

FRANCISCO J. GONZALEZ



PLATO AND HEIDEGGER

A QUESTION OF DIALOGUE

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this to some extent is suggested by the emphasis he gives to the paradigmatic, commanding, or normative character of the forms or ideas: the ἰδέα of something is not only what it *is*, but also what it *ought to be*. As Peperzak states the point, the ἰδέα is “the union of being (*Sein*) and ought (*Sollen*) before their difference arises” (93). And as Peperzak himself notes, this normative character of the forms is completely lost in Heidegger's reduction of the forms to “looks” (94).²⁶

Heidegger himself appears to see beyond such a reduction when he characterizes the μέγιστα γένη as *presuppositions* of discourse, rather than as objects of discourse (538–39).²⁷ Dialectic, Heidegger insists, does not deduce the γένη, but instead discloses them as already there in what we say: “what is still and already there is uncovered, is looked to [*es wird aufgedeckt, nachgesehen, was noch und schon da ist*]” (539; my trans.). But the γένη are in this case disclosed not as objects, but instead as what is presupposed in every addressing of objects. The form or idea of a thing is what must be already disclosed if I am to address that thing as what it is; as such a presupposition, the form or idea is the *being* of the thing addressed and not *another thing*. In other words, the ἰδέα is what makes possible a thing's having a particular “look” and form of address and cannot therefore itself be a “look.” To discover the ideas as presuppositions is incompatible with objectifying them.²⁸ Heidegger himself appears to recognize this when, earlier in the course, he makes the striking claim that if phenomenological research has any kinship with Plato, this lies in Plato's understanding of ὑπόθεσις (451–52), which, Heidegger insists, is not an ontic hypothesis. The Greek ὑπόθεσις is not something we postulate after the fact to explain what we say and do, but rather what already and always underlies what we say and do, whether explicitly or not. It is this kind of ὑπόθεσις that phenomenology seeks to uncover, and it is as this kind of ὑπόθεσις that the ideas or forms must be understood.

If we return to the claim at 539 that a γένος is not deduced, but rather uncovered as “was noch und schon da ist,” i.e., as presupposed, as ὑπόθεσις, we find an extremely important marginal gloss by Heidegger on the phrase “was noch und schon da ist”: “self-asserting, being in power: δύναμις [*sich geltend macht, an der Macht ist: δύναμις*].” Here we have a recognition of how

als Sich-verbergen im Sich-zeigen” (1997, 286). In my view, and I believe Peperzak's, Plato's position is much closer to that attributed here to Heidegger.

26. For further discussion of this normative character of the forms, see also my *Dialectic and Dialogue: Plato's Practice of Philosophical Inquiry* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1998), 212–16; and Rafael Ferber, *Plato's Idee des Guten*, 2nd ed. (Sankt Augustin: Academia Verlag Richarz, 1989), 30.

27. Cf. Gadamer on the γένη (sameness and difference, specifically) as the condition of the possibility of dialectic (*Plato's Dialectical Ethics*, 95; *Plato's dialektische Ethik*, 69).

28. This is a point on which Wieland rightly insists: see, e.g., *Platon und die Formen des Wissens*, 100.

the forms are discovered and how they should be characterized: not as *present*, as Heidegger otherwise insists, nor as *looks*, but as *sich geltend machend*, as asserting their rights and demanding recognition, as being in power: as δύναμις.

D. BEING AS ΔΥΝΑΜΙΣ

1. Being as Presence

This last point gets at the real heart of the matter. In arguing that Plato approaches being entirely from the perspective of λόγος and that accordingly he identifies being with εἶδος in the sense of what is visible to a pure perceiving, Heidegger's ultimate aim is to show that being for Plato, and for the Greeks generally, is *presence* or, more precisely, *being-made-present-for-use*, that is, *produced* (*Her-gestelltsein*, 269–70).²⁹ Heidegger makes this aim fully explicit in introducing his discussion of the battle of the gods and giants (γίγαντομαχία περὶ τῆς οὐσίας). He first observes: “The question of the meaning of οὐσία itself is not alive for the Greeks as an ontological theme; instead, they always ask only: which beings genuinely satisfy the meaning of being and which ontological characters result thereby? The meaning of being itself remains unquestioned. This does not imply, however, that the Greeks had no concept of being. For without one the question of what satisfies the meaning of being would be groundless and without direction. . . . The meaning of being implicitly guiding this ontology is being = presence” (466).³⁰ Heidegger then proceeds to make clear his intention to “demonstrate, by the success of an actual interpretation of Plato's ensuing discussions, that this sense of being in fact guided the ontological questioning of the Greek—otherwise there is no way to demonstrate the function of this meaning of being in Greek philosophy” (467) Heidegger's interpretation of Plato, however, is in this respect *not* a success.³¹ One can indeed grant that what Heidegger says here about the

29. While its presuppositions are being challenged here, the thesis that the Greeks interpreted being as being-produced will be taken up more explicitly in the last chapter.

30. See also GA 19, 34, and especially 398: “Sein für die Griechen eben heißt: Anwesend-sein, Gegenwärtig-sein.” Heidegger does grant, however, that the positions of the friends of the forms and the giants are not, like the positions criticized earlier, purely ontic, but instead expressly ontological (465).

31. That this same interpretation of Plato's conception of Being pervades Gadamer's *Plato's Dialectical Ethics* (see, e.g., 9, 35, 133; *Plato's dialektische Ethik*, 10, 27, 96) is a clear sign of Heidegger's influence on the book. Gadamer does try to provide some defense of this interpretation through his critique of Plato's account of the affects in the *Philebus* (161, 169, 172, 190–95; *Plato's dialektische Ethik*, 116, 122, 124, 137–40), but for a response see my “Plato's Dialectical Ethics: Or Taking Gadamer at His Word,” in *Hermeneutic Philosophy and Plato: Gadamer's Response to the “Philebus,”* ed. Christopher J. Gill and François Renaud (Sankt Augustin: Academia Verlag, forthcoming).

good in the context. If the good is characterized in one context as not being and in another context as of or in being, Heidegger draws whatever conclusions he wishes from each claim without tracing the difference back to the difference in contexts: specifically, in this case, the difference between seeing the good as a cause of being and truth, in which case it must be considered beyond being, and seeing it as itself something to be known or desired, in which case it must be considered as in some sense belonging to being.²⁰ Furthermore, the word *yoke* has been seen to acquire in Heidegger's reading a life of its own completely divorced from its context in the text: a feature of Heidegger's interpretation that will become even more pronounced later. What is obscured and distorted in all of these cases is precisely what Plato's analogies are meant to indicate, and *only indicate*: the nature and transcendence of the good.

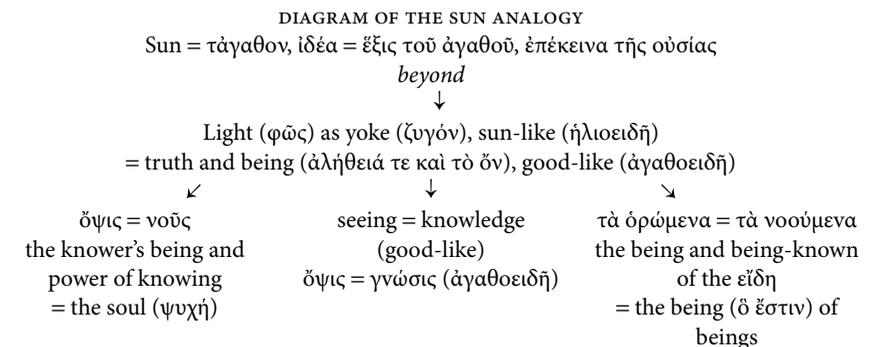
4. Conclusion of Section A

In charting the development of Heidegger's interpretation, it is important to note that the course of WS 1931/32, even after introducing the Sun Analogy into the Cave Analogy, only hints at the transformation of truth into correctness. At 117, Heidegger informs us that the reason why the interpretation of the Cave Analogy was undertaken was to gain a better understanding of ἀλήθεια as unconcealment and of its intimate connection with the essence of man, as indeed a happening of this essence. There is not a word here about truth as "correctness." Rather than attempting to demonstrate the transformation of truth from unconcealment into correctness on the basis of the analogies of the *Republic*, Heidegger instead has recourse, in the second half of the course, to the *Theaetetus* and the characterization there of untruth as falsehood (ψευδής), a characterization that Heidegger sees as resulting in a corresponding conception of truth as ἀψευδές or correctness (see 137). That this

20. Alain Boutot at one point asks the important question "Heidegger devait inévitablement rencontrer, à vrai dire, le problème de la transcendance de l'idée du Bien chez Platon. Platon, en effet, n'essaie-t-il pas par là de penser au-delà de l'οὐσία, au-delà de l'ἐκείναι en direction de l'être lui-même? Si tel était le cas, Heidegger ne pourrait plus dire que l'être comme tel est resté impensé chez Platon ni que ce dernier marque vraiment l'avènement de ce qu'il appelle le 'nihilisme,' c'est-à-dire l'avènement de l'histoire de l'oubli de l'être." *Heidegger et Platon: Le problème du nihilisme* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1987), 159. But Boutot then cites the passages describing the good as somehow within being, passages describing the good in the context of our knowledge and desire and saying nothing explicit about its exact relation to being, as by themselves showing that Plato could not think beyond οὐσία and thereby bring it into question (160): as if these passages could simply *cancel the explicit assertion* at 509b9–10 that the good is *not* οὐσία but *beyond* οὐσία! There is no doubt still a paradox and a problem in Plato's conception of the good, one that Peperzak expresses in the following question: "How, then, can it, despite its beyondness, be 'seen' and 'known' as if it were a being, a truth, an essence, or a virtue?" ("Did Heidegger Understand Plato's Idea of Truth?" 98). But then the problem is that Heidegger and Boutot suppress the paradox and thus fail to think it through. As Peperzak rightly insists, "In any case we will miss the whole secret of 'the good' if we betray all of Plato's efforts by reducing it to the dimension of essences and their manifestation" (ibid.).

turn to the *Theaetetus* backfires by doing more to undermine than support Heidegger's thesis will be the argument of the next chapter. The version of the course delivered in 1933–34, as we have seen, goes further in the direction of what will become the essay "Platons Lehre von der Wahrheit," arguing, on the basis of the Sun rather than the Cave Analogy, that the failure to question the nature of the yoke yoking together the knowledge possessed by the subject and the truth of the object starts taking us down the road to truth as correctness.²¹ It is therefore perhaps not only due to time limitations that the discussion of the *Theaetetus* is greatly curtailed and abbreviated in 1933–34: it is no longer as essential to Heidegger's case. Any reference to the *Theaetetus* will of course disappear completely from the essay on Plato's doctrine of truth. Even the interpretation of the Sun Analogy in the 1933–34 course, however, only suggests an inception of the transformation of truth in Plato. Both courses, furthermore, have been seen to contain insights in their interpretation of Plato that resist the reductions required by the thesis of a transformation of the essence of truth. Unfortunately, what will prove to determine Heidegger's later reading of Plato are not the insights, but rather the serious errors and reductive simplifications that, rather than being corrected, will become only more entrenched and more liberated from the text they distort.

The following diagrams will serve to outline and summarize the ways in which Heidegger must transform the Sun Analogy to defend his thesis.



21. It is possible that the differences between the 1931–32 and 1933–34 courses are even greater than the texts published in the *Gesamtausgabe* would lead us to believe. As Fritsche observes, Heidegger made additions to his manuscript for the 1931–32 course after the course was delivered and certainly when he redelivered the course in 1933–34 on the basis of the same manuscript (HPD, 171–72n23). Given the editorial practice of the *Gesamtausgabe*, to produce a continuous text out of all of the materials available, there is really no way of telling what in GA 34 was delivered in 1931–32 and what represents a later addition. It is certainly possible that as Heidegger developed Plato's "doctrine of truth" in the context of a "history of being," he went back to his manuscript for the earlier courses and made additions/revisions to bring it into line with this doctrine. Therefore, while the present chapter shows that it is possible to trace a development even from the published texts, the development could have been even more extensive and significant than these texts suggest. Until we have a critical edition of these courses, there is no way to know for certain.

6



CALCULATIVE THINKING, MEDITATIVE THINKING,
AND THE PRACTICE OF DIALOGUE

The critique of logos, and therefore of logic, that was seen to put Heidegger at odds with Plato's dialectic in the courses of the 1920s becomes even more pronounced during the 1930s and afterwards. One should therefore expect that Heidegger's antipathy to dialectic and dialogue in Plato's works would become even more uncompromising. This expectation is sometimes fulfilled. However, most striking in the later texts are the moments when Heidegger, rather unexpectedly, betrays a greater sympathy not only to dialectic but to the dialogue form: a sympathy apparently due to a recognition that Plato's relation to logos might be after all quite different from that critiqued under the heading of "logic." The goal of the present chapter is to follow both trajectories in the later Heidegger and bring into question their compatibility: the further intensified critique of logos, on the one hand, and the evidence of a greater affinity to dialectic and dialogue, on the other, culminating in Heidegger's own attempt to write dialogues. In this case as in others, Heidegger will be seen to be largely at odds with himself as a result of failing to come to terms with Plato's legacy.

A. HEIDEGGER'S CRITIQUE OF LOGOS IN THE 1930S

In the course *Grundfragen der Philosophie* (WS 1937/38), Heidegger says: "Since the times of *Plato* and *Aristotle* the question of truth is a question of logic. What this entails is that the search for what truth is proceeds on the tracks and in the perspectives laid down by logic's starting point and field of work as well as its presuppositions" (GA 45, 10). Heidegger then suggests that "the field of vision of *all logic* as logic *blocks* (*verstellt*) precisely the view onto the essence of truth [*den Ausblick auf das Wesen der Wahrheit*]" (11). Why is this the case? Logic is the study of λόγος understood as *assertion* (*Aussage*).

To interpret the essence of truth from the perspective of logic is therefore to interpret it as having its proper place in the assertion, as being a property of the assertion: specifically, the assertion's *correspondence* to what is. In other words, interpreted from the perspective of logic, truth becomes correctness. Such a characterization of truth, however, distorts or covers over the essence of truth as *unconcealment*. The correspondence of a λόγος to a thing presupposes the unconcealedness or openness (*Offenheit*) of the thing itself, of the region between the thing and the person making the assertion, and of the person himself both toward the thing and toward other human beings (19): it is therefore in this openness or unconcealment that the original essence of truth is to be found (96–103). The problem, then, with characterizing truth within the perspective of logic as "correctness" is not that this characterization is "incorrect," but rather that it obstructs the more original essence of truth as openness within which correctness is alone possible. To make λόγος one's guiding perspective is thus from the very outset to block access to the genuine essence of truth.

Yet it is not only truth that gets distorted and covered up by logic as the science of the assertion, but also being, since truth and being cannot be thought separately. As Heidegger insists in the 1937–38 course (46–48), one cannot ask the question of the essence of truth without asking the question of the truth of essence. If in asking about the essence of truth, we simply assume that essence here means some general idea or genus common to all particular cases of truth, then we also assume that the essence of truth is to be determined on the basis of some correspondence to particular cases of truth, that is, we already assume that truth is correspondence. In short, the questions of being/essence and truth are inseparable. But then what kind of interpretation of being results from making logic the guiding perspective? If truth is interpreted as correspondence, then being is simultaneously interpreted as what enables something to be *an object for* such correspondence. In other words, a thing must be *present* to a λόγος, and present in a constant and stable way, in order for the λόγος to be able to be *about* it and to *correspond* to it. Being thus comes to be interpreted as what makes something present to a λόγος and thus as *presence*; more specifically, it comes to be interpreted as the presence of an *idea* which enables a being to appear as the specific kind of thing about which I can make assertions and therefore as *what-lies-before* (*ὑπο-κείμενον*). This point is made with special clarity in the 1935 *Einführung in die Metaphysik* course: "Enduringly present [*beständig anwesend*] is that to which we must in advance return with all grasping and producing, the paradigm, the *idea*. Enduringly present is that to which we in every λόγος, assertion, must return as to what is always already lying there before [*Vorliegende*], the *ὑποκείμενον, subjectum*" (EM, 147). In the 1937–38 course, Heidegger repeatedly draws