

## CHAPTER VI HEIDEGGER AND THE AMBIGUITY OF TRADITION

The ambiguity of Heidegger's attitude toward tradition is a much-discussed point in recent scholarship. Some have said that Heidegger's thought is an effort to grasp the very foundations of the Western tradition of philosophy.<sup>1</sup> According to this view, the questions raised by Heidegger could be raised only within the framework of that tradition.<sup>2</sup> Others have argued – with approval or disapproval – that Heidegger's thought represents a break with the tradition.<sup>3</sup> They say that Heidegger rejects the dominant philosophical tradition, extending back to Aristotle and remaining authoritative up to Hegel and beyond, in which being is understood in terms of οὐσία, that is, substance or essence.<sup>4</sup> Both camps appeal to Heidegger's own works in support of their theses. Let us

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<sup>1</sup> George Joseph Seidel, Martin Heidegger and the Pre-Socratics: An Introduction to His Thought (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1964), p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Jarava Lal Mehta, Martin Heidegger: The Way and the Vision, revised ed. (Honolulu: The University Press of Hawaii, 1976), p. 355.

<sup>3</sup> Perhaps the most extensive effort to show the problems raised by Heidegger's break with scholastic metaphysics is that of John N. Deely, The Tradition via Heidegger: An Essay on the Meaning of Being in the Philosophy of Martin Heidegger (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1971). Deely argues that the Heideggerian distinction between being and beings is a consideration of distinct dimensions that are identical, and so belongs to the very metaphysics which Heidegger explicitly rejects.

In his analysis, Deely draws on the work of Dominican Father Ralph Powell. Powell has argued that the distinction in Being and Time between ontic (having to do with beings) and ontological (having to do with being) presupposes the metaphysical distinction between act and potency. Heidegger grew to realize this, Powell concludes, and eventually dropped the terms. See Ralph Powell, "The Late Heidegger's Omission of the Ontic-Ontological Structure of Dasein," in Heidegger and the Path of Thinking, ed. with an Introduction by John Sallis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press; and Louvain: Editions E. Nauwelaerts, 1970), pp. 116-137. The vaunted Heideggerian destruction of metaphysics, according to Powell, is built upon metaphysical principles, namely, the principle of non-contradiction and the freedom of the thinking subject from blind fate. Ralph Powell, "Has Heidegger Destroyed Metaphysics?," Listening/Current Studies in Dialog 2 (1967): 52-59. My qualified approval of Powell appears below in footnote 83.

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Werner Marx, Heidegger und die Tradition. Eine problemgeschichtliche Einführung in die Grundbestimmungen des Seins (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1961), p. 13. Translation: Heidegger and the Tradition, trans. Theodore Kisiel and Murray Greene, with an Introduction by Theodore Kisiel (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1971), p. 5. Marx's general thesis is that Heidegger rejected the presupposition of Aristotle that the question of being would remain the question of (Metaphysics 1028<sup>b</sup>3-4), and consequently the demand of the Stagirite that

begin by examining some of the leading ideas in Being and Time which have given rise to such divergent opinions about Heidegger's relation to tradition.

Those who would argue that Heidegger stands within what is broadly called the Western philosophical tradition point to the constitutive role played by Plato and Aristotle in Heidegger's thought. Plato's Sophist provides the epigram to Being and Time. The question of being kept him and Aristotle on the move, says Heidegger, only to retire, after the classical age, from the field of explicit philosophical investigation.<sup>5</sup> Any modern investigation of the question of being, Heidegger continues, needs to uncover what has been concealed in the centuries since the foundation of Plato's academy. But this uncovering does not mean shaking off the ontological tradition. On the contrary, Heidegger calls for an investigation of being which remains within that tradition, whose borders contain the very possibilities for the investigation.<sup>6</sup> In particular, Heidegger proposes and carries out an investigation of certain passages from Aristotle. Aristotle's treatment of time in the Physics, for example, provides Heidegger with a way of characterizing what he calls the ordinary concept of time, the concept which has informed the traditional discussion of being.<sup>7</sup> In short, it allows Heidegger to trace his own question, that of being and time, back to the foundations of philosophy.<sup>8</sup>

When Heidegger lays out the phenomenological method upon which Being and Time is built, he turns again to Aristotle. Aristotle wrote that it is the business of the proposition, the λόγος ἀποφατικός, to indicate or make things visible.<sup>9</sup> From this

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every philosopher be concerned with the first principles (τας αρχας) and causes (τας αιτίας) of ουσία (Metaphysics 1003<sup>b</sup>18-19). See below, footnote 102.

<sup>5</sup> Heidegger, Sein und Zeit, p. 2.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.

<sup>8</sup> The treatment of time by Aristotle leaves much to be desired, in Heidegger's opinion. We will sketch this treatment in the briefest terms in the section below entitled "The Categories in Kant." For a discussion of the link between truth and time in Aristotle, a link which Heidegger found to be important, see the section below entitled "The Categorical Link Between Temporality and Truth." For Heidegger's criticism of the Aristotelian concept of time in Hegel see chapter V above, esp. the section entitled "The Encyclopedia's Exposition of Time."

<sup>9</sup> Aristotle On Interpretation 17<sup>a</sup>15-18, in Aristotle, The Organon, vol. I, comprising The Categories and On Interpretation, trans. Harold P. Cooke; and Prior Analytics, trans. Hugh Tredennick; The Loeb Classical Library; 2 vols. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press; and London: William Heinemann Ltd, 1955). We shall comment on Heidegger's analysis of the apophantic word in the section below entitled "The Categorical Link Between Temporality and Truth."

Heidegger draws out the meaning of phenomenology as the discourse (λόγος) which lets something be seen (φαινέσθαι).<sup>10</sup> The ancient – one might say, the traditional – doctrine of hermeneutics, in his opinion, makes the modern phenomenological method comprehensible. And when Heidegger lays out what he calls the primordial phenomenon of truth, he turns yet again to Aristotle. Being and Time states that this primordial phenomenon has been obscured by a secondary understanding of truth. That secondary understanding, wherein truth becomes an agreement between the mind and the entities about which judgments are made, is itself ancient. It goes back to the pre-Socratic philosopher, Parmenides.<sup>11</sup> But that is no reason to ignore Greek philosophy. Although the ancients concealed the primordial understanding of truth by grasping it in a secondary way as an assertion about what is present at hand, nevertheless Heidegger does not reject them. The primordial understanding, he claims, remained alive among the Greeks. It even managed to hold its own, at least in Aristotle, against the tendency toward concealment which lay in Greek ontology.<sup>12</sup> A proper interpretation of Aristotle, states Heidegger, can yield a glimpse at this primordial understanding of truth.<sup>13</sup> This is the kind of Heideggerian assertion which can be cited in order to show that the author of Being and Time remains squarely and explicitly within the Western philosophical tradition.

On the other hand, those who portray Heidegger as a revolutionary can point to the celebrated sixth section of Being and Time. This section outlines “The Task of Destroying the History of Ontology.” The problem with this history, according to Heidegger, is that it obscures the very thing which it transmits. It does so by reducing ontology to something self-evident, thereby concealing its meaning. The meaning is not only forgotten, but apparently unapproachable, at least through traditional channels. The very self-evidence of the ontological tradition, says Heidegger, especially the seeming transparency and unproblematic nature of the verb “to be,” blocks our approach to it. What is so clearly self-evident, to use the word ironically, lacks interest. The foreign, the

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<sup>10</sup> Heidegger, Sein und Zeit, p. 32.

<sup>11</sup> It was Parmenides who observed that even those things which are absent can be securely present (παρεόντα, πάρεμι) to the mind. Fragmente der Vorsokratiker, 1.232; trans., Ancilla to the Pre-Socratic Philosophers, p. 42. Heidegger notes that the key to Parmenides’ interpretation of being was νοεῖν (perception), defined as “das schlichte Vernehmen von etwas Vorhandenem” (Sein und Zeit, p. 25), a key word which would turn out to be fateful for the history of being. For a further discussion of the “secondary” notion of truth, see below, esp. “The Categorical Link Between Temporality and Truth.”

<sup>12</sup> Heidegger, Sein und Zeit, p. 225.

<sup>13</sup> It is a mistake, says Heidegger, to invoke Aristotle in support of the thesis that judgment is the genuine locus of truth. *Ibid.*, p. 226.

strange, and the unfamiliar absorb us far more, he says, distracting us to such a degree that the ontological foundations of our own thinking remain unexamined.<sup>14</sup>

Now it must be conceded that the question of the meaning of being is an ancient one, and that the history of its investigation is almost as old. The ontological question has indeed been investigated under the traditional heading of metaphysics. Of those in the post-medieval period, Suarez, Descartes, and Hegel are mentioned explicitly by Heidegger. But the development of Greek ontology, he says, which has shaped all thought on the question of being up to the present day, suggests that being is usually understood, even by the greatest thinkers, in terms of the “world.”<sup>15</sup> This is the world of self-evident entities, according to Heidegger, which are present at hand. Entities which are self-evident escape consideration. Only when they cease to be self-evident do they become objects of study. Being, in Heidegger’s view, has become exactly such a self-evident entity. The metaphysical tradition in which it has been studied has reduced it to one entity among other entities. Within the history of this tradition, the difference between being and beings has been overlooked. For this reason, Heidegger calls for a destruction of ontology:

If the question of Being is to have its own history made transparent, then this hardened tradition must be loosened up, and the concealments which it has brought about must be dissolved. We understand this task as one in which by taking the question of Being as our clue we are to destroy the traditional content of ancient ontology until we arrive at those primordial experiences in which we achieved our first ways of determining the nature of being – the ways which have guided us ever since.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 21.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., pp. 21-22.

<sup>16</sup> “Soll für die Seinsfrage selbst die Durchsichtigkeit ihrer eigenen Geschichte gewonnen werden, dann bedarf es der Auflockerung der verhärteten Tradition und der Ablösung der durch sie gezeitigten Verdeckungen. Diese Aufgabe verstehen wir als die am *Leitfaden der Seinsfrage* sich vollziehende *Destruction* des überlieferten Bestandes der antiken Ontologie auf die ursprünglichen Erfahrungen, in denen die ersten und fortan leitenden Bestimmungen des Seins gewonnen wurden.” Ibid., p. 22.

The translation obscures two features present in the original text. First, the destruction of what has been transmitted in ancient ontology is a “sich vollziehende Destruction.” It brings itself to fulfillment, and Heidegger may be suggesting that this destruction is by no means the initiative of a human subject. Second, this destruction occurs on account of (“auf”) the primordial experiences in which the first and leading experiences of being were grasped. The English translation suggests that the opposite is the case, namely, that the task of destruction is a preparation for arriving at these primordial experiences.

From this passage one notes, first of all, that Heidegger is far from suggesting that the question of being has never before been raised. Indeed, it has a venerable history. The problem lies in the ambiguity of this history, which has both shaped and obscured the question. Second, Heidegger sketches a solution. The solution is to make transparent the history of the question of being, that is, to take it from its status of self-evident impenetrability. Third, one must note in the passage what it is that Heidegger wants to destroy. The object of destruction is neither the history of the question nor ancient ontology. Instead, Heidegger has taken aim at the “content” of such ontology. The German word rendered as “content” is “Bestand.” Perhaps it would be better to say, not that Heidegger wants to destroy the “content” of ancient ontology, but rather that he wants to destroy its present “standing.” The genuine content may yet be salvaged. Finally, the word “destruction” in the passage is itself ambiguous. It can mean either “to ruin” or (keeping its etymology in mind) “to un-build.” If it means the latter, then the destruction of the present standing of ancient ontology is nothing other than a dismantling of it, the better to understand how it works. It is a dismantling which literally accomplishes itself, because the experiences of the ancients are to become those of the moderns as well. Heidegger’s task of the destruction of the history of ontology cannot be taken as a nihilistic call for the repudiation of what previous philosophers have accomplished.

Nevertheless, the commentators on Heidegger who view him as attempting or effecting a break with tradition have a point. Heidegger is drawing a line between his thought and that of the “hardened” tradition. That tradition has fostered a tendency to conceal the question of being, a question which Heidegger sets out to reveal. The revelation will be achieved, he suggests, when the current standing of ontology, laden with the accretions of centuries, is confronted by the primordial experiences in which being was first grasped. Heidegger’s implicit claim is that he is the first to have fully grasped the question of being. In this sense, the task of the destruction of the history of ontology means a break with tradition. Let us now examine in greater detail the positive significance of the destruction of ontology. This should put us in a better position to judge the important question, which shall be discussed in the closing pages of this chapter, of the extent to which one who is rooted in a tradition can break with it.

### VI.1. Destroying the History of Ontology

The negative thrust of the title of Being and Time’s sixth section, “The Task of Destroying the History of Ontology,” tends to obscure the chapter’s positive intent. Heidegger does set out a twofold program of destruction. He aims to destroy a superficial philosophical method and superficial understanding of being. But his goal is by no means purely destructive. Instead, he offers a more profound method and understanding, of which the rest of his book represents the application.

What is the superficial philosophical method which Heidegger combats? It is a method which suggests that an investigator can somehow stand completely apart from (and in that sense, take a wholly objective stance toward) the matter of history. In particular, Heidegger implicitly criticizes those who treat a historical question, such as the question of being, as if it were a mere factum, a product of human design and

manufacture.<sup>17</sup> Their treatment suggests that history is present at hand, that it can be manipulated, and that it only occasionally has an effect upon the present. To this view Heidegger is utterly opposed. He says that “Dasein” – the word usually means “existence” or “presence,” but as a technical term in Being and Time it refers to the being which belongs to persons – “‘is’ its past.”<sup>18</sup> He means that history has so shaped humanity that it is misleading to say that history “follows” Dasein. More precisely, history precedes it. Dasein matures with an understanding of being, an understanding which overtakes it from the past, so to speak, and within which it grasps itself. In short, humanity is, despite its pretensions to autonomy and self-sovereignty, what it already has been.

#### VI.1.A. Historicality and the Superficial Method

Heidegger calls this grasp of being “Geschichtlichkeit” or “historicality.” The term refers to an understanding of Dasein or humanity as that which is shaped by history. This shaping alone makes world history, as well as the study of it by historians, at all possible. The trouble with this historicality is that it can be hidden from Dasein. When this happens, two possibilities arise. First, the study of history may not even be realized as a way of addressing the past. This is the case, for example, with some pre-literate peoples. Second, one can undertake the study of history without ever acknowledging the constitutive role of historicality. This second possibility concerns Heidegger to a greater extent. When Dasein fails to acknowledge its own historicality, says Heidegger, it “falls prey” to its own more or less explicitly grasped tradition.<sup>19</sup> Tradition then steers the historical inquiry without the inquirer’s knowledge or consent.

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<sup>17</sup> The Latin topos “verum et factum convertuntur” received its Italian explication in Vico’s 1725 La Scienza Nuova. There Vico states that his science of history is true because (1) human beings have made history and (2) the ideal historiographer narrates that which he creates. The science of history gives a divine pleasure for “in Dio il conoscere e l fare è una medesima cosa” – “since in God knowledge and creation are one and the same thing.” Giambattista Vico, La Scienza Nuova, 1744 ed. with the variants of the editions of 1730 and of the two unedited intermediate redactions, ed. Fausto Nicolini (vols. 112-113 of the series Scrittori d’Italia); 2 vols. (Bari: G. Laterza and figli, 1928), Libro I, “Del metodo.” Translation: The New Science of Giambattista Vico, revised translation of the third edition (1744) by Thomas Goddard Bergin and Max Harold Frisch (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1968), pp. 104-105 (Book I, paragraph 349).

<sup>18</sup> “Das Dasein ‘ist’ sein Vergangenheit in der Weise *seines* Seins, das, roh gesagt, jeweils aus seiner Zukunft her ‘geschieht’.” Heidegger, Sein und Zeit, p. 20. This recalls the statement of Count Yorck that the historian is history. See chapter V, footnote 62 above.

<sup>19</sup> “Dasein verfällt in eins damit auch seiner mehr oder minder ausdrücklich ergriffenen Tradition.” Heidegger, Sein und Zeit, p. 21.

If a failure to acknowledge one's own historicity lies at the root of the superficial historical method which Heidegger seeks to destroy, what then is the more adequate method which he proposes? It is easier to say what it is not. For the phenomenological method proposed by Heidegger – and we shall have to reserve until later the meaning of the adjective “phenomenological”<sup>20</sup> – is no method in the ordinary sense of the word. It is not a set of procedures which one can apply, so to speak, from the outside.<sup>21</sup> Heidegger did not set about to trace the history of ontology in order that future investigators could recognize and avoid, as if that were possible, their own historicity.<sup>22</sup> One cannot do with historicity what the therapist does with neurosis, namely, thematize it and thus reduce it to something manageable. To escape the pervasive influence of historicity is clearly not the aim of Being and Time. On the contrary, Heidegger acknowledges that the inquiry into being is itself characterized by historicity.<sup>23</sup> Thus when he proposes a hermeneutical phenomenology of Dasein, he is aware that the word “hermeneutic” connotes an acknowledgment of the conditions, such as historicity, which shape the possibility of his ontological investigation.<sup>24</sup>

At the same time, however, Heidegger takes pains to avoid giving the impression that historicity has so put its stamp upon humanity that one can no longer inquire or choose. To be sure, Dasein has grown up into a traditional way of understanding itself. This understanding reveals and regulates the possibilities of Dasein's own being. That is why Heidegger says that Dasein is its own past. But that does not mean, he adds, that historicity cannot be discovered and nurtured. The investigation of historicity takes place when tradition is uncovered, conserved, and explicitly pursued.<sup>25</sup> These tasks are possibilities for Dasein, and the fact that Dasein can undertake them, in the context of the inquiry into being, provides a clue to the very meaning of being. To put it more concisely, the method of inquiry proposed by Heidegger is a historical one. It is historical in that history (or more precisely, the ontological tradition) becomes an object

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<sup>20</sup> See the section below entitled “The Categorical Link between Temporality and Truth.”

<sup>21</sup> The conception of method as a set of procedures had been condemned by Hegel as “external reflection.” See chapter V above, esp. the section entitled “The Limits of External Reflection.”

<sup>22</sup> Heidegger, Sein und Zeit, p. 47.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 37. This is the second of the three meanings of “hermeneutic” sketched by Heidegger: the making known or interpreting of something, the working-out of the conditions for the possibility of an investigation, and an acknowledgement that the being of the interpreter comes into play in every interpretation.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

of interpretation. And it is historical because the investigator acknowledges that historicity has shaped (or is the condition for the very possibility of) the interpretation.

The historicity of which Heidegger speaks raises a difficult question. It is the question of the penetrability of tradition. Heidegger uses the word “tradition” in two senses. It is, on the one hand, that which Dasein can uncover, conserve, and explicitly pursue. This we have already seen as one of Dasein’s possibilities. On the other hand, tradition is that which transmits the objects of Dasein’s historical investigation. It is that which, in transmitting, dominates the very traditions which are handed on. So we can say that the particular tradition (in the first sense of the word) which Dasein investigates is subordinate to that general tradition (in the second sense) by means of which the first is transmitted. Tradition is therefore the context for the handing on of traditions. But Heidegger goes further than this. He argues that the general tradition, in the second sense of the word, does not merely dominate particular traditions. More to the point, it conceals them, reducing them to something self-evident.<sup>26</sup> By making particular traditions appear self-evident, tradition in general removes them from the field of explicit investigation. The net result is that the historicity of Dasein becomes uprooted. It has been torn away from its own foundations, from its roots in the particular traditions which would have been investigated had they not been rendered self-evident by tradition in general. Tradition in this second sense cuts humanity off from the depth of being itself, the very being which has shaped Western life and thought. This, Heidegger argues, is the “hardened” tradition which must be loosened.<sup>27</sup>

But at this point, the question of penetrability arises. How can tradition in the second sense, the “hardened” tradition, be loosened up without reducing it to tradition in the first sense? Only in the first sense, we must remember, is tradition capable of being uncovered, conserved, and pursued. Only in the first sense is it penetrable. Tradition in the second sense--that which transmits what humanity can uncover, conserve, and pursue--is not penetrable in the same way. It is not a hardened something which can be loosened up and dissolved. No less than historicity itself can tradition in the second sense be exhaustively thematized. Heidegger is aware of this problem, although in other terminology. It is nothing less than the problem of the distinction between beings and that being which cannot be reduced to one among other beings: the problem of the ontological difference.<sup>28</sup> Our question of the penetrability of tradition hinges upon such an ontological difference, and the relation between the two shall be explored throughout this chapter.

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 21.

<sup>27</sup> See footnote 16 above.

<sup>28</sup> The phrase “ontological difference” began to appear the year following the publication of Being and Time. See Martin Heidegger, Vom Wesen des Grundes (1929), unchanged 4th ed. (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1955), pp. 15ff.

At any rate, we have seen the kind of superficial philosophical method which Heidegger sets out to destroy. The proclaimed destruction of the history of ontology is to begin with a destruction of that method which fails to acknowledge historicity. In its place, Heidegger proposes a phenomenological method within which historicity is seen as that which characterizes the very question under consideration, the question of being. Doubtless, to describe as a method what Heidegger proposes can be misleading. The very idea of historicity is meant to suggest the ground of every interpretation of being, a ground which cannot be manipulated as we ordinarily think a method can be. Nevertheless, the word method is not inappropriate. It is, after all, the word which Hegel chose to describe the movement of the matter itself under investigation.<sup>29</sup> Heidegger's method is meant to supersede the superficial method consigned to destruction. But the destruction of the history of ontology is not restricted to methodological issues. Let us now turn to the superficial understanding of being which is equally Heidegger's target.

#### VI.1.B. Being and the Superficial Content

The question of being, according to Heidegger, has been superficially treated in a variety of ways since the first formulations of Greek ontology. Heidegger recites a litany of terms in which philosophical modernity has touched upon the problem: the Cartesian ego cogito, the subject, the "I," reason, spirit, and person. These particular entities remain uninterrogated as to their being, says Heidegger, because the fundamental question of being has been neglected. Nevertheless they have provided an occasion for a superficial treatment of the question. Such a treatment has yielded a content of matching superficiality. Why has the treatment been superficial? What has gone wrong in the analysis of the terms or entities listed above? Heidegger speaks of a twofold shortcoming. He says that either

the categorial content of the traditional ontology has been carried over to these entities with corresponding formalizations and purely negative restrictions, or else dialectic has been called in for the purpose of interpreting the substantiality of the subject ontologically.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> See chapter IV above, esp. the section entitled "The Limits of External Reflection."

<sup>30</sup> "Vielmehr wird der kategoriale Bestand der traditionellen Ontologie mit entsprechenden Formalisierungen und lediglich negativen Einschränkungen auf dieses Seiende übertragen, oder aber es wird in der Absicht auf eine ontologische Interpretation der Substantialität des Subjekts die Dialektik zu Hilfe gerufen." Heidegger, Sein und Zeit, p. 22. The word translated as "content" is "Bestand," which suggests that the traditional understanding of categories may not be the only one. It is one particular understanding, rather than a static "content." It should also be noted that the word translated as "entities" is really a singular noun, "das Seiende," and most likely refers to the "Struktur" of the being of the entities in question. To that "Struktur" has the categorial content been carried over.

This highly-compressed sentence poses a number of difficulties. What is the categorial content of which Heidegger speaks? What are the formalizations and restrictions which the carry-over accomplishes? What is the substantiality of the subject which dialectic serves to interpret? None of these terms are defined by Heidegger, at least not at this point in his text. Nevertheless we are not left without a clue. Each half of Heidegger's sentence employs a key term which has been associated with a most important figure of philosophical antiquity. The first key term is categorial, which calls to mind the work On Categories by Aristotle (and the later treatment of categories in the work of Kant). The second key term is dialectic, signifying the art of conversation of the Platonic Socrates. In short, Heidegger is suggesting that the limitations of the modern discussion of being can be traced back to problems implicit in the ancients' treatment of the question. Let us now turn to Heidegger's critique of the doctrine of categories and of dialectic in order to layout those aspects of ancient ontology whose destruction is his task.

#### VI.1.B. Merely formal dialectics

Heidegger's attitude towards dialectic wavers, in the chapter on destroying the history of ontology, between contempt and appreciation. Surely the passage quoted above, in which Heidegger speaks of that dialectic which is "called in for the purpose of interpreting the substantiality of the subject ontologically," betrays scant appreciation. Yet this passage is followed a few pages later by one in which we glimpse, with Heidegger, some of the power of dialectic. The power lies in the ability to elicit the truth through dialogue, a power which Plato granted only to the one who pursues philosophy in purity and righteousness.<sup>31</sup> Heidegger links dialectic (*διαλεκτικός*) with the verb to talk or to hold discourse (*λεγειν*). Discourse provides the clue, he says, for arriving at the structures of being which belong to entities.<sup>32</sup> When Heidegger analyzes in the next section his phenomenological method, he states that it is in discourse that entities are brought out of concealment and allowed to be seen.<sup>33</sup> The etymological link between discourse and dialectic hints at an appreciation by Heidegger for the dialectic which Plato calls a science.<sup>34</sup>

Nevertheless Plato's dialectic is tainted, Heidegger suggests, by a superficial notion of being. Ancient ontology, he says, "becomes" dialectic.<sup>35</sup> Such ontology was

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<sup>31</sup> Plato Sophist 253e. In Plato, with an English translation by H. N. Fowler, The Loeb Classical Library, vol. 1: Euthyphro, Apology, Crito, Phaedo, Phaedrus; vol. 2: Theaetetus, Sophist; 2 vols. (London: William Heinemann, and New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1921). Cf. 230 b-d, where dialectic is referred to as cross-examination or *ελεγχος*.

<sup>32</sup> Heidegger, Sein und Zeit, p. 25.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33.

<sup>34</sup> Plato Sophist 253d.

<sup>35</sup> Heidegger, Sein und Zeit, p. 25.

prior to dialectic, and it left upon it an ineradicable stamp. That stamp led to the eventual superfluity of dialectic. Heidegger puts it this way:

As the ontological clue gets progressively worked out – namely, in the ‘hermeneutic’ of the λογός – it becomes increasingly possible to grasp the problem of Being in a more radical fashion. The ‘dialectic’, which has been a genuine philosophical embarrassment, becomes superfluous. That is why Aristotle ‘no longer has any understanding’ of it, for he has put it on a more radical footing and raised it to a new level.<sup>36</sup>

Dialectic became superfluous, says Heidegger, in the working out of the ontological clue. This clue is the “hermeneutic” of the λογός. Heidegger puts the word “hermeneutic” in quotation marks, one can surmise, as an allusion to Aristotle’s work On Interpretation, Περὶ Ἑρμηνείας. In that work, Aristotle defines the dialectical question and refers to the treatment of dialectic in his work on Topics.<sup>37</sup> The Topics distinguishes between dialectic and demonstration: dialectic begins with opinions which are generally accepted, while demonstration (αποδείξις) has premises which are true and primary.<sup>38</sup> This has led many scholars to the conclusion that, for Aristotle, dialectic did not enjoy the standing accorded to it by Plato.<sup>39</sup> It was subordinated to the theory of syllogistic expounded in Aristotle’s Prior Analytics. There Aristotle criticizes those who, by means of dialectic, attempt to prove what is better demonstrated by syllogism.<sup>40</sup> Syllogism seemed to offer a

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<sup>36</sup> “Mit der fortschreitenden Ausarbeitung des ontologischen Leitfadens selbst, d.h. der ‘Hermeneutik’ des λογός, wächst die Möglichkeit einer radikaleren Fassung des Seinsproblems. Die ‘Dialektik’, die eine echte philosophische Verlegenheit war, wird überflüssig. Deshalb hatte Aristoteles ‘kein Verstandnis mehr’ für sie, weil er sie auf einen radikaleren Boden stellte und aufhob.” Ibid. The expression “raised it to a new level” captures only half the meaning of “aufhob.” The other meaning, “to cancel,” provides a clue for understanding Heidegger’s ironic use of the adjective “radical.”

<sup>37</sup> Aristotle On Interpretation 20<sup>b</sup>22-26. At this point Aristotle also notes, incidentally, that the question “What is it?” is not a dialectical question, because such a question ought to give the respondent a choice between two contradictory answers. In Aristotle, The Organon, The Loeb Classical Library, vol. 1: The Categories and On Interpretation, trans. Harold P. Cooke, and the Prior Analytics, trans. Hugh Tredennick; vol. 2: Posterior Analytics, trans. Hugh Tredennick, and Topica, trans. E. S. Forster; 2 vols. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, and London: William Heinemann Ltd, 1960).

<sup>38</sup> Aristotle Topics 100<sup>a</sup>25-30.

<sup>39</sup> This is maintained by A.-H. Chroust, “The First Thirty Years of Modern Aristotelian Scholarship,” Classica et Mediaevalia 24 (1963): 27-57, at p. 55. Cited by J. D. G. Evans, Aristotle’s Concept of Dialectic (Cambridge, London, New York, Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1977), p. 2.

<sup>40</sup> Aristotle Prior Analytics 46<sup>a</sup>31-46<sup>b</sup>4.

stricter means of proof, and so dialectic suffered a loss of prestige.<sup>41</sup> This must be what Heidegger refers to when he states that dialectic had become a genuine philosophical embarrassment. Aristotle, he says, “no longer has any understanding” of it (the quotation marks are Heidegger’s), because he had come to regard dialectic’s apparent imprecision as a shortcoming. He appropriated only that aspect of dialectic which could be schematized, namely, diaeresis. This is the division of things by classes and the avoidance of the belief that the class appropriate to one thing is also appropriate to another.<sup>42</sup> Thus Heidegger can assert that Aristotle had both raised dialectic to a new level and cancelled it. Dialectic was cancelled by being absorbed into syllogistic.

#### VI.1.B.1.a. The “radicality” of substance

What is striking about the passage from Heidegger quoted above is the ironic use of the adjective “radical.” Heidegger says that a more radical grasp of the problem of being, as well as the more radical basis upon which Aristotle put dialectic, were occasioned by the working-out of ancient ontology. “Radical” has an ironic tone here because Heidegger does not mean more primordial or superior. To be sure, we might conclude that he meant this, if we were to confine our attention to this passage alone. But in the context of Heidegger’s overall exposition, his use of the word “radical” cannot be appreciative. He seems rather to suggest that the grasp of being and of dialectic is more radical in the sense of “extreme.” This grasp is the extreme consequence of the presuppositions of ancient ontology.

The proof of this interpretation lies in another passage from the sixth section of Being and Time. There Heidegger first advances a central critical thesis. It is the thesis that his target, the superficial understanding of being, arose in connection with a particular understanding of time:

The outward evidence for this (though of course it is *merely* outward evidence) is the treatment of the meaning of Being as *παρουσία* or *ουσία*, which signifies, in ontologico-Temporal terms, ‘presence’. Entities are grasped in their Being as ‘presence’; this means that they are understood with regard to a definite mode of time – the ‘*Present*’.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> See Friedrich Solmsen, “Dialectic Without the Forms,” in Aristotle on Dialectic: the Topics, Proceedings of the third Symposium Aristotelicum, ed. G. E. L. Owen (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1968), pp. 49-68. Solmsen argues (p. 61) that Aristotle took over the logical scaffolding of Plato’s diaeresis while abandoning the metaphysical doctrine of forms.

<sup>42</sup> Plato Sophist 253d.

<sup>43</sup> “Das äussere Dokument dafür – aber freilich *nur* das--ist die Bestimmung des Sinnes von Sein als *παρουσία*, bzw. *ουσία*, was ontologisch-temporal ‘Anwesenheit’ bedeutet. Seiendes ist in seinem Sein als ‘Anwesenheit’ gefasst, d.h. es ist mit Rücksicht auf einen bestimmten Zeitmodus, die ‘*Gegenwart*’, verstanden.” Heidegger, Sein und Zeit, p. 25. The phrase “treatment of the meaning of Being” is somewhat of an expansion of the

This passage is an allusion to the Aristotelian ουσία, that substance which is the primary cause or essence of each thing.<sup>44</sup> Aristotle defines it as the form or nature by which all things are constituted, and thus “not an element but a principle.”<sup>45</sup> The Aristotelian word “principle,” αρχή, has the primary signification of “beginning” or “origin.” The temporal significance belonging to “principle” lends support to Heidegger’s link between ουσία and παρουσία, the word for “presence.”<sup>46</sup> What he proceeds to argue is that the Aristotelian interpretation of being in terms of substance<sup>47</sup> is based upon a notion of substance as that which is present at hand.<sup>48</sup>

When something is present at hand, says Heidegger, its being is a matter of indifference.<sup>49</sup> To apply the term “presence at hand” to a human being is thus inappropriate. It suggests that the person belongs to the same class as a thing. But one’s humanity, one’s very being, cannot be a matter of indifference. When it is allowed to be treated in this way, as for example in an academic treatise upon anthropology or human psychology, then something fundamental is lost. The intimate bond between what the expositor is describing, namely, anthropology or psychology, and the expositor’s own being is broken. The treatment of a human subject cannot be divorced from the subject who is treating it. Heidegger puts it this way:

*Ontologically, every idea of a ‘subject’ – unless refined by a previous ontological determination of its basic character – still posits the *subjectum* (ὑποκείμενον) along with it, no matter how vigorous one’s ontical protestations against the ‘soul substance’ or the ‘reification of consciousness’.*<sup>50</sup>

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German “Bestimmung,” a term which means “definition” or “giving-a-voice-to,” and recalls the word “Dokument,” documentation, which is translated as “evidence.”

<sup>44</sup> Aristotle Metaphysics 1041<sup>b</sup>27-32. Substance is the first of the ten categories (Aristotle Categories 1<sup>b</sup>25-2<sup>a</sup>3).

<sup>45</sup> [H] ἔστιν οὐ στοιχεῖον ἀλλ’ ἀρχή. Aristotle Metaphysics 1041<sup>b</sup>27.

<sup>46</sup> Literally, “alongside of (παρ) substance (οὐσία).”

<sup>47</sup> Aristotle Metaphysics 1030<sup>a</sup>21-24.

<sup>48</sup> Heidegger, Sein und Zeit, pp. 25-26. The full exposition of “Vorhandenheit” begins with section 9, (ibid., pp. 42-45).

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., p. 42.

<sup>50</sup> “Jede Idee von ‘Subjekt’ macht noch – falls sie nicht durch eine vorgängige ontologische Grundbestimmung geläutert ist – den Ansatz des *subjectum* (ὑποκείμενον) *ontologisch* mit, so lebhaft man sich auch ontisch gegen die ‘Seelensubstanz’ oder die ‘Verdinglichung des Bewusstseins’ zur Wehr setzen mag.” Ibid., p. 46. The expression,

This passage suggests that every idea of a human subject, no matter how clearly thought out, always contains at the same time something ungrasped. The human subject, and indeed being itself, is intelligible, as all ideas are; but such an idea remains based upon something which refuses to become fully transparent. That something or “subjectum” Heidegger refers to as the *ὑποκείμενον*. The word means “what underlies or is presupposed.” Aristotle identifies it with that matter which underlies form,<sup>51</sup> and as that substantial union of matter and form which underlies accidents.<sup>52</sup> Heidegger employs the term *ὑποκείμενον* in a special way. He means that consciousness which does the analyzing in every analysis of consciousness. Thus it does not refer to the “idea of a ‘subject’,” i.e., to a representation of consciousness, but only to the subjectum, to the form which the representation takes.<sup>53</sup> It cannot be present at hand. Presence at hand belongs to a given subject matter, not to the “subjectum” or “Dasein.”

#### VI.1.B.1.b. The manipulation of the subject

We are now in a position to interpret what Heidegger means when he speaks of that dialectic which is “called in for the purpose of Interpreting the substantiality of the subject ontologically.”<sup>54</sup> The substantiality of the subject refers to the consciousness trivially understood as present at hand. Substantiality means *ουσία*, interpreted as *παρουσία* or presence. Subject means, not the *ὑποκείμενον* or “subjectum,” but the mere representation of human consciousness. These two terms, substantiality and subject, signify a decline in the understanding of Dasein. They have become mere entities, according to Heidegger, cut off from the depths of being. They are the prey, so to speak, of that which has been called up to manipulate them, dialectic. Dialectic is no longer the Platonic art of eliciting the truth of a matter in discourse, but mere diaeresis, the handmaiden of syllogistic.

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“to posit the ‘subjectum’ along with the idea of the ‘subject’,” cannot do justice to the German “Ansatz machen,” as indeed no English phrase can. “Ansatz machen” means both “to ready” or “prepare for” (as if to say that the “idea” of a subject prepares at the same time the self-interpretation of the one who thinks it) and “to evaluate” (as if the one who conceives of the human subject in general is evaluating his or her own self as well) .

<sup>51</sup> Aristotle *Metaphysics* 983<sup>a</sup>30; it is thus, as the opposite of *εἶδος*, the second of the four primary causes.

<sup>52</sup> Thus the *ὑποκείμενον* “humanity” can be predicated of a particular person, but is not found in the person; it is the person’s *ουσία*. Aristotle *Categories* 1<sup>a</sup>20, 27; see also *Metaphysics* 1037<sup>b</sup>16 and 983<sup>b</sup>16. Liddell and Scott’s *Greek-English Lexicon* offers a third definition: the *ὑποκείμενον* as a logical subject to which attributes are ascribed. See *Categories* 1<sup>b</sup>10, 21 and *Physics* 189<sup>a</sup>31.

<sup>53</sup> Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, p. 319.

<sup>54</sup> See footnote 30 above.

That is not to say that Heidegger himself regards dialectic solely in this derogatory manner. We have seen that he links it with human being itself, defined as that being who has logic. This is the  $\xi\omega\omicron\nu\ \lambda\acute{o}\gamma\omicron\nu\ \acute{\epsilon}\chi\omicron\nu$ , the rational animal. The one who has logic has the word. Whoever has the word has the capacity for language. And whoever has language, and who can therefore engage in discourse (i.e., dialectic), can let things be seen. To this indirect extent, then, Heidegger appreciates the power of dialectic. A further proof for this is the treatment of Plato in the Marburg lecture course of 1927. There Heidegger notes the keen insight into the nature of the word or of discourse in Plato's Sophist. This is the very dialogue from which the epigraph to Being and Time was drawn. Plato saw, remarks Heidegger, that discourse always brings out something about being.<sup>55</sup> Even when the being it brings out is the false opinion of the speaker, nevertheless every sentence, even the false one, is a sentence about something.<sup>56</sup> In the word, in dialectic, beings become manifest.<sup>57</sup> Heidegger illustrates this further by means of Plato's allegory of the cave. The ascent of the cave-dwellers to the light is nothing other than anamnesis,<sup>58</sup> the recollection of that being which has been forgotten. Doubtless, there is a certain ambiguity about the concept of truth in the allegory. At times the light brings the cave dwellers to only a secondary concept of truth, that is, in agreement with ideal notions about reality, the good and the beautiful.<sup>59</sup> But the light also enables what is to be revealed.<sup>60</sup> The source of the light is the idea of the good.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Martin Heidegger, Die Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie, ed. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann, vol. 24 of the projected Heidegger Gesamtausgabe (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1975), pp. 295-296. Translation: The Basic Problems of Phenomenology, trans., introduction, and lexicon by Albert Hofstadter (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), pp. 207-208.

<sup>56</sup> Plato Sophist 262e. The central question of the dialogue, namely, whether not-being really is, receives an affirmative answer in the following stages: 241d, 254d, 256d, and 259.

<sup>57</sup> This point is also made in Heidegger's Being and Time, p. 159, but is there subordinated to the task of the destruction of ontology: the ancient ontology regarded what is manifest in language as present at hand, that is, as manipulable.

<sup>58</sup> Plato Phaedo 72e.

<sup>59</sup> Heidegger, Grundprobleme, pp. 464-465; trans., Basic Problems, pp. 326-327.

<sup>60</sup> This is the argument of Heidegger's lecture of 1940, Platons Lehre von der Wahrheit. Mit einem Brief über den "Humanismus" (1946) (Bern: Verlag A. Francke AG, 1947), pp. 42-43. Heidegger notes that the primary notion of truth in Plato's allegory is the idea of the good, the cause "of all that is right ( $\acute{o}\rho\theta\omega\nu$ ) and beautiful." Plato, The Republic (517c), with an English translation by Paul Shorey, The Loeb Classical Library, 2 vols. (London: William Heinemann Ltd, and Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1930 (vol. 1: this vol. bears the imprint of G. P. Putnam's Sons in New York) and 1935 (vol. 2)).

This idea lies in the realm of the intelligible,<sup>62</sup> the realm to which alone the word, logic, and dialectic enable access.

Having said this, we must still conclude that the dominant notion of dialectic in Heidegger's thought is less the profoundly revelatory dialectic of Plato than the superficial formalism of later thinkers. Being and Time is full of contemptuous references to such formalism. "Formal dialectic," Heidegger tells us, is impotent in its efforts to overthrow scepticism.<sup>63</sup> It takes refuge in negating propositions without ever being able to ascertain what negation is.<sup>64</sup> And the concern which becomes visible in every inquiry into pure negation cannot be explored, we are told, by means of an "existentially unfounded dialectic."<sup>65</sup> The dialectic to which Heidegger refers is Hegel's, the Heideggerian critique of which we have already seen.<sup>66</sup> It is this, the dialectic labelled formal and baseless, which, in our opinion, has aroused Heidegger's antipathy. This is the dialectic which Western ontology has "called in for the purpose of Interpreting the substantiality of the subject ontologically."

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<sup>61</sup> It is in this sense that we can remark, with Henry W. Wolz, that "Heidegger did not know how close he was to Plato," and that Plato's idea of the good was meant to show the "complexity, not of a supersensory realm, but of the world in which we live." Henry W. Wolz, Plato and Heidegger: In Search of Selfhood (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press; London and Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1981), pp. 301-302.

<sup>62</sup> Plato Republic 517c.

<sup>63</sup> Heidegger, Sein und Zeit, p. 229

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., p. 286.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., pp. 300-301. The link between dialectic as negation and the inquiry into nothingness is explored by Heidegger in his lecture of 1929, Was ist Metaphysik, with a "Nachwort" (which first appeared in the fourth edition, 1943) and an "Einleitung" (which first appeared in the fifth edition, 1949), 8th ed. (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1960), pp. 39-40. Translation: "What Is Metaphysics?", trans. David Farrell Krell, in Martin Heidegger, Basic Writings from Being and Time (1927) to The Task of Thinking (1964), ed., with General Introduction and introductions to each section, by David Farrell Krell (New York, Hagerstown, San Francisco, London: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1977), pp. 91-112; p. 110 cited here.

<sup>66</sup> Heidegger, Sein und Zeit, pp. 429, 432, 432fn. See chapter V above, especially the sections entitled "The Phenomenology's Formula for Consciousness" and "The Encyclopedia's Exposition of Time."

### VI.1.B.2. Inappropriate use of categories

If a merely formal dialectic is the root of one of the two shortcomings of the superficial treatment of being which Heidegger has marked for destruction, what is the other shortcoming? Heidegger describes it in this way: “the categorial content of the traditional ontology has been carried over to these entities [such as the subject, the “I,” reason, and spirit] with corresponding formalizations and purely negative restrictions.<sup>67</sup> We remarked earlier that the word “categorial” is an allusion to Aristotle. In Aristotle’s work on Categories we find a list of ten categories, the first of which is substance and the remainder of which are called accidents (1<sup>b</sup>25-26). These categories represent the classes into which every statement about something can be put. There are a number of questions which can be raised about this doctrine. From where, for example, did the categories come? What is their nature? Is the list of ten exhaustive? Yet these questions, formidable as they are, can tend to obscure a more central issue.<sup>68</sup> This is the issue of the predication of reality. There are two sides of this issue. Each of them can be formulated as a question. First, how is it possible to predicate something general of a particular reality? Second, how is it possible to comprehend a particular reality without the assignation to it of a general predicate?

These questions were raised by Aristotle himself. We can get a clue as to their meaning by a quick look at the Greek verb “to categorize,” κατηγορεω. The primary meaning of this verb is “to speak against, to accuse.” This fact becomes relevant when we consider how the predication of reality is similar to a courtroom procedure. Predication, like accusation, is a general statement about a particular reality whose validity has yet to be determined. At the preliminary legal stage of accusation it is nothing more than an application of judicial categories to an event whose significance is imperfectly known. The matter has not yet come to trial. Testimony must be gathered. The accused party has still to respond. Such an accusation has a double aspect. On the one hand, a determination must be made as to the appropriateness of the accusation. Such an accusation is an interpretation of the real events which underlie it. On the other hand, justice will not be done unless the particular interpretation, represented by the accusation, is made public and weighed. Is the judicial procedure appropriate to the event about which it is concerned? Can the significance of the event be known without the judicial procedure? These two questions are suggested by the verb “to categorize” in the sense of “accusation.”

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<sup>67</sup> See footnote 30 above.

<sup>68</sup> This is Heidegger’s opinion about Aristotle’s treatment of the categories as well as Kant’s. Martin Heidegger, Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik, 2nd unchanged edition (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1951), pp. 56-57. Translation: Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics, trans. James S. Churchill, Foreword by Thomas Langan (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1962), pp. 59-60.

#### VI.1.B.2.a. The categories in Aristotle

The legal analogy brings out a central feature of Aristotle's doctrine of categories. To be sure, the Greek philosopher did not use the verb "to categorize" primarily in its legal signification. He was more concerned with its secondary meaning, "to signify," and its tertiary meaning, "to predicate." Nevertheless the legal meaning clarifies the second and third meanings. In particular, it suggests the complexity of the first of the categories or predicates, that of substance. Aristotle distinguishes here between primary and secondary substance. The first is individual, the second is universal. Primary substance "is that which is neither asserted of nor can be found in a subject."<sup>69</sup> This means that substance is not something we say of a subject or discover within it. It is, rather, the subject itself, considered as an individual.<sup>70</sup> Secondary substances, Aristotle says, are "those within which, being species, the primary or first are included, and those within which, being genera, the species themselves are contained."<sup>71</sup> They are the classes to which primary substances belong. Secondary substances are asserted of a subject. The particular man belongs to the human species. But secondary substances are not in a subject.<sup>72</sup> That is, "humanity" is not within the particular man. In short, the secondary substance to which a primary substance belongs deserves to be called substance, but only in a secondary way. It is not the subject itself, yet is united to it.<sup>73</sup> Similarly, the accusation in a court of law is not the reality about which the accusation has been made. But the two are united. The accusation reveals something about what happened, and the significance of the accusation cannot be known apart from the revelatory procedures of the trial.

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<sup>69</sup> Ουσία δέ ἐστιν ἡ κυριωτάτη τε καὶ πρῶτως καὶ μάλιστα λεγόμενη, ἡ μήτε καθ' ὑποκείμενου τινος λεγεται μήτ' ἐν ὑποκείμενω τινί ἐστιν. Aristotle *Categories* 1<sup>b</sup>11-12. The verb "to assert of" is *λεγειν*, and the verb "to be found" is *ἐστιν*. The "subject" of which *ουσία* is not predicated is *ὑποκείμενον*, Heidegger's "subjectum."

<sup>70</sup> W. D. Ross, *Aristotle* (1923), fifth edition, revised and reprinted (London: Methuen and Co. Ltd, 1956), pp. 23-24.

<sup>71</sup> δεύτεραι δὲ οὐσίαι λέγονται, ἐν οἷς εἶδεναι αἱ πρῶτως οὐσίαι λεγόμεναι ὑπαρχουσι, ταῦτα τε καὶ τὰ τῶν εἰδῶν ταυτῶν γένη. *Ibid.*, 1<sup>b</sup>13-14. The word translated as species, *εἶδος*, means literally "that which is seen," and in Plato is usually translated as "form."

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 3<sup>a</sup>9-14.

<sup>73</sup> Heidegger characterizes primary substance as "existencia" and argues that, while Aristotle gave it precedence over secondary substance (which Heidegger equates with "essencia"), nevertheless Aristotle conceived this primary substance as "what is present," thereby missing its temporality. Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, 2 vols. (Pfullingen: Verlag Gunther Neske, 1961), 2.405-409. Translation: "Metaphysics as History of Being," in Heidegger, *The End of Philosophy*, pp. 6-9.

The critical point of this analysis of Aristotle's categories lies in the ambiguity of substance. There seems to be an apparently irreconcilable tension between substance as individual and as universal. If primary substance is not something we say of a subject or discover within it, then it is absolutely individual. How does this follow? It follows because, if primary substance is not something we say of a particular subject, it is nothing we can say of any other subject. And because we cannot discover it within an individual, it cannot be found in a class. It eludes thought, in a sense, because it consists in differentiation from everything else.<sup>74</sup> One can predicate its accidental features, to be sure, but primary substance is prior to all these. After having pointed it out, one cannot go on to assert it of something else. This is its individuality. Secondary substance, however, has to do with species and genus. It is, by definition, that which is asserted of a subject, and contains all primary substances. Whereas the latter are particular, all secondary substances are general. They reveal what things have in common.

It is no surprise that one of the words Aristotle applies to secondary substance, namely εἶδος or "species," is the same word by which Plato names his "forms." They are the intelligible entities or ideas whose concrete exempla have only a secondary reality.<sup>75</sup> The Platonic forms are intelligible but not sensible. Their concrete manifestations are merely images or copies, in the sense that a poem is an image of reality or a statue is a copy of a person's features. They do not possess the reality of that which they represent. Plato would never apply the same name to images or copies that he would to the forms. But Aristotle does. In his philosophy, both the individual and the species are "substance." No doubt he distinguishes between them as primary and secondary substance. Yet the same word, substance, reveals their unity. This is where the ambiguity of substance lies. How is the individual and primary understanding of substance to be reconciled with the universal and secondary understanding? How is the reality of the individual to be united with the ideality of the general concepts which the individual exemplifies? What is more real – the individual, considered in its incomparable uniqueness, or the intelligible form, that which provides a pattern for all concrete individuals?

VI.1.B.2.a.i. Potentiality and Act. It is well known that Aristotle "solved" this dilemma by means of the doctrine of potentiality and act. His discussion of the one and of being in the *Physics* is often cited as a *locus classicus*.<sup>76</sup> There Aristotle takes up the question of what it means to say that all things are one. The ancients, he relates, were concerned about avoiding the suggestion that the same thing could be both one and

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<sup>74</sup> Ross, p. 24.

<sup>75</sup> See, for example, Plato Parmenides 131-133b.

<sup>76</sup> Pierre Aubenque, Le problème de l'être chez Aristote: Essai sur la problématique aristotélicienne (1962), 2nd revised edition (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1966), esp. pp. 156-163.

many.<sup>77</sup> Such concern blocked their progress on the question. The doctrine of potentiality and act, however, broke the impasse. Aristotle asserts that it is no contradiction to suppose that the same thing is actually one but potentially many.<sup>78</sup> The principle of this solution has important ramifications for the doctrine of categories. First of all, and in contrast to Plato, it enables Aristotle to reconcile primary and secondary substance. Primary substance or the individual, which for Plato was a mere image or copy of an ideal form, is accorded a new dignity by Aristotle. That dignity consists in the actuality, the *ενεργεια* of the individual.<sup>79</sup> Actuality, says Aristotle, is prior in definition, time, and in substantiality to potency or *δύναμις*.<sup>80</sup> The man is prior to the boy, and the eternal is prior to the perishable. In that sense, actuality is better than potency.<sup>81</sup> An actual science, Aristotle argues, is more scientific than the ideal form of science. And whereas contrary potentialities can exist simultaneously, contrary actualities cannot. What had seemed a defect to Plato, namely the particularity of the individual, a particularity which eludes thought, is transformed. For Aristotle, and for the Christian thinkers of the late middle ages who appropriated his philosophy, the particular is that in which the universal is truly known.<sup>82</sup> Doubtless, the two have to be clearly distinguished. The universal is only present in the particular as a mixture of potentiality and actuality. But the universal and the particular, it must be said, are united in the category of substance. With that category, Aristotle opposed the Platonism which would have

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<sup>77</sup> This problem is akin to that treated in Plato's *Sophist*, namely, whether non-existence really does exist; and the solution is similar, too, because Plato concludes that motion does exist in one sense and does not exist in another. Plato *Sophist* 256d.

<sup>78</sup> Aristotle *Physics* 185<sup>b</sup>26-186<sup>a</sup>4. In Aristotle, *The Physics*, with an English translation by Philip H. Wicksteed and Francis M. Cornford, The Loeb Classical Library, revised ed., 2 vols. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, and London: William Heinemann Ltd, 1957 (books I-IV, first printed 1929), 1952 (books V-VIII, first printed, 1934)).

<sup>79</sup> The translation of *ενεργεια* as "actuality" is not intended as a criticism of Heidegger's thesis that, in the translation of the Greek term into the Latin "actualitas," the Aristotelian notion of the indivisible unity of form and appearance degenerated into a notion of reality in which being was assumed to be self-evident. See Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, 2.409-411; translation: Heidegger, *The End of Philosophy*, pp. 9-11.

<sup>80</sup> Aristotle *Metaphysics* 1049<sup>b</sup>4-13.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 1051<sup>a</sup>3-5.

<sup>82</sup> For Thomas Aquinas, by way of example, goodness can be predicated of a creature, and the individual creature can be said to exemplify the universal idea of goodness. Nevertheless, it must be said that for Thomas, the creature is good only by participation. Only God is essentially good, whereas in the creature goodness can be spoken of as both potency and act. S. Thomae Aquinatis, *Quaestiones Quodlibetales*, cura et studio P. Fr. Raymundi Spiazzi, O.P., eighth revised edition (Taurini-Romae: Marietti, 1949), quodlibetum secundum, quaestio II, articulus 3 (1), respondeo (p. 24).

limited reality to the intelligible as distinct from the sensible. And he confronted philosophy with a perennial demand, the demand of conceptualizing the relation between a single entity and the multiple predicates attached to it. To this demand, we can say, especially to the relation between a particular entity and the predicate of being, Heidegger responded.<sup>83</sup>

The doctrine of potentiality and act did not just enable Aristotle to argue cogently against Plato's idealization of reality. In addition, it allowed him to refine the doctrine of categories in such a way that all reality, not just the categories, could be made intelligible through predication. We see this particularly in the discussion of being in the Metaphysics. There Aristotle demonstrates that being is neither substance, genus, nor species.<sup>84</sup> A substance, he argues, is by definition the differentiae or the species of a genus.<sup>85</sup> Although such a species or secondary substance may be further differentiated by accidental features, further subdivisions do not indicate new species. From this Aristotle elicits a general principle that substance cannot consist of other substances which are completely and fully present.<sup>86</sup> To be sure, a single substance can be potentially two. A large number, for example, is potentially the synthesis of other smaller numbers. But the large number is not said to be the smaller numbers in actuality, and a single substance is not said to actually be more than one. Hence, Aristotle concludes that being cannot be a substance.<sup>87</sup>

If being is not a primary substance or individual, could it be a secondary substance or species? Is it, in other words, a common denominator, something which all

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<sup>83</sup> It is true to say that Heidegger rejected the metaphysics based upon the distinction between act and potency. He did so because it presupposes that being is the ground of reality, the ground of all entities. See Martin Heidegger, *Identität und Differenz* (Pfullingen: Gunther Neske, 1957), p. 69. Translation: Identity and Difference, trans. and with an Introduction by Joan Stambaugh (New York, Evanston, and London: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1969), p. 71.

Nevertheless questions must be raised: In Heidegger's response to the demand of the Aristotelian doctrine, conceptualizing the relation between the unity of being and the multiplicity of categories applicable to entities, is he not forced to refer to being as that which is intimately united with beings, yet distinct from them? Does being not encompass the full potentiality of which actual entities only realize a part? If the act-potency distinction is somehow our fate as thinkers, must we not concede that Heidegger's efforts to escape this fate are less than thoroughgoing, as Powell suggests? See Powell, "The Late Heidegger's Omission," p. 125 (cited above, footnote 3).

<sup>84</sup> Aristotle Metaphysics 998<sup>b</sup>22-26.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 1038<sup>a</sup>5-7

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 1039<sup>a</sup>3-11.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 1040<sup>b</sup>16-21

substances share? This might be the case if there were but a single species, namely, being itself. But there are clearly more than one species, and a universal term such as being is common to all of them.<sup>88</sup> Being, therefore, cannot be a species. Is it then a genus? So it might seem, for being is predicated of all that is. But Aristotle rejects this as well. A genus is, by definition, that which is predicated of the species but not of the differentiae or substances within the species.<sup>89</sup> The genus animal, for example, is predicated of the species man, but not of the differentia John Smith – at least not without insult to Mr. Smith. If the genus were predicated of the differentia, then it would be predicated of the species many times over. This cannot be the case without damage to the concept of species. If being is a genus, it should be predicable of species only. But we commonly predicate being of the differentia as well as of the species. Being, therefore, cannot be a genus.<sup>90</sup> And we have already seen that it is not a species. What then is it?

VI.1.B.2.a.ii. Predication of reality. Heidegger, citing Aristotle, calls being the most universal of all terms, the καθόλου μάλιστα πάντων.<sup>91</sup> It is most universal in that it is predicable of all things. But it is not itself a thing: being is neither genus, species, nor substance. In calling it a universal, a καθόλου, he has not said what it is. Can we only say what it is not?

Aristotle himself raises this question indirectly in a discussion of substance. No substance can consist of universals, he argues, because they indicate “of such a kind” rather than a particular thing. And substance cannot be composed of other substances, as we have seen, for substance is always one in actuality, if not in potentiality. Substance, then, is incomposite. It is a unity of which the components have only a potential existence. Hence there is no formula, no λόγος, of substance.<sup>92</sup> Does that mean that actual substance – and being itself – is indefinable? To this question Aristotle gives an equivocal answer. Individual things, he says, such as primary substance, are impossible to define. The distinguishing feature of the individual is that it is unlike anything else. It eludes thought because it is incomparable. Yet there is more to substance than primary substance, which Aristotle here describes as the formula or word (λόγος) in connection with the matter (υλη). Secondary substance, for example, which is the formula or word

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 1038<sup>b</sup>7-14.

<sup>89</sup> Aristotle Topics 144<sup>a</sup>36-144<sup>b</sup>11.

<sup>90</sup> Aristotle Metaphysics 998<sup>b</sup>22-27 and 1059<sup>b</sup>21-33.

<sup>91</sup> Heidegger, Sein und Zeit, p. 3. The citation from Aristotle is not literally accurate, for the Greek philosopher states that both unity and being are the most universal terms (see Aristotle Metaphysics 1001<sup>a</sup>21).

<sup>92</sup> Aristotle Metaphysics 1039<sup>a</sup>15-23.

in its generality (ο λόγος ολως), does not elude thought.<sup>93</sup> It is truly definable, because it is not, strictly speaking, individual. Here substance becomes an object of knowledge. The ambiguity of substance, its dual nature as incomparable individual and as general formula, enables it to be known. One knows the unique individual, to put the matter in a paradoxical way, by means of that which it shares with others. Aristotle makes an analogous point about the Platonic ideas. They are individuals, and thus indefinable. But that of which the idea of human nature consists – for example, “animal” and “two-footed” – can be applied to many things. Through that application, it is possible to know the idea.<sup>94</sup>

In sum, the predication of reality is the way by which understanding is accomplished. This is true even when what is predicated, being, does not belong to the list of specific predicates, the categories. Aristotle makes the explicit link between predication and being in that section of the Metaphysics, sometimes called the philosophical lexicon, in which being is treated. “The senses of essential being are those which are indicated by the figures of predication,” Aristotle writes; “for ‘being’ has as many senses as there are ways of predication.”<sup>95</sup> Here the “figures of predication” are literally “the schemes of the categories,” the σχήματα της κατηγορίας. Through the categories, that is, through the act of predication, being itself is indicated. This puts the doctrine of categories in a new light. While it is true that the categories can be regarded superficially as a list of all possible classes of predication, a list which pretends to be exhaustive, Aristotle has no such reductive scheme in mind. His categories are rather the points where being and thought intersect. Being, which is itself no category and cannot be defined, is revealed through predication as that in which all things participate. Thought, which is manifest in language, participates in being and cannot help but reveal it. Seen in this way, the doctrine of categories draws Aristotle back into the orbit of Plato, for whom thought – as the soundless dialogue of the soul with itself – and speech are the same.<sup>96</sup>

What, then, is the significance of Aristotle’s doctrine of categories for the destruction of the history of ontology demanded by Heidegger? The Aristotelian doctrine, we can say, is significant for what it reveals about predication and about being.<sup>97</sup> First, it suggests the complexity of predication, viewed as the relation between a

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 1039<sup>b</sup>20-31.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 1040<sup>a</sup>23.

<sup>95</sup> καθ’ αὐτὰ δε εἶναι λέγεται ὡσαυτὸν σημαίνει τὰ σχήματα τῆς κατηγορίας. ὡσαυτὸν γὰρ λέγεται, τὸσαυτὸν εἶναι σημαίνει. Ibid., 1017<sup>a</sup>22-25. “Essential being” is literally “being in itself.” The final clause could be rendered in this way: “as much as one speaks, so much does one show being.”

<sup>96</sup> Plato Sophist 263e.

<sup>97</sup> Heidegger saw this as early as 1915, when he completed his Habilitationsschrift, Die Kategorien- und Bedeutungslehre des Duns Scotus (Martin Heidegger, Frühe Schriften

single entity and the multiple categories to which that entity belongs. In predication, the speaker yokes together those which are apparently incompatible, namely, the one and the many. Aristotle's conceptualization of this union – achieved by means of the distinctions between primary and secondary substance and between potency and act – arose as a critique of the Platonic doctrine of forms. The Aristotelian treatment was so thoroughgoing that it might have seemed to render the enigma of predication fully transparent. No doubt there is a trivial sense in which predication seems a merely formal procedure of combining substance and accidents. But Heidegger rejects this.<sup>98</sup> For him, the value of the ancient doctrine of categories lies precisely in its presentation of the unity of being over against the multiplicity of applicable categories, and in Aristotle's preserving this as a problem.<sup>99</sup>

Second, the Aristotelian doctrine of categories is significant to Heidegger in its formulation of the enigma of being. Aristotle showed that, while being is neither genus, species, nor substance, nevertheless it is knowable. One knows it in the same way that one knows every indefinable individual: not by attempting a definition, but by examining those beings which participate in being by means of predication. In this Aristotle is reconciled to Plato, who also regarded language as the manifestation of that thought which alone can grasp what really is. But Aristotle accomplished more than that. Heidegger applauds him for putting the question of being on a higher level than Plato, because Aristotle realized that being cannot be simply another category or genus.<sup>100</sup> Every genus "is," and one cannot define being as a genus in terms of itself. But one can bring being to language.<sup>101</sup> This insight stems from Aristotle's description of the categories – of predication – as that which shows being in itself. Thus we can see how consequential the Aristotelian doctrine is for Heidegger's thought. In terms of the destruction of the history of ontology, the doctrine of categories represents a stage of understanding in relation to which subsequent treatments of ontology appear superficial. The history of ontology to be destroyed is that which took place despite Aristotle.<sup>102</sup>

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(Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1972). pp. 131-375). See p. 345, where Heidegger links Aristotle and Kant, stating that for them both the problem of categories was bound to that of predication or judgment.

<sup>98</sup> This gives us a clue to the "formalizations" corresponding to the carry-over of the content of ancient ontology. See above, footnote 30.

<sup>99</sup> Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, p. 3.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>101</sup> See, for example, Heidegger's discussion of the concept of the logos (*ibid.*, pp. 32-34).

<sup>102</sup> This would be my answer to the thesis of Werner Marx (see above, footnote 4). Marx argues that Heidegger makes any Aristotelian discussion of the question of being as the question of essence a pointless discussion – and so devalues the categories (Heidegger

#### VI.1.B.2.b. The categories in Kant

If that is the case, we look in vain to Aristotle for the basis of Heidegger's critique of the categories. When Heidegger speaks disparagingly of the "categorical content of ancient ontology," a content which has fostered the neglect of the question of being, he refers to the way in which the content of the ancient doctrine of categories has been taken up by later philosophers.<sup>103</sup> In particular, he refers to Kant. To be sure, Kant's treatment of the categories in The Critique of Pure Reason differs from that of Aristotle. Whereas for Aristotle the categories are classes into which every statement about something can be put, for Kant they are the logical functions in all possible judgments. They specify in a complete way, according to Kant, the nature of understanding.<sup>104</sup> What is significant about the Kantian treatment is its emphasis on the understanding, that is, on the subjectivity of the one who understands. Unlike Aristotle, for whom the categories are applicable regardless of the one who applies them, Kant sees the role of the ego as central. It is the ego which synthesizes a variety of mental representations, grasping them in an act of knowledge.<sup>105</sup> The categories are contained within the ego as pure concepts of synthesis.<sup>106</sup> It is for this reason that Heidegger assigns Kant a central position in modern philosophy. Kant, he says, made the ego philosophy's proper subject for the first time.<sup>107</sup> This is decisive for Heidegger's own interrogation of Dasein as the clue to an investigation of being.

What Kant saw, according to Heidegger, is that the ego is not one among the many categories of judgment. It is, on the contrary, the condition for the possibility of categories in general.<sup>108</sup> Within the ego the many predicates are chosen and applied to a

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und die Tradition, p. 13; trans., p. 6). If Aristotle could be so provocative for Heidegger, as I have attempted to show, then can one afford to dismiss the Aristotelian tradition?

<sup>103</sup> See above, footnote 30.

<sup>104</sup> Immanuel Kant, Kritik der reinen Vernunft (2nd ed., 1787), vol. 3 of the Gesammelte Schriften, ed. by the Königlich Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, the first Abteilung of which contains Kant's Werke, 9 vols. (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1910-1923 (vols. 8-9 bear the imprint: Berlin und Leipzig: Walter de Gruyter, 192)), 3.92-93. Translation: Immanuel Kant's Critique of Pure Reason, trans. (1929) by Norman Kemp Smith, corrected reprint ed. (London: Macmillan and Co. Ltd, and New York: St. Martin's Press, 1958), p. 113.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 91; trans., p. 111.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 93; trans., p. 113.

<sup>107</sup> Heidegger, Grundprobleme, pp. 178-179; trans., p. 127.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 181; trans., p. 129.

single entity. Within the ego the reconciliation of the one and the many takes place. That is why Kant calls the judgment “I think” a transcendental.<sup>109</sup> It transcends all concepts or categories because it is always included in the conceiving of them. Heidegger links it with Aristotle’s ὑποκείμενον, “that which underlies.” The “I” of the “I think” is neither a merely logical subject nor a representation, states Heidegger, but the very form of representation. It is that which makes anything like a mental representation possible, because it underlies every representation.<sup>110</sup> For this reason Kant excludes the ego from his table of categories or pure concepts of understanding. Instead he treats it under the heading of “the original synthetic unity of perception.”<sup>111</sup> Apperception is Kant’s term for the mind’s consciousness of itself. This apperception is unified in that all representations to oneself of consciousness are one’s own representations. The manifold representations are synthesized in consciousness. The resultant unity is original or “ursprünglich” because, while the ego generates mental representations, it is not itself accompanied by them. Rather than representing itself to itself, the ego is that which is presupposed in every representation.

Heidegger praises Kant as the first to show that the application of categories to the “I” (in the judgment “I think”) enables us to say nothing about the “I” as a “spiritual substance.”<sup>112</sup> Kant saw that the ego which conditions all categorization cannot itself be defined by that which is conditioned. Consciousness of self, far from being knowledge of myself as I am, is only knowledge of myself as I appear to myself.<sup>113</sup> The ego is more than a self-experience. It is the ground of all experience. Included in this experience is the intuition or “Anschauung” of that multiplicity of representations in me by which I gain the thought of myself.<sup>114</sup> The ego, then, is the unity which enables this multiplicity. Up to this point, Heidegger and Kant are in accord. They part ways, however, when Kant advances the thesis – in his treatment of the “Transcendental Deduction of the Pure Concepts of Understanding” – that the intuition of the multiplicity is conditioned by time.

VI.1.B.2.b.i. “Natural” time. Heidegger does not dispute the particular point of Kant’s thesis. Kant argues that the synthesis of the multiplicity of representations in the ego is made intuitable only according to relations of time.<sup>115</sup> This seems mere common

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<sup>109</sup> Kant, Kritik der reinen Vernunft, in Gesammelte Schriften, 3.263; trans., p. 329.

<sup>110</sup> Heidegger, Sein und Zeit, p. 319.

<sup>111</sup> Kant, Kritik der reinen Vernunft, in Gesammelte Schriften, 3.108ff; trans., pp. 152ff.

<sup>112</sup> Heidegger, Grundprobleme, p. 204; trans., p. 144. Kant refers to the “I” as a spiritual substance in the first Critique, in Gesammelte Schriften, 3.264-265; trans., pp. 330-331.

<sup>113</sup> Kant, Kritik der reinen Vernunft, in Gesammelte Schriften, 3.123; trans., p. 169.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 123-124; trans., p. 169

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 124; trans., p. 169.

sense, for one can only perform a limited number of mental acts in a limited amount of time. What Heidegger objects to is the concept of time which Kant presupposes. That concept, according to Heidegger, is the concept of “natural” time, a notion of time which is available to the senses.<sup>116</sup> Such a concept can be traced back to the fourth book of Aristotle’s Physics.<sup>117</sup> There Aristotle defines time as a number which measures movement in relation to a “before” and “after.”<sup>118</sup> Heidegger interprets this as a counting, such as the counting of minutes, hours, and days.<sup>119</sup> Time is sensed as a continuation of what is constantly present at hand, the going and coming of a succession of present moments.<sup>120</sup> This is the concept of time, implicit in Kant, to which Heidegger objects.

What does it mean to say that Kant presupposed this ordinary concept of time in his treatment of the categories of pure reason? Reason is pure, according to Kant, when it is considered in itself, and not in association with other faculties.<sup>121</sup> The other faculties perceive things as they appear to be. Pure reason, however, is concerned with the subsumption of appearances under the categories or the a priori concepts of understanding. The application of categories to appearance becomes possible, according to Kant, “by means of the transcendental determination of time, which, as the schema of the concepts of understanding, mediates the subsumption of the appearances under the category.”<sup>122</sup> Time, by consequence, stands between what the faculties perceive and what pure reason subsumes under categories. It limits reason’s ability to apply categories to appearances. Doubtless there is a positive significance to this. Like the ego itself, time is already included in the consciousness of the self, enabling the mind to be what it is.<sup>123</sup> This is what Heidegger means when he lauds Kant for allowing himself to be led to

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<sup>116</sup> Heidegger, Grundprobleme, p. 206; trans., p. 145.

<sup>117</sup> Aristotle Physics 217<sup>b</sup>1-224<sup>a</sup>17. Heidegger gives an exposition of this in the Grundprobleme, pp. 330-361; trans., pp. 232-256. A more compressed treatment is the 81st section of Sein und Zeit, pp. 420-428.

<sup>118</sup> Aristotle Physics 219<sup>b</sup>1-2.

<sup>119</sup> Heidegger, Grundprobleme, p. 361; trans., p. 256.

<sup>120</sup> Heidegger, Sein und Zeit, p. 422.

<sup>121</sup> Kant, Kritik der reinen Vernunft, in Gesammelte Schriften, 3.43; trans., p. 58.

<sup>122</sup> “Daher wird eine Anwendung der Kategorie auf Erscheinungen möglich sein vermittelt der transcendentalen Zeitbestimmung, welche als das Schema der Verstandesbegriffe die Subsumption der letzteren unter die erste vermittelt.” Ibid., 3.134-135; trans., p. 181. The translation spells out the relation of “Kategorie” to “Erscheinung,” which the German refers to as “the first” and “the last.”

<sup>123</sup> Heidegger, Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik, pp. 173-174; trans., p. 197.

the question of time by the study of the phenomena of the understanding.<sup>124</sup> The conditions for the possibility of subsuming appearances under categories propelled Kant toward the question of time. But the Kantian acknowledgment of time could not progress toward an analysis of temporality. Instead, time was regarded as that which restricts the capacities of pure reason. The ordinary concept of time as a succession of present moments prevented Kant, in Heidegger's opinion, from linking time with being.<sup>125</sup>

VI.1.B.2.b.ii. Ego as logical subject. Such a link could be achieved had Kant exploited his insight into the ego as that which enables the original synthetic unity of apperception. Starting from the thesis that the "I think" is "the form of apperception, which belongs to and precedes every experience," Kant might have worked out a different concept of time.<sup>126</sup> He might have seen that if the form of self-consciousness precedes every experience, then time is not simply a succession of present experiences. It is instead that which belongs to and precedes them. What precedes experience is the history to which the ego belongs. That history is the entirety of the ego's past, that which has shaped the ego. Every new experience builds upon it, for it is, in a sense, the condition for every new experience. Kant might even have stated explicitly what Heidegger claims is implicit in his work, namely, the identity of time and the judgment "I think."<sup>127</sup> They are identical in their transcendentality: just as the apperception "I think" transcends the content of any particular thought, so time transcends our grasp of it in any present moment.

But Kant never stated this as such. Time remained for him a negative entity which restricts the domain of pure reason. Indeed, he never glimpsed the Heideggerian strategy by which the ego, the Dasein, is interrogated as to its own concern for the future.<sup>128</sup> That concern is rooted in one's own history, the temporal situation into which one has been thrown.<sup>129</sup> Now it must be conceded that Kant alludes to something akin to

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<sup>124</sup> Heidegger, Sein und Zeit, p. 23.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24.

<sup>126</sup> "Also bleibt eben so hier [in dem zweiten Paralogism] . . . der formale Satz der Apperception: Ich denke, . . . welcher Satz zwar freilich keine Erfahrung ist, sondern die Form der Apperception, die jeder Erfahrung anhängt und ihr vorgeht. . . ." Kant, Kritik der reinen Vernunft (1st ed., 1781), in the Gesammelte Schriften, 4.223; trans., pp. 336-337. The English translation of Heidegger's Sein und Zeit, in which this sentence is cited (p. 319), renders "anhängt" as "clings to" instead of "belongs to." Such a translation may tend to suggest a greater subjectivity than even Kant would allow.

<sup>127</sup> Heidegger, Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik, p. 174; trans., p. 197.

<sup>128</sup> Heidegger, Sein und Zeit, esp. sections 40-41.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, esp. sections 29 and 38.

this when he speaks of the “I think” as the form of apperception which “precedes every experience.” But it is more characteristic of his thought that he refers to the soul as substance. By this he means simply an immaterial object of inner sense. Nothing more than the bare fact of existence can be said about the spiritual substance of the soul, according to Kant, for this substance or “I” is a “completely empty representation.” About the “I” who thinks, he added, “nothing further is represented than a transcendental subject of the thoughts.”<sup>130</sup> With this remark Kant backs away from his insight into the ego as that which contains or provides the basis for the categories. Instead he slips into a formal categorization of the ego. It is equated with substance – not, to be sure, in the Aristotelian sense of any object considered as an individual, but as the logical subject of all possible judgments.<sup>131</sup> The quite appropriate characterization of the “I think” as the form of apperception has degenerated, in Heidegger’s view, into a mere formalization.

This is the point at which Heidegger subjects Kant to a pointed criticism. When Kant defines the ego as a logical subject he exposed a weak flank. “To define the ‘I’ ontologically as ‘*subject*’,” writes Heidegger, “means to regard it as something always present-at-hand.”<sup>132</sup> If it is present at hand it is no longer what underlies all categories, i.e., the Aristotelian ὑποκείμενον or the form of representation. The ego has rather become a mere formality, a subject, something which can be grasped. Doubtless Kant would insist that his completely empty representation, the ego, remains distinct from that which it represents to itself. The “I” cannot be to itself one among the many representations it synthesizes. But by treating the ego as a substance or logical subject, Kant loses sight of this. The ego becomes something to be subsumed, as present at hand, under the categories of pure understanding. Against this tendency, Heidegger emphasizes that the characteristics of Dasein’s being are not “categories.” Instead, they are “existentialia,” because they define a “who,” an existence, rather than a “what.”<sup>133</sup>

#### VI.1.C. The Categorialization of Being and of Time

With Heidegger’s critique of the Kantian doctrine of categories in mind, we are now ready to summarize the superficial treatment of the question of being upon which Heidegger had set his sights. That superficial treatment has to be swept away in a

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<sup>130</sup> “Durch dieses Ich . . . , welches denkt, wird nun nichts weiter als ein transscendentales [sic] Subjekt der Gedanken vorgestellt.” Kant, Kritik der reinen Vernunft (2nd ed., 1787), in Gesammelte Schriften, 3.265; trans., p. 331.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., 3.267-269; trans., pp. 369-371.

<sup>132</sup> “Das Ich ontologisch als *Subjekt* bestimmen, besagt, es als ein immer schon Vorhandenes ansetzen.” Heidegger, Sein und Zeit, p. 320. The verb translated as “to regard,” “ansetzen,” means literally “to set it upon” – not merely to regard, but to employ.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., pp. 44 45

destruction of the history of ontology, Heidegger proclaimed. Of the two aspects of this superficial treatment, we have already investigated the first. It is that baseless dialectic which trivially interprets the subject (or mere representation of human consciousness) in its parousia, that is, as something present at hand. Now we can see the second aspect of the superficial treatment of being as well. “The categorial content of the traditional ontology,” according to Heidegger’s denunciation, “has been carried over to these entities [such as the subject, the “I,” reason, and spirit] with corresponding formalizations and purely negative restrictions.”<sup>134</sup> It now appears that the categorial content of the traditional ontology refers to a particular understanding of the doctrine of categories developed by Aristotle and restated by Kant. Heidegger takes aim only at a particular understanding of the categories, it must be said, because the doctrine as a whole proved to be of central importance for his thought. The Aristotelian treatment of the categories, we saw, opened up two important dimensions of the question of being. It revealed, first of all, the problem of predication, regarded as the problem of reconciling the unity of being with the multiplicity of categories applicable to entities. Second, it suggested the intelligibility of being in predication. While being cannot be an entity, and so is not subject to definition, nevertheless it can be known in the predication of other entities which participate in being. These two dimensions of the Aristotelian doctrine stimulated Heidegger.

Kant’s treatment of categories also yielded important insights. He thrust the ego into a central position in philosophy by showing that it is the locus of all categorization. The subsumption of appearances under the categories or concepts of understanding takes place within the ego. That is why Heidegger applies to the Kantian “I” the Aristotelian term *ὑποκείμενον*. The ego underlies all categorization. It is the primary substance (to use the language of Aristotle) of which all the other categories are predicated. Kant’s elevation of the ego into its key role in the doctrine of categories laid the groundwork for Heidegger’s interrogation of Dasein as that whose being is for itself an issue. In short, the categories are indispensable for an understanding of the central Heideggerian concerns.

But the carry-over of the categorial content of the traditional ontology to entities such as the subject, the “I,” reason, spirit, and person has contributed, in Heidegger’s phrase, to the forgetfulness of being. This forgetfulness has been achieved in two ways. First, it has resulted in formalizations. Aristotle, we know, defined primary substance as the form (*εἶδος*) by which matter becomes a definite thing.<sup>135</sup> He used the same word to refer to secondary substance, that is, the species within which primary substance is included.<sup>136</sup> Substance, as the first of the categories, is that of which the accidents are predicated. The predication of accidents can seem to be a merely “formal” procedure. It

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<sup>134</sup> See above, footnote 30.

<sup>135</sup> Aristotle *Metaphysics* 1041<sup>b</sup>7-9.

<sup>136</sup> Aristotle *Categories* 1<sup>b</sup>13-15.

can seem to be a self-evident combination of substance (as form) with accidents (as matter or raw material). Matter does not exist as anything unless it is caused or shaped by form. This causality or shaping is glimpsed in predication, loosely defined as the formation of judgments by combining substance and accidents. Without a doubt, this concept of predication reduces the phenomena to something self-evident. It glides over the mystery of the bond between the one and the many without the slightest hesitation. And it clearly suggests the contribution of Aristotle, or at least of Aristotle's vocabulary, to the "formalizations" of which Heidegger speaks.

A further and decisive glimpse of those formalizations is facilitated by Kant. Kant defined the "I" of the judgment "I think" as the "form" of apperception. By this he meant that the ego is not itself some thing which it represents to itself, but the form of every mental representation whatever. The force of this insight was blunted, however, when Kant failed to expand upon his remark that this form of apperception precedes every experience. The notion of something which precedes and is carried over into experience – the temporal clue – remained undeveloped. Instead, the concept of the ego as the form of apperception was interpreted as spiritual substance or as logical subject. In brief, it was itself formalized. No doubt Kant was right in calling it a "completely empty representation." Unlike the other appearances subsumed under categories, the representation of the ego tells us nothing about it. But by including it among other representations, Kant abandoned his earlier achievement: the interpretation of the ego as that which is precisely not a representation. Rather than being a "subjectum," the ego became a "subject."<sup>137</sup> This gives us another perspective on the formalizations which Heidegger deplors. The carry-over of the doctrine of categories to the "I" or "subject" led to a formalization (i.e., a reduction) of those entities. The ego was reduced to one among other substances available for predication.

Heidegger also speaks of "purely negative restrictions" resulting from the carry-over of the categorial content of traditional ontology. Here again Kant allows us to understand Heidegger's meaning. Kant referred to time as that which mediates the subsumption of appearances under categories. Time is the condition for the possibility of categorizing and thus judging appearances. Heidegger applauds Kant for adumbrating the relation, even the identity, of time and the judgment "I think." But Kant did not pursue this idea. The concept of time as that which announces itself in memory (and forgetfulness) of the past and in anticipation of the future remained obscure to him. Instead he regarded time as a schemata, that which underlies the categories. Hence reality is being in time, and negation is not-being in time.<sup>138</sup> Time, in brief, is restricted to a condition for the possibility of being and not-being. Within time the ego predicates or does not predicate.<sup>139</sup> Within time the ego subsumes appearances under categories.

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<sup>137</sup> See above, footnote 50.

<sup>138</sup> Kant, Kritik der reinen Vernunft, in Gesammelte Schriften, 3.137; trans., p. 184.

<sup>139</sup> Predication is ambiguous, says Heidegger, for it lets something be seen for what it (at this moment) really is. It restricts our attention to this aspect of what is, to the aspect

One fails to see anything positive to be gained by this understanding of time. Time presents itself neither as that history which guides our interpretation of the past, nor as that future into which we project ourselves from the present. These are the purely negative restrictions, lamented by Heidegger, which result from the categorial content of traditional ontology. An ontology whose doctrine of categories leaves no room for the positive understanding of time is indeed restricted. And these restrictions have no positive content – they say only what time and the ego are not.

#### VI.2. The Positive Significance of the Destructive History

Those who claim that Heidegger is a revolutionary thinker who broke with the Western philosophical tradition can cite his criticism of dialectic and of the doctrine of categories. Heidegger's criticism is certainly penetrating, and we may well agree that it is just. But that does not necessarily mean that Heidegger has broken with tradition in the widest sense of the term. Nor does it mean that he overthrew, as if that were possible, the doctrines of Plato and Aristotle. There is a certain irony in Heidegger's use of the terms dialectic and category. When he speaks of dialectical efforts to throw off scepticism, for example, or of that dialectic which negates propositions without ascertaining what negation is,<sup>140</sup> he hints at the pretensions of those whose estimation of dialectic is inflated. Their understanding of dialectic does not merit the unbounded faith they put in it. Plato's understanding, however, is another matter. And when Heidegger disparages the categorial content of ancient ontology, he does not mean the content of Aristotle's doctrine of categories. That doctrine posed to him the problem of the one and the many in a genuinely provocative way. Heidegger means rather the appropriation of that doctrine by later thinkers who failed to grasp the authentic Aristotelian problem. Thus "categorial content" ironically becomes "lack of categorial content," and "ancient ontology" becomes "thinkers subsequent to Aristotle." Heidegger is doubtless criticizing certain traditional doctrines in philosophy. But does he really break with the Western philosophical tradition?

No one can deny that the intention behind Heidegger's treatment of Plato and Aristotle was destructive.<sup>141</sup> Both thinkers were guilty, before the Heideggerian bench, for reducing phenomena to concepts. To be sure, this is an exaggerated verdict. The Platonic ideas, it must be said, are not sensible, and cannot be grasped as one might grasp a door handle or a tool. But they are intelligible entities, graspable as concepts. Heidegger criticized Plato for suggesting that truth is agreement with an ideal notion of reality or a participation in the idea of the good.<sup>142</sup> This notion, Heidegger argued,

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predicated, rather than to the other aspects which (at another time) might show themselves. Heidegger, Sein und Zeit, p. 155.

<sup>140</sup> See above, footnotes 63 and 64.

<sup>141</sup> Gadamer, "Heidegger und die Geschichte der Philosophie," p. 425; trans., p. 436.

<sup>142</sup> See above, footnote 59.

blinded the Greek to that which precedes such an agreement or participation, namely, the moment in which what really is the case comes to light. This blindness had to be remedied. In his critique of Plato, Heidegger implied that truth comprehends more than a concept or ideal of the good. Plato, in his estimate, failed to see what this “more” is.

Aristotle similarly became the object of Heidegger’s criticism. The Aristotelian analysis of substance and accidents bestowed upon philosophy an apparatus for categorizing the individual and the species. Indeed, this apparatus was eventually extended to all of reality, even to that which was not, in strict Aristotelian terms, applicable. It was extended to being itself, for example, which (like everything else which is wholly unique) is not, as the Stagirite freely conceded, susceptible to definition. Within this tradition of commentary, Aristotle’s unsettling exposition of the enigmas of predication was largely overlooked. What emerged instead was a seemingly self-evident doctrine of categories. Heidegger sought the destruction of this self-evidence.<sup>143</sup>

Nevertheless, Heidegger’s destructive aim resulted, as our analyses have suggested, in a renewal. This becomes particularly clear in section seven of Being and Time, where Heidegger expounds his phenomenological method of investigation, and in section 44b, in which the primordial phenomenon of truth is defined over against the traditional conception of truth. In these sections we find the power of the Platonic dialectic reinterpreted as the discourse in which the intelligibility of the world is expressed. And the force of the Aristotelian doctrine of categories is reinterpreted as the link between temporality and truth. To be sure, Heidegger never makes the connections between his doctrines and those of classical Greece fully explicit. His primary intention is to destroy the history of ontology within which Plato and Aristotle stand. But his interpretation of the concept of the logos in section seven, as well as his analyses in sections 32-33 of assertion as that which derives from the fore-structure of Dasein, betray the importance of Plato’s dialectic. And the importance of Aristotle emerges in Heidegger’s appropriation of the Greek word for truth, *αλήθεια*. Although Heidegger never states the intention of renewing our understanding of Plato and Aristotle, can anyone deny that this is a positive result of his destruction of the history of ontology?

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<sup>143</sup> This aim betrays the influence of Husserl. For while Husserl showed that the phenomenology of consciousness as the self-manifestation of phenomena was grasped profoundly by Aristotle, as Heidegger states, nevertheless Husserl’s technique generally refrained from bringing into discussion the authority of the great thinkers. The old Heidegger’s recollection of this is gently reproachful. But we can doubt whether he would have criticized his teacher for this in the 1920s.

Husserl’s attitude offers a clue to the largely critical tenor of the young Heidegger’s treatment of the philosophical tradition. See Martin Heidegger, “Mein Weg in die Phänomenologie,” in Heidegger, Zur Sache des Denkens (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1969), pp. 86-87. Translation: “My Way to Phenomenology,” in Heidegger, On Time and Being, trans. Joan Stambaugh (New York, Evanston, San Francisco, and London: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1972), pp. 78-79.

## VI.2.A. Discourse as the Intelligibility of Being

Plato receives no extensive treatment in Being and Time. But the hints of Platonic interpretation in that work, supplemented by the fuller treatment of Plato in Heidegger's Basic Problems of Phenomenology (a reconstruction of his lectures of 1927) and his Plato's Teaching on Truth (lectures of 1940), enables us to see the connection between Plato's dialectic and Heidegger's exposition of discourse. We have already noted that Heidegger himself draws attention to the etymological relation between dialectic and discourse.<sup>144</sup> In both of them, the word or logos which is spoken has the function of showing.<sup>145</sup> Words themselves show what they are. What is of particular interest here is the seeming ineluctability of language. Ordinarily a sound definition must avoid employing the thing defined as anything but the subject of the definition. But that is not the case with discourse, for one cannot avoid, in defining it, the use of words. Heidegger alludes to this when he writes that the logos shows that from which, in the discourse, the discourse is about.<sup>146</sup> This suggests that nothing more can be done, in trying to understand another's speech, than by listening to the other. There is no understanding of another's discourse apart from a linguistic understanding. One cannot sidestep language. Heidegger's treatment of discourse parallels, in a remarkable way, the Aristotelian treatment of being. Although thought cannot "escape" either discourse or being in order to define them in terms other than themselves, nevertheless they can be expressed. We express them by predicating that which participates in them. This occurs, for example, when we speak of entities participating in being, or of words in discourse.

The explicit link between the logos and Plato occurs in section 33 of Being and Time, entitled "Assertion as a Derivative Mode of Interpretation."<sup>147</sup> Assertion is derivative, Heidegger explains, in that it stems from what occurs prior to it: an interpretation which understands. Every assertion emerges from a moment of understanding. This is the moment in which we take up a stand, so to speak, toward something.<sup>148</sup> Our taking-up-a-stand is expressed in interpretation or assertion.<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> See above, footnote 32.

<sup>145</sup> Heidegger, Sein und Zeit, p. 32.

<sup>146</sup> "λογός als Rede besagt vielmehr soviel wie δηλουν, offenbar machen das, wovon in der Rede 'die Rede' ist." Ibid. The Greek verb δηλόω appears in this sense in Aristotle On Interpretation 17<sup>a</sup>15-17. The English translation of the second half of Heidegger's sentence – "to make manifest what one is 'talking about' in one's discourse" – obscures the wordplay by which "Rede" is defined in terms of itself.

<sup>147</sup> Heidegger, Sein und Zeit, pp. 153-160. The adjective translated as derivative, "abkünftiger," comes from the noun "Abkunft" meaning descent, lineage, or ancestry. This suggests that assertion as a "derivative" mode of interpretation is not derivative only in the sense of second-rate. In addition, it is derivative in that it legitimately stems from interpretation.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid., esp. section 32, "Understanding and Interpretation," pp. 148-153.

Interpretation expresses understanding as concern. Then assertion expresses understanding in a theoretical statement. Heidegger's characterization of the two seems to suggest that interpretation and assertion have definite shortcomings. Both derive from, and are subsequent to, the moment of understanding which precedes them and has priority.

Yet Heidegger's characterization of assertion as derivative need not be seen as detrimental to it. We should recall the description of conceptual understanding as secondary by the Platonic Socrates. In the discussion of the immortality of the soul which took place on the day of his death, Socrates tells of his inquiry into the causes of generation and decay. When he was young, he says, he believed he could discover these causes by means of natural history, the study of what really is. But he was disappointed in this quest, for no natural cause was as all-embracing as, for example, the idea of the good. So he embarked on what he calls his second voyage in quest of causality. What is secondary about this quest is its linguistic nature. It takes place not by means of sense-data, but of conceptions, of the λόγοι. "So I thought," says Socrates, "I must have recourse to conceptions and examine in them the truth of realities."<sup>150</sup> Here Socrates is pointing to the "derivative" nature of language. It is secondary because words or conceptions seem less direct than the reality available to the senses. Heidegger's concept of assertion is derivative in a similar way. Assertion, the theoretical statement about one's concerned interpretation, has a secondary character. It presupposes understanding and interpretation.

But can we not detect, in both Plato and in Heidegger, a note of irony in their characterization of the logos and of assertion as secondary phenomena? In Plato, for example, Socrates' statement about having recourse to conceptions is immediately qualified. He will not concede, he says, that the one who studies reality through conceptions, i.e., through words, is looking at it through mere images. That, he says, was only how he began his quest. And Heidegger, while insisting that the assertion or judgment is not the primary locus of truth, nevertheless emphasizes its connection with being. The assertion, he says, enables us to share our being, at least in relation to that

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<sup>149</sup> Ibid., section 33.

<sup>150</sup> ἔδοξε δὴ μοι χρῆναι εἰς τοὺς λόγους καταφυγόντα ἐν ἐκείνοις σκοπεῖν τῶν ὄντων τὴν ἀληθειαν. Plato Phaedo 99e. The verb translated as "to have recourse to," καταφυγάνω, literally means "to take refuge in." Socrates implies that words are safer than the data of the senses. Gadamer alludes to this passage often. See, for example, "Die Natur der Sache und die Sprache der Dinge," in Kleine Schriften, 1.65-66; trans., "The Nature of Things and the Language of Things," in Philosophical Hermeneutics, p. 77; "Die philosophischen Grundlagen des zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts," in Kleine Schriften, 1. 47; trans., "The Philosophical Foundations of the Twentieth Century," in Philosophical Hermeneutics, p. 128; and Wahrheit und Methode, p. 406; trans., p. 389.

which is asserted.<sup>151</sup> The stand we have taken toward something – our understanding, in a word – is shared by means of an assertion about it.

What is this understanding which underlies the assertion? Heidegger answers this question by invoking Plato, who knew that the unity which lies behind the multiplicity of words in discourse is the unity of meaning.<sup>152</sup> The allusion is to Plato's Sophist. There the Eleatic stranger tells Theaetetus that if a word or statement is to be truly such, it must be about some particular thing.<sup>153</sup> Even when some- one makes a false statement, there is a unity of intention behind it. That unity of intention gives us a clue to the being of the speaker. This is also a clue, Heidegger suggests, to the mystery of being, in which both the speaker and what is spoken participate. To be sure, the clue which words provide seems less scientific than the more direct modes of access to reality which one can imagine.<sup>154</sup> To follow such a clue necessarily involves the investigator in a circle structure by which the presuppositions implicit in understanding guide the results of the inquiry.<sup>155</sup> But Heidegger does not regard this as a shortcoming. It is rather the very nature of reality, the way being discloses itself in the world. Such reality or being is intelligible, and discourse articulates this intelligibility.<sup>156</sup> Here we see the most important rapprochement between Plato and Heidegger. Both agree that language expresses reality, even a reality which encompasses falsehood and nothingness. This is the point at which it can be said that Heidegger realizes the power of the Platonic dialectic. For in dialectic, that is, through words, being comes to light.<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> Heidegger, Sein und Zeit, p. 155.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 159.

<sup>153</sup> Plato Sophist 262e. One knows which of the Platonic dialogues Heidegger is alluding to from the discussion in his Grundprobleme. See above, footnote 55. The citation of the exact passage from Plato is my conjecture.

<sup>154</sup> That is why the Platonic approach through language, dialectic, became an embarrassment of the scientifically-minded Aristotle. See the section above entitled "Merely Formal Dialectics."

<sup>155</sup> Heidegger calls this circle the "fore-structure" of Dasein itself. Heidegger, Sein und Zeit, p. 153.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 161.

<sup>157</sup> See Heidegger's discussion of the cave allegory in Platons Lehre von der Wahrheit, esp. pp. 42-43, and footnote 60 above. Hubert L. Dreyfus is right when he says that all intelligent behavior and all intelligibility "must be traced back to our sense of what we are" (What Computers Can't Do: The Limits of Artificial Intelligence, revised ed. (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers (Harper Colophon Books), 1979), p. 57). But is he correct to add that what we are is, "on pain of regress, something we can never explicitly know"? To be sure, we cannot "know" ourselves the way a computer engineer knows a

This treatment of Plato gives us an insight into what Heidegger means when he writes that the destruction of the history of ontology is by no means a shedding of the ontological tradition.<sup>158</sup> It is, on the contrary, a delineation of its genuine possibilities. For Heidegger is not content to show how dialectic deteriorated, among philosophers after Plato, into diaeresis, a technique for distinguishing things and combining them into classes. That would have been a mere exercise in intellectual history. Instead Heidegger shows the bond between Plato's concern for the manner in which falsehood (as that which has no real existence) can be said to exist, and his own question of the meaning of being. In that sense the two can be said to stand within the same tradition. The Plato of which Heidegger speaks is not an item in a bibliography, but a partner in the pursuit of the meaning of being.

#### VI.2.B. The Categorical Link between Temporality and Truth

The same respect tendered by Heidegger to Plato he tendered to Aristotle. For while Heidegger does claim that Aristotle's definition of language<sup>159</sup> lies at the root of the later definition of truth as the adequation of intellect and its object, he does not thereby reject it. The task, he says, is not to shed the tradition. It is rather, in Heidegger's phrase, an "ursprüngliche Aneignung": to make the tradition one's own in a primordial way.<sup>160</sup> Heidegger gives a good example of this in his exploration of the apophantic word, the λόγος ἀποφαντικός.<sup>161</sup> This is usually translated as "proposition"<sup>162</sup> or as "enuntiative

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computer. We cannot reproduce our own intelligence. But Dreyfus' argument against the artificial intelligence experts is less applicable to students of the humanities, for whom genuine self-knowledge, expressed in the problematic Delphic saying "know thyself" discussed in Plato's Charmides, is possible and worth seeking.

<sup>158</sup> Heidegger, Sein und Zeit, p. 22.

<sup>159</sup> Aristotle says that what is spoken are symbols of what the soul feels: Ἔστι μὲν οὖν τὰ ἐν τῇ φωνῇ τῶν ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ παθημάτων συμβόλα. Aristotle On Interpretation 16<sup>a</sup>6. He adds that the feelings of the soul, of which speech is the primary sign, are the same for all, as are the experiences which they represent. ὦν μέντοι ταῦτα σημεῖα πρῶτως, ταῦτα πασι μαθήματα τῆς ψυχῆς, καὶ ὦν ταῦτα ὁμοιώματα, πράγματα ἤδη ταῦτα. Ibid., 16<sup>a</sup>5-7. Heidegger paraphrases this in Sein und Zeit, p. 214.

<sup>160</sup> Heidegger, Sein und Zeit, p. 220.

<sup>161</sup> Aristotle On Interpretation 17<sup>a</sup>10-17. This is an example of Heidegger's refusal to be content with the ordinary understanding of Aristotle. The statement about the apophantic word can be interpreted as a self-evident definition of the single proposition. It is that which indicates a single fact or whose parts result in a unity. Heidegger's appropriation reveals what lies behind this, namely, the mystery of apophantic or predicative judgment. Heidegger's teacher, Husserl, also treated the question of the apophantic. See Edmund Husserl, Formale und transzendente Logik. Versuch einer Kritik der logischen Vernunft (1929), with additional texts, edited by Paul Janssen, vol. 17 of Husserliana; see esp.

sentence.”<sup>163</sup> The Latin translation is “*oratio enuntiativa*.”<sup>164</sup> None of these translations suggests the etymology of the term “apophantic word.” Yet it is to that etymology that Heidegger turned. He linked the adjective “apophantic” with the verb φαίνω, “to bring to light” or “to cause to appear.” The apophantic word was not reduced, in his interpretation, to a proposition or enuntiative sentence. Rather, it sprang to life as the discourse which lets something be seen, as that which makes something like a phenomenological method possible.<sup>165</sup> Such an etymological analysis illustrates the direction which Heidegger’s “*ursprüngliche Aneignung*” took.

Etymological analysis finds a critical edge when the apophantic word is juxtaposed with what Heidegger calls the traditional concept of truth.<sup>166</sup> Aquinas had formulated this traditional conception as the conformity of thing and intellect, *adaequatio intellectus et rei*.<sup>167</sup> Heidegger relates this conception to the Aristotelian of language cited above. The “*adaequatio*” of Aquinas expresses the *ομοιωματα* of Aristotle. They are the likenesses equated both to the feelings of the soul and to the experiences which prompt those feelings. What one feels or thinks corresponds to the reality which one experiences. Heidegger calls this traditional conception of truth “*derivative*.” It derives

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sections 16, 22-23, and 26. Janssen notes (pp. xxi-xxii) that the incubation period for Husserl’s work extends back at least to 1908, long before the 1927 publication of Heidegger’s *Sein und Zeit*.

<sup>162</sup> So Harold P. Cooke translates it, in Aristotle, *The Organon*, op. cit.; and E. M. Edghill does the same, in Aristotle, *The Works of Aristotle* (1908-1952), translated into English under the editorship of W. D. Ross, 12 vols. (London: Oxford University Press (Geoffrey Cumberlege, Publisher to the University), 1955; vols. 2-12 bear the imprint of the Clarendon Press); *On Interpretation* is in vol. 1.

<sup>163</sup> So O. F. Owen translates it, in Aristotle, *The Organon or Logical Treatises of Aristotle*, with the Introduction of Porphyry, literally translated, with notes and introduction, by Octavius Freire Owen, 2 vols., Bohn’s Classical Library (London: George Bell and Sons, 1900-1901), vol. 1.

<sup>164</sup> Aristotle, *Aristotelis Opera*, ed. Academia Regia Borusica, with the Greek text prepared by Immanuel Bekker (vols. 1-2), the Latin text prepared by various others (vols. 3-4), and the Index Aristotelicus prepared by Hermann Bonitz (vol. 5); 5 vols. (Berlin: George Reimerus, 1831). The Latin translation of the *Organon*, prepared by Iulio Pacio, is in vol. 3.

<sup>165</sup> Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, p. 32.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 214-219.

<sup>167</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *De Veritate*, Q. I, art. I, in the *Opera Omnia* (Leonine edition), XXII.6. Translation: *The Disputed Questions on Truth*, 1.6.

from a primordial phenomenon of truth, he argues, which one can detect in Greek philosophy.<sup>168</sup> Aristotle provides an example. In speaking of his philosophical predecessors, Aristotle mentions those who have “brought the truth to light,” περι της ἀληθείας ἀπωφηνάμενων.<sup>169</sup> This phrase is important to Heidegger because it unites truth with the verbal form of the word apophantic, meaning to bring something to the light as something particular, as something worthy of attention. What Aristotle’s predecessors brought to light is the truth. This does not mean, for Heidegger, that the ancients were the first to make truth a subject for study. While that may be the case, it belongs to the traditional concept of truth. According to that concept, there is an entity, i.e., the truth, which one can experience; and when one’s intellectual grasp of that entity is adequate, one has both made a true judgment and grasped the truth. This is doubtless correct. But it presupposes the existence of truth as an entity to which one’s intellectual grasp must conform. It leaves unexamined what that truth is. How did that truth arise as a subject for thought? How did it come to light? What does it mean to speak of truth as if it were something whose darkness can be illumined? These questions prompted Heidegger to inquire about what in the phenomenon of truth is primordial or “ursprünglich.”<sup>170</sup>

It is a commonplace that the privative prefix α- of ἀλήθεια gave Heidegger an etymological clue to the primordial phenomenon of truth. ‘Αλήθεια is that which is not “concealed” or does not “escape notice” (λανθάνω). The primordial phenomenon of truth as unconcealment therefore stands in contrast to the traditional concept of truth as adequation or correspondence. This contrast, which lay at the root of Heidegger’s concept of a phenomenological method, can be expressed in a variety of ways.<sup>171</sup> Unconcealment is the discovery of something in the present as compared to agreement with something whose validity is presupposed. Unconcealment is wresting something

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<sup>168</sup> Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, pp. 219-226.

<sup>169</sup> Aristotle *Metaphysics* 993<sup>b</sup>17. Heidegger quotes this inexactly in *Sein und Zeit*, p. 213.

<sup>170</sup> The questions are akin to those raised by Husserl. Husserl saw that, while it is true to say that being is apprehended through judgment – at least, according to what may be called classical philosophy – nevertheless one must see that the source of being is not our reflection upon judgments but the fulfillment of them. Judgment can be, for Husserl, no more an object of immediate perception than being can be, for Heidegger, one among other present-at-hand beings. Edmund Husserl, *Logische Untersuchungen*, 2 vols. in 3, 2nd partially revised ed. (Halle an der Saale: Max Niemeyer, 1921), vol. 2, part 2: *Elemente einer phänomenologischen Aufklärung der Erkenntnis*, esp. chap. VI: “Sinnliche und kategoriale Anschauungen,” section 44, pp. 139-142. Translation: *Logical Investigations*, trans. J. N. Findlay, 2 vols. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul; New York: The Humanities Press, 1970), 2.782-784.

<sup>171</sup> Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, pp. 219-220.

from obscurity in contrast to grasping what has always been readily available. Unconcealment is the activity of removing what has veiled the matter to be considered versus the passivity of appropriating what has been established. These distinctions, in which are expressed the “phenomenological” aspect of Heidegger’s method, arise as a result of the analysis of truth as *ἀληθεία*. But Heidegger, in his exposition of truth in section 44 of Being and Time, does not show the common thread running through the distinctions: time. That temporal dimension emerges only later, in the second part of the book. From that we can infer what Heidegger might say about the temporal dimension of truth. That dimension arises with the realization that bringing something out of concealment may or may not take place. And what has once been brought out of concealment may again be obscured. In short, something which emerges as a theme for discourse need not emerge, and if at one time it does emerge, it may at another time disappear. No such temporality attaches to the concept of truth as the agreement of the intellect with the object of its knowledge. Once a certain correspondence between object and intellect has been achieved, it abides as a standard. To conform with it is truth. Not to conform is falsehood. And so it will always be.

Aristotle, according to Heidegger, prevented the primordial phenomenon of truth from being obscured by what was already, in classical Greece, the traditional concept.<sup>172</sup> In the ninth book of the Metaphysics, for example, he points out a shortcoming of the traditional concept. According to that concept, conformity between the mind and the thing is always true. But there are some things, says Aristotle, which can be viewed as a unity or as a multiplicity. In the state of unity, they exist one way, and in the state of multiplicity they can be said to exist another way. “Therefore as regards the class of things which admit of both contrary states,” writes Aristotle, “the same opinion or the same statement comes to be false and true, and it is possible at one time to be right and at another wrong.”<sup>173</sup> Rightness and wrongness, truth and falsity, have a temporal significance. An opinion can be right at one time, and wrong at another. Knowing when to advance the opinion, and when to keep one’s counsel, is a matter of practical wisdom or prudence. Aristotle’s word for this is *πρόνησις*. To pursue it would take us from the Metaphysics to the sixth book of the Nicomachean Ethics. For the present it suffices to have shown that, by introducing the temporal element into his discussion of truth, Aristotle has preserved what Heidegger calls the truth’s primordial phenomenon. Truth as unconcealment can take place at a given moment or not take place. The same word or opinion can at one moment reveal and the next moment conceal.<sup>174</sup>

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<sup>172</sup> Heidegger, Sein und Zeit, pp. 225-226

<sup>173</sup> *περι μεν ουν τα ενδεχόμενα η αυτη γίγνεται ψευδης και αληθης δόξα και ο λόγος ο αυτός, και ενδέχεται οτε μεν αληθεύειν οτε δε φεύδουσθαι.* Aristotle Metaphysics 1051<sup>b</sup>13-15. The “comes to be” is suggested by the conjunction of *γίγνομαι* (to come into being) and *ενδέχομαι* (to accept). “At one time” and “at another” are signified by the indefinite adverb *οτέ*.

<sup>174</sup> Heidegger, Sein und Zeit, pp. 225-226.

The link between temporality and truth puts a new complexion on the doctrine of the categories. When substance and accident are united in predication, there is a possibility that something which was formerly unnoticed can emerge. This is doubtless not always the case. Predication can bring triviality as well as profundity to light. And predication can obscure the truth as well as reveal it. If, for example, an inappropriate opinion is expressed, that opinion can, at a particular moment, plunge an entire discussion into darkness – despite the fact that the same opinion, at another time, could be genuinely illuminating. Knowing when an opinion is appropriate calls for prudence. But without predication the darkness would be unrelieved. In the timely yoking of categories something commonplace, such as an old doctrine, an ancient idea, or an apparently trivial fact, can spring to life. It is not a matter of simply recalling what was once forgotten. It is rather the placing of a matter in a new light, so that its significance can, perhaps for the first time, shine forth. This was what Heidegger saw in Aristotle’s understanding of truth.

### VI.2.C. Destiny and Tradition

With the introduction of the explicit link between truth and temporality we have arrived at a significant point for our explication of Heidegger’s philosophy as part of the rehabilitation of tradition. Clearly, there is a relation between tradition and temporality. The relation between tradition and truth is no less important. For if tradition had nothing to do with truth there would be no reason to rehabilitate it. Heidegger contributes to the rehabilitation of tradition his insight into past thinkers as partners in the quest for the meaning of being. We saw this in connection with the dialectic of Plato. Although Plato’s idea of the good tended to reduce the truth to agreement with an idea, according to Heidegger, his development of dialectic or discourse became the very light by which being could be illuminated. But Heidegger did more than invite the ancients to participate in his investigations. He saw that they were the ones who had handed down the possibilities with which present thinking must work. Their thought has shaped the world into which every subsequent thinker has been thrown. When one meditates upon the inheritance bequeathed by the ancients, without which there would be no modern thought as we know it, one is forced to employ a word which Heidegger employs, the word “Geschick” or destiny.<sup>175</sup>

Aristotle cannot simply be called a partner with Heidegger in the quest for the meaning of being. Something stronger must be said. Aristotle’s link between temporality and truth suggests that truth is bound up with destiny. This bond is a result of the nature of truth as the bringing of something out of concealment. For something to be brought out of concealment, it must first of all exist as something which can be uncovered. Not anything can be uncovered, but only that which has been given. There would be no primordial phenomenon of truth to be rediscovered if it were not there first as primordial. To be uncovered it must have historical existence: given, so to speak, by destiny.

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<sup>175</sup> Ibid., section 74.

Secondly, what can be unconcealed need not necessarily be unconcealed. There are possibilities bequeathed by destiny which have not been exploited. Heidegger, for example, only commented on a small part of Aristotle. He by no means exhausted Greek thinking. History has provided an inheritance, we can say, of which only a small part has been spent. Thirdly, the rediscovery of what tradition has given is itself a matter of destiny. The possibilities for recovering elements of tradition and restoring them to conscious power are possibilities which destiny itself grants. The times, it might be said, called for Heidegger's rediscovery of the meaning of being explored by Aristotle. But who can say when another Heidegger will arise? Thus we can see that the link between temporality and truth, forged by Aristotle and renewed by Heidegger, has nothing to do with temporal relativism. Its focus is rather the destiny which unites past and present thought. Aristotle is not simply an authority which Heidegger invokes, but an exponent of that thought which has been our destiny as well as our intellectual heritage.<sup>176</sup>

To speak of thought as destiny calls for a definition of terms. Heidegger defines "Geschick" or destiny in Being and Time as the event of Dasein's fateful existence with others.<sup>177</sup> Destiny, which has a communal dimension, is distinguished from fate, which has to do with the finitude of individual existence. The German form of both words is related to the verb "schicken," meaning to send. Destiny refers to that which has been sent to a group as its portion in life. Although the decisiveness of the individual who chooses to live authentically is paramount for Heidegger, there is here a strong element of

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<sup>176</sup> Hubert L. Dreyfus has noted, in an indirect way, the connection between destiny and tradition. He advocates a "religious" resistance to nihilism which takes the form of (1) a critique of reductionist views of humanity, and (2) an interpretation of the human condition which distinguishes between our dominant practices and those habits, customs, and skills which suggest a non-reductionist understanding of humanity. This could be interpreted as a rehabilitation of those inexplicit traditions – Dreyfus' habits, customs, and skills – which destiny has bequeathed.

But when Dreyfus expresses the hope, reminiscent of Heidegger's "only a God can save us," that the habits, customs, and skills "will find a focus in a new paradigm," he moves beyond the central concerns of the rehabilitation of tradition. Those concerns are not with some unknown paradigm in the future, but with that being which is already manifest in what has been given and is now present. See Hubert L. Dreyfus, "Holism and Hermeneutics," Review of Metaphysics 34 (1980-1981): 3-23, esp. pp. 22-23.

The 1966 interview with Heidegger, "Only a God Can Save Us Now," was published by Der Spiegel in the spring of 1976, shortly after Heidegger's death. An English translation by David Schendler appeared in the Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal 6 (1977): 5-27.

<sup>177</sup> "Wenn aber das schicksalhafte Dasein als In-der-Welt-sein wesentlich im Mitsein mit Anderen existiert, ist sein Geschehen ein Mitgeschehen und bestimmt als *Geschick*." Heidegger, Sein und Zeit, p. 384. The translation, which renders "Geschehen" and "Mitgeschehen" as "historizing" and "co-historizing," introduces an element of confusion which I would avoid by using the word "event."

determinacy. To be sure, Heidegger emphasizes the importance of “resoluteness” or “Entschlossenheit” for the individuals who want to hold themselves open for the possibilities of their being, against all temptations to simply acquiesce in the torpor of everyday life.<sup>178</sup> In this way he avoids the connotations of predestination. But Heidegger’s concept of destiny implies that those possibilities for which one holds oneself open are bequeathed or inherited. The individual makes choices, but those choices are finite: one cannot choose what is not possible.

Indeed, Heidegger even goes so far as to say that resoluteness is the retrieval or repetition of the possibilities which tradition has given. “The repetition is the explicit tradition,” he writes, “which means the return to the possibilities of the Dasein which has been there,” that is, there in the past.<sup>179</sup> This sentence clarifies the relation between destiny and tradition. Destiny is the working-out of the choices, made by a people, from the possibilities sent by tradition. Most interesting here is the relation of freedom to determinacy. Destiny does not mean the negation of freedom. People do make choices. But their choices are circumscribed. No matter what is chosen, the choice is from among possibilities which have been granted, in which choice on is repeating or retrieving something which was already there. Heidegger summarizes the matter in this way. “In repetition,” he says, “fateful destiny can be disclosed explicitly as bound up with the heritage which has come down to us.”<sup>180</sup> It can be disclosed, yes, in the choices of a people. But that disclosure is bound up with the people’s heritage. Here we see encapsulated Heidegger’s ambiguity toward tradition. It has a great anonymous power, a power which extends over every conscious and unconscious act. But tradition also offers the possibilities from which choices are made. In his discussion of destiny in Being and Time, Heidegger balances an awareness of personal resoluteness and of seemingly impersonal fate or tradition.

Twenty-five years later, in his meditation on the word “fate” or μοιρα of Parmenides, Heidegger would strike a note in which the inscrutability of destiny was more pronounced. For Parmenides, fate was the goddess who had bound thought to the particular beings or entities in which being is encountered. Being, we read in the fragment of Parmenides, “is not and will not be apart from the beings to whom Moira has bound it.”<sup>181</sup> Heidegger seizes on the identification of fate with that power which has

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<sup>178</sup> Ibid., section 32.

<sup>179</sup> “Die Wiederholung ist die ausdrückliche Überlieferung, das heisst der Rückgang in Möglichkeiten des dagewesenen Daseins.” Ibid., p. 385. The translation, which brings out explicitly the link between repetition and tradition, is my own.

<sup>180</sup> “Das schicksalhafte Geschick kann in der Wiederholung ausdrücklich erschlossen werden hinsichtlich seiner Verhaftung an das liberkommene Erbe.” Ibid., p. 386.

<sup>181</sup> οὐδεν γαρ [η] ἐστὶν ἢ εἶσται ἄλλο πάρεξ τοῦ εὐόντος, ἐπει το γε Μοιρ’ ἐπέδησεν οὐλον ἀκίνητον τ’ ἔμεναι. Fragmente der Vorsokratiker, 1.238; trans., Ancilla to the Pre-

bound being to beings. Moira, he writes, is the destiny of being.<sup>182</sup> He means that the fact that one never encounters being apart from beings is not due to some choice or decision made at the dawn of philosophy. It is rather the destiny of thought. The forgetfulness of being, the refusal or inability of thinkers to see what underlies every ontological statement, is not due simply to a failure to see what is here present. On the contrary, destiny has bound being to beings so tightly that when one points to an entity, one is never pointing to being itself. Heidegger no longer talks about the resoluteness with which one chooses from among possibilities. His theme here is the destiny which cannot be other than what it is.

The point he makes is that, when the rare individual encounters being in the presence of beings, that person encounters what destiny itself has given. Heidegger was such a rare individual. Yet it cannot be denied that destiny is gracious, bestowing the opportunity to encounter being upon others, and not just upon Heidegger.<sup>183</sup> Heidegger himself conceded this. Some thinkers, notably Aristotle, have grasped the problematic character of what destiny offers. But Heidegger also seemed to imply that, even when one does accept what destiny offers, that acceptance is not simply a free choice. One does not step out of destiny to accept the gift of destiny. Both the gift and its acceptance are fated. We recall here what Heidegger said about the destiny of being in the context of the history of philosophy.<sup>184</sup> When the thinker feels most unfettered, then the thought is most fully in the grip of destiny. The same can be said of tradition. Just when the moderns felt themselves most free of tradition, in the period of the Enlightenment, for example, they were instead manifesting the very possibilities which tradition had presented to them.

The notion of tradition which Heidegger rehabilitated is tradition in the sense of destiny. To be sure, this is not all that tradition is. One cannot avoid one's destiny, but

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Socratic Philosophers, p. 44. My translation is close to the German of Diels, from which Freeman's English greatly departs.

<sup>182</sup> "Μοῖρα ist das Geschick des 'Seins' im Sinne des εἶναι." Martin Heidegger, "Moira (Parmenides VIII, 34-41)," in *Vorträge und Aufsätze*, p. 252. Translation, "Moira (Parmenides VIII, 34-41)," in Early Greek Thinking, trans. David Farrell Krell and Frank A. Capuzzi (Capuzzi is responsible for "Moira") (New York, Evanston, San Francisco, and London: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1975), p. 97. This essay was originally written as an undelivered part of the lectures of 1951-1952, published as Was Heisst Denken? (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1954), in which "Moira" did not appear.

<sup>183</sup> It must be said that the graciousness of destiny is not the graciousness of God, who revealed himself at a particular time to a particular people: Heidegger's philosophy can only prepare one to face the question of theology in earnest. After Heidegger, no Catholic can take as self-evident a statement such as Thomas' that being and truth are convertible (De Veritate, Q. 21, art. 2, resp.).

<sup>184</sup> See Chapter V above, esp. the section entitled "History as the Inexorable."

one can reject traditions. They can be rejected in the way that Heidegger rejected the history of ontology and sought to destroy it. But a thinker is powerless to destroy tradition when it is regarded in terms of destiny. This is tradition as the unique singular, as opposed to the plurality of traditions. Within that one tradition, which is no more reducible to a formula than being itself, traditions have their ground. Such traditions can be appropriated primordially, as Heidegger showed with the doctrines of Plato and Aristotle. But such an appropriation does not occur when one attempts to stand outside of tradition, as if it were no longer effective. One only appropriates traditions, in Heidegger's sense, to the degree which tradition allows them to be appropriated.

This is the great difference between Heidegger's rehabilitation and that of Hegel. For Hegel, thought itself enables the full appropriation of the past in which all differences between present spirit and past spirit are dissolved. For Heidegger, history stands over against the present interpreter, bequeathing as fate the possibilities of interpretation. There is an obvious corollary to this doctrine when one moves from philosophic to Christian tradition. That corollary is that the opportunities for the appropriation of Christian tradition are themselves bestowed by that tradition. Every interpretation of the Christian past stands before the power of history, upon which Christianity has put its stamp. But the question of the theology of tradition is out of place in our present discussion, which confines itself to the philosophic rehabilitation of tradition. That phrase, the rehabilitation of tradition, belongs to Gadamer. In Gadamer's thought, Hegel and Heidegger are united in the service of tradition. Let us now turn to an examination of Gadamer, whose work has provided the impetus for this study.