

CHAPTER SIX

THE BEGINNING OF THE HISTORY OF BEING

By providing a detailed reading of Heidegger's account of the beginning of the understanding of Being as presencing with the ancient Greeks, this chapter shows Heidegger's notion of the Temporality of Being "in action." Heidegger claims that, though the pre-Socratics originally glimpsed the role of Being as the cultural ordering of what-is, this insight, and hence Being itself, has sunk further and further into "oblivion" as the history of metaphysics has unfolded. The pre-Socratics grasped the relationship between the cultural practices and how things show themselves as well as the role of Time in the presencing of the Being of what-is, but Heidegger's contribution to the history of Being is the explicit recognition of what they only tacitly recognized.

By now the reader should be forewarned that Heidegger's reflections assimilate a philosopher's thinking into his own view of the history of metaphysics. He does not attempt to give what we might regard as an "historically objective" analysis of their views, but, then, Heidegger's work brings into question the meaning of this phrase in a way that we have already seen. Here I only try to trace his own vision, not argue with him about what a philosopher really meant, but, then, Heidegger's philosophy is this vision and in our context such arguments seem irrelevant.

The chapter starts with a discussion of the beginning of Dasein's history in ancient Greece, and then, in section 6.2, we examine Heidegger's account of the rise of

metaphysical thinking with Anaximander. Sections 6.3 and 6.4 examine the contribution of Heraclitus and Parmenides to the discovery of the Being of what-is.

The last two sections of the chapter explore the new and fateful direction that metaphysical thought takes with the work of Plato (6.4) and Aristotle (6.5). The pre-Socratics are aware of the priority of "knowing how" and the role of cultural practices in our understanding of ourselves and what-is, but, by the time we get to Plato, "knowing that" has become all important. For the Greeks this knowledge may be "conceived as a looking and a seeing," but we need to understand its deeper source (P 147/219).

Richard Rorty comments that Heidegger's greatest contribution to current discussions within philosophy is his way of recounting the history of philosophy which lets us see the origin of Cartesian imagery in the Greeks and the model of knowledge adopted by this tradition. This tradition, as Rorty puts it, views knowledge "as looking at something (rather than, say rubbing up against it, crushing it underfoot, or having sexual intercourse with it).¹ But Heidegger thinks that this visual orientation is based on the fundamental encounter of Greeks with Being, not vice versa. This encounter is the Appropriation which founds the history of the West (P 147/218).

6.1 The Primordial Beginning

As we have seen, Heidegger argues that Dasein is the "happening of strangeness" when humankind first asks the question of what it is "to be." Not at all equivalent to asking about the meaning of life, the origin of the world or ourselves, or any other similar

question in the religious reflections of all cultures, this question is prompted by the ancient Greek experience of what it is to be. In Heidegger's view, what made the Greeks special was that they themselves recognized the distinctive estrangement. Sophocles in "Antigone" says that, of all the strange things in the world, nothing surpasses man in strangeness (IM 146/112). As he who "breaks out and breaks up," man breaks into an environment in which birds and fish, bull and stallion, earth and sea live in their own rhythm and precinct. However, "Into this life . . . man casts his snares and nets; he snatches the living creatures out of their order, shuts them up in his pens and enclosures, and forces them under his yokes" (IM 154/118). This breaking-up opens what-is as sea, as earth, as animal, and, more generally, as the Being of what-is. Sophocles also noted, Heidegger claims, that the "sweep of time" both lets what-is emerge into the open and conceals what once appeared (P 140/209). The Greek tragedies both articulate and critically alter the dying Homeric world and usher in a new order.

The culture which authentic Dasein brings into focus only tacitly orders our relationship to the gods, the earth, language, space, things of nature and everyday use. The light cast by the creator's insight lets the Being of what-is appear, or, as Heidegger would say, unconceal itself.² The "gods and the state, the temple and the tragedy, the games and philosophy," the works which were wrought to tell the Greeks who they were, bring things into focus (IM 105f./80). The Greeks were not the first people to domesticate animals or plant crops, of course, but Heidegger's account suggests that they may have been the first to tell themselves that the way they did this made them distinct from other creatures.³ And, more importantly, to tell themselves what things must be that they could use them so.

Heidegger does not think that the questioning of Being only begins with those thinkers whom we regard as the first philosophers. His credit to Sophocles shows that. For him, thinking about what-is does not even have to be expressed in propositions or formed into an explicit system (AP 223/241). An answer to the question of "what it is to be" can be posed, for example, in art without expression in propositions or in poetry without articulation in an explicit system. Indeed, besides artists, poets, and thinkers, Heidegger also mentions statesmen as among those who pose an answer to the question of Being (IM 62/47), perhaps thinking of Solon and Lycurgus or even Hitler.

The Greek temple is the first and best example of a "work" that fits together and gathers into a unity "those paths and relations in which birth and death, disaster and blessing, victory and disgrace, endurance and decline acquire the shape of destiny for the human way to be." Such a work of art turned the Greeks into "this historical people." The temple, perched on a hill above the sea, let rock and stone, sky, sun, and sea, trees and grass, eagle, bull, snake and cricket "first enter their distinctive shapes and thus come to appear as what they are" (OWA 42/27f.). With its massive stone columns, the designs of its friezes, and its surrounding environment, the temple brought these things to the people's attention and reminded them of the difference between themselves and the gods.

What prepares the ground for Dasein's fateful insight, what sets up the world in which Dasein finds itself, is Being. For Heidegger, the world-building accomplished in a work of art such as the temple is not the invention of human beings but of Being revealing itself in human activity and through the insight of authentic Dasein. He remarks about the Greek temple's articulation of an understanding of Being:

The temple-work, standing there, opens up a world and at the same time sets this world back on earth, which itself only thus emerges as familiar ground. But men and animals, plants and things, are never present and familiar as unchangeable objects, only to represent incidentally also a fitting environment for the temple, which one fine day is added to what was already there. Rather, we shall get closer to what is, if we think all this in reverse order, assuming of course that we have, to begin with, an eye for how differently everything then faces us. . . . The temple, standing there, first gives to things their look and to human beings their outlook on themselves (OWA 42f./28f.).⁴

Human beings gain their outlook on themselves and what-is in general when Being is revealed in a new way through the temple. However, the builders of the temple were responding to the culture's practices: its traditional stories of the gods, its understanding of how to approach them, its dealings with animals and plants dear to the gods, and so forth. Human beings only come to understand their outlook on themselves when it becomes articulated by and focused in a work like the temple.⁵

Perhaps the first written question and answer to Being occurs in the poetry attributed to Homer, though not in so many words and certainly not in propositions. Heidegger invokes a passage from Homer to show that this poet reflected on "ta onta," or what-is (to on) regarded as a plurality of different things. Homer mentions the ability of the seer Kalchas to see all that is, will be, or once was. Homer used the term "ta eonta"

(the extra `e' is archaic) not just for things of nature but also "the Achaeans' encampment before Troy, the god's wrath, the plague's fury, funeral pyres, the perplexity of the leaders, and so on" (EGT 37f./350). Perhaps such poetry inspired the philosophers to think explicitly about the Being of what-is.

6.2 Anaximander and the Beginning of Metaphysics

As we noted in section 0.3, metaphysics is "the kind of thinking which thinks what-is as a whole in regard to Being" (HS 75/123). Unlike the insight manifest in a work of art such as the temple, metaphysical thinking articulates the order of what-is in words. Heidegger believes that the ancient Greeks were inspired to think about what-is as a whole which manifests a certain Being not just by their language's copula verb but by the ambiguity of a single verbal term: the Greek word `on.' As both participle and noun, this word "says `being' in the sense of to be something-which-is; at the same time it names something-which-is. In the duality of the participial significance of on the distinction between `to be' and `what-is' lies concealed." Heidegger adds that what seems like grammatical hair-splitting is "the riddle of Being" (EGT 32f./344).

If metaphysics has its beginning in the emergence of the duality of Being and what-is from "the self-concealing ambiguity" of the term `on,' then, Heidegger argues, metaphysics begins with the pre-Socratic thinkers (HCE 107/176). They were the first to think explicitly about the nature of everything with which they dealt. The emergence of the duality is the emergence of the "ontological difference" between Being and what-is. However, the emergence of the difference between what-is and Being does not guarantee

that they emerge explicitly recognized as distinct . In fact Heidegger says that at no time—presumably up until he came along—has the distinction between what-is and Being been designated as such. He argues that, from the beginning of thought about what-is, Being has been forgotten and "the oblivion of Being is the oblivion of the distinction between Being and what-is." But, then, in what sense does such a distinction emerge with the pre-Socratic thinkers? Heidegger suggests that the two things distinguished, Being and what-is, unconceal themselves but they do not do so as explicitly distinguished (EGT 50f./364f.).

Thus, the original oblivion of the distinction between Being and what-is is not the complete oblivion of Being and what-is as such but rather the oblivion of the distinction between them. The early Greek thinkers thought about Being in so far as they thought about the Being of what-is which "unconcealed" itself to them. But they did not think explicitly about Being itself nor its relation to the things which show themselves as Being in a certain way. Hence, they did not think explicitly about the distinction between Being and what-is. For Heidegger, until the distinction between Being and what-is is comprehended we have really understood neither Being nor what-is since they only appear "in virtue of the difference" (ID 63f./131).

But, if the ontological difference was never explicitly recognized until Heidegger came along, if previous thinkers had never seen the connection between how things show themselves in the background practices and what we think about them, then what is the point in saying that this distinction has been "forgotten"? Heidegger thinks that the distinction, though not explicitly recognized as such, can "invade our experience . . . only if it has left a trace which remains preserved in the language to which Being comes"

(EGT 51/365). Heidegger finds this "trace" of the nature of the distinction in the language and thought of Anaximander, Heraclitus, and Parmenides. Though they did not realize the full nature of the difference, they did glimpse the dependence of what-is on the understanding of Being which is embedded in the cultural practices. Heidegger thinks that they tried to articulate this relationship with their notions of chreon, logos, and moira.

For Heidegger the early Greek philosophers divide into three distinct groups: Thales, Anaximenes, et al.; Anaximander, Heraclitus, and Parmenides; and Plato and those after him. Since Heidegger's views on other philosophers are frequently regarded as idiosyncratically bizarre, I will call upon a scholar of Greek philosophy to help make one of Heidegger's basic points about these thinkers. Preparing for his discussion of Parmenides, Alexander Mourelatos remarks:

At the dawn of philosophic speculation some bold spirits startled their contemporaries with direct pronouncements such as "It's all water" or "It's the opposites at war." It was an advance in self-conscious thinking when these sages were able to refer to what appears on the right-hand side of these intriguing identity statements as phusis or aletheia, or to eon. Both the practice of employing a concept, and the words referring to this employment, had come to be developed. The radical shift comes with Parmenides.⁶

In a thinker such as Thales we can see someone grappling with the nature of what-is, yet he has not really distinguished the "it" from the water of which he says it is made. We

take a step closer to metaphysical thinking with Anaximander, who asserts that what-is is ordered by necessity; but the more significant advance comes when Heraclitus and Parmenides identify what-is as some sort of whole, as phusis or aletheia or to on, which reveals itself as having some particular Being. This, Heidegger thinks, is quite different from seeing things as made of the same "stuff."

Heidegger dismisses Thales and Anaximenes from the usual list of the first thinkers without much comment. Heidegger does suggest that Thales is the first thinker to answer the question of Being by reference to a being (BPP 319/453). He says that "to be" is to be water. One might argue that claims such as "it's all water" or "it's all air" seem to assert something about material composition, and the "it" here is understood as a "totality" in the same way that water is conceived as a totality made up of all particular configurations of water from drops and puddles to lakes and oceans. The predicate then names the "stuff" thus totalized. But the metaphysical notion of "what-is as a whole" is not that of a cumulative mass, and its "Being" is not its material composition. We might say that Heidegger regards Thales as offering, so to speak, an ontic theory of the nature of what-is with Anaximander providing the first authentically ontological inquiry.⁷

As the first ontological thinker, Anaximander points the way for the others to follow. Heidegger agrees with Mourelatos that a "radical shift" in Greek thinking occurs with Parmenides, but, for Heidegger, Parmenides is the second pivotal thinker after whom philosophy begins to move away from the original Greek insight into Being and toward traditional metaphysics and the fateful model of knowledge. Anaximander gets metaphysics off the ground, but the thinkers after Parmenides give this grounding a different character.

Heidegger focuses on Anaximander's idea of "to chreon" or "necessity" as it is expressed in the one fragment of quotation which has come down to us from him. Things come into and pass out of existence "according to necessity," says Anaximander, "for they pay one another recompense and penalty for their injustice." The "they" which compensate one another according to necessity are, Heidegger tentatively suggests, "ta onta" or the multiplicity of what-is.⁸ Anaximander's term `to chreon' is, Heidegger argues, "the earliest name of the Being of what-is" (EGT 49/363).

Homer may have thought about ta onta, but Anaximander is the first to name the Being of what-is which ta onta have and to glimpse the context in which they have their place. "Necessity" is the name for that which unifies or makes a whole of everything which is, even though ta onta are still a multiplicity. Heidegger understands Anaximander's notion of chreon as, to use his terminology, a "gathering" which both "lights" and "shelters" what-is (EGT 55/369), making it what it is. Heidegger takes the notion to be expressing the original glimpse of Being which is developed more explicitly in both Heraclitus and Parmenides. "Gathering" is the activity of the cultural background practices which let things show up in various ways in one unified clearing.

Heidegger insists that we must try to understand the significance of the Greek word for `necessity' in its historical, etymological context. In a rather dubious etymology, he suggests that the term `chreon' is connected with `he cheir' which refers to the hand and `chrao' which means to `get involved with something' or `reach one's hand to something' as well as to `place in someone's hands' or `let something belong to someone.' Hence, Heidegger proposes to translate `to chreon' into German as `der Brauch,' which means `usage' or `custom,' relating the term to the verb `brauchen' which means `to need,'

`to employ,' `to engage.' In his translation Heidegger is trying to capture the notion of a necessity that arises out of practical involvement and the demands of everyday activity (EGT 51f./366), but also suggests that things solicit us, engage us, in this involvement. The "world" of Being and Time is the context of involvement which "necessarily" must be in order for things to "be," the world that Dasein does not create but enters in its engagement with the Being of things.

We should not take this sense of `usage' as being purely pragmatic or implying that the order of things is dependent solely on what human beings want to do with them. Heidegger takes the word `brauchen' back to what he regards as its root-meaning: to enjoy, to be pleased with something and have it in use. To `use' is supposed to suggest letting something be involved in one's being-at-home in the world (EGT 53/367). Thus, the trees that surround one's house or the river that flows through the park are as much "useful" as one's shoes or hammer. Tying in Parmenides with Anaximander's chreon, Heidegger suggests that the root-meaning of Parmenides' `chre' indicates turning something to use by handling it but that this has always meant "a turning to the thing in hand according to its way of being, thus letting that way of being become manifest by the handling" (WICT 195/118). Tending grapes or grain, using leather for shoes or bronze for shields, involves letting these things be what they are. This is not simply a matter of our purposes, though in its modern evolution Dasein is tempted to think so, as we will see in Section 7.3.

To amplify his notion of usage Heidegger quotes some lines from Hölderlin's "The Ister River":

It is useful for the rocks to have shafts,

And for the earth, furrows.

It would be without welcome, without stay.⁹

Heidegger adds that without food or drink, without the crops sprouting from the furrows or the well-water bubbling from the shafts, there is no welcome for us, no "stay" or "lingering" in "the sense of dwelling at home."¹⁰ He explains:

‘It is useful’ says here: there is a way of being together of rock and shaft, of furrow and earth, within that realm of being which opens up when the earth becomes a habitation. The home and dwelling of mortals has its own site. But its situation is not determined first by the pathless places on earth. It is marked out and opened up by something of another order. From there, the dwelling of mortals receives its measure (WICT 190f./117).

We, as Dasein, have an understanding of this Being which is manifested most primordially in our everyday dealings with things such as, in this period, finding wells and plowing the land. But we do not create Being. It reveals itself to us through what-is. That a piece of land is fertile or water potable is a matter of their Being, not just ours, although they show up as such only in a context of concern.

In his discussion of Homer and Anaximander, both of whom he considers to be articulating the distinctively Greek understanding of Being, Heidegger extracts their understanding of what-is. He says that the Greeks equate what-is with (1) what we are "at home with" in our everyday dealings, and (2) what-is-present.¹¹ These senses are mingled in the term that Heidegger considers to be the Greeks' most precise name for what-is: τὰ

pareonta.' He suggests that the prefix par' shares a meaning with the German preposition bei,' indicating 'at' or 'near' as well as 'during' or 'while.' Bei' also means 'at the home of,' similar to the French chez.¹² This supposed connotation is especially appropriate since the pareonta are, Heidegger says, the things which we come across in the "neighborhood" of unconcealment, that is, our familiar territory (EGT 34/346).¹³ Thus, Heidegger believes that the Greeks originally thought about the Being of what-is primarily in regard to the objects of their everyday concerns such as tools, crops, furnishings, the earth, and the sky. As we noted in section 5.2, this orientation toward the ready-to-hand is supposed to mark a clear break with myth and magic.

At least from the time of Homer and renewed contact with Eastern cultures, the Greeks did have a sense of the distinctiveness of Greek life and the unique social and political order that made their world a whole. Heidegger claims that the early Greek thinkers understood the importance of this cultural ordering as the condition for things to come forth and show themselves as what they are. In this realm Anaximander's ta onta make their presence known:

Anaximander's chreon, as the Being of what-is, is not a "something" which stands "behind" or within separate objects but rather is that which "gathers" things into a neighborhood.

Heidegger also finds in the early Greek thinkers traces of the Temporal significance of presence, the second point above. He comments: "The Greeks experience what-is as what-is-present, whether at the present time or not, presencing in unconcealment" (EGT 36f./349). For Homer and Anaximander, ta onta referred to what is

past and what is to come, as well as what is present at some here and now. "Both are ways of presencing, that is, the presencing of what is not presently present" (EGT 34/346). The seer Kalchas, understanding the Being of what-is, comprehends what was, is, and will be. Anaximander, according to the traditional version of his fragment, thinks that things come to be and pass away "according to necessity." Ta onta pay each other compensation for "injustice" according to the "dominion of time."¹⁴

Thus, Heidegger argues that the locus of reality for the early Greek metaphysical thinkers was their here and now. What is past was present once; what will be becomes present later. They shift from a mythological orientation in which the "really real" existed at some indeterminate "once upon a time" and "once at a place" to an understanding of Being according to which even the gods manifest themselves at some here and now, as on the battlefield at Troy.

Heidegger also takes the early Greeks as having at least a glimpse of the way that the understanding of Being is dependent upon the quite different sort of time in which we are "in time with" the Temporality of Being. His analysis of Anaximander's notion of ta onta "compensating" each other for their "disorder" according to the "dominion of time" draws on this idea (EGT 40-50/353-364). We will see the nature of this dominion more clearly once we have examined Heidegger's version of the thought of Heraclitus and Parmenides.

6.3 Heraclitus

According to Heidegger, Heraclitus's notion of logos¹⁵ involves a similar force of necessity which maintains the order of what-is. Heidegger himself takes this logos to be

the legein which "lays out" the world as the context of significance in which things are dealt with in various ways. Logos should be understood as not language or reason but rather as the ordering of what-is by cultural practices. Indeed Heidegger suggests that, if Heraclitus had explicitly recognized the relationship between language and the logos, the history of Being would have gotten off to a very different start (EGT 77/220), perhaps one not so ignorant of its indebtedness. Logos lets what-is manifest itself as what it is, as, e.g., chiseling let the stone show itself as a column or wine-making let the grapes show themselves as fermented juice.

Heraclitus says that the logos reveals that "all is one," that is, "hen panta." Making the next move in the history of Being, Heraclitus does not just see ta onta, the multiplicity of what-is, but rather thinks there is a unity and oneness to what-is. He discovers to on, what-is as a totality. In spite of all the apparent diversity of things, there is a sameness to the multiplicity which makes them into a "one." But, Heidegger questions, what does the statement that everything is one mean? He warns us not to jump quickly to the conclusion that Heraclitus is offering "a formula that is in some way correct everywhere for all times" (EGT 69/211). That is, Heraclitus is not making, with universal and eternal intent, a particular metaphysical claim about what-is. He is not proposing the first traditional metaphysics comparable to the Platonic "Being is idea" or the Aristotelian "Being is ousia." Rather we could say that Heraclitus is making the first claim about the relationship between Being and what-is. He is saying that, thanks to logos, what-is is revealed as having some common bond. He does not, however, specify "what" this common bond is, as if it were a common property. In the language of Being

and Time, Heraclitus offers a glimpse of an existential analysis, not some one existentiell understanding of Being.

Thus, Heraclitus's dictum only suggests that traditional metaphysics is possible. He is not making any specific claim about the character of the one—about the Being of what-is—which is all things. He only describes what it accomplishes. As Heidegger puts the point:

The hen panta lets lie together before us in one presence
things which are usually separated from and opposed to one
another, such as day and night, winter and summer, peace
and war, waking and sleeping, Dionysos and Hades (EGT
71/213).

If everything is one, then even opposites are placed together in such a way that we can find some common bond gathering them.

Instead of trying to make Heraclitus's dictum into a formula of traditional metaphysics, Heidegger suggests that we should think of "logos as legein prior to all profound metaphysical interpretations, thereby trying to establish seriously that legein, as the gathering letting-lie-before, can be nothing other than the essence of unification which assembles everything in the totality of simple presencing" (EGT 70/212). The things so assembled may exhibit a different unity at different times, and therefore no "formula" describing their unity as a common property (as "idea" or "created by God" or "stuff to be dominated") will remain adequate at all places and times. Heidegger suggests that legein, in its letting-lie-together-before, means that "whatever lies before us involves us and therefore concerns us" (EGT 62/203). We are involved with and concerned about

things in different ways in different periods of our history, and this difference lies behind the history of traditional metaphysics, that is, the history of the revelations of Being.

Heidegger takes note of Heraclitus's use of the image of lightning to describe the context created by the way Being unifies what-is: Heraclitus says both that logos steers all things through all things and that the thunderbolt steers all things. Heidegger's own notion of this cultural context as a "lightening" or "clearing" in which things show themselves, plays on this same imagery. The logos lets everything be gathered into a unified totality, but our understanding of the character of this totality can be changed in a flash—a lightning flash of insight which casts new illumination on our world.

Heidegger thinks that Heraclitus indicates that he recognizes the ambiguous relationship between Being and what-is when he remarks that the one does not want and yet does want to be called Zeus. In order to make Heidegger's point clearer, we can compare the phrase 'hen panta' ('all is one') to Heidegger's phrase 'the Being of what-is,' which itself refers to the unity of all that is. If we understand "all is one" with the emphasis on the "one" as in the Being of what-is, then we see the one as a manifestation of logos and hence as "what lets what-is-present come to presencing." But then, Heidegger points out, "the hen is not itself something present among others" (EGT 73/215f.). All is one emphasizes the Being of what-is, that is, it is the logos or cultural practices which gather things into what they are. And then the one is not willing to be called Zeus because it is not a thing at all but rather that which lets everything, including things like gods, be present in the clearing and show themselves as what they are.

On the other hand, Heidegger continues, "If the hen is not apprehended from itself as the logos, it appears rather as panta; then and only then does the totality of what is

present show itself under the direction of the highest present thing, as one whole under this one" (EGT 74/216). Then, Heidegger says, this one, now understood as the highest one of all, and similarly as the highest Being of what-is, is willing to be called "Zeus." Under this aspect, Zeus becomes one amongst the all or something-which-is, and he executes the one's "dispensation of destiny" (EGT 73/216). Zeus is regarded as a particular something-which-is and the moving force of the history of Being.

Heidegger thinks that the same sort of fruitful ambiguity between Being and what-is, the ambiguity of on and of the one as Zeus, arises in Heraclitus's comment that "phusis loves to hide." Heraclitus evidently conceives of phusis both as a characterization of the logos and as what-is. Thus phusis is both the activity which lets what-is manifest itself and that which is manifest. As the activity of manifesting, it itself does not show itself, and thus it hides; but this activity reveals phusis as "nature," as the Being of what-is. This way of Being, however, is hidden from those who, unlike Heraclitus, do not understand that everything is one, and so only see a scattering of things with each one different from the others. It is hidden from those who live in the Anyone but not from those who are authentically Dasein and can see things through the eyes of Heraclitus.

Heidegger provides his own definition of phusis, which becomes one of his favorite terms to capture his notion of Being. He says of phusis:

It denotes self-blossoming emergence (e.g., the blossoming of a rose), opening-up, unfolding, that which manifests itself in such unfolding and preserves and endures in it; in

short the realm of things that emerge and linger on (IM
14/11).¹⁶

Notice that this realm includes two distinct aspects: the self-blossoming emergence (Being) and that which manifests itself in such unfolding (what-is). In Heraclitus the relationship between these two aspects has not been forgotten. Hence, in his use of the term, `phusis' indicates the same sort of ambiguity as the two-faceted `on.'

6.4 Parmenides

Parmenides takes the next step in the history of Being. Connecting him with the first thinker to name the Being of what-is, Heidegger claims that the essence of Parmenides' notion of "moira" or "fate" is intimated in Anaximander's conception of chreon. Chreon is "the first and most thoughtful interpretation of what the Greeks experienced in the name moira as the dispensing of portions" (EGT 55/369). We can support Heidegger's point about the development of metaphysics by noting the connection between `chreon' and the necessity referred to in Parmenides' famous dictum. Parmenides used a form of the same word, `chre,' in saying, as the sentence is usually translated, "It is necessary to say and think what is." George Redard has explored the meaning of Parmenides' phrase and shown that the core meaning of `chre' is that of adaptation or accommodation to the requirements of a given context.¹⁷ Adding to this idea, Heidegger claims that the context is created by practical activities.

Heidegger also argues that Parmenides' notion of moira is similar to Heraclitus's notion of logos as a "letting-lie-before which gathers." Connecting Heraclitus and

Parmenides, Heidegger comments that "in the beginning of its history Being opens itself out as emerging (phusis) and unconcealment (aletheia)" (EP 4/403). While translated as 'truth,' another one of Heidegger's favorite terms to describe the activity of Being, 'aletheia' or 'unconcealedness' etymologically indicates the opposite of oblivion. To Heidegger it suggests the same sort of revealing, of un-concealing, as phusis. Just as Heraclitus called what-is "phusis," Parmenides equates what-is with aletheia. But, unlike his predecessors, Parmenides speaks not of ta onta or hen panta but of to on. The many have become one. And an important new factor also enters in: a special sort of apprehension or noein is recognized as the distinctive way of grasping this oneness as the Being of what-is.

Referring to one of Parmenides' key themes, Heidegger indicates that he takes Parmenides' notion of to on as remaining within the fruitful ambiguity of the on. He says:

In its ambiguity, on designates both what is present and the presencing. It designates both at once and neither as such.

In keeping with this essential ambiguity of on, the doxa of dokounta, that is, of eonta, belongs together with the noein of the einai, that is, the eon. What noein perceives is not truly what-is as against mere semblance. Rather doxa perceives directly what-is-present but does not perceive its presencing. This presencing is perceived by noein (HCE 107/176).

Parmenides distinguishes two paths to the understanding of what-is: the way of doxa or opinion and the way of noein or apprehension. A third path cannot be traversed by

mortals.¹⁸ Viewing the distinction from his own perspective, Heidegger suggests in the above quote that doxa perceives what-is-present in its multiplicity, that is, doxa perceives ta onta. In contrast, noein perceives the "to be" (einai) of what-is (on). Thus noein perceives the presencing or Being of what-is as a totality. Noein is the Parmenidean equivalent of Being and Time's moment of insight or, more exactly, of our special capacity as Dasein which enables us to have this insight.

Heidegger thinks that Parmenides, unlike his successor Plato, does not separate the appearance of the multiplicity of ta onta from its Being as if separating the illusory—the mere semblance or appearance—from what truly is—the on as unified. Rather, as Heidegger says in the quotation above, Parmenides thinks that noein perceives the "to be" in what-is-present. We are supposed to group Parmenides with the thinkers of the first beginning of metaphysics who adhered to the ambiguity of on. He belongs with them rather than with the thinkers in the history of traditional metaphysics who, like Plato, divided what-is into two distinct realms, one the realm of the illusory and the other the realm of what truly is, with the latter as the locus for whatever Being the former was able to manifest even through its illusory appearances (HCE 107/176). Of course, the illusory realm for Plato turns out to be the world of our everyday life.

But, then, precisely what is the distinction which Heidegger thinks Parmenides is making between doxa and noein? By the time of Plato, doxa has become "mere opinion," suggesting a belief which is imagined or supposed but perhaps wrongly so. It is the epistemological relationship which one has to the illusory, sensible world when one mistakenly attributes to it a reality it does not possess. However, Homer and Pindar both use the word to mean simply expectation, opinion, or judgment without any negative

implication as to its truth or reliability. Heidegger's above quoted comments about doxa strongly tempt one to relate his notion of Parmenides' doxa to his own notion of the Anyone, although, as far as I know, Heidegger never explicitly makes such a connection. In his essay on Parmenides, he does say:

Mortals accept (dechesthai, doxa) whatever is immediately, abruptly, and first of all offered to them. They never concern themselves about preparing a path of thought. They never expressly hear the call of the disclosure of the duality (EGT 99/245f.).

Doxa simply accepts the things that present themselves, without further thought as to their Being, as does the person who lives comfortably in the Anyone.

Mortals, as Heidegger here calls those who are inauthentically Dasein, are absorbed in dealing with the things that show themselves, and, failing to "run before" their death, they never become a forerunner of a new revelation of Being. Although the point may seem far-fetched, perhaps it is no coincidence that one descriptive term Heidegger uses in Being and Time for the authentic future ecstasis of timeliness is etymologically similar to Parmenides' term when he says that no mortal will be able to "outstrip" he who grasps the path to well-rounded aletheia.¹⁹ As we saw in section 2.6, the "outermost" or "most extreme" possibility that Dasein "foreruns" in authentically Being toward death cannot be outstripped.

Correlatively, noein, like being authentically Dasein, involves a "choice" of Being. As Heidegger says, "apprehension is no mere process but rather a decision" (IM 167/128). As we saw in the discussion of resoluteness such a decision is not a matter of a

particular person's judgment or choice within the realm of the Anyone, but rather is the decision made from Dasein's ownmost self which brings about a "separation" in "Being, unconcealment, appearance, and non-Being" (IM 110/84). In other words, as we saw in section 1.3, the decision involves taking a stance toward the question of what it is to be. Interestingly enough, Mourelatos suggests that "Parmenides emphasizes that what-is has been gathered apart as a result of a krisis, a `decision' or `separation.'" Significantly for Heidegger's case, he adds that Parmenides also thinks that what-is "abides kath' auto, `by itself.'"²⁰

At least Parmenides, unlike Plato, recognizes that a "decision" founds the understanding of Being. He thinks that an insight into the Being of what-is must be achieved. But this decision is not ad hoc or arbitrary or even a matter of "free will." It is an insight into the way Being reveals itself and thus into the way what-is abides "by itself." However, the cultural practices revealing Being are not independent of the sort of "decision" of which Heidegger speaks. The Being of what-is can be both a matter of decision and yet abide by itself because of the curious, ambiguous relation between Being and Dasein, the "there" in which Being is revealed.

In discussing Parmenides, Heidegger analyzes this curious relationship as that between legein and noein. Heidegger describes "noein" as a "taking-to-heart" or "taking-heed" of what shows itself in legein, the "letting-lie-before-us." He comments:

Noein, whose belonging together with eon we should like to contemplate, is grounded in and comes to be from legein. In legein the letting-lie-before of what-is-present in its presencing happens. Only as thus laying-before can

what-is-present as such admit the noein, the taking-heed-of
(EGT 89/235).

The 'laying-before' of the cultural practices grants the insight into Being, and therefore the insight is not arbitrary. To use again a much later example, Descartes and Galileo did not just dream up the idea that everything is capable of mathematical treatment; they were responding to the way things were beginning to reveal themselves in the culture. In apprehension "we gather and focus ourselves on what lies before us" (WICT 209/126).

Conversely, apprehension also has an effect on the cultural practices. In What Is Called Thinking? Heidegger addresses the intertwined nature of the relationship:

Legein is prior to noein and not only because it has to be accomplished first in order that noein may find something it can take to heart. Rather legein also surpasses noein in that it once again gathers, and keeps and safeguards in the gathering, that of which noein takes heed; for legein, being a laying, is also legere, that is, reading Thus legein and noein are coordinated not only in series, first legein and then noein, but each enters into the other (WICT 208/125).

Noein's insight into what-is gives cultural practices sense and order, like arranging letters to make words, but Heidegger also is saying that in turn legein reads noein.

In the rest of the passage above Heidegger suggests that reading involves a gathering or gleaning of the sense that the letters of words give to us. Legein responds to the sense-giving activity of apprehension by "reading" the letters that noein arranges.

Cultural practices respond to the focused articulation that occurs when Dasein apprehends the Being of what-is, and, indeed, this is the crucial impetus for the history of Being. Thus, legein and noein "enter into each other" because they engage in a mutually effective dialogue. Legein abides "by itself" and makes the apprehension of the Being of what-is possible, but it also responds to the choice of a possible way to be involved in the insight into Being. Consequently, the insight into Being found in great philosophers, artists, poets, and statesmen leads to cultural changes which in turn lead to new insights.

This dialogue can be seen from the very beginning of thought about what-is: drawing on comments by Herodotus, Gregory Nagy points out that "the Greeks owed the systemization of their gods—we may say, of their universe—to two poets, Homer and Hesiod." The poets had to try to respond to and unify diverse city rituals in which a god with the same name may appear to have radically different characteristics. Their poetry brought about a similar pan-Hellenic pantheon and encoded "a value system common to all Greeks."²¹ The articulation brought the values into focus in a way that not only united the Greek culture but opened these values up to later questioning by the tragedians and philosophers and hence led to new insights.

The process of focusing and adapting, of reading and responding, indicates the Temporal character of Being. In the language of Anaximander's insight, what-is pays "compensation" for its "injustice" according to the "dominion of time." Focusing on one manifestation of the Being of what-is to the neglect of others makes them assert themselves to receive their "due." Plato's idea left out the concrete reality of things, which subsequently demanded attention from Aristotle. To illustrate this idea we might also think of the way that the technological understanding of what-is as mere stuff to be

dominated and manipulated for our purposes has provoked the "ecological" backlash, both in the realm of theory and the reality of pollution.

Heidegger claims that one of Parmenides' famous maxims captures for the first time the essence of being human (IM 165f./126). As Heidegger translates the dictum, Parmenides says that "needful is the gathering setting-forth as well as the apprehension: what-is in its Being" (IM 111/85). The human essence understood as a demand to gather and to apprehend what-is in its Being is, in fact, the human essence understood as Dasein. This human essence, Heidegger says, is the relation which first reveals Being to people (IM 170/130). Thus Parmenides is pictured as the thinker who first makes explicit both the role of Dasein as the site in which Being reveals itself by gathering what-is and the task of humans as those who apprehend the Being of what-is.

Heidegger invokes Parmenides' remark about the "untrembling heart of unconcealment" and suggests that this is "the place of stillness which gathers in itself what grants unconcealment to begin with. That is the opening of the open." He adds:

We must think aletheia, unconcealment, as the opening which first grants Being and thinking their presencing to and for each other. The quiet heart of the opening is the place of stillness from which alone the possibility of the belonging together of Being and thinking, of presence and apprehending, can arise at all (TB 68/75).

That Parmenides should think about the Being of what-is at all is then the "wonder of wonders"²² that launched the history of philosophy.

Parmenides is not only the thinker who brings to fulfillment the first, essential beginning of metaphysics. He also positioned philosophy for an easy, downhill slide into the start of traditional metaphysics with Plato and Aristotle. Certainly this seems true given that tradition's own reading of Parmenides. Though Heidegger is trying to keep him grouped with his predecessors, his successors have given Parmenides' notion of the Being which underlies the many the sort of interpretation which already places him on the downhill side of the slide which Heidegger describes in the following passage:

Since the gathering that reigns within Being unites everything which is, an inevitable and continually more stubborn semblance arises from the contemplation of this gathering, namely the illusion that Being (of what-is) is not only identical with the totality of what-is, but that, as identical, it is at the same time that which unifies and even is the highest-which-is. For representational thinking everything becomes something-which-is (EGT 87/232).

The background context of Being recedes into oblivion as the things looming large in the foreground blot it out. Parmenides' Being was pictured as some sort of super-substance, the sum total of what-is, which does not change. In this view the changing things around us become illusory.

Heidegger maintains instead that, as with Heraclitus's one, Parmenides' Being is the assembled "totality of simple presencing" which arises out of the unification of legein. However, thanks to this totalizing activity, Parmenides' Being can also be regarded, as was Heraclitus's one, as the totality of what-is or some highest thing rather

than the unity manifest by the activity of legein. Perhaps Parmenides himself invited this reading by emphasizing one term of the ontological ambiguity, focusing on aletheia as what-is rather than as Being. Furthermore, aletheia is considered in regard to how noein grasps it, thus giving the disclosure of truth an orientation toward knowledge (N4 170/227) rather than unconcealing.

6.5 Plato

While metaphysical thinking in general may begin with the emergence of the duality of what-is-present and its presencing in the pre-Socratic thinkers, Heidegger suggests that, if we think of metaphysics as making a division between a suprasensible and a sensible world with the former as what truly is and the latter as appearance, then metaphysics begins with Socrates and Plato.²³ However, he thinks that this "second start" of metaphysics is only a specifically oriented interpretation of the initial duality of the on (HCE 107/176), though it is one which endures, in one form or another, through Nietzsche. The slide into traditional metaphysics starts when the ambiguity of on, traced out by Anaximander, Heraclitus, and Parmenides, is "forgotten" by Plato. Then the ontological difference is "forgotten" as the difference between how we understand ourselves in being ourselves or understand a hammer when we are hammering and how we understand things reflectively as something-which-is.

The slide into traditional metaphysics begins because of the very nature of thinking. Plato in his own way asks us, like Fichte, to "think the wall." And, as we noted in the Introduction, Heidegger argues that such thinking involves a "constructive

violation of the facts" which rips the thing out of its context of significance and hence forgets Being.²⁴ When Heidegger emphatically asserts that "for representational thought everything becomes something which is" in the passage quoted near the end of the preceding section, he is not simplistically arguing that thinking reifies everything, turning what is not an object into one. The phrase "something-which-is" refers to universals as well as individuals, to properties, essences, processes, etc., as well as "things." All of these are "things" in the broadest sense of the word or something about which we say "is." Heidegger is arguing that metaphysical thinking by its nature tends to ignore the context of practical significance in which things have their Being and to focus instead on the characteristics of that which shows itself in this context.

Plato's thinking is not yet representational thinking, which starts with Descartes, but it prepares the way to such thinking. For Heidegger representational thinking involves a split between subject and object. Plato conceives of what-is as something constant and permanent, thus placing it beyond the influence of human decision and activity, but he does not conceive of it as "object," that is, something set over against the human subject. Heidegger argues that both Plato and Aristotle think of what-is as "the constant" or that which stands on its own and endures. However, he adds that "we would not at all be thinking like the Greeks if we were to conceive the constant as that which `stands against' in the sense of ob-jective" (AP 227/246).²⁵ In objectification we understand our relationship to what-is as mastery or dominion, but the Greeks, including Plato and Aristotle, remain in touch with the idea that it is phusis which has dominion over what-is, not human beings.

Heidegger examines Plato's allegory of the cave looking for the "unsaid occurrence" whereby "the idea became the master of aletheia" (PDT 265/230). In his essay "Plato's Doctrine of Truth," Heidegger originally argued that Plato identifies unhiddenness with the self-manifestation of the idea, and, in doing so, introduces a new concept of the nature of aletheia as truth. The "unhiddenness" of earlier thinkers changes to correspondence or correctness. In later remarks Heidegger will not specifically blame Plato for this move, but he still thinks that the distinction between the two ways of viewing truth is fundamental. He acknowledges that no dramatic change takes place in the concept of truth or the notion of aletheia and that even from the time of Homer truth was regarded as a matter of correctness, that is, orthotes, rather than unhiddenness. However, as he did in Being and Time, Heidegger still argues that unhiddenness is the primordial phenomenon (TB 70f./77f.). Truth appears as correctness because we take what-is as what-is present-at-hand, disengaging ourselves from active involvement with it and contemplating its nature.²⁶

Plato thinks of the Being of what-is as idea; what is really real about something is the essence that it imperfectly manifests as an item of the sensible world. Indeed, the idea is truly what-is, and the items of the world are a cross between what-is and me on or non-being. Heidegger argues that for Plato the Being of a thing is not just its outward appearance or eidōs since it itself is not ultimately real. Rather it is the idea that shows itself, however imperfectly, through this appearance.²⁷ The idea is also what lets many things manifest the same outward appearance, thus grouping them into natural kinds. The idea lets things be present as what they always are, e.g., dog, cat, table, chair, and

therefore Heidegger says that Plato identifies the presencing of Being with the "what-Being" of what-is (PDT 262/225).²⁸

The allegory of the cave represents the ideas by the things which are manifest in the daylight outside the cave, and the sun itself is taken to be the symbol of that which makes all ideas manifest, the "idea of the Good." Heidegger describes the sun as "the 'image' for the Idea of all ideas" (PDT 255/215). He seems to identify the Good with the possibility of essence, not in some abstract sense of possibility but as what gives reality its organization into essences.²⁹ And once again he tries to connect a thinker's notion of the necessary organization of reality with the notion of use. Heidegger comments: "As the Greeks thought of it, to agathon [the good] means that which is of use to something and which makes something useful" (PDT 263/227). Hence, the idea of the Good lets the ideas be useful.

Although Heidegger himself does not pursue the question of the nature of this usefulness in his essay on Plato, we might consider whether it is similar to Anaximander's to chreon. It seems that for Plato the ideas are useful for knowing the world, for having correct understanding of what things are, rather than for handling them or putting them to practical use. This would confirm the claim that truth as correspondence or correctness of apprehension and declaration (PDT 265/231) is more fundamental than truth as the unhiddenness which lets us be at home with things in everyday life. Heidegger comments that the idea of the Good makes knowing, the knower, knowledge, and what-is as what-is possible; and the term that he uses suggests the knowing of "knowing that" rather than "knowing how" (N4 168/225).³⁰ We know that the thing is a hammer rather than knowing how to hammer.

True, Plato's notion of the correct knowledge of what things are may appeal to their use or function, but this is not the same as understanding how to use them. He does seem to take the human skill of techne as his model for the creation of the universe, but he pays attention to the craftsman's possession of an image of what he wants to create and not the practical skill involved in the actual creation. Things are created according to ideas, not "know how." The focus on function is especially inadequate when it comes to the question of what it is to be human. Parmenides' glimpse of the "essence" of human beings is lost when Plato compares the "function" of our soul to the function of eyes and pruning knives. Here we apparently have the first example of what Heidegger regards as our inevitable tendency to understand ourselves in terms of the objects we use (15).

To Heidegger Plato denigrates the everyday world in favor of the suprasensible realm of ideas. According to Plato, the ordinary man in the cave, which the vast majority of us are, does not realize that "what he considers real is real only in a shadowy sense" (PDT 255/215). This shadowy sense indicates something not fully real at all.

Heidegger thinks, however, that the problem with Plato's thinking is not just that the Being of what-is is characterized as idea and transferred to some realm beyond the everyday. As he puts it, "The crux of the matter is not that phusis should have become characterized as idea but that the idea should have become the sole and decisive interpretation of Being" (IM 182/139). Plato, unlike Parmenides, seems unaware that his interpretation is founded on a krisis or decision about Being. Plato thinks that the structure of the reality which he apprehends is eternal, unchanging, and entirely independent of the activities of human beings. However, the metaphysics that begins with Socrates and Plato is not some final solution to the question of Being but, Heidegger

suggests, "only a specifically oriented interpretation of that initial duality within the on" (HCE 107/177). This orientation is toward conceptual knowledge, toward knowing that things manifest certain essences, and not toward knowing how to deal with them. The former sort of knowledge can be acquired from a philosopher, the latter from a farmer, a cook, etc.

A second problem is reflected in the first: Plato identifies Being with the Being of what-is and understands this as a special sort of thing which is, the idea. He neglects to think of the ambiguity of the on which Heraclitus and Parmenides heeded. The unthought difference between understanding Being and this way of understanding the Being of what-is, between the revelation of Being in the cultural practices and the conception of the nature of what-is which it makes possible, spurs on the traditional metaphysics which Plato inspires. Heidegger even comments that "this thoughtlessness can then constitute the essence of metaphysics." He adds: "As it remains unthought, so does the logos of the on remain without foundation. But this groundlessness is what gives ontology the power which is its essence" (HCE 108/177).

The logos has its "foundation" in cultural activities. However, if Plato's thinking grows out of the "oblivion" or "forgottenness" of Being, this is not because of some simple "forgetfulness" or absent-mindedness on his part. Rather "the oblivion of Being belongs to the self-concealing essence of Being" (EGT 50/364). As we saw in section 0.2 of the Introduction, the background practices do not yield themselves up to explicit thought, or, if they do so, it is with difficulty and only against the background of other practices. At least Anaximander, Heraclitus, and Parmenides recognized the necessity of the practical articulation of reality. Plato neglects the background in his attempt to make

explicit some unchanging, permanent structure of the foreground, that is, to make explicit the idea as the Being of what-is.

But, then, in what way does Being, as the logos which gathers and reveals, evoke the Platonic interpretation of what-is? We must remember that for Heidegger this view of reality was no arbitrary invention on Plato's part, no more than the discovery of mathematical conception of reality hundreds of years later by Descartes and Galileo. Being revealed itself in what-is as idea, and Plato apprehended this. Heidegger says that we must bear in mind that, "because Being is in the beginning phusis, the emerging and disclosing power, it discloses itself as eidos and idea" (IM 197/150). Plato did not arrive at his conclusion through some abstract philosophical exegesis; rather it is an insight into Being resting on a decision. Arguments come later.

This question basically comes down to the question of why Greek culture evoked philosophy. There are surely many factors that are relevant to the notion of abstract common properties: the development and wide-spread use of currency, the calendar, the phonetic alphabet, written texts, etc. Heidegger himself does not try to find some causal impetus or offer a specific explanation in keeping with his claim that there is no "why" to explain the history of Being. He does, however, offer some reflections.

Heidegger's most general answer to this question calls upon the ambiguity of the notion of "phusis." Phusis not only indicates an appearing in the sense of "bringing-itself-to-stand in its togetherness." It also means "that which, already standing-there, presents a front, a surface, offers an appearance to be looked at" (IM 182/139). Being brings things to stand, and then, standing there, things can present the appearance of always having been in a certain way. The site of Being is a stage upon

which things can show themselves off to us and invite our attention. The term `idea' did originally indicate how a thing looks, what is seen of it, as did the term `eidos.' With this grammatical inspiration it is perhaps an easy step to an explicit conception of the grouping of things according to how they look, and, from here, the next step is to use the term to indicate the "essence" or "nature" of a thing which makes it a member of some particular group.

The harder step to explain is why Plato uses the term `idea' to indicate something non-sensible which you see not with your eyes but with the "eye" of the mind through a sort of intellectual rather than sensible perception. The fact that Plato did take this step reminds us of what W. K. C. Guthrie called "the discovery which above all others stands to the especial credit of the Greeks," that is, "the discovery of form." This discovery "marks the advance from percepts to concepts, from the individual examples perceived by sight or touch to the universal notion which we conceive in our minds: in sculpture no longer an individual man but the ideal of humanity; in geometry no longer triangles but the nature of triangularity and the consequences which logically and necessarily flow from being a triangle."³¹ The discovery of form was evident not just in philosophy but in Greek sculpture, pottery, architecture, and literature.

These remarks do not explain Plato's step but rather re-describe it and place it in the context of his culture's general movement. Heidegger does suggest that the philosophical distinction between form and matter which we see arising in Plato is drawn from the things that are closest to us such as items of equipment (OWA 32/17). Considering the Greek emphasis on the reality of the things with which we are at home and the artistry that they lavished on even the most mundane items, which must have

made them aware of the malleability and resistance of various kinds of material, it is perhaps not surprising that the philosophical distinction should arise in this culture.

Heidegger asks whether it is an accident that the interpretation of the thing as form and matter attains special dominance, and he implies that it is not since equipment comes into Being through human making and is particularly familiar to thinking (OWA 32/17). The character of equipment continues to influence metaphysics: both the medieval and the modern understanding of the thing are "repetitions" of the ancient distinction of eidōs and hulē (OWA 30/15).

However, to say that the interpretation is no accident is not to say that there is a necessary explanation for this step in the history of Being. In the case of the step to philosophy, it is perhaps the step itself which brings with it the demand for such explanations. Rorty comments:

The notion of "contemplation," of knowledge of universal concepts or truths as theoria makes the Eye of the Mind the inescapable model for the better sort of knowledge. But it is fruitless to ask whether Greek language, or Greek economic conditions, or the idle fancy of some nameless pre-Socratic, is responsible for viewing this sort of knowledge as looking at something³²

For Heidegger the last mentioned alternative is excluded; the insight into Being is not an arbitrary invention but a response to how what-is is revealed in cultural practices. And language, economic activity, social and political activity, art, and philosophy itself would all be part of these practices.

Although Heidegger admits that there is no answer to the question of why Being undergoes the transformations that it does or is apprehended in precisely the way it is, Rorty himself suggests an interesting answer in the case of Plato's apprehension of Being. He says:

The urge to say that assertions and actions must not only cohere with other assertions and actions but "correspond" to something apart from what people are saying and doing has some claim to be called the philosophical urge. It is the urge which drove Plato to say that Socrates' words and deeds, failing as they did to cohere with the current theory and practice, nonetheless corresponded to something which the Athenians could barely glimpse.³³

The Athenian culture was one in which "saying" played an especially important role. The focus of the life of its citizens, at least those members of the community who were considered truly human, was talking to each other about their situation and what should be done in response to it.³⁴ The culture also followed the practice of putting on trial and punishing people who were socially disruptive to it. In addition the development of Plato's thought took place in a context of philosophical practice which already disparaged popular opinion. Heraclitus and Parmenides had little faith in the populace's ability to discern the truth. In this setting Plato's response may seem quite predictable, though Heidegger would say its predictability is a retrospective illusion. Insight into Being involves a leap of thought that is not determined beforehand.

The "essence of things" which, Heidegger says, first became a matter of thought with Plato (EGT 113/262) has remained a matter for thought in traditional metaphysics down to the time of Nietzsche. The nature of the essence changes from epoch to epoch and thinker to thinker. In the history of metaphysics Being has revealed itself as the Being of what-is in various ways: as, e.g., idea, ousia, actualitas, perceptio, the transcendental making possible of the objectivity of objects, the dialectical mediation of Absolute Spirit, the historical process of production, and the will to power positing values. However, thanks to Plato, the quest of metaphysics remains the same. The effort of thought is devoted to discovering immutable structures in what-is. Logos is transformed into reason as the impression of those structures or speech as the expression of words; and noein, now contrasted with doxa as mere opinion, ceases to involve a leap of insight and becomes instead the source of propositional knowledge, that is, justified true belief.

6.6 Aristotle

Heidegger sees Aristotle's thinking as standing in an ambivalent relationship to that of his predecessors. Like Plato, Aristotle regards the "Beingness" of what-is as something permanent and eternal. He said in Book VII of the Metaphysics that the question of the Being of what-is is a question about the essence of a thing, and he predicted that it would always remain so. Yet, according to Heidegger, Aristotle thinks that the question of just what this "Beingness" is remains everlasting, as Heidegger

himself did (WICT 212/128). Heidegger thinks that Aristotle is "more Greek" than Plato because his thinking is closer to that of the pre-Socratics than is Plato's.

Heidegger suggests that 'Beingness' is the only adequate translation of Aristotle's term 'ousia,' rather than 'essence' or 'substance.'³⁵ The latter terms suggest interpretations of ousia which are too much under the sway of Platonic or later Roman thought (AP 237f./259f.). Heidegger distinguishes two important elements in Aristotle's notion of ousia: an idea of constancy and, more important for the primordially Greek conception of Being, an idea of "becoming-present in the sense of coming forth into the unhidden, placing itself in the open" (AP 247/272). For Aristotle, Heidegger argues, the term 'phusis' has the same two-faceted meaning as 'ousia.' It indicates both a coming-to-be into unhiddenness and the state of nature achieved in this process, thus corresponding to ousia in both its aspect of becoming-present and of constancy. Furthermore, Aristotle seems to recognize a relationship between these two sorts of phusis similar to that posed by the earlier Greeks.³⁶ He claims that phusis in the sense of coming-to-be is the path to phusis in the sense of the nature reached.³⁷ That which lets things show themselves as what they are lets them endure as what they are.

Unlike Plato, Aristotle regards the everyday things around us as having Beingness. He does not dismiss what we encounter in our daily lives as not fully real or real only in a shadowy sense. Heidegger suggests that Aristotle's term 'ousia' still draws on its original, ordinary meaning of 'house' and 'home,' 'possessions' and 'present holdings' (AP 238/260). His notion of "presence" is supposed to capture the same meaning of familiar territory.³⁸ Things other than those from phusis also have their Being on the basis of familiarity. Aristotle's thought at least hints that the techne which the

craftsman follows in his production of objects is not some abstract knowledge of essences but a know-how and skill at dealing with everyday objects (AP 231/251).

Werner Marx comments that "one of the great intellectual accomplishments in the history of philosophy is that Aristotle, unlike Plato, did not define moveable, transient being, on gignomenon, as non-being, as me on; rather he saw something intransient `in' it, and thus `saved' or `delivered' the transient individual into the eternal actuality of Being of a nonetheless moveable order."³⁹ Heidegger even finds a passage in Aristotle which allows him to connect this idea of the "moveable order" with his account of the early Greek notion of `logos,' thus denying its "eternal actuality." Aristotle considers morphe or form to be the crucial element which gives "order" to ousia; it is contrasted with hule as the "order-able." He comments that morphe means "to eidos which is in accordance with logos" (AP 249/275).

Heidegger's own interpretation of this sentence lets him suggest that for Aristotle, unlike Plato, the eidos is a manifestation not of some immutable order independent of human activity but rather of an order articulated by legein. Juxtaposing Aristotle's view with Plato's notion that the eidos was idea, Heidegger remarks: "But Plato, overwhelmed as it were by the essence of eidos, understood it in turn as something present for itself and therefore as something common (koinon) to the individual `what-is' which `stands in appearance'" (AP 249/275). Aristotle, in Heidegger's interpretation, does not think that the eidos stands on its own; it has its grounding in the logos.

Aristotle also speaks of the Being of what-is as "energeia." This Being is evidently found both in things which have their "origin and ordering" from phusis and in those which have this from techne. Both something brought into unhiddenness by its own

self-production and something unhidden through human production are "ergon" or "work." The character of the presence of a work is, Heidegger says, that which occurs in "production" in a distinctively Greek sense. This sense is supposed to be captured by Aristotle's notion of energeia in that it suggests an activity or "energy" apparent in being "at work" or involved.⁴⁰

The epoch of Greek thought comes to an end with the translation of Greek notions into Latin terminology and into the Roman understanding of Being. Then a different sense of production begins to reign, one which suggests that the human task is to dominate and control what-is. The fateful translation of terms indicated a change in the understanding of Being. The active, involved energeia becomes "actualitas," just brute factuality, and the understanding of the Being of what-is as actuality will in turn become the notion that reality is "objectivity" (EGT 56/371). The understanding of the Being of what-is is set on a path where thinking will find itself "set off against Being in such a way the Being is placed before it and consequently stands opposed to it as ob-ject" (IM 116/89). The thing is now set over against us as thing.

For Heidegger the conception of knowledge as theoretical knowledge has its foundation in a particular understanding of what it is to be, one which sees the fundamental human relation to the world as contemplation, and "such a conception has meaning and is correct only on the basis of metaphysics" (N1 152/177). Heidegger, in contrast, thinks that we know a thing most primordially when we use it unreflectively, not when we think about it. His verdict on the rest of the philosophers in the tradition will be quite similar to his verdict on Plato and Aristotle. He comments about knowing a jug through its eidos or idea:

In the process of its making, of course, the jug must first show its outward appearance to the maker. But what shows itself here, the aspect (the eidos, the idea), characterizes the jug solely in the respect in which the vessel stands over against the maker as something to be made.

But what the vessel of this aspect is as this jug, what and how the jug is as this jug-thing, is something we can never learn -- let alone think properly -- by looking at the outward appearance, the idea. That is why Plato, who conceives the presencing of what-is-present in terms of outward appearance, had no more understanding of the way of being of the thing than did Aristotle and all subsequent thinkers.⁴¹

NOTES

¹ Rorty, Mirror, p. 12.

² Heidegger casts the image of this happening of strangeness in the Greek terms 'dike' and 'techne.' He remarks: "Dike is the overpowering order. Techne is the violence of knowledge. The reciprocal relation between them is the happening of strangeness" (IM 165/126). Not abstract propositional thought, this knowledge is the insight embodied in the works of the creators.

³ For example, in "Antigone" Sophocles cites the accomplishments of humankind. We plow the earth, snare light-gliding birds, hunt the beasts of the wilderness and the native creatures of the sea. We yoke "the hirsute neck of the stallion and the undaunted bull." We have the courage to rule over cities, and we build shelter to "flee from exposure to the arrows of unpropitious weather and frost." Heidegger quotes the relevant lines in Introduction to Metaphysics on p. 147/112f.

⁴ 'Umgekehrt' is the term translated as 'reverse order,' perhaps a reference to Heidegger's notion of the "Kehre" or "turn" which we discussed in section 1.4.

⁵ In Heidegger's terminology, the temple is an example of a "thing thinging," a work which brings into focus the significance in its surrounding world. It is debatable whether for Heidegger there has been a work of art since the temple which serves this purpose for a whole culture, though I think that the Gothic cathedral qualifies because of its similar articulation of the Christian understanding of Being. But there are other sorts of things that focus the world (and, in Heideggerese again, "preserve the fourfold" of sky and earth, divinities and mortals) by "thinging," although in a much less comprehensive way perhaps. Heidegger gives us a list of such "things": jug, bench, plow, tree, pond, brook, hill, heron, roe, horse, bull, mirror, book, picture, crown and cross (OWA 182/175). The items on this particular list appear anomalous. Crown and cross could also be seen as cultural works, focusing a common understanding of Being as the temple did. But, while a jug or pond might serve as a precipitant around which a person's understanding of Being crystallizes, its function seems more localized and personal.

⁶ Alexander P. D. Mourelatos, The Route of Parmenides (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), p. 216.

⁷ Anaximander's notion of composition as the opposites at war may seem similar to that of his predecessors, but, of course, Heidegger chooses to focus on the ideas of Anaximander that he finds congenial to his own position and pays little attention to this aspect of Anaximander's view. If pressed, he might choose to think of "the opposites" as Being and what-is.

⁸ Heidegger admits that the term `ta onta' may not be Anaximander's own word, but he seems to end up saying it ought to have been. See EGT 28-31/340-342 and 40/353. Most scholars take this term to be referring back to "the opposites," but, as mentioned in the preceding footnote, Heidegger seems to ignore this aspect of Anaximander's view.

Eric Havelock indirectly casts doubt on Heidegger's prescription. In footnote 39 in section 0.3 of the Introduction I mentioned that Havelock agrees with Heidegger by arguing that `to on' is inappropriately translated as `thing' since it means `what exists' and what this is varies according to the metaphysics of the speaker using the term. However, Havelock adds: "Ta onta did double duty, meaning `things' and also `realities,' and both senses grew out of the Eleatic dialectic. The attempt to describe what Anaximander may have said using such terminology is an anachronism. The same observations apply to the term ousiai, translated `substances' . . . with the difference that ousiai in the fifth century carried a concrete reference (typical of the pre-conceptual stage of language) to `real property.'" Heidegger would presumably agree with the latter point. See Havelock's article in Robb's Language and Thought in Early Greek Philosophy, p. 63.

⁹ `Without stay' is an awkward translation of `ohne Weile.'

¹⁰ Heidegger uses the term `Wohnens.'

¹¹ `What-is-present' translates `das Anwesende.'

¹² We should recall that in Being and Time Heidegger had coined the expression `Sein-bei' or 'Being-at-home-with' to indicate Dasein's familiar dealings with things in its world. We are dealing now with the first articulation of this notion.

¹³ Heidegger's term is `Gegend.'

¹⁴ Curiously, given his own general thesis, Heidegger seems willing to let the ending "according to the dominion of time" be dropped from the quotation traditionally attributed to Anaximander as perhaps not genuine, though he wants to continue to attribute the spirit of the idea to him (EGT 29f./341).

¹⁵ I have chosen not to capitalize Greek terms such as `logos,' `hen panta,' and `moira.' They are not capitalized in ancient Greek texts, and the use of capital letters in English gives the terms a Christian connotation that is inappropriate in this discussion. Heidegger capitalizes their initial letter, but, then, in German all nouns are capitalized.

¹⁶ The phrase 'self-blossoming emergence' translates Heidegger's `das von sich Aufgehende.'

¹⁷ Mourelatos cites Redard on p. 277. This confirmation of Heidegger's interpretation is especially interesting since Heidegger's etymological support for his claims is also frequently regarded as idiosyncratically bizarre.

¹⁸ The goddess speaks to Parmenides about three paths. In his poem the nature of the "impossible" third path is obscure, and it has provoked impressive modern feats of interpretation articulating the logic of "is" and "is not." Heidegger describes the intersection of these paths as the "crossroad of way, no way, wrong way." He does not explain his comment in this passage, but one might see the "impossible" path as the "no way" beyond death and the "wrong way" as the way of the Anyone. He adds that "the way" is never

determined by a once-and-for-always decision. The "crossroads accompanies us on the way, every moment" (WICT 175/108). See also his discussion of the three ways in his Introduction to Metaphysics where he suggests that the third, impossible path leads to nonbeing, the nothing (IM 110-114/84-87).

¹⁹ Parmenides' term is parelasei, meaning 'to drive by' or 'to overtake.'

²⁰ Mourelatos, p. 135.

²¹ Gregory Nagy, "Hesiod" in Ancient Writers, T. J. Luce, editor (New York: Scribner, 1982), p. 43. See also pp. 46-49. I am indebted to John Hamilton, S. J., for this reference.

²² Heidegger, "Nachwort zu 'Was Ist Metaphysik,'" Wegmarken (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1976), p. 307.

²³ In such comments Heidegger seems to regard "Socrates and Plato" as one thinker, and the emphasis is on Plato's contribution. However, in What Is Called Thinking, Heidegger suggests that Socrates is a thinker after his own heart: Socrates does not give an answer to the question of Being or propose any metaphysics but rather insists on the questionableness of Being (WICT 17/52).

²⁴ See Section 0.2 for Heidegger's remarks about Fichte and the wall.

²⁵ Heidegger's word play between das Ständige ('the constant') and Gegen-ständige ('the ob-jective') is lost in English. Gegen-ständige suggests a 'standing over against,' which is the meaning at stake here.

²⁶ For criticism of Heidegger's original analysis of Plato's notion of aletheia, see Paul Friedländer's Plato: An Introduction, translated by Hans Meyerhoff (New York: Harper and Row, 1964), pp. 221-229, and the reply by Christopher S. Nwodo, "Friedlaender Versus

Heidegger: A-letheia Controversy," Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology, Vol. 10, No. 2 (May 1979), pp. 84-93. Also see Charles Kahn's criticism of Heidegger's original claim in his The Verb 'Be' in Ancient Greek, pp. 363-66.

²⁷ Unlike Plato, Heidegger makes a distinction between eidōs and idea, perhaps emphasizing the slide from the ordinary use of the former to the technical use of the latter.

²⁸ 'What-being' substitutes for Heidegger's 'Was-sein.'

²⁹ See PDT 266/231.

³⁰ His word is 'Erkennen.'

³¹ W. K. C. Guthrie, History of Greek Philosophy, Vol. I (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), p. 36.

³² Rorty, Mirror, p. 38f.

³³ Ibid., p. 179.

³⁴ See Hannah Arendt's The Human Condition (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1958), p. 27.

³⁵ His term is 'Seiendheit.'

³⁶ Even if Aristotle has a notion of phusis which retains an "echo" of the earlier Greek conception, his remarks about it indicate an ambivalence. On occasions when he seems to identify phusis with ousia, he echoes the earlier view. But at other places he distinguishes one particular type of ousia as having its Being from phusis (AP 268/299f.). This is the Being of plants, animals, and natural "elements" such as earth, water, fire, and air. With these sorts of things, phusis is the "origin and ordering (arche) of the being-moved of something which moves on its own" (AP 242/266). In this view other domains of what-is exhibit a different sort of ousia. Artifacts, for example, have their "origin and ordering"

outside of themselves in the craftspeople who make them (AP 234/255). The separation of these two types of ousia suggests that their Being is not as similar as Heidegger thinks it is.

³⁷ Aristotle, Physics 193b 12.

³⁸ In ordinary language Heidegger's term 'Anwesen' means 'real estate' or 'premises.'

³⁹ Werner Marx, Introduction to Aristotle's Theory of Being as Being, translated by Robert Schine (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1977), p. 29.

⁴⁰ See EGT 56/370f.

⁴¹ "The Thing" in PLT 168/160.