Paul Livingston

July 24, 2010

Heidegger's *Sophist* and the Logic of Presence

One of the most pervasive themes of Heidegger's philosophy, early and late, is the idea of the determination of the meaning of Being as one form or another of *presence*. Not only does the idea of Being as presence centrally underlie the late Heidegger's historical interpretation of the successive epochs of the metaphysical interpretation of Being and beings since the Greeks, but it already plays a decisive role (perhaps *the* decisive role) in *Being and Time*'s systematic attempt at a "de-structuring" or deconstruction [*Destruktion*] of the tradition of ontological thought in order to liberate and recover its most original sources of insight.[1] Yet for all the methodological importance of the theme, early and late, it can be difficult to say on the basis of Heidegger's shifting statements what the idea of Being as presence really comes to, especially when it is a question of the possibility of thinking Being "otherwise" than as presence, as it is in Heidegger's later thinking "toward" Ereignis, the event of "appropriation" or "en-owning."

The aim of this paper is to interrogate the meaning of this decisive Heideggerian idea, using a guideline that Heidegger himself suggests and treats as a central and recurrent theme from his earliest writings, the "ontological" interpretation of the phenomenon of the *logos*. The interrogation has both an interpretive and a critical goal. Interpretively, I shall show that Heidegger's idea of Being as presence is massively co-determined by his specific analysis of the historical unfolding of the *logos*, beginning with the Pre-Socratics and continuing through Plato and Aristotle. Critically, without disputing the usefulness of this guideline for formulating the question of the meaning of Being from its ancient Greek determination up to the present, I shall try to raise some questions about the determination of Heidegger's own positive conception of the nature and structure of the *logos*, and suggest that the limitations of this conception may also negatively affect the comprehensiveness of Heidegger's own understanding of the centrally important relationship between *logos* and Being itself.

Recent scholarship has effectively and helpfully opened up for critical exegesis and interpretation the "early Heidegger" of the writings and lectures leading up to the publication of *Being and Time* in 1927. We now have detailed and useful studies of the origin and first articulation many of the huge variety of motifs and undercurrents that work their way into that famously synthetic book: the awakening of the problem of Being in connection with the most fundamental questions of logic and truth in Heidegger's earliest writings, the discovery of phenomenology and the increasingly complex relationship with Husserl, the profound influence of neo-Kantians such as Natorp, Cassirer, and Lask on the young Heidegger's developing conception of the logical status of judgment and truth, the religious themes of the Marburg lectures of the 1920s and the discovery of the interlinked problems of the temporality of

---

[1] (Heidegger [1927] 2006), translated as (Heidegger [1927] 1962) (Henceforth: S&Z), pp. 19-27 (pagination given as in original, untranslated text).

everyday life and the the interpretation of its defining possibilities (the so-called 'hermeneutics of facticity,'), the massive and profoundly determinative critical encounter with Aristotle of 1921 to 1928.[23] As these studies have amply shown, the interpretation of the sense and history of *logos* and logic plays a central role in Heidegger's development of virtually all of these motifs and themes.

 Although much of the young Heidegger's developing sense of the history of *logos* is drawn from the encounter with Aristotle represented by the several lecture and seminars on Aristotle, his lecture course in the WS 1924-25, largely devoted to Plato's *Sophist*, occupies, for various reasons, an especially interesting position in the course of these interpretations. Not only is this one of the most sustained and detailed readings of Plato that Heidegger ever attempts, but it is the only one to focus centrally on the question of Plato's specific understanding of the sense and significance of *logos* as the ultimate horizon for the intelligibility of Beings. Heidegger sees this understanding as underlying in general as well as in detail both Aristotle's subsequent development of the formal logic of the proposition as *logos apophantikos* as well as, indeed, the whole subsequent Western tradition of the metaphysical determination of Being as presence. For according to a familiar Heideggerian theme that will remain a constant even throughout the later development of the project of "Being-historical" interpretation, the historical first and inaugural moment of this metaphysical determination of Being as presence is to be found in Plato's conception of the Ideas as exhibiting the most real or privileged form of being, which Plato understands, according to Heidegger, as timeless stasis and unchanging presence.   Because this understanding itself unfolds in the closest connection with Plato's own understanding of *logos* and dia-*logos* (or dialectic) as the ultimate conditions for the intelligibility of beings up to and including the ideas, the works (such as the *Sophist*) in which Plato considers most directly the phenomenon of *logos* are clearly essential to the articulation of this ostensibly "Platonic" determination of Being as presence itself.

The *Sophist* is, moreover, one of the three dialogues in which Plato deals most centrally with the legacy of Parmenides, the philosopher long credited with "founding" Western logic through his decisive and inaugural recognition of the distinction between being and non-being, the totality of what is and what, on the other hand, simply is not. Here, as in different ways also in the *Statesman* and the *Parmenides* itself, Plato reckons with the formidable challenge of the thinker who, first posing and resolving the formidable problem of the One and the Many through his identification of What Is with a timeless, unified, and unchanging whole, also denied the very possibility of thought and speech about non-being, the very thought and speech which Plato himself would criticize as *doxa* and *phantasma*, the *pseudos logos* of what *appears* to be the case but *is* not. If Parmenides will thus have, as Heidegger says, inaugurated ontology as such through his epochal identification of the topic of Being as a theme for philosophical discourse, Plato's struggle with Parmenides clearly has much to show us about the

---

[2] For these trenchant analyses, see, e.g., (Martin 2006), (Dahlstrom 2001), (Crowell 2001), (Kisiel 1993).

[3] During this period, Heidegger teaches at least one course or seminar on Aristotle practically every semester. The extended critical encounter may be taken to begin with the seminar "Phenomenological Practicum for Beginners in Conjunction with Aristotle's de Anima" in SS 1921 and to taper off (for the moment at least) with the seminar "Phenomenological Practicum to Aristotle, Physics 3" in SS 1928. See (Kisiel 1993), pp. 470-74.

interlinked problematics of logic, ontology, and presence as they first developed in the Western tradition and continue, according to Heidegger, to determine thinking and action today. And since Heidegger's later thought itself continues to develop massively the theme of the originally Platonic determination of Being as intelligible presence through the manifold of its historical variations and inflections, the Parmenidean thought of the originary co-presence of thinking and Being in the form of an intelligible *logos* remains a constant, if constantly problematic, reference for Heidegger throughout his career.[4] In the course on the *Sophist* itself, as we shall see, we thus witness the apparent paradox of a Plato who at once, "developing" the original ontological insight of Parmenides in the direction of greater logical precision and phenomenological truth, at the same moment and by the same token, performs and consolidates the foundational *mis*interpretation of the underlying sense of Being that will determine Western logic and metaphysics up to the present. As we shall see, this ambivalence on Heidegger's part with respect to Plato can serve as an indication of the "lofty ambiguity" with which the linked historical co-determination of logic and presence today faces us as well.[5] This ambiguity is, as I shall attempt to show, not simply circumscribed by Heidegger's text, but rather suggests further complications of method and doctrine that appear to be necessary prerequisites for any contemporary attempt to uncover and critique the "metaphysics of presence."

I

The ostensible theme of the *Sophist* is the definition of the nature of the sophist and his distinction from the philosopher. But because the sophist is seen as the purveyor of false images and claims, and because falsehood is, in turn, treated as "something which is not" but nevertheless in some way exists, the theme is developed in close connection with the problem of being and non-being; and this problem is in many ways the dialogue's real topic. The proximity of the concerns mooted in Plato's discussion of falseness and non-being to Heidegger's own guiding question is evident in the latter's decision to use as the epigraph for *Being and Time* a quotation in which Plato's Eleatic Stranger, pretending to address Parmenides and "everyone who has ever urged us to specify just how many beings there are and what they're like,"(242c) expresses his perplexity about what these illustrious predecessors actually intended to signify with the expression "being" (öv): "Manifestly, you have long been aware of what you mean when you use" this expression, but "we" who once thought we understood, "have become perplexed." (Sophist, 244a; S&Z, p. 1).[6] Still in our time, Heidegger says in the first paragraph of *Being and Time*, we lack an answer to the question of "what we really mean by the word 'being'"; we are thus, once more, in the situation of the Eleatic stranger with respect to the ancient question of the 'meaning of being' or the

---

[4] See, e.g., *Parmenides*, "The Principle of Identity," *What is Called Thinking*?

[5] The phrase is taken from Heidegger's later essay "The Question Concerning Technology."

[6] Unless otherwise noted, all quotes from Plato's *Sophist* are taken from the translation by Nicholas P. White in (Plato 1997), pp. 235-293.

signification of its sign (Plato's term is σημαίνειν, to signify or give a sign).[7] Moreover, as it already did in Plato's time, the obscurity of the question and our forgetfulness of it even as a question call for an explicit re-awakening of the inquiry into the meaning of being, an inquiry which "provided a stimulus for the researches of Plato and Aristotle, only *to subside from then on as a theme for actual investigation*." (SZ, p. 2). In renewing the Sophist's "battle of the giants over being," we thus again stand in the same situation with respect to our own distinguished philosophical forebears, Plato and Aristotle, as Plato (or at any rate the Eleatic Stranger) does with respect to his own forebears, including not only Parmenides but all those who would speak about being itself.[8] Now, as then, we who "once thought we understood" and have thereby cloaked the meaning of Being behind a dogmatic self-evidence, thus foreclosing even the possibility of raising it as a question, must become perplexed once more.[9]

The dialogue of the *Sophist* is chiefly conducted between the student Theatetus and the visitor or stranger from Elea, who is thus quite closely associated with the school of Parmenides and Zeno and is introduced as "very much a philosopher." (216a). Although Socrates is present, he plays almost no role in the dialogue. This, of course, raises the interesting and very difficult question of the extent to which we can take the Eleatic Stranger's positions and views on the nature of being, non-being, truth and falsehood to represent Plato's own, especially given the obvious and profound influence of Parmenides' conception of the timeless One of Being upon Plato's own official doctrine of unchanging and unifying forms or ideas. In any case, it is Socrates who sets the agenda for the discussion that follows, asking how it is possible to distinguish the three types of the sophist, the statesman, and the philosopher. Though the subsequent discussion pursues the sophist specifically, what is at stake as well is obviously the identity and possibility of the philosopher, since if the sophist cannot be clearly distinguished from the philosopher it will be impossible to accord the latter a distinct identity as well.

The initial method chosen for the identification of the sophist is *diaresis* or "division"; the interlocutors attempt to define the nature of the practice of the sophist by finding a precise definition of its type. As is so often the case in Plato, the inquiry proceeds by way of an investigation of the meaning and nature of *techne*, in this case the specific kind of *techne* that defines the practice, and hence the identity, of the sophist. At 221d, the Sophist is identified as certainly the possessor of some *techne* or other, and this possession is said by Theatetus to indicate, as well, in accordance with his name, that the sophist possesses some kind of *sophia* or wisdom. The question is now what sort of *techne* or art defines the sophist, whether this techne is a type of acquisition or a type of production, whether it is a kind of economic exchange (given that the sophists characteristically take money for their teaching), and whether and in what way the sophist's art amounts to a kind of "cleansing" of the soul by means of

---

[7] S&Z, p. 2. The reference to the Stranger's question in the *Sophist* as calling for a reawakening of the question of the meaning of Being appears as early as summer semester 1925 in the course "History of the Concept of Time" (Heidegger [1925] 1992, p. 179).

[8] S&Z, p. 2.

[9] S&Z, p. 2.

"cross-examination."[10] The results of this initial discussion by means of *diaresis* are, however, inconclusive: by the end of it, the sophist has appeared in several different, mutually incompatible guises, and in particular it has not yet been possible to identify the *specific* type of expertise or techne that the sophist possesses (232a). Indeed, the sophist appears impossible to pin down on just this question, since, claiming to discourse and engage in disputes about any topic whatsoever, he also would seem to have to possess knowledge and expertise, not just about any specific subject matter, but about anything and everything.

This implicit claim of the sophist to expertise about everything provides the occasion for the dialogue to turn to more obviously ontological concerns. In particular, since it is in fact impossible for anyone to know about everything, the sophist must be discussed as someone who has only a kind of "belief-knowledge" or presumptive, but actually illegitimate, claim to know. (233c). The sophist is thus a kind of "maker of everything" in the form of images or copies, and it now seems that the right *techne* to attribute to the sophist is the "craft of copy-making," (εἰδωλοποικὴν τέχνην) whereby the sophist uses "words" (λόγους) and "spoken copies" (εἴδωλα λεγόμενα) to mislead young people. (234b-c) This is a game of "imitation" (μιμητικόν) (234b) that makes its practitioner a kind of "sorcerer" and "magician" who "imitates real beings" (235a). However, there is still an important distinction to be made within this copy-making art, for there are two sorts of images to be distinguished. First, there is a kind of image-making that faithfully preserves the proportions (συμμετρίαςτις) and colors of the original; this results in images that we may call icons (εἰκόνα) due to their resembling their originals.   However, there is also the case of image-makers who, because they "sculpt or draw very large works," must betray the true proportions of their object in making the image. (Here, Plato seems to have in mind the practice of exaggerating the relative size of the upper parts of such an image and reducing the relative proportions of the lower parts in order to produce an appearance that is more like the original). Those who make this sort of image "say goodbye to truth" (τὸ ἀληθὲς ἐάσαντες) and produce an image that is not accurate to the proportions of the original, although it may appear "like a beautiful thing" (236b): such an image we may call a phantasm (φάντασμα).

With the distinction between icons and phantasms, the Stranger takes it that an actual distinction within image-making has been found, such that we can now distinguish, at least conceptually, between false and true instances of images or copies, and comprehend the difference between the arts that produce both. However, it is still not clear, to the stranger at least, to which type of image-making the sophist's art belongs, and there is an additional, deeper difficulty, one which, if unaddressed, allows the sophist to escape once again into obscurity.   For the description of the sophist as making "false" images itself presupposes the ability to speak of falsehood and false appearances, what seems to be but is not. But:

---

[10] Interestingly, the visitor's description at 230b of this method of "cross-examination" which is practiced by sophists is almost identical to some of Socrates' own descriptions of the method of elenchus in dialogues such as the Apology and its practice in dialogues such as *Euthyphro*; the Visitor reasonably expresses some doubt at 231a as to whether this definition thus suffices to distinguish the sophist from the philosopher.

This appearing, and this seeming but not being, and this saying things but not true things – all these issues are full of confusion, just as they always have been. It's extremely hard, Theatetus, to say what form of speech we should use to say that there really is such a thing as false saying or believing, and moreover to utter this without being caught in a verbal conflict. (236e-237a)

This is because the present doctrine (*logoi*) of images involves the assumption that "that which is not" (me on) somehow "is;" only in this way can we speak of appearances that are false, and thus distinguish these from accurate images or icons. But 'since we were boys,' the great Parmenides has testified to the impossibility of the thought that "that which is not" is; here the Stranger quotes Parmenides directly:

Never shall this force itself on us [or: be proved], that that which is not, is [or: that things that are not, are]; but in your search, keep your thought far from [or: hold back your thought from] this way.[11]

Despite the considerable authority of Parmenides, the Stranger does not take his apparent prohibition of speaking of non-being simply for granted, but proceeds instead to explore the grounds for Parmenides' claim and the difficulties to which it points. In particular, although it is certainly possible simply to utter "non-being" (*me on*), it is deeply perplexing what this sound or name should stand for, since it would not be correct to apply it to anything, any "something" that is. (237d).[12] Moreover, since to say "something" (legein ti) is to say some one thing or several things, if we cannot use "what is not" (me on) to say "something" at all, it seems that in using it we have not said anything; rather we have said nothing (237e). In fact, as the *me on* is neither one nor many, it is not correct to speak of it in any way and the person who tries to speak of it is not even speaking at all. (237e; 238c).

At 238c, the Stranger reaches once again the pessimistic conclusion, apparently still in full agreement with Parmenides, that "it's impossible to say, speak, or think that which is not correctly by itself." There quickly follows, however, an additional consideration which, while it may indeed seem to make things still worse for the prospects of defining the sophist, also by the same token complicates the Stranger's relationship to Parmenides himself. This is the consideration that *even in attempting to refute the claim that it is possible to speak of what is not*, we have had to do so; the philosopher (Parmenides or the stranger himself) who appears to establish the impossibility of speaking of non-being must therefore

---

[11] "οὐ γὰρ μήποτε τοῦτο δαμῇ, φησίν, εἶναι μὴ ἐόντα:
ἀλλὰ σὺ τῆσδ᾽ ἀφ᾽ ὁδοῦ διζήμενος εἶργε νόημα." This is a quotation of fragment 7, which seems to have come near the beginning of the goddess's description of the two 'ways' or paths before which the young traveler stands, the way of "being" and the way of "non-being." She is here telling the traveler to avoid the second path of "non-being," but also in a certain way holding that it is impossible for him to follow it, in any case; this is confirmed by fragment 2, which calls the second path "altogether indiscernible" and claims that "you could not know what is not – that cannot be done – nor indicate it." (KRS, p. 245).

[12] Throughout this paper, I translate "*me on*," following Heidegger, as "non-being," rather than "what is not" (as in, e.g. White's translation).

apparently violate his own result in the course of its proof. (238d). The Stranger recognizes that he has for some time, precisely, been speaking of what is not, and indeed speaking of it as *one* thing; whereas it is clearly illegitimate and impossible, by his own argument, to do so. At this apparent impasse, the stranger re-introduces the thought that we might identify the sophist as a kind of maker of copies or images, provided that we can define clearly "what runs through all those things which you call many, but which you …should call by the one name, *copy*…" (240a). As the Stranger emphasizes, it is insufficient here simply to refer to obviously visual copies such as "things in mirrors," sculptures, or reflections in water, since the sophist's question concerns the kind of copy or image that can be made in words (240a); and to this question the response in terms of visual images is not obviously relevant, and does not provide any evident help in answering the problem of speaking of non-being itself.

Theatetus then raises the possibility that the false image or copy may in a certain sense "be" after all, though the position is problematic in that Theatetus consents to the identification of "true" with what is, and the false image is avowedly not true. However, it seems possible that, even if it is not possible to speak of what is not simply or by itself, the sophist's false image somehow "weaves together" that which is not with that which is, being in some obscure way a combination or hybrid of the two. The Stranger endorses the suggestion and its applicability to the false saying (psuedos *logos*), holding indeed that we might regard "false speaking the same way, as saying that those which are are not, and that those which are not are." (This closely anticipates Aristotle's famous definition of truth and falsity at *Metaphysics*, book 4, 1011b25ff, according to which, "To say of what is that it is not, or of what is not that it is, is false, while to say of what is that it is, and of what is not that it is not, is true…")   The Stranger here persists in the insistence that we must be able to hold somehow, even if only by "brute force," that that which is not" somehow is, and indeed that "that which is" somehow is not; he will attempt to persist in this conviction even if the discussion risks turning him, with respect to "our father" Parmenides, into a "kind of patricide." (242a; 241d). This leads the Stranger to open a renewed discussion of his own predecessors, not only Parmenides himself but the various theorists who have held theories about "how many beings there are and what they're like:" this includes those who hold that there are two or three kinds of beings entering into various and shifting relations with one another, "our own Eleatic tribe" who hold that "all things" are just one, and even those, like some Ionians and Sicilians (Plato seems to have in mind Heraclitus and Empedocles), who have combined the two kinds of accounts to hold that being is in some way both one and many. All of these theorists, Parmenides included, seem to the Stranger to have engaged in a somewhat problematically "easygoing" mode of discourse; in particular, he explains, "They each appear … to tell us a myth, as if we were children." (242c). These predecessors, as distinguished as they are, have nevertheless "been inconsiderate and contemptuous toward us" in that they have been merely "talking through" their explanations and definitions, without taking care to ensure that they can be followed or understood. Even the most basic concept they employ, the concept of *being*, is by no means clear or easy to understand, as we have just seen in the sustained discussion of non-being which has failed to attach a clear meaning to it. This renewed perplexity is the occasion for the quotation which Heidegger uses at the beginning of *Being*

and Time, the Stranger's demand that these illustrious predecessors explain, once more, what is signified when they utter the word "being" itself.[13]

Here, we are in the midst of a deep ontological and logical problematic, and the difficulties of speaking of being quickly multiply. For instance, the Eleatic claim that being is one leads immediately to the question whether "being" and "one" in fact mean the same thing; if they do not, then they will name not one but two things, it will be impossible to maintain the claim of oneness after all. (244a). But even if they *do* name the same thing, then there will again be not one but two; for in addition to the one that is, there will be the "one" of the name itself. The only possible escape from this impasse would be to claim that the name "being" is simply identical with the thing that it names, but then it is impossible to maintain that it is indeed the name "of" or referring to anything at all (244d). Parmenides himself had maintained that the one of being, however it is named, is "spherical" and possesses a middle; it seems clear, then, that Being for Parmenides is a whole composed of parts. However, this again makes what was supposed to be the One of being into a Many (245b), and additionally raises the question whether "wholeness" is an additional characteristic added to all that is, which once more would make it many rather than one (245c). In all of these cases, the very intelligibility of the Parmenidean attempt to speak of Being as One is threatened by the apparently necessary multiplicity of the discourse itself; as the Stranger has already suggested with respect to the attempt to discuss non-being, the ontological claims are again and again undermined by the very possibility of their meaningful statement.

This problem will apparently hold quite generally with respect to those who have in the past discussed the nature of being or the types of beings, as the Stranger goes on to show in more detail by considering the "gigantomachia" or battle of "gods and giants" over being (here the Stranger alludes to Hesiod's Theogony) between those who hold that all being is material, or "the same as body," and those who identify "true being" with "certain forms" (εἴδη) that are non-bodily and immaterial but nevertheless intelligible (246b), while holding that "becoming," by contrast, is not a trait of such forms but rather of material bodies. The partisans of the latter view *may* be intended to include Plato himself, although it is also possible that the Stranger here refers to the doctrine of the Megarians, who combined Socratic themes with the teachings of Parmenides and the Eleatics. At any rate, it is the first party of materialists whose views are now discussed; these theorists must admit the existence, the Stranger maintains, of living beings, as well as of things like justice, intelligence, and virtue, and so must admit the existence of a soul as the bearer of all of these (246e-247d). The Stranger speculates on their behalf that the materialists must accept, in any case, that something exists if it has any capacity (*dunamis*) at all to affect or be affected by anything else, and even suggests, apparently now in his own voice, that we might take this dunamis to amount to a definition of "being" in general (this is the first positive definition that the Stranger actually endorses). (269e).

---

[13] The structure of the problem here is quite similar to that of other instances of the characteristic Socratic challenge to those who claim to know the nature of something (for instance piety or justice) to show that they do know what they claim to know.

The discussion now turns to the second party, the "friends of the forms." For this party as well, the necessary existence of an animating soul poses problems. For the partisans of the forms, as noted, would prefer to identify the forms with the essence of being as static and unchanging, distinguishing them categorically from the realm of becoming. Yet at the same time, the forms are said to be intelligible and knowable; if the identification of whatever is with unchanging and static forms were correct, this would be impossible, since nothing would really exist that changes or moves and it would be impossible for anything to be understood or known. (248d-249b). Thus it is apparently necessary for the partisans of the forms, if their own doctrine of intelligibility is to be tenable, to admit that "change" and movement indeed exist in some way. (249b). Here, the discussion clearly touches on the deepest problems of the nature of temporality, and the connection of the possibility of intelligibility with the necessity of change and becoming indicates what is clearly a profound problem for what is elsewhere expressed as Plato's doctrine of forms and participation, given its recurrent expression in terms of the dichotomy of being and becoming. In particular, if the forms are to be identified with being as what truly and in the deepest sense exists, and if it is furthermore held that the realm of being is static and completely unchanging, then it is deeply mysterious how they can be known in the course of a life that is itself inherently a process of change and becoming. The Platonic doctrine of anamnesis, on certain formulations, might be thought to offer a kind of solution, whereby the forms are ultimately known not from "within" the time of a mortal life but antecedently to it, in the distinct temporal modality that Plato understands as the "a priori"; but we may well think , along with Heidegger, that the specification of this modality will in fact raise more problems than it solves. The Stranger, in any case, still does not offer any straightforward solution, holding instead that since the identity of anything depends on "rest," but its being known depends on "change," the philosopher must hold that both "rest" and "change" somehow exist, despite their seeming to be contradictory. (249a-d). In fact, since being (or whatever is) is in fact is characterized by both change and rest, we must now apparently hold that being, that which is, is a third thing, encompassing both change and rest but not identical with either. (250b)

Having now to admit that being is characterized by both the opposite principles "rest" and "change," we seem still to be embroiled in deep confusion (250e); however, the admission that Being can indeed encompass both of these seemingly opposed principles provides the first glimmer of what will eventually lead to a solution, at least apparently, to all of the problems so far discussed. For it seems now that the coexistence of rest and change within Being, and their equal applicability to the nature of Being itself, is problematic only if we insist that it is impossible to "call one and the same thing by several different names." This view has indeed been held; historically it was the position of the sophist Antisthenes, who held that each thing can have only one, unique name and that it is thus impossible to attribute two opposed names to the same thing. Those who have held this view have also, the Stranger says, "grabbed hold" of the "handy idea that it's impossible for that which is many to be one and for that which is one to be many" (251b), but to see whether the latter idea is justified it's essential that we first investigate more closely the former.

Is it, then, tenable that each thing may have only one name and that it is impossible to call one and the same thing, for instance a man, by several names, for instance the names of all the colors, shape, sizes, defects, and virtues he possesses? In fact, the Stranger now argues, this view is not tenable. For its

proponent must hold that it is impossible for things such as being, change, and rest to *associate* or combine with one another in any way whatsoever. However, it is evident that this is possible. For those who deny the possibility of various names for the same thing, and thus deny that anything can be called "by a name that it gets by association with something else," betray this very claim constantly in their everyday discourse. In particular:

> They're forced to use *being* about everything, and also separate, from others, of itself, and a million other things. They're powerless to keep from doing it – that is, from linking them together in their speech. So they don't need other people to refute them, but have an enemy within, as people say, to contradict them, and they go carrying him around talking in an undertone inside them like the strange ventriloquist Eurycles. (252c)

Given the indispensible reality of such everyday speech, the Stranger concludes, it must be possible for at least some of the things that are, such as *being*, *change*, and *rest*, to "combine" or "blend" with one another, even if not just anything can combine with anything. The Stranger draws an analogy to the letters of the alphabet, some of which can fit together to form words, while others cannot (253a). In order to know which combinations work and which do not, it is necessary to be a kind of expert of grammar, a τέχνης… γραμματικῆς (253a). Analogously, in order to know what forms can combine and which cannot, as well as which forms are different from which others, it takes an "expertise in dialectic;" it now thus seems, the Stranger remarks, that we may have found the philosopher rather than the sophist (253c).

The Stranger proceeds to elaborate the beginnings of a kind of "formal alphabet," listing and distinguishing from one another the "important kinds" or forms that are most general and universal: the initial list comprises being, rest, change, sameness, and difference.[14] These forms are all clearly distinct from one another and can enter into various combinations.   But the clear and demonstrable existence of *difference*, in particular, helps us finally to understand the nature of non-being. For any of the other "great forms" may take part in difference; and thereby they are not identical to any of the other forms. For instance, the form "change" is clearly different from the other forms, sameness, rest, and difference itself. Similarly, it is different from (other than) being as well. Nevertheless, change also partakes in being, since it is something that is. At 256d-e, the Stranger concludes: "So it has to be possible for that which is not (or non-being) to be, in the case of change and also as applied to the kinds. That's because as applied to all of them the nature of the different makes each of them not be, by making it different from that which is." (256d-e)

The actuality of non-being (the *me on*) is thus apparently discerned as a consequence of the application of the form *difference* to various other forms; in this sense, as the Stranger verifies with his next analysis, we may say that that which is not, for instance, beautiful, results from the combination of the form *difference* with the form *beautiful*. In this way, the Stranger is now able to explain the existence of "that which is not X" for any property X, although it remains unclear that this solution actually gives an

---

[14] In discussing these, Plato occasionally uses the term "form" (*eidos*) but more often uses "type" (*gene*).

answer to the question of *absolute* non-existence, or the meaning of a statement that simply denies that some object X exists at all.[15] The Stranger is, in any case, untroubled by this issue, and takes himself to have finally discerned "what turns out to be the form of *that which is not*" (258d).

At this point, with the main solution in place, it remains only to apply it back to the problem at issue, Parmenides' prohibition of non-existence. By reducing non-being to difference, the Stranger says, although we have still respected Parmenides' dictates in that we have "said good-bye long ago to any contrary of that which is, and to whether it is or not, and also to whether or not an account can be given of it;" (259a) the pervasiveness of difference in its combination with other forms, including being, is sufficient to explain the actual existence of "what is not" even if there is no direct "contrary" to "that which is." It is this possibility of the "weaving together" of forms, the Stranger holds, that makes all distinction and division of things in different respects possible, and it is also, he now reminds us, at the basis of the very possibility of speech. In fact, it was an especially good choice, earlier in the conversation, to use the actual possibility of discourse to "force" those who would hold forms apart to admit that they can indeed combine. For the fact that speech or discourse (λόγον) actually exists is not only helpful in the argument, the Stranger emphasizes, but essential to philosophy itself (260a).

The Stranger now develops the consideration of this actual being of *logos*, applying the results of the earlier "discovery" of the actual possibility of non-being. If non-being can indeed mix with being in speech, then it is indeed possible to explain false and deceptive speech, since "falsity in thinking and speaking amount to believing and saying those that are not." (260c). How are we to understand this "mixing" of being and non-being in speech, however? Again, the Stranger draws a linguistic analogy, this time to names rather than letters. Some names can fit with one another and others cannot; moreover, there is a distinction on the level of the sentence or proposition between two different types of sounds: names (or nouns) and verbs. A *logos* – here the Stranger uses the term with the sense of a single proposition or sentence -- cannot be formed simply by concatenating names, nor from simply listing verbs. (262a). Rather, the simplest and most basic kind of *logos* arises from the combination of a single noun with a single verb, as for instance in the simple sentence "man learns." (262d). Whenever there is a *logos*, however, it is also *about* something (262d) and given the simple unity of the *logos* as comprising, minimally, a noun and a verb, it is always possible to tell what the sentence is *about*. This is the case even if the sentence is false; the Stranger considers, for instance, the sentence "Theatetus flies." In this case, though the sentence is clearly false, it is also just as clearly *about* Theatetus himself. This allows the Stranger to offer what we can now take as a general definition of truth and falsity for sentences: the true sentence "says those that are, as they are, about you"; whereas the false one says

---

[15] This issue is, of course, connected to the longstanding debate about the relative dominance of "veridical" vs. "predicative" and "existential" senses of the verb "to be" (einai) in Greek. See, e.g, (Owen [1967] 1986); (Kahn [1966] 2009); (Kahn [2004] 2009). Both Owen and Kahn argue that, as Kahn puts it, for Plato "to be is always to be something or other," although Kahn also suggests ([2004] 2009, p. 112) that the distinction between a "copula" and an "existential" sense of "to be" is neither exhaustive nor exclusive.

"those that are not, but that they are."[16] With the demonstration of the meaning of falsity and truth in speech, we are now prepared to understand as well how false belief and deception are possible in the soul. For though and speech are "just the same, except that what we call thought is speech that occurs without the voice, inside the soul in conversation with itself…" (263e) and "the stream of sound from the soul that goes through the mouth is called speech." (263e).[17] Now, we can finally return at long last to the *diaresis* of the sophist, armed with an understanding of the possibility of falsehood and hence of his specific kind of copy-making, the making of false copies or phantasmata in words. The sophist can now be defined as a maker of appearances rather than true likenesses, one who uses his own voice rather than tools to make these images, and one who is "unknowing" in that he does not know what he is imitating and is moreover insincere in that he pretends to know what he does not. With this definition, the Stranger concludes and Theatetus agrees, we have finally tracked down exactly what the sophist is.

II

Heidegger's lecture course in Marburg from the Winter Semester 1924-25, announced under the title "Interpretation of Platonic Dialogues (Sophist, Philebus)", comes in the midst of his first profound, transformative and definitive encounter with Greek philosophy.[18] During this encounter, Heidegger repeatedly expresses his basic loyalty to the phenomenological project of Husserl, but has also begun to seek to radicalize and deepen its methods and results through the hermeneutic consideration of medieval and ancient texts and sources, which Husserl himself had largely eschewed.[19] At this time, the central focus of Heidegger's repeated efforts to penetrate the meaning of Greek philosophy and recover its most original guiding concepts was Aristotle; over the period from 1921to 1928, Heidegger devoted no fewer than 10 lectures, courses and seminars to the interpretation of Aristotle's corpus, finding in it the key to such decisive issues as the nature of truth, change and motion, the meaning of perception and action, and the structure of time itself. After 1923, Heidegger's interpretations of Greek philosophy uniformly unfold along the guideline of the fundamental insight (which he appears to have reached that year), that Greek philosophy universally interprets the meaning of Being as presence, and hence

---

[16] λέγει δὲ αὐτῶν ὁ μὲν ἀληθὴς τὰ ὄντα ὡς ἔστιν περὶ σοῦ.
Θεαίτητος
τί μήν;
Ξένος
ὁ δὲ δὴ ψευδὴς ἕτερα τῶν ὄντων.
Θεαίτητος
ναί.
[17] Cf. *Theatetus* 189e.

[18] (Kisiel 1993), p. 472.

[19] (Kisiel 1993), p. 229.

privileges the (temporal) present over other dimensions of time, and understands it on the model of things "present at hand."[20] After Heidegger accomplished it, this insight affected in a fundamental way his understanding of what is involved in phenomenological investigation itself, as well as its application to recover the deepest sources of the metaphysical tradition in the Greeks. For as he explains in the "preliminary considerations" for the 1924-25 course, the sense of phenomenology comprises *phainomenon*, or "what shows itself," as well as *legein*, what Heidegger here translates as "to speak about" [*ansprechen*].[21] Though many sciences indeed talk about what shows itself in various ways, the specificity of phenomenology is determined, Heidegger says, by the specific "way in which it posits what shows itself and in which it pursues this."[22] Here, this primary respect is the "question of the Being of these beings." (p. 8). The resource to the Greeks in the hermeneutic interpretation will thus attempt to prepare an "orientation" toward their understanding of basic concepts and toward the Greeks' interpretation of the most important objects of philosophical inquiry; this includes achieving "an orientation concerning how such peculiar objects as Being and non-being, truth and semblance, become visible at all…" (p. 7) This means also, Heidegger says, retrieving adequately the "past" of this interpretation of the Being of beings, so that we see that "we are this past itself" in that "our philosophy and science" continue to "live on" the foundations of Greek philosophy. (p. 10)

The foundations of Greek ontology are completed, consolidated and thought most "radically," according to Heidegger, by Aristotle; thus it is not surprising that the lecture course of 1924-25, like so much else in Heidegger's thought at this time, in fact begins with an interpretation of Aristotle. This approach is in fact necessary, Heidegger holds, because we must move hermeneutically from what is clearer to us to what is more obscure, and because Aristotle, in his interpretation of the meaning of Being and its presence, essentially developed what Plato already "placed at his disposal" (p. 11); thus the proper and necessary propaedeutic to understanding Plato is to interpret Aristotle first.   In particular, in terms of what Heidegger sees as the basic task of phenomenology, the task of inquiry into the Being of beings, Aristotle will have brought to completion the basic and transformative Greek insight into the very possibility of such an inquiry, an insight which depends on the Greek understanding of the phenomenon of truth, or *aletheia*. *Aletheia*, Heidegger says, is a "peculiar character of the Being of beings insofar as beings stand in relation to" the possibility of their disclosure [*Erschliessen*] and being known; at the same time, "the *alethes* is certainly both in *on* and is a character of Being itself, and specifically insofar as Being = presence [*Anwesenheit*] and the latter [viz., presence] is appropriated [angeeignet] in *logos* and 'is' in it." (p. 17) Indeed, the recognition of *aletheia* as the guideline for our access to beings and

---

[20] (Kisiel 1993), p. 230, summarizing Otto Pöggeler, suggests that this crucial insight was reached in "the years 1922/23"; Heidegger himself, though much later, seems to have given the date as "1923". ((Kisiel 1993), p. 534; cf. Denkweg, 1983 Postscript, pp. 351f./285).

[21] Heidegger, *Platon: Sophistes* (GA 19) [1925] 1992 (henceforth: *PS*), p. 8. Throughout the paper, I have generally quoted from the translation by Richard Rojcewicz and André Schuwer (Heidegger, *Plato's Sophist* [1925] 1997), except where (as indicated) I have modified the translation slightly. Page numbers are as in the original German text.

[22] Transl. slightly modified.

their ways of being disclosed already involves us in the closely related problem of the nature of what Aristotle and the Greeks understood as *logos* and *legein*, for:

> Insofar as disclosure and knowledge have for the Greeks the goal of *aletheia*, the Greeks designate them as aletheuin... We do not intend to translate this word, *alethuein*. It means *being-disclosed* [*aufdeckendsein*], to remove the world from closure and coveredness. And that is a mode of Being [*Seinsweise*] of human Dasein.

> It appears first of all in speaking, in speaking with one another, in *legein*. (p. 17; transl. slightly modified)

The inquiry necessarily takes up the linked meaning of *aletheia* and *logos* in two directions at once: as the phenomena responsible for the basic disclosure or revealing of beings and the nature of their Being, and so as phenomena themselves bearing a privileged connection to the meaning of Being in general, and simultaneously as basic and essential modes of action and comportment of *human* life, definitive of Dasein itself. This connection between the basic problem of the Being of beings and the possibilities of human life is, for Heidegger, definitive as well for "human Dasein" in one of its "most extreme possibilities, namely philosophical existence." (p. 12) Heidegger, in fact, takes the investigation of this "extreme possibility" of human life to be the proper object of Plato's inquiry in the *Sophist*, which Plato achieves, according to Heidegger, precisely through his successful interpretation of the traits and activities definitive of the sophist's particular kind of existence. Insofar as it bears directly on the nature of truth as well as *logos*, however, the analysis of these special possibilities of human existence (sophistry and philosophy) offers to yield an important guideline, as well, for understanding the basic sense of human life in general, as it appears to the Greeks.

Thus:

> *Aletheuein* shows itself most immediately in *legein*. *Legein*, speaking, is what most basically constitutes human Dasein. In speaking, Dasein expresses it*self* – in the way that it speaks about something, about the world. This *legein* was for the Greeks something so preponderant and such an everyday affair that they acquired their definition of man in relation to, and on the basis of, this phenomenon and thereby determined man as *zoon logon echon.* (p. 17)[23]

---

[23] Transl. slightly modified. Cf., also, *Being and Time*, pp. 25-26:"The problematic of Greek ontology, like that of any other, must take its clues from Dasein itself. In both ordinary and philosophical usage, Dasein, man's Being, is 'defined' as the *zoon logon echon* – as that living thing whose Being is essentially determined by the potentiality for discourse [*das Redenkönnen*]. *Legein* is the clue for arriving at those structures of Being which belong to the entities we encounter in addressing ourselves to anything or speaking about it [im Ansprechen und Besprechen]. (cf Section 7 B.). This is why the ancient ontology as developed by Plato turns into 'dialectic'. As the ontological clue gets progressively worked out – namely, in the 'hermeneutic' of the logos – it becomes increasingly possible to grasp the problem of Being in a more radical fashion. The 'dialectic', which has been a genuine philosophical embarrassment, becomes superfluous. That is *why* Aristotle 'no longer has any understanding' of it, for he has put

One of the most pervasive and oft-repeated claims of Heidegger's interpretation in the course is that the phenomenon of *logos* provides the most important horizon for the understanding of beings and the question of Being in both Plato and Aristotle. Thus, "*logos* [is] the guiding line of Aristotle's research into Being ("onto-logy")." (p. 206) and for Aristotle, "the basic character of Being [as *hypokeimenon*] is drawn from the context of *logos* itself." (p. 224) Similarly, in Plato's dialectic, "already from this term, *dialegesthai*, you can see that what is at issue is *logos*," (p. 165) for "dialegesthei", or dialectic, is, for Plato, "the primary mode of the disclosure [Erschliessens] of beings themselves, such that thereby *legein* maintains, in the broadest sense, its ground" (p. 337) In particular, for Plato, "what is fundamental is that *onta* – beings – are grasped as *legomena*, i.e. as encountered in *logos*." (p. 525). Beyond Plato and Aristotle themselves, Heidegger generalizes this claim of the priority of the phenomenon of *logos* for the understanding of the nature of beings to the whole of Greek thought. For "the elucidation of *logos* was for the Greeks a basic task…" (p. 252), and in fact the Greeks "understood *logos* as the very phenomenon on which their interpretation of human existence was based." (p. 306) Accordingly, the interpretation of the *Sophist*, one of the handful of dialogues in which Plato most directly considers the nature and structure of *logos*, is particularly important for gaining a contemporary understanding of the legacy bequeathed to modern philosophical and logical research by Greek philosophy. For "the understanding of this entire development, and of the usual, so-called systematic questions ordinarily found today in relation to logic, depends on a concrete investigation into the ground of the question of *logos* in Greek philosophy and hence here in Plato." (p. 253)

Heidegger's interpretation of the Greeks is accordingly from the beginning oriented toward understanding how their interlinked understanding of *logos and aletheia* manifests or fails to manifest the fundamental meaning of the Being of beings, both as they conceived of it and as we might understand it today. In its extremely close connection with the inquiry into the sense of *aletheia*, which the Greeks understood, Heidegger says, privatively as the "wresting" of uncoveredness from the world, which is "primarily, if not completely concealed,"(p. 16) the inquiry into *logos* must demonstrate its original capacity to reveal beings in their being *as well as* its equally powerful tendency to conceal them once more. This is because, despite the tendency of *logos* to disclose and reveal the nature of beings, it is also eminently possible that "that which in natural consciousness was, within certain limits, perhaps originally disclosed becomes covered up again and distorted [*verdeckt und verstellt*] through speech." (p. 16; transl. slightly modified). This inherent tendency of speech toward concealment and obscuration is actualized when "opinions [*Meinungen*] rigidify themselves in concepts and propositions," thus becoming "repeated over and over, with the consequence that what was originally disclosed comes to be covered up again" in "idle talk," [*Gerede*] which converts truth [*das Entdeckte*] to untruth [*Unwahrheit*] (p. 16). This implies that philosophy itself has a twofold task: both, positively, to "[break] through to the matters themselves," wresting them from unconcealment, and critically, to "[take] up

---

it on a more radical footing and raised it to a new level [aufhob]. *Legein* itself – or rather *noein*, that simple awareness of something present-at-hand in its sheer presence-at-hand, which Parmenides had already taken to guide him in his own interpretation of Being – has the Temporal structure of a pure 'making-present' of something. Those entities which show themselves in this and for it, and which are understood as entities in the most authentic sense, thus get interpreted with regard to the Present; that is, they are conceived as presence (ousia)."

the battle against idle talk." (p. 16) The intention to perform both tasks, Heidegger says, is active in the "spiritual work" of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, and accordingly it is incumbent on philosophy today to take up again the legacy of their pursuit.

What, though, is the specific legacy of this Greek thought, under the heading of *logos*, about the nature of Being, beings and truth? It is familiar, Heidegger says, that "Aristotle was the first to emphasize: what is true is a judgment; the determinations true or false primarily apply to judgments." (p. 15; transl. slightly modified.) However, he says, though this definition of truth as the truth of judgments "is in a sense correct" it is nevertheless "superficial" (p. 15); in order rightly to interpret the legacy of the Greek understanding of *logos* it is necessary to see behind Aristotle's familiar conception of judgmental truth a more basic function, and determination, of *logos*. This more basic function is the *disclosure of beings*, and it actually underlies, Heidegger suggests, Aristotle's more official conception of *logos* as the logic of the judgment. In particular: "Aristotle determined *logos* (which later on was called *enuntiatio* and judgment), in its basic function, as *apophansis*, as *apohainesthai*, as *deloun*. The modes in which it is carried out are *kataphasis* and *apophasis*, affirmation and denial, which were later designated as positive and negative judgment. Even *apophasis*, the denial of a determination, is an uncovering which lets something be seen [*ein sehenlassendes Aufdecken*]. For I can only deny a thing a determination insofar as I exhibit that thing." (p. 18).

Thus, according to Heidegger, philosophical interpretation of the sense of *logos* for the Greeks must penetrate behind the "logical" tradition that understands truth as the truth of judgments to see, in Aristotle and, more originally, in Plato, the more basic meaning of *logos* in its close relation to aletheic truth, or truth as the disclosure of beings. This recovery of the more originary sense of *logos* already has, for Heidegger, the sense of a deconstructive "retrieval" of the most basic sources of the Greek understanding of the meaning of Being in the interpretation of Being as presence. For although, as we have seen, the interpretation of the *logos* was, for the Greeks, the primary site for the understanding of truth and the Being of beings, nevertheless the Greek interpretation historically "made progress only with difficulty and very slowly" and in fact, according to Heidegger, "got stuck at one point" (p. 252). This is the point of what we know today as Aristotelian logic, the formal logic of the proposition and syllogism that remains the logic "handed down to us" today. This kind of logic has remained, Heidegger suggests, the basis for the whole development of logical thinking since Aristotle's time. For:

> Insofar as the Greeks ultimately developed a doctrine of *logos* in a theoretical sense, the *primary phenomenon of logos was the proposition* [*Satz*], *the theoretical assertion* [*Aussage*] of something about something.[24] Insofar as *logos* was primarily determined on this basis, the entire subsequent logic, as it developed in the philosophy of the Occident, became propositional logic [*Satzlogik*]. Later attempts to reform logic, whatever they might have worked out, have always remained oriented to propositional logic and must be conceived as modifications of it.

---

[24] Interestingly, Heidegger here appears, implicitly at least, to identify the "theoretical assertion" (*theoretische Aussagen*) with the proposition (*Satz*) *tout court*. He thus leaves out of account clearly non-theoretical assertions such as those that occur commonly in everyday life, e.g. "The door is shut."

What we commonly know as logic is merely one particular, determinately worked out direction of the research impetus internal to Greek philosophy, but by no means is it *the* logic; the basic questions connected to the phenomenon of *logos* are not thereby disposed of. Insofar as propositional logic so oriented, which takes the theoretical proposition for its exemplary foundation, at the same time guided all reflections directed at the explication of *logos* in the broader sense, the whole science of language as well as, in a broader sense, philosophy of language [*Sprachphilosophie*], took their orientation from this propositional logic. (p. 253; transl. slightly modified).

Because of the continuing predominance of this traditional, propositional logic drawn from Aristotle, Heidegger says, it "seems almost hopeless to try to understand the phenomenon of language [*Sprache*] freed from" it (p. 253). Nevertheless, to do so is precisely the task of phenomenological research today; this is the task of "*conceiving logic, once and for all, much more radically than the Greeks succeeded in doing and working out thereby, in the same way, a more radical understanding of language itself and consequently also of the science of language*." (p. 253). Here we may already recognize, in fact, the task announced in *Being and Time* (pp. 19-27) as that of a 'fundamental de-structuring' of Greek ontology and a retrieval of its basic sense.

With these preliminaries in place, Heidegger's analysis proceeds to investigate the transformations of the concept of "*logos*" from Parmenides to Aristotle and the significance of this development for the nature of human life and the all-important question of the meaning of Being. Beginning with an analysis of *aletheuein* in Aristotle's *Nichomachean Ethics*, Heidegger distinguishes five phenomena which Aristotle treats as "modes" of truth, or ways for "human Dasein" to disclose beings. These are: *techne*, *episteme*, *phronesis*, *sophia*, and *nous*. All, with the possible exception of nous, are "*meta logou*": they are all connected to *logos* in that they depend on speaking and discourse (p. 21). These can again be divided into the *epistemonikon*, the modes of truth (*espisteme* and *sophia*) that contribute to knowledge of necessities and eternal beings, and *logistikon*, those modes (*phronesis* and *techne*) that depend on particulars and unfold in specific situations. The classification appears to leave out the fifth mode of truth, *nous*, and in fact it is *nous* that "causes [Aristotle] the most difficulty." (p. 58). This is because the idea of *nous* is, in the first instance, not the idea of a human capacity but a divine one, and humans can only be credited with it in a sense that is derivative and dependent on the human possession of *logos*, or "the assertion of something *as* something." (p. 59) Thus, the human condition of *logos* transforms what would otherwise be the simple, non-assertive knowing of nous into *dianoein*, which is no longer a simple, objectual knowing but rather yields propositions and assertions.

Nevertheless, within the remaining four specifically human modes of knowledge, *sophia* and *phronesis* stand highest, as they both involve most directly, though in "opposite" ways, the phenomenon of *nous* understood as a pure grasping of things. Whereas *phronesis* is the kind of "practical" deliberation that depends on ultimately grasping a present object or situation in its "most extreme concretion," *sophia* depend on the grasping of things in their "most general universality," and hence is founded on a "looking," not into present matters or objects, but into that which is *aei*, what is "always present in sameness." (pp. 163-64). In this respect, Heidegger can say, whereas "*sophia* is Dasein's positionality

toward the beings of the world in the full sense", by contrast, "*phronesis* is Dasein's positionality toward the beings which are themselves Dasein." Between the two, Aristotle himself ascribes a clear priority to *sophia* over *phronesis*, insofar as the former aims toward knowledge of the *arche*, or first principles of things. But this priority is itself a consequence, Heidegger holds, of the specific Greek determination of the Being of beings. For Aristotle, along with all of the Greeks, understood the meaning of Being as eternal Being, the being of what always exists. (p. 178). This interpretation, which was itself, Heidegger says, gathered from "the Being of the world" as the Greeks understood it (that is, as eternal and always existing), explains why the "pure onlooking" of *sophia* onto the *aei* and the *arche* is the "highest in the Greek sense."

Because the Greeks oriented their whole conception of the meaning of human existence toward their understanding of the Being of beings as the Being of what is eternal and constantly present, the disinterested and general "onlooking" of *sophia* appears to Aristotle as the highest mode of human access to truth and as most completely including the *nous* which is itself, because of its closeness to the divine, "the highest possibility of Being of the living being called man." (p. 178)[25] Yet at the same time, Heidegger suggests, Aristotle recognizes deeply the necessity for specifically human knowing and understanding to stand under the condition of the *logos*; for the human being at least, there can be no vision of what is that is not, also, carried out as discourse and speech. For this reason, the *nous* of which humans are capable is not a pure nous but only a "so-called" nous, characterized by Aristotle as *dianoein* (p. 179).

Because the most basic character of *legein* is speaking of something *as* something, Heidegger suggests on Aristotle's behalf, the kinds of knowledge and access to truth that are *meta logou* are not sufficient, by themselves, to attain reliable knowledge the most simple and eternal elements of things. For these are grasped "properly" only if they are simply disclosed, not *as* anything but simply in themselves. It is, in fact, only with the specific "as-"structure of the *logos* that the possibility of falsehood and deception first occurs. For "because *logos* is a showing which lets that about which it speaks be seen *as something*, there remains the possibility that this thing might get distorted through the 'as' and that deception would arise." (p. 183) By contrast, "in simple disclosing, in *aesthesis* as in *noein*, there is no longer a *legein*, an addressing of something as something. Therefore no deception is possible there either." (p. 183). Aristotle's determination of the structure of the *logos* that is involved in formal logic and assertion as the "*logos apophantikos*" is thus a formulation of only one, rather limited possibility of the *logos*, the possibility which occurs when something is genuinely disclosed in an assertion or proposition.

How, though, does the kind of disclosing that can happen in accordance with the *logos* actually take place, and what does this show us about the structure of *logos* as such? According to Heidegger,

---

[25] The priority of *sophia* over *phronesis* is, of course, essentially reversed by Heidegger in Division I of *Being and Time*. Thus, in place of the pure, disinterested looking that characterizes the highest knowing for the Greeks, Heidegger substitutes what he here calls the knowing of beings "in their most extreme concretion," the knowing of *phronesis* that is appropriate to Dasein's knowing of "other beings which are themselves Dasein."

Aristotle's most fundamental insight about the structure of the *logos apophantikos*, or propositional judgment, is that it consists in both a synthesis (or putting-together of elements) and a *diaresis* (or separation of moments) with respect to the thing disclosed in it. For instance, in the assertoric proposition, "The table is black," I have in view the object itself about which the assertion is made, the table itself. But in the proposition, the object is articulated into the two separate moments, "table" and "black"; these are separated explicitly in the structure of the proposition, though also "posited" together, "as if they were one" (p. 183). Thus the articulate proposition is at the same time a *diaresis* – a separation of the moments of the object shown – and a synthesis of these separated moments as a unified whole.

This synthetic/diaretic structure of the *logos apophantikos* , which Heidegger says characterizes false and negative propositions as deeply as true and assertoric ones, yields the whole theory of the *logos* (p. 186) and it is this structure that provides the basis for the transition to the interpretation of Plato, to whom Heidegger now turns. In accordance with the originally synthetic/diaretic structure of the *logos*, dialectic (or dia*logos*) in Plato's sense is directed toward the disclosure of the matters concerned, but it does not yet "arrive at pure *noein*" because it does not yet "have at its disposal the proper means to attain its genuine end," which is theory (*theorein*) (p. 197). Nevertheless Plato's insight into the structure of the *logos*, as formulated especially in the *Sophist*, represents "a remarkable innovation" (p. 204) over earlier Greek inquiries into the nature of Being.   In particular, in explicating the nature of the sophist in relation to that of the philosopher, the dialogue aims "to create, as it were, the milieu within which beings can show themselves in their Being." (p. 204). The interpretation of the *logos* carried out by Plato in the dialogue yields a "new foundation for research into the Being of beings" that represents a "remarkable" advance over the position of Parmenides. Although Parmenides, like Plato, sees the philosopher as ultimately defined by his capability of noetic seeing, for Parmenides "this *noein* remains wholly undetermined. He does not say whether it is the *noein* of a determinate realm of Being or of beings in general;" accordingly, "he speaks of Being only in general and in an undetermined way."   With Plato, by contrast, "the ground upon which rests the question of the meaning of Being now becomes concrete." (p. 205)

An exemplary sign of this greater concretion, Heidegger says, is Plato's acknowledgment of, and questioning of, the being of non-beings in the Sophist; this questioning forges ahead with the inquiry into the beings themselves in their "most immediate and original way of being encountered," which is just one leading aspect of "the question of the meaning of beings" or the "question of Being" itself. (p. 205) Nevertheless, despite his success in raising this question on the basis of his interpretation of the *logos*, Plato's inquiry, like Parmenides', remains determined by the assumption that "something can be settled about beings with regard to their Being only insofar as the beings are present [*sofern das Seinde da ist*]…" (p. 205) and, more generally, by the overarching interpretation of Being as presence. This interpretation, Heidegger holds, itself brings about the Greek development of the theme of *logos* and logic culminating in Aristotle. For the Greeks draw "the basic character of Being … from the context of *logos* itself" in that beings are understood, in a privileged sense, as *on legomenon*, beings that can become themes for *logos*. In this sense, the "irruption of *logos*" in Greek philosophy is thoroughly motivated "by the fact that on, the Being of beings itself, is primarily interpreted as presence

[*Anwesenheit*], and *logos* is the primary way in which one presentifies [*vergegenwärtige*] something, namely that which is under discussion." (p. 225)

Heidegger now turns to the detailed, almost line-by-line interpretation of the dialogue in its ambiguous but rigorous development of the deeply intertwined relationship between the *logos* and the interpretation of the Being of beings. Heidegger first analyzes the person of the Stranger and the initial *diaresis* of the sophist; the point of this opening discussion, he suggests, is simply to show how the phenomenon of the *legein* is decisive for the nature of the sophist, and that it is accordingly the structure of the *logos* on which we must focus if we are to track him down (p. 306). At the same time, since the initial *diaresis* subordinates the whole discussion of the sophist to the question of the type of *techne* that defines his practice, this question of the structure of *logos* as pursued through the sophist will also be a question of the extent to which *logos* itself can be subordinated to a *techne*, and in particular to what Plato understood as the "technique" of speaking well, or rhetoric. (p. 307). In order to show more clearly how Plato understood the nature of rhetoric and its relation to *logos*, Heidegger turns briefly away from the sophist to consider a dialogue that, he says, can provide better information about the role of rhetoric and speech in Plato. (p. 310).

Notoriously, in the second part of the *Phaedrus* (259e1f), Socrates considers the relationship of successful speaking and writing to truth; a successful orator, in order to succeed in public communication, will "have to have in mind the truth about the subject he is going to discuss." (259e). This normative guideline of truth governs the successful production of speech about any topic; however, as Socrates admits by way of a reference to Zeno's paradoxes and contradictions, the *techne* of rhetoric itself does not prevent the rhetorician from "speaking on opposite sides" and convincing audiences of contradictions. (261d-e). This is why, for Plato as Heidegger reads him, the proper *logos* cannot be reduced to a *techne* of rhetoric, but must maintain an essential relation to the matters spoken of, including the unifying view of these matters that Plato calls the *idea* (p. 331), and must accordingly be grounded ultimately in the practice of dialectic. At the same time, however, the concluding portion of the Phaedrus bears witness to what Heidegger calls Plato's "skepticism with regard to *logos*," (p. 339), a skepticism that is articulated through Socrates' retelling of the myth of the Egyptian god Theuth and his invention of writing. According to the myth, the *techne* of writing, though initially intended as an aid to memory and wisdom, will in fact "introduce forgetfulness into the soul of those who learn it"; for they will soon put all of their trust in writing, "which is external and depends on signs that belong to others, instead of trying to remember from the inside, completely on their own…" (275a). Writing is, accordingly, both potion and poison, both aid and detriment to the accessibility of the matters themselves to expression in a revealing *logos*. This is because, as Socrates goes on to explain, written words have a "strange feature" that they share with paintings and other static representations. Although such words seem at first to be "speaking as if they had some understanding," they cannot be questioned as a living speaker can, for "if you question anything that has been said because you want to learn more, [they continue] to signify just that very same thing forever." (275d). Moreover, "When it has once been written down, every discourse roams about everywhere, reaching indiscriminately those with understanding no less than those who have no business with it, and it doesn't know to whom it should speak and to whom it should not." (275e). In these respects, the *logos* as written is inherently

problematic and decidedly inferior to a better *logos*, one that is "written down, with knowledge, in the soul of the listener." (276a). This is the "living, breathing *logos* of the man who knows, of which the written one can fairly be called an image [*eidelon*]." (276a).

Thus, according to Socrates' concluding discussion in the *Phaedrus*, the written *logos* exists in a "dangerous" exteriority and fixity with respect to the original, living *logos*, an exteriority that Plato already understands as a matter of its distance from the interiority of "living" memory and its closer access to the matters themselves. Heidegger's gloss on this passage concurs with Socrates' diagnosis, and indeed sees it as demonstrative of Plato's whole attitude toward the possibilities of truth and untruth inherent to the *logos* as such. For Plato as Heidegger reads him, Plato's "suspicion" toward the *logos* as it appears in writing, in particular, is justified in that:

> The *logos* as something communicated, something written, is capable of promoting an unconcern with retaining the matters spoken of, i.e., with retaining them in their proper substantive content. And then comes the more precise reason: ….[those who learn to write] will retain what they learn *dia pistin graphes*, "by relying on what is written," *exethen*, "from the outside," i.e., on the basis of the written word, "by means of foreign signs" which have, in their own character, nothing at all to do with the matter they refer to. The written form of the word "chair" does not have the least kinship with the thing itself; it is something completely foreign to the thing itself … The *pistis graphes*, reliance on what is said, in the broadest sense of what is talked about publicly, considers itself absolved from having to look into what is talked about." (p. 342; transl. slightly modified).

According to Heidegger, it is thus an inherent ontological possibility of *logos* in general, and specifically of the kind of "publicity" inherent to the written *logos*, that a kind of "free-floating" [*freischwebenden*] *logos* can arise which makes it "possible for one's view of things to be distorted." (p. 339). In particular, "insofar as it is free-floating, *logos* has precisely the property of disseminating presumed knowledge in a repetition that has no relation to the things spoken of." (p. 340). This occurs, according to Plato as Heidegger reads him, when the *logos* no longer "takes its life from a relation to the matters themselves," (p. 345), when it fails to maintain a proper relation (a correct *symmetria*) to the things themselves. (p. 348). This occurs when the *psuche* (or, as Heidegger glosses, "inner comportment") of the speaker no longer "lies in the correct condition [*rechten Verfassung*] with regard to the world and itself." (p. 348). In this respect, the very possibility of falsehood, error and deception is itself, Heidegger maintains, a structural feature of the *logos* that results directly from its inherent capacity to be "repeated" and "publicized" in the form of the external and derivative 'image' or *eidelon* of writing. In being repeated and publicized in this fashion, the *logos* stands in eminent danger of losing its relation to the original matters themselves and the "inner" comportment of the *psuche* toward their disclosure. Thus the possibility of error and deception has its deepest root, once again, in the possibilities of comportment inherent to the life of the being defined, for the Greeks, in terms of the *logos* itself in relation to whatever is, the zoon logon echon or Dasein, which can either achieve a proper disclosure of the matters that arises from "setting out to see them … on one's own" (p. 343) or, again, can cover up

and obscure these matters by fixing and repeating them in the indifferent modalities of publicity, writing and idle talk.[26]

With this account of the origination of falsehood and deception in place, Heidegger now returns to the interpretation of the *Sophist* and its attempt to demonstrate the being of non-being, or the fundamental possibility of saying what is not. The purpose of the next section of the dialogue (from 226b to 236d), according to Heidegger, is to demonstrate the "existence of non-beings," or the *me on*, by demonstrating the factual existence of the sophist.   (p. 403) Since the sophist is, in turn, defined by his capacity to produce the me on, this factual demonstration will suffice to show that the "me on" in some way exists. It is accomplished, according to Heidegger, in two ways. First, insofar as the sophist purports to speak about everything, the object of his discourse is shown to be "impossible," since as the Stranger points out, no one can know about everything. The *techne* of the sophist is therefore in a certain sense "impossible in terms of that to which it relates" (p. 388) and the "sophistical *techne*" is therefore, "according to its Being," itself impossible. Nevertheless, Heidegger says, such a *techne* "is in fact given along with the existence of the sophist," so we have here something that in a certain sense is, although it is also impossible; the sophistical techne thus already presents, in a certain sense, the "Being of a non-being." The second place at which the being of non-being is demonstrated through the factual existence of the sophist, according to Heidegger, is at 235c-236d, in the course of the Stranger's attempt to distinguish, within the copy-maker's art in general, the making of "good" copies or *eikons* from the making of bad ones or *phantasms*. According to Heidegger, this distinction also serves to verify in the person of the sophist itself the existence of the me on as a positive phenomenon: in particular, although the *eikon* is already "not the same as what it presents," the *phantasma* "possesses still less of that which it is designed to present and render, not even its proportions in the sense of the same size, length, breadth, and depth." (p. 402). As a consequence, the *phantasma* is "even more not that which it poses as" than the icon; in it, "non-being is all the more general" and there is "still more of *me on*." Thus, with the demonstration of the *techne phantastike*, "something exists which is still more not what it presents" and accordingly, Heidegger concludes, "the factual existence of non-beings [*das faktische Vorhandensein des Nictseienden*] can by no means be disputed any longer." (p. 403) At this point, with the demonstration of the sophist as a kind of "walking incarnation [*Faktizität*] of the *me on*," "the actual existence of non-being" has actually been established, and can now serve as a guideline for the remainder of the discussion. (p. 404)

Nevertheless, there still remains the perplexity captured in Parmenides' thesis of the unsayability of non-being, and if the actual existence of the *me on* has in some sense already been demonstrated in the person of the sophist, it nevertheless remains to make this being "intelligible" by demonstrating, against Parmenides, the very possibility of speaking of what is not. This is the problem of the possibility of the

---

[26] Heidegger here mentions the close etymological connection between *eidos* ('form' or, as Heidegger glosses it, "the outward look of something, i.e., that ontological determination which gives something as what it is") and *eidelon* (or "image, imitation, or the like"). According to Heidegger, the contrast is that while both terms thus refer to the "outward look" of something [*das Aussehen von etwas*], *eidelon* refers to the "*merely* looks that way"; it is something that "only appears to be thus and so." (p. 345; transl. slightly modified).

psuedos *logos*, a *logos* which does not "uncover the being as it is" but rather distorts it. (p. 410). But such a *logos* will only be possible if "non-beings can be" in some sense, and Parmenides' statement as to the impossibility of the existence of what is not is defeated, or shown to be limited. Indeed, with respect to Parmenides, Plato now faces a fundamental choice. Either he may maintain "complicity with the well-established dogma of the school of Parmenides that non-beings are not" or he "can acknowledge the factual existence of the sophist and accordingly of *me on*, of the *psuedos*, and take the factual existence of deception, distortion, and misrepresentation as it is and so transform the theory of Being." (p. 411). Of course, Plato will choose the second alternative, and thus choose to "allow the matters themselves their right and bind [his]self on the basis of them to a ruthless opposition against all pre-established theory;" or rather, more precisely, he has already in advance decided in favor of this alternative in discussing the life of the sophist, for this preliminary discussion has had "the positive meaning of first making visible the phenomena which the further investigation can latch on to." (p. 412). Nevertheless, we must still squarely face the apparent contradiction between Parmenides' principle that non-beings are not and the equally important principle, discovered by Plato, that every *legein* is a *legein ti*: every speaking is a speaking of something or about something. With the latter discovery, Heidegger says, "an entirely original structure of legein is becoming visible," (p. 418), a structure that will ultimately be developed in Husserl's phenomenology as the fundamental phenomenon of intentionality or directedness toward something. (p. 424). But if every *legein* is indeed a *legein ti*, then it indeed remains obscure how it is possible to speak about something that is not.

It is in the renewed discussion of images at 240a-c that Heidegger sees the first beginnings of the "ontological" solution to this problem. The image, or *eidelon*, of course exists in a certain way – as the image that it is. Nevertheless, in a certain way it is not; in particular, it "poses" as what is not and therefore manifests non-being in a certain way. This recognition of the peculiar character of the image means, Theatetus suggests at 240c, that in it non-being is in a certain way "woven together" with being – here, Heidegger says, "non-beings can enter into a *symploke*" with beings. This is the first suggestion of what the Stranger will ultimately offer as his solution to the "logical" problem of non-being, the suggestion of a combination or koinonia of types, such that the type being can, through its combination with the type difference, also enter into a certain unity with non-being. According to Heidegger (p. 431), the key to this specific *koinonia*, and hence to the whole problem of the entry of non-being into what is, is the peculiar structure of the *logos*, the addressing of something *as* something; only through this structure and with its discernment does it become possible to see that something which is not, i.e. a non-being, can nevertheless be addressed *as* something that is.

We can now proceed to the "*gigantomachia* over Being," the portion of the dialogue in which the Stranger discusses the detailed theories of his predecessors, including Parmenides himself, about the number, principles, and kinds of beings. The Stranger's criticism of his predecessors, including Parmenides himself, as having spoken in an "easygoing" manner and as having told us a "myth, as if we were children" indicates, according to Heidegger, the profound transformation that the whole ontological problematic undergoes in Plato. For it shows that Plato saw those who preceded him as "insofar as they dealt with Being," nevertheless failing in that they "told stories about beings" instead. Thus those who explained all beings in terms of the principles of the hot and the cold, bodies and forms,

"were selecting definite beings, ones which had an emphatic sense for them" and thus "explained beings out of beings." (p. 441). Accordingly, these ancients wholly failed to reach the level of explaining the Being of beings. Plato, by contrast, "has the intention of carrying out the ontological over and against the ontic." He does so by undertaking a "categorical explication of Being over and against an ontic description of beings," a seeing of "Being over and against beings" that was "unheard of" before Plato, although Parmenides himself may be credited with taking "the first step in this direction." (p. 439). With respect to the "ontological difference" between beings and Being, therefore, Plato will have been, according to Heidegger, the first one really to perceive this difference and make it a guideline for ontological research, even if it is indeed "anticipated" in a certain sense already in Parmenides' discussion of beings as a whole.

The key to this Platonic development of an entirely new ontological problematic is, of course, again Plato's interpretation of the being and structure of the *logos*, which provides for him (as for all the Greeks, implicitly or explicitly) the fundamental guideline for discerning the Being of whatever is, and in particular his new and radical articulation of the ontological problematic through his discovery, against Parmenides, of the possibility of speaking of what is not. Continuing to pursue Parmenides' "hypothesis" of the unity of all that is, the Stranger here emphasizes the actual existence of the *logos* as concrete discourse and actually existing words, for instance the *names* "being" and "one" themselves. As is argued in a different way in Plato's *Parmenides*, the very existence of these names poses problems for the philosopher who will maintain the hypothesis of the unity of all beings; for in their very speaking, there is already something else in addition to the supposed One of being. Here, we approach closely the profound problematic, already suggested by other remarks of Parmenides,[27] of the relationship between being itself and the possibility of thinking, or speaking about it; accordingly, the problematic introduced by the Stranger here already serves to direct the discussion in a different way to the question of the Being of beings by inquiring into the being of the *logos* itself. According to Heidegger, what Plato specifically wishes to demonstrate with these considerations is that "in *legein*, in all speaking about beings, something else is co-said. And this 'something else' is no less than Being itself." (p. 446). This is because every speaking about beings "co-posits" the *einai* of Being itself, and the actual existence of the *logos* as a possibility of speaking about Beings therefore offers to demonstrate the structure of this co-saying or co-positing.[28]

The determinate nature of Being as it is revealed in the interpretation of the structure of the *logos* now is developed in more detail through the Stranger's discussion of the theories of the materialists and the "friends of the forms." In this discussion, the being of the soul proves to be a special point of difficulty for both parties, insofar as the soul must be capable of knowing that which is permanent and unchanging, while nevertheless being dynamic and in motion itself. This point of difficulty is indicative,

---

[27] Most notably, fragment B3, which is sometimes rendered as: "For thinking and being are one" (or "For the same one is [there] for both thinking and being"]

[28] The most significant reason for this, according to Plato as Heidegger reads him, is that the "addressing" of anything as being carries with it, in the very speaking, an addressing of "being" – on – itself. (cf. 244a1f).

according to Heidegger, of the fundamental ontological problematic that arise directly from the Greek determination of Being as constant, unchanging presence. For the question that is actually at issue between the two parties (the materialists and the "friends of the forms") is the question "of the mode of access to what most properly possesses Being," in particular whether true being is accessible on the basis of feeling and sense perception (the materialist hypothesis) or whether it is accessible only on the basis of *logos* or noein. In either case, however, although "beings are that which always is, still the meaning of Being as presence can have legitimacy only if there is something in attendance on them." This means, according to Heidegger, that "The meaning of Being is thus dependent on the possibility that beings can be encountered *for* something which can, in general, possess something like the present [*Gegenwart*]" (p. 467). For Plato, this is *psuche* or the soul in its dynamic grasp of the truth of beings. Thus, the fundamental character of the *psuche* is already determined as *dunamis* or, as Heidegger says, "possibility," and the Stranger even ventures the thought that *dunamis*, or the capacity to affect and be affected, is a fundamental definition of the nature of all actually existent beings; Heidegger here sees a "confrontation" with the young Aristotle (pp. 483-86) as possibly figuring in the motivation of Plato's text.

Psuche is therefore determined as a unique unity of *kinesis* and *stasis*, thereby closely linked to the on, or being, insofar as being itself is neither changing nor static. Furthermore, the psuche achieves this grasp of being, once again, through its definitive link to the structure of the *logos*, which as we have already come to suspect, makes possible the koinonon or combination of the various "great types" or genres of beings, including even the type "non-being." These types themselves are determined by analogy with alphabetic letters, which Plato often refers to, according to Heidegger, in order to "illustrate ontic-ontological relations" (p. 517). The determination of Being as presence itself requires that certain "determinations" are "always already, in advance, present to all beings." (p. 520). The possible co-presence of these most basic elements is determined, again, as *koinon* on the basis of the structure of the *logos*, and most basically by the "as-structure" that characterizes any *logos* as such and itself depends on the "onomatic" and "delotic" basic structure of the *logos* as addressing and disclosing beings. (p. 581). Insofar as it is characterized by this *koinona*, the *logos* is itself a "structural manifold" which makes possible the combination and visibility of eide, and can accordingly be determined as the combination of the "name" and verb in the sentence; this structure establishes the intrinsic connection among "the matters at issue, what is properly visible in them, word, word-sound – beings, world, disclosure of beings, discourse, manifestation." This is itself, Heidegger says, "the universal context of phenomena within which man, the *zoon logon echon*, ever exists;" and is also "ultimately grounded in Being-in, the antecedent uncoveredness of the world." (p. 585).

This solution in terms of the *koinon* that *logos* originally is also yields the ultimate solution to the problem of non-being that gives the whole dialogue its sense, for it demonstrates how there can be a combination of non-being with being and thus how non-being can, in a certain sense at least, exist. Bin this sense, by the end of the dialogue, Plato has actually discerned the eidos or form of non-being, and hence demonstrated the positive possibility of its being given as such. (p. 567) (258d). The solution in terms of the *koinon* also demonstrates, according to Heidegger, the true and underlying sense of "negation" that is also discerned by "phenomenological research;" here, phenomenology agrees with

Plato's solution in that it "accords negation an eminent position: negation as something carried out after a prior acquisition and disclosure of some substantive content." (p. 560) This true sense of negation, according to which negation is always simply the negation of some "previously acquired" content, should be distinguished, according to Heidegger, from the "empty negation" of Parmenides, which by placing *legein* and *noein* "prior to the nothing" allows the nothing to be "seen" only as founded by the negated. (p. 571) This "over-hasty" sense of negation, which sees non-being as founded on negation rather than, with Plato, seeing negation as always the negation of some determinate being, results in turn from Parmenides' identification of the "ontological meaning of Being" with the "ontical totality of beings" (p. 571); by transcending this identification through the demonstration of the actual givenness of the *me on*, Plato has transcended this identification and made a fundamental advance in the "determination and clarification of beings and their meaning." (pp. 571-72). With this development, the genuine sense of the *logos* in its capacity to disclose beings is thereby demonstrated for the first time, and the being of the sophist as characterized by the possibility of error and deception has also been demonstrated in its fundamental provenance from the basic disclosive structure of the *logos*. With this successful delimitation of the sophist, however, the being of the philosopher has also become transparent in its basic possibility and reality as a possible form of the life of the *zoon logon echon*, and the dialogue has thus achieved its most important task, the demonstration of the possibility of *philosophy* as a concrete form of life.

III

Heidegger's interpretation of Plato in the course on the *Sophist* displays several definitive features of Heidegger's own conception of the nature and significance of logic, as he understood it at that time; in addition to these features of Heidegger's own conception, it shows specifically how the Greek determination of Being as presence itself determines, according to Heidegger, the specific conception of logic that developed from Parmenides to Aristotle. I now summarize these features, both of Heidegger's own understanding of logic and of the "Greek" understanding, determined according to Heidegger by the metaphysics of presence:

1) **Aletheiac truth**: For Heidegger, the capacity of logically formed structures to carry intentional content – whether these structures be propositions, judgments, truths or falsehoods, or even just names or individual words or symbols – is always dependent upon their *capacity to reveal "matters"* or to *disclose "beings."* This conception of logic as grounded in disclosure is based in Heidegger's "*aletheiac*" conception of truth, according to which truth is, primarily and definitively, a matter of the disclosure of beings. He sees truth, so understood, as the "proper place" of logic and the ultimate source of its foundations.

2) **Co-saying of Being**: For Heidegger, the logical disclosure of particular beings is always accompanied, whether clearly or obscurely, by a "co-saying" of Being itself, "something like" a presupposition or intimation of a specific determination of the Being of beings. This presupposition or intimation captures, clearly or obscurely, the way in which beings are

disclosed within the context of their particular way of being in the world; accordingly the co-disclosure of the Being of beings is always also world-disclosure.

3) **Falsehood as a possibility of life**: For Heidegger, since the *logos* understood as speaking and discourse is always a specific, factical possibility of the life of Dasein, the possibility of *falsehood* is always itself understood in its relation to Dasein. In particular, falsehood arises from the possibility of concealment that is implied by the basic "as" structure of logic, whereby something can appear *as* something else. This possibility of concealment itself first arises through the structure of logic and occurs when a *logos* becomes "free-floating" and is cut off from an "original" or direct connection with the matters themselves. Heidegger understands this possibility of the "free-floating" *logos* as a consequence of the structural possibility for words and sentences to be fixed and freely repeated, a structural possibility that is realized most extensively, and dangerously, in writing.

4) **The 'hermeneutic' as-structure**: For Heidegger, the most basic structure of logic is the "as"-structure, whereby something is taken *as* something.[29] This means that every actual *logos* (word, sentence, or judgment) concerning an object is both *synthetic*, in that it combines at least two characters, aspects or designations of an object; and *diaretic*, in that it divides the originally unified object into these (at least two) aspects or characters.

In addition, Heidegger suggests, the "Greek" determination of Being as presence yields additional determinations of the nature of *logos* that hold for Plato and Aristotle (and perhaps Parmenides as well), although these may not be *universally* valid. In that Being is understood not only as presence but also, temporally, as static, eternal presence, the primary beings (or archai) are understood to be those that are themselves static and eternally present. These are the ideas for Plato, and in a somewhat different sense, both Plato and Aristotle understand the *stoichea* (basic elements) as eternally existing and unchanging. Due to the composition or mixing of everything else from these basic elements, even non-beings can be seen to exist, in a certain sense; and this mixing is itself understood as a possibility of *logos*.

This determination of what is most in Being as eternally present raises the question of the possibility of such eternally present beings being known or understood by beings that are finite and dynamic.   This problem is resolved, Heidegger suggests, with Plato and Aristotle's doctrine of the *psuche*, or soul. However, since the *psuche* itself is understood by Plato as defined by its "silent dialogue with itself" and this "silent speaking" is understood as an instance of *logos*, the more basic solution to the problem of the relationship of the static to the dynamic is solved by the synthetic/diaretic structure of the *logos* itself. The commerce of the *aei on* with the dynamic and changing potentialities of a human life is made possible by the *koinon* (or possibility of combination) that the *logos* itself is.

---

[29] Cf. S&Z, p. 158: "The primordial 'as' of an interpretation (*ermeneia*) which understands circumspectively we call the "existential-*hermeneutical* 'as'" in distinction from the "*apophantical* 'as'" of the assertion."

I shall now raise a series of critical considerations which bear on the sense and plausibility of each of these characterizations. My aim is not to quarrel with Heidegger's fundamental project of attempting to elicit historically the meaning of Being, but rather to suggest that both Plato and the structure of the *logos* itself might be understood somewhat differently than Heidegger does, and even that an alternative understanding of both the history and the structure of the phenomenon of *logos* might prove capable of eliciting the historical determination of the meaning of Being, along certain dimensions, even more clearly and completely than Heidegger's own analysis can do. But although some of these considerations will have the effect of suggesting that there are resources within the Platonic text that Heidegger diminishes or altogether misses, I do not at all wish to accuse Heidegger of misreading or misinterpreting the text. Heidegger is a good practitioner of his own hermeneutic method, and it is of course internal to this method that it is impossible to enter the text except from the basis of certain guiding methodological as well as thematic assumptions. My aim is simply to show that, and how, we might enter the hermeneutic circle in a different way, and so elicit suggestions and guidelines from Plato's own text that may take us far afield, in certain cases, from Heidegger's own results.

IIIa.

To begin with, it is helpful to take note of the specific way that Heidegger positions himself, in the reading of Plato, with respect to Plato himself as well as to the several real and fictional actors and characters that play a role in the dialogue. As we have seen, Heidegger reads the dialogue as a whole as attempting to define and defend the practice of philosophy against sophistical objections, and sees the whole aim of the dialogue's purported diaretic definition of the sophist as contributing to this end. Accordingly, Heidegger takes the Stranger's definition of the sophist as ultimately successful, and moreover repeatedly identifies the views expressed by the Stranger as Plato's own. In fact, there is no suggestion anywhere to be found in Heidegger's text that Plato intends to introduce any distance between himself and the Stranger at all.[30] In some of the more recent literature on the *Sophist*, by contrast, there is a great deal of speculation about Plato's intentions in placing the main "arguments" and positions expressed, here as well as in the Statesman, in the voice of the Eleatic Stranger rather than Socrates; an even more complicated case, of course, is the *Parmenides*, where Plato puts the main theoretical claims in the mouth of Parmenides himself, as against the young Socrates, whose views appear, by contrast, confused and problematic. The hermeneutic point of emphasizing these apparent complexities of identification is not simply to accuse Heidegger of neglecting the more "literary" and dramatic aspects of these dialogues, over against their direct argumentative content or the positions themselves, but just as much to suggest that these complexities themselves affect what we should take to be the status and merits of these positions, according to Plato. For instance, it has been suggested that Plato's placement of the suggested diaretic "definition" of the sophist in the mouth of the Stranger is intended, precisely, to express a degree of skepticism about the actual success of this definition and

---

[30] At one point, Heidegger even writes, "The Stranger=Plato".

indeed about the possibility of *any* fixed, definite definition of the sophist by means of *diaresis*.[31] This does not necessarily imply that Plato thinks it impossible to distinguish the sophist from the philosopher by any means, but may suggest that he thinks the only way to do so is in practice, through the ongoing pursuit of dialectic rather than by means of any fixed definition.

At any rate, though I do not intend to defend any settled view of Plato's intentions in these respects, it is clearly especially significant in the present context that the stranger is an Eleatic, and thus clearly signaled as a representative of the Parmenidean school, even as he undertakes to criticize Parmenides' own views.   The great respect that Plato accorded Parmenides, and the depth of the influence of the latter on the former, is verified throughout Plato's corpus. Plato's use of the Eleatic Stranger in the *Sophist* thus obviously complicates the dialectical situation involved in his apparent rejection here of a package of interrelated and yet sometimes conflicting requirements whose core is clearly Parmenides' declaration of the impossibility of non-being, but which also evidently includes various "sophistical" admixtures of different kinds which Plato, or the Stranger in any case, is concerned to refute.[32] Heidegger is, of course, not unaware of the differences in position and argument between the historical Parmenides and the sophists, on one hand, and between both and the position ultimately expressed by the Eleatic stranger, on the other. Nevertheless, his tendency to interpret the dialogue as a straightforward identification or definition of the sophist and hence a direct demonstration, in Plato's own voice, of the form of life of the philosopher, leads to certain difficulties and questions concerning Heidegger's own interpretation of both philosophers.

We can see this clearly by considering more closely Heidegger's understanding of what is for him a turning point early in the dialogue, the point at which, according to Heidegger, the "factual existence of non-beings" is initially demonstrated and indeed "cannot be disputed any longer." (pp. 403-404). This is the passage at 235b-236d wherein the Stranger draws the initial distinction, within the general art of copy-making, between icons and phantasms, and implies (though he specifically backs off from this suggestion at 236c9-10) that the sophist might be seen as the maker of the second kind of copy as opposed to the first. The implication that the sophist might be seen as the maker of "bad" rather than good copies provides an initial sense of what is at issue in the identification of the sophist as the producer of the *psuedos logos*, one which carries through the rest of the dialogue, but, as is indeed indicated by the continuation of the dialogue to a much more detailed consideration of the problem of non-being, there are profound and probably fatal problems with the position as stated. To begin with, there is the problem of making sense of what the distinction between icons and phantasms really amounts to, even if applied to literal images, for instance paintings and the like. The Stranger draws the distinction between paintings and sculptures which preserve the proportions of their originals and those which, in order to present more closely an *appearance* of the original, correct for their large size by distorting proportions. However, both kinds of copies apparently maintain reference to their originals

---

[31] See, e.g., (Rosen 1983), especially "Scene Five" and "Scene Six".

[32] For the suggestion that the Parmenides that Plato is concerned to refute in the *Sophist* includes such "sophistical" admixtures, see (Palmer 1999), esp. chapters 6 and 7.

by virtue of their similarity to the originals in *certain* respects (we can here consider color, shape, and other aspects along with proportion) while of course differing from the originals in others. Every painting presumably resembles its original in some respects (and is in that respect "true" to it) while differing from it, and thus being "false" to it, in others. Why should the aspect of "symmetry [*symmetrian*]" or proportion be decisive in making the difference between the "good" copies or icons and the "bad" ones or phantasms, when other aspects may vary just as well? And if no dimension of variation between originals and copies indeed is privileged in underlying it, then do we really have grounds for drawing the distinction between "true" and "false" copies at all?

Behind this lurks a much more profound problem, one that appears to affect the whole Platonic theory of forms, at least insofar as it includes a "copy" or "image" theory of participation. In expounding the doctrine of forms, Plato often suggests that an object which participates in a certain form is, in a certain respect at least, a copy or image of that form. At the same time, however, not all images are good ones or true ones, and in particular, according to the famous critique of art developed in the *Republic*, the manufactured artistic image, as a "copy of a copy" is far from the truth. The mimetic logic of this theory of participation thus demands a distinction between the "good" copies that represent their original faithfully, and those "bad" copies or simulacra that do not. This is a problem for any mimetic theory of truth, and it is not clear that Plato ever satisfactorily solves it, although it is also evident at various places in the corpus that he is aware of it.

Scholarship in the mode of "deconstruction" has emphasized the way in which the whole question of the sorting of good from bad copies can be seen as governing the central problems of the theory of forms. Thus, for instance, Gilles Deleuze sees running through Plato's corpus "an obscure debate … carried out in the depth of things, between that which submits to the action of the Idea and that which escapes this action."[33] This is not the familiar "debate" between Ideas and their copies, but rather between what Deleuze calls "good copies" (or *eikons*) and "bad copies" or simulacra (Deleuze's word for what Plato calls *phantasmata*). By contrast with the more familiar one, this is a:

> …more profound and secret dualism hidden in sensible and material bodies themselves. It is a subterranean dualism between that which receives the action of the Idea and that which eludes this action. It is not the distinction between the Model [or Idea] and the copy, but rather between copies and simulacra. Pure becoming, the unlimited, is the matter of the simulacrum insofar as it eludes the action of the Idea and insofar as it contests *both* model and *copy* at once.[34]

In *Difference and Repetition* and the *Logic of Sense*, Deleuze draws from this problem a remarkable systematic deconstructive reading of Plato, one that in its ambition to "overturn Platonism" nevertheless finds in the Platonic text the basis for an entirely positive and affirmative retrieval of the "rights of the simulacrum" over the image or icon. Whether or not we see the official "theory of forms" as more or less completely determined, and undermined, by this problem, though, what is important in

---

[33] (Deleuze [1969] 1990), p. 15.

[34] (Deleuze [1969] 1990), p. 2.

the present context is its connection to the attempt to define the sophist as the maker of false images, or what the Stranger calls phantasms, as opposed to true images, or icons. However this distinction might be made in the literal case of paintings and sculptures, where we might indeed conceivably appeal to features such as proportion and symmetry to describe one image as "more closely resembling" its original than another image of the same thing, the application of the distinction to *words* and *statements* (clearly, the actual medium of the sophist's art) is massively more complicated. For where the artist's "images" are made in words, we cannot appeal *at all* to mimetic relations, such as relations of resemblance in various respects, to make the difference between accurate and inaccurate copies. There simply *are* no such relations of resemblance or mimesis between a *legein* – a word or sentence – and its "original," the object or state of affairs described.

Plato's Eleatic visitor is clearly aware of the problem, as is evident when Theatetus, after the initial discussion of Parmenides, again suggests that we might understand the sophist as a practitioner of making "copies" (*eidola*) in the sense of "copies in water and mirrors, and also copies that are drawn and stamped and everything else like that…" (239d). The answer, the Stranger responds, will certainly fail to satisfy the sophist. For:

> "He'll laugh at what you say when you answer him that way, with talk about things in mirrors or sculptures, and when you speak to him as if he could see. He'll pretend he doesn't know about mirrors or water or even sight, and he'll put his question to you only in terms of words." (239e-240a).

The necessity to speak in words about the sophist's peculiar art of *logos* here shows that defining his "copy-making" art in terms of mimetic copies such as sculptures and images in mirrors will not do.In particular, the Stranger explains, the Sophist will ask "what runs through all those things which you call many, but which you thought you should call by one name, copy, to cover them all, as if they were all one thing." (240a). Here, as elsewhere in the Platonic corpus, the demand to display the "one thing" that runs through many instances – what Plato will elsewhere often specify as the idea – proceeds by way of what is manifestly and essentially a *linguistic* inquiry; the question is, quite simply, what all the instances have in common that can be called by a single *name*, in this case, the name "copy." If we are indeed to take the sophist to be a maker of copies in some sense, it is clear that to respond to this question with an explanation in terms of *mimetic* images only will not do – for these are not the sort of "copies" that the sophist makes, and it is not at all clear how to draw the analogy, if such there be, from images in painting, sculpture and the like to "images" in words. Moreover, the possibility of presenting an image *of* non-being, of what quite simply is not, remains obscure in either case. For it is clear that there can be no mimetic relationship between an image, which is something that is, and what simply is not.

There is thus very good reason, both internally and externally, to think that Plato sees the manifold failings of any straightforward theory of *mimesis* in capturing the logical art of the sophist, and thus that the preliminary discussion at 235b-236d of the distinction between icons and phantasms is not at all conclusive, and in fact is only a very preliminary attempt, quickly to be rejected in view of the much

deeper problematic of the specific possibility of the false *logos*, with which we are soon to be deeply involved. Neither the central problem of how it is possible to speak of non-being, nor even the apparently more tractable problem of the possibility of a false image, is solved by the distinction between icons and phantasms itself. The Parmenidean problem of non-being, and its implication for the impossibility of discerning the sophist from the philosopher, remains as sharp as ever, and indeed will remain so for quite some time to come.

This is, however, quite different from Heidegger's gloss on the passage. For Heidegger, the distinction between icons and phantasms actually demonstrates the "factual existence of non-beings" (p. 404) and even, thereby, the "factual existence of the sophist" himself (p. 405). Both are guaranteed by the example of images (*eidelopoike*), in which "we possess the state of affairs of *phainestha*i , the 'showing-itself as'…*einai de me*, 'without actually being it." (p. 406)[35]. Although Heidegger does not take the solution of all the ontological problems involved to be complete at this point, he does understand the distinction between icons and phantasms itself to provide the most essential and definitive distinction between the sophist and the philosopher, and to provide a basis for concluding that the sophist and non-being actually exist. The order of analysis here is the familiar one of the Heideggerian "hermeneutics of facticity," whereby the factual, ontic existence of the phenomenon under consideration is supposed to be given first, and we then proceed to the "ontological" interpretation of the meaning of the phenomenon. In this case, his hermeneutic method will allow Heidegger to present the factical "demonstration" of the existence of the sophist -- which Heidegger supposes to be accomplished already at this point – as the "kernel of the dialogue," leaving the rest of the dialogue to be nothing more than an ontological "liberation of this kernel in its structure." (p. 412). And as we shall see, it will allow him significantly to underestimate the force of the logical and ontological problem posed by Parmenides' argument for the claim that it is impossible to speak of non-being. Indeed, according to Heidegger, at this point Plato is faced with a choice of two alternatives. Either he can choose to maintain complicity with "the well-established dogma of the school of Parmenides that non-beings are not"; this alternative would have the effect of confirming that there is no distinction between the sophist and the philosopher and hence to Plato's "renouncing himself." Or he can "acknowledge the factual existence of the sophist" and thereby "transform the theory of Being." The second alternative, the one that Plato has actually chosen, is the choice to "allow the matters themselves their right and bind oneself on the basis of them to a ruthless opposition against all pre-established theory" rather than to "adhere to the [existing] tradition simply because it is venerable…" (pp. 411-12).

What Heidegger takes to be the fundamental decision of the dialogue, the decision that allows Plato to break through the "sclerotic" tradition he already inherited from Parmenides in order to bring philosophical reflection to a new plane of ontological insight, is thus presented as a direct consequence of Plato's fidelity to the phenomenological maxim of faithfulness to the things themselves, over against the (presumably non-phenomenological) "pre-established theory" of Parmenides and his followers.[36]

---

[35] Transl. slightly modified.

[36] Cf., of course, S&Z p. 22: "If the question of Being is to have its own history made transparent, then this hardened tradition must be loosened up, and the concealments [Verdeckungen] which it has brought about must

Yet as we have seen, there is little reason to think that the Stranger, or even Plato himself, takes even the question of the factual existence of the sophist to be even close to settled at this point in the dialogue, which comes before any specific engagement with Parmenides whatsoever. The reason that the Stranger's initial distinction between icons and phantasms cannot suffice even to establish the factual existence of the sophist is stated clearly enough, by the Stranger himself, at 239e-240a: since the falsity of the sophist's art is a matter of *logos* rather than visual or literal copies, no relations or distinctions based entirely on mimesis will suffice to show the actual difference between truth and the false products of this art. Nevertheless, Heidegger takes it that the reality of the image and the distinction, within images, between icons and phantasms *is* sufficient to show the "factual existence" of non-being and so of the sophist himself.   Despite the significant resources of his interpretation dedicated to showing the importance of the specific structure of the *logos* to the problem Plato confronts here and indeed to the whole Greek tradition, it seems, therefore, that Heidegger here misses one of the most significant ways in which the specific structure of the *logos* complicates the issue of the relationship between being and non-being itself. Plato himself, however, appears to recognize this issue, and even formulates it in the Stranger's demand to provide the form or "one thing" that runs through all instances of the type *copy*, even though it doubtless implies additional, and profound, problems for Plato's official theory of forms itself.

Why, then, does Heidegger miss the problem of *logos* that Plato here sees? The reason, as I shall try to show, is that Heidegger's specific understanding of truth as the demonstration or unconcealing of the matters themselves binds his account of the *logos* to a theory of mimetic relations, even as it simultaneously provides him with important potential resources for resisting such a binding. In particular, in accordance with principle 1) above, the truth of every true *logos* for Heidegger is a matter of its successfully disclosing some being or matter, as it is in itself. Since this account of truth as disclosure is explicitly prior to anything specific to language or words, however, Heidegger will not hesitate to apply it to images and copies quite generally. On this basis, we can say along with Heidegger that a "true" copy is one in which its original is faithfully and completely disclosed, whereas a "false" copy is one which, due to some failure or inadequacy to its original, instead at least partially conceals it, presenting it as having features or aspects which it does not actually possess, or indeed "as being" something other than it actually is. This distinction between true presentation of the thing as itself and its false presentation as something else clearly presupposes that each image has a unique original or intentional "subject matter"; we shall discuss this assumption in more detail below. But what is important in the present context is that the distinction is then, insofar as it characterizes the "as" structure which is according to Heidegger the basic structure of the *logos*, applied to characterize the difference between true and false propositions itself. This means that the only way to understand the truth of a true *logos*, for Heidegger, is in terms of its accuracy, genuineness, legitimacy or authenticity in presenting its subject "as it is in itself," and the only way to understand the falsity of a *pseudos logos* is

---

be dissolved. We understand this task as one in which by taking *the question of Being as our clue*, we are to *destroy* the traditional content of ancient ontology until we arrive at those primordial experiences in which we achieved our first ways of determining the nature of Being – the ways which have guided us ever since."

as its failing to do so.   And this effectively ties Heidegger's own account to an essentially mimetic theory of the truth of propositions, one which forecloses in advance the (apparently Platonic) insight that the truth of a *logos* might rely on very different and even essentially non-mimetic structures.

We can see the implications of this in more detail by reconsidering the earlier passage of Heidegger's interpretation wherein he considers Plato's fundamental attitude toward rhetoric and logic through his reading of the *Phaedrus*. In the course of this consideration, recall, Heidegger discerns the possibility of the occurrence of falsehood through the arising of a "free-floating *logos*" that is unconnected to the matters themselves, and so can essentially distort and conceal them. This "free-floating *logos*" arises precisely when "presumed knowledge" is "disseminated" in a "repetition that has no relation to the things spoken of," and is an eminent possibility of the factical phenomenon of speaking insofar as this phenomenon is a matter of "self-communication and self-publicizing." This separation of the *logos* from the matters themselves is *particularly* likely to occur, Heidegger suggests, in the case of writing and the use of signs. For: "*Logos* as communicated in writing is capable of promoting an unconcern with retaining the matters spoken of, i.e., with retaining them in their proper substantive content." (p. 342). This is because signs "have, in their own character, nothing at all to do with the matter they refer to" (p. 342). For instance, "The written form of the word 'chair' does not have the least kinship with the thing itself; it is something completely foreign to the thing itself." This diagnosis of the dangers of repetition, dissemination, and in particular of the dangerous potential of the *written* sign to lead us far from the matters themselves appears to be confirmed by Socrates' discussion of the problems involved in writing, presented through his retelling of the myth of the Egyptian god Theuth at the end of the *Phaedrus.*

In fact, there is reason to think that the possibility of repetition that comes to the fore in writing, but which is involved, according to Heidegger, in all *logos* as such, represents for him more than the origin of just *one* form of falsehood or error. It is, rather, tied constitutively to the very origin of falsehood in human life itself. Thus, according to Heidegger in the *Sophist* course, the danger of a forgetting that results from reliance on the external forms of repetition and writing shows "very clearly the function of the *grammata* and the *graphe* within the existence of man [*des Daseins des Menschen*], and indeed precisely in relation to the possibility of discovering what is there to be uncovered." (p. 343). In particular, the tendency of the *logos* to lead to a "repetition that has no relation to the things spoken of" (p. 340) is what the *logos* "insofar as it is left to its own devices … presents as an ontological possibility of life itself" (p. 340) and indeed: "This [possibility of repetition] is just what *logos* means in the term *zoon logon echon* (the determination of man) insofar as *logos* comes to dominate." (p. 340). In Plato, Heidegger says, it is opposed to the positive "foundation of correct speaking" in dialectic as an "opposite power, as it were, i.e., as that possibility in Dasein which precisely keeps man far from the access to beings." (p. 340) This tendency of the logos to repeat is connected explicitly both to the historical determination of the logos as propositional and to the standing possibility of Dasein to rely on "what is said" in the sense of "what is talked about publicly" (p. 342). In *Being and Time*, through the analysis of Gerede (or idle talk) and the tendency of the They (das Man) to lose touch with "things themselves," this

is again explicitly connected to the phenomenon of falling [Verfallenheit] and to what Heidegger their characterizes as the "untruth" of Dasein itself.[37]

Remarkably, the question of *logos* in the *Phaedrus*, and in particular the status of writing according to the concluding myth of Theuth, is precisely the central focus of Jacques Derrida's classic deconstructive reading of Plato in the long article "Plato's Pharmacy," first published in 1968.[38] The publication of this article antedates the publication of Heidegger's lecture course on the Sophist by some 24 years; it is therefore highly unlikely that Derrida had seen a transcript of the course before writing the article, and in any case he makes no mention of it. Nevertheless a comparison of the two texts is profoundly revealing, not only with respect to the radical transformation that Heidegger's basic problematic of being and presence undergoes at the hands of Derrida, but with respect to what the difference between them shows about the central thread of the interpretation of Being as presence that links Plato to Heidegger himself. Derrida discerns in Plato's discussion of the dangers of writing a distinctive yet ambiguous logic of the *supplement* that will have, according to Derrida, in a certain sense determined Western metaphysics in its entirety. According to this ambiguous logic, writing is the supplement of speech in that it both makes up for what is specifically lacking in speech and, at the same time, is wholly external to it and ultimately unnecessary for it. In the *Phaedrus*, writing operates as a *pharmakon* to the true *logos* of speech and the accurate memory of its objects; it is both cure and poison, both technical extension and enhancement of the powers of memory and the fatal threat of their downfall through disuse and atrophy.   Reading the passage in the *Phaedrus* (276a-b) wherein Socrates purports to distinguish between written language and another kind of discourse, a kind of "brother" to written speech but one of much greater legitimacy, the "living and animate" discourse of the "one who knows" which is, in a certain sense, "written in [his] soul", Derrida identifies the profound role of this guiding and organizing distinction in the history of Western philosophy:

---

[37] Cf S&Z, pp. 221-23: "To Dasein's state of Being belongs falling. Proximally and for the most part Dasein is lost in its 'world'. Its understanding, as a projection upon possibilities of Being, has diverted itself thither. Its absorption in the 'they' signifies that it is dominated by the way things are publicly interpreted. That which has been uncovered and disclosed stands in a mode in which it has been disguised and closed off by idle talk, curiosity, and ambiguity…*Because Dasein is essentially falling, its state of Being is such that it is in 'untruth'*." Accordingly, Heidegger says, "Dasien is equiprimordially both in the truth and in untruth" (p. 223). Furthermore, this constitutive "untruth" of Dasein is a result of Dasein's possibility of assertion [Asussprechen]: "Dasein expresses itself [spricht sich aus]: it expresses *itself* as a Being-towards entities – a Being-toward which uncovers. And in assertion it expresses itself as such about entities which have been uncovered…What is expressed becomes, as it were, something ready-to-hand within-the-world which can be taken up and spoken again….Dasein need not bring itself face to face with entities themselves in an 'original' experience; but it nevertheless remains in a Being-towards these entities. In a large measure uncoveredness gets appropriated not by one's own uncovering, but rather by hearsay of something that has been said. Absorption in something that has been said belongs to the kind of Being which the 'they' possesses." (pp. 223-24).

[38] (Derrida [1968] 1981).

While presenting writing as a false brother – traitor, infidel, and simulacrum – Socrates is for the first time led to envision the brother of this brother, the legitimate one, as another sort of writing: not merely as a knowing, living, animate discourse, but as an inscription of truth in the soul …

According to a pattern that will dominate all of Western philosophy, good writing (natural, living, knowledgeable, intelligible, internal, speaking) is opposed to bad writing (a moribund, ignorant, external mute artifice for the senses). And the good one can be designated only through the metaphor of the bad one … Bad writing is for good a model of linguistic designation and a simulacrum of essence. And if the network of opposing predicates that link one type of writing to the other contains in its meshes all the conceptual oppositions of "Platonism" – here considered the dominant structure of the history of metaphysics – then it can be said that philosophy is played out in the play between two kinds of writing. Whereas all it wanted to do was to distinguish between writing and speech. It is later confirmed that the conclusion of the *Phaedrus* is less a condemnation of writing in the name of present speech than a preference for one sort of writing over another, for the fertile trace over the sterile trace, for a seed that engenders because it is planted inside over a seed scattered wastefully outside: at the risk of *dissemination*."[39]

The treatment of the written *logos* as *pharmakon* in the Phaedrus confirms the ambiguous, supplementary status of writing for Plato ultimately by making it the supplement of a "more original" and "living" writing, the private "writing in the soul" in which knowledge ultimately consists. The contrast that determines the sense of the written *logos* in Plato – and even determines, Derrida will suggest, "Platonism" as a whole – is thus the contrast between an interior, secured, and living presence of the soul to itself, and the "exterior," insecure, public and "dead" representation of the sign. If this opposition itself presupposes and carries out a distinctive logic of the relationship of original presentation to copy and representation, this logic is inseparable, as Derrida recognizes, from the meaning of the "metaphysics of presence" itself in Plato (p. 114). Once again, it is a problem, for Plato, of distinguishing between two kinds of copy, two kinds of repetition of original presence: in this case the "good" repetition of the living memory vs. the "bad" repetition of the *simulacrum* – or fanstasm -- that writing represents. Thus, in endorsing the myth of Theuth, Socrates adopts the central opposition thereby implied, the opposition: "…between knowledge as memory and nonknowledge as rememoration, between two forms and two moments of repetition: a repetition of truth (*aletheia*) which presents and exposes the *eidos*; and a repetition of death and oblivion (*lethe*) which veils and skews because it does not present the *eidos* but re-presents a presentation, repeats a repetition. (p.135)

This opposition between good and bad forms of repetition, between good and bad forms of the modification of original presence in representation and memory, will itself determine, Derrida suggests,

---

[39] (Derrida [1968] 1981), (pp. 148-49).

Plato's understanding of dialectics as the privileged medium of the "good" *logos*, the living presence of the soul to the soul. For, according to Plato as Derrida reads him, "dialectics supplements and replaces the impossible *noesis*, the forbidden intuition of the face of the father (good-sun-capital)."[40] This is the "face of the father" that, by way of a metaphorics of light and presence that, Derrida suggests, is more than mere "metaphors," figures the originary presence of the good "beyond being," that which cannot be grasped or seen, according to Plato, on pain of going blind from the brilliance of the sun. The impossibility of a direct nous, a direct vision of the luminosity of Being, is therefore, according to Derrida, the basis and opening for the irreducible play of difference that "violently opens writing" and thereby "gives rise to a structure of replacements such that all presences will be supplements substituted for the absent origin, and all differences, within the system of presence, will be the irreducible effect of what remains *epekeina tes ousias*." (p. 167) The logic of this system will be irreducibly tied to *mimesis*, even as it insists upon the absolute inferiority of the copy to the original.[41] This produces the ambiguous logic of the supplement, which opposes the "bad copy" of the simulacrum, the "disseminated" and externally replicated image, whose most extreme instance is the written sign, to the "good copy" of the ikon, the spoken *logos*, and the living presence of self to self in the originary disclosure of the original.

If it is, today, possible to begin to envision another logic of presence, one that does not depend upon the supplementary logic of the pharmakon and the opposition of "good" and "bad" copies that give it its force, this alternative will necessarily involve, according to Derrida, a reconsideration of Plato's "distinction" between the philosopher and the sophist itself. For reconsidering the logic of presence and supplement that governs Plato's text, and thus recognizing the profound problematic that "links writing with the (putting in) question of truth," requires that we "must necessarily exhume … the conceptual monuments, the vestiges of the battlefield, the signposts marking out the battle lines between sophistics and philosophy…" (p. 107). For if, according to a theme that runs through Plato but has its best example in the dialogue Sophist itself, the sophist is always determinable as the maker and purveyor of false images, displacing the logic of supplementarity that governs the entire Platonic corpus (and with it, the metaphysics of the West itself), demands that we recognize that:

---

[40] Cf. the following, from Heidegger's Sophist course: "[about the epekeina tes ousias]"

[41] For Plato, "…just as painting and writing have faithfulness to the model as their model, the resemblance between painting and writing is precisely resemblance itself: both operations must aim above all at resembling. The are both apprehended as mimetic techniques, art being first determined as mimesis." (p. 137). Nevertheless, according to Derrida, "Despite this resemblance of resemblance, writing's case is a good deal more serious. Like any imitative art, painting and poetry are of course far away from truth (Republic X, 603b). But these two both have mitigating circumstances. Poetry imitates, but it imitates voice by means of voice. Painting, like sculpture, is silent, but so in a sense is its model… The silence of the pictorial or sculptural space is, as it were, normal. But this is no longer the case in the scriptural order, since writing gives itself as the image of speech. Writing thus more seriously denatures what it claims to imitate…It displaces its model, provides no image of it, violently wrests out of its element the animate interiority of speech. In so doing, writing estranges itself immensely from the truth of the thing itself, from the truth of speech, from the truth that is open to speech." (p. 137)

The front line that is violently inscribed between Platonism and its closest other, in the form of sophistics, is far from being unified, continuous, as if stretched between two homogenous areas. Its design is such that, through a systematic indecision, the parties and the party lines frequently exchange their respective places, imitating the forms and borrowing the paths of the opponent…[42]

This does not mean that the difference between Plato and the sophists is simply indeterminable, or that, as Derrida emphasizes, the deconstructive reading must tie itself in any sense to "some slogan or password of a 'back-to-the-sophists' nature." (p. 108). What it does suggest, though, is that a generalized reconsideration of the meaning of presence in Plato, as well as the tradition he inaugurates, cannot any longer rely on the supplementary logic of presentation and representation, the good and the bad copy, that determines the opposition between writing and speech advocated by Socrates in the Phaedrus. The Derridian deconstructive inquiry into the meaning of presence, itself inspired, of course, by Heidegger's critique of the metaphysical understanding of Being as presence, thus ultimately calls into question the secondariness and externality that Plato affirms of the *logos* in general, and of the written *logos* in particular, invoking instead a more primary *logos* without origin, one that thus can no longer be governed by the mimetic relationship of original to copy or by any of the oppositions – including the opposition between the philosopher and the sophist – that it has historically determined.

Despite the way that Derrida's deconstructive reading generalizes and furthers Heidegger's consideration of the determination of Being as presence, the critical implications of this reading for the tenability of Heidegger's explicit *position* in the *Sophist* lectures should be clear. If, as Plato himself seems to grasp, the specific structure of the *logos*, as it is involved in the sophist's art, introduces complications and relations between the "original" and its "image" that cannot ultimately be mastered by any logic of mimesis or resemblance, then the initial distinction of ikons and phantasms can hardly suffice to demonstrate, as Heidegger thinks, the "factual existence" of the sophist and of the *psuedos logos* itself. It follows that the point of this initial distinction cannot be to manifest an existence that would then need only to be "ontologically interpreted" to yield its true sense and ground, once and for all, the distinction between sophistry and philosophy, but that this distinction, quite to the contrary, demands a whole other, and much deeper and more problematic, consideration of the structure of the *logos* as such. And if, more generally, as Derrida suggests, a more radical consideration of the historical meaning of presence itself suggests that the mimetic rights of the original over the copy , and hence of the "good copy" over the "bad one", must ultimately be overturned, then it will no longer be possible to determine the *logos* itself as secondary and derivative with respect to 'the matters themselves' and the pre-linguistic *nous* that would simply contemplate them without any possibility of distortion or falsehood. Nor will it be possible to determine the very possibility of falsehood and error, as Heidegger does, as the result of the standing possibility of the arising in human life of the "free-floating" *logos* that, like writing itself as discussed by Socrates in the Phaedrus, becomes cut off from an original intuition or presence to drift in the perdition of a lifeless repetition. The possibility of such repetition is, to the

---

[42] (Derrida [1968] 1981), p. 108.

contrary, to be grasped as a fundamental possibility of the *logos* itself *prior to which it is impossible to conceive of truth or falsity as such,* and independently of which there is no original model to stand as paradigm or be disclosed as present. Indeed, it is the suggestion of Derrida's reading that, as Plato already seems in some ways to grasp, the specific structure of the *logos* already puts into profound question the privileged linkage of truth with presence which, on Heidegger's own account, governs the whole ontological problematic for the Greeks, but which also, as we now see, remains in certain ways in certain ways determinative of Heidegger's conception itself.

It is important to notice that the problems for Heidegger's position here, though they show up clearly in his reading of Plato, are not only problems for this reading but in fact extend as well to his own basic understanding of the nature and structure of the *logos*. According to this understanding, as we have seen, the specific structure of any *logos* is to be understood in terms of its capacity to disclose or conceal the beings it concerns; this structure is thus always secondary to the *aletheia*c truth of beings, understood as their being disclosed or revealed in themselves.   Thus, any *logos* that is capable of consideration as true or false has its truth or falsity as a consequence of its revealing or concealing matters that are originally accessible to a more basic, pre-linguistic vision, which Heidegger identifies ultimately with truth; indeed, it is only through the secondary complication of the *logos* and its capacity to be repeated outside the immediate presence of the matters concerned that the possibility of distortion, concealment and falsehood first arises at all.[43] This inherent secondariness of the *logos* with respect to the matters themselves determines the specific trajectory that he sees the theory of the *logos* taking from Parmenides to Aristotle; what was, for Parmenides, the simple truth of the beings as grasped in a purely noetic vision that owes nothing yet to the structure of the *logos* becomes, in Plato, subject to the synthetic/diaretic condition of the *logos* and its constitutive "as"-structure, and ultimately yields, in Aristotle, the formal-logical theory of the assertoric proposition. The meaning of these successive transformations is, we can agree with Heidegger in holding, nothing other than the successive determination of the meaning of Being as it comes to expression in words and sentences, the logical expression of the underlying Being of beings itself. But as we can now see, this assumption of the inherent secondariness of *logos*, which determines Heidegger's whole interpretation of Plato as well as his own understanding of the specific structure of *logos* in relation to truth, itself remains dependent upon the assumption of an original and pure presence of the matters themselves in the simple disclosure of a presentation free of distortion or the possibility of error. This assumption itself demands that Heidegger conceive of the *logos*, as such, as always secondary to such a disclosure, and hence as consigned to its (faithful or unfaithful) repetition.   It thus commits Heidegger, in accounting for the truth or falsity of any *logos*, to posit an ultimately mimetic relationship between originals and copies

---

[43] Thus Heidegger discusses the problem of finding what all images have in common (the problem raised by the stranger at 240a) as a question that is ultimately about ways of *seeing*: "Thus in his way of addressing, one which is quite natural and obvious, in his spontaneous use of words, he has already, in a certain sense, meant an *en*. And this is what the sophist means when he asks about the *eidelon*. The question is hence about a self-sameness, about the self-same *eidelon* versus the arbitrary succession of *eidola* in various concrete forms. In this way the *zenos* first elevates Theatetus to the genuinely correct methodological level. Thus it has become clear that the discussion of the *eidelon* is not a matter of seeing with the sensible eyes but with the eyes of *nous*." (PS, p. 428).

that can, on the basis of considerations already implicit in Plato's text but brought out most completely by Derrida, no longer be sustained.

This is not at all to suggest that Heidegger simply adopts a "copy" or correspondence theory of truth, whereby the truth of a representation consists simply in its resemblance to an original in some specific fashion or aspect. Quite to the contrary, it is of course a central goal of Heidegger's theory, early and late, to reject "correspondence" accounts of truth of all kinds in favor of his own aletheic conception of truth as *ultimately* consisting in the presentation or disclosure of the matters themselves. The point is, rather, twofold: first, that the aletheic conception itself commits him, *with respect to what are in fact copies and represetnations*, to a primarily mimetic account of their truth; and second, that he thinks of explicitly articulated theoretical judgments precisely *as such "representations"*, and so as *dependent for their own truth* on standing in relations of resemblance and mimesis toward the matters they are about. It has been pointed out, and rightly, that the intention of Heidegger's critique of the "traditional," correspondence account of truth is not to deny that correspondence truth exists, or even that an accurate account of the truth of propositions can indeed be given in terms of correspondence, but simply to maintain that this kind of truth is "founded" upon a more basic, pre-propositional kind of truth that cannot be explained in terms of correspondence.[44] If, however, the present critique is right, what is wrong with Heidegger's theory is not that he has *underestimated* the primacy of correspondence truth but rather that he has *overestimated* it; or, in other words, that his understanding of the basis of all truth as the originary disclosure of the matters themselves commits him to understanding the ("secondary" and "derivative") truth of *propositions* as "representation" and correspondence, an understanding which is, in light of a more penetrating investigation of logical structure, itself untenable.

IIIb.

As we have seen, then, issues arising from the specific structure of the *logos*, as Plato *himself* understands it, already pose problems for Heidegger's own conception of *logos* as a secondary structure and its truth as the disclosure, in repetition, of contents originally present to the pure vision or insight of a primary *nous*. In particular, as we see in the course of Plato's own complex consideration of the sophist as the producer of the psuedos *logos*, the problem of the truth or falsity of the assertoric *logos* cannot be solved simply on the basis of the disclosive conception of truth and the conception of originary presence it entails, since this conception also entails a basically *mimetic* understanding of assertions and sentences that is quite inappropriate to their actual logical structure. This suggests that Heidegger's attempt to portray the existence of non-being, in the sense in which it is relevant to the nature of the sophist, as already verified by the mimetic distinction between icons and phantasms cannot be successful, and that as the structure of Plato's dialogue itself suggests, it is necessary first to engage in a much more penetrating and sustained discussion of the specific structure of words and sentences about "what is not."

---

[44] See, e.g., (Wrathall 1999) for this kind of account.

But this is not to say that names and sentences do not bear essential referential and intentional relations to the objects and relationships that they are about, or that these relations are not an essential feature of the structure of the assertoric sentence itself. Whatever else it is, the assertoric sentence is, as Aristotle grasped, a *logos apophantikos*, a structure through, or by means of which, objects and states of affairs are, at least some of the time, disclosed, either correctly, as they are, or incorrectly, as something else, or has having another character than they in fact do. And the general feature whereby the assertoric sentence bears these relations to objects and states of affairs is, of course, what Husserl, following Brentano, calls *intentionality*. As Heidegger himself emphasizes, any adequate understanding of the structure of the *logos* will have to reckon with the question of the basis of these relations of words to things, even (and perhaps especially) when the things concerned do not exist at all. The whole attempt of the Eleatic Stranger in the dialogue (and of Plato, if we may indeed identify the two) may, in fact, be seen as the attempt to give a theory of intentionality that handles the problem of non-existent objects, as against the official theory derived from Parmenides, according to which no intentional relation to a non-existent object is so much as possible. In both developing and criticizing Husserl's view, Heidegger sees in the question of the referential dimension of language the very problem of the presentation of beings, which is itself nothing other than the question of the meaning of Being, or the Being of beings, itself. And as we shall see, despite Heidegger's basic endorsement of the solution proposed by the Stranger, the original critical argument suggested by Parmenides nevertheless continues to pose important problems for Heidegger's own theory of presentation, and accordingly bears significant implications for Heidegger's understanding of the relationship between Being and beings itself.

According to Heidegger, one of the most important discoveries of Plato's understanding of the *logos*, as developed in the Sophist, is the recognition that every *legein* is a *legein ti*: that is, every *legein*, every saying, is "of," "about," or "directed toward" something.

> [The Stranger's] emphasis on *legein* as *legein ti* is nothing else than the disclosure and clear appropriation of a *basic structure* in *legein* as well as in *noein* and *doxazein*: speaking is speaking about something. That is by no means trivial. It is precisely Plato's exertions that show what it cost to see this basic fact of *legein* as *legein ti* and then not to leave it at this constatation but to proceed to a modification of *legein* and *on*. This basic structure of *legein* and *noein*, and, more broadly taken, of every human comportment and in general of the comportment of every living thing, has the sense in its Being of directedness toward something. Phenomenology, appropriating the scholastic term *intentio*, calls this basic structure 'intentionality.' The word is perhaps inappropriate to its matter, since it harbors a whole series of difficulties. Even today it still suggests that this phenomenon of intentionality involves a special attitude, a peculiar observing, attending to, or aiming at something. But all that is not what is meant. On the contrary, intentionality is a structure pertaining to the living being with regard to its very Being … Precisely because *intentio*, both linguistically as well as historically, has a close connection with 'attention,' it is easily misunderstood, especially when it is applied to so-called lived experiences [*Erlebnisse*] and acts of consciousness and is then seen exclusively from that standpoint. (p. 424; transl. slightly modified)

This is decisive, Heidegger suggests, because it is the basis on which Plato can go on to understand the legein, not only as legein ti, but furthermore as the *legein ti kata tinos*: the speaking (or "addressing" – *Ansprechens*)[45] of something *as something*; and *this* structure will, in turn, already define the basic structure of truth and falsity for Aristotle as well. For Heidegger, moreover, Plato's determination of the *logos* is significant because it provides the first breakthrough to the phenomenon of intentionality that characterizes 'every human comportment' and is as such a definitive feature of human life, what Heidegger at this time calls the life of Da-sein.

In what specific sense, though, does Plato understand the *legein* generally, and the *legein ti* specifically, as a "structure pertaining to the living being with regard to its very Being," and in particular to the 'living beings' that we are? The answer is not difficult to find in Plato's text. It is evident at 247a-249a, where the Stranger urges against the "friends of the forms" that the soul along with its attributes of "change", "life," and "intelligence," must be counted among the things that exist. The fact that the psuche exists and is capable of knowing Being (248d) provides an important guideline for the Stranger's subsequent theory of the 'great genres' and the relation of Being to change and difference, confirming that Being must be a "third thing" in addition to change and rest (250c), and hence suggesting again that it must be possible for the most elemental forms to "blend" or "combine" in knowledge. The fact of this "blending" is the most prominent and important result of the Stranger's analysis of the structure of the *logos*, and his understanding of thinking (*dianoia*) (263eff.) as the soul's silent dialogue with itself (hence, a form of *logos*) verifies the actual reality and effectiveness of this blending and combining of forms in the life of the *zoon logon echon* and the person of the sophist.

Although the Stranger's official theory thus designates the *psuche* as the region in which, owing to its "logical" structure, forms can mix and combine freely and so make possible a solution to the problem of non-being, there are also multiple indications in the dialogue that Plato sees the relationship of the soul to forms as problematic, and even to a certain extent paradoxical. This is because, as the Stranger points out in the course of the critical discussion of the "friends of the forms," knowing and being known are "cases of doing, or having something done"; the claim that the forms are knowable at all thus requires an account of their actual commerce with the soul. But this must be a matter of change and becoming, although according to the "friends of the forms" the forms themselves are static and unchanging. The point bears most directly against the (Parmenidean) claim that "change, life, soul and intelligence" are not really present in (or to?) that which actually is (248e: *to pantelos me pareinai*).   But it also clearly raises problems for any view which, like Plato's own official theory of forms, identifies what is most truly real or in being as both changeless and in some way knowable to dynamic and changing beings. The difficulty, the Stranger suggests, leaves the philosopher in the problematic situation of having to be "like a child begging for 'both,'" and saying "that that which is – everything – is both the unchanging and that which changes." (249d)   However, as the Stranger emphasizes, the claim

---

[45] Heidegger's usual term for the primary act that defines something as something is *Ansprechen* [addressing] rather than, for instance "describing" [*beschreiben*] or "pointing out" [*zeichnen*]. To a certain extent, this usage blurs the distinction between *de re* (as in *zeichnen*) and *de dicto* (as in *beschreiben*) ways of "talking about" something.

that being in some way combines both change and rest – complete contraries -- leaves us in "extreme ignorance" and "confusion" (249e).

A more satisfying solution requires admitting that being is in some way a "third thing" aside from change and rest, somehow "falling outside" both, although they appear to be jointly exhaustive. Nevertheless change and rest must "somehow" partake in being, and so there must be some possibility, after all, of the "mixing" or combination of forms that seem at first to be different from one another and even opposed to one another. To verify this possibility, the Stranger turns to the specific structure of the *logos*, and in particular to the limited *koinon* or mixing that it permits (252cff). By considering this structure, it is possible to see the incoherence both of those views that allow nothing to combine with anything else and those that make everything mix indiscriminately. Like letters of the alphabet, (253a) the forms permit of some combinations but not others, and it is up to the dialectician (the practitioner of *logos*) to master the possibilities of appropriate combination (253d). This metaphor is then the occasion for the Stranger to introduce the "alphabet" of basic forms and begin to elaborate its greatest members (254ff).

The Stranger's official doctrine thus solves the problem of the commerce of the soul with the forms by turning to the *koinon* of the *logos* as the underlying basis for the types of "combination" that the forms are capable of. Just as letters combine in appropriate ways to form words, and words combined in appropriate ways form sentences (261dff), so the appropriate combination of forms allows for meaningful syntheses even of the most basic types, for instance being with change and even being with non-being. It is thus, according to the Stranger's doctrine, owing to the specific structure of the *logos* as *koinon* that it is possible for the soul to relate both what is changing and dynamic and what is static and fixed. This explains, in turn, how the soul, which is itself dynamic, can after all have knowledge of the atemporal and unchanging forms themselves. In this way, it is in terms of the metaphor or paradigm of the *logos* itself that Plato (or the Stranger, at any rate) ultimately solves the problem of the temporality of human life in relation to that of what is most truly in Being.

In the context of Heidegger's analysis, focused as it is on the fundamental issues of temporality and presence, this solution is particularly significant. It shows, according to Heidegger, that Plato ultimately understands Being itself in terms of certain specific beings, privileged and pre-eminent in that they exist eternally and "everywhere" and are in themselves unchanging:

> [According to Plato] among the knowables, i.e. among beings, there are those which have the fundamental privilege of universal presence. The *Sophist* illustrates precisely these relations by means of *grammata*. What is essential to this analogy in the *Sophist* is that, as in the case of the manifold of *grammata*, so also, among beings, there are certain *onta* which, as *onta*, are pre-eminent in their Being. If Being is interpreted as presence, then that means that there are determinations which are always already, in advance, present in all beings. Thus these offer a pre-eminent presence. (p. 520)

This Platonic determination of certain beings as pre-eminent elements, and of the *logos* itself as the space of their mixing, also makes it possible, according to Heidegger, for Plato to refute the position of Antisthenes according to which contradiction and falsehood are impossible, since it is only possible to address each single thing in one way, specifically by using its name. (p. 500). If the primary elements exist and are capable of entering into combination, by contrast, we can distinguish between the "reference" of a name to its object and the larger "referential context" which allows it to stand in relation to other objects and hence be open to multiple determinations. (p. 500).

For Heidegger, the Stranger's isolation, by means of the grammatical metaphor or analogy, of the basic types or elements and his identification of the possibility of their combination, represent both a dramatic step forward for ontological research (with respect to, say, the position of Antisthenes) and, at the same time, a primary example of the Platonic determination of the meaning of Being in terms of specific beings, which is itself the first and pre-eminent example of the Greek determination of Being as presence. The identification of the primary types as providing the categories for all knowledge and cognition of beings is itself a first response, Heidegger suggests, to the problem of the cognition and being of the *a priori*, which remains a deep problem even for phenomenology today. For:

> Phenomenology today still faces the basic task of clarifying the methodological moment of eidetic knowledge, which has nothing whatsoever to do with the eidetic 'type' in psychology. This eidetic knowledge is connected to the general problem of Being, to the question of how something in general can be prior to something else and what this peculiar order of priority means. The Greeks had no occasion to reflect on all this, because they let the whole context of being and Being play out, from the very outset, in the present [*Gegenwart*]. (p. 495)

In particular, Heidegger suggests, the overarching determination of being as presence allows Plato, in response to the problem of the dynamic soul's cognition of static being, to see being as a "third thing" in addition to and alongside motion and rest.[46] In this sense, according to Heidegger, for Plato the actuality of the *psuche* as the medium of the combination of these genres means that, in Plato, "the grasping of the *apriori* resides on the same level as the grasping of the ontical in general." (p. 495). It is thus only on the basis of the overarching determination of Being as presence, which here takes the form of the isolation of certain beings as pre-eminent, that Plato can appear to solve the problem of the existence of the soul and its knowledge of the forms.

---

[46] "To be sure, it is not that Plato was unaware of the difficulties here, but instead he asked: how can something be which is neither at rest nor in motion, and yet nevertheless is? This question is, for Plato and the Greeks, a very weighty one, if we realize that beings – as before – are necessarily either moved or at rest. And now there is supposed to be something which resides beyond both and yet is, and indeed not only is but constitutes Being in the proper sense. This questioning, as it occurs here in the Sophist, later became for the Neoplatonists a locus classicus. They derived from it the idea of the epekeina, of what resides beyond all concrete beings: the idea of the ti, of the en, of on. The Neoplatonic commentaries, above all the ones on the Parmenides, take their orientation precisely from this passage in the *Sophist*." (p. 495)

Heidegger does not say explicitly, in the *Sophist* course at least, what it would mean to think the being of the psuche and its possibility of knowing the essence of Being, outside the ambit of the determination of Being as presence that governs Plato's own text. However, to the extent that Heidegger already understands these issues in terms of the "ontological difference" between Being and beings, the answer is clear, at least in outline. To understand the ontological nature of the being capable of having some understanding of Being itself – what Plato understands as the psuche – it is necessary to understand this being as something other than simply another ontic, "innerworldly" being or entity alongside others. Rather, we must understand it in terms of its "ontic-ontological" priority, its capability of having its own kind of being as a concern. That is, we must understand it as Dasein; and if the *logos* indeed is a pre-eminent structure for Dasein's disclosure of beings, then we must understand this structure itself in terms of its relationship to this disclosure. Since events of disclosure are themselves events in the finite and temporal life of Dasein, this provides a radical alternative to the "Platonic" determination of certain pre-eminent beings as eternally present and enduring. It also appears to imply that the concrete *logos* itself – the spoken or written word or sentence – cannot be understood simply as an ontic being or entity, but must *also* be understood in terms of its disclosive dimension. This is the aspect of intentionality, whose re-discovery after hundreds of years of neglect Heidegger attributes to Husserl, but which is also preceded or at least anticipated by Plato's discovery of the legein as, inherently, a legein ti. Rather than understanding this dimension, as Husserl did, in terms of the relationship of subject to object, however, Heidegger understands it as a matter of the aletheic disclosure of beings. This disclosure is, at the same time, inherently disclosive of the structure of the world as such; thus it reveals not only beings but, potentially, the Being of beings itself.

To understand the true structure of the disclosive *logos* (the *logos* apophantikos), for Heidegger, it is thus necessary to look beyond the sign or sound itself, taking into account also the way that it discloses ontic beings and *also* implies or presupposes the Being of these beings themselves. Thus, the disclosive *logos* "co-says" Being itself in that it always presupposes and relies upon the possibility of its disclosure. It would be difficult to overestimate the importance of this "co-saying" of Being in language for the early Heidegger's hermeneutic theory of truth and ontology. In *Being and Time*, it is this "inexplicit" presupposition of the Being of beings that provides the horizon of an "average and everyday" understanding of Being in which Da-sein constantly lives. It is this "average and everyday" pre-understanding that provides both the "at first and for the most part" structure of everyday life, the everyday life of falleness and "das Man," and also provides for the possibility of an authentic recovery of a more explicit understanding of the meaning of Being through resoluteness and authenticity.

Yet in the context of the overarching distinction between beings and Being, Heidegger's appeal in the context of the *logos* to its inherent disclosive dimension and its ultimate potential to reveal the Being of beings through its capacity of world-disclosure is also, as becomes clear in the present discussion, deeply problematic. If appreciating the world-disclosive dimension of the *logos* always requires looking away from the concrete *logos* – the spoken or written word or sentence – toward whatever, in being disclosed, gives the word or sentence its sense, then we must ask about the accessibility and ontological status of this source of meaning or sense, the disclosure of which makes the word or sentence mean what it does. Given Heidegger's desire to find alternatives to the metaphysical determination of Being

as constant, eternal presence, it would clearly be unacceptable, here, to understand the meaning of individual beings as depending upon *a priori* structures or items – whether categories, forms, or ideas – that are themselves conceived as timeless and eternal. Even more problematic is the purported "co-saying" or disclosure of the meaning of Being itself.   For to make of this "co-saying" the revealing of something, whether eternal or temporal, would make Being into a being, and once more collapse the ontological difference. Thus it appears that, while the potential of the *logos* to "co-say" Being itself requires a dimension of its meaning that resides beyond the concrete, empirical existence of the (spoken or written) sign, this "beyond" cannot be lodged in any of the "transcendent" and eternally present beings that the metaphysical tradition has invoked as the source for the meaning of signs – these meanings cannot be aspects of the Idea, the form, the category or the timeless proposition. And yet this very capability of the *logos* to disclose Being requires it to have some relation to that which governs the Being of beings, the meaning of presence itself.

To get to the root of the issues here, it is helpful once again to consider Heidegger's interpretation of Plato's position, both with respect to his (Eleatic and Sophistical) predecessors and to the entire metaphysical determination of Being as presence itself. As we have seen, Heidegger takes the ontological position of Plato's theory of the *logos* to represent a great advance over that of his predecessors, especially in that Plato understands the disclosive *logos* as a *logos* ti, and so comprehends the essential feature of aboutness or intentionality. At the same time, of course, Plato remains locked in the Greek understanding of Being as constant, enduring presence – in particular, the presence of certain eternal beings -- and so remains largely oblivious to the ontological difference. According to Heidegger, though, this does not prevent Plato from already seeing the way in which the concrete existence of the *logos* itself already implies a "co-saying" or positing of Being itself. Commenting on the passage (242c-244a) in which the Stranger criticizes those who have come before, including Parmenides, for speaking in an "easygoing" way and raises the question what these predecessors, who said that there is one or perhaps two things in being, could have meant by "being" itself, Heidegger emphasizes the way in which this question opens a whole new problematic for ontological research:

> In every case [i.e., whatever we say about the relationship of Being (on) to the things that exist], we are forced to co-posit *on*, insofar as, in each case, the legein of on co-posits the einai. What is decisive is the critique on the basis of legein. Plato's aim is not at all, as commentators claim, to create a "monism" by emphasizing the en. The en is of no consequence to him. What does matter to him is the demonstration that on resides in legein implicitly yet constitutively. Plato thus does not want to argue his opponents to death, but he wants to open their eyes and show them that in legein, in all speaking about beings, something else is co-said. And this "something else" is no less than Being itself. (p. 446)

Immediately after this passage comes the Stranger's posing of the question of the meaning of Being, which serves as the epigraph for *Being and Time*. In his interpretation in the *Sophist* course, Heidegger emphasizes that Plato is here raising a question which has, today, "been forgotten." This forgetting of the question is facilitated, Heidegger says, by explicit or implicit appeals either to the idea that the concept of Being, used constantly in everyday discourse, is "obvious"; or to the idea that "Being," as the

"highest concept," cannot be defined. This obscurity of the question today can only be reversed by an explicit re-awakening of the investigation of what is meant in saying Being, an investigation that has as its objects of "interregation" (Befragtes) beings themselves, with respect to their Being. (p. 448). For this questioning, it is imperative that "the beings to be interrogated" be "available." This is, Heidegger says, "a matter of gaining the correct original mode of access to the appropriate domain of Being and establishing within this mode of access, the guiding respect, according to which the question of the Being of beings is to be posed." (p. 449). This "guiding respect" is, for Plato and Aristotle at least, *logos*, in which Plato's whole discussion moves.

Discussion in the dialogue next turns to the explicit consideration of the "hypothesis" of Parmenides: *en on to pan*. We may translate this as "everything is one," and the Stranger suggests that the next task is to inquire of those who hold this hypothesis what they actually mean by "being." Those who hold to the Parmenidean thesis hold also that there is just one thing; everything that is amounts to one being or entity (we should here keep in mind the link between the Greek term en – one – and the later Latinate "entity"). However, as the Stranger points out, this immediately lands the proponent of the thesis in a kind of paradox. For in designating this supposed one thing, the proponents of the thesis use not only the name "one" (en) but also the name "being" (on). Even if there is no deep problem, other things being equal, with using multiple names to designate the same thing, here the existence of these multiple names does pose a direct problem for the content of the Parmenidean thesis. For the thesis asserts precisely that there is just *one* thing; hence there cannot be more than one name, for these names themselves are things. Hence if there is more than one name, the thesis does not hold. In fact, as the Stranger goes on to explain, even the existence of so much as a *single* name for being, or for the one, refutes the thesis itself. For the proponent of the thesis, admitting the existence of such a name, may either hold that the name is the same as or different from its object. But if it is different from its object, then there are at least two things; and if it is the same, then it is not really a name for it at all:

> Stranger: If he supposes that a thing is different from its name, then surely he's mentioning two things.
>
> Theatetus: Yes.
>
> Stranger: And moreover if he supposes that the name is the same as the thing, he'll either be forced to say that the name is the name of nothing, or else, if he says it's the name of something, then it's the name of nothing other than itself and so will turn out to be only the name of a name and nothing else.
>
> Theatetus: Yes.
>
> Stranger: And also the one, being the name of the one, will also be the one of the name. (244d)

The name ('*on*' or '*en*') must be different from the thing it names, for otherwise it would be "the name of nothing" or else "the name of itself," and hence only the name of a name. But then we have two

distinct things – the name and what it names, rather than just one.   The thesis of Parmenides according to which all is one is thereby refuted in its very statement ; the mere existence of the referential names themselves which are needed to make the assertion of unity undermines and refutes this very unity.

The argument may appear to consist merely in conceptual (or even sophistical) games, but at its heart is a phenomenon that is clearly important to Plato, as it is in a different way to Heidegger: the concrete existence of the (spoken or written) *logos*, here the *name* "being." For as Plato here points out, in a way reminiscent also of many of the arguments in the dialogue *Parmenides*, to *name* being is already, in a certain sense, to double it; in the very act of naming or positing, the exteriority of the name to what is named already divides the totality of Being into at least two. There is thus a fundamental paradox involved in Parmenides' thesis, not on the level of its explicit content, but between this content and the pre-conditions of its utterance or statement; in order for the thesis to be asserted, it seems, it must already be false. The actual statement of the *logos* itself here undermines its own assertoric content, contradicting this content by virtue of its very existence.

As the subsequent discussion makes clear, this problem bears deeply, in fact, on *any* attempt to discuss or describe the *totality* of what is, as a unified whole. Parmenides himself had asserted that the one, or the whole of what is, is spherical and hence has a middle and extremeties. (244e). The description is easily refuted (again in a manner reminiscent of Plato's *Parmenides*) by the consideration that this means that the one will have multiple parts; but then it will, of course, not truly be one. Again, even the assertion that being is a whole is problematic, in that it appears that the "wholeness" is then additional to what is, making being in a certain sense appear "less than itself." (245c). Moreover, it is additionally mysterious how anything could *become* whole, since something that is not yet a whole would seem to have no quantity at all. (245d). The Stranger reaches the conclusion that "…millions of other issues will also arise, each generating indefinitely many confusions, if you say that being is only two or one." (245e).

Although the argument thus bears most directly and specifically against the consistency of the contents of Parmenides' own claims with their very statement, all but explicit in the discussion is a powerful and general consideration that bears against the possibility *of any description at all of the totality of what is*. We may put the consideration as follows. Any such description will make reference to the totality of what is, and attribute some quality or qualities to it. In referring to this totality, the description has it as an intentional object, and treats it (at least implicitly) as a *single* object or a unity. However, if every name must have a referent other than itself, this appears to require that the *logos itself* stand outside the totality of whatever is. But it clearly does not: the *logos*, the spoken word or sentence, is itself a concrete thing that exists, and so is part of the whole it designates. Thus the very existence of the concrete *logos* – the name for being or the totality of whatever exists – refutes the content of any assertoric sentence attributing any concrete properties to this totality whatsoever.[47]

---

[47] The difficulty is not diminished if we consider an anti-Parmenidean thesis such as "being is many." For then we still have the attribution of multiplicity to (what is treated by the sentence as) a unity, and we face the question whether this attribution takes place inside or outside the totality (the multiplicity) of being that it describes.

This is a profound and original paradox, which cuts to the heart of Parmenides' theses as well as the entire possibility of the ontological distinction between Being and beings. For if Parmenides' thesis about the unity of Being, understood as the totality of existing beings, is indeed refuted by its very concrete statement, then so is *any* thesis that attempts to describe, or even depends on giving a name to, the totality of whatever is. It appears to follow that it is indeed impossible, on pain of self-refutation, to define or describe the totality of beings *as* a unified totality at all. Or, in Heidegger's terms, we may say: due to the concrete existence of the *logos* itself, in each case, as an innerworldly being, it is impossible to use referential language to describe or refer to Being itself, if we continue to identify Being with the totality of beings. This appears, indeed, to confirm the ontological difference, underlining that the description of beings is utterly incommensurate with the description of Being itself. And yet it comes with a price which is, for Heidegger's analysis at least, too steep to bear: for it threatens to make Being itself utterly indescribable.

For Heidegger's analysis to succeed, it is thus necessary that he reject the identification, operative throughout Plato's text and indeed already in Parmenides, of *Being* with the *totality of what is*. This does not mean that Heidegger gives an alternative account of this totality, or of its limits, boundaries, or unity. Most often, he simply denies or disavows the coherence of speaking of it at all, instead identifying Being with the modes of disclosure or revealing of individual beings rather than their totality. Here it is possible to approach – although not, I fear, to settle – the issue of Heidegger's discussion of the world, in *Being and Time* and beyond, as consisting not in a circumscribed totality of "innerworldly" beings but in specific modes and ways of their being and being-in, as well as Dasein's way of "having" a world. According to this massively complicated and articulated Heideggerian line of thought, to describe the Being of beings is never simply to refer to the totality of beings but always also to describe their modes or ways of being disclosed; nevertheless, as becomes more clear in the turn toward the "being-historical" project after 1933, these modes or ways also determine, for a time at least, the totality of all that can exist.

In the present context, Heidegger sees Plato's discussion of the paradoxes introduced by the concrete being of the *logos* as indicative of a level of ontological disclosure that Plato "intends" to pursue in his interrogation of Parmenides' thesis, but nevertheless fails to reach because of his ultimate failure to draw clearly the distinction between beings and Being, "the ontical and the ontological," itself:

> You need to see clearly that this consideration cannot be taken as mere sophistical shadow-boxing. On the contrary, it is a matter of taking the thesis *en on to pan* seriously. Plato is concerned to show that in this hypothesis there resides a moment which reaches beyond its own proper sense. To understand Plato's explication here and particularly in the following case, we must recognize that he has not yet elaborated an actually precise concept of Being versus beings, but that the whole consideration runs its course in an indifference between the ontical and the ontological … The explications, at first view, give the impression of being simple imitations of sophistical arguments … But if we are clear about the intention residing in the idea of dialectic – as this became visible in connection with the *Phaedrus* – namely the intention to go by way of *synagoge* toward the *en*, so that on the basis of the en the further characteristics

of beings become intelligible, then we will not find ourselves in the difficulty of understanding these arguments as purely ontical in the sophistical sense. (p. 453)

As we have seen, the paradoxes that Plato adumbrates in relation to Parmenides' thesis sufficiently demonstrate that there can, on pain of self-refutation, be no discussion of the totality of beings that treats this totality itself *as a being*. The ultimate reason for this is to be found in the being, or the concrete existence, of the *logos* itself; for if language exists it cannot stand outside the totality of beings, but it apparently must do so in order to speak of this totality. What remains unclear, however, is whether there is indeed any other way to speak of the Being of beings than this, i.e., whether there is any way of speaking concretely of the givenness or determination of beings than to refer to their totality. Heidegger here takes it that a sufficient drawing of the distinction between beings and Being would allow Plato to transform what is otherwise a paradox into an opportunity for ontological disclosure; if he had correctly drawn this distinction, he would have seen in the concrete reality of the *logos* not simply the paradox of its "ontic" relation to the totality of what is, but rather (as well) the ontological "co-saying" or presuppositional indication of Being within every *logos*. But this itself requires the claim that, in the concretely spoken *logos*, the naming, positing, or describing of beings – the intentional dimension, or the *legein ti* – itself presupposes or includes a disclosure of the character of Being, which is not at all a being.

About this last assumption, the least one can say on the basis of Plato's text itself is that it is far from certain. Though Plato will consistently imply that Being and non-being themselves are forms and will indeed attempt partially to describe them, he does not clarify – nor, if Heidegger is right about Plato's unclarity on the ontic/ontological distinction, could he have clarified—their "ontological" status, as entities or otherwise. It is thus not at all clear that, if Being, for Plato, can indeed be said to be "co-said" or "co-disclosed" with the concrete *logos* which talks about beings, this disclosure *can* have the sense that Heidegger attributes to it, that of a revealing of Being which does not at all treat it (as Parmenides, for instance, does) as *a* being. Indeed, Plato's elaboration of paradoxes against Parmenides tends to suggest exactly the opposite: that the concrete being of the *logos* itself demands that any discourse about Being as such collapse, in paradoxical fashion, into discourse about a being, or about the one that is the totality of beings. The only way to avoid this implication is to take the *logos* or its structure to function not only referentially, in order to describe and refer to various entities, but also as capable of indicating *in some other way* the nature of what is not a being – not a possible object of reference – at all, but in determining the Being of beings determines all possibilities of reference to them as well. In a somewhat circular way, then, Heidegger here appears to presuppose the applicability of the ontological difference to the functioning of the concrete *logos*, while at the same time relying on this functioning to verify it. This is not outright incoherent, but it would clearly not be unreasonable to raise questions here, especially in light of Plato's own arguments, about the very sense in which this indication discloses (or brings to presence) what it indicates itself. We can recognize in this the very question that Plato poses as the question of the commerce of the timeless with the dynamic and answers with the being of the soul, and ultimately that of the *logos* as the mixing or koinon of the "great types" and forms. However, outside the metaphysical determination of Being as timeless presence, this answer is clearly

inadequate; and it remains mysterious how the concrete *logos* can indeed succeed in gathering beings and Being into the unity of a co-presence, if it can indeed do this at all.

IIIc.

By pursuing more closely Heidegger's own question of the determination of Being as presence as it bears upon Plato's text, we have seen that there is reason to doubt that Heidegger's interpretation of Plato, at at least two moments, sufficiently appreciates the depth of the problems that Plato poses for the very attempt positively to account for the structure of the *logos* and its "ontological" significance. First, we saw that Heidegger underestimates and misjudges the problem posed by the specifically non-mimetic structure of the *logos* for any primarily mimetic account of the truth of discourse. Second, we saw that Heidegger takes what Plato presents as a paradox bearing on *any* attempt (such as Parmenides') to give a positive description of beings as a whole as, rather, a non-paradoxical, though obscure and confused, attempt to invoke the ontological difference between Being and beings *avant la lettre*. To a certain extent, both of these issues suggest problems with Heidegger's own positive account of the structure of the *logos* as well. The first suggests inadequacies in Heidegger's theory of the assertoric *logos* as a *derivative* structure, constitutively dependent for its truth upon a prior and original direct disclosive vision of the matters themselves. The second suggests that Heidegger's attempt to generalize the intentional relation between knowers and the known into the capability of Dasein to disclose the Being of beings and even Being itself, and additionally that the basic relationship of intentionality itself remains unclear. Both problems bear on Heidegger's theory of truth as disclosure, and both may be seen, if we wish to do so, as suggesting that this theory in fact retains elements of what Heidegger will later criticize as the "metaphysics of presence."

In this section, I shall explore the possibility that a closer interpretation of the structure of the *logos* and logic, drawing on twentieth-century developments and resources that Heidegger either ignored or did not have knowledge of, can indeed provide a clearer understanding of what is involved in the relationship between Being and presence itself, even in ways that exceed and partially call into question elements of Heidegger's historical interpretation of this relationship. At any rate, I shall argue that it is useful and instructive to compare Heidegger's theory of the *logos* with the development of theories of the meaning of propositions and the logical structure of meaning over the course of the twentieth century in what has come to be called the "analytic" tradition.

As we have seen, Heidegger sees the Stranger's official theory of the structure of the *logos* – which he identifies as Plato's own theory -- as a crucial ontological advance over earlier accounts and the key step on the road to Aristotle, even as it unfolds within the interpretation of Being as eternal and standing presence which governs the whole of Greek thought. Although Heidegger thus wishes to challenge certain elements of the Stranger's theory of the *logos* as keinon or combination, he expresses sympathy for others, and in particular endorses the Stranger's account of the possibility of discourse about non-being over against the "prohibition" of such discourse formulated by Parmenides. Just as significantly,

Heidegger endorses the basic conception of the propositional or assertoric sentence as a synthetic/diaretic structure which he finds anticipated in the Stranger's account. This structure of synthesis and diresis, for Heidegger as well as Plato as Heidegger reads him, is marked in the "as" structure which defines the original character of the *logos* as such. Although, according to Heidegger, this "as" structure is subsequently misinterpreted and flattened out in the official logic of subject and predicate that governs philosophical thought about the sentence from Aristotle to the present, it nevertheless provides the clue to the more original and authentic function of the sentence as disclosing the matters with which it is concerned.

With respect to evaluating this Heideggerian diagnosis of the history of what he presents as the misinterpretation of the *logos* and its truth, one of the first things to notice is that the analytic tradition practically begins by making a clean and radical break with the logic of subject and predicate. Late in the 19th century, Frege realized that the subject-predicate logic inherited from Aristotle is inadequate for portraying the actual logical structure of relational and other sentences of mathematics. For instance, the fact asserted by the sentence "seven is greater than five" is only very poorly, if at all, treated as attributing the "predicate" or "property" of being "greater than five" to the individual *seven*. This is confirmed by noting that the same fact is asserted by the sentence "five is less than seven," which receives, on the subject-predicate reading, a totally different description. This and similar observations led Frege to replace the logic of subject and predicate with the framework of concept and object, treating concept-terms as expressions for higher-level and essentially unsaturated functions, to be filled in or "saturated" with names for objects. The innovation is closely connected with Frege's notorious "context principle," which holds that "a name has meaning only in the context of a sentence, and accordingly that the logical content of a sentence is not simply the object or objects that bear the names involved in it, but rather first emerges on the level of the sentence as a whole. Finally, the context principle allows allows Frege to treat the logical content of a sentence as a matter of its inferential relations to other sentences – its liability to be inferred from other sentences, and to lead to them by inference – and so facilitates the possibility of *truth-conditional theories* of sentential meaning.

Together, these innovations mark a series of important breaks with the subject-predicate logic characteristic, as Heidegger says, of the tradition from Aristotle to the nineteenth century. As we saw in the last chapter, the truth-functional picture inaugurated by Frege also allows a radical break with the traditional "correspondence" theory of truth, which Heidegger almost always identifies with the subject-predicate logic of propositions. More significantly in the present context, Frege's context principle and his apparatus of concept and object also evidently suggest alternatives to Heidegger's own official conception of the basic structure of the *logos* as the "as"-structure itself.

In particular, if sentences have the structure of concept and object(s) rather than subject and predicate, then it is possible to understand the ground of their meaning in a way that is starkly different from Heidegger's. As we have seen, that the basic structure of the *logos* is the "as"-structure means, for Heidegger, that the basic work of the *logos* is disclosive: it is to disclose some particular object *as* being some way or another. This is closely related to the subject-predicate conception, according to which the sentence consists of a subject-term which names an object, and a predicate term which asserts

something of that object. By contrast, on Frege's conception, the content of a sentence need not "disclose" any single object or plurality of objects *as* having any particular character at all; it can just as easily assert a relation holding between two or more objects, or assert a property or relation as holding of *all* or *no* objects of a certain kind. The advantages of this approach for handling a variety of types of sentences are obvious; for instance, relational sentences such as "Socrates is older than Plato," universally quantified sentences such as "All men are mortal" and (importantly for our analysis) negative existential sentences such as "A 10,000 pound man does not exist" are all difficult, if not impossible, to handle by means of either the traditional subject-predicate conception or Heidegger's; by contrast, they are all easily handled in Frege's concept-object and quantificational framework.

 In the *Grundlagen der Arithmetik*, Frege himself drew a connection, which may at first seem obscure, between observance of the context principle and the possibility of avoiding a *psychologistic* theory of meaning, according to which the meaning of sentences depends on intuitions or psychological experiences. The suggestion is that if we fail to observe the context principle, and instead take meaning to be determined at the level of the individual terms and names involved in a sentence, then we will have to suppose this meaning to be given by means of intuitions or psychological experiences of the objects named by these terms. We will then not be able to account for the truth of sentences for which we have no corresponding intuitions or experiences, such as sentences about large-scale or small-scale phenomena that we cannot observe, or sentences about abstractions. By contrast, the context principle, together with a truth-functional and inferential account of sentential meaning, gives us an account of the meaning of these sentences that does not in any way depend on intuition or psychological experience, but rather evinces their *logical* content in terms of their inferential connections to other sentences in the language as a whole.

There is much more to say about the relationship of these various theories of sentential meaning to the historically transformative critique of psychologism, which played, in the person of Husserl, a foundational role in the inauguration of the tradition of phenomenology as well as that of analytic philosophy, and which the youngest Heidegger, in any case, had once enthusiastically endorsed. In the present context, what is most important, though, is just that Frege's logic and semantics thus seems to offer resources for conceiving of the meaning (or logical content) of a sentence that are much less closely tied to the "metaphysics of presence" than even Heidegger's own account is. In particular, whereas Heidegger's account always presumes that the work of the assertoric sentence is a function of its relation to the "matters themselves" – and so (along with the whole metaphysical tradition) makes the primary work of a sentence its capacity to "disclose" and hence "present" these matters (either accurately or inaccurately) – Frege's account provides a way of thinking about sentential meaning that does not at all depend on these issues of presence and presentification. The most important yield of this innovation, for Frege, is that it is no longer necessary to think of the meaning of a sentence as dependent upon the presence or presentation of its "matters" to an individual soul or psyche; it is thus possible to break completely with the psychologism that has been a constant accompaniment of the subject-predicate logic throughout its history, and which we may identify, in the Heideggerian jargon, as an exemplary manifestation of the interpretation of Being as presence itself.

Nevertheless, it is clear, as we saw in the last chapter, that the Fregean or truth-functional account of sentential meaning does not, by itself, resolve the problems inherent in this traditional interpretation; or at any rate, that interpretations of the metaphysics underlying the logical framework itself, most importantly Frege's interpretation itself, tend to re-instate the link between truth and eternal, enduring presence that is definitive, according to Heidegger, for the Greeks. Thus Frege's own official conception of the truth of sentences is "Platonistic" in that it posits a "third realm" of ideal and timeless contents or senses, in addition to the temporal realms of physical and (individual) psychical existence. This commitment to a timeless third realm is underlain, in Frege's own case, by his deeply held conviction that the logical laws underlying inference and truth are themselves ahistorical and independent of empirical facts (and in particular of psychological facts). But this conviction again raises, and in fact in an especially dramatic fashion, the question of the being of such laws and contents, and the very possibility of their commerce with the empirical world of change and becoming, which was already, as we have seen, grasped by Plato as a definitive problem.

It may thus seem that, between Frege's theory and Heidegger's, we are thus caught between the Scylla of a Platonism that simply replicates the Greek determination of formal Being as eternal, changeless presence, and the Charybdis of a "disclosive" theory of truth that, in its requirement for the truth of a sentence to depend on its presentification of the matters themselves, essentially replicates the "present-ism" at the basis of psychologism, albeit while displacing the nexus of the presence of beings from the soul itself to the "life of Dasein." But it remains possible that the subsequent development of both positions may evince further resources for conceiving the structure of the *logos* outside either of these guiding determinations of presence.

In any case, it is highly instructive in the present context to consider the development of Wittgenstein's position from the "logical atomism" of the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* to *the Philosophical Investigations*' mature consideration of the role of language and its temptations in the course of a human life. For Wittgenstein's theory in the *Tractatus* resembles very closely, in several respects, the Stranger's account of the structure of the *logos* and its descriptive and referential connection to the world. According to Wittgenstein, a proposition is "logically articulated" (4.032) in that it consists of a structure of terms or signs standing in certain interrelations. All propositions can be analyzed into elementary propositions; an elementary proposition is a "nexus" of names. The names stand for objects and the systematic combination of names in the proposition mirrors the relations of these objects in a state of affairs (2.131-2.14). This is the essence of the notorious "picture" theory of meaning, according to which a proposition is a "logical picture" of a possible state of affairs (2.12-2.14). The proposition thus effectively asserts that certain elementary objects stand in certain relations; it is true if these objects do in fact stand in these relations and false otherwise. (2.15). This implies that all states of affairs consist of such objects entering into various changing combinations (2.032); the objects themselves, however, are fixed in their identity and timeless; hence: "Objects are what is unalterable and subsistent; their configuration is what is changing and unstable. (2.0271). The combinations into which the objects actually enter determine the "totality of existing states of affairs" or "positive facts" which Wittgenstein calls "the world"; whereas this totality of existing states of affairs also determines "which states of affairs do not exist" (2.05) or "negative facts" (2.06).

Wittgenstein thus solves the Parmenidean problem of the assertion of "negative facts" by means of a logically based theory that resembles that of Plato's Eleatic Stranger both in general and in its specific details. Reference to a "non-existing" state of affairs (and hence the possibility of falsehood) is achieved by making reference to the several objects that would comprise that state of affairs, were it to exist; and these objects, as conditions for any possibility of reference whatsoever, are *necessary* existents without which referential language itself would be impossible. As necessarily existing preconditions for any possibility of significant reference, moreover, these elements strongly resemble the "great genres" or types of the Stranger's theory, which are themselves determined as the objects of simple names in language which do not admit of any further decomposition. Since the simple objects themselves must necessarily exist for any description to be possible, it is in fact impossible to describe them themselves; objects can *only* be named and only their configurations can be described. "Objects can only be named. Signs are their representatives. I can only speak about them: I cannot put them into words. Propositions can only say how things are, not what they are." (3.221).

Like Plato's Eleatic Stranger, Wittgenstein thus solves the Parmenidean problem of non-existent facts by means of a distinction between the shifting and contingent configurations of elements and the necessary existence of those elements themselves, whose temporal mode of existence corresponds to what epistemology grasps as the *a priori.*[48] In a sense, this convergence is not surprising. For both Wittgenstein and the Eleatic Stranger derive this distinction between the necessary existence of elements and the contingency of their combination from the analogy or model of the articulate logical structure of sentences. In both cases, the necessity of presupposing the referential meaning of names prior to their descriptive use in sentences is transferred directly to the *a priori* existence of elements which themselves, it is supposed, must exist in order for meaningful language to be possible. The logical theory of the proposition as an articulate combination of names thereby motivates, in both cases, the ontological account of basic elements and the determination of their temporal mode as that of constant, standing presence.

Given the extent of the analogy here between the two views, we may rightly expect Wittgenstein's own later critical reaction to his own position in the Tractatus to cast an informative light on the merits and determinants of the Stranger's own theory. In fact, in criticizing his own earlier view in the Philosophical Investigations, Wittgenstein explicitly recognizes the parallels between his Tractatus view of objects and the position, similar to that of the Stranger in the Sophist, which Socrates sketches in the *Theatetus*:

> 46. What lies behind the idea that names really signify simples? --
>
> Socrates says in the *Theatetus*: "If I am not mistaken, I have heard some people say this: there is no explanation of the *primary elements* – so to speak – out of which we and everything else are composed; for everything that exists in and of itself can be *signified* only by names; no other

---

[48] It is important to remember in the present context, though, that Wittgenstein, at the time of writing the Tractatus, was almost wholly unconcerned with epistemology; witness his highly critical reaction to Russell's own contemporary attempts at a theory of knowledge.

determination is possible, either that it *is* or that it *is not* . . . But what exists in and of itself has to be . . . named without any other determination. In consequence, it is impossible to give an explanatory account of any primary element, since for it, there is nothing other than mere naming; after all, its name is all it has. But just as what is composed of the primary elements is itself an interwoven structure, so the correspondingly interwoven names become explanatory language; for the essence of the latter is the interweaving of names."

Both Russell's 'individuals' and my 'objects' (*Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*) were likewise such primary elements. (p. 25). [49]

In the passage Wittgenstein quotes, which Socrates reports as the content of a "dream" he has had, Plato replicates the solution of the Sophist's Eleatic Stranger to the problem of non-being. The position is once more grounded in a consideration of the structure of the *logos*, which is here translated as "explanatory account" and "explanatory language" (the German translation that Wittgenstein used has "erklärungsweise zu reden" and "erklärenden Rede" for $\lambda\acute{o}\gamma\omega$ and $\lambda\acute{o}\gamma o\nu$), as composed out of simpler elements that in themselves can only be named. This is the same, Wittgenstein suggests, as the position of the *Tractatus*; and he proceeds to interrogate its basis by asking what can really be meant by such "simple constituent parts." For as he now points out, "composite" has many meanings, and there need not be any single, unique order of decomposition for the meaning of any sentence or for any object or configuration of objects (47). Even if we compose a figure in strict accordance with the account given in the Theatetus (48), there are still a variety of ways to decompose it; for instance, we might take the individual spatial parts as distinct individuals, or we might simply take the properties or "universals" (such as distinct colors) as its constituents. The thought underlying the claim that it is impossible to attribute either being or non-being to the elements was that everything that we can rightly call "being " and "non-being" consists in the existence or non-existence of connections between the simple objects (50), so that it makes no sense to speak of the being or non-being of an element by itself. However, the simple element – about which it is supposed to be nonsense to say either that it exists or does not exist – is in this respect analogous to instruments and paradigms used in the practice of language, for instance the standard metre-stick in Paris, about which it is nonsense either to say or to deny that it is one metre long. Thus: "What looks as if it *had* to exist is part of the language. It is a paradigm in our game; something with which comparisons are made. And this may be an important observation; but it is none the less an observation about our language-game – our mode of representation." (50, p. 29)

In a somewhat parallel passage in the Blue Book, Wittgenstein considers the "problem of non-being" and the motivations for the Tractatarian account of simple objects:

" 'How can one think what is not the case? If I think that King's College is on fire when it is not on fire, the fact of its being on fire does not exist. Then how can I think it? How can we hang a

---

[49] Cf. Theatetus 201e-202b.

thief who doesn't exist?' Our answer could be put in this form: 'I can't hang him when he doesn't exist; but I can look for him when he doesn't exist'.

We are here misled by the substantives 'object of thought' and 'fact', and by the different meanings of the word 'exist'.

Talking of the fact as a 'complex of objects' springs from this confusion (cf. *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*). Supposing we asked: 'How can one imagine what does not exist?" The answer seems to be: 'If we do, we imagine non-existent combinations of existing elements'. A centaur doesn't exist, but a man's head and torso and arms and a horse's legs do exist. 'But can't we imagine an object utterly different from any one which exists?' – We should be inclined to answer: "No; the elements, individuals, must exist. If redness, roundness and sweetness did not exist, we could not imagine them".

But what do you mean by 'redness exists'? My watch exists, if it hasn't been pulled to pieces, if it hasn't been destroyed. What would we call 'destroying redness'? We might of course mean destroying all red objects; but would this make it impossible to imagine a red object? (p. 31)

The demand for simple elements which can only be named is based upon the thought that such elements *must* exist as a precondition for any meaningful thought or imagining of what does not exist. This is intimately connected with the conception of the proposition as a concatenation of such names, and hence with the thought that the descriptive or assertive work of the proposition must be secondary to the provision of meanings for such names. Together, these two thoughts led the early Wittgenstein – and may have led Plato, if we may identify his own view with that of the Eleatic Stranger and with the "dream" of Socrates – to understand all being as well as discourse to be jointly preconditioned by the simple elements and to posit these as eternal, unchanging existents. But the deconstruction of this assumption of constant, standing presence begins with the observation, that if it is meaningless to say of these supposed elements that they are destroyed, it is also meaningless to say that they are indestructible; if they cannot be supposed to arise and vanish in time, then it is also meaningless to attribute to them the a priori status of eternal existence. This does not mean that the basic elements simply do not exist, but rather that we can gain a better understanding of their mode of existence and even their temporal structure only by considering their role as *instruments* and *paradigms* within the complex whole of words, objects, and actions that Wittgenstein calls a "language-game." This role involves both the "simple objects" and the words for them serving as standards of evaluation and measurement against which other items are compared and discussed.

As Wittgenstein notes, the ideology that may lead us to posit elemental objects as eternal, a priori existents is also closely connected to the "Platonistic" ideology that posits propositions themselves, or propositional senses, as "shadowy" non-physical objects whose own mode of existence is timeless or eternal:

The next step we are inclined to take is to think that as the object of our thought isn't the fact it is a shadow of the fact. There are different names for this shadow, e.g. "proposition", "sense of the sentence".

But this doesn't remove our difficulty. For the question now is: "How can anything be the shadow of a fact which doesn't exist?"

I can express our trouble in a different form by saying: "How can we know what a shadow is a shadow of?" –The shadow would be some sort of portrait; and therefore I can restate our problem by asking: "What makes a portrait a portrait of Mr. N?" (p. 32)

Here, Wittgenstein once again formulates the question that motivates both Plato and Heidegger in responding to the Parmenidean problem of non-being. This is nothing other than the problem of intentionality itself, which must apparently be solved if it is possible to account for the pseudo *logos* or the proposition *about* what does not exist. We can indeed think of the picture of what does not exist as a kind of picture; to this extent at least, the 'picture' theory of the Tractatus was not mistaken. Nevertheless, as Wittgenstein now very clearly recognizes, there can be no account of the "aboutness" of portraits *or* of propositions that relies upon mimetic relationships of similitude or resemblance to characterize this feature:

The answer which might first suggest itself [to the question: "What makes a portrait a portrait of Mr. N"] is: "The similarity between the portrait and Mr. N". This answer in fact shows what we had in mind when we talked of the shadow of a fact. It is quite clear, however, that similarity does not constitute our idea of a portrait; for it is in the essence of this idea that it should make sense to talk of a good or a bad portrait. In other words, it is essential that the shadow should be capable of representing things as in fact they are not. (p. 32)

In other words, it is essential to the notion of "aboutness", as it is applied to portraits, that it be possible to distinguish between a poor portrait of Mr. N – which may in fact look like or resemble more closely Mr. Q – and a good portrait of Mr. Q, which may be indistinguishable, in terms of mimetic relationships of similarity and resemblance, from the first. This is the same difficulty we met above in connection with the Stranger's first attempt to distinguish the true *logos* from the false one by means of the mimetic distinction between ikons and phantasms; as we saw there, Heidegger fails to recognize this difficulty, whereas Plato at least appears to recognize it by having the Stranger scoff at Theatetus' suggestion that the sophist will accept it. In any case, Wittgenstein does clearly recognize that the intentionality of a sentence or proposition cannot in any sense be simply a matter of mimetic relations ; this leads him to raise anew the problem of what is basically meant by "intention"[50]:

---

[50] The shadow [of the sentence] , as we think of it, is some sort of picture; in fact, something very much like an image which comes before our mind's eye; and this again is something not unlike a painted representation in the ordinary sense. A soruce of the idea of the shadow certainly is the fact that in some cases saying, hearing, or reading a sentence brings images before our mind's eye, images which more or less strictly correspond to the

An obvious, and correct, answer to the question "What makes a portrait the portrait of so-and-so?" is that it is the *intention*. But if we wish to know what it means "intending this to be a portrait of so-and-so" let's see what actually happens when we intend this. … To intend a picture to be the portrait of so-and-so (on the part of the painter, e.g.) is neither a particular state of mind nor a particular mental process. But there are a great many combinations of actions and states of mind which we should call "intending . . ." (p. 32)

Here, Wittgenstein does not at all (as is sometimes suggested) deny the existence of intentionality, or even its correctness in answering the question about the source of "aboutness." But he emphasizes that "intending" the portrait to be a portrait of someone does not consist in the presence of a single or particular mental state; rather there are, in varying circumstances, widely various mental states, as well as actions, which we will call "intending" the portrait to be a portrait of a certain person, or connect to such intending. Husserl, and other critics of psychologism, would of course agree with at least the first part of this diagnosis: intentionality in the phenomenological sense does not consist in any particular mental state or even any collection thereof. Nevertheless, as we have seen, early proponents of anti-psychologism, including Frege as well, tend to identify the intentional "meaning" of mental states and processes as well as sentences with ideal propositional contents, "Platonistically" construed as timeless and unchanging; and this solution is here, of course, off the table. Rather, the intention to paint a portrait of a certain individual, or the "relation" in which consists the "aboutness" of a sentence toward its object or objects, is shown in a wide variety of different and heterogeneous actions, expressions, and practices unfolding in the varied circumstances and occasions of human life; these differ from case to case and there is no *single*, essential relationship that holds between each sentence or portrait and the object it is "about." If, indeed, we remain tempted to maintain that there must be some specific mental state in which intentionality consists, we need only conceive of that state as a sign (this is, at any rate, how it will function) in order to see that any such item is open to *multiple* interpretations and so cannot, all by itself, specify how we are to understand it.

We are, here, in the close vicinity of the two most important interrelated skeins of argument in the *Philosophical Investigations*, the so-called "rule-following considerations" and "private language argument."   The first argues that, since every actual visual or symbolic expression of a rule can have multiple interpretations, how it is correct to follow a rule cannot be determined by any such expression. Rather, it is determined in the complex course of the various events and occurrences which can be

---

sentence, and which are therefore, in a sense, translations of this sentence into a pictorial language.—But it is absolutely essential for the picture which we imagine the shadow to be that it is what I shall call a "picture by similarity". I don't mean by this that it is a picture similar to what it is intended to represent, but that it is a picture which is correct only when it is similar to what it represents. One might use for this kind of picture the word 'copy'. Roughly speaking, copies are good pictures when they can easily be mistaken for what they represent. …If we keep in mind the possibility of a picture which, though correct, has no similarity with its object, the interpolation of a shadow between the sentence and reality loses all point. For now the sentence itself can serve as such a shadow. The sentence is just such a picture, which hasn't the slightest similarity with what it represents." (pp. 36-37).

called "following the rule" in the course of a life. The "private language argument" shows that the idea of a language consisting solely of signs private to, and privately interpreted by, an individual agent or subject is conceptually incoherent; it is thus impossible to suppose the act of *meaning* something by a (public) word or sentence to be accomplished by means of the presence of such a sign, or indeed by means of the presence of any essentially private mental state or occurrence.   Meaning is rather, as is suggested by the current example, shown in a vast and diverse set of circumstances and occurances unfolding in the course of a human life.

Wittgenstein's later critical reaction to his earlier "metaphysical" position, which was itself motivated in part by the need to react to Parmenidean questions about the possibility of speaking of non-being, thus shows how a more reflective consideration of the complex role of language in a human life, its manifold and diverse interconnections with the various institutions of human life and practice, may allow us to resist the assumption of eternal, unchanging presence that underlies the "Platonic" theory of forms as constant, underlying and eternally existing elements (although we have also seen reason to doubt that this is in fact Plato's own theory). At the same time, it allows us to avoid the suggestion of dependence on another notion of presence – the presence of intuitions or images to the privacy and interiority of the soul – that may still seem to adhere even to theories of intentionality (such as Heidegger's) that thoroughly repudiate the first kind of commitment. The critique of psychologism that the early Wittgenstein shares with Husserl and Frege is certainly an important step in the development of this comprehensive critique of presence in both its Platonist and psychologistic forms, although as we have seen its formulation in Frege (as well, probably, as Husserl) does not yet succeed in overcoming the "Platonist" assumption of ideal and timeless contents of thought, which is marked in the remaining identification of the contents of sentences with timeless or eternal objects of thought.

However, it is significant in relating the development of this critique to Heidegger's own position that the late Wittgenstein does not so much abandon Frege's context principle as *generalize* it. In the examples of the simple language-games of building and retrieving that begin the Philosophical Investigations, the "meaning" of a term such as "slab" or "five" is shown in the simple practices and interactions that characterize its use; we may, as we like, call these terms "words" or "sentences" but the interconnections of use that characterize whatever we can reasonably call their "meaning" precede and make possible the privileged connection of word to object that we might otherwise be tempted, not seeing these interconnections, to understand as naming. Thus, rather than supposing the "primary" level of the establishment of names to set up the initial and privileged connection between words and thins, Wittgenstein emphasizes that any conceivable act of naming is in fact dependent on, and secondary to, the language-game in which it takes place:

> Naming is not yet a move in a language-game – any more than putting a piece in its place on the board is a move in chess. One may say: with the mere naming of a thing, nothing has yet been done. Nor *has* it a name except in a game. This was what Frege meant too when he said that a word has meaning only in the context of a sentence. (49, p. 28).

Thus, it is not, for Wittgenstein acts of naming and the establishment of "referential" connections between individual objects and their names which makes possible intentional meaning and significant propositions; quite to the contrary, what we may see as the significance of propositions has its role in the course of human practices and language-games of interacting with other humans, animals and objects, and it is from this that the meaning of names (as well as the whole variety of other types of words) is "ultimately" derived.

This is quite the opposite, though, of the order of presupposition which is suggested by Heidegger's own theory of the structure of the *logos*. As we have seen, the basic structure of the *logos* for Heidegger is the "as" structure involved in taking "something as something;" this structure underlies the simplest form of explicit propositional statements (the apophantic *logos*) as well as what precedes it, the "hermeneutic" as-structure of original interpretation. This is the basis of what Heidegger sees as the essentially synthetic-diaretic structure of the *logos*, which Plato himself will have formulated as one of his key logical insights. But because this "as" structure is always a matter of (implicitly or explicitly) taking *something* as something, it always presupposes the possibility of a level of simple, monadic access to an object. This presupposition itself appears to replicate the assumption of the subject-predicate logic of a distinction, within the sentence, between the subject named and the property or properties predicated of it; and it is also clearly connected to the privilege that Heidegger will continue to accord, in his discussions of the determination of beings and the accessibility of their Being throughout his lifetime, to primary and original acts of naming. In fact, the relationship of names to objects remains, as we have seen, the ultimate basis of the intentional directedness of a *logos* toward its "matters," both for Heidegger and for the Eleatc Stranger's own theory, and it is thus no accident that Heidegger will essentially concur, in the Sophist course and throughout his career, with the Stranger's conception of the *logos* as essentially a koinon or gathering of beings. What he seems to miss thereby is the possibility, suggested already by Frege's context principle and brought out by the late Wittgenstein, of an understanding of the *logos* as in no sense a mere combination or synthesis of names, but rather a holistically defined and irreducible structure whose significance runs the full gamut of a human life and is in no sense simply limited to, or defined by, its capacity to disclose or presentify.

This is not to deny, of course, the vast importance that Heidegger accords to life, practice, and context, all of which he sees, in agreement with the late Wittgenstein at least up to a certain point, as the ultimate and original basis for the meaning of any narrowly descriptive sentence or theory. Being and Time's radical theory of Being-In, of course, formulates this basis in terms of the original structures of articulation and fore-grasping by which objects are "given" inexplicitly in practice prior to their becoming obtrusive to the theoretical gaze and thus prior to their being "thematized" in explicit judgments and statements. Moreover, as we have seen in the context of the Sophist course, the most essential and direct transformation that the Eleatic Stranger's theory must undergo in order to be wrenched free of the "Platonic" metaphysics of eternal presence is that the *logos* must be seen as performing its disclosive work in the context of the life of Da-sein, rather than simply against the backdrop of a priori presence; this is the transformation that Heidegger seeks to effect, in Being and Time, by replacing the a priori categories of traditional metaphysical theory with the dynamic "existentials" that always have their ground in concrete events in the life of Da-sein. Because of this

shared emphasis on the role of context and practice in preceding and making possible explicit theoretical judgments and statements, and on the inherently embodied and situated character of such practice, Wittgenstein and Heidegger have thus often been seen as allied in a "pragmatist" and "anti-theoretical" understanding of the basis of meaning itself.

If both philosophers may thus be seen as "deconstructors" of the metaphysics of presence through their emphasis on bringing the problems of language and logic back to the concrete temporality of life and practice, however, there remain vast and important differences in the two accounts of the relationship between life and logic. The two philosophers do not disagree about the ultimate grounding of explicit propositions in the life of practice, but rather about the ultimate structure of this life itself. One way to bring out the most important of the differences might be to say that, whereas for Heidegger practice is essentially a way of encountering beings that is grounded in experiences, interactions, and disclosures that are essentially *pre-logical* – and hence only subsequently capable of being "captured" in linguistic propositions, for Wittgenstein (early as well as late) this is not so; rather, something like the structure of language as such permeates the world (early Wittgenstein) and human life (late Wittgenstein) as a whole and fundamentally defines all of its possibilities. The Wittgensteinian conception of the "language game" is not that of a game played "with" language as a mere external set of symbols or signs, but rather of the complete interweaving of language with the whole totality of a human way of life, a totality that Wittgenstein even ventures elliptically to characterize, using a term that is here not simply accidentally drawn from Plato and Aristotle's own theories of presence and time, a "form of life." The actions and circumstances of such a linguistically formed life in relation to their "objects" are not simply actions of disclosure and presentifying, but are just as likely to be actions of using objects, relating them to one another, transforming them, ignoring them, etc; and are at the same time inseparably interconnected with a huge variety of relations and relationships to other people and animals as well.

Here we may note, in fact, one final telling difference, which seems to verify that if the two philosophers can indeed both be seen as, in a certain sense, deconstructors of the metaphysics of presence, it is indeed Wittgenstein who carries out the more profound and thoroughgoing deconstruction. For recall that, as we saw in connection with Wittgenstein's discussion of intentional meaning, the basis of (anything we can call) meaning for Wittgenstein is always inherently *intersubjective* and hence "public." This significance of this point can be misplaced, as it routinely is by those who take Wittgenstein to formulate a "public" or "social" theory of language or its structure. Nevertheless the position represents a stark contrast to Heidegger. Despite Heidegger's profound ambition to replace the traditional theory of a "worldless subjectivity" with his ontic-ontological account of the constitutive structure of Dasein in its being-in-the-world, a hierarchical opposition between the private and the public nevertheless permeates Heidegger's texts, early and late. In Being and Time, this opposition giving sense to such key concepts as those of authenticity, falling prey, the "leveling" mode of existence of the "They" and its constitutive structures of idle talk and forgetting, and (by contrast) resoluteness and Da-sein's own relationship to "its" highest "ownmost" possibility, its death. For this series of oppositions, the public and its language and action is always a realm of which Heidegger is suspicious, so much so, in fact, that as we have seen he tends to identify Da-sein's public life as the

most basic origin of its tendency to falsehood and deceit, its "being in the false" which is equiprimordial, according to Heidegger, with its being in truth. In the course of the current analysis, we have witnessed the effect of this opposition on Heidegger's conception of the *logos* and its specific potential for falsehood: the possibility of the false *logos* is seen as first arising from an exterior "repetition" which loses contact with the matters themselves, and as such is an inherent consequence of the capability of spoken and especially written sentences to be communicated and publicized.   In discussing this tendency of the *logos* (and especially of writing), as we saw, Heidegger concurs uncritically with Socrates' own criticism of the *logos* in the Phaedrus, even repeating and endorsing Plato's own distinction between the "inner" truth of the soul and its "outer" repetition.

By contrast, the upshot of Wittgenstein's interrelated rule-following and private language arguments is the conception of a *logos* which extends to the totality of intersubjective human life, and whose sense and meaning is not to be understood except as an aspect of the publicity of this life. This is a *logos* that is at home, not in the "interiority" of a private life, whether of the soul or of an "individual Dasein" or "case of Dasein", but in the medium of publicity and repetition, which does not have its fundamental purpose as not the disclosure of matters in the interiority of an isolated cognition but in the massively varied circumstances and purposes of human life. If we may indeed grasp the late Wittgenstein's vision of language as a vision of what Plato too knew as the *logos*, and hence as comparable to what Heidegger discusses using the same term, then it may thus appear that the Wittgensteinian conception indeed breaks more cleanly with the terms of presence and presentation that still tend to govern, in many ways, Heidegger's text, and so represents a more thorough and complete break with the metaphysics that it still maintains.

IV

On the basis of the critical considerations adduced so far, we have seen that there is some reason to question the adequacy of the specific understanding of the *logos* that Heidegger advances for the task he wishes to perform, namely that of a deconstructive interpretation of the Greek understanding of Being as presence. This is not, I have suggested, because Heidegger is wrong to hold that the Greeks do indeed understand Being as presence, but because his own official conception of the *logos* as a disclosive, secondary, and synthetic structure commits Heidegger himself to significant elements of the interpretation of Being as presence with which he would like to break. The possibility thus arises that drawing on a different conception of the *logos* might provide other, and even perhaps deeper, insights into both Plato's understanding of logical structure and the logical structure of judgment, assertion, and negation themselves. The question thus arises how we might see the structure of the individual *logos* (word or sentence) or indeed of language as a whole as related to the meaning of Being itself.

As we have seen, Heidegger sees Plato, through his presentation of the theory of the Eleatic Stranger, as making a fundamental breakthrough in the understanding of the structure of the *logos*, as against Parmenides' original position. Through this breakthrough, Plato will have in a certain sense inaugurated

the metaphysical determination of Being in terms of the presence of certain privileged beings, although the general theme of Being *as* presence is already broached with Parmenides. But as we have seen in the course of the analysis, there is good reason to doubt whether the solution offered by the Eleatic Stranger to the problem posed by Parmenides is successful, even on the level of successfully demonstrating the very possibility of what Parmenides denies, the possibility of speaking of non-being. To the extent that the Stranger's argument "refutes" Parmenides by showing the incoherence of his own discourse about Being, the same considerations or very closely related ones appear to bear directly against the Stranger's own attempt to speak of being and non-being, and may indeed threaten Heidegger's project as well. Moreover, even on its own terms, the Stranger's solution answers Parmenides' solution only by understanding "non-being" as a species or aspect of difference, in the sense that what "is in one way" is different from what "is in another." Yet this depends on conceiving of the *logos* itself as a structure of subject and predicate; and it is not clearly sufficient as an answer to Parmenides' challenge itself. Depending on the sense in which Parmenides' challenge is to be construed, the solution requires that there be a *presentation* of non-being; for the Eleatic Stranger, at any rate, this requires in turn that there be something like a form, or at any rate a genre, of non-being. Heidegger himself, as we shall see, essentially retains the claim that there is such a presentation, and this possibility for "non-being" or the "nothing" to be presented plays an important role in his own account of the possible disclosure of Being.

To get clearer on these issues, it is helpful to consider more closely just what is involved in Parmenides' seeming "prohibition" itself. The point of Parmenides' argument is to show that it is in some way impossible to speak of (or think of or imagine) "non-being" (*me on*). But what is the meaning of "*me on*" here? Conceptually, there are at least five distinct theses that Parmenides could be arguing for, or that can be seen as suggested by his text:

> 1) That it is impossible to speak of *nonexistent things*, for instance Santa Claus or a centaur.
>
> 2) That it is impossible to assert what is *not the case*, for instance that King's College is on fire (when it is not).
>
> 3) That it is impossible to speak of what is *not something-or-other*; that is, of what has no properties or features.
>
> 4) That it is impossible to speak of any such thing as "nothing," "nothingness," "the Nothing," or "non-being", where these are taken to be (grammatically) objects or phenomena.
>
> 5) That it is impossible to assert a contradiction, e.g. to assert in the same sentence, about the same thing, that it both has and does not have a certain property at a single time.

There is a substantial interpretive literature debating which thesis Parmenides actually intends, and discussing the further consequences in each case. This is closely connected with the longstanding debate over how to understand Parmenides' uses of the verb "*einai*" and its participle, "*eon*." Kirk,

Raven, and Schofield (1983, p. 246) suggest that for Parmenides, to exist is "in effect to be something or other," and so argue for an interpretation of his prohibition along the lines of interpretation 3), but also suggest that Parmenides may be construed as offering an argument against the intelligibility of statements of non-existence, and so as introducing considerations that support interpretation 1).   Along partially different lines, Kahn ([1966] 2009) has argued that the sense of "*einai*" for the Greeks – Parmenides as well as Plato – is primarily "veridicative"; that is, it is used primarily to assert the truth of some state of affairs. Accordingly, Kahn takes the primary sense of Parmenides' argument to be 2) above, although he acknowledges that "*einai*" is also sometimes used, ambiguously, for what we would understand as assertions of simple existence as well.

If Parmenides is arguing for conclusion 1) or 2), then his conclusion is clearly incredible; nevertheless it is not impossible that either of these is his intended conclusion, and in any case considering the possible arguments for them, in the style of good "skeptical" or paradoxical arguments, helps us to focus more clearly on the problems of intentional reference and truth, even if the arguments turn out ultimately to be untenable. Conclusion 5) is suggested by Parmenides' discussion of the "way" of mortal belief, on which …. Moreover, it seems to be the only possibility that is clearly and unambiguously consistent with logical theory as developed, e.g., by Frege and Wittgenstein; indeed it captures the essence of the historically decisive "law of noncontradiction," which holds (for instance on Aristotle's formulation) that it is impossible to assert that something both has and does not have some property at the same time.[51]

The question of which thesis Parmenides is asserting is clearly closely connected to the question of which thesis, if any, Plato takes himself to have refuted in the *Sophist.* Since the stranger's argument amounts in many ways to a detailed and exhaustive analysis of the structure of sentences and predication, it is clear that at least a major part of the argument is designed to show that non-being in the sense of 2) – falsehood – is possible. For it is, after all, the production of falsehood that is the most characteristic mark of the sophist and the definition of his essence.   Moreover, the actual argument that the Stranger produces about the possibility of speaking of "non-being" shows, at most, that the fact that something is *not-X* (where X is any descriptive predicate) does not prevent the possibility of saying that it is Y, where Y is any other predicate or even X itself. This claim appears to extend to the possibility of speaking of some things – objects of fantasy or imagination such as centaurs and chimeras – that do not "really" exist (we might put "real" for X) (and hence to interpretation 2) – but there is little or no suggestion that the Stranger wishes to show the possibility of speaking of non-being in any of the senses 3), 4), or 5). To the contrary, in fact, when the Stranger does explicitly consider the status of "that which is not" *simpliciter* and "by itself" (238c) he appears to *concur* with the Parmenidean argument (if such it be) that it is impossible to do so. He even goes so far as to suggest (238d-239c) that even the philosopher who would formulate a refutation of the Parmenidean argument, as applied to "non-being" itself, will *also* necessarily run into incoherence in the very attempt to speak of it, and so that neither the argument nor its refutation can even coherently be stated.

---

[51] Cf. *Metaphysics* IV 3 1005b19-20: "…the same attribute cannot at the same time belong and not belong to the same subject in the same respect…"

What, though, of Heidegger? As we have seen, by the end of his analysis, Heidegger takes Plato to have established, through the Stranger's argument, the actual presentation (and hence existence) of the me on, "what is not" or "non-being" itself. The demonstration is closely connected, for Heidegger, with the suggestion, which he finds in Plato's text, that "the me on", as participating in the general character of *logos* as legein ti, is itself disclosive, in particular of whatever matters or objects are denied existence by means of it.[52] At 257b, the Stranger summarizes the discussion so far by suggesting that the "me on" means, not something contrary to being (or what is) but rather "only something different from it." Heidegger takes this to mean that the "me on" is just an aspect of the pros ti relation of any *logos* to its matters; thus: "Putting it sharply, the Being of the "not" (the "non-"), the me, is nothing else than the dunamis of the pros ti, the presence of the Being-in-relation-to." (p. 558). He goes on to emphasize, on behalf of "phenomenological research" itself, the implication that negation itself has a disclosive sense:

> Phenomenological research itself accords negation an eminent position: negation as something carried out after a prior acquisition and disclosure of some substantive content. This is what is peculiarly systematic in phenomenology, that, provided it is practiced authentically, phenomenology always involves an antecedent *seeing* of the matters themselves. What is systematic is not some sort of contrived nexus of concepts, taking its orientation from some construct or system. On the contrary, the systematic is grounded in the previous disclosure of the matters themselves, on the basis of which negation then attains the positive accomplishment of making possible the conceptuality of what is seen.

> Furthermore, it is only on the basis of this productive negation, which Plato has at least surmised here, even if he has not pursued it in its proper substantive consequences, that we can clarify a difficult problem of logic, a problem residing in the copula of the proposition or judgment: the meaning of the "is" or "is not" in the propositions "A is B," "A is not B." (pp. 560-61)

Thus, according to Heidegger, "negation as something carried out after a prior acquisition and disclosure of some substantive content" must be accorded, on the basis of its participation in the general *pros ti* structure of the *logos*, phenomenological priority over "bare negation" or mere denial. In fact, according to Heidegger, even the "empty exclusion" which appears to characterize the sense of negation for Parmenides must itself be understood as disclosive, and in particular as having its basis in its relationship to "the nothing":

---

[52] "Over and against a blind addressing of something in merely identifying it by name, there is a disclosive seeing of it in its co-presence with others. And in opposition to the mere blind exclusion that corresponds to this identification by name, there is, if our interpretation of apophasis is correct, a denial which discloses, which lets something be seen precisely in the matters denied. Hence Plato understands the "not" and negation as disclosive. The denying in legein, the saying "no," is a letting be seen and is not, as in the case of the mere exclusion corresponding to the pure calling by name, a letting disappear, a bringing of what is said to nothing." (p. 560)

Phenomenologically, this can be clarified very briefly. Every "not," in every saying of "not," whether explicitly expressed or implicit, has, as a speaking about something, the character of exhibition. Even the empty "not," the mere exclusion of something over and against something arbitrary, shows, but it dimly shows that on which the negation is founded, thus what, in saying "not", is delimited against the nothing. (p. 570)

Thus it is important phenomenologically not to concur with Parmenides' sense of negation as "prior to the nothing" but rather to reverse it, and rather see even the empty and general "not" that figures in such phrases as "non-being" and "what is not in any way" as phenomenologically founded in a prior disclosure, indeed of "the nothing" itself. This is, in fact, just the sense in which Heidegger takes Plato to have "acquired, on the basis of the new insight into the on of me on, a new basis for the interpretation of *logos*" and thus accomplished a fundamental "advance in the determination and clarification of beings" corresponding to this new and "radical" conception of the *logos*. Heidegger takes this discovery to mean that "the opposite of *on*, *me on* itself, is to be addressed as an *on*," and to show that we have actually made "*me on* itself visible as an *eidos*" and even "shown how *me on* itself looks." (cf. *Sophist* 258d).

Heidegger's "phenomenological" interpretation of the Stranger's argument thus takes it to establish, over against Parmenides' own undifferentiated sense of bare and exclusionary negation, a kind of "productive negation" which depends on and allows the disclosure of the "me on" itself, the actuality or "presence" of "non-being", or what Heidegger calls "the nothing." Heidegger thus takes the Stranger's argument to establish the possibility of speaking of non-being in sense 4) above, and even takes it to demonstrate the possible disclosure and presencing of "the nothing" itself. This idea of a form of disclosure of "the nothing" that is in fact prior to, and at the foundation of, the logical function of negation is quite important for Heidegger's understanding of truth and disclosure, as is amply confirmed by the notorious 1929 Freiburg inaugural address, "What is Metaphysics?"[53] The centerpiece of the address is Heidegger's claim for the possibility of a disclosure of "the nothing" in the fundamental mood, or attunement, of *Angst*. Heidegger here repeats the claim that this disclosure on the basis of mood precedes and founds the "bare negation" of logic, rather than the other way around:

> What testifies to the constant and widespread though distorted revelation of the nothing in our existence more compellingly than negation? But negation does not conjure the "not" out of itself as a means for making distinctions and oppositions in whatever is given, inserting itself, as it were, in between what is given. How could negation produce the not from itself when it can make denials only when something deniable is already granted to it? But how could the deniable and what is to be denied be viewed as something susceptible to the not unless all thinking as such has caught sight of the not already? But the not can become manifest only when its origin, the nihilation of the nothing in general, and therewith the nothing itself, is

---

[53] (Heidegger [1929] 1993)

disengaged from concealment. The not does not originate through negation; rather, negation is grounded in the not that springs from the nihilation of the nothing. (pp. 104-105).

Thus, while "the nothing" is definable as "the complete negation of the totality of beings" (p. 98), it is the experience of this "nothing" in the positive phenomenon of its "nihilating" that first makes possible an experience, or disclosure, of "beings as a whole." This experience is not, however, a matter of conceiving of, or conceptualizing the totality of beings, which Heidegger declares "impossible in principle. " Rather:

> As surely as we can never comprehend absolutely the whole of beings in themselves we certainly do find ourselves stationed in the midst of beings that are revealed somehow as a whole. In the end an essential distinction prevails between comprehending the whole of beings in themselves and finding oneself in the midst of beings as a whole. The former is impossible in principle. The latter happens all the time in our existence. (p. 99)

Heidegger draws on these conclusions – that the logical function of negation is preceded by, and grounded in, a disclosive experience of "the nothing," and that this disclosive experience is itself grounded in mood and attunement rather than intellect – to dispute what he here calls the "traditional" logical treatment of negation and indeed the "rule of 'logic'" itself. (Throughout the address, Heidegger puts the term "logic" in scare quotes, but his meaning in doing so is somewhat obscure). It is indeed, Heidegger suggests, necessary to challenge this "doctrine" in order to appreciate the actual priority of mood and attunement over the intellect in the meaning of negation. For: "[A]ccording to the reigning and never-challenged doctrine of "logic," negation is a specific act of the intellect." (p. 97) The more original disclosure of the nothing in the experience of Angst itself shows, Heidegger suggests, that we must reject the priority expressed in this traditional "logical" doctrine of negation and reverse its underlying assumptions. Even the law of contradiction itself, "the commonly cited ground rule of all thinking," must be challenged, in that it threatens to "lay low" the question of the meaning and disclosure of the nothing. But this disclosure of the nothing "makes possible the openedness of beings as such." (p. 104). At the time of the lecture, at any rate, Heidegger therefore understands the positive possibility of a disclosure of "the Nothing" as very closely connected to the possibility of the disclosure of Being – in the sense of the Being of beings – itself.

What, however, is Heidegger's argument for this positive possibility of this disclosure of "the Nothing"? If it is legitimate to assume that his argument is basically the same as those developed in much more detail in the *Sophist* lecture course – and certainly he says nothing in the address to contravene this impression – we may summarize it as follows. The phenomenological discovery of intentionality, already anticipated by Plato, demonstrates that every assertoric *logos* has the feature of aboutness; this is verified by the fundamental disclosive character of the *logos* as *legein ti.* This means that, contrary to Parmenides' argument, even a false *logos* or one "about" a "non-being," something that does not actually exist, may disclose such a non-being. Heidegger follows Plato's Stranger in taking this implication to refute Parmenides' argument by showing a sense in which "non-being" itself is capable of being disclosed. This disclosure, moreover, must be prior to the formulated sentence itself, for only by

capturing it can the sentence have the meaning and significance that it does. This verifies the possibility of disclosing "non-being" itself, a possibility that is, as prior to the formulation of any sentence, also prior to the logical operation of negation, which is an operation of negating a given sentence. This possible disclosure of "non-being" or "the nothing" in its own character, also, practically *a fortiori*, verifies the possibility of a disclosure of Being itself that is distinct from either the disclosure of any being or the disclosure of the logical totality thereof.

However, as we have seen, although there is good reason to think that Plato, through the Stranger's argument, refutes Parmenides' claims on interpretation 2) and probably 1) as well, there is little reason to think he refutes the argument on interpretation 3) – which, to the contrary, he appears to agree with – and no reason whatsoever to think that he refutes the argument on interpretation 4).[54] But interpretation 4) gives precisely the sense with which Heidegger is primarily concerned. This suggests – and the suggestion may be verified by looking closely at the argument of "What is Metaphysics" – that the crucial passage in Heidegger's argument from the establishment of the possibility of the false *logos* in Plato to his own conclusion, that of a positive disclosure of "the nothing," turns largely on an equivocation between two senses of "non-being." In the first, innocuous sense, "a non-being" simply means something that does not exist, for instance Santa Claus or a centaur. This first sense may perhaps with some legitimacy also be extended to sentences, so that, e.g., the fact that King's college is burning may be termed a "non-being", or at any rate the nominalized "burning King's college" is such a "being that doesn't exist". However, in a second, not directly related sense, "being" is used not as a straightforward general noun but as a participle, and "non-being" denotes the state or phenomenon of not existing, opposite to "Being" in the participle sense. "Non-being" in the second sense is then treated as synonymous with "the nothing", which again is a kind of nominalization of what is otherwise expressed in negative existential sentences such as "there is nothing in the box" or "there is nothing I can hold onto".[55] It is only by means of this equivocation, then, that Heidegger proceeds from the argument actually given by the Stranger and grounded in Plato's own understanding of logic to the position that "non-being" and "the Nothing" are themselves capable of being disclosed.

 If this is the right analysis of Heidegger's route to affirming a primary and essential disclosure of "the Nothing" itself, it additionally yields good reason to doubt the basis of his claim for the priority of this disclosure over negation in the logical sense. To a large extent, as we have seen, this claim is dependent

---

[54] In this paragraph and the next one, I rely closely on a perspicuous article by Ernst Tugendhat ((Tugendhat 1970) titled "Das Sein und das Nichts" which discusses Heidegger's "What is Metaphysics" along with Parmenides and Hegel.

[55] Cf. (Tugendhat 1970): "So gelangen wir zu dem uberraschenden Ergebnis, dass, wo Heidegger die Erfahrung 'des Nichts' tatsachlich vorfuhrt, er sie faktisch im Rekus auf den normalen Gebrauch des Wortes 'nichts' beschreibt: die gemeinte Erfahrung artikuliert sich in einem negative Existenzsatz ('es gibt nichts, woran ich mich halten kann',), und die nachtragliche Erklarung, was da erfahren wird, sei 'das Nichts', erweist sich als ein blosser Zusatz: man kann ihn, wenn man unbedingt will, als deinitorische Einfuhrung des Ausdrucks 'das Nichts' auf dem Weg uber den angegebenen negative Existenzsatz festhalten, man kann ihn aber ohne jeden Verlust ebensogut weglassen." (p. 155).

on his broader claim that the disclosure of beings is prior to their formulation and capture in assertoric sentences, which are what alone can truly be negated; thus, negation "can make denials only when something deniable is already granted to it" and is, at least "according to the reigning and never-challenged doctrine of "logic,", "a specific act of the intellect" which consists in forming the denial or negation of some previously given judgment or assertion. But if Heidegger's claim for a disclosure of the "Nothing" indeed relies on the equivocation discussed in the last paragraph, and claims about "non-being" and the "nothing" indeed remain logically dependent on, rather than prior to, sentences that employ these terms in their ordinary senses, then the sense of "negation" that is appropriate to understanding them remains the standard sense of logical negation, which functions only in relation to sentences, and remains a primary determinant of their meanings. Moreover, the assumption that this makes of negation a merely subjective "act of the intellect" is misguided. For although logical negation in the sense relevant to the argument is assuredly a function that applies only to sentences, it certainly need not be taken to characterize an *act* performed by any subject at any time. In fact, the powerful and general consideration that every assertoric sentence must have, as a matter of its fundamental logical structure, a negation which reverses its truth-value, speaks powerfully in favor of a conception of logical negation that owes nothing to subjective acts or events whatsoever.

In criticizing Heidegger's argument in this way, however, must we not deny the reality and importance for ontological research of the very experiences upon which Heidegger relies so heavily, for instance the experience of *Angst* which, according to him, gives us a first clue to the meaning of Being itself? In fact we need not. In upholding the view that Heidegger's descriptions of the supposed priority and disclosure of the Nothing as a bare phenomenon in fact rest essentially and inseparably on the *sentences* in which claims "about the nothing" are formulated, all we have to do is insist upon maintaining the formulation of these claims in these sentences themselves. Thus, as Tugendhat suggests at the end of his article, the ontological analysis of the "phenomenon" of "the Nothing" as it is disclosed in Angst becomes the (potentially rather more concrete) analysis of the experiences and claims which find apt expression in *sentences* such as "I find nothing to hold onto;" "In anxiety, all things and we ourselves sink into indifference;" and "there is nothing (in existence) rather than something." There is no reason to think that this analysis cannot be as fruitful, and as eminently capable of yielding "ontological" truths, as Heidegger's own purported methodology of reflecting on the "disclosure" of the Nothing itself. Yet it retains, where Heidegger's own analysis does not, a close and essential connection to the phenomena and structures that determine the logical articulation of the sentence as such, and so the possibility of any sort of linguistic meaning whatsoever.[56]

What might such a program of jointly logical and ontological analysis look like, if actually applied to the positions of Parmenides, Plato, and Heidegger, and hence used to evaluate, from another perspective, the shifting status of the "determination of Being by presence" and its historical implications? As we have seen, to insist upon a *primarily sentential* (rather than pre-logical) understanding of the significance of negation is to exclude any interpretation along the lines of 4), above, as a serious option

---

[56] Cf., again, (Tugendhat 1970).

for understanding Parmenides or undertaking his refutation; however, it leaves in place the claim that Plato refutes Parmenides in senses 1) and 2), and may allow interpretation 3) to stand as the common core of what Plato and Parmenides both agree to. More suggestively in terms of the "history of logic" itself, it appears that interpretation 5) may also stand as at least implicated or suggested by Parmenides, never refuted or denied by Plato, and indeed an important and potentially revealing implication of "modern logic" as well. This would imply that the "meaning of negation," although it presumably has not yet been fully understood, is closely connected with, and stands to be further revealed by consideration of, the significance of the "principle of contradiction," which Heidegger tends to either pass over or simply reject as a relic of the "logic of the tradition" which he would like to overcome. This consideration would take up, then, *inter alia*, such questions as the question of the necessity of the exclusionary relationship between each truth-evaluable sentence and its negation, the question of the ultimate reason for the "impossibility" of uttering a contradiction, and even the force of rational criticism itself in detecting and evincing contradictions.

Suggestively in the present context, it is, of course, not at all unreasonable to take Parmenides himself to be the first discoverer of the "principle of contradiction," even if he does not (quite) formulate it explicitly or see clearly all of its consequences. If it is after all correct, however, as I have suggested, to see Parmenides' sense of "bare negation," which underlies the principle of contradiction, as prior in many ways to the concrete "disclosure of non-being" that Heidegger takes Plato to have established, then this suggests a rather different way of looking at the relationship between Parmenides and Plato than Heidegger himself suggests. Recall that Heidegger sees Parmenides' privileging of such "bare negation" as the result of an "overhasty" approach to the meaning of Being that essentially consists in identifying the meaning of Being with the "ontic totality of beings" as revealed in a pure and unarticulated looking (what Parmendies calls *noein*). According to Heidegger this approach is responsible, as well, for Parmenides' declarations of the unity of all Being and its stasis and incapability of change, which inaugurate in a certain sense the entire Greek interpretation of Being as constant, standing presence, but do not yet interpret Being in terms of a privileged entity or entities. This latter step would wait for Plato himself, who identifies the Forms as such privileged beings capable of determining the sense of the being of anything else. In taking this step, according to Heidegger, Plato inaugurates the ontological problematic itself, and he does so specifically by inaugurating a sense of Being that is genuinely distinct from any description or summary of beings. Through the theory of forms and the determination of them as what is most truly in Being, he thus in a certain way invents the ontological distinction between Being and beings itself, albeit while still fundamentally lacking clarity about it, and hence continuing to understand the forms themselves on the analogy or model of beings. A privileged moment in this discovery is (what Heidegger takes to be) Plato's clarification of the structure of the *logos* in the Sophist and related dialogues, and in particular his elucidation of the specific existence and disclosure of "non-Being," which is correlative to the possibility of a disclosure of Being itself.

 But if there is probably no such disclosure of "non-Being itself" in Plato, and certainly no such disclosure that is prior to or independent of the structure of the *logos*, then it becomes significantly more difficult, as well, to understand Plato as having discovered the very possibility of a pre-logical disclosure of "the

meaning of Being", if such a possibility indeed exists (and we may well come to doubt it). By contrast to Parmenides, Plato's contribution in the Sophist will, rather, have consisted in demonstrating that "non-being" (in the innocuous sense of what does not exist or obtain) has its "proper place" in the assertoric *logos*, and is hence to be understood only by means of a theory of the meaning of sentences, which the Stranger's doctrine also goes some way toward providing. This suggests, as well, that the "meaning of Being," if we may indeed attribute anything like an anticipation of this phrase to Plato, is also to be found, if at all, only in logical reflection on the meaning and structure of sentences.

To see things this way is not at all to deny the ontological difference between Being and beings. It is, rather, to insist that this difference be formulated in terms of the differential meanings of the claims that its drawing permits, as it seems it must, in any case, if there is to be a coherent discourse about it. In particular, it is to insist that any claim that we can coherently present as summarizing the Being of beings, or the meaning of Being, have its own sense in relation to logical features of claims "about beings," or better, in relation to truths on the "ontic" level, without necessarily being reduced or reducible to such claims or truths. If, in particular, the sense and intentionality of claims "about beings" does not simply reduce, under logical analysis, to a uniform relation of disclosure or disclosedness, then it will not be possible simply to understand the "truth of beings" as their possible disclosure and identify the meaning of their Being as simply what permits such disclosure. On the other hand, the fact that beings can be *discussed* -- and even compared with what does not exist as well as, through language, considered "as a whole" – remains of cardinal, profound, and properly *ontological* importance.

The last remark, in particular, again suggests the importance and relevance of a level of analysis which Heidegger often simply dismisses, or takes as being of secondary importance relative to what he understands as the disclosure of the "meaning of Being" itself. This is the analysis of what is involved in *claims about totalities*, and in particular about the "totality of what is," whether we understand this in Heidegger's way as "the totality of beings" or, perhaps more perspicuously, as the "totality of the facts," i.e. "all that is the case" (following the early Wittgenstein). Parmenides' position itself is presented, of course, as grounded in reflection on this totality in some sense, and we have seen that Plato's Stranger introduces powerful considerations to the effect that such reflection (or at least speaking about it) is not possible. However, whatever the extent or bearing of these considerations (which are echoed and extended in the Parmenides itself), it remains that the idea of the totality of what is has an apparent sense, and set of uses in ordinary discourse, which cannot simply be dismissed even if they are not simply in good logical order, either. Rather than supposing, as Heidegger does, that the sense of "beings as a whole" simply cannot be grasped at all by the intellect (though it nevertheless corresponds to an experience in which we find ourselves "among them"), it might be productive and indeed revealing to consider more deeply the logical structure of such grasping, as it is involved in the everyday sense of expressions such as "everything," "the universe," and "what there is," without precluding or underestimating the profound and perhaps revealing paradoxes and difficulties that may be encountered in the course of this consideration.

If one were indeed to reconsider the grand Heideggerian narrative of the successive historical determinations of Being as presence with this and similar considerations in mind, it might then indeed

appear that the insight of Parmenides is, with respect at least to the depth and profundity of its understanding of the "meaning of Being" itself, in many ways greater even than Plato's. For it is Parmenides who will have seen in the logical structure of the assertoric sentence itself the implication of the constant, unchanging presence of all that it characterizes, and distinguished this categorically and completely from the non-being, falsehood, and illusoriness of whatever changes and passes. This, what we might see as a *logical* determination of "being as presence" – is then, of course, the model for Plato's official account of the forms, which indeed makes the unchanging a region or level of Being rather than its totality. Nevertheless, if it is reasonable to ask again, on these grounds, about what is actually involved in the temporal and historical "determination of Being as presence" and its many variations, it also appears reasonable to consider that Parmenides' own logical insight truly inaugurates the "metaphysics of presence," and specifically does so by drawing out implications of the very possibility of speaking of beings, and so that it is with these specifically logical and linguistic implications that we must ultimately reckon if we are to overcome it. This suggestion indeed finds some confirmation in the later Heidegger's almost obsessional re-readings of Parmenides, which intensify after Heidegger explicitly comes to consider the Being of language essential to the ontological problematic, and which constantly return to the interpretation of the sense of Parmenides' assertion of the unity of Being and "what is to be thought." I have argued that it is verified, as well, in many of the profound results of inquiry into the nature and structure of logic, in the sense of "formal logic," in the twentieth century.   If this inquiry indeed has, as I think, the potential to contribute in fundamental and profound ways to the elucidation and pursuit of the question of the meaning of Being that Heidegger himself was the first in our times to state and present, it is to be hoped that Heidegger's own more specific, regional, and (as it has turned out) short-sighted assumptions about the historical sense and development of the "logical tradition" do not prevent properly ontological inquiry from pursuing what may be some of the most radical and potentially profound tools that logical reflection has, in recent times, placed at its disposal.

Works Cited

Crowell, Steven Galt. *Husserl, Heidegger, and the Space of Meaning.* Evanston, Il.: Northwestern U. Press, 2001.

Dahlstrom, Daniel O. *Heidegger's Concept of Truth.* Cambridge U. Press, 2001.

Deleuze, Gilles. *The Logic of Sense.* Columbia U. Press, [1969] 1990.

Derrida, Jacques. "Plato's Pharmacy." In *Dissemination*, by Jacques Derrida, translated by Barbara Johnson. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, [1968] 1981.

Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time.* Translated by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson. New York: Harper and Row, [1927] 1962.

—. *History of the Concept of Time: Prolegomena.* Translated by Theodore Kisiel. Indiana U. Press, [1925] 1992.

—. *Platon: Sophistes (GA 19).* Edited by Ingeborg Schussler. Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, [1925] 1992.

—. *Plato's Sophist.* Translated by Richard Rojcewicz and Andre Schuwer. Indiana University Press, [1925] 1997.

—. *Sein und Zeit.* Tubingen: Verlag, [1927] 2006.

Heidegger, Martin. "What is Metaphysics?" In *Basic Writings*, by Martin Heidegger, edited by David Ferrell Krell, 89-110. Harper, [1929] 1993.

Kahn, Charles H. "A Return to the Theory of the Verb Be and the Concept of Being." In *Essays on Being*, by Charles H. Kahn, 109-142. Oxford U. Press, [2004] 2009.

Kahn, Charles H. "The Greek Verb 'To Be' and the Concept of Being." In *Essays on Being*, by Charles H. Kahn, 16-40. Oxford U. Press, [1966] 2009.

Kir, G.S., Raven, J.E., and Schofield, M. *The Presocratic Philosophers.* Second. Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 1983.

Kisiel, Theodore. *The Genesis of Heidegger's Being and Time.* Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993.

Martin, Wayne. *Theories of Judgment: Psychology, Logic, Phenomenology.* Cambridge U. Press, 2006.

Owen, G. E. L. "Plato on Not-Being." In *Logic, Science and Dialectic*, by G. E. L. Owen, 104-137. Cornell U. Press, [1967] 1986.

Palmer, John A. *Plato's Reception of Parmenides.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999.

Plato. *Plato: Complete Works.* Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997.

Rosen, Stanley. *Plato's Sophist: The Drama of Original and Image.* Yale U. Press, 1983.

Tugendhat, Ernst. ""Das Sein und das Nichts"." In *Durchblicke: Martin Heidegger zum 80. Geburtstag*, 132-61. Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1970.

Wrathall, Mark. "Heidegger and Truth as Correspondence." *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 7, no. 1 (1999): 69-88.