarly apparatus than more traditional translations).<sup>64</sup> In this way, at least, Sachs’s translations might free up time for students to be more attentive to Aristotle’s text, achieving at least some of the aims of liberal education.

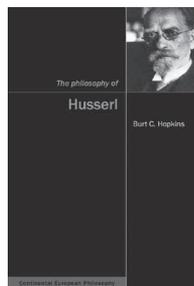
Some of Sachs’s locutions can make for awkward constructions, but it can be helpful to see the Greek morphology made visible in English. In the case of Aristotle, it may not be necessary to achieve the most elegant English prose: not many have argued that Aristotle is a model of Greek prose style. Even Coughlin concedes that consideration of Sachs’s translations can be “useful for coming to grips with Aristotle’s thought,” though only for those who are already “familiar with that thought” (xxvii), presumably through more conventional translations. I would agree that those experienced in reading Aristotle’s works would gain from reading Sachs’s translations. But it is not clear that learning has to be so unidirectional. In my experience, students can do quite well by beginning with the Sachs translations. Those moving from the Sachs translations to the secondary literature should be able to work out the correspondences.

It is possible that Sachs’s terms could become a technical jargon, especially if his translations were to become a standard. That outcome is not likely, at least not at St. John’s. As mentioned above, it is customary at St. John’s not to force any single translation onto a class of students. The encounter with different renderings can induce a seminar to negotiate the differences between texts, to linger on words. If there is one thing that Sachs’s translations teach, it is the power of paying attention to words.

<sup>63</sup> Sachs, introduction to the *Physics*, 3.

<sup>64</sup> For example, the text of Sachs’s translation of the *Metaphysics*, including footnotes, takes up 291 pages. In contrast, the main text C. D. C. Reeve’s translation takes up 251 pages; endnotes take up another 332 pages.

# HUSSERL, PLATO, AND THE HISTORICITY OF THE *EIDĒ*



[Burt C. Hopkins, *The Philosophy of Husserl* (Chesham: Acumen, 2011)]

*The Philosophy of Husserl* by Burt C. Hopkins (hereinafter PH), according to its title, presents and discusses the thought of Edmund Husserl, especially his project of phenomenology. As stated by the author, this book is conceived as an introduction aimed at beginners in the field of Husserl's phenomenology.<sup>1</sup> However, even a cursory look at the table of contents makes it quite clear that PH is not a typical introduction. While presenting Husserl's philosophy, Hopkins engages with a wide spectrum of topics and problems stretching from antiquity to the twentieth century. We find in PH, on the one hand, a thorough discussion of two critiques of Husserl's phenomenology, Heidegger's and Derrida's,<sup>2</sup> and on the other hand, extensive references to the ancient dispute between Plato and Aristotle about the εἰδῆ.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, Hopkins pays special attention to Husserl's later turn to history.<sup>4</sup> Because of that, considerations contained in PH embrace the question of the relation of phenomenology, envisaged by Husserl as a rigorous science, to history and historicism.

This brief overview of some of the significant topics covered in PH shows that this is a book that has a lot more to offer than one would expect from its title. Due to its original approach to the subject, it may be a compelling position not only for researchers directly interested in phenomenology but also for a wider group of readers. PH is, of course, first of all a book about Husserl's phenomenology, and it has been recognized<sup>5</sup> and widely discussed<sup>6</sup> for this reason. The main topic, however, is accompanied by other

<sup>1</sup> PH, 1.

<sup>2</sup> See chapters 16-19.

<sup>3</sup> See chapters 1-3.

<sup>4</sup> This question is raised at the beginning of the book (PH, 8-9) and then thoroughly discussed in chapters 11-15.

<sup>5</sup> In 2011, Burt C. Hopkins was awarded the Edward Goodwin Ballard Book Prize in Phenomenology for PH.

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, reviews by C. Majolino, "Husserl by Numbers," *Research in Phenomenology* 42, no. 3 (2012): 411-36; W. Hopp, "Burt C. Hopkins: *The Philosophy of Husserl*," *Husserl Studies* 28, no. 3 (2012): 239-49; and C. Painter and C. Lotz, "Husserl as the Modern Plato? On Hopkins' Reading of Husserl," *Comparative and Continental Philosophy* 3, no. 2 (2011): 255-68.

issues that serve no minor role in the overall argumentation scheme and thus also deserve to be emphasized. The three that I have already mentioned – the dispute between Plato and Aristotle about the εἰδῆ, the discussion with Heidegger’s and Derrida’s critique of Husserl’s phenomenology, and the question of the relation between phenomenology and history – stand as core issues so closely related to Hopkins’s line of reasoning that without them PH would be a completely different book. Because of this, PH can be read and interpreted from different points of view. Hopkins’s book need not be perceived only from the perspective of Husserl studies or, more broadly, from that of studies in phenomenology. It can also be approached in a way that brings the issue of the reception of Platonism or Aristotelianism to the forefront, thus emphasizing the question of their role in the development or understanding of Husserl’s phenomenology. The same can be said about history and historicism. I find this feature – the feature of connecting various topics skillfully and, in consequence, confronting the reader with different ways of engaging with the argumentation produced – to be one of the most important and distinguishing characteristics of Hopkins’s book.

Having said that, the scope and multiplicity of the topics discussed in PH make it impossible to relate to all, or even to the majority, of them in this short review. It was, therefore, necessary to select and highlight only some of the issues. Presenting the contents of PH, I will first briefly reconstruct the overall structure of Hopkins’s argument. This will provide a general overview of the author’s consideration and allow us to discuss some selected issues concerning Platonism.

PH consists of five parts, divided into a differing number of chapters. The whole is preceded by a *Prolegomenon* and closed by a short *Epilogue* and *Coda*. In my presentation, I will not follow the precise order of the chapters. Because of the intricate design of the employed argumentation,<sup>7</sup> it is a bit easier to elucidate Hopkins’s steps by slightly rearranging the course of considerations.

The basic aim of PH is “to introduce the beginner to Husserl’s phenomenological research by situating its salient discoveries in relation to traditional philosophy.”<sup>8</sup> This goal is realized by presenting the development of Husserl’s thought from its initial considerations about the origin of the numbers undertaken within Brentano’s conceptual framework of descriptive psychology, through the refutation of psychologism and the adoption of a new method of pure phenomenology, moving into the embraces of transcendental idealism, and, lastly, turning to the issues related to history in the *Crisis* lectures. This path of Husserl’s intellectual progress is followed by Hopkins and carefully reconstructed with great attention to detail in the middle chapters of PH.<sup>9</sup>

This reconstruction is based on the division of Husserl’s phenomenology into the subsequent four stages, which are characterized by Hopkins as follows:<sup>10</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Majolino calls this argumentation “spiraling and scholarly unconventional” (Majolino, “Husserl by Numbers,” 419).

<sup>8</sup> PH, 1.

<sup>9</sup> See chapters 4-15.

<sup>10</sup> PH, 4-5.

- (1) the beginning stage, in which the method of descriptive psychology is used to analyze the contents of cognitive acts in order to reach beyond the assumptions tacitly and unknowingly accepted by empiricism or empirical psychology;
- (2) the second stage, in which the pure phenomenological method is construed and used in investigating cognitive acts in order to unravel their foundations in “the essences immanent to pure consciousness”;<sup>11</sup>
- (3) the third stage, in which a further analysis of these “essences” leads to the discovery of their origin in the “units of meaning” contained in transcendental subjectivity;<sup>12</sup> and
- (4) the last stage, in which the connection is established between the “units of meaning” and their development in transcendental consciousness, a development that “is extended to include events and text whose essential meaning is datable to an origin in actual history.”<sup>13</sup>

Hopkins emphasizes that, regardless of the differences between each of the stages, they all have a common element that allows them to be seen as a part of one and the same project. The binding factor, which manifests itself at every stage, is Husserl’s constant and unchanging pursuit of the “integrity of knowledge.”<sup>14</sup> This assumption guides Hopkins’s consideration to always view Husserl’s phenomenology as one project whose integrity prevails over the differences of its subsequent stages. However, the first three stages, with their consistent aim at investigating a priori constituents of meaning, at first glance do not seem to be compatible with the last one, which is concerned with the historical development of those constituents. After all, history is seen as a realm of facticity and contingency. Therefore, it seems that the principles of pure phenomenology<sup>15</sup> not only cannot be successfully employed in the field of history but also contradict even a possibility of such employment.<sup>16</sup> Hopkins is well aware of the problem that arises here.<sup>17</sup> The importance of this issue is clearly evident from the first pages of the book. Nearly half of the introductory chapter (*Prolegomenon*) is devoted to the presentation of the problem posed by history in Husserl’s late thought. The last stage of phenomenology, as Hopkins argues, is a direct continuation of the third stage and arises from a critical scrutiny of its achievements.<sup>18</sup> The argumentation for it is laid out in detail in chapters 11-15. The main idea is as follows: An investigation of the genesis of ideal meanings conducted at stage three leads to the conclusion that the meanings have a “backward reference” pointing to “more original meaning and the process of its formation.”<sup>19</sup> However, what the analysis so far enabled by phenomenology can grasp is only the “finished accomplishment of a constitution or genesis” of ideal meaning.<sup>20</sup> In other words, it is not original meaning

<sup>11</sup> PH, 4.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> PH, 5.

<sup>14</sup> PH, 3.

<sup>15</sup> Hopkins points to three principles: presuppositionlessness, pure reflection, and essential intuition (PH, 6).

<sup>16</sup> PH, 7-8.

<sup>17</sup> See PH, 174-76.

<sup>18</sup> PH, 171-73.

<sup>19</sup> PH, 180.

<sup>20</sup> PH, 183.

as it was presented for the first time to a consciousness at the time of its discovery but “a finished product of constitution.”<sup>21</sup> Therefore, a new task of phenomenology is to reach those original meanings that have become “sedimented” or “in some sense forgotten,” and trace their development – that is, as Husserl puts it, to “awaken” them.<sup>22</sup>

If the main goal of Hopkins’s argument is to present the integrity of the first stages of phenomenology with the last one, then what is the role of references to antiquity and contemporary critiques of Husserl? To answer this question, we need to return to the beginning of the book. Hopkins states in the *Prolegomenon* that his aim is to present Husserl’s phenomenology “by situating its salient discoveries in relation to traditional philosophy”<sup>23</sup> – that is, in relation to the ancient Greek philosophy – and to the “European beginning of philosophy’s modern transformation into universal science.”<sup>24</sup> This move is motivated by the desire to provide “a historically informed philosophical perspective”<sup>25</sup> for the reconstruction of Husserl’s phenomenology. The need for such a perspective is caused by two problems: first, by the unreliability of Husserl’s own statements concerning the relationship between his phenomenology and earlier philosophical tradition;<sup>26</sup> second, by the fact that the perception of this relationship was predominantly shaped by critics of Husserl, including Heidegger and Derrida; and hence, as Hopkins notes, the widespread acceptance of the statements that Husserl’s project is “inseparable from a Cartesian starting point”<sup>27</sup> and from “the metaphysics of presence (traceable to an origin in the putative “logocentrism” characteristic of ancient Greek philosophy).”<sup>28</sup> According to Hopkins, such interpretations are not only unjustified but also based on “superficial assumptions.”<sup>29</sup>

As we can see, the ancient and contemporary philosophers serve here as important points of reference for calibrating the reliable perspective within which Husserl’s phenomenology can be accurately grasped and properly interpreted. On the one hand, the dispute between Plato and Aristotle about the εἰδῆ is employed in a positive way and treated as a paradigm for all subsequent philosophies that are concerned with the intelligibles;<sup>30</sup> on the other, Heidegger’s and Derrida’s critique is employed in a negative way, as it is thoroughly scrutinized and rejected.<sup>31</sup> This, however, does not exhaust the role played by all these references. Let us remember here the general idea proposed by Husserl at the last stage of the development of his phenomenology: the phenomenological investigation should be aimed at the awakening of what has been in some sense forgotten

<sup>21</sup> PH, 184

<sup>22</sup> PH, 176. For a more detailed elucidation of Hopkins’s argument, see Hopp, “Burt C. Hopkins,” 241-42.

<sup>23</sup> PH, 1.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.* Hence the focus on Plato and Aristotle on the one hand (see chapters 1-3) and mentions of Descartes (see chapters 9-10) and Leibniz (see PH, 126-28 and 162-65) on the other.

<sup>25</sup> PH, 2.

<sup>26</sup> PH, 1.

<sup>27</sup> PH, 1-2.

<sup>28</sup> PH, 2.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> PH, 17, where Hopkins claims, “Aristotle’s dispute with Plato and the ancient Platonists over intelligible objects discloses basic terms and problems that remain relevant for understanding all subsequent philosophical appeals to their purity, including, therefore, Husserl’s.”

<sup>31</sup> See chapters 16-17 for a discussion of Heidegger and chapters 18-19 for a discussion of Derrida.

– that is, to capture ideal meanings in their most original sense. This is precisely what Hopkins tries to achieve in his book. With that in mind, the overall argumentation, which at first glance seemed quite unusual, now presents itself in a completely different light. The references to the ancient dispute over the εἰδή and the refutation of the contemporary critique of Husserl’s phenomenology are the necessary elements of the process aimed at the unravelling of the most original meaning of one of the central concepts of phenomenology – that is, the εἶδος.<sup>32</sup> In other words, PH presents and explains the idea behind the last stage of Husserl’s phenomenology on two distinct levels: first, by the presentation of the development of phenomenology and the characterization of each of its subsequent stages, with special attention given to the last stage; and, second, by confronting us with the phenomenological investigation performed in the manner proposed at this last stage, the investigation aimed at the topic of εἶδος,<sup>33</sup> thus serving the self-critical role for the project of Husserl’s phenomenology taken as a whole.

The last remark prompts us to look again at Hopkins’s statement about the introductory character of PH. Everything that has been said so far suggests that this book is not well suited to play such a role. The extensive references to Plato and Aristotle, or discussions with Heidegger and Derrida, not to mention the intricate and unusual (at least at first glance) structure of the main argument can easily be overwhelming for a reader not acquainted with Husserl or with contemporary philosophy. This issue was also noted by Majolino,<sup>34</sup> with whom I fully agree here. However, all of these do not seem to pose much inconvenience in the case of a more experienced reader, who is already familiar with Husserl or modern and contemporary philosophy. Moreover, the unusual structure of deliberations can easily be seen as an advantage due to the perspective that it opens up for the engaged reader. As I mentioned at the beginning, this mixture of topics concerning phenomenology, Husserl, history, Plato, and Aristotle makes it possible to look at PH from different points of view. In the closing remarks of this review, I would like to pay closer attention to one such topic: the reconstruction of Plato’s theory of the εἰδή as given by Hopkins. These considerations not only play an important role in the author’s argumentation but also are produced in a careful and comprehensive manner that renders them a standalone point of interest.<sup>35</sup>

Plato’s theory of the εἰδή is reconstructed in chapters 1-2. Due to the extensive and detailed argumentation, it is impossible to cover it in depth in this review. For this reason, I will limit myself only to the major and most important topics that give the overall idea of Hopkins’s position. It should be pointed out here that, in reconstructing Plato’s theory, Hopkins relies solely on the text of the selected dialogues and, to some extent, on the

<sup>32</sup> This is the point that seems to be missing from the critical remarks of Painter and Lotz. In their review, they stated that “Hopkins’s claim that a reconstruction of Plato’s and Aristotle’s battle over the status of essences is *necessary* for *all* philosophies of purity ... remains obscure” (Painter and Lotz, “Husserl as the Modern Plato,” 259). Hopkins’s considerations are aimed at this “battle” precisely because it marks the origin of the formation of the concept of intelligibility (see PH, 17).

<sup>33</sup> See similar remarks made by Majolino, “Husserl by Numbers,” 425-26.

<sup>34</sup> See Majolino, “Husserl by Numbers,” 417-19, with the strong conclusion on page 424 that PH “should *not* be read as an introduction.”

<sup>35</sup> It should also be noted, as Painter and Lotz emphasize, that the relationship of Husserl’s phenomenology to ancient philosophy is a rarely discussed topic by Husserl scholars (Painter and Lotz, “Husserl as Modern Plato,” 256).

unwritten teachings (ἀγραφα δόγματα).<sup>36</sup> As a result, PH offers Hopkins's own reading of the dialogues without any discussion of or even references to the interpretations of Plato by other philosophers or scholars. The author justifies this approach by stating that he is interested in "'actual' thought ... not the standard interpretations."<sup>37</sup> This absence of even general references to other interpretations, however, makes it unclear which readings of Plato Hopkins considers unreliable and which he would be willing to accept. Therefore, it is up to the reader to situate the author's views in the broader context of the contemporary discussion of Plato's dialogues.<sup>38</sup>

The author's main idea is that Plato's dialogues allow for an interpretation of two accounts of the εἰδή that, regardless of their differences, form a single whole unified in a dialectical way.<sup>39</sup> It is worth emphasizing that Hopkins presents those accounts in a developmental manner by showing step by step the argumentation scheme that leads Plato to conclusions concerning the εἰδή. Because of this, PH focuses more on showing in detail the process leading to the theory of the εἰδή rather than on the finished theory itself. This idea, as Hopkins puts it, is taken from the dialogues themselves: "A precise exposition of Plato's account of the εἰδή requires that its dialogical mode of presentation be respected and therefore its origin in λόγος be acknowledged."<sup>40</sup> Adopting such an approach proves to be heuristically more valuable than just simply describing what Plato (supposedly) meant by his consideration of the εἰδή. In chapters 1-2 of PH, two accounts of the εἰδή are presented by showing the starting point of inquiry, problems encountered along the way, and means adopted for solving them. What we can see here are not only the results in the form of two theories of the εἰδή but also the methods that lead to them. Hopkins thus confronts us in the first place with Plato's thinking about the εἰδή with all its peculiarities, advantages, and problems and not just with the finished result in the form of a given theory. Let us have a brief look at the author's reconstruction of both accounts of the εἰδή.

The author calls the first account the Socratic one because the basis for its interpretation is found in those dialogues in which Socrates, using his elenctic method, plays a major role in the discussions.<sup>41</sup> Chapter 1 of PH, therefore, presents and interprets topics that should be familiar to readers of *Phaedo*, *Euthyphro*, *Meno*, or *The Republic*. The development of the first theory of the εἰδή is presented by the author as originating from the Socratic inquiries concerning particular virtues or virtue as such<sup>42</sup> – that is, objects that cannot be grasped by sensual perception. The proposed answer, however, is itself no less problematic.<sup>43</sup> To solve it, Plato's Socrates proposes two methodological

<sup>36</sup> Hopkins is referring to Plato's concept of eidetic numbers (PH, 38-39) and teachings about the Independent One and Indeterminate Dyad (PH, 59).

<sup>37</sup> PH, 17-18.

<sup>38</sup> Similar remarks, although referring to the PH as a whole, are made by Painter and Lotz, "Husserl as Modern Plato," 267.

<sup>39</sup> PH, 21.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> The answer to the question of "what is it?" is the εἶδος, which is presupposed not only as something that cannot be grasped by sensual perception but also as something that unchangingly maintains its unity, thus excluding all change or even opposites (PH, 22). For example, in this perspective, the εἶδος of justice is one and only one (there

assumptions that we find in *Phaedo* in the famous fragment about the “second sailing”: first, to abandon searching for the truth in things in order to search for it in λόγος;<sup>44</sup> and, second, to employ a method of assuming and scrutinizing hypotheses that seems to be the best explanation of the issues in question.<sup>45</sup> This second assumption opens the way to the use of dialectics, which investigates the hypothesis of the εἰδή in order to find their ultimate explanation and characteristics.<sup>46</sup> However, the basic problem for the first account of the εἰδή, as Hopkins points out, is the absence of any presentation of a truly dialectical investigation by Plato’s Socrates.<sup>47</sup> This account of the εἰδή is therefore interpreted by the author as a prelude to the proper theory.

The second account of the εἰδή starts precisely at the point at which the first account has reached its limit. It takes up the question of the εἰδή and tries to find a solution to it through dialectical investigation.<sup>48</sup> As Plato’s Socrates pointed out in *The Republic*, the use of dialectics requires the proper employment of the art of counting and calculation.<sup>49</sup> According to Hopkins, this is exactly what characterizes the second account of the εἰδή, which is thus called an arithmological one – that is, pertaining to numbers.<sup>50</sup> Here we find the most crucial point of Hopkins’s interpretation, which is the usage of the concept of eidetic numbers in order to elucidate Plato’s characterization of the εἰδή. The employment of this concept is, as pointed out by Majolino,<sup>51</sup> influenced by Jacob Klein’s work *Greek Mathematical Thought and the Origin of Algebra*. Hopkins’s argumentation proceeds as follows:

The first step is based on the observation taken from *Hippias Major* concerning the issue of participation.<sup>52</sup> If we consider the εἶδος of some virtue – for example, justice – we can say that each person who can be called just somehow “has” this εἶδος.<sup>53</sup> This is different in the case of a number. If we have three objects of some sort, then it can be said that, taken as a whole, they participate in the εἶδος of three; however, each of those objects taken individually is one, thus participating in the εἶδος of one, not three. In other words, as Hopkins states, “Each of the items united by a number is different from the common thing that composes the number, and conversely, the number is different from each of the items that it unites.”<sup>54</sup> It is precisely this observation that is used by the author in the next step to interpret the passages from the *Sophist* in which the greatest kinds are discussed.

---

can be no multiple εἰδή of justice), and it is “composed” only of justice and nothing else. The latter assumption excludes any relation of this εἶδος to its opposite, injustice.

<sup>44</sup> PH, 22. See *Phaedo* 99e-100a.

<sup>45</sup> PH, 24. See *Phd.* 100a-d.

<sup>46</sup> PH, 24.

<sup>47</sup> PH, 28.

<sup>48</sup> PH, 34.

<sup>49</sup> See *Rep.* 523a.

<sup>50</sup> PH, 34. For a precise explanation of this phrase, see PH, 39-40. In short, Hopkins decides to use the word “arithmological” rather than “arithmetical” because the numbers to which this account of the εἰδή refers are not ordinary numbers but eidetic ones.

<sup>51</sup> Majolino, “Husserl by Numbers,” 425-26.

<sup>52</sup> See *Hippias Major* 300a-302b.

<sup>53</sup> In other words, this εἶδος can be truthfully predicated about this person.

<sup>54</sup> PH, 36.

Motion and Rest, two of the five greatest kinds mentioned in the dialogue,<sup>55</sup> are called the greatest oppositions because everything is either in motion or at rest.<sup>56</sup> This, however, raises the question of their relation to Being. The agreed-upon answer by the Stranger of Elea and Theaetetus is that this relation is only partial.<sup>57</sup> Being cannot be identified with either Motion or Rest because this would result in a contradiction: Motion will be the same as Rest.<sup>58</sup> It also cannot be said that Being has no connection with Motion and Rest because both of them are.<sup>59</sup> Therefore, as Hopkins notes, the idea of relation here is partial, as in the case of numbers. Each of the unity composing a given number is not this number but unity; however, those units have something in common, that is, the number that they together compose. The greatest kinds of Motion, Rest, and Being behave exactly in the same manner.<sup>60</sup> In the last step of argumentation, Hopkins, following Aristotle's mention of Plato's unwritten teachings,<sup>61</sup> underlines the difference between numbers and the greatest kinds. A number is composed of units that are the same insofar as they are considered units. Therefore, they can be combined in every possible manner. In the case of the greatest kinds, we have units that have their own characteristics, and precisely because of this feature they cannot be combined indifferently<sup>62</sup> (e.g., Motion and Rest cannot be combined with each other because they are the greatest opposites, but they can be connected through Being).

On the ground of the first account, it was established by Hopkins that the εἰδή are renderers of understanding of intelligible objects.<sup>63</sup> When we are faced with something that is not sensible, we refer to the εἰδή to understand it, especially to discern it from its opposite.<sup>64</sup> Therefore, the primary role of the εἰδή is to give sense and meaning to the things we refer to. On the one hand, the εἶδος suggests itself as a possible answer to the question of "what is it?" in the case of objects that cannot be perceived by the senses, while on the other hand it is something that also cannot be sensually perceived, thus demanding further explanations. The second account tries to achieve precisely that. The εἰδή are explained in terms of the greatest kinds, which are "shown as the necessary presuppositions for the 'intelligibility' of any εἶδος."<sup>65</sup> Not only is this interpretation interesting, but it also compels one to further studies, especially to confront the thesis concerning the structure of the εἰδή with those works of Plato which Hopkins does not mention in his own analysis. What comes to mind is the *Parmenides* with its deductions concerning the one and many, the *Philebus* with references to one and many in reasoning concerning the nature of pleasure, or the famous philosophical passage from *Letter VII*. The absence here of a broader analysis of Plato's dialogues is noticeable.

<sup>55</sup> See *Soph.* 254d-e.

<sup>56</sup> *Soph.* 250a.

<sup>57</sup> *Soph.* 252e-253a.

<sup>58</sup> *Soph.* 252d.

<sup>59</sup> *Soph.* 251e-252a.

<sup>60</sup> See PH, 37.

<sup>61</sup> Hopkins points to two fragments from Aristotle's *Metaphysics*: A, 987b *in medio*, and M, 1086a *in medio*.

<sup>62</sup> PH, 38-39.

<sup>63</sup> PH, 21-22.

<sup>64</sup> See PH, 21.

<sup>65</sup> PH, 34.

Arriving at the end of this review, it needs to be noted that the above presentation covered only a fragment of the more extensive and detailed argumentation of Hopkins's book. Many issues, even those concerning the interpretation of Plato's thought,<sup>66</sup> had to be left aside. Despite this, however, there can be no doubt that PH is a very interesting and demanding study with an original perspective of presenting Husserl's phenomenology. PH not only reconstructs and explains Husserl's phenomenology but also employs its methods to investigate the question of the formation of ideal meanings. This teaches a lot more about phenomenology than could any description of what Husserl really said. It is the vivid nature of the investigation conducted into the history of the formation of the εἰδή that is especially worthwhile and compelling. To reach it, however, one must first travel along the steep path of the unusual structure of the argumentation of PH, beginning with remarks concerning the last stage of Husserl's phenomenology and the reconstruction of the antique dispute over the εἰδή.

---

<sup>66</sup> Such as, for example, Hopkins's statement that "λόγος and εἶδος are the same, without, however, being identical" (PH, 23), or the discussion concerning the problem of participation (see PH, 39-42).



# **GEMMA PLATONICA, ON HEINRICH DÖRRIE'S PHILOLOGICAL PLATONISM**

[Heinrich Dörrie, *Der Platonismus in der Antike*. Bd. 1. *Die geschichtlichen Wurzeln des Platonismus*. Bausteine 1-35: Text, Übersetzung, Kommentar. Aus dem Nachlass herausgegeben von Annemarie Dörrie. Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: froman-holzboog, 1987]

For any tradition-wise philosopher, to speak of Plato is to speak of origins, to take up the question of the relation of philosophy to the Platonic heritage is to take up the problem of filiation, and to find an answer to that question is to delineate the form of one's philosophizing. Therefore, as we see, philosophers who engage in the question of the relation between Platonism and philosophy find themselves bound by the tradition in which they are working. Yet, if the manifestations of philosophy are to be considered as limited to a literary tradition, those of philosophers who strive for a more synoptic perspective – for a view stretching far beyond a particular tradition – may be searching for someone capable of unfettering them and of helping overcome their peculiar entanglement. This, if philosophy belongs to writing, would be the holder of the keys to the textual tradition: the philologist.

One such philologist was Heinrich Dörrie, the founder of *Der Platonismus in der Antike* (*Platonism in Antiquity*), a monumental eight-volume series, the first volume of which was published in 1987, four years after his passing. He set out the plan of the series as early as 1937, two years after his promotion, being the author of the last dissertation in Latin defended at the University of Göttingen. The work on the series took the rest of his lifetime, including eight years of interment, from 1945 to 1953, in a Soviet prisoner-of-war camp, where his wife, also a philologist, kept sending him short letters, which, due to character limitations, contained nothing but excerpts from Platonic literature to work on.<sup>1</sup> The first volume, *The Historical Roots of Platonism* (*Die geschichtlichen Wurzeln des Platonismus*), was published posthumously by Annemarie Dörrie, the author's wife, in 1987. After over 30 years, the monstrous editorial project is near completion, with volume 8.1-2 (*Die Ethik des antiken Platonismus in Kaiserzeit*) to be published in June 2020 by

<sup>1</sup> See H.-D. Blume, "Heinrich Dörrie †," *Gnomon* 56 (1984): 185-89.

frooman-holzboog and another remaining volume (7.2: *Die philosophische Lehre des Platonismus [4] Teilband 2: Theologia Platonica*) as well as the final index being currently edited. After Heinrich Dörrie's death, the project was continued by his students, the late Matthias Baltes and Friedhelm Mann. The last volumes are edited by Christian Pietsch. Although the series is often dubbed "Dörrie-Baltes," the introductory notes to volumes 2-7.2 mention more than forty names of collaborators who have contributed in various ways, a loose transgenerational scholastic community centered around the University of Münster, where Heinrich Dörrie served as professor from 1961 until 1983.<sup>2</sup>

*Platonism in Antiquity* consists of 300 "building stones" (*Bausteine*) and aims at recollecting and reunifying the reportedly shattered tradition of ancient Platonism by making its textual witnesses available to the contemporary reader. Each building stone pertains to one topic of ancient Platonism and offers a review of crucial quotes from the sources alongside a German translation and commentary. The commentaries are posited separately, thus each volume consists of two parts: *Text and Translation* and *Commentary*.<sup>3</sup> Ancient Platonism is conceived of as a partly discontinuous yet fundamental tradition, a thorough spiritual phenomenon the witnesses of which are scattered as loosely as abundantly in the ancient literature from Aristotle up to the *Suda*. Dörrie approaches the text in both an analytic and a synthetic way, presenting, exposing, and summarizing the preserved material, striving to provide an assimilative read – that is, to make his work understandable to the user "rooted in the spiritual world of the twentieth century."<sup>4</sup> As such, Dörrie's endeavor seems to be of much broader scope and aim than that of a simple archivist. He seeks for a comprehensive introduction to a vast tradition he is recollecting, preserving, and passing down yet with a full conscience that under no circumstances should he expand it or elaborate on it in any way, since, obviously, a twentieth-century German philologist cannot seriously conceive of himself as another ancient Platonist.

The title of the work has raised reasonable controversy, expressed by Thomas Alexander Szlezák in his 2010 review.<sup>5</sup> Szlezák pointed out that, although Dörrie attempts

<sup>2</sup> The volumes of *Der Platonismus in der Antike* are as follows (asterisk signifying the *Baustein* number):

1. *Die geschichtlichen Wurzeln des Platonismus*, \*1-35, 1987.
2. *Der hellenistische Rahmen des kaiserzeitlichen Platonismus*, \*36-72, 1990.
3. *Der Platonismus im 2. und 3. Jahrhundert nach Christus*, \*73-100, 1993.
4. *Die philosophische Lehre des Platonismus [1] Einige grundlegende Axiome / Platonische Physik (im antiken Verständnis) I*, \*101-24, 1996.
5. *Die philosophische Lehre des Platonismus [2] Platonische Physik (im antiken Verständnis) II*, \*125-50, 1998.
6. 1-2. *Die philosophische Lehre des Platonismus [3] Von der »Seele« als der Ursache aller sinnvollen Abläufe*, \*151-81, 2002.
- 7.1. *Die philosophische Lehre des Platonismus [4] Teilband 1: Theologia Platonica*, \*182-205, 2008.
- 7.2. *Die philosophische Lehre des Platonismus [4] Teilband 2: Theologia Platonica*, \*206-30, in preparation.
- 8.1-2. *Die Ethik des antiken Platonismus der Kaiserzeit*, \*231-52, June 2020.
9. *Index*, in preparation.

<sup>3</sup> H. Dörrie, *Zur Einführung*, in *Der Platonismus in der Antike*, vol.1, *Die geschichtlichen Wurzeln des Platonismus*. (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: frommann-holzboog, 1987), 48-51.

<sup>4</sup> Dörrie, *Zur Einführung*, 14.

<sup>5</sup> T. A. Szlezák, "Heinrich Dörrie – Matthias Baltes: Der Platonismus in der Antike, Band 1-6.2, Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: frommann-holzboog, 1987-2004," *Gnomon* 82 (2010): 389-404.

to lay out an overview of Platonism during the whole of antiquity (*der Platonismus in der Antike*), it seems that his proper point of concern is rather Middle Platonism – that is, an epoch beginning with Antiochus of Ascalon in the early first century BCE and ending with Ammonios Saccas, the teacher of Plotinus. Yet it is not that Dörrie does not acknowledge the chronological distinction between the Old Academy, Middle Platonism, and Neoplatonism. On the contrary, he gives a concise introductory discussion of the scholarly periodization of Ancient Platonism.<sup>6</sup> The introduction to the series is devoid of any claims regarding the precise period and circumstances of some supposed historical occurrence of *the* authentic Platonism. Although the *Bausteine* focus mostly on the testimonies to the historical phenomenon of Middle Platonist intellectual culture, it is not the choice of textual material but rather the philosophical definition of what Platonism is, given in the introduction, that accounts for why Dörrie's concept of Platonism seems to pertain mostly to the phenomenon that contemporary scholarship describes as Middle Platonism.

\*\*\*

Before proceeding with the presentation of Dörrie's notion of Platonism, which is our primary point of concern, we will briefly outline its formal structure to recognize how it affects and intertwines with the structure of the editorial enterprise. Dörrie deems it unfeasible to deliver a series covering the Platonic literature, whatever its definition, in as thorough and exhaustive a manner as Diels-Kranz or *Stoicorum Veterorum Fragmenta* do it, respectively, with the pre-Socratic and early Stoic literature.<sup>7</sup> Thus he opposes the approach represented by John Dillon's *The Middle Platonists*, which seeks to grasp this phenomenon in the form of a presupposed historico-prosopographical continuity of a chosen sequence of authors.<sup>8</sup> His interest is not in the Platonists but in Platonism itself, which brings about a very Platonic tension between the reconstructed Platonism materializing in Dörrie's *Bausteine* and the Platonism predefined by him as an intended subject of the reconstruction. The first definition of Platonism found in the seventy-page-long introduction says that "Platonism should be understood as the philosophy, the proponents of which call themselves Πλατωνικοί – *Platonici*."<sup>9</sup> Right afterward, we learn that "the surviving material allows no doubt that the passing down of Plato's spiritual heritage was subject to a profound breach in the tradition."<sup>10</sup> The assumption regarding the discontinuity of the tradition is further supported with another one, that of fragmentation. One should not conceive of Platonism as a transgenerational oeuvre of a few distinguished thinkers but rather as a broad cultural phenomenon finding a plethora of textual expressions by authors both acknowledged and anonymous. The cultural institution of diadochy

<sup>6</sup> Dörrie, *Zur Einführung*, 33-41.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>8</sup> J. Dillon, *The Middle Platonists: 80 B.C. to A.D. 220* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977). Dörrie mentions Dillon twice, criticizing him for a prosopocentric approach unapt for the treatment of the subject matter. Moreover, Dörrie states very clearly that "the most important transmissions of Platonism were anonymous; the Platonists who carried these transmissions were traditionalists, not innovators." See Dörrie, *Zur Einführung*, 47n1; 51n1.

<sup>9</sup> Dörrie, *Zur Einführung*, 3-4.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 4-5.

notwithstanding, there is no such thing as any sort of Platonic lineage in purely intellectual terms. Each author conveying an expression of the tradition has some more or less direct access to its intelligible source, yet the access as such cannot be subject to inheritance.<sup>11</sup> The relation of various Platonists' ideas to each other and to those of Plato is not mediated through a historical lineage of thinkers nor through any objective external factor or agent. This is precisely why Dörrie has to organize the work around a choice of *Platonicae quaestiones* – and the why both of the aforementioned tension between the conceptual and the textual layers of the work and of the tendency to identify Middle Platonism with ancient Platonism as such. We will understand it better by inquiring into how Dörrie perceives the structure of Platonism, which he metaphorizes as a crystalline one: “It is legitimate to think of Platonism as of a crystal with many facets. It is possible to project the image of the whole from each of these planes, yet there is no single projection that would not present the whole in a foreshortening manner.”<sup>12</sup>

Dörrie's metaphor of Platonism as a crystal with many facets seems very much apt for explaining the fragile structure of his work and its subject. It is a structure of an inherent order that keeps recurring in particular parts of the whole – particular Platonic topics investigated in particular *Bausteine*. The inherence and unity of the structure makes it impossible to present it in a thorough and faithful manner with the help of some external mediation, hence the criticism of Dillon's historico-prosopographical attitude. The order is revealed and uncovered in a study of its particular occurrences, that is, in a textual exposition of the given question. Such a work – which we could quite fittingly metaphorize as the job of the gem cutter – engenders the threat of the precious stone's shattering and crumbling.<sup>13</sup> First, devoting too much attention to a single issue could effectively result in isolating it from the whole, thus endangering the integrality of the structure. Second, an imprecise cut, a faceting too assiduous, could upset the equilibrium between the parts of the structure and weaken the harmony within them that allows for an unconstrained movement of thought from one issue to another. Dörrie's work of recollecting the tradition is somehow also the work of cutting, and the emphasis on the discontinuity of the tradition

<sup>11</sup> This echoes the problem of inheriting virtue, which is particularly important for Plato's early dialogues such as *Protagoras* and *Meno*. Plato's Socrates consequently denies the possibility of inheriting virtue in a purely natural way and points out that it should be attained through education. Since, as Paul Natorp has shown, the virtue theory served as a first step toward the theory of ideas, one could conclude that the problem of inheriting virtue may be expanded toward the problem of inheriting access to the intelligible. See P. Natorp, *Plato's Theory of Ideas: An Introduction to Idealism* (Sankt-Augustin: Academia Verlag, 2004). Regarding the problem of inheriting access to the intelligible, one may argue that Plato's answer to it is his project of institutionalized and politicized education expressed in *The Republic*. Thus, the question arises of whether or not it is possible to inherit access to the intelligible via institutionalized education.

<sup>12</sup> Dörrie, *Zur Einführung*, 52; see also p. 15: “Platonism is a complex phenomenon; it could be compared to a crystal with many facets. Some facets must necessarily remain unseen for everyone who contemplates it, another appears foreshortened. It is necessary to turn the precious stone around here and there to see it in its whole” (my translation).

<sup>13</sup> Dörrie puts a strong emphasis on this issue, first accepting in advance possible accusations of crumbling and disintegrating (*Zerbröseln und Zerkrümeln*), then presenting means undertaken to counter the danger of splintering (*Gefahr der Zerfasserung*). He alludes to the Platonic catchword *κατακεκερματισθαι* (“to cut into pieces”) used in the *Sophist* 257c, 258e, *Parmenides* 144b, and others. In the passages cited, the verb *κατακεκερματισθαι* pertains to the nature of the other, the knowledge of the particulars, and the distribution of existence among particular beings. See Dörrie, *Zur Einführung*, 52, particularly 52n2.

seems to coincide in a very essential way with the daedal splitting of the textual material as a prerequisite for its exposition and reorganization. We are reading, λέγομεν, *wir lesen*, dividing and collecting our very long read.<sup>14</sup>

Regarding the supposed identification of ancient Platonism with Middle Platonism, the reasons for such a predilection are to be found in the structure of the work – resembling the presupposed structure of Platonism – and the hermeneutical approach it represents. The first *Baustein* is devoted to Plato's lecture on the Good, the unwritten doctrines serving as a point of departure and the cornerstone of the series.<sup>15</sup> There is a strong emphasis on the terminological distinction between the adjective *platonisch* and the genitive *Platons*, possibly to radicalize the distinction between Plato the founder of the Platonic tradition and Plato the author of the dialogues.<sup>16</sup> The kernel of the tradition remained unwritten; it is described as a “well-founded system” that “for good reasons was never formulated *in extenso* nor recorded.”<sup>17</sup> The obscurity of the origin is indeed a typical characteristic of the tradition broadly understood. Such is also, to continue with the crystallographical metaphor, the origin of the primary nucleation of a crystal, which involves a contingent nucleus from which the formation and growth of a crystal develops rather spontaneously. That would account for the early origination of the Platonic tradition in the milieu of the Old Academy, the direct successors to Plato. The secondary nucleation is a process in which the nuclei are formed from preexisting crystals and may merge into a larger crystalline structure. That is what happens with the tradition in the period of Middle Platonic syncretism. Earlier Platonism is synthesized with vast parts of a Stoic and a Neo-Pythagorean heritage, and a universal spiritual and intellectual form of ancient culture emerges, this being the Platonism of antiquity, the merger of most of the preceding traditions of ancient thought and culture. As for Neoplatonism, one could argue that it is not conceived of as a part of Platonism proper precisely because of the novelty it reportedly involves. In the Platonic tradition as Dörrie conceives of it, the introduction of novelties, νεωτερίζειν, is generally seen as a highly unwelcome subversive act.<sup>18</sup> Although the periodization that includes a distinction between the traditions dubbed Middle Platonism and Neoplatonism does not remain uncriticized or unchallenged, Matthias Baltes argues that the philosophers known to us as the Neoplatonists have already in their own utterances differentiated between the old and the new interpretations of Plato, presenting themselves as innovators.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>14</sup> For the etymology of λέγω, see P. Chantraine, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque. Histoire des mots* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1999), 625-26: “λέγω: le sens originel est ‘rassembler, cueillir, choisir’ (Hom.)”; also, R. Beekes, *Etymological Dictionary of Greek*, vol. 1 (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2010), 841. For German *lesen*, see F. Kluge, *Etymological Dictionary of the German Language*, trans. J. F. Davis (London, New York: George Bell & Sons – MacMillan & Co., 1891), 214: “The development of the meaning ‘to read’ from ‘to gather’ is indeed analogous to that of Latin *lego* and Greek λέγω, which the High German significations combine”.

<sup>15</sup> H. Dörrie, \*1, *Platons Vorlesung über das Gute*, in *Der Platonismus in der Antike*, vol. 1, *Die geschichtlichen Wurzeln des Platonismus* (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: frommann-holzboog, 1987), 74-80; *Text und Übersetzung*, 277-94 (*Kommentar*).

<sup>16</sup> Dörrie, *Zur Einführung*, 7-8.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>19</sup> M. Baltes, *Mittelplatonismus*, in *Der neue Pauly*, vol. 8 (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 2000), 294-300. Szlezák mentions this entry as proof that the editors of the series recognized its misnaming, since Baltes himself “shortly

Here we arrive at the point where a peculiar interplay between a continuity and a discontinuity of the tradition emerges. Neoplatonism, as conceptualized by modern periodization, breaches into the tradition as a newly established lineage of continuity, thus distinguishing and distancing itself from the previous tradition. By contrast, Middle Platonism – also dubbed *Vorneuplatonismus* or *Prae-neoplatonismus* before the coining of the term we use today – lacks such clear historico-prosopographical lineage and continuity. Thus, if we understand Dörrie correctly, it does not introduce any fundamental delineating breach in the tradition.<sup>20</sup> Its discontinuity is far more superficial than that which emerges with Neoplatonism. It is a discontinuity of the fragmentation but not of the breach and the reformation. Dörrie's hermeneutics must not feel at ease with any sort of innovators offering a choice between the old and the new interpretation since among its crucial presuppositions are those of a legitimate succession and passing down of the tradition, particularly of its esoteric kernel of the unwritten doctrine.<sup>21</sup> It despises the modern revisionist hermeneutical attitude and does not seek to discover what Plato thought or what precisely the unwritten doctrine consists of.<sup>22</sup> It does not work against the tradition; rather, it seeks to learn with the tradition; it does not dis-cover anything but rather uncovers and re-veals that which ultimately must not be left deprived of cover and veil.<sup>23</sup>

\*\*\*

To summarize the previous section, Dörrie's main hermeneutical principles are (1) that of the peculiar continuity of the tradition that involves fragmentation but no break, subversion, or revolution; (2) that of the inseparability of substance and hermeneutics; and (3) that of the ἄρρητον as the peak and the kernel of Platonism, which is subject to constant describing and peri-phrasing (*umschreiben*). By the inseparability of substance and hermeneutics, Dörrie possibly means the gradually deepening identification of the interpreter with the

---

before his death wrote an entry to *Neue Pauly* that discusses the epoch he devoted almost all of his lifetime's work to under the name of *Middle Platonism*.<sup>20</sup> Earlier he says that "the blatant *misnomer* 'Der Platonismus' ... luckily did not prevail." See Szlezák, "Heinrich Dörrie – Matthias Baltes," 391.

<sup>20</sup> The term *Mittelplatonismus* was introduced by Karl Praechter. See K. Praechter, "Der mittlere Platonismus," in *Friedrich Ueberwegs Grundriß der Geschichte der Philosophie des Altertums* (Berlin: E. S. Mittler & Sohn, 1920), 536-68. *Vorneuplatonismus* was proposed by Willy Theiler in 1930; see W. Theiler, *Die Vorbereitung des Neuplatonismus* (Berlin: Weidmann, 1964), 1, 37-40. *Prae-neoplatonismus* was proposed by Cornelia J. de Vogel in 1959; see C. J. de Vogel, *Greek Philosophy. A Collection of Texts with Notes and Explanations*, vol. 3 (Leiden: Brill, 1964), 340-433.

<sup>21</sup> See the passage cited already in note 8 when referring to the criticism of Dillon's approach, that is, Dörrie, *Zur Einführung*, 51n1: "the most important transmissions of Platonism were anonymous; the Platonists who carried these transmissions were traditionalists, not innovators."

<sup>22</sup> Dörrie, *Zur Einführung*, 8: "It is particularly wrong to state that in the age of the Roman Empire the Platonists were conducting their own research striving for their own view of Plato (*Platonbild*) (to presuppose that would mean to project modern methods and modern postulates back onto antiquity)." *Neues Platonbild* is one of the slogans used by the Tübingen School, which is reflected by the titles of numerous publications. See K. Gaiser, *Das Platonbild: 10 Beiträge zum Platonverständnis* (Hildesheim: Olms, 1969); H. Krämer, "Zum neuen Platon-Bild," in *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* 55 (1/1981): 1-18; H. Krämer, "Altes und Neues Platonbild," *Méthexis* 6 (1993): 95-114; H. Krämer, "Das neue Platonbild," in *Zeitschrift für Philosophische Forschung*, vol. 48 (1994): 1-20.

<sup>23</sup> Regarding the metaphor of the veil as pertaining to scientific discovery, see P. Hadot, *The Veil of Isis: An Essay on the History of the Idea of Nature*, trans. M. Chase (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).

tradition he is working on. He bespeaks this question almost marginally while referring to the problem of the systematical presentation of principles. He introduces Porphyry as the only Platonist who had tried to proffer a systematical written utterance peri-phrasing or describing the peak in which Platonic teaching culminates, the result of this being ἀφορμαὶ πρὸς τὰ νοητά (*Sententiae ad Intelligibilia Ducentes*). Dörrie stresses that these sentences do not pertain to the “constants that occur in the philosophical teaching of Platonism” but rather to the “constants of the self-understanding and self-presentation of Platonism and the Platonists.”<sup>24</sup> Right afterward, the aforementioned principle of the inseparability of substance and hermeneutics in Platonism is mentioned – and Dörrie the hermeneutist begins with the thirty guiding sentences (*Leitsätze*) that in a quasi-Porphyrian manner sketch out the concept of Platonism as philosophy and religion.

It will soon become clear to the reader that everything that is spoken of in such an aphoristic manner refers to the highest insight [*höchste Erkenntnis*]. This culminating insight, which is to aphorisms as the top is to the rest of the pyramid, was and remains impossible to grasp or express in any direct utterance, even in a form of some simple textbook. Words can only peri-phrase [*um-schreiben*] the ἄρρητον, in which the Platonic philosophy reaches its climax, this being Plato's major guiding thought to which all his disciples and followers have remained faithful in a most steadfast and unassailable manner.<sup>25</sup>

“Platonism as Philosophy and Religion: A Sketch in Thirty Sentences,” part 2 of the introduction to *Platonism in Antiquity*, begins with a bold and plain statement: Platonism understands the teaching it represents as philosophy per se. Its unity and exceptionality resemble the unity and exceptionality of the truth. Therefore, the unchangeable wisdom taught by Plato and known by the name of φιλοσοφία was attested even before him by the wise such as Orpheus, Homer, and others [1].<sup>26</sup> The Platonists profess many fixed yet general δόγματα regarding the world and its divine principle, the most important of which being that of the Soul as the source of all movement and process; that of the man who is bedwelled by λόγος, accounting for his kinship with the divine; and that of the way of life that allows for an ascent in terms of ethics and understanding. The Platonic confession is devoid of the Augustinian distinction between *fides* and *intellectus*, hence it is both religious and scientific, rational and theological [2]. Each expression about λόγος must be legitimized regarding its accordance with the tradition. The tradition cannot be enriched since λόγος was already fully revealed to the ancient wise, the παλαιοὶ σοφοί. The Platonist's aim is to dwell in the tradition and get more and more assimilated. He or she should never openly introduce some novelties nor present himself or herself as an original thinker [3]. The fixed points are often referred to in a peri-phrastic manner, with the use of so-called winged words, *Geflügelten Worten*, ἔπεα πτερόεντα, these being

<sup>24</sup> Dörrie, *Zur Einführung*, 16-17.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>26</sup> The number in brackets refers to the given sentence and concludes its summary. The sentences are found in Dörrie, *Zur Einführung*, 17-32.

usually shortened metaphors or remarkable expressions from the dialogues.<sup>27</sup> The practice of making such allusions to Plato and the ancient wise was passed down from generation to generation, thus forming one of the major manifestations of the Platonic tradition [4]. Platonism mostly ignored many subject fields that were of high interest to Plato, such as mathematics, dialectics, or politics. It kept a strong focus on individual ethics, understood as the cultivation of the divine λόγος that dwells in man and allows for assimilation with the divine. The cornerstone of such an attitude was a radical interpretation of Plato's expression that God is the measure of all things, θεὸς ἡμῖν πάντων χρημάτων μέτρον [5].<sup>28</sup> Another fundamental point of focus was Plato's natural philosophy, particularly its formulation in the *Timaeus*, which was subject to scrupulous exegesis attaining an importance incomparable to that of most of Plato's written teaching [6]. The *Timaeus* offered an answer to the question of the principle and cause of all heavenly and earthly processes. The divine character of this cause was the central question of Platonic theology; to seek for a theological-scientific explanation of the phenomena of nature was to seek for an understanding that would allow for sufficient acknowledgement and right veneration of the highest principle [7]. The tradition ultimately developed two interpretations of the *Timaeus*, which offered two theories of principles and two Platonic theologies at variance with one another. The older one is the theory of the three principles (*Dreiprinzipienlehre*): Creator, Paradigm, and Matter. The three principles act simultaneously, the Creation being compared to the act of craftsmanship. Such a theory presumes that the world was created in time and that the Creator is partially dependent on the two other principles, particularly on the higher principle, which accounts for the temporal horizon of the act of creation. *Timaeus* 27c-d serves as the primary textual basis for this theory [8]. In the second interpretation, the divine, on the contrary, does not engage in the world since any scheme and matter necessary for creation remain alien to its eminence. It is rather the World Soul by which creation is carried out. Being a direct creation of the divine, it serves as an intermediary between the divine and the sensible world. Proponents of this theory refer to *Timaeus* 29d ff. and 35a ff. [9]. Over time, the latter interpretation prevailed, and it even became customary to think of the creation story from the *Timaeus* as of a metaphor. The adjective γενητός was interpreted in an atemporal sense, hence Creation was not conceived of as a temporal event. Such exegesis made it possible to preserve the eminence (ὑπεροχή) of the divine, which seemed to be the main point of concern of the parties of the controversy [10]. The full self-sufficiency (αὐτάρκεια) of the divine required that it not participate with or engage in substances, which are alien to it. Thus, it was conceived of as manifesting and realizing itself through the Soul, its perfect hypostasis. The controversy

<sup>27</sup> "Winged words" was originally a Homeric idiom (ἔπεα πτερόεντα), occurring in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* 124 times.

<sup>28</sup> Plato, *The Laws* 4.716c. Here Dörrie openly says that "man is seen as a being that realizes its kinship with god, ὁμοίωσις θεῷ, through λόγος, and precisely because of that he is in no manner focused on nor related to the institutions of this world" (Dörrie, *Zur Einführung*, 20). And further on: "Not a single Platonist has ever supported any human entanglement in the world [*Weltbezogenheit*], and it is by no means accepted that man would be attached to or be obligated to society, the state, or another man" (Dörrie, *Zur Einführung*, 20n2). Here we may find a glimpse of a response to the question of institutionalized education and *The Republic* we mentioned earlier in note 11, a response not only from a Platonist philologist but from a soldier of World War II and a prisoner of war interred for an eight-year period in Stalin's Soviet Union.

regarding the essence of the divine was mediatized and transformed in a controversy regarding the essence of the universal Soul, serving as an intermediary between God and the individual Soul and guaranteeing their essential kinship, συγγένεια [11]. Such binding, despite the superstitions it produced (faith in demons, astrology), resulted in a scientific search for causes and the laws of causality and a rejection of the Stoic strongly immanentistic and materialist theory of causes. The Platonists perceived causality as being of a generally transcendent character but having an immanent manifestation of its legality (*Gesetzlichkeit*) posited in the universal Soul. The Soul is active in the world through λόγος, which serves as its instrument [12]. The Soul is subject both to theological investigation and religious veneration, its functions recognized as the powers that had long been worshipped under the names of traditional gods and goddesses [13]. The Soul has as its task the universal implantation of intellect and order, νοῦς and κόσμος, which results in striving for the understanding of the creation found in particular intellects. Such notable intellects, who undertook an advancement toward universal knowledge, were above all Plutarch and Porphyry [14]. The theory of λόγος, particularly the concept of its realization into the sensibles as the function of the universal Soul, makes Platonism convergent with contemporary Stoicism, particularly with Posidonius of Apamea. The latter's only important claim rejected by Platonism was that of the material character of the causes and powers active in the world, leading to the materialistic identification of λόγος with a fiery πνεῦμα [15]. Λόγος should rather be understood as an active creative principle that allows for a realization of the Soul or Nature (the first term employed by the Platonists, the second, φύσις, by the early Stoics) in the world. The principle striving for such realization is the νοῦς. This initially physical theory involving hierarchy and relation of νοῦς, Soul, and λόγος was passed down by Posidonius, yet he cannot be counted as a Platonist since he conceived of this hierarchy only as pertaining to the material world [16].

Fundamental presuppositions regarding the occurrence of λόγος are its manifestation in the material world – in the mineral, vegetal, and animal worlds – and its expression in the teachings of the ancient wise, παλαιοὶ σοφοί [17]. Hence the main research interests of the Platonists: (1) the philosophical study of Homer, Hesiod, the Seven Sages, and another σοφοί, later supplanted by the study of *Oracula Chaldaica*. These authors are subject to the exegesis reserved for λόγια, the expressions of the oracles; (2) the interpretation of Plato's dialogues aimed at unveiling the λόγος they conceal. Later on, the passages thought of as the expressions of extasis, θεία μανία, gained particular attention; and (3) the philosophical study of religions – of the old customs, rites, cults, and mysteries, particularly those exotic and not Hellenic since it was commonly believed that the barbarians preserved the salvatory truth that Greek culture lost [18]. Platonism thus became a universal phenomenon pervading late antique intellectual and spiritual culture. Its four scientific foundations are natural science; the philology of the sacred texts; the knowledge of the gods, of their veneration, and of the cults; and, finally, the knowledge of the mysteries and revelation. Science is thus centered around λόγος, which leads to communication with the divine, the service of science equaling divine service [19]. Although all sensible phenomena are pervaded by λόγος, only a suitable, well-prepared νοῦς may recognize it and partake in it. Such preparation is attained in a process of training, ἄσκησις [20]. For the sake of allowing no access for the untrained or the profane, λόγος unfolds through riddles, δ'αἰνιγμάτων,

the solving of which is attained through the understanding of natural phenomena and exegesis of the proverbs of the ancient wise and the interpretation of the mysteries [21]. It is admissible to offer new explanations of and new solutions to these riddles since the plurality of the explanations strengthens the apprentice's ability to receive λόγος and recognize its unity through a variety of explanations that hint at it [22]. Therefore, since λόγος is of divine character, all knowledge and understanding serve for communication with the divine and all philosophy for the salvation of man, σωτηρία [23]. Σωτηρία means saving the soul from an existential threat consisting of a compulsion to live another life under conditions that would not allow for philosophizing, thus excluding the possibility of moving further along the path of salvation. The meaning of σωτηρία could be further radicalized as escaping a reincarnation into an earthly body, the shroud of skin, δερμάτινος χιτών, and heading for an ascension of the Soul into its heavenly home [24].

There's a universal hierarchy in Platonism that pertains to everything, yet all hierarchy stems from a unity and comes back to it, gradually unfolding the orderly and ruling principle, the "king" [25]. The subjective hierarchy pertains to an individual's cognitive faculties. It is so because the limits of individual understanding are delineated by a just Providence, πρόνοια, accordingly to an individual's merit in terms of philosophy during his or her predeceasing life [26]. The objective hierarchy is that of the sensible world and the higher world it resembles, υπερουράνιος κόσμος. The higher world is ruled by νοῦς, which serves as an existential foundation (*Seinsgrundlage*) of all beings (*alles Seienden*), all causality and natural laws in the sensible world being a reflection and image (*Abbild*) of the higher metaphysical order [27]. The recognition of λόγος is possible since the like is known by the like, thus λόγος dwelling in man's Soul acknowledges λόγος present in the world. Following the path of education, ἐγκύκλιος παιδεία, the philosopher strives to think of νοῦς as of the epitome of all beings. There are three ways he can pursue: *via negationis* (κατ'ἀφαίρεσιν), *via analogiae* (κατ'ἀναλογίαν), and *via eminentiae* (καθ'ὑπεροχήν). There's controversy regarding a supposed fourth way, *via mystica*, καθ'ἔνωσιν [28].

Since νοῦς is not only the highest concept but also the highest divinity, metaphysics and theology converge toward an inseparable unity [29]. This highest being is necessarily the Good. All the beings that partake in it are necessarily good, above all the Creator, since the aim of creation is the Good. Since being is substantially good and its substance is unchangeable, it can never be subject to degeneration. Thus the question of the origin of evil, πόθεν τὰ κακά, could never be solved by the Platonists, neither by Plotinus nor by Proclus, and Platonism, together with Stoicism, remained a pillar of ancient optimism and staunchly opposed the anxiety expressed during late antiquity in pessimistic doctrines of evil powers or a vicious creator. Platonism was therefore not only a metaphysics or a theology but also a religion in its own right, centered around a belief that there is a Providence, πρόνοια, that attends to the well-being of men with incessant care. Precisely because of the central function of Providence, no Platonic congregation, church, ritual, or sacrament of any sort could ever emerge since it would be plainly blasphemous to try to influence the eminent Providence with the use of any sacral activity.<sup>29</sup> Instead of this,

<sup>29</sup> That claim, naturally, excludes Neoplatonic theurgy. It is one of the points that met with the late Werner Beierwaltes's indignation in his 1993 review, which is critical of the thirty sentences and Dörrie's notion of

each Platonist is endowed with a different specific effective form of veneration that he or she acknowledges through attaining the recognition of the eminence of νοῦς as the highest principle and of the universal Soul that emerges from it. Veneration is thus inseparable from understanding. The constitutive values of Platonism are εὐλάβεια and εὐσέβεια [30].

To summarize the thirty sentences, the author concludes with a series of short definitory formulas. Being is equal to God, as is ontology to theology. Cosmology and anthropology are synthetized with the Stoic theory of λόγος through the binding of the doctrine of the realization of νοῦς in the world with the concept of universal hierarchy. Yet, such synthesis produces a fundamental problem: the nature of the relation of νοῦς to the world and of the nature of the unfolding of the One into multiplicity. The beginning of Platonism is the search for causality; the end of Platonism is the recognition of the equality of finality and causality in the highest principle, which is both ἀρχή and τέλος, reason and purpose. This highest principle is necessarily the Good, since only the Good can serve as a reason and purpose of all being and all becoming. This highest Good is translated into the world by the νοῦς on the plane of actuality and by the Soul on the plane of potentiality. The Soul is the lowest and the most worldly realization or hypostasis of the νοῦς, effectuating the movement of the heavenly bodies above men and the work of the moral law inside men. The Soul is filled with and guided by λόγος and serves as the main subject of Platonic research and investigation. As its functions are symbolized by the names of the old gods, the Soul endows Platonic religiosity with its object and substance.

\*\*\*

These are the outlines of Platonism as philosophy and religion given by Heinrich Dörrie, a philologist. They form the conceptual basis for a reconstruction of the tradition undertaken by him and continued by the efforts of Matthias Baltes and over forty further participants of this gargantuan project. From this theoretical nucleus, the structure of which is briefly drawn above, grows a yet unfinished oeuvre of over 5,000 pages, a philological *Gemma Platonica* in its own right provided by the numerous inheritors of Dörrie's craftsmanship. It is not our concern and far beyond our competence to pursue a critical analysis of the project and its presuppositions. We would only like to stress the deeply philological nature of the series. It is not by accident that the part of the introduction describing the objective of the work (*Zielsetzung dieser Arbeit*) concludes with an invitation to philosophize together,

---

Platonism. See W. Beierwaltes, "Zur Geschichte des Platonismus (I)," in *Philosophisches Jahrbuch* 100 (1993): 194-99. Beierwaltes also opposed such claims as that of Platonism's lack of interest in mathematics, dialectics, and politics [5] and Dörrie's statement that it remains controversial whether or not ἐνοσις is a viable means of education and meditation of the νοῦς [28]. He recalls various passages from Neoplatonic authors from Plotinus to Damascius, thus inadvertently confirming that Dörrie's notion of Platonism excludes the Neoplatonists. Beierwaltes's confusion was accurately noticed by Szlezák (see Szlezák, "Heinrich Dörrie – Matthias Baltes," 391). One could further argue that another reason why the Neoplatonists are not counted among *the* Platonists of antiquity is their political and religious engagement resulting from the deepening split between the pagan and the Christian worlds. Neoplatonism wasn't necessarily "a dominant spiritual phenomenon of its epoch," which is an important trait of ancient Platonism as conceived of by Dörrie. Consequently, Dörrie and Beierwaltes also take opposite sides regarding the legitimacy of Christian Platonism, the former dismissing it as an inimical pseudo-assimilatory repulse of Platonism proper, and the latter arguing for its continuity with pagan thought. See Dörrie, *Zur Einführung*, 5-13.

συμφιλοσοφεῖν.<sup>30</sup> It seems that philology as practiced by Dörrie and his inheritors is of a very philosophical character and of a profound philosophical self-understanding, conceiving of its subject, λόγος, not as a textual phenomenon or a word but rather as something unworded, the plentiful textual expressions of which are only its more or less bleakening derivatives. The Platonic statement that the archetype is *hors-texte* results in a transformation of the stemma into some kind of textual rhizome. Such a peculiar structure, determined by an elusive yet all-pervading pattern, has a sort of particular inwardness and closedness-in-itself that makes it oppose any sort of exposition by a subject not willing to immerse in it. It is a self-referent structure of the tradition that allows easily for a philological *cura* but is hardly unfolded in a historicist manner and does not translate well into linear time. For the same reason, it does not seem feasible to pursue a critical analysis of *Der Platonismus in der Antike* from an external position. Again, since the structure of the tradition is self-referential, its critique could be accomplished only through a deep immersion into its structure and pattern – and would ultimately lead to proposals of recomposing the tradition being passed on to us, to taking up the task of rediscovering the order and of cutting the gem anew. Instead, the purpose of this short cultivatory text regarding its subject is rather to peri-phrase it and to reflect upon it – that is, to re-view, *wieder-zu-sehen*.

<sup>30</sup> Dörrie, *Zur Einführung*, 15.

# ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**GIORGIO AGAMBEN (1942)** completed studies in Law and Philosophy with a doctoral thesis on the political thought of Simone Weil and participated in Martin Heidegger's Le Thor seminars on Hegel and Heraclitus as a postdoctoral scholar. He has taught at various universities, including the Universities of Macerata and Verona, Università IUAV di Venezia, and the European Graduate School in Saas-Fee. He was Director of Programmes at Collège Internationale de Paris. He has been a Visiting Professor at various universities in the United States of America and was a Distinguished Professor at The New School University in New York. He is known mostly for the *Homo Sacer* series, the first integral edition of which appeared recently at Quodlibet (*Homo Sacer. Edizione integrale*, Quodlibet 2018). His books have been translated and commented upon all over the world.

**RICHARD BODÉÛS (1948)** is a retired Professor of Greek Philosophy at Université de Montréal and a member of Société royale du Canada. He has published numerous books on Aristotle, including *The Political Dimensions of Aristotle's Ethics* (1993) and *Aristotle and the Theology of the Living Immortals* (2000). He is the author of the French translations of *On the Soul* and *Nicomachean Ethics*.

**EVA BRANN (1929)** received her doctorate from Yale University in 1956. She has been a tutor at St. John's College in Annapolis from 1957 to the present and dean from 1990 to 1997. Her books include *Feeling Our Feelings* (2008), *Un-Willing* (2014), and *Pursuits of Happiness* (2020), and translations, with her colleagues Peter Kalkavage and Eric Salem, of these Platonic dialogues: *Phaedo*, *Sophist*, *Statesman*, *Symposium*.

**KEVIN CORRIGAN (1948)** is Samuel Candler Dobbs Professor of Interdisciplinary Humanities in the Department of Middle Eastern and South Asian Studies at Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia. His recent works include *Evagrius and Gregory: Mind, Soul and Body in the 4th Century* (Ashgate Press, UK, 2009); *Religion and Philosophy in the Platonic and Neoplatonic Traditions: From Antiquity to the Early Medieval Period (Pagan, Jewish, Christian, Islamic, and Comparative Eastern Perspectives)*, edited with John D. Turner and Peter Wakefield (Akademia Verlag, 2012); *Gnosticism, Platonism and the Late Ancient World: Essays in Honour of John D. Turner*, edited with Tuomas Rasimus, in collaboration with Dylan Burns, Lance Jenott, and Zeke Mazur (*Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies*. Leiden: Brill, 2012); and *Reason, Faith and Otherness in Neoplatonic and Early Christian Thought* (Farnham: Ashgate Press, 2013).

**FRANÇOISE DASTUR (1942)** taught philosophy in the University of Paris I from 1969 to 1995, in the University of Paris XII from 1995 to 1999, and in the University of Nice-Sophia Antipolis from 1999 to 2003. She taught also as visiting professor in the Universities of Mannheim, Rio de Janeiro, Caracas, Warwick, Essex, De Paul (Chicago), Boston College, and Northwestern University (Evanston). As annual lecturer, she gave lectures in 2011 in ten different universities in India. She was, as honorary Professor of Philosophy, attached to the Husserl Archives of Paris (ENS Ulm), a research unit affiliated with the French National Center for Research (CNRS) until June 2017. She was one of the founding members in 1993 and the president until 2003 of the École Française de Daseinsanalyse, of which she is now honorary president. She has published many articles in French, English, and German on Husserl, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, Ricoeur, Derrida, Levinas, and others, and is the author of several books in French from which five have been translated into English: *Heidegger and the Question of Time* (1998); *Telling Time, Sketch of a Phenomenological Chronology* (2000); *Death, An Essay on Finitude* (1996); *How Are We to Confront Death? An Introduction to Philosophy* (2012); and *Questions of Phenomenology, Language, Alterity, Temporality, Finitude* (2017). Her last publications in French include *Daseinsanalyse. Phénoménologie et psychiatrie* (with Philippe Cabestan; 2011); *Hölderlin, le retournement natal* (2013); *Penser ce qui advient, Dialogue avec Philippe Cabestan* (2015); *Déconstruction et phénoménologie. Derrida en débat avec Husserl et*

Heidegger (2016); *Chair et langage, Essais sur Merleau-Ponty* (2016); *Leçons sur la Genèse de la pensée dialectique, Schelling, Hölderlin, Hegel* (2016); and *Figures du néant et de la négation entre Orient et Occident* (2018).

**DIEGO DE BRASI (1982)** is currently Assistant Professor of Classical Philology / Greek at the University of Marburg and specializes in Ancient Philosophy. His scholarship focuses on ancient biology (especially during the Roman Empire), Plato's political thought and the poetics of philosophical dialogue, Philo of Alexandria, late antique Christian anthropology, and the interpretation of Platonic dialogues by modern and contemporary philosophers. He is the author of *L'immagine di Sparta nei dialoghi platonici: il giudizio di un filosofo su una (presunta) pólis modello* (Sankt Augustin 2013) and has edited with Sabine Föllinger *Anthropologie in Antike und Gegenwart: Biologische und philosophische Entwürfe vom Menschen* (Freiburg i. B. 2015). He is the editor, together with Marko J. Fuchs, of *Sophistes: Plato's Dialogue and Heidegger's Lectures in Marburg (1924-25)* (Newcastle upon Tyne 2016).

**FRANCISCO J. GONZALEZ (1963)** is Professor of Philosophy at the University of Ottawa. His publications include *Dialectic and Dialogue: Plato's Practice of Philosophical Inquiry* (Northwestern, 1998) and *Plato and Heidegger: A Question of Dialogue* (Penn State, 2009), in addition to numerous articles in journals and collections in the areas of Ancient and Contemporary Continental philosophy. He has also edited *The Third Way: New Directions in Platonic Studies* (Rowman and Littlefield, 1995) and co-edited *Plato and Myth: Studies on the Use and Status of Platonic Myths* (Brill, 2012). Currently he is working on Heidegger's reading of Aristotle as well as on Aristotle's metaphysics and biology.

**BURT HOPKINS (1954)** is an American philosopher. He is an Associate Member of the Université de Lille, Permanent Faculty member of the Summer School of Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy, Università Ca' Foscari Venezia, former Professor and Chair of Philosophy at Seattle University, and Permanent Secretary of the Husserl Circle. He has been Visiting Professor at the University of Nanjing, China, Visiting Professor at École des hautes études en sciences sociales (EHESS) and the Centre Alexandre Koyré, Senior Fellow at The Sidney M. Edelstein Center for the History and Philosophy of Science, Technology and Medicine at The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and most recently Researcher at The Institute of Philosophy, Czech Academy of Sciences. His main research interest is the philosophical foundation of the transformation of knowledge that began in the sixteenth century with the philosophical advent of modernity. He has written three books, most recently *The Origin of the Logic of Symbolic Mathematics: Jacob Klein and Edmund Husserl* (2011) and *The Philosophy of Husserl* (2010), and edited two others. He has published over sixty articles and given over 100 lectures on contemporary European philosophy (especially the phenomenology of Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, and Jacob Klein), Plato, early modern philosophy, and philosophy and depth psychology. He is founding co-editor of *The New Yearbook for Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy*. Hopkins's current research continues the tradition of transcendental phenomenology and is focused on the critique of symbolic reason.

**PETER KALKAVAGE (1951)** was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He received his doctorate in philosophy at Penn State University and has been on the faculty of St. John's College in Annapolis since 1977. He has translated Plato's *Timaeus* and co-translated the *Sophist, Phaedo, Statesman, and Symposium* with Eva Brann and Eric Salem. He is the author of *The Logic of Desire: An Introduction to Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit* for Paul Dry Books and has written essays on Plato, Hegel, Dante, Bach, Mozart, Schopenhauer, and Wagner.

**JOSHUA D. KERR (1984)** is currently a doctoral candidate at the University of Oregon. He studies ancient Greek philosophy and nineteenth- and twentieth-century continental philosophy.

**JEFF LOVE (1962)** is Research Professor of German and Russian at Clemson University. He is the author of *The Black Circle: A Life of Alexander Kojève* (Columbia University Press, 2018), *Tolstoy: A Guide for the Perplexed* (Continuum, 2008), and *The Overcoming of History in War and Peace* (Brill-Rodopi, 2004). He has also published a translation of Alexandre Kojève's *Atheism* (Columbia University Press, 2018), an annotated translation (with Johannes Schmidt) of F. W. J. Schelling's *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom* (State University of New York Press, 2006), a co-edited volume, *Nietzsche and Dostoevsky: Philosophy, Morality, Tragedy* (Northwestern University Press, 2016), and an edited volume, *Heidegger in Russia and Eastern Europe* (Rowman & Littlefield International, 2017).

**MICHAEL MENG (1978)** is Associate Professor of History at Clemson University. He is the author of *Shattered Spaces: Encountering Jewish Ruins in Postwar Germany and Poland* (Harvard University Press, 2011) and co-editor of *Jewish Space in Contemporary Poland* (Indiana University Press, 2015) and co-editor of *Modern Germany in Transatlantic Perspective* (Berghahn Books, 2017), among other publications on modern European intellectual and cultural history.

**PIOTR NOWAK (1966)** is Professor of Philosophy at Białystok University in Poland. He translated works of such writers as Hannah Arendt, W. H. Auden, Leo Strauss, Alexander Kojève, Allan Bloom, Boris Pasternak, Vasyli Rozanov, Andrei Bely, Pavel Florensky, Jacob Taubes, and Semyon Frank. He is the deputy editor-in-chief of the philosophical quarterly *Kronos* (in Polish), and the annual *Kronos. Philosophical Journal* (in English). He is also a Member of the Board of the Count August Cieszkowski Foundation. He is the author of the following monographs: *Ontology of Success: An Essay on the Philosophy of Alexandre Kojève* (Gdańsk 2006), *The Prince's Signature: Reflections on Strength and Weakness* (Warsaw 2013), *The Ancients and Shakespeare on Time: Some Remarks on the War of Generations* (Amsterdam–New York 2014; in English), *Troglodyte Breeding: Comments on Higher Education and the Mental Culture of Contemporary Man* (Warsaw 2014), *I Die Therefore I Am* (Warsaw 2016), *The Box with Pandora Within* (Warsaw 2016). His most recent book is *Violence and Words. Political Philosophy of Hannah Arendt* (Warsaw 2018), for which he was awarded the 2019 Daedalus' Wings Literary Prize founded by the National Library of Poland.

**JOHN SALLIS (1938)** is Frederick J. Adelman Professor of Philosophy at Boston College. He obtained his Ph.D. from Tulane University with a dissertation on Heidegger (*The Concept of World: A Study in the Phenomenological Ontology of Martin Heidegger*, 1964). He has published more than twenty books in such areas as ancient philosophy, German Idealism, philosophy of art, and recent continental philosophy. His *Collected Writings* are currently being published by Indiana University Press. Professor Sallis has been Visiting Professor at Freiburg University, Tübingen University, Bergen University (Norway), and Wuhan University (China). He holds an honorary doctorate from Freiburg University and has been the recipient of the Alexander von Humboldt Stiftung Research Prize. He has lectured throughout the world, and his works have been translated into more than a dozen languages.

**ANDRZEJ SERAFIN (1980)** is Assistant Professor of Philosophy at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the Pedagogical University in Cracow. He is the editor of the philosophical quarterly *Kronos* (in Polish) and the annual *Kronos. Philosophical Journal* (in English). He translated Plato (*Symposium, Epinomis*), Jacob Taubes (*Occidental Eschatology*), and Rilke (*Letters on Cézanne, Letters to Merline and her son Balthus*) into Polish. He obtained his PhD with the thesis *The Concept of Truth in Heidegger's Interpretation of Aristotle* (2016). He is the founder and organizer of the Platonic Academy, a summer school of Platonism held each year in Lanckorona since 2017.

**MARK SHIFFMAN (1968)** is Associate Professor in the Department of Humanities at Villanova University. His publications include a translation of Aristotle's *De Anima* (Focus, 2010) and scholarly articles on Plato, Aristotle, and Plutarch.

**MAREK SŁAWIŃSKI (1987)** holds an MA in law and BA in philosophy. He is a PhD Candidate at the Jagiellonian University in Cracow. In his thesis, he adopts Roman Ingarden's conception of responsibility as a framework to develop and explain the notion of criminal liability used in legal sciences. His main areas of interest include the notion of moral agency in ancient Greek philosophy, as well as Plato's thought and its contemporary reception.

**CLAUDE VISHNU SPAAK (1980)** was recruited as a philosophy teacher after he received an Agrégation de philosophie in 2007. He received a PhD from Sorbonne University in 2014. He is currently Assistant Professor at Sorbonne University Abu Dhabi, serving as the Head of the Department of Philosophy and Sociology. He specializes in the field of phenomenology, especially in Heideggerian studies and in the field of cosmological phenomenology. C. V. Spaak has several academic affiliations: he is an associate member of the Husserl Archives of Paris, full member of Centro de Filosofia at the University of Lisbon, and a scientific collaborator of Europé, centre de philosophie pratique at Université Catholique de Louvain. C. V. Spaak is the author of three monographs (including one as co-author) and co-editor of four collected works published either as books or as thematic releases in philosophical journals. He has published about 15 peer-reviewed articles and 15 book chapters.

**THOMAS ALEXANDER SZLEZÁK (1940)** studied Philosophy, Classics, and History in the 1960s, was Privatdozent of Classics at the University of Zürich, later Full Professor at the University of Würzburg (1983-1990) and at the University of Tübingen (1990-2006). More than 100 of his numerous publications were translated into 17 European and non-European languages.

**ANTONI SZWED (1955)** is a Professor at the Pedagogical University in Cracow. He has published books on Kant, Hegel, and Kierkegaard, as well as translations of Kierkegaard's works into Polish (*The Concept of Anxiety, Practice in Christianity, Works of Love, On Christianity*). His main area of interest is the relation between faith and reason. His recent research focuses on the interplay between philosophy and religion in early modern England.

**PETER LAMBORN WILSON (1945)** a.k.a. Hakim Bey has published (as author, co-translator, editor, etc.) over sixty books and countless articles, among them *Traditional Modes of Contemplation & Action* (1977), *Angels* (1980), *Henry Corbin and the Hermeneutics of Light* (1981), *The Universe: A Mirror of Itself* (1992), *Sacred Drift: Essays on the Margins of Islam* (1993), *Introduction to the Sufi Path* (1995), and *The New Nihilism* (2018). His works have been translated into Dutch, German, Swedish, French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Gallego, Arabic, Slovenian, Bengali, Hungarian, Québécois, Japanese, Czech, Turkish, and Polish. He lives in the Hudson Valley. He was born in another century.

**JAKUB WOLAK (1995)** is a PhD candidate at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the Polish Academy of Sciences. He studied Philosophy and Classical Philology at the University of Warsaw, at the Jagiellonian University of Cracow, and at the University of Tübingen, where he received a scholarship from GFPS e.V.

**CORDELL D. K. YEE (1955)** has been on the faculty of St. John's College, Annapolis, Maryland, since 1989. There, he, as do all the faculty of St. John's, teaches across an integrated program of study in which students examine fundamental works of the Western tradition in science, mathematics, music, literature, and philosophy. In a similar way, Yee has ranged widely in his scholarly work. After focusing on modern literature in English, he has gone on to publish on the cultural contexts of cartography, on the Chinese script, and on translation. Among his publications are *The Word according to James Joyce: Reconstructing Representation* (1997), *Reading within the Lines: Henri Michaux and the Chinese Art of Writing* (2009), and (co-author) *Challenges in a World-Wide History of Cartography* (2001).

**SYED A.H. ZAIDI (1990)** is a PhD candidate in Islamic philosophy at Emory University's Islamic Civilizations Program, Atlanta, GA. He has published several book reviews in the *Journal of Iranian Studies*, the *Journal of Islamic and Muslim Studies*, and a chapter in *A Guide to Sufi Literature*. His doctoral focus is on the philosophical thought of the Brethren of Purity (Ikhwān al-Safā'), Ibn Sīnā, and Mīr Dāmād. He obtained an MA (2016) in Islamic Studies from George Washington University, Washington, DC, and a BA (2012) in International Relations from Hobart and William Smith Colleges, Geneva, NY. His dissertation work will focus on the influence of Hermetic and Neoplatonic thought upon the works of the Brethren of Purity.

Kevin Corrigan and Syed A. H. Zaidi

## ON HENRY CORBIN'S *THEOLOGY OF ARISTOTLE*

This commentary focuses on Corbin's understanding of the *Theology of Aristotle* and shows how it was used in the works of major Muslim philosophers. In his short piece, Corbin argues on the basis of the *Theology* that there is an inter-earth known as the "the land of nowhere," (*na-koja-abād*), "the eighth climate," or the *mundus imaginalis*, where dreams and miracles exist, where the Qur'ānic celestial mountain *Qāf* is situated, and where prayers become reality. This article shows how the "eighth climate" is a world found in the ontological and cosmological religious philosophies of Plotinus and Proclus and outlines the important role it plays in the *Theology*. It then goes on to show how Ibn 'Arabī, Suhrawardī, and Mīr Dāmād employed the *mundus imaginalis* in their cosmological doctrines. For Corbin the *mundus imaginalis* was an important cornerstone in Greek philosophy that influenced all of medieval Abrahamic thought, a cornerstone now lost in an age of analytic philosophy.

Thomas Alexander Szlezák

## ON KARL KERÉNYI'S HUMANISTIC AND EXISTENTIALISTIC PLATONISM

This article tries to give a critical comment on the short essay by Karl Kerényi on Plato from 1940. Kerényi proves to be, on the one hand, a typical representative of the European intellectual world of the first half of the twentieth century, insofar as he does not realize fully the meaning of Plato's criticism of writing at the end of the *Phaedrus*. On the other hand, he saw important things that tend to be overlooked in our days. He treats the *Seventh Letter* rightly as authentic and does not believe, as even today many Platonists do, that *σύγγραμμα* means "treatise": Plato is not criticizing a specific literary form of writing but writing as such. Most valuable is Kerényi's interpretation of Plato's metaphysical approach. Plato's goal is not to recommend a new religion. He points to something that lies at the roots of religion, philosophy, art, and all spiritual longing. Therefore, Plato's Ideas of Truth, Beauty, and the Good are in the first place contents of personal existentialist experience, apt to transform your individual life.

Diego De Brasi

## KARÓLY KERÉNYI AND THE PLATONIC DIALOGUE

In this paper, I comment on Karóly Kerényi's essay *Platonism*. First, I briefly examine the aspects of Platonism and of Plato's literary style that Kerényi highlights in these essays. Second, I focus on some methodological aspects of his reading of Plato and examine them within the broader context of his dissociation from traditional philology. In particular, I analyze some of the programmatic claims made in his prefaces to the first two editions of *Apollon* and in his *Bericht über die Arbeiten der Jahre 1939-1948*. Then I consider some critical remarks that clearly set both essays at odds with the interpretation of Plato that was dominant in Germany at that time. Further I show the continuities between *Unsterblichkeit und Apollonreligion* and *Platonism*. Finally, I critically assess Kerényi's reading of Plato from the perspective of the contemporary scholarly debate on Plato.

Piotr Nowak

## I DIE, THEREFORE I AM: *PHAEDO* AS A POLITICAL DIALOGUE

*Phaedo* is not a dialogue on death or dying. Neither is it an opinion on immortality in a narrow sense – that is, whether there is life after death or not, whether it hurts to live in Tartarus or not. Rather, *Phaedo's* content is, according to Gadamer, "not immortality at all but rather that which constitutes the actual being of the soul – not in regard to its possible mortality or immortality but to its ever vigilant understanding of itself and reality."

I would like to recommend the *Phaedo* as the second greatest, right after *The Republic*, political treaty of antiquity. It is my strong conviction that its lesson has been written as if in between the parts of the philosopher's soul – the philosopher who is willing to serve the state with his wisdom. I think the best way to reconstruct *Phaedo*'s political drama is to employ the structure of the cave parable borrowed from Book Seven of Plato's *Republic*.

John Sallis

### **SOCRATES'S SECOND SAILING: THE TURN TO *LOGOS***

This essay focuses on the passage in Plato's *Phaedo* in which Socrates recounts his philosophical development, from the period in which he took up investigations of nature, to that in which he was attracted by – but ultimately disappointed in – the theories of Anaxagoras, to the period in which he finally carried out the turn that proved decisive. This truly Socratic turn he describes as his second sailing, adopting the phrase that was used to describe the practice of taking up the oars when there was no wind to fill the sails. Having failed in his efforts to investigate things directly, he launches the indirect approach, which consists in turning to *lógos*. In this way he goes about his search for the truth of things. The task of the present essay is to interpret the precise sense of this turn to *lógos* and the way in which it opens the way to a discovery of the truth of things. In this interpretation it is shown that it is the manifold nature of *lógos* itself that enables Socrates's philosophical endeavor.

Eva Brann

### **COURAGE NAILED DOWN: PLATO'S *LACHES***

Socrates's philosophizing is a sort of unperturbed unsettledness, hence "ironic" in the specific sense of "paradoxical." From this perspective, the *Laches*, Socrates's conversation with two generals, gives the answer to the question "What is courage?" in terms applicable to all the canonical virtues, such as justice, temperance, courage, and wisdom. In this understanding, courage is descriptively distinct from and essentially identical to all the virtues. For courage looks like and can be particularly described as endurance, but it is, in its being, wisdom. This wisdom is, however, distinct from that in the canonical list, where it is a sort of know-how, an expertise. This hyper-wisdom is instead one that welds all the particular virtues into a super-virtue, one that is concerned with ends, with finalities. Consequently, in the *Laches*, as in other dialogues, Socrates's refutational logicizing gives way, as a mere preliminary cleansing of the mind, to a mode of clear-eyed self-contradiction that conveys the truth about courage. Although the *Laches* does not explicitly answer the generals' practical question, how to make their sons courageous, the dialogue implies Socrates's recommendation: Think out the question "What is courage?" and the cognitive effort will have an ethical result. For Socrates is convinced that to gain wisdom about courage is to become courageous. He himself embodies this genuine courage which is wisdom.

Burt C. Hopkins

### **DIVIDING MADNESS AND THE APPEARANCES OF EROS IN THE *PHAEDRUS***

The criteria behind the dialogue's criticism of writing and the argument for the superiority of spoken over written *lógos* is applied to Lysias's and Socrates's speeches on Eros and madness and Phaedrus's and Socrates's critical examination of these speeches. The argument is made that the dialogue's dramatic portrayal of both these speeches and their examination present written word images that conjure up in the soul of the reader Socrates's and Phaedrus's original spoken *lógos*. It follows from this that the criteria for assessing their *lógos* should be what that *lógos* presents with regard to distinguishing good and bad speech, not good and bad writing (which are not investigated in the dialogue). In line with this, the inconsistencies between the divisions of madness and the appearances of Eros in the speeches and their examination in the dialogue point not to a deficiency in Plato's writing but to the original investigation of the community of madness and Eros in Socrates's and Phaedrus's spoken *lógos*. Interpreted thusly, the community in question is established *not* by argument but by its appearance in the *lógos* of the Lover Socrates and his Beloved Phaedrus. This appearance is one in which the reader may share, insofar as the dialogue's written word images serve as reminders to the reader of the knowledge they already possess of Eros's community with madness and its source in the beauty of the face and body parts of their Beloved.

Peter Kalkavage

### **POETIC SCIENCE IN PLATO'S *TIMAEUS***

In Plato's *Timaeus*, Socrates foregoes his usual questioning and receives an elaborate speech about world order from the scientist-statesman, Timaeus. The "likely story," as Timaeus calls it, is not just a speech about the cosmos but an imitation of the very deed by which the cosmos came to be. This mimetic act celebrates two things: the cosmos as a divinely ordered whole and the productive art or *poíōsis* that went into the making of the whole. The cosmology of Timaeus may therefore be called "poetic science," since it

is not the order as such but the making of order, most beautifully displayed in the mathematical tuning of the scale (for the cosmic soul) and the construction of the regular solids (for the cosmic body), that gives us cognitive access to what the cosmos essentially is or, rather, what it is imagined to be – a thing well made.

But cognition for its own sake is not the goal of poetic science. Timaeus's account connects mathematics and poetic science with the ethical good and practical wisdom. To give likely accounts of the whole is to establish a healthy, because intelligent, bond with the laws of the cosmic regime and to bring our souls into virtuous conformity with that regime. By playfully sharing in the technical modes of divine making, especially when this concerns our ingeniously devised bodily structures, we come to know, in detail, the complexity of our being in light of the whole of becoming. The τέχνη-driven account of the human good in the *Timaeus* in this way invites contrast with the dialectical pursuit of the good in *The Republic*.

**Richard Bodéüs**

## **THEOLOGICAL SCIENCE AND ITS OBJECT ACCORDING TO ARISTOTLE**

In the first section, I consider (1) Aristotle's use of the adjective "theological," then (2) some potential presuppositions aiming at an explication of this adjective, and, finally, (3) a project of Platonic origins, which seems to be the main concern of Aristotle's use of this adjective.

In the second section, (4) I attempt to explain how one could find certain elements of "theological" science in Aristotle, and (5) how one could possibly recollect these elements.

In the third section, I take into account (6) the silence that is, on principle, imposed on the second philosophy regarding the noetical soul, and, further, (7) the rigorous distinction that Aristotle poses between the living body and the celestial body, and, finally, (8), the causal union he establishes between the celestial body and the noetical soul, thus sketching a profile of god that differs from human in a twofold manner.

In the fourth section, I explain (9) why the divine body and the divine soul, although separated, remain united in a suitable way, and, further, (10) why the divine good is not separable from the multiplicity of the gods.

In the fifth and last section, I conclude with (11) an attempt to collect the key data that allow for a reconstruction of the profile of the heavenly gods, thus evaluating its significance from the viewpoint of a potential "theological" science. Finally, (12) I compare it with a certain belief that seems independent from it and that is held by the Philosopher, who does not hesitate to assert it.

**Mark Shiffman**

## **HOW THE PRIOR BY NATURE COMES TO LIGHT IN *CATEGORIES* 12**

In chapter 12 of the *Categories*, Aristotle initially promises the reader to distinguish four different senses of priority but then reconsiders and adds a fifth, the prior by nature. We might interpret this as a later revision of an original text. This would accord with a modern chronological interpretation like that of Christopher Long, which sees in the *Categories* a preliminary doctrine of οὐσία whose instability requires that Aristotle develop his more mature doctrines of material/formal relations and the priority of ἐνέργεια over δύναμις. Alternatively, with the ancient commentators, we might read the *Categories* as intentionally propaedeutic to metaphysics and the passage in question as composed with a pedagogical intention. Drawing on Heidegger's phenomenological account of the emergence to view of the prior by nature, this article argues that chapter 12 marks a shift in horizon – from a pre-metaphysical account of οὐσία, governed by priority in time, to a metaphysical horizon concerned with causal relations among beings – and that this shift of horizon governs how Aristotle, beginning in chapter 13, revisits topics addressed earlier in the text. Thus the pedagogical reading of ancient commentators is not displaced but rather enhanced by recognizing the instability of the doctrine of οὐσία, on the assumption (supported by this analysis of the text) that Aristotle himself recognizes that instability as one inherent in the natural path of philosophical learning and incorporated it into his unfolding of the text. At the same time, a phenomenological reading of how Aristotle's fourth sense of priority opens the way to this unexpected fifth sense challenges the adequacy of Heidegger's narrative, according to which Plato's doctrine of the priority of the idea of the Good is destined to eventuate in Nietzsche's metaphysical doctrine of will-to-power.

**Joshua Kerr**

## **PHYTOLOGY: BETWEEN *PHŪSIS* AND *ZOĒ***

What is the place of the vegetal in Aristotle's account of living things? In contrast to his predecessors, Aristotle begins with the life of plants, insisting upon a vegetal beginning to the inquiry concerning soul. At the same time, vegetal life quickly recedes and vanishes in his account, which remains oriented around the animal. Life in plants thus appears as the origin for a zoological account of life while nevertheless remaining foreign to that account. Although this has led many interpreters to see vegetality as merely a primitive stage of animality, I understand Aristotle's ambivalence concerning plants as the mark of a certain autonomy of plant life vis-à-vis animal life. This is expressed poignantly in his vacillations concerning local motion and desire, which he both affirms and denies of plants. Although related to animals (ζῷα) as a form of life (ζωή), the plant (φυτόν) remains more closely related with nature (φύσις) as the

coming to be and passing away of things. In this way, the plant manifests a germinal form of life that in its hiddenness simultaneously discloses φύσις as a principle of animal life.

Françoise Dastur

### **SOME REMARKS ON HEIDEGGER'S READING OF ARISTOTLE'S *PHYSICS*: MATTER, FORM, AND PRODUCTION**

For Heidegger in 1927, the question was to discover the phenomenal basis and the limits of ancient ontology, a task that led him to the analysis of Aristotle's *Physics*, which he considered as the "foundational book of Western Philosophy." In his 1939-1940 seminar dedicated to Aristotle's conception of φύσις, he undertakes to show that the Aristotelian interpretation of φύσις guides all succeeding interpretation of the being of nature, since he places the question of φύσις on an entirely new level. This new level is the level of production, that is, of the productive behavior of the human being, which implies the application of a form, μορφή, to a preexisting matter, ὕλη. But Aristotle nevertheless succeeds in showing that there is another mode of production than making, that is, growing, which involves the fundamental negative category of στέρησις, privation, which alone allows the understanding of the process of blossoming and fructification. It is therefore on the basis of στέρησις that the essential mobility of φύσις has to be understood, whereas for us modern beings, nature is unilaterally understood on the basis of production, as is shown by the fact that Kant could see in nature a "technique." It is only if we place ourselves in the artistic attitude that we succeed in understanding that what is set forth in the Open through the work of art is the self-secluding process of nature, which, as Heraclitus said, κρύπτεσθαι φύλει, since the emerging and rising of all things tends from itself to keep itself secluded.

Francisco J. Gonzalez

### **GROUNDING THE PRINCIPLE OF NON-CONTRADICTION EXISTENTIALLY: HEIDEGGER ON ARISTOTLE'S *METAPHYSICS* GAMMA IN AN UNPUBLISHED SEMINAR FROM 1928/29**

In the winter semester of 1928-1929, Martin Heidegger delivered a seminar titled *The Ontological Principles and the Problem of Categories*. This seminar remains unpublished in any form and has not received any discussion or even acknowledgement in the literature on Heidegger. The seminar is of significant importance, however, and for a number of reasons. First, the one "ontological principle" on which it focuses, that is, the principle of noncontradiction, and whose supposed self-evidence is elsewhere described by Heidegger as "perhaps what is most puzzling in Western philosophy," here receives its most extensive discussion by him. Second, in turning first to Kant's insistence on the purely formal and logical character of the principle, Heidegger pursues a critique of Kant that both anticipates and supplements his later interpretations. Finally, the seminar turns to Aristotle with a detailed reading of *Metaphysics* Γ that also, especially as concerns chapters three and following, is not to be found elsewhere in Heidegger. It is on this reading of Aristotle that I will focus here, while also reproducing the trajectory of the seminar as a whole. It will be shown that Heidegger's reading defends the thesis that the principle of noncontradiction is neither a logical nor an ontological but an *existential* principle, that is, one that characterizes our existence in relation to beings. It will also be shown that Heidegger, while raising at the outset the question of the relation between the principle and a certain conception of time, a relation denied by Kant but presupposed by Aristotle, leaves it unanswered at the seminar's end. Nevertheless, a certain answer can be inferred from what the seminar does say.

Claude Vishnu Spaak

### **PHENOMENOLOGICAL INTERPRETATIONS OF ARISTOTLE'S *PHYSICS* IN THE WORKS OF HEIDEGGER AND PATOČKA**

This work confronts the Heideggerian and Patočkian interpretations of the fundamental concepts of Aristotelian *Physics*. Both interpretations share a point in common: according to Heidegger and Patočka, Aristotle conceives movement as a fundamental ontological determination of Being. Indeed, movement (κίνησις/μεταβολή) is conceived by Aristotle as a process of unconcealment, of coming into presence of entities in the openness of manifest being. Nevertheless, Heidegger and Patočka disagree on the way that one should understand the meaning of this ontological movement at the core of nature (φύσις). This work is dedicated to examining these differences. Our aim is to show, through Heidegger's and Patočka's interpretations of Aristotle, that there are two distinct and by all means opposed conceptions of the meaning and status of phenomenological ontology itself. We conclude both with Heidegger's philosophical idealism (at least in his hermeneutical appropriation of Aristotle) and with Patočka's contrary attempt to build a cosmological realism that challenges to a certain extent the identity between Being and meaning. In the working out of this thesis, a very particular focus is drawn on the concept that concentrates the entire charge of the tension, that is, the concept of matter (ὕλη).

Jeff Love and Michael Meng

## HEIDEGGER'S SILENCE

Martin Heidegger is not typically considered an esoteric writer as defined by Leo Strauss. Recent evidence, the hidden writings of the 1930s and the newly published *Black Notebooks*, suggest otherwise. This article argues that Heidegger is a profoundly esoteric writer whose esotericism reaches far beyond that of Strauss. Heidegger's esotericism encompasses two fundamental aspects of his thinking, its efforts to define truth and the human relation to death. Heidegger strives in both cases to orient thinking to a "sigetics" or speaking of silence that shows what is most unsettling and dangerous about his thinking: its refusal to accept any account of origins and ends as authoritative.

Andrzej Serafin

## HEIDEGGER ON PLATO'S ORIGINARY GOOD: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL RECONSTRUCTION

Heidegger's phenomenology is rooted in Greek metaphysics. According to Heidegger's claim, Aristotle was an earlier and more radical phenomenologist than Husserl, with ἀλήθεια understood as *Unverborgenheit* constituting the core of Greek phenomenology. Already in one of his early remarks, Heidegger claims that ἀγαθόν also underwent a process of deterioration and the original, phenomenological meaning of this concept was lost. Unfortunately, he never systematically developed the concept of originary ἀγαθόν and based his narrative of *Seinsvergessenheit* on the loss and retrieval of the primordial concept of ἀλήθεια. This essay is an attempt to analyze the process of deterioration and to reconstruct the originary concept of ἀγαθόν upon the basis of remarks scattered around the entire corpus of Heidegger's writings, in particular his interpretation of Plato. Heidegger's understanding of the phenomenological method with the three components of reduction, construction, and destruction are the guiding thread for this analysis.

Giorgio Agamben

## ARISTOTLE'S *DE ANIMA* AND THE DIVISION OF LIFE

The concept of life is not used by Aristotle in the way we moderns use it, as something concerning biology or science, but rather it is initially a political term, and subsequently it will become a theological term. Furthermore, there is the term "life," for instance in the philosophical tradition and perhaps also in the scientific tradition. In the scientific tradition, it is never defined. We never find a definition of what "life" means, what a ζῶν is. But we find – on the contrary – an operation of division of life. Life is not defined but always divided, and this is from its origin up to now. Life is what cannot be defined and precisely for this reason must ceaselessly be articulated and divided.

One should not underestimate the enormous importance of this Aristotelian strategy of division. It seems an innocuous philosophical operation, but if you now consider the development of Western science and medicine, you will see how this apparently innocuous operation constitutes a fundamental event that enables the construction of the entire edifice of modern medicine and science. Modern surgery was made possible only by material separation through anesthesia of vegetative life from consciousness (the ἀρχή from the other function). Medicine transformed this psychological and logical operation of division into a material operation. We are now able to separate vegetative life completely from mental life, thinking, sensation, and so forth. Out of the Aristotelian division of life into nutritive, sensational, thinking, conscious, there is one – φυτικόν – that will act as the ἀρχή and allow for all modern sciences.

Antoni Szwed

## A LONG WAY TO JOHN LOCKE'S CONCEPT OF TOLERATION

In *Letters Concerning Toleration* and in *Two Treatises of Government*, John Locke (1632-1704) elaborated the concept of toleration, which was of great importance for liberal democracy and generally for liberal culture in the world. Locke strongly contributed to the break in a long period of intolerance in English public life until the Glorious Revolution (1688-1689). The intellectual debate concerning the toleration concept, which paved the long way toward the Glorious Revolution, will be the subject of my analysis. I devote particular attention to Samuel Parker (1640-1688), the author of *A Discourse of Ecclesiastical Politie*, who argued for preserving the official religion and the official Church of England. Parker had two objectives. First, the official religion was to reinforce sovereign authority and to contribute to better observation of national law by its subjects. Second, Parker was silently arguing that the monarch's religion is the true one.

Cordell D.K. Yee

## TRANSLATION AMONG THE LIBERAL ARTS: ON JOE SACHS'S ARISTOTLE

This is a review of the work of Joe Sachs, an emeritus member of the faculty at St. John's College (Annapolis, Maryland), who has published a septology of translations of Aristotle's works: three theoretical works and four focused on human activities. The review

begins by making a case for translation as an important activity of liberal learning, not only as an application of the arts of the trivium, but also as an undertaking that aims at least in part to foster the examination of unexamined presuppositions. Sachs's work offers plenty of examples to illustrate the former characterization, but that characterization is secondary to my main interest in the latter aim. I try to show how Sachs realizes this aim by considering some of his renderings of key terms and definitions, such as "motion," "being," and "soul." With some of his renditions, Sachs attempts to make etymology visible, and the results, to say the least, are non-standard and non-traditional. As such, they help a reader to break through sedimentation accumulated from a consistency of scholarly practice in the translation of Aristotle – a consistency that obscures important aspects of his thinking, making it seem more static and abstract than it is.

**Marek Stawiński**

## **HUSSERL, PLATO, AND THE HISTORICITY OF THE *EIDĒ***

*The Philosophy of Husserl* by Burt C. Hopkins is a book devised by its author to serve as an introduction to Husserl's phenomenology for beginners. However, its unusual structure combined with high attention to detail and a broad spectrum of topics makes it a very original introduction, if introduction at all. The book begins with an emphasis on the importance of the last stage of Husserl's phenomenology, that is, its turn to history. What immediately follows is the presentation of the "ancient precedent to pure phenomenology," which Hopkins identifies as Plato's and Aristotle's dispute about the εἰδῆ. Everything closes with the refutation of the critique of Husserl's phenomenology raised by Heidegger and Derrida. The presentation of the development of Husserl's phenomenology is thus situated between Plato and Aristotle on the one hand and Heidegger and Derrida on the other. In this review I present the overall structure of the book, arguing that Hopkins's considerations have two main purposes, one explicitly stated and the second implicitly realized. The former is to present and explain Husserl's phenomenology project by reconstructing subsequent phases of its development, while the latter is to apply this thinking to investigate the origin of the ideal meaning of the εἰδῆ. Therefore, Hopkins's book is not only about Husserl's philosophy but is also a practical example of philosophizing done in this manner. I conclude this review by presenting and discussing Hopkins's interpretation of Plato's theory of the εἰδῆ. Despite the role of this fragment in the overall structure of this book, it can be treated as a stand-alone point of interest because of Hopkins's employment of the notion of eidetic numbers in the interpretation of Plato's thought.

**Jakub Wolak**

## **GEMMA PLATONICA: ON HEINRICH DÖRRIE'S PHILOLOGICAL PLATONISM**

Heinrich Dörrie was a German philologist and a founder of *Der Platonismus in der Antike* (*Platonism in Antiquity*), a monumental eight-volume series, the first volume of which was published posthumously by his wife in 1987. The project was continued by his students and now, after over 30 years, is near completion.

*Platonism in Antiquity* consists of 300 "building stones" (*Bausteine*) and aims at recollecting and reunifying the reportedly shattered tradition of ancient Platonism by making its textual witnesses available to the contemporary reader. Each building stone pertains to one topic of ancient Platonism and offers a review of crucial quotes from the sources alongside a German translation and commentary. Dörrie approaches the text in both an analytic and a synthetic way, presenting, exposing, and summarizing the preserved material, striving to provide an assimilative read – that is, to make his work understandable to the user "rooted in the spiritual world of the twentieth century." As such, Dörrie's endeavor seems to be of much broader scope and aim than that of a simple archivist.

The paper seeks to reconstruct Dörrie's concept of Platonism and to present controversies it evoked in German-speaking Academia. Of particular interest are (1) the metaphor of Platonism as a crystal with many facets, (2) the accusation of identifying all of ancient Platonism with Middle Platonism, and (3) the hermeneutical principles that rely on a presupposition that there is a continuous yet fragmented Platonic tradition centered around an unwritten esoteric kernel. The paper gives a thorough summary of Dörrie's thirty guiding sentences (*Leitsätze*), which sketch out the concept of Platonism as philosophy and religion in an aphoristic manner and concludes with a reflection on a Platonic understanding of philology.

The philosophical quarterly *Kronos* was established in 2007 by scholars connected with the University of Warsaw and the University of Białystok. Metaphysics, the philosophy of politics, the philosophy of literature and religion, history of psychoanalysis comprise the thematic scope of the journal. The editors of the quarterly strive to familiarize the Polish reader with new translations and commentaries of classic works (Plato, Joachim of Fiore, Nicholas of Cusa, Shakespeare, Schelling, the Schlegel brothers, Heidegger, and many others), as well as the work of contemporary philosophers.

The annual *Kronos Philosophical Journal* (in English) was established in 2012 as a companion edition to the quarterly, to supplement it, yet without repeating the content of the Polish edition. The papers presented in the annual might be of interest to the readers from outside Poland, allowing them to familiarize themselves with the dynamic thought of contemporary Polish authors, as well as entirely new topics, rarely discussed by English-speaking authors. One of the issues published so far contained passages from previously unknown lectures by Leo Strauss on Aristotle; another issue was dedicated to the Russian phenomenologist Gustav Shpet.

ISSN 2392-0963

