Questioning Concerning Heidegger:
Rethinking His Appropriation and Forgetting of Plato’s Good Beyond Being

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I. Introduction

During his long philosophical career, Heidegger published only one essay that was exclusively devoted to a textual interpretation of Plato. In this well-known and much-disputed essay, “Plato’s Doctrine of Truth” (PDT), Heidegger’s central argument is that in Plato’s cave allegory, there is a fundamental shift in the essence of truth, from truth (ἀλήθεια) as “unconcealment” to truth as correct representation under the aegis of the masterful “look” (ὄρθωτης). Quickly after its publication, PDT came under substantial criticism, which focused especially on Heidegger’s translating of ἀλήθεια as “unconcealedness” rather than as “truth.” Interestingly, while Heidegger accepted such criticisms, he continued to use ἀλήθεια to mark out the contrast between truth as “unconcealedness” and truth as correct representation. Indeed, this disjunction stood at the heart of his critique of “representational metaphysics” for most of his career, even after he openly acknowledged that he was wrong in PDT, and that a shift in the essence of truth did in fact not occur in Plato. What many scholars fail to recognize, however, is that late in his career Heidegger also dispensed with ἀλήθεια as “truth” altogether, speaking instead of the contrast between truth (Wahrheit) on the one hand, and the “clearing” (Lichtung) of the “unconcealed” on the other.

What is the significance of Heidegger’s abdication of ἀλήθεια as “truth” or even “unconcealedness”? Does his critique of the onto-theological tradition of Western metaphysics still hold if his reading of Plato is given up? In what follows, we shall be questioning concerning Heidegger with these thoughts in the background. On the whole, we hope to show that Heidegger’s misappropriation of Plato renders him blind to some interesting continuities between himself and Plato on two points: Plato’s treatment of the good as “beyond being” on the one hand, and the correlative place for the zetetic philosopher on the other. To get there, we will begin with a thorough exposition of PDT, followed by a synoptic reading of Heidegger’s latter
years at Marburg, where Plato’s good as ἐπέκεινα τῆς οὐσίας figures prominently in his efforts to effect an “ontological-ontic” movement. Then, we will take up criticisms against Heidegger’s PDT interpretation of the good as the “highest idea.” On the whole, our main contention will be that, in his reduction of Plato’s ontological concerns to epistemological ones, and in his forgetfulness of the difference between the good and the ideas, Heidegger misses two significant opportunities to make progress on the ontological-ontic problem, both of which rest on the ἐπέκεινα of the good.

II. “Plato’s Doctrine of Truth”: Exposition

With these preliminary considerations in mind, we now turn to an exposition of PDT, focusing on some of the central themes and contentions there. As we noted above, PDT is Heidegger’s only published essay focused exclusively on a text of Plato’s,¹ and even though he later recanted his interpretation here, there are nonetheless fundamental continuities between his later work and his concerns in this text.² Indeed, apart from a good grasp of this text, his critique of Western metaphysics cannot be fully grasped beyond a facile Carnapian façade.³

Heidegger begins the essay by saying that a thinker’s “doctrine” is often what remains “unsaid” in their work, and that in his interpretation of Plato, he will pay attention to “that which remains unsaid within what is said” [203].⁴ “What remains unsaid in Plato’s thinking,” says

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² While PDT was written concurrently with Heidegger’s more extensive lecture on the issue, On the Essence of Truth, the basic themes and analysis are the same as in PDT, and only the latter did Heidegger offer up for publication. Hence, we limit ourselves to PDT. For comparative analysis, however, see Martin Heidegger, The Essence of Truth: On Plato’s Cave Allegory and Theaetetus, transl. Ted Sider (New York: Continuum, 2000).
Heidegger, “is a change in what determines the essence of truth,” and this shift can be most readily clarified by an interpretation of Plato’s allegory of the cave [203]. Heidegger then proceeds to offer a translation of the entire cave allegory, notably translating τό ἀληθὲς and ἀληθεία respectively as “unhidden” and “unhiddenness” (Unverborgen, Unverborgenheit), rather than the usual rendering of “true” and “truth.”

As he moves to interpretation, Heidegger notes that the allegory consists in a “series of movements” or “movements of passage” through four stages, the first three consisting in the exit from the cave, and the last stage involving the return into its darkness [215-216; 219-224]. Each stage, notes Heidegger, involves an extended process of “turning around” that is no less than a reorientation of the whole human essence, by means of παιδεία, into a new “normative bearing” that obtains at each new stage [216]. Hence, Heidegger states that the whole allegory is meant to illustrate the essence of παιδεία, as Plato himself tells us at the opening of Book VII. However, what Heidegger wants to do is to show that “the allegory not only illustrates the essence of education,” but also reveals a “transformation in the essence of ‘truth,’” such that “an original and essential unity” in fact obtains between education and truth [217-218].

As the cave dweller is moved from one stage to the next—from shadow, to fire’s glow, to sunlight—he is progressively educated and liberated only as, at each stage, his being is “oriented toward that which appears in its visible form and which is the most unhidden in this appearing” [220]. In other words, the necessary condition for transformative παιδεία is the progressive unfolding of truth as “unconcealment,” which increases in quality at each stage, from the merely “unhidden” to the “most unhidden” of all (τά ἀληθεστάτα), the sphere of sunlight outside the

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5 We will develop this in more detail presently, but it suffices to note here that, as Peperzak says, Heidegger’s translation of ἀληθεία as “unhiddenness” is far and away the most challenged aspect of his translation. Adriaan T. Peperzak, “Heidegger and Plato’s Idea of the Good,” in Reading Heidegger: Commemorations, ed. John Sallis (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1993), 264.
cave. Those looking at the shadows on the wall “never consider anything else to be unhidden except the shadows cast by the artifacts” [219; transl. Rep. 515c1-2], but they are led to the “more unhidden” truth of the fire and the “most unhidden” of the sunlight, but throughout the appearance of things in unconcealment is a condition for further παιδεία. For Heidegger, education is the progressive exposure and re-orientation toward that which in beings is revealed as unhidden, and hence the “essence of ‘education’ is grounded in the ‘essence’ of ‘truth’” [222]. Here, Heidegger notes that the “most unhidden” shows itself in each case, as the “whatness” of a being (i.e. the ideas), and without such a self-showing nothing of beings would appear at all, but would rather remain always concealed [221]. In short, the ideas can be read in this allegory as “the foreground that ἀλήθεία puts out in front to present things” [234].

The significance of the final stage or movement, that of returning into the cave, underscores for Heidegger the link between unhiddenness and hiddenness. While the unhidden renders “accessible whatever appears” and keeps it “revealed in its appearing,” it must also perpetually “be torn away” or “stolen from hiddenness” [223]. Indeed, says Heidegger, for “the Greeks” it is only the unspoken and latent experience of ἀλήθεία as the unhiddenness of beings, and the dynamic interchange of the hidden and the unhidden, that renders the image of an underground cave meaningful at all. The cave is open within itself, rendering certain things unhidden, but is also surrounded by an enclosure that hides “the unhidden that is spread out in the light above the ground” [224]. Wherever truth is either “not unhiddenness or at least not co-determined by unhiddenness, there an ‘allegory of the cave’ has no basis as an illustration” [224]. For Heidegger, the fourth stage of returning back into the cave is yet another aspect of

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6 At this point in the text, Heidegger clearly means “truth” to be taken as “unhiddenness,” as indicated by his reference to “truth in the proper sense.” One interesting puzzle emerges however. Heidegger had previously asserted that education and truth formed an “original and essential unity,” whereas here truth is the necessary condition for and grounding of proper education. The difference between these two is rather significant, but Heidegger appears to take no notice of the discrepancy.
Plato’s latent experience of the ineradicable relation between truth as unhiddenness, and the
hiddenness from which truth must be wrested.

At this point in his exposition, Heidegger turns to show how the truth of ἀλήθεια as
unhiddenness of beings is eclipsed by another essence of truth which “pushes to the fore” [224].
Here, Heidegger contends that the illustrative power of the cave allegory derives chiefly from
role played by the fire, the fire’s glow, the brightness of day, and the shining of the sun itself
[225]. Heidegger’s comments here are crucial:

Everything depends on the shining forth of whatever appears and on making its visibility
possible. Certainly unhiddenness is mentioned in its various stages, but it is considered simply in
terms of how it makes whatever appears be accessible in its visible form (εἴδος) and in terms of
how it makes this visible form, as that which shows itself (ἰδέα), be visible…. The “idea” does
not first let something else (behind it) “shine and appear” [“erscheinen”]; it itself is what
shines…. The essence of the idea consists in its ability to shine and be seen [Schein- und
Sichtsamkeit]. This is what brings about presencing, specifically the coming to presence of what a
being is in any given instance.

For Heidegger, the ἱδέα in its shining forth grants vision. The shining ἱδέα lets the gaze focused
on it see the essence of a thing, its “whatness,” and in apprehending the ἱδέα one has
apprehended the unhidden as well. Henceforth, says Heidegger, “unhiddenness” means simply
that which is rendered accessible “thanks to the idea’s ability to shine” [226].

Significantly, inasmuch as “access” is obtained through “seeing,” unhiddenness is
“yoked” into a relation relative to seeing; ἀλήθεια becomes yoked under the idea and subjected
to correctness of vision and assertion [226]. The “movements of passage” in the cave from one
stage to the next are moments in the increasing correctness of gaze, as the essence of truth has
now become ὀρθότης; “correctness” of apprehension and assertion [231].

Turning to his treatment of “the idea of the good,” Heidegger follows Plato (Rep. 508;
517b8) in saying that this idea is what itself pre-emintenly shines, and provides the conditions for
vision of anything else. Here Heidegger translates Plato (Rep. 517b8) in this way: “the idea of
the good is the power of visibility that accomplishes all shining forth and that therefore is seen only last, in fact it is hardly (only with great pains) really seen at all” [226-227]. The crux of Heidegger’s treatment of the good is that it is the “idea of ideas” that makes possible “the appearing, in all its visibility, of everything present.” In other words, the idea of the good “brings about the shining of everything that can shine” and “is itself that which properly appears by shining” [228]. In what turns out to be a crucial quotation, Heidegger cites Plato’s naming of the good as τοῦ ὄντος φανότατον (Rep. 518c9), “that which most shines…of beings” [228]. Hence, the idea of the good is the ἱδέα τελευταία, since in it, as the condition for the possibility of all other ideas, “the essence of the idea comes to its fulfillment.” The good is thus at the top of a continuous hierarchy of ascent as the “highest idea,” and hence, for Heidegger, eminently visible and knowable, since it “constantly stands in view wherever any beings at all show themselves” [228]. By its shining the idea of the good (here, the sun) bestows brightness, visibility and hence “unhiddenness,” enabling “everything that ‘comes to be’ to go forth in the stability of its stable duration (509b)” [229]. And, once the highest idea itself is seen (ὁφθείσας) it is recognized as the “original source [Ur-Sache] of all ‘things’ [‘Sachen’] in their thingness [Sachheit]” [229].

In a final move back to the issue of παιδεία, then, Heidegger suggests that for Plato, whoever wants to act prudently in the world needs, above all else, a “view” of the ideas, a comportment of correct vision to the essence of things. Hence, the very essence of education consists in strengthening and freeing a person for “the clarity and constancy of insight into essence,” which is why ascent to a view of the highest idea is a necessary part of the allegory [229-230].

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7 Emphasis mine, since our later discussion will focus on Heidegger’s (perhaps) intentional omission of treating the good as beyond being.
**Heidegger’s Critique of Plato**

In the wake of his interpretation, Heidegger returns again to address what is “unsaid” in Plato’s text. As he sees it, “the ‘allegory’ is grounded in the unspoken event whereby ἴδεα gains dominance over ἀλήθεια,” and the fullness of the latter as “unhiddenness” comes under “the yoke of the ἴδεα” [230]. If our “comportment with beings” is always and everywhere a matter of gaining ἴδειν of the ἴδεα, of catching sight of the “visible form,” then correctness of vision becomes the crucial matter. In the “movements of passage” from shadows, to fire, to sunlight, the progressive increase of the correctness (ὁρθότης) of the gaze becomes the all-important matter [230]. Through this progressive educative correction of vision, “seeing or knowing becomes something correct” so that ultimately, sight may “look directly” upon the highest idea and fix itself in a “direct alignment,” a “correct” (ὁρθά) conforming of apprehension (ἵδειν) to what is to be seen: “the ‘visible form’ of the being” (ἵδεα) [230]. Heidegger brings all of this together into his central, twofold contention of the essay:

…the priority of ἴδεα and ἴδειν over ἀλήθεια results in a transformation in the essence of truth. Truth becomes ὀρθότης, the correctness of apprehending and asserting.

With this transformation of the essence of truth there takes place at the same time a change of the locus of truth. As unhiddenness, truth is still a fundamental trait of beings themselves. But as the correctness of the “gaze,” it becomes a characteristic of human comportment toward beings.

In short, the unspoken shift in Plato’s text is twofold: there is a change in both the essence of truth as unhiddenness, and in the place of truth in the appearance of beings. The ambiguity between the said and the unsaid in Plato’s text arises, says Heidegger, from the fact that while ἀλήθεια is named and discussed throughout the text, “it is ὀρθότης that is posited as normative” [231]. In other words, “truth” in the cave allegory is still, simultaneously unhiddenness and correctness, but “unhiddenness already stands under the yoke of the ἴδεα” [232]. This is the shift in the essence of truth. The shift in the place of truth is concurrent, in that
truth is no longer seen as a characteristic of beings as they unfold in a temporal field of meaning in their appearance; truth is now a matter of correct “comportment” toward being.\(^8\)

Thus does Heidegger close out this analysis by returning us to the whole scope of the history of Western metaphysics. Following Plato, the understanding of truth as correctness of representation and assertion “becomes the normative for the whole Western thinking” [232], and henceforth all beings are thought according to “ideas” and all reality evaluated according to “values” [238]. This holds even for Nietzsche, who in Heidegger’s estimation is “the most unrestrained Platonist in the history of Western metaphysics” [227], whose metaphysics of “values” is merely the inverse mirror-image of Plato.\(^9\)

Notably, however, Heidegger doesn’t appear to reject any place for truth as “idea” and

\(^8\) For the imagery of truth as “temporal unveiling” and Being as an “unfolding of the field of meaning,” I am indebted to Gregory Fried, “Back to the Cave: A Platonic Rejoinder to Heideggerian Postmodernism,” in *Heidegger and the Greeks: Interpretive Essays*, eds. Drew A. Hyland and John Panteleimon Manoussakis (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006), 161. Fried himself provides an excellent account of the twofold shift in the character of truth: “The core of Heidegger’s charge against Plato is that the ‘doctrine’ of the ideas falsifies Being by obscuring truth as temporal and polemical unveiling. By locating Being in an eternal and otherworldly domain of suprasensuous forms, and by making truth the conformity of our assertions with these forms, Plato has succeeded in transforming Being from the unfolding of the field of meaning as it is given temporally into a trans-temporal domain of eternally static absolutes (*PDT*, 180-82). Truth as \(\alpha\lambda\gamma\theta\epsilon\iota\alpha\) is no longer the free opening of a world of meaning to us; truth is now the marker of our correct apprehension of a permanent, if transcendent, reality.... Truth, as the criterion of philosophical and later scientific rigor, now becomes located in statements, or assertions, that correspond to a fixed reality...” (Fried, 161).

\(^9\) Dostal comments on the way that Heidegger ties Plato to Nietzsche: “By introducing the concept of existence (*Existenz*) and its accompanying existentials in *Being and Time*, instead of the traditional categories, Heidegger sought a way out of the traditional impasse of essentialism or nominalism, objectivism or subjectivism, Plato or Nietzsche.” For Heidegger, just as the distinctions of realism and idealism, transcendent and transcendental, objective and subjective, as well as truth and value mirror one another, so also does Nietzsche mirror Plato (Dostal, 67). Sallis, however, wants to keep Nietzsche outside of the metaphysical history which Heidegger is opposing. Referring to Heidegger’s comments in *Contributions to Philosophy*, on the “first beginning” of metaphysics, Sallis notes that Plato’s determination of being as idea, and “the distinction between intelligible idea and sensible thing” is the “founding—distinction of philosophy or metaphysics.” Sallis continues, identifying this as the framework for all subsequent metaphysics until Nietzsche, when “the distinction between intelligible and sensible is completely inverted and thus its possibilities finally exhausted.” John Sallis, “Plato’s Other Beginning,” in *Heidegger and the Greeks: Interpretive Essays*, eds. Drew A. Hyland and John Panteleimon Manoussakis (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006), 179.
correct assertion. Rather, his main concern is that an inversion has occurred between truth as ἀλήθεια and truth as ὀρθότης. Significantly, his analysis suggests that there is indeed a place for both, so long as ἀλήθεια retains its fundamental, originary position. Speaking about how the change in truth’s essence and place has resulted in determining the being of beings as ἱδέα, Heidegger offers some provocative words that lead us nicely into a discussion of the critical reception of PDT:

As a consequence of this interpretation of beings, being present is no longer what it was in the beginning of Western thinking: the emergence of the hidden into unhiddenness, where unhiddenness itself, as revealing, constitutes the fundamental trait of being present. Plato conceives being present (οὐσία) as ἱδέα. However, ἱδέα is not subordinate to unhiddenness in the sense of serving what is hidden by bringing it to appearance. Rather, the opposite is the case: it is the shining (the self-showing) that, within its essence and in a singular self-relatedness, may yet be called unhiddenness. The ἱδέα is not some foreground that ἀλήθεια puts out front to present things; rather, the ἱδέα is the ground that makes ἀλήθεια possible [233-234, emphasis mine].

III. From Marburg to Freiburg: “Forgetting” the Ἑπέκεινα

Heidegger’s identification of a shift in the essence and place of truth in Plato’s cave allegory has met with a great deal of criticism. Although many of these responses simply try to show that Heidegger “got Plato wrong,” it isn’t altogether clear that such responses undermine Heidegger’s evocative project, the questioning and thoughtful way upon which he embarks. The more interesting criticisms are those that show how Heidegger “got Plato wrong,” while revealing how “getting Plato right” would have contributed to the advancement of Heidegger’s overall project, or changed it in some substantial way. We will focus on one major stream of this latter type of criticism. This stream focuses on Heidegger’s treatment of the good as the highest idea, which is especially provocative in light of his frequent appropriation, prior to PDT, of Plato’s characterization of the good as “beyond being” (ἔπεκεινα τῆς ὀύσιας; Rep. 509b), which makes no appearance in PDT.
In what follows we will offer a synoptic reading of Heidegger’s latter years at Marburg, where Plato’s good as \( \textit{\'e\pi\kappa\varepsilon\iota\alpha} \ \tau\hbar\zeta \ \textit{ou\varsigma\iota\sigma}\varsigma \) figures prominently in Heidegger’s post \textit{Being and Time} philosophical efforts to effect an “ontological-ontic” movement. Then, we will take up several critiques of Heidegger’s interpretation of the good, showing that Heidegger misses two significant opportunities to make progress on the ontological-ontic problem, both of which rest on the centrality of the \( \textit{\'e\pi\kappa\varepsilon\iota\alpha} \) of the good. Given their exhaustive treatment of the issues surrounding Heidegger and Plato’s “good,” our main interlocutors will be Peperzak and Dostal, though others will be brought in as well.

\textit{Marburg and Plato’s \textit{\'E\pi\kappa\varepsilon\iota\iota\alpha}}

After his work on \textit{Being and Time}, and during his final years at Marburg (1927-1928), Heidegger was focused on the “transcendental condition of the possibility of \textit{Seinsverständnis}.”\textsuperscript{10} This “understanding of Being” required a “beyond” Being that could serve as “the pre-ontic horizon of all ontic and ontological projections.”\textsuperscript{11} This is a problem Heidegger had set up for himself in \textit{Being and Time} (\textit{BT}). In his discussion of truth in §44 of \textit{BT}, Heidegger had argued that truth as unconcealment was the originary ontological condition of the possibility of truth as “adequation” or “correspondence.”\textsuperscript{12} As Tugendhat shows, the establishing of this relation initially involved a movement from ontically correct propositions up to ontological unconcealment, the so called “ascent” to the meaning of Being as such.\textsuperscript{13} But the reverse

\textsuperscript{10} Peperzak, 259.
\textsuperscript{11} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{12} This same relationship is retained in our present text (\textit{PDT} 233-234), on which we will elaborate presently.
\textsuperscript{13} Tugendhat says that “What Heidegger arrives at with his own \textit{line of reasoning} is therefore only the position assumed by Husserl. And the decisive step beyond Husserl’s is not subject to further justification” (230). Then, quoting Heidegger, Tugendhat presents the three steps as follows: 1. “The assertion is true when it so indicates or discloses the state of affairs as it is in itself.” 2. “The assertion is true, means: it discloses the state of affairs in itself” [Here, the “so-as” is eliminated, since it is implied in the “in-itself”]. 3. “The assertion is true...means...it uncovers the state of affairs.” [Without further justification, now the “in-itself” is gone, and we have the basic thesis on truth Heidegger works with from now on: “The truthfulness (truth) of the assertion must be understood as its disclosedness” (\textit{BT} 218). Ernst Tugendhat, “Heidegger’s idea of truth,” in \textit{Critical Heidegger}, ed. Christopher Macann
movement—from unconcealment as the ground to propositional truth as the foreground—proved to be problematic. Dostal summarizes the problem succinctly:

Heidegger’s analysis moves from the propositional and ‘adæquatio’ level to the higher ontological level—from correctness to unconcealment. He nowhere, however, successfully shows how the move back down from the ontological to the ontical and propositional level is possible.  

The problematic of this gap was the primary concern of the post-BT lecture courses in Marburg, and one possible solution Heidegger entertains is Plato’s understanding of the good as ἐπέκεινα τῆς οὐσίας.

In his courses, Basic Problems of Phenomenology (summer 1927) and Metaphysical Foundations of Logic (summer 1928), Heidegger offers a reading of the cave allegory, and in both cases fixes his attention on the ἐπέκεινα of “the good” as the condition for the possibility of individual beings’ understanding of Being. Taking an anti-Neoplatonic approach, Heidegger generally identifies “the good” with “the world,” and the ἐπέκεινα as the transcendence of Dasein itself. Peperzak cites Heidegger, and provides a helpful interpretive follow-up here:

“Temporality in its exstatic-horizontal unity is the fundamental condition of the possibility of the ἐπέκεινα, i.e., of the transcendence that constitutes Dasein itself” (GA 24: 436). Finite time is the beyond: the ultimate horizon of all understanding and so the origin and outset of all possibilities of projection (GA 24: 436-37).

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14 Dostal, 77. The problem can be put in another way also: If truth is simply “unconcealment,” what purchase, if at all, is there between truth as “unconcealment” and of truth as correct adequation? Where is the normative content in the concept of “unconcealment” as such? Even by the time of Heidegger’s PDT, the same problem persists. His critique of Plato’s reversal of the proper relationship between ἀλήθεια and the ἰδέα directly suggests the need for its inverse: unconcealment as the ground and the idea as its presenting foreground [PDT 233-234]. However, as in Being and Time, the nature and possibility of this relationship is left undeveloped in PDT.

15 Peperzak, 259. Peperzak also notes that two pages of Heidegger’s 1929 essay, “On the Essence of Ground,” are dedicated to Plato’s concept of the good as beyond εἶναι and οὐσία, where Heidegger again equates the good with Dasein as the transcendence of the world (262).

16 Ibid., 259. While discussing Heidegger’s 1928 lecture course on the Metaphysical Foundations of Logic, Peperzak offers yet another illuminating explication: “‘The good’ seems to be another name for the world as ‘the whole of the essential inner possibilities…of Dasein, a whole which—as we know from Sein und Zeit—surpasses all real beings” (260).
Peperzak also notes that for Heidegger, “the good” as world can be structurally determined as the “for-the-sake-of” (Umwollen, ὑπὲρ ἔννοια). Although this is an Aristotelian teleological category, Heidegger applies it to Plato and identifies it as an arche or “ground,” a kind of “giving source,” rather than as a teleological object of eros.\(^{17}\) Hence the good was for Heidegger a kind of temporally transcendent ground. He says that “The Umwillen, as primary character of the world, i.e. of transcendence, [is] the archphenomenon of ground as such,” and that it therefore “transcends all beings in its various modi essentiae and existentiae.”\(^{18}\) Through his initial engagement with the possibilities contained the ἐπέκεινα of Plato’s good, Heidegger appears to be working toward a closing of the ontological-ontic gap. Unfortunately, he stops short.

**The Shift in “Plato’s Doctrine of Truth”**

In the space between the Marburg lectures of 1927-1928, and Heidegger’s first drafts of PDT in 1930-31, a remarkable shift has taken place. Instead of taking up the ἐπέκεινα of Plato’s good as the principle of fundamental unconcealment, ontologically prior to all ontic questions pertaining to particular facts about entities, Heidegger ossifies the good as the highest or perfect idea. As we have seen, in PDT the ἐπέκεινα of the good is absent, and “the idea of the good” is treated as an object, in its “shining” an eminently visible and knowable being, “direct alignment” with which enables the correct apprehension of beings in their “visible form” (iδέα) [PDT, 230].

What is the impetus behind this radical shift? The answer isn’t altogether clear. Some suggest that the shift is rooted in Heidegger’s developing critique of what he will later call “ontotheology,” while others point to Heidegger’s “turn;” however both explanations seem inadequate.\(^{19}\) Perhaps Heidegger simply changed his mind, suspecting that in Plato the ἐπέκεινα...

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\(^{17}\) Ibid., 260.

\(^{18}\) *GA* 26: 276, cited in Peperzak, 261.

\(^{19}\) Peperzak claims that “The reason why Heidegger no longer sees τὸ ἀγαθόν as a trace of that which precedes all beingness and being seems…to lie in the rejection of what he later calls onto-theology”
of the good faltered under the weight of a counter-reading of the good as “highest idea.”

Whatever his reasons, Heidegger’s excursions into the ἐπίκεισα, immediately prior to drafting PDT, give its total absence in this text the weight of a large “unsaid” in Heidegger’s ‘doctrine of Plato.’ Indeed, Dostal goes so far as to charge Heidegger with “intentional ignorance” on this matter.20

IV. Critiquing Heidegger’s “Idea of the Good”

Whatever the reason for the shift, it has led to myriad critiques of Heidegger’s “Platonist” reading of the good in Plato, suggesting that a closer reading of Plato amidst his earlier efforts, might have provided the way forward he was looking for. Here we restate, in greater detail, our main line of argument. In his reduction of Plato’s ontological concerns to epistemological ones, and by forgetting the difference between the good and the ideas, Heidegger misses two significant opportunities to make progress on the ontological-ontic problem.21 First, by failing to read Plato as more than a two-worlds “Platonist,” Heidegger misses the way in which the

(Peperzak, 282). However, to say that the ontotheological critique caused this shift is question-begging, since the main substance of this critique was already firmly in place in Heidegger’s thought before he composed PDT. As for the “turn,” whatever its effects, it did not change Heidegger’s desire to make sense of the ontological-ontic return. Although he had rejected philosophy as a science (the quasi-metaphysical project of BT), Heidegger still held on to the prospect of accounting for ontic “truth” in the light of Being. This is evident in his repeated emphasis on “the essence of truth” during the main years of the “turn.” Cf. Dostal (78), who argues that in giving up “fundamental ontology” as a science (Wissenschaffen), Heidegger does not thereby dispense with the problem of the ontological-ontic gap. For more details on the Kehre and its implications for Heidegger’s thought, see Polt, 117-121.20

20 Dostal, 66.

21 Why does it matter that Heidegger misses these opportunities? In short, eventually he is forced to recant what he sees as a change in the essence of truth in Plato, and ultimately he gives up on the notion of ἀλήθεια as unconcealment. In other words, he gives up on the ontological-ontic problematic, and consigns himself to a bare, originary “unconcealment,” which then creates a whole host of normative problems for him. How are we to know when a one revealed thing is an “authentic” or “meaningful” uncovering? As he has noted in his essay on technology, both poiesis and enframing [Gestell] are modes of revealing, but the critical apparatus with which to critique the latter is and thus oppose Das Man is significantly impoverished. Cf. Martin Heidegger, “The Question Concerning Technology” in The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays, transl. and intro. by William Lovitt (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 29.
of the good provides a compelling model for making the ontological-ontic movement possible from the “top down.” Second, Heidegger misses the zetetic-Socratic philosophical mode of inquiry associated with the ἐπήκεινα of the good. This mode of philosophy might have suggested to Heidegger a viable way of Dasein’s understanding of Being, a questioning that never reduces to the mastery of the gaze, while preserving the ontological-ontic relation from the “bottom up.”

“Epistemologizing” Plato

We begin with the first critique, popularized by Stanley Rosen, that Heidegger basically “epistemologizes” Plato.22 By treating the essence of Platonic ideas as “appearance” (εἴδος; Aussehen and Schein) and a visibility that enables correctness, Heidegger is suggesting that Plato has established “the epistemological primacy of the metaphor of sight” for the metaphysical tradition.23 One reason for this epistemic emphasis in Plato derives from Heidegger’s own central concerns, linked to the ontological-ontic problematic sketched above. Dostal suggests that “one of the primary shoals” upon which Heidegger’s ontological project of the Marburg period founders—hence necessitating the Kehre—is the failed attempt to provide “an ontological notion of truth in opposition to the prevailing epistemological view.”24 While Heidegger does recognize, in Metaphysical Principles, that the key problem for the ancients was ontological, not epistemological, Dostal notes that “Heidegger is not careful in his Plato essay to distinguish the ancient ontological stance from the modern epistemological one.”25

Another way of putting this, is that in PDT Heidegger treats Plato as setting up the modern

23 Dostal, 67.
24 Dostal, 63.
25 Ibid., 75. (Cf. Metaphysical Principles, 180).
philosophical quagmire of subjectivism and objectivism, the transcendental and the transcendent, which Heidegger himself wants to avoid.\textsuperscript{26} In so doing, Rosen suggests that Heidegger himself misses some crucial similarities between his own project and Plato’s,\textsuperscript{27} consequently finding in Plato the roots of the transcendent/transcendental dilemma over the epistemic criteria for truth. Dostal aptly summarizes this move:

Though Heidegger thinks he has found an alternative to the either/or of idealism and realism, he is happy to consign Plato to this very alternative. Heidegger would escape the dilemma of the transcendental vs. the transcendent, but he allows Plato to be confounded by this same dilemma. This dilemma...is no more appropriate to Plato than to Heidegger... [For Heidegger] Plato is either Aristotle’s Plato with the single idea of the Good in the place beyond the heavens or the Neo-Kantian idealist of transcendental subjectivity. These two ideas, according to Heidegger, mirror one another—just as Nietzsche mirrors Plato. They represent the dilemma of objectivism/subjectivism which modern philosophy cannot escape and which Heidegger proposes to resolve by eradicating it at its root in the metaphysics of Plato.\textsuperscript{28}

As Dostal notes, Plato’s notion of ideas fits in with neither a transcendent “other world” view, nor in a transcendental (Neo-Kantian) view,\textsuperscript{29} and that “Like Heidegger, Plato was

\textsuperscript{26} In Heidegger’s reading of the allegory, the transcendent “shining” of the sun on the one hand, and the implied transcendental “shining” in the “sun-like” eyes of the knowers on the other, may be one textual indication of this. Cf. \textit{PDT} 226, and cf. nt. 29 below, where this is treated more in-depth.

\textsuperscript{27} For Rosen, the “oddity” of Heidegger’s reading of Plato was nonetheless captive to the “traditional” reading of Plato as a two-worlds dualist (albeit with transcendental Kantian overtones). Rosen suggests that this prevents Heidegger from seeing that “the differences between himself and Plato may be viewed from within the horizon of a common endeavor.” Rosen, “Heidegger’s Interpretation of Plato,” 52.

\textsuperscript{28} Dostal, 65.

\textsuperscript{29} Dostal argues that Heidegger does not take sides in the realism/idealism debate. He wants to go to the root of both, proposing a “transcendental philosophy that is neither idealist nor realist” (65). To establish this, Dostal sets Historical in his historical context of reading Plato as a response to the dominance, during Heidegger’s Marburg period, of his colleague Natorp’s \textit{Platos Ideenlehre} (“Plato’s Doctrine of Ideas”) which provided the Neo-Kantian reading of Plato in Weimar Germany at the time. Natorp’s position was that Plato and Kant align, and that Plato was the prelude to Kant’s transcendental idealism (63-64). In other words, Natorp enlists Plato in the contemporary debate between realism and idealism. For the former, the ideas reside in a place beyond the heavens: they are transcendent. For the latter, the ideas reside in the (Neo-Kantian) subject: they are transcendental. Heidegger sees evidence of the latter being prefigured in Plato, but in general goes with an Aristotelian critique, seeing the ideas as transcendental in Plato (Dostal, 63-64).

Following Dostal’s lead here, this is evident, we suggest, in the text of \textit{PDT} [226], where Heidegger favors the “shining” of the idea of the good as the conditions for the possibility of knowledge on the one hand, while locating the “shining” also in the eyes of those who are emerging from the cave: shining has a source both in the heavens and in the self, but Heidegger’s emphasis is on the former.
concerned less with the epistemological criteria for truth than with the ontological conditions for truth.”

By making this shift in Plato, it is fair to say that Heidegger literally “missed” what was right in front of him. Here Dostal reminds us that, while Heidegger’s critique of Plato remains undeveloped in the Marburg lectures, in Metaphysical Principles he does list six “aspects of the transcendence of the Good”: 1) The Good is hard to see; 2) The Good is the cause or ground of the just and beautiful and their fellowship (koinonia); 3) The Good gives light so that things can be seen; 4) The Good grounds the inner possibility of truth and reason; 5) The Good is the principle (arche) of all; 6) The Good is above beings and their Being. Having noted these, Dostal suggests that Heidegger’s reduction of the good to an epistemological criterion of truth follows from his almost exclusive focus, in his PDT interpretation, on the third “aspect”: “The Good gives light so that things can be seen.” However, says Dostal, aspect 4-6 are just as pertinent to an adequate interpretation of the cave, and may have led Heidegger to give the much-needed emphasis to Plato’s concern over the ontological conditions for the possibility of truth. This, as we have seen, is precisely what Heidegger himself was after.

**Forgetting the Good/Idea Difference**

Instead of developing this potential point of contact, Heidegger’s “epistemologizing” of Plato requires a collapse of the distinction between the good itself and ideas. This is only made possible, in PDT, by the “intentional ignorance” of the επεξείνα of the good that so occupied Heidegger’s late Marburg lectures. Rather than treating the good as the ontological condition for the possibility of ontic truth, the good as “highest of ideas” is eminently visible and knowable, and is for Heidegger the benchmark of epistemic correctness and certainty. Indeed, as Rosen has

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30 Dostal, 63.
31 Ibid., 72-73.
32 Ibid., 66.
noted, Heidegger misses the fact that for Plato, there is a difference between the firelight (involving dianoia) and the sunlight itself (involving noesis). For Rosen, this difference amounts to the “Platonic analogue to the ‘ontological difference’ drawn by Heidegger between Sein and Seinden. Heidegger’s ‘lighting-process of Being’ ...is in Plato the light of the good, and the things in the sunlight are the Ideas, accessible to noesis or instantaneous vision.”

What is not subject to instantaneous vision, then, is the good itself. To be sure, there are conflicting messages in Plato on the possibility of seeing or knowing the good as such. In direct tension with some of his other characterizations of the good, Plato does stress the “visibility” of the good and the possibility of the philosopher coming to know it. Indeed, the cave allegory alone has over 20 occurrences of the words “seeing” or “eyes.” But it is precisely the difficulty of seeing the good or even talking about it, that brings Socrates to introduce sun as its offspring into the dialogue (508c) in order to discuss “the line” and “the cave.” Even the pre-eminent teacher of the good doesn’t adequately “know” what the good is, even though it is necessary to know it. And while Socrates calls the good “an object of knowledge,” it is something “other” than knowledge or truth; it is the ontological condition for their possibility. Indeed, these things owe not only their “being known” to the good, but also their very being as such, since the good itself is ἐπέκεινα τῆς οὐσίας.

So, we do have two impulses in Plato. However, the two together install a critical epistemic and ontological interval between the ideas and their ἔδος [visible form], and the good which is somehow in excess of all ideas in their being. By contrast, Heidegger himself stresses the fact that the good not only provides the light in which all else can be seen and known, but is itself

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33 Rosen, “Heidegger’s Interpretation of Plato,” 52.
34 Comments on the visibility of the good can be found at Rep. 517b, 517c4-5, 517c1, 518c, 526d, and 532c. Though I’ve consulted the primary text for these, I owe the list itself to Peperzak, 285 nt. 29.
35 Cf. Rep. 505a-c, 506a, and 517b.
36 Rep. 508e.
37 Rep. 509b.
“that which most shines” (or is “the most appearing” of beings. Here (Rep. 518c9), Heidegger has avoided the more straightforward translation of τοῦ ὀντός τὸ θανότατον as “the brightest of beings” or “the brightest thing,” in order to emphasize the visibility (and hence knowability) of the good as ἴδεα. This is due in part to the false inference Heidegger makes when he supposes that, because the good “brings about the shining of everything that can shine,” it “therefore is itself that which properly appears by shining.” As the highest ἴδεα in the genus of ideas, the essence of the good “consists in its ability to shine and be seen [Schein- und Sichtsamkeit].

Appealing to Gadamer (ironically), Dostal makes the important point that, contrary to Heidegger’s treatment in PDT, Plato never calls the good ἔιδος (visible form), as he does the other ideas. Likewise, Peperzak points out that for Plato, all ideas are beings, but as ἐπέκεινα τῆς οὐσίας, the good is ultimately not reducible to the genus of the other ideas. Hence, against Heidegger’s translation of ἔιδος as Aussehen (“appearance”) and its univocal application to the good, Dostal reiterates that “the Good presents no appearance. It is beyond the forms. It is their very ground.” Arguably, echoes of Heidegger’s earlier treatment of the good as both ἐπέκεινα τῆς οὐσίας and the Umwillen of Dasein are discernible here. Peperzak’s insightful comments offer a good conclusion to our discussion:

The good, as outlined by Plato, is neither an idea nor a being, a truth, an invisible “light,” or a spiritual source. It is not a virtue, a god, or cosmos either, for all these and other beings presuppose a “light” that should come from “something” that cannot be thought as a—be it “metaphorical”—“sun,” a highest being, an open space, a Lichtung, or a blinding “light”…. Was it Plato’s “failure,” was it the fate of metaphysics that, at the very moment of a great disclosure, it hid the nonessential and nonideal good which it began to perceive, behind the traits of an idea, a being, a truth, a telos, a “source” of “light”? We cannot answer this question if we do not first take into account the full arsenal of strategies by which Plato tried to prevent himself and his readers from thinking that the good…could be treated as a theme or topic of a thetic and

38 PDT, 228, emphasis mine.
39 PDT, 225.
41 Ibid., 69. Peperzak adds that if Heidegger had limited himself to the text of the cave story, he couldn’t have even mentioned Plato’s “doctrine of ideas”, since in the actual text neither idea nor eidos appears more than once (514a1-517a7). Peperzak goes on to give a sustained argument that, for Plato, the “idea of the good” is merely equivalent to “the good.” Peperzak, 272.
systematic inquiry.\textsuperscript{42}

\textbf{A “Top-Down” Ontological-Ontic Movement}

Thus far we have suggested that Heidegger reduces Plato’s ontological concerns to epistemic ones, and “forgets” (since Marburg) the difference between the good and ideas. We had stated above that this leads Heidegger to miss two significant opportunities for dealing with the ontological-ontic problem. The first thing he misses, we suggested, is the way that the επέκεινα of the good provides a compelling model for making the ontological-ontic movement possible from the “top down,” which we will now address.

In \textit{PDT}, Heidegger had stated that “The ιδέα is not some foreground that ἄληθεία puts out front to present things; rather, the ιδέα is the ground that makes ἄληθεία possible.”\textsuperscript{43} This is in outline the ontological-ontic problematic: how is it that an understanding of Being is possible, with truth as unconcealment at the ground and the idea as its presenting foreground? While the use of “top-down” is clearly misleading, but helpful here as long we remember that here we are looking for unfound (by Heidegger) resources in Plato for a “transcendence” of Dasein that makes truthful adequation or projection possible.\textsuperscript{44}

The crux of what Heidegger misses is that, if the critical ontological interval between the good and visible ideas is retained, then it is entirely consonant with Heidegger’s concerns to speak of the truth of Being in “excess” of beings as “unhiddenness.” But what is important to note is that this does not, in Plato, necessarily consign us to the pole of “transcendence” in the transcendent/transcendental dilemma Heidegger wants to avoid, involving in his view a shift in the “place” of truth. The “excess” or “beyond” of beings in their appearance must, for Heidegger,

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{42} Peperzak, 282-283.
  \item \textsuperscript{43} \textit{PDT}, 233-234.
  \item \textsuperscript{44} The “bottom up” approach, by contrast, will be looking at the resources in Plato for a philosophical mode of life that can enter into what Heidegger later will call \textit{Ereignis}, or “ap-propration” of Being’s givenness in its unfolding.
\end{itemize}
be a kind of this-worldly Dasein-transcendence which unfolds in the event of Being and Time; an unhiddenness that retains the bond to the hidden and thus remains “in excess of the world it clears.”

Turning to Plato, we have seen that the good provides the conditions for the possibility of truth and knowledge about beings, while remaining in excess of these things. Indeed, if a “two-worlds” Platonism is rejected, then what emerges from Plato himself is the suggestion that the ἰδέα or εἰδός is something not available to the senses, but is only discovered by and extra-sensual perception that itself passes through the senses. At bottom, the ἰδέα in Plato names that which in being, though not subject to sense perception, is more genuine than that which appears to sense perception, insofar as the senses still need to be purified by “thinking” (νοεῖν). “The ἰδέα is thus ‘the truth’ of such a being,” its “authentic” or “genuine” inner secret opened up by a φανώμενον that refuses the reduction of a being to its sensible appearance. Following this line of interpretation, Peperzak rightly goes on to suggest that

The idea is neither a thing above the phenomena nor simply given to our spontaneity. It is not a look, but rather an astonishing secret, which urges us to discover and admire its genuine but hidden presence. No aesthetic phenomenon is ever separated from the ideality of its idea; if it were, it would not even be perceptible at all…. On the other hand, no idea is separated from its [sensible] appearances since it would—just as pure light—not be perceptible, lacking things to be reflected upon.

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45 Migel de Beistegui, *Thinking With Heidegger: Displacements* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2003), 7. Polt’s comments here are also helpful. He suggests that like Being, the world itself can be called “transcendent” (*BT* 69c), but Heidegger also speaks of Dasein’s transcendence. “Dasein reaches beyond itself to a world that lies beyond it.” But Dasein isn’t something separable from the world since it is being-in-the-world. For Heidegger, says Polt, “world” isn’t a collection of total objects, but rather “a totality of meanings and purposes within which Dasein can act and can encounter other beings. Having a world is indispensable to existing as Dasein” (Polt, 42).

46 Peperzak, 272. Critical to this contention is that, for Plato’s ἰδέα and εἰδός, “reference to seeing is not essential to their understanding.” Throughout the Republic, Plato uses synonyms to refer to the ἰδέα of a thing: “that which each thing is,” “that which truly is,” “that which beingly is,” “the true,” or simply “the being.” Throughout, the emphasis is not on sensual, but intelligible visibility that constitutes the “truth” of a given being.

47 Peperzak, 272.
On this “one-world” reading of Plato, the idea or truth about a being is indeed subject to “genuine” or “correct” adequation, but one that is always tied to excess and so to hiddenness. Here, the shining of the truth of beings is not a property they possess, but rather is “granted as a splendor which generates θαυμασία.”\(^{48}\) Indeed, even after the idea of a being is discovered in its granted unhiden splendor, the good itself remains in excess of both ideas and the world it clears; it is a hidden surplus surrounding the circumference of the clearing. Heidegger was right to suggest that the power of the cave allegory lies in its “light” imagery, but misses the gift therein.

What this kind of reading enables, it seems, is a completion of what Heidegger prematurely left off in his rejection of Plato’s ἐπέκεινα. The ontological excess of the good as beyond being grants the splendor of the genuine truth of beings. Undeniably, there are of course impulses to transcendence in Plato’s ἐπέκεινα are incompatible with Heidegger’s “beyond” of Being as Dasein’s this-worldly horizon of transcendence. However, our point is merely that truth has not here come under the yoke of the idea, and that Heidegger missed in Plato a viable solution to the ontological-ontic gap. Commenting on PDT, Sallis suggests one such solution that Heidegger missed:

> Truth as ἀληθεία would make possible truth as correctness by setting forth a look, a presenting foreground, to which apprehension could correspond and so be correct. Yet the look would be bound to concealment, and consequently the apprehension would be bound always to take account of the bond to concealment.... Taking account of the bond of concealment would...consist in installing all learning within the horizon of a certain awareness of ignorance... But then, the very sense of truth as correctness would—as often in the dialogues—be exposed to slippage...would look other than the concept of truth that can, all too easily, be traced in the history of metaphysics.\(^{49}\)

### A “Bottom-Up” Ontological-Ontic Movement

If Heidegger missed the way in which the ἐπέκεινα of the good provides a compelling

\(^{48}\) Ibid., 272 (emphasis mine).

\(^{49}\) Sallis, 187.
model for making the ontological-ontic movement possible from the “top down,” he also missed, in Plato, a “bottom up” approach. The focus of this point is on Socrates, and the zetetic mode of philosophical inquiry in which he engages, and to which we’ve already alluded. This zetetic mode in fact receives its contours from the ἑπεξειῶνα of the good.

As Fried has argued, in the Republic there are two different types of philosophers, and two different modes of philosophizing. There is Socrates the zetetic skeptic, and there are the echonic (echein, to have, hold) philosophers who are the guardians of the ideal polis, and characterized as knowers par-excellence.50 “This version of the philosopher,” says Fried, “approximates the humanistic model that Heidegger takes to task,” but Socrates himself doesn’t quite fit the bill. He does not, notes Fried, “present himself” as an echonic philosopher, “which is to say that Plato does not represent him as the type of philosopher that the internal argument of the Republic establishes as paradigmatic.”51 The irony is that the high and exalted claims made about philosophers in the Republic exclude Socrates himself. “But if Socrates isn’t a philosopher,” asks Fried, “who can hope to be?”52

In our view, Fried is right to suggest that “This distinction at work in the Republic between zetetic and echonic philosophy affects the whole metaphysical-ontological-political-ethical-pedagogical teaching of Books 6 and 7,” including the divided line, cave, and sun as image of the Good.53 Taking Socrates as an echonic philosopher, Heidegger misses an entirely different way to reading the cave allegory and its paideic impulse. Extending Fried’s insights, we will recall here that the entire allegory itself arrives in the text of the Republic as a result of Socrates’ ignorance. He can’t satisfy Glaucon’s request that he “discuss the good as [he] discussed justice” because, he says, “I won’t be up to it” and “I’ll disgrace myself and look ridiculous by trying” to

50 Fried, 164.
51 Ibid.
52 Ibid.
53 Ibid.
speak about “the good itself.”

Evidently then, his *zetetic* mode of philosophy is directly linked to the *ἐπεκεινα* of the good, and so the best Socrates can do is talk about the sun as the “offspring” of the good. What is more, even after the allegory, he qualifies his interpretation of the whole by saying “Whether it’s true or not, only the god knows. But this is how I see it.”

Socrates’ further comment, that in realm of things knowable, the good is “scarcely to be seen” (517b) suggests, for Sallis, that at the pinnacle of unconcealment Plato “installs” an “integral bond to concealment” (188). This is what Sallis calls “Plato’s other beginning” with a “countermovement back into concealment” (187), which always problematizes the will to mastery and absolute knowledge that characterizes the *echonic* impulse.

What did Heidegger miss here? This mode of philosophy might have suggested to Heidegger a viable way of Dasein’s understanding of Being, a questioning that never reduces to the mastery of the gaze, while preserving the ontological-ontic relation from the “bottom up.” Socrates does indeed engage in dialectical forays into truthful adequation, but he also operates with an attunement to the excess of beings in their appearance that always keeps the *ἐπεκεινα* in the hidden background; itself the ontological condition for the possibility of ontic propositions and projections about beings in their presence, as well as that which ties all such adequation to a

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54 *Rep.* 506d.
55 *Rep.* 517b.
56 Of course Heidegger also commented on this text in *PDT*, but the marginal note in his own copy of his text he ironically covers over the move toward concealment here: “Άγαθον of course ἰδεα, but no longer coming to presence [nicht mehr anwesend], therefore scarcely visible.” *GA*9, 227; Sallis, 188.
57 At the close of the discussion on “the line,” Glaucon is eager to ascend through dialectic to arrive at “a haven from the road” and “an end of the journeying” (*Rep.* 532e). Socrates responds by telling him that he would “no longer be seeing an image…but the truth itself, at least as it look to me” (*Rep.* 533a). Commenting on the last phrase of Socrates, Sallis offers these rather Heideggerian insights: “Socrates is saying that even at the end of the road one will see only an image of the true, not the true in its undivided, full luminosity… there is no end of the road, no haven where one would finally have the highest idea present without reserve before one’s vision. Always there would remain images, difference—that is, the bond to concealment.” Sallis, 189.
58 Somewhat in alignment with Heidegger, Sallis assumes throughout and concludes his article by saying that this *lethe*, this concealment, remains unsaid in Plato, but inscribed nonetheless in his text. Here he, like Heidegger, is simply wrong. Plato does indeed say it, precisely through his installation of the *ἐπεκεινα*, as well as through the zetetic impulse that he infuses throughout the Republic.
fundamental hiddenness.

V. Conclusion

Under the pressure of philological and other critiques of his treatment of \( \alpha \lambda \eta \beta \varepsilon \iota \alpha \) as “unconcealment,” Heidegger eventually abandoned the connection between “truth” and “unconcealment” altogether. For the late Heidegger, \( \alpha \lambda \eta \beta \varepsilon \iota \alpha \) has always simply meant “correct” (richtig). What is more, he recanted his treatment of a “shift” in the essence of truth in Plato. In *The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking* (1964), he says that “…the assertion about an essential transformation of truth, that is, from unconcealment to correctness, is…untenable.” In other words, truth as “unconcealment” has always already in the whole history of philosophy—even in Parmenides and Heraclitus—been identified with a correctness of representation. In contrast to both *Being and Time* and *PDT* where representation/adequation and the more original essence of truth were seen as closely related meanings of “truth”, Heidegger “now clearly distinguishes ‘truth’ (Wahrheit)” from the clearing (Lichtung) as the enigma of unconcealment that precedes and preserves, as well as grants both presence and absence.”

Failing to enact the ontological-ontic return, Heidegger gives up on “truth,” and turns toward the bare concept of “unhiddenness,” and later, the “clearing” (Lichtung). For the late Heidegger, the task of philosophy, then, is to “think the clearing,” that “opening that clarifies things; the unfolding that lets them appear…letting light shine on them and show them as this or that.” Whereas Plato does have a place for correct assertions within and in the light of both the “excess” and hiddenness of the good, for Heidegger, once we’ve emerged (or are pulled) into the “clearing” of Dasein’s “meaningfulness,” there is sense making, an “originary attunement to

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59 Peperzak, 267.
60 Ibid., 266.
being,” but only a shadowy semblance of a bridge between the ontological and a foregrounding ontic. Sheehan summarizes this well, under what he sees as that which constitutes the first moment of Ereignis:

As drawn out and opened up by its own imperfection, Dasein opens up the mediating realm that frees things from unintelligibility, the clearing that clarifies them, the unifying-of-difference that draws them into tentative aggregates of sense.

The reason why the questioning of what Heidegger might have “missed” matters at all, is reducible to the possibility of a false appearance or semblance. After all, even the prisoners in the cave are given, according to Heidegger, an “unconcealment” of their own in the images paraded on the wall. On the ontological-ontic problem, Tugendhat presses the point. He notes that in all Heidegger’s shorter writing on truth,…

…the thesis is advanced that, in order that the assertion be in accord with the entity, the entity in question must show itself, must be uncovered. Thus the truth of the assertion as adequation is grounded in the truth of the entity as unconcealment…. But one simply cannot see that towards which the true assertion is directed as merely consisting in the self-showing, in un-concealment as such. For the false assertion is also directed towards something that shows itself. Even semblance (Schein) is an unconcealing.

This raises the question of the normative character of “unconcealing” as such, which Heidegger himself seems to have left off in order to think the sheer givenness or gift of this clearing (“es

63 Sheehan, 206.
64 In the cave, says Heidegger, there are “different kinds of ἀλήθεια normative at each level”; each stage has its own “truth” as “unhiddenness” [219]. Interestingly, the degree of the prisoners freedom is said to be the necessary condition for proper assessment of the adequacy of each normative showing. “So even those who have been freed from their chains still assess wrongly in what they posit as true, because they lack the prior condition for ‘assessing,’ namely, freedom” [PDT, 220]. The problem here is obvious: If the “truth” of what is unveiled depends on the freedom of the person viewing it, then the normative status of unhiddennes as such has come under the “yoke” of something else; precisely what Heidegger is trying to oppose.
66 Tugendhat, 233.
gibt Sein; es gibt Zeit”) and the meaning arising from that. In our analysis of Plato, however, we have suggested that the latter does indeed offer resources for addressing the normative problem, while also exhibiting attention to the gift of Being. If his analysis of Plato had been more attentive, might Heidegger have taken a different path?

Beistegui, working on “thinking” in the late Heidegger, offers some helpful comments to this effect: “In excess of the thing in its actuality, there is the gift at the origin of this actuality, the virtual horizon whence it unfolds” (7). Beistegui mentions Heidegger’s reflection on “There is/it gives being” (es gibt Sein), “there is/it gives time” (es gibt Zeit), saying that this constitutes Heidegger’s attempt to “desubstantialize and desubjectivize the operation whereby ‘there is,’ in an effort to wrest the co-originary event of time and being from the metaphysics of substance, and return it to its purely eventful nature” (8).
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