

Heidegger's *Sophist* and the Logic of Presence

(Chapter 4 of Draft MS: *The Logic of Being: Heidegger, Truth, and Time*)

In the *Theaetetus* and the *Sophist*, Plato is centrally concerned to respond to an argument given by Parmenides according to which the discussion of non-beings or the utterance of falsehoods is impossible. Parmenides argues that it is not possible to speak, think, or know of what is not (me on), or of what is not true, since to do so would be to speak, think, or know of nothing, and to do so is not to speak, think, or know at all.¹ The argument motivates the distinction Parmenides draws between possible ways of inquiry or understanding. In fragment 2², the two ways that are thus distinguished are the one of being (or “that is”) which “attends upon truth”, and the other, of non-being (“that is not”), which is called “indiscernible” and is further said to be unknowable and incapable of being indicated.³ The two paths are mutually exclusive, and the goddess stresses the injunction to avoid the second one. This leads to her suggestion, in Fragment 6, of a way typically followed by mortals and identified with confusion and error, and against which the goddess also enjoins her audience; on this way of confusion, “to be and not to be” are believed to be “both the same and not the same.”⁴ Both injunctions, the injunction to avoid the confused way of mortals as well as the wholly indiscernible way of non-being, formulate sharply the basic demand for a decision between being and non-being, or between truth and falsehood, suggesting that only incoherence can result from a failure to make the decision. Parmenides’ argument can thus be read as anticipating or actually inaugurating the logical law of non-contradiction, which first gains explicit formulation by Aristotle, and according to which it is impossible (in some sense) to affirm both A and not-A. At the same time, in formulating the key distinction as that between truth and being on one hand, and falsehood or illusion on the other, Parmenides further suggests that clarity on the difference is requisite for attaining any coherent understanding of the nature of being or of what is as opposed to what falsely appears or merely seems to be, including the characteristics of unity and timelessness which Parmenides’ poem goes on to attribute to being in itself.

¹ I follow the formulation of T.H. Irwin in “Plato: The Intellectual Background.”

² KR, 291; Heid. calls it “fragment 4”

³ Kirk and Raven translate: “The one, that [it] is and that it is impossible for [it] not to be, is the path of Persuasion (for she attends upon Truth); the other, that [it] is not and that it is needful that [it] not be, that I declare to you is an altogether indiscernible track...” They supply the parenthetical “[it]”, in each case, as a grammatical subject for Parmenides’ verb *estin*; this is based on their supposition that Parmenides is applying the verb to “any subject of enquiry whatsoever...” (p. 245); they thus take Parmenides to be holding, with respect to any such subject, that it is necessary either to assume that it exists or does not. However, as we shall see, this interpretation prejudices ontological issues about the meaning of *estin* in Parmenides that are better left open.

⁴ Three ways or two?

The solution given by Plato's Eleatic Visitor, in the *Sophist*, to the problem posed by Parmenides' argument against the possibility of speaking the false turns on the specific structure of an assertoric or predicative sentence (or logos). According to this solution, the possibility for a predicative sentence to be false depends on the fact that the act of asserting does not have the simple relational structure of actions described by simple transitive verbs (such as "to touch" or "to hold"); rather, sentences have the minimal structure of saying something *about* something, and it is thus possible to say something that "is not" about something that is. As we have seen (chapter 1 above), Plato's solution thus depends on his identification of what he sees as the irreducibly synthetic structure of predication as making possible a logical *koinonia*, or combination, of name and verb. The possibility of this logical *koinonia* in the sentence, which in a certain way mixes being and non-being in the case of falsehood, is itself a result of the possible mixing or *koinonia* of the great types; non-being in general can appear in that difference mixes with being to produce something that is not-being in a certain way. On the picture suggested by the Visitor, negative claims or sentences say *that* something is *not* with respect to a particular individual, and to utter a false logos is to say "what is not" *about* something that is. This is itself possible only in that it is possible to say *of* something (say Theaetetus) something that is not "about him" or something that is different from everything that is "about him." At the basis of the possibility of falsehood is thus the twofold logical structure of predication, on one hand, and the possible mixing of the great types, on the other; and Plato's Visitor sees the twofold structure as the ultimate possibility of the actual phenomenal appearance of non-being in the person of the Sophist. The correspondence between the two levels is itself apparently understood by Plato, in a somewhat problematic way, in terms of a mimetic relationship of similarity or copying between forms and their instantiations, which allows for the distinction between good or accurate copies (*icons*) and the "false copies" or *phantasmata* that instances of illusion amount to, on the Visitor's suggestion.

As we have seen in chapter 1, in the massive 1924-25 lecture course on the *Sophist*, Heidegger interprets this response to Parmenides as allowing Plato to discover the specific structure of intentionality as well as an original mode of the phenomenal appearance of nothingness that actually underlies, according to Heidegger, the logical possibility of negation. Heidegger argues that Plato, in discovering the specific possibility of a phenomenalization of nothingness at the basis of the logical operation of negation, has made a decisive advance over Parmenides himself in unfolding the underlying meaning or sense of being. However, since both philosophers interpret being itself primarily ontically, or in terms of beings, neither one can see the original structure of ontological relationship between being and the nothing which, Heidegger suggests elsewhere, is itself at the root of any possible explicit relationship of Dasein to beings as a whole. In particular, because both Plato and Parmenides presuppose the structure of the assertoric logos as the basic determinant of the being of beings, and therein adopt an interpretation of the logos as itself an extant being, they fail to see the more basic grounding of the possibilities of falsehood and illusion in the *ontological* structure of truth as disclosure.

In developing the interpretation in 1924-25, Heidegger follows Plato in understanding the specifically *iterative* structure of the logos as giving rise to the dangerous possibility of a logos being "cut off" from its original context and coming to misrepresent or mislead with respect to the "matters themselves" originally indicated by it. This conception exposes Heidegger's position in 1924-25, as I shall argue, to

criticism on the basis of a position on which the structural iterability or possibility of repetition characteristic of language is grounded in an originary and irreducible phenomenon of difference and differentiation. This kind of picture is developed explicitly, in different but analogous ways, by Derrida and Deleuze; affirming it in the context of Plato's argument in the *Sophist* means affirming, as Deleuze says, the "rights" of the simulacra over the faithful copy and, as Derrida points out, renders the distinction between philosophy and sophistry that Plato pursues in terms of this primarily mimetic distinction itself, in a certain sense, undecidable. But although Heidegger does not yet see it in 1924-25, there is in fact a motivating basis for the conception of originary difference that Deleuze and Derrida expound in Heidegger's own development of the ontological problematic; in particular, this basis is to be found in the radicalization of the implications of the ontological difference that Heidegger undertakes in the middle 1930s and that underlies the famous *Kehre* or "turn" in his thought. Through this radicalization, as we shall see, Heidegger replaces the metaphysical "guiding question" of the Being of beings with the historical "grounding question" of the truth of Being, and prepares for a transition from the metaphysical thought of beings as a whole to a thoughtful questioning of Being itself, independently of the reference to beings that is determinative for metaphysics in each of its stages. This allows Heidegger to see, as he had not in 1924-25, the possibility of an essentially historical conception of the metaphysical tradition as determined by historically determined but variable interpretations of the being of beings, and to contemplate the possible closure of the metaphysical epoch of "being as presence" as a whole in relation to the extra-metaphysical happening of Being itself, or *Ereignis*. (critique of *omiosis* in Plato) In particular, if the history of metaphysics is itself thinkable as a series of successive conceptual and practical fixations of the ontic totality of beings, then the metaformal dynamics of totality and limit in relation to those of negation and nothingness themselves point the way, as I shall argue, to an ontological clarification of the structure of negation, falsehood, and illusion, beyond the metaphysical determination of being as presence.

To begin to see how a radicalization of the ontological difference itself can begin to point the way to an extra-metaphysical determination of truth and illusion, it is helpful first to note a significant and structurally determinative ambiguity in Parmenides' exposition. This ambiguity is present both in his basic argument against the possibility of non-being and in the description of the two (or three) ways that is motivated by it. It is the ambiguity between *enjoinder* and *description as impossible*; in particular, the way of non-being is described by the goddess as *both* "indiscernible" *and* not to be taken, on pain of the negative consequences of pursuing it; the third way (if it is not simply a redescription of the first) which confuses being and non-being is itself described as confused, and leading to disorientation and errancy. The root of this overdetermined structure, what is said to be impossible (namely the thought or description of non-being) is simultaneously, nevertheless, prohibited or enjoined against, is to be found in the same problematic structure of reference that actually underlies the possibility of Parmenides' basic argument *as well as* (from a certain perspective) undermines its conclusion. It is that, in refuting the possibility of referring to any X, it is actually necessary first to make reference to X; Parmenides actually does, in this case, refer repeatedly to non-being in general as *me eon*. (Plato notes this).

Parmenides' procedure in pursuing the argument is motivated (though not rendered ultimately coherent) by his appeal to what may be called a *criteriological picture* of the difference between being

and non-being. On this picture, the range of existing beings constitutes a delimited whole, with respect to which non-beings are located outside. The picture can be seen, from an ontological perspective, as a basic consequence of Parmenides' understanding of being as identical to the ontic totality of existing beings; but given this understanding, it is also necessary, in order to argue for the actual impossibility of reference to non-being, to conceive of nonexistent beings as possible objects of description or indication beyond the boundary and thus as constituting, in some sense, possible objects of reference after all. It is also not possible to avoid the paradox inherent in this structure of delimitation by holding that the imperative to avoid non-being is simply the imperative, formulated from within, not to transgress the boundary envisaged as surrounding beings and inclosing them as a whole; for the possibility of describing any actual thought or assertion as one that transgresses the boundary by thinking or asserting what is not must itself presuppose a specific determination of what is (apparently) referred to as not being.

The criteriological picture is modified, but not essentially altered, if the line is seen as one between truths and falsehoods, or obtaining and non-obtaining states of affairs, rather than as one between beings and non-beings. In particular, if formulated in this way, the line becomes the one between true and false sentences (or, alternatively, between what is and what is not "the case") and Parmenides' argument becomes one against the possibility of asserting (or actually, if we take it in its full force, even determinately conceiving of) falsehoods or "non-obtaining" states of affairs.⁵ The arguments that Parmenides gives, as well as the distinction between the two ways, can be understood either way; for Parmenides' own formulation of the distinction is ambiguous between "what is" in the sense of being and "what is" in the sense of truth (as the Greek of his time itself is ambiguous). It is in the second form that Plato mainly reacts to it, taking Parmenides to have argued specifically against the possibility of uttering falsehoods, and thus as posing a *prima facie* problem for the identification and definition of the sophist as a purveyor of falsehoods. Even when the argument is understood in the second way, however, the paradoxical structure of overdetermination remains. For the possibility of prohibiting or enjoining the assertion of falsehoods presupposes the availability of these falsehoods *as* possible objects of assertion, and although this does not demand that they be true, it presupposes that they exist, subsist, or are "structurally possible" in some way.

The picture, in this second form, underlies the theory of the logical form of language and the world in Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*. Here, "The world is all that is the case;" furthermore, the totality of facts, or subsisting [*Bestehen*] states of affairs, determines what is the case as distinct from what is not. (1.12). Thoughts and meaningful sentences are understood as determinately true or false in that they structurally picture actually subsisting states of affairs or only possible ones. This raises the question of the mode of existence of non-subsisting, merely possible states of affairs; and here Wittgenstein develops an atomist picture of the basis of both types of states of affairs as depending upon the inherent structural possibilities of logical form characteristic of both language and the world. In particular, states of affairs are understood as articulate combinations of objects which must, in order for the sense of sentences to be determinate in every case, exist necessarily and at all times. The possibility

⁵LW: TLP.

of drawing the univocal and determinate line between true and false sentences which delimits the world is thus preconditioned by the broader structure provided by the necessarily existent objects, and the totality of true *and* false meaningful sentences, so understood, determines the boundary of sense or of what *can* be said. As I have argued elsewhere, the typical overdetermination between enjoiner and impossibility that already characterizes Parmenides' argument is replicated in the structure of the *Tractatus*' last remark, which enjoins the reader to silence "whereof" we *cannot* speak. Its basis is the structural limit-paradox as a result of which, as Wittgenstein recognizes, the apparently substantive remarks of the *Tractatus*, as articulating the possibility of sense by apparently describing the *whole* of logical form, must themselves ultimately be "kicked away" as nonsense.

Putting things this way allows us to see that Plato does not overcome the paradoxical structure of the criteriological picture, but just modifies it. In particular, Plato's way of drawing the distinction between the true and the false *logos* allows for the false *logos* to occur only on the basis of a "mixing" of difference with being that is mirrored or instantiated at the level of sensible beings by the relationship of an actual individual to a form that is *not* "instantiated" in his case. The presumed mimetic relationship between the relations of forms and the relations of individuals to forms (figured in the problematic "relationship" of *methexis*), thus immediately raises questions, in the new "logical" context of the *Sophist*, about the peculiar force of logical relations and their ability to structure both language, on one hand, and actual states of affairs, on the other. In particular, Plato's dependence on the specific structure of the *logos* to solve the problem of falsehood requires an overarching formal or grammatical order which must pre-exist and condition the possibility of meaningful utterance and the possibility of its bearing (truly or falsely) on the world. With the specific conception of non-being as capable of appearing in that difference "mixes" with other great types, the Visitor substantializes the basis of the difference between being and non-being and begins to consolidate the criteriological or topological picture according to which linguistic predicates pick out determinate ranges of beings. The picture paves the way for the Aristotelian ordering of beings into species and genera, on which everything has a determinate place within the given categorical ordering and "being" becomes the highest and most general (and accordingly most indeterminate) genus or type. It remains the case, in Aristotle's picture, that the deepest and most binding determination of the possibilities of logical and ontological relations, that of the necessity to avoid contradiction (formulated as the "law of non-contradiction") continues to operate in overdetermined fashion as the enjoiner against what is simultaneously said to be impossible.

As I shall argue here, Heidegger's conjoint radicalization of the ontological difference and of the question of being in the "turn" of the 1930s yields a position from which we can understand ontologically the basis of the overdetermination, and the underlying limit-contradiction, characteristic of every criteriological picture of this sort. For Heidegger's radicalized historical understanding of the ontological difference in the 1930s gives shape to the proposal that all metaphysical pictures of language, truth, negation and non-being result from the attempt to conceive "beings as such and *as a whole*" which is, on Heidegger's reading, characteristic of metaphysics as such. Here, as I shall argue, the attempt to take into consideration "beings as a whole" is not simply to be blocked or refused at the outset; rather, the inherent formal structures of overdetermination and paradox that emerge

structurally *from* this attempt point toward the underlying “relationship” between beings and being that is at the basis of the coherence of any such attempt but is also necessarily forgotten within them. To comprehend, in relation to the ontological difference that itself finds expression in them, the paradoxical limit-structures that emerge from the metaphysical attempt to grasp beings as a whole in criteriological fashion is thus to begin to trace the closure of the metaphysical epoch of “being as presence” itself. In particular, if philosophers since Parmenides have necessarily thought the line between being and non-being as an ontic one, separating beings from beings, and hence have been led to presuppose a constitutive reference to totality that they cannot themselves positively ground, Heidegger’s essential thought here is that both the totality and its necessary undermining can only be thought, ultimately, on the ground of difference.

It is from this perspective of originary difference that, as I shall argue here, we must understand the structure and “force” of negation, nothingness, and (ultimately) the law of non-contradiction itself. In particular, tracing the paradoxical structures of limit-contradiction that emerge as the necessary expression of the ontological difference *within* the metaphysical conception of the ontic totality allows us to see how the “normative” force of the law, as well as the logical structure of negation itself, are structurally conditioned by that which is necessarily presupposed in any phenomenalization of beings as a whole but also necessarily escapes it. On this picture, in other words, originary difference is at the root of *all* phenomenalization, both illusory and veridical, and there is no distinction to be drawn between “true” and “false” seemings with respect to their representational or mimetic correspondence or non-correspondence with an original. Nevertheless, as I shall argue, understanding the ontological basis of the force of negation allows us nevertheless to maintain a distinction, on the level of presentation, between truth and falsity. The result is that it is possible to consider the formal-ontological basis of the interrelated logical phenomena of negation, falsehood, and illusion from the position of a pure differentiation independent of representation and the successive regimes of presence that characterize metaphysics as a whole. This is to trace the paradoxical in-closure of the metaphysics of presence, or the history of being, as difference and differentiation, from that “happening” of being, “outside” metaphysics, that Heidegger calls *Ereignis*.

I

Heidegger’s lecture course in Marburg from the Winter Semester 1924-25, announced under the title “Interpretation of Platonic Dialogues (Sophist, Philebus)”, comes in the midst of his first profound, transformative and definitive encounter with Greek philosophy.⁶ During this encounter, Heidegger repeatedly expresses his basic loyalty to the phenomenological project of Husserl, but has also begun to seek to radicalize and deepen its methods and results through the hermeneutic consideration of medieval and ancient texts and sources, which Husserl himself had largely eschewed.⁷ At this time, the central focus of Heidegger’s repeated efforts to penetrate the meaning of Greek philosophy and recover

⁶ (Kisiel 1993), p. 472.

⁷ (Kisiel 1993), p. 229.

its most original guiding concepts was Aristotle; over the period from 1921 to 1928, Heidegger devoted no fewer than 10 lectures, courses and seminars to the interpretation of Aristotle's corpus, finding in it the key to such decisive issues as the nature of truth, change and motion, the meaning of perception and action, and the structure of time itself. After 1923, Heidegger's interpretations of Greek philosophy uniformly unfold along the guideline of the fundamental insight (which he appears to have reached that year), that Greek philosophy universally interprets the meaning of Being as presence, and hence privileges the (temporal) present over other dimensions of time, and understands it on the model of things "present at hand."⁸ After Heidegger accomplished it, this insight affected in a fundamental way his understanding of what is involved in phenomenological investigation itself, as well as its application to recover the deepest sources of the metaphysical tradition in the Greeks. For as he explains in the "preliminary considerations" for the 1924-25 course, the sense of phenomenology comprises *phainomenon*, or "what shows itself," as well as *legein*, what Heidegger here translates as "to speak about" [*ansprechen*].⁹ Though many sciences indeed talk about what shows itself in various ways, the specificity of phenomenology is determined, Heidegger says, by the specific "way in which it posits what shows itself and in which it pursues this."¹⁰ Here, this primary respect is the "question of the Being of these beings." (p. 8). The resource to the Greeks in the hermeneutic interpretation will thus attempt to prepare an "orientation" toward their understanding of basic concepts and toward the Greeks' interpretation of the most important objects of philosophical inquiry; this includes achieving "an orientation concerning how such peculiar objects as Being and non-being, truth and semblance, become visible at all..." (p. 7)

According to Heidegger, Plato's insight into the structure of the *logos*, as formulated especially in the *Sophist*, represents "a remarkable innovation" (p. 204) over earlier Greek inquiries into the nature of Being. In particular, in explicating the nature of the sophist in relation to that of the philosopher, the dialogue aims "to create, as it were, the milieu within which beings can show themselves in their Being." (p. 204). Although Parmenides, like Plato, sees the philosopher as ultimately defined by his capability of noetic seeing, for Parmenides "this *noein* remains wholly undetermined. He does not say whether it is the *noein* of a determinate realm of Being or of beings in general;" accordingly, "he speaks of Being only in general and in an undetermined way." With Plato, by contrast, "the ground upon which rests the question of the meaning of Being now becomes concrete." (p. 205) An exemplary sign of this greater concretion, Heidegger says, is Plato's acknowledgment of, and questioning of, the being of non-beings in the *Sophist*; this questioning forges ahead with the inquiry into the beings themselves in their "most immediate and original way of being encountered," which is just one leading aspect of "the question of the meaning of beings" or the "question of Being" itself. (p. 205) Nevertheless, despite his success in

⁸ (Kisiel 1993), p. 230, summarizing Otto Pöggeler, suggests that this crucial insight was reached in "the years 1922/23"; Heidegger himself, though much later, seems to have given the date as "1923". ((Kisiel 1993), p. 534; cf. Denkweg, 1983 Postscript, pp. 351f./285).

⁹ Heidegger, *Platon: Sophistes* (GA 19) [1925] 1992 (henceforth: *PS*), p. 8. Throughout the paper, I have generally quoted from the translation by Richard Rojcewicz and André Schuwer (Heidegger, *Plato's Sophist* [1925] 1997), except where (as indicated) I have modified the translation slightly. Page numbers are as in the original German text.

¹⁰ Transl. slightly modified.

raising this question on the basis of his interpretation of the *logos*, Plato's inquiry, like Parmenides', remains determined by the assumption that "something can be settled about beings with regard to their Being only insofar as the beings are present [*sofern das Seiende da ist*]..." (p. 205) and, more generally, by the overarching interpretation of Being as presence. This interpretation, Heidegger holds, itself brings about the Greek development of the theme of *logos* and logic culminating in Aristotle. For the Greeks draw "the basic character of Being ... from the context of *logos* itself" in that beings are understood, in a privileged sense, as *on legomenon*, beings that can become themes for *logos*. In this sense, the "irruption of *logos*" in Greek philosophy is thoroughly motivated "by the fact that on, the Being of beings itself, is primarily interpreted as presence [*Anwesenheit*], and *logos* is the primary way in which one presentifies [*vergegenwärtigt*] something, namely that which is under discussion." (p. 225)

In analyzing the dialogue, Heidegger first analyzes the person of the Visitor and the initial *diaeresis* of the sophist; the point of this opening discussion, he suggests, is simply to show how the phenomenon of the *legein* is decisive for the nature of the sophist, and that it is accordingly the structure of the *logos* on which we must focus if we are to track him down (p. 306). At the same time, since the initial *diaeresis* subordinates the whole discussion of the sophist to the question of the type of *techne* that defines his practice, this question of the structure of *logos* as pursued through the sophist will also be a question of the extent to which *logos* itself can be subordinated to a *techne*, and in particular to what Plato understood as the "technique" of speaking well, or rhetoric. (p. 307).

In the second part of the *Phaedrus* (259e1f), Socrates considers the relationship of successful speaking and writing to truth; a successful orator, in order to succeed in public communication, will "have to have in mind the truth about the subject he is going to discuss." (259e). This normative guideline of truth governs the successful production of speech about any topic; however, as Socrates admits by way of a reference to Zeno's paradoxes and contradictions, the *techne* of rhetoric itself does not prevent the rhetorician from "speaking on opposite sides" and convincing audiences of contradictions. (261d-e). This is why, for Plato as Heidegger reads him, the proper *logos* cannot be reduced to a *techne* of rhetoric, but must maintain an essential relation to the matters spoken of, including the unifying view of these matters that Plato calls the *idea* (p. 331), and must accordingly be grounded ultimately in the practice of dialectic. At the same time, however, the concluding portion of the *Phaedrus* bears witness to what Heidegger calls Plato's "skepticism with regard to *logos*," (p. 339), a skepticism that is articulated through Socrates' retelling of the myth of the Egyptian god Theuth and his invention of writing.

According to the myth, the *techne* of writing, though initially intended as an aid to memory and wisdom, will in fact "introduce forgetfulness into the soul of those who learn it"; for they will soon put all of their trust in writing, "which is external and depends on signs that belong to others, instead of trying to remember from the inside, completely on their own..." (275a). Writing is, accordingly, both potion and poison, both aid and detriment to the accessibility of the matters themselves to expression in a revealing *logos*. This is because, as Socrates goes on to explain, written words have a "strange feature" that they share with paintings and other static representations. Although such words seem at first to be "speaking as if they had some understanding," they cannot be questioned as a living speaker can, for "if

you question anything that has been said because you want to learn more, [they continue] to signify just that very same thing forever.” (275d). Moreover, “When it has once been written down, every discourse roams about everywhere, reaching indiscriminately those with understanding no less than those who have no business with it, and it doesn’t know to whom it should speak and to whom it should not.” (275e). In these respects, the *logos* as written is inherently problematic and decidedly inferior to a better *logos*, one that is “written down, with knowledge, in the soul of the listener.” (276a). This is the “living, breathing *logos* of the man who knows, of which the written one can fairly be called an image [*eidolon*].” (276a).

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

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

According to Heidegger, it is thus an inherent ontological possibility of *logos* in general, and specifically of the kind of “publicity” inherent to the written *logos*, that a kind of “free-floating” [*freischwebenden*] *logos* can arise which makes it “possible for one’s view of things to be distorted.” (p. 339). In particular, “insofar as it is free-floating, *logos* has precisely the property of disseminating presumed knowledge in a repetition that has no relation to the things spoken of.” (p. 340). This occurs, according to Plato as Heidegger reads him, when the *logos* no longer “takes its life from a relation to the matters themselves,” (p. 345), when it fails to maintain a proper relation (a correct *symmetria*) to the things themselves. (p. 348). This occurs when the *psuche* (or, as Heidegger glosses, “inner compartment”) of the speaker no longer “lies in the correct condition [*rechten Verfassung*] with regard to the world and itself.” (p. 348). In this respect, the very possibility of falsehood, error and deception is itself, Heidegger maintains, a structural feature of the *logos* that results directly from its inherent capacity to be “repeated” and “publicized” in the form of the external and derivative ‘image’ or *eidolon* of writing. In being repeated and publicized in this fashion, the *logos* stands in eminent danger of losing its relation to the original matters themselves and the “inner” compartment of the *psuche* toward their disclosure.

Thus the possibility of error and deception has its deepest root, once again, in the possibilities of comportment inherent to the life of the being defined, for the Greeks, in terms of the *logos* itself in relation to whatever is, the *zoon logon echon*, which can either achieve a proper disclosure of the matters that arises from “setting out to see them ... on one’s own” (p. 343) or, again, can cover up and obscure these matters by fixing and repeating them in the indifferent modalities of publicity, writing and idle talk.¹¹

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

¹¹ Heidegger here mentions the close etymological connection between *eidos* (“form” or, as Heidegger glosses it, “the outward look of something, i.e., that ontological determination which gives something as what it is”) and *eidolon* (or “image, imitation, or the like”). According to Heidegger, the contrast is that while both terms thus refer to the “outward look” of something [*das Aussehen von etwas*], *eidolon* refers to the “merely looks that way”; it is something that “only appears to be thus and so.” (p. 345; transl. slightly modified).

Nevertheless, there still remains the perplexity captured in Parmenides' thesis of the unsayability of non-being, and if the actual existence of the *me on* has in some sense already been demonstrated in the person of the sophist, it nevertheless remains to make this being "intelligible" by demonstrating, against Parmenides, the very possibility of speaking of what is not. This is the problem of the possibility of the *psuedos logos*, a *logos* which does not "uncover the being as it is" but rather distorts it. (p. 410). But such a *logos* will only be possible if "non-beings can be" in some sense, and Parmenides' statement as to the impossibility of the existence of what is not is defeated, or shown to be limited. Indeed, with respect to Parmenides, Plato now faces a fundamental choice. Either he may maintain "complicity with the well-established dogma of the school of Parmenides that non-beings are not" or he "can acknowledge the factual existence of the sophist and accordingly of *me on*, of the *psuedos*, and take the factual existence of deception, distortion, and misrepresentation as it is and so transform the theory of Being." (p. 411) It is in the renewed discussion of images at 240a-c that Heidegger sees the first beginnings of the "ontological" solution to this problem. The image, or *eidolon*, of course exists in a certain way – as the image that it is. Nevertheless, in a certain way it is not; in particular, it "poses" as what is not and therefore manifests non-being in a certain way. This recognition of the peculiar character of the image means, Theaetetus suggests at 240c, that in it non-being is in a certain way "woven together" with being – here, Heidegger says, "non-beings can enter into a *symploke*" with beings. This is the first suggestion of what the Visitor will ultimately offer as his solution to the "logical" problem of non-being, the suggestion of a combination or *koinonia* of types, such that the type being can, through its combination with the type difference, also enter into a certain unity with non-being. According to Heidegger (p. 431), the key to this specific *koinonia*, and hence to the whole problem of the entry of non-being into what is, is the peculiar structure of the *logos*, the addressing of something *as* something; only through this structure and with its discernment does it become possible to see that something which is not, i.e. a non-being, can nevertheless be addressed *as* something that is.

In *Difference and Repetition*, Gilles Deleuze suggests that the question of the sorting of good from bad copies in Plato can be seen as governing the central problems of the theory of forms. According to Deleuze, there is at the center of Plato's *corpus* "an obscure debate ... carried out in the depth of things, between that which submits to the action of the Idea and that which escapes this action."¹² This is not the familiar "debate" between Ideas and their copies, but rather between what Deleuze calls "good copies" (or *eikons*) and simulacra (or "images without resemblance").¹³ By contrast with the more familiar one, this is a:

...more profound and secret dualism hidden in sensible and material bodies themselves. It is a subterranean dualism between that which receives the action of the Idea and that which eludes this action. It is not the distinction between the Model [or Idea] and the copy, but rather between copies and simulacra. Pure becoming, the unlimited, is the matter of the simulacrum

¹² (Deleuze [1969] 1990), p. 15.

¹³ (Deleuze [1969] 1990), p. 257.

insofar as it eludes the action of the Idea and insofar as it contests *both* model and *copy* at once.¹⁴

In *Difference and Repetition* and the *Logic of Sense*, Deleuze draws from this problem a remarkable systematic deconstructive reading of Plato, one that in its ambition to “overturn Platonism” nevertheless finds in the Platonic text the basis for an entirely positive and affirmative retrieval of the “rights of the simulacrum” over the image or icon. Whether or not we see the official “theory of forms” as more or less completely determined, and undermined, by this problem, though, what is important in the present context is its connection to the attempt to define the sophist as the maker of false images, or what the Visitor calls phantasms, as opposed to true images, or icons. However this distinction might be made in the literal case of paintings and sculptures, where we might indeed conceivably appeal to features such as proportion and symmetry to describe one image as “more closely resembling” its original than another image of the same thing, the application of the distinction to *words* and *statements* (clearly, the actual medium of the sophist’s art) is more complicated. For where the artist’s “images” are made in words, we cannot appeal *at all* to mimetic relations, such as relations of resemblance in various respects, to make the difference between accurate and inaccurate copies. There simply *are* no such relations of resemblance or mimesis between a *legein* – a word or sentence – and its “original,” the object or state of affairs described.

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

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

The necessity to speak in words about the sophist’s peculiar art of *logos* here shows that defining his “copy-making” art in terms of mimetic copies such as sculptures and images in mirrors will not do. In particular, the Visitor explains, the Sophist will ask “what runs through all those things which you call many, but which you thought you should call by one name, copy, to cover them all, as if they were all one thing.” (240a). Here, as elsewhere in the Platonic corpus, the demand to display the “one thing” that runs through many instances – what Plato will elsewhere often specify as the idea – proceeds by way of what is manifestly and essentially a *linguistic* inquiry; the question is, quite simply, what all the instances have in common that can be called by a single *name*, in this case, the name “copy.” If we are indeed to take the sophist to be a maker of copies in some sense, it is clear that to respond to this

¹⁴ (Deleuze [1969] 1990), p. 2.

question with an explanation in terms of *mimetic* images only will not do – for these are not the sort of “copies” that the sophist makes, and it is not at all clear how to draw the analogy, if such there be, from images in painting, sculpture and the like to “images” in words. Moreover, the possibility of presenting an image of non-being, of what quite simply is not, remains obscure in either case. For it is clear that there can be no mimetic relationship between an image, which is something that is, and what simply is not.

Remarkably, the question of *logos* in the *Phaedrus*, and in particular the status of writing according to the concluding myth of Theuth, is precisely the central focus of Jacques Derrida’s classic deconstructive reading of Plato in the long article “Plato’s Pharmacy,” first published in 1968.¹⁵ Derrida discerns in Plato’s discussion of the dangers of writing a distinctive yet ambiguous logic of the *supplement* that will have, according to Derrida, in a certain sense determined Western metaphysics in its entirety. According to this ambiguous logic, writing is the supplement of speech in that it both makes up for what is specifically lacking in speech and, at the same time, is wholly external to it and ultimately unnecessary for it. In the *Phaedrus*, writing operates as a *pharmakon* to the true *logos* of speech and the accurate memory of its objects; it is both cure and poison, both technical extension and enhancement of the powers of memory and the fatal threat of their downfall through disuse and atrophy. Reading the passage in the *Phaedrus* (276a-b) wherein Socrates purports to distinguish between written language and another kind of discourse, a kind of “brother” to written speech but one of much greater legitimacy, the “living and animate” discourse of the “one who knows” which is, in a certain sense, “written in [his] soul”, Derrida identifies the profound role of this guiding and organizing distinction in the history of Western philosophy:

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

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

¹⁵ (Derrida [1968] 1981).

engenders because it is planted inside over a seed scattered wastefully outside: at the risk of *dissemination*.”¹⁶

The treatment of the written *logos* as *pharmakon* in the Phaedrus confirms the ambiguous, supplementary status of writing for Plato ultimately by making it the supplement of a “more original” and “living” writing, the private “writing in the soul” in which knowledge ultimately consists. The contrast that determines the sense of the written *logos* in Plato – and even determines, Derrida will suggest, “Platonism” as a whole – is thus the contrast between an interior, secured, and living presence of the soul to itself, and the “exterior,” insecure, public and “dead” representation of the sign. If this opposition itself presupposes and carries out a distinctive logic of the relationship of original presentation to copy and representation, this logic is inseparable, as Derrida recognizes, from the meaning of the “metaphysics of presence” itself in Plato (p. 114). Once again, it is a problem, for Plato, of distinguishing between two kinds of copy, two kinds of repetition of original presence: in this case the “good” repetition of the living memory vs. the “bad” repetition of the *simulacrum* – or fanstasm -- that writing represents. Thus, in endorsing the myth of Theuth, Socrates adopts the central opposition thereby implied, the opposition: “...between knowledge as memory and nonknowledge as remembrance, between two forms and two moments of repetition: a repetition of truth (*aletheia*) which presents and exposes the *eidōs*; and a repetition of death and oblivion (*lethe*) which veils and skews because it does not present the *eidōs* but re-presents a presentation, repeats a repetition. (p.135) The logic of this system remains irreducibly tied to *mimesis*, even as it insists upon the absolute inferiority of the copy to the original.¹⁷ This produces the ambiguous logic of the supplement, which opposes the “bad copy” of the simulacrum, the “disseminated” and externally replicated image, whose most extreme instance is the written sign, to the “good copy” of the ikon, the spoken *logos*, and the living presence of self to self in the originary disclosure of the original.

In “affirming the rights of the simulacrum” and in pointing to an alternative conception of repetition no longer governed by *mimesis*, both Deleuze and Derrida draw out the implications of a thought of *difference* as an originary or even pre-originary basis for all possible manifestation and phenomenalization. This thought is developed by Derrida, in the essay of the same name, as the thought of *différance*, which must be understood, according to Derrida, as both synchronic difference

¹⁶ (Derrida [1968] 1981), (pp. 148-49).

¹⁷ For Plato, “...just as painting and writing have faithfulness to the model as their model, the resemblance between painting and writing is precisely resemblance itself: both operations must aim above all at resembling. They are both apprehended as mimetic techniques, art being first determined as *mimesis*.” (p. 137). Nevertheless, according to Derrida, “Despite this resemblance of resemblance, writing’s case is a good deal more serious. Like any imitative art, painting and poetry are of course far away from truth (Republic X, 603b). But these two both have mitigating circumstances. Poetry imitates, but it imitates voice by means of voice. Painting, like sculpture, is silent, but so in a sense is its model... The silence of the pictorial or sculptural space is, as it were, normal. But this is no longer the case in the scriptural order, since writing gives itself as the image of speech. Writing thus more seriously denatures what it claims to imitate...It displaces its model, provides no image of it, violently wrests out of its element the animate interiority of speech. In so doing, writing estranges itself immensely from the truth of the thing itself, from the truth of speech, from the truth that is open to speech.” (p. 137)

(or “spacing”) and temporal deferral.¹⁸ *Différance* is moreover, according to Derrida, to be understood in terms of the total structural system of “language...or any system of referral in general;” in this respect it is the “weave of differences” in which any such system is “constituted” without itself “being” or existing as an entity, phenomenon, or cause.¹⁹ [also closely connected to iterability as repetition]

The thought of *différance*, Derrida argues, provides a basis on which it is possible to interrogate the “value of presence” which, as Heidegger has shown, is coextensive with the metaphysical or ontotheological determination of Being, and thereby allows for the critical interrogation or even comprehension of the total “epoch” of metaphysics in which Being is determined ontotheologically as presence.²⁰ Thus understood, *différance* is closely related, according to Derrida, to the ontological difference between Being and beings; in one “aspect of itself,” indeed, it is “certainly but the historical or epochal *unfolding* of Being or of the ontological difference.”²¹ As such, it is at the structural *basis* of the possibility of the differentiation between presencing and presence that Heidegger understands both as the ontological difference and as the basis of all possible presentation, any possible appearance of phenomena.²² In this way, *différance* points to the origin of all possible presentation, all possible determination of beings from Being, and all possible disclosure in presence. Nevertheless, according to Derrida, it is simultaneously possible to think, on the basis of *différance*, that the “determination of the ontico-ontological difference” as well as the “*meaning or truth* of Being” remain “intrametaphysical effects” of *différance*.

Concluding the essay with a close reading of Heidegger’s discussion of the “Anaximander Fragment” from 19--, Derrida ventures to suggest that *différance*, thought in this way as underlying the ontological difference without being reducible to it, also opens the possibility of a “silent tracing” in which it is possible to think that “the history of Being, whose thought engages the Greco-Western *logos* such as it is produced via the ontological difference, is but an epoch of the *diapherein*.”²³ Thought as the “play” of a “trace” which is both inscription and erasure, *différance*, “in a certain and very strange way, (is) ‘older’ than the ontological difference or than the truth of Being”²⁴ This play of the trace is not its presence, according to Derrida, but rather “the simulacrum of a presence that dislocates itself, displaces itself, refers itself...”; through the constitutive erasure which constitutes it as a trace (and in particular through what Heidegger understands as the “early trace” of the ontological difference in the Pre-Socratics, since vanished in the development of a metaphysical tradition which, more and more, forgets the difference), the text of metaphysics will have nevertheless retained a “mark” of this original difference, even as it has lost it or set it aside. This structure of inscription and erasure points to a “paradox” which “produces the following effect: the present becomes the sign of the sign, the trace of the trace.”²⁵ This effect of

¹⁸ Pp. 10-11.

¹⁹ P. 12.

²⁰ P. 16.

²¹ P. 22.

²² P. 23.

²³ P. 22.

²⁴ P. 22.

²⁵ P. 24.

redoubling, whereby the present itself becomes a “function in a structure of generalized reference,” now allows that the text of metaphysics be “*comprehended*” and accordingly becomes legible and “to be read.” In this reading, the metaphysics of presence is no longer “surrounded by” its limit, as if inscribed uniformly within some larger space within which it would have clear and uniform bounds. Rather, it is “traversed by its limit, marked in its interior by the multiple furrow of its margin.”²⁶

Along partially similar lines, in the first chapter of *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze considers a thinking of “difference in itself” whereby it would not be subordinated to a prior idea or principle of identity but would rather manifest a “univocity of Being” on which “Being is said in a single and same sense of everything of which it is said, but that of which it is said differs: it is said of difference itself.” (p. 36). This “univocal” sense of Being is closely linked to a structure of repetition in which repetition is primarily the “repetition of the singular”; thought this way, repetition is a “difference without a concept” that is nevertheless “internal to the Idea” in that it “unfolds a pure movement, creative of a dynamic space and time which corresponds to the Idea.” (p. 24). By contrast with the repetition of the same or identical, this repetition of difference or of the singular is, according to Deleuze, “grounded in inequality, incommensurability and dissymmetry”; it thus precedes and also founds, according to Deleuze, the principle of identity as well as the subsequent possibility of the “partition of concepts” and the “measuring of subjects.” (p. 33). Understood in terms of its “own concept” and as correlative to an original repetition of repetition in which the repeated can no longer be distinguished from an original, the repetition of difference in this sense, according to Deleuze, also underlies the logical structures of negation and contradiction.²⁷ In this respect, according to Deleuze, negation is difference; but it is “difference seen from its underside,” rather than “the right way up,” whereby it is also, more basically, affirmation. In this sense, “negation results from affirmation; this means that negation arises in the wake of affirmation or beside it, *but only as the shadow of the more profound genetic element* – of that power or ‘will’ which engenders the affirmation and the difference in the affirmation.” (p. 55)²⁸ Contradiction itself, according to Deleuze, has its ultimate ground in this basically affirmative repetition of difference, in which simulacra repeat themselves endlessly without origin and point to an ultimate undecidability at the root of logical differentiation.²⁹

Both Deleuze and Derrida thus propose a thought of originary difference, closely linked to repetition, at the basis of the structure of mimetic representation, and of the specific logical conceptions of negation, falsehood, and illusion that this structure permits. From this perspective, it is possible to see how the picture of difference and of non-being presented by the Eleatic Visitor in the *Sophist* as a positive solution to the problem of the actual existence of the Sophist involves such an essentially mimetic conception of truth, falsehood, difference and negation, which submits the nature of negation and illusion to a (modified) version of what I have called the “criteriological” picture above. As we have seen, the Visitor’s picture of non-being and falsehood makes a central appeal to difference, insofar as it is the mixing of the great type or form of difference with being that ultimately accounts for the possible

²⁶ P. 24.

²⁷ P. 55

²⁸ Deleuze’s italics.

²⁹ Logical and nomic ‘distributions’ – nomic as distribution in a space without limits

appearance of determinate non-being. Though the appeal to difference is central, though, it is not originary (or pre-originary) in the sense in which it is for Derrida and Deleuze; in particular, difference is here understood as a substantial type or form, and it is not through its original action of differentiation but rather through its “mixing” with being that it articulates the distinction of it from non-being. Here, in other words, the criteriological line of difference that surrounds beings and separates them from non-beings on Parmenides’ picture is not replaced but simply distributed throughout the range of beings, types, or characteristics, as difference itself is said to be distributed across the things that are. Plato’s picture (or the one presented by the Visitor) is thus not so much a replacement of Parmenides’ as a modification of it still conditioned by the general conception of beings as a whole as a consistently bounded totality, the conception that is correlative with the constitutive “metaphysical” reference to beings as a whole.

In particular, recall that, on the solution offered by the Visitor to the “falsehood paradox” of Parmenides, to say of something that it is *not* is always to say that it is not *something*, i.e. that it is not some way or other or that it is *different* from what is that way. Non-being, in general, is thus able to appear only insofar as difference mixes with being to produce *what is not* (i.e. what is different from what is) in some way. As the Visitor clearly notes, this means on the one hand that there is no place, on the conception, for a phenomenal appearance or positive conception of “non-being” *in itself*; and also that the mixing or distribution of difference “over against” that which produces whatever actuality non-being can have.³⁰ Here, in other words, difference is not originary but rather partitive or diaeretic with respect to a logical order of types and forms in relation to particulars. The distributed mixing of difference articulates the line, within the set of articulated logoi, between true and false logoi.³¹ The topological intuition underlying the picture of the role of difference in the phenomenalization of non-being (some way) is that of a spatial or topological exteriority. On this picture, something (e.g. Theaetetus) is not-something (e.g. flying) insofar as he lies outside the domain of correct application of the term or universal “flying”, or insofar as all his actual characteristics are *different from* that of flying. To say that something has a property is thus to say that it fits within its range of application; to say that it does not is to say that it is different from what has that property.

The picture suggested by the Eleatic Visitor already recognizably anticipates an Aristotelian picture of predication on which properties or predicates in general can be organized into categorical and hierarchical relations of inclusion or exclusion, as species and genera; here, negation is simply the determinate exclusion of something from its falling under or exemplifying some property or concept. On this conception, beings as a whole are thinkable in terms of a uniform structure of categories or “things said,” structured according to possibilities of being “said of” and “present in”. At the same time being itself is treated as the highest and most general structure of things. Though being is nevertheless not said to be a genus, since nothing can be set over against it, the relation to being is treated in terms of the enigmatic “pros hen” relationship. The possibility of the *logos* to be true or false is then to be

³⁰ 238c; 258d-e; 259a.

³¹ This is not to say Plato himself had a general conception of facts; but he did have the conception of the articulate logos, as we’ve seen, above.

understood simply in terms of its “saying of” something what is the case, or is not, where this is itself understood as a matter of the properties of substances.

As Deleuze suggests, it is thus possible to see Plato’s methodology of division in the *Sophist* as delicately balanced between, on the one hand, a thought of original differentiation whose goal is ultimately the differentiation of the authentic from the false, and on the other, the Aristotelian topological picture which mobilizes difference only as the differentiation of species and genera within already determinate mediating concepts. Insofar as the Eleatic visitor actually produces a logical “solution” to the problem of the identity of the Sophist, however, he imposes the latter picture, one that finally subordinates difference to identity and differentiates terms only within the assumed commonality and structural unity of the great types.³² In particular, although the discussion in the *Sophist* does not yet fully develop this ultimately topo-logical and distributive picture of truth, falsehood, and negation, which will find full expression only in Aristotle, its underlying conception of a logical *koinon* linking the structure of sentences and language with that of the superior grammar or structure of types already significantly the picture of identity that will, subordinating difference, establish the regime of *mimesis* in which negation is thought as exclusion and truth and falsehood can be opposed as original is opposed to secondary copy. In particular, in explaining linguistic non-being and falsehood in terms of the distribution of difference across (already constituted) beings, the picture presupposes, as we have seen in chapter 1, an overarching *structural* correspondence between the “grammar” of types and the possibilities of determinate expression in language. The problem of this correspondence is the problem of how the “superior” structure of types relates, on the one hand, to the properties and relations of actual

³² Cf. Deleuze (in the same paragraph of *Difference and Repetition* wherein he defines the task of “modern philosophy” as that of overturning Platonism): (also pp. 32-33 on Aristotle):

“Aristotle indeed saw what is irreplaceable in Platonism, even though he made it precisely the basis of a criticism of Plato: the dialectic of difference has its own method – division – but this operates without mediation, without middle term or reason; it acts in the immediate and is inspired by the Ideas rather than by the requirements of a concept in general. It is true that division is a capricious, incoherent procedure which jumps from one singularity to another, by contrast with the supposed identity of a concept. Is this not its strength from the point of view of the Idea? Far from being one dialectical procedure among others which must be completed or relayed by others, is not division the one which replaces all the other procedures from the moment it appears, and gathers up all the dialectical power in favour of a genuine philosophy of difference? Is it not simultaneously the measure of both Platonism and the possibility of overturning Platonism?

Our mistake lies in trying to understand Platonic division on the basis of Aristotelian requirements. According to Aristotle, it is a question of dividing a genus into opposing species: but then this procedure not only lacks ‘reason’ by itself, it lacks a reason in terms of which we could decide whether something falls in one species rather than another. For example, we divide art into arts of production and arts of acquisition: but then why is fishing among the arts of acquisition? What is missing here is mediation – that is, the identity of a concept capable of serving as middle term. However, this objection clearly fails if Platonic division in no way proposes to determine the species of a genus – or if, rather, it proposes to do so, but superficially and even ironically, the better to hide under this mask its true secret. Division is not the inverse of a ‘generalisation’; it is not a determination of species. It is in no way a method of determining species, but one of selection. It is not a question of dividing a determinate genus into definite species, but of dividing a confused species into pure lines of descent, or of selecting a pure line from material which is not.” (pp. 59-60) – also, Platonic “point of departure” as a “mixture”, an “indefinite representing multiplicity which “must be eliminated in order to bring to light the Idea” ; question “not of identifying but of authenticating; myth, logos and circulation; dialectic discovers its “true method” in division, which lets the line between dialectic and myth lapse (p. 61). Problems and questions.

particulars, and on the other to the possibilities of linguistic predication. The Visitor's solution to this problem does not succeed in solving the problem of the actual structure of negative and positive predication, however, since it continues to rely on the obscure correspondence between the superior grammar of types and the real possibilities of *logoi* and objects in producing the systematic logical structure of possible (meaningful) predication.³³ In particular, it remains obscure on this conception how the kind of mixing of difference that is said to produce the differentiation of forms from one another is related to the differentiation of *particulars* that accounts for the possibility of negatively predicating of them.

If the logic of the differentiation between the original and the simulacrum, which the Visitor applies in his analysis of the possibility of falsehood, is itself based on this subordination of a more originary difference, then the Visitor's account of falsehood is open to reconsideration, along with the whole mimetic picture on which sensible particulars are to be conceived as images or copies of supersensible forms, on the basis of an affirmation of this more originary difference. On Deleuze and Derrida's conception, as we have seen, this more originary difference is not exterior to the possibility of repetition which is structurally inherent in language, but is rather (in one sense) co-original with it, so that the structural possibility of repetition and iteration that is characteristic of every linguistically articulable content is not conceived as secondary with respect to the original disclosure of contents, but rather as structurally present with any disclosure as such. This recognition is requisite, for Deleuze and Derrida, in order structurally to describe the conditions for a distinction between truth and falsehood, and hence between true presentation and illusion, that owes nothing to *mimesis* or to the mimetic distinction between the good and the bad copy. Here, rather, the primary difference that underlies the distinction between truth and illusion is not simply "original" but actually *pre-original* or *arche-original*, in that it structurally precedes (as Deleuze and Derrida both emphasize) any possible distinction between original and copy, and thus also is prior to the "originary" of Being itself.³⁴ On this conception, this originary is itself only the effect of a structural repetition without origin, the "sign of a sign" or the "trace of a trace".

The undecidability that this suggests in the distinction between "original" presentation and "false" exterior repetition (or between the icon and the simulacrum) is itself at the positive basis of the undecidability that Derrida and Deleuze see in the distinction between the philosopher and the sophist, a distinction whose maintenance already has, for Plato, the significance of the prohibition of contradiction and paradox. On this conception, Plato's picture is, like Parmenides', simply a version of the topological picture which puts non-being outside being as a kind of external surrounding; though the

³³ Cf. Davidson: "Plato speaks of the forms as blending, connecting, or mixing with one another. In the case of Rest and Motion, they fail to blend. The difficulty is to reconcile these declarations with the claim that every sentence must have a verb. Clearly the words 'Motion' and 'Rest' name or refer to forms, so if the sentence 'Motion is not Rest' has a verb, it must be 'is' or 'is not' (or 'blends with' or 'does not blend with'). Plato takes Sameness and Difference to be forms, but then fails to recognize that if these forms are what is meant by the 'is' and 'is not' in sentences that speak of the forms blending or failing to blend, then a sentence like 'Motion is not Rest' names three forms ('Motion Difference Rest?'), and there is no verb." (p. 82)

³⁴ Derrida: difference and the trace are "older than Being".

Visitor's conception of difference mobilizes the distinction between beings and non-beings and distributes it among beings as the logical difference between what falls within the range of a particular predicate and what falls outside it, this does not modify in any fundamental way the basic topological picture, which is grounded in the identity of the concept. Both are to be opposed by a conception of originary difference on which, as Deleuze says, "There are not two 'paths', as Parmenides suggests, but a single 'voice' of Being" which is said *of* difference. This is not, in other words, a secondary distinction *between* already identified beings, of those which are and those which are not, or a division among already constituted beings of those which fall *under* a concept and those that fall outside it. Rather it is a singular voice of Being said univocally of all, but ultimately said *of* difference rather than identity, and so an affirmation of difference at the ultimate prior ground of all possible *identification* of beings as such.

With the affirmation of this arche-original difference at the root of any possible phenomenalization, Plato's own argument for a positive phenomenalization of non-being *based in* the mixing of the substantial type of difference with being is itself radicalized and the ground for the distinction between being and non-being put on a more fundamental basis. The issue that drives toward this ground is just, as we have seen, that of the phenomenalization of non-being itself, and hence the very root of the possibility of error, illusion, and falsehood. What is at issue is whether this phenomenalization of non-being is to be understood as a figuring, representation or indication of what is not within the determined range of what is, or whether it can only be seen as the outcome of a more fundamental differentiation, at the root of any possible constitution of identity, that affects and underlies beings and non-beings equally.

Along with this, it becomes possible to consider whether Heidegger's position, in 1924-25, insofar as he endorses Plato's supplementary logic of the distinction between the originary logos and the "cut off," "free-floating", "covered-up" one, is itself open to criticism from the perspective of the affirmation of this pre-original difference at the more basic root of the *logos* and, more broadly, of all phenomenalization as such. It is not, as we have seen, that Heidegger simply replicates Plato's position *vis a vis* Parmenides; rather, while attributing to Plato a deepening of the ontological problematic and crediting him with a fundamental achievement in moving beyond Parmenides' position to recognize a genuine possible appearance of non-being in the person of the sophist, he also situates both philosophers clearly within the regime of the "Greek" interpretation of being as presence, which means that both understand the distinction between being and non-being ultimately in terms of the presence of beings in general and as a whole. Furthermore, there is actually, as we have seen in Derrida's analysis of *différance*, a motivating basis for the affirmation of original difference that Plato and Aristotle suppress and dissimulate in the logical doctrine of negation and the topological picture of conceptual determinacy can in fact be found in considering the implications of the *ontological difference* between being and beings, which is at least implicit in Heidegger's analysis of Plato and will be named explicitly by Heidegger a few years later. As we shall see in the next section, in fact, this development of the ontological difference can even be seen, in the context of Heidegger's own radicalization of the implications of the difference in the period of the "turn" of the 1930s, to produce the transformation in

Heidegger's own thought from the *Being and Time* conception of fundamental ontology to the later, "history of being" project.

Nevertheless, it remains that, in 1924-25 at least, Heidegger still sees the specific structure of the *logos*, insofar as it is the result of a more fundamental structure of disclosure that can either give "the matters themselves" or fail to do so, insofar as it falls into exterior repetition and becomes "cut off" from this original disclosure. This is connected, as we have also seen, with Heidegger's interpretation of what he presents as Plato's actual solution to Parmenides' problem of falsehood, and thus to the problem of distinguishing the philosopher from the sophist, in terms of what Heidegger sees in 1924-25 as the positively demonstrated possibility of a phenomenalization or presentation of non-being itself. In particular, as we have seen, Heidegger here takes Plato to have established, through the Visitor's argument, the actual *presentation* (and hence existence) of the *me on*, "what is not" or "non-being" itself, and that this demonstration is closely connected, for Heidegger, with the suggestion, which he finds in Plato's text, that "the me on", as participating in the general character of *logos* as *legein ti*, itself articulates in a fundamental way the basis of the possibility of disclosure.³⁵

At 257b, the Visitor summarizes the discussion so far by suggesting that the "me on" means, not something contrary to being (or what is) but rather "only something different from it." As Heidegger suggests, this points to the way in which the "me on" is structurally an aspect of the *pros ti* relation of any *logos* to its subject matter. Thus: "Putting it sharply, the Being of the "not" (the "non-"), the me, is nothing else than the *dunamis* of the *pros ti*, the presence of the Being-in-relation-to." (p. 558). He goes on to emphasize, on behalf of "phenomenological research" itself, the implication that negation itself has a disclosive sense with respect to the structure of the *pros ti*:

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

Furthermore, it is only on the basis of this productive negation, which Plato has at least surmised here, even if he has not pursued it in its proper substantive consequences, that we can clarify a difficult problem of logic, a problem residing in the copula of the proposition or

³⁵ "Over and against a blind addressing of something in merely identifying it by name, there is a disclosive seeing of it in its co-presence with others. And in opposition to the mere blind exclusion that corresponds to this identification by name, there is, if our interpretation of apophasis is correct, a denial which discloses, which lets something be seen precisely in the matters denied. Hence Plato understands the "not" and negation as disclosive. The denying in *legein*, the saying "no," is a letting be seen and is not, as in the case of the mere exclusion corresponding to the pure calling by name, a letting disappear, a bringing of what is said to nothing." (p. 560)

judgment: the meaning of the “is” or “is not” in the propositions “A is B,” “A is not B.” (pp. 560-61)

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

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

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

Heidegger’s interpretation of the Visitor’s argument thus takes it to establish, over against Parmenides’ own undifferentiated sense of bare and exclusionary negation, a kind of “productive negation” which depends on and allows the disclosure of the “*me on*” itself, the actuality or “presence” of “non-being.” The idea of a form of disclosure of “the nothing” that is in fact prior to, and at the foundation of, the logical function of negation figures prominently in Heidegger’s 1929 Freiburg inaugural address, “What is Metaphysics?”³⁶ The centerpiece of the address, in particular, is Heidegger’s claim for the possibility of a disclosure of “the nothing” in the fundamental mood, or attunement, of *Angst*, and its relation as so disclosed with the possibility of a first conception of being, here still understood as the being of beings, but also as giving a kind of explicit access to being as an inquiry “beyond or over beings.” The lecture begins by posing a question about the “nothing” that lies beyond the scope of scientific inquiry into beings, or beyond our pursuit of beings in science and the determinate orientation to research and to the existence of the world as a whole that characterizes this pursuit. This nothing, Heidegger argues, can in fact be made manifest in the attunement of *Angst*, in which “all things and we ourselves sink into

³⁶ (Heidegger [1929] 1993)

indifference.” In this attunement, “beings as a whole slip away” (p. 89 PM) and it is thereby possible for the nothing to become manifest as a “slipping away of the whole” (p. 90). Such a manifestation itself allows, according to Heidegger, “the original openness of beings” to [arise]; here it is possible to grasp in particular that “they are beings – and not nothing” (p. 90). This “nothing” is, Heidegger emphasizes, no superfluous addition, but points to an original ground for the manifestation of beings as such.

Heidegger goes on to argue that this possible manifestness of the nothing precedes and founds the “bare negation” that figures in logic as an act of the intellect, rather than the other way around:

What testifies to the constant and widespread though distorted revelation of the nothing in our existence more compellingly than negation? But negation does not conjure the “not” out of itself as a means for making distinctions and oppositions in whatever is given, inserting itself, as it were, in between what is given. How could negation produce the not from itself when it can make denials only when something deniable is already granted to it? But how could the deniable and what is to be denied be viewed as something susceptible to the not unless all thinking as such has caught sight of the not already? But the not can become manifest only when its origin, the nihilation of the nothing in general, and therewith the nothing itself, is disengaged from concealment. The not does not originate through negation; rather, negation is grounded in the not that springs from the nihilation of the nothing. (pp. 104-105).

Thus, while “the nothing” is definable as “the complete negation of the totality of beings” (p. 98), it is the experience of this “nothing” in the positive phenomenon of its “nihilating” that first makes possible an experience, or disclosure, of “beings as a whole.”

This experience is not, however, a matter of conceiving of, or conceptualizing the totality of beings, which Heidegger suggests “impossible in principle. “ Rather:

As surely as we can never comprehend absolutely the whole of beings in themselves we certainly do find ourselves stationed in the midst of beings that are revealed somehow as a whole. . (p. 99)

Heidegger draws on these conclusions – that negation as a logical operation is preceded by, and grounded in, a disclosive experience of “the nothing,” and that this disclosive experience is itself grounded in mood and attunement rather than intellect – to dispute what he here calls the “traditional” logical treatment of negation and indeed the “rule of ‘logic’” itself. It is indeed, Heidegger suggests, necessary to challenge this traditional “rule” in order to understand the real phenomenological and ontological basis for the possibility of negation, which is itself structurally linked to the possibility of the unconcealment of beings as such. For: “[A]ccording to the reigning and never-challenged doctrine of “logic,” negation is a specific act of the intellect.” (p. 97) The more original disclosure of the nothing in the experience of Angst itself shows, Heidegger suggests, that we must reject the priority expressed in this traditional “logical” doctrine of negation and challenge its underlying assumptions. Even the law of non-contradiction itself, “the commonly cited ground rule of all thinking,” must be challenged, in that it

threatens to “lay low” the question of the meaning and disclosure of the nothing. But this disclosure of the nothing “makes possible the openedness of beings as such.” (p. 104).

In “What is Metaphysics,” in the context of what is still a positive reference to the possibility of metaphysics as a systematic “inquiry beyond or over beings that aims to recover them as such and as a whole for our grasp,” (p. 93 Pathmarks), the positive possibility of a phenomenalization of the nothing is thus seen as the basis for an initial understanding of the being of beings as such. This possibility is, moreover, structurally connected with the positive ground for the disclosure of beings as such and as a whole in that it characterizes the very structure of Dasein according to which it constitutively transcends itself, being “held out into the nothing” to achieve a relationship to beings as a whole. As such, the possible phenomenalization of the Nothing is also seen as the ultimate ground for the function of negation and other logical structures, including (we may surmise) what Heidegger discusses in the Sophist lectures as the *pros ti* relationship to beings as a whole and as such. In this respect, the position that Heidegger adopts in “What is Metaphysics?” is a development and extension of the conception of the basis of negation that he finds in Plato in the *Sophist* lectures; in particular, where the “productive negation” that he finds in Plato’s conception as opposed to Parmenides’ depends on the “systematic” elaboration of a structure of relationality founded on a “prior seeing of the matters themselves” which is itself characteristic, as Heidegger says in the lectures, of the very structure of the *pros ti* relation of intentionality, here this *pros ti* relationship is itself generalized into the “relationship to beings as a whole and as such” which the specific manifestness of the nothing makes possible. This prior manifestness of the Nothing, set over against the totality of beings, then itself becomes the ultimate basis for any possible characterization of beings as a whole, as well as of the determinate conceptual grasp of their properties or relations that negation, as well as other logical structures, makes possible, and is seen to be structurally rooted in the transcendence of Dasein. The structure of any articulate logos as well as the specific force of logical rules, including the law of non-contradiction, are thus seen as outcomes of a more fundamental topological or meta-topological relation between beings as a whole and the Nothing beyond, here thought also as an enigmatic first indication of being, over against “beings as a whole and as such” themselves.

In this way, Heidegger’s conception of the actual presentation of the Nothing in “What is Metaphysics?” sharpens and deepens the conception he finds in Plato by exposing in detail the structural connection, only, at best, implicit in Plato’s own discussion, between the phenomenon of the nothing as such and the underlying structure of the relationship of the *pros ti* or of intentionality. This relationship is itself, as we have seen, grounded for Heidegger in the possibility of implicit or explicit reference to the totality of beings “as such and as a whole.” Plato’s partitive conception of the distinction between being and non-being with respect to individual properties or traits (at the basis of the logical picture of Aristotle) is thus replaced with Heidegger’s picture of the nothing as set off against the totality of beings and as *thereby* providing an original foundation and broader horizon for the “logical” function of negation and the force and applicability of the law of noncontradiction. This deepening of Plato’s picture results from Heidegger’s insistence on the implications of the ontological difference between beings and being, in terms of which, as set off against the totality of Beings, the Nothing provides a kind of first sign or indication of their being.

Nevertheless, despite the way in which it deepens Plato's own picture and officially replaces what is there a merely ontic difference between ranges of beings with the ontological difference between the totality of beings and their being, Heidegger's conception in 1929 retains a basically topological picture of this totality and this relation. The picture is marked in its picture of beings as a whole, in relation to their positive consideration within scientific research and the positive "stance" to them thereby taken, as bounded by as a whole by a clear and univocal limit which can become apparent to conceptual reflection, and by the metaphors of "shrinking back before," "turnaround," and ultimately of the "transcendence" of Dasein in relation to the totality of beings which Heidegger here employs. As we shall see in more detail, insofar as this picture still presupposes the possibility of a univocal *delimitation* (whether implicit or explicit) of beings as a whole that is not itself contradictory, from an assumed position of a Dasein capable of anticipating the delimitation in Angst and of explicitly recovering it metaphysically, this is still to think the "original" difference as secondary, as the drawing of a line of enclosure between two regions that must *first* be thought as positive existences in themselves. From a perspective which, by contrast, affirms pre-original difference and finds in it the specific conditions for the differentiation between being and non-being which itself structurally yields the possibility of any totalizing reference to beings as a whole, the complexities of this line of enclosure will be further shown in the paradoxes constitutively involved in this totalizing reference. In particular, the intuition of a clear and univocal line will yield to that of a line which, if total in its enclosure of beings, must be traversed and structured by paradox; and hence to a thinking of the ontological difference itself as itself divided, between (on the one hand) an incompleteness of every positively constituted field of beings with relation to their Being; and on the other, an inconsistency of univocal Being itself in its self-differentiation, an original difference that produces as a determinate effect every possibility of negation, falsity, error and truth.³⁷

III

Heidegger's position in 1929 thus involves, on the one hand, treating negation as founded ontologically in the phenomenon of a "nothing" that is set off against the totality of beings, and on the other, treating its *logical* structure, including the scope of the application and force of the law of non-contradiction, as founded in this more basic phenomenological or ontological structure, wherein "logic itself dissolves in ... a more original questioning." On this conception, as we have seen, the experience or phenomenon of "the nothing" is essentially prior to that of negation and indeed to its specifically *logical* structure. Heidegger's claim for the primacy of ontology over logic has often been resisted, both in general and on specific points, within the analytic tradition that has taken Fregean logic as a basic guideline for the

³⁷ I am indebted here (and specifically for the suggestion of a division of the ontological difference between incompleteness and inconsistency) to John Bova. Cf. also Bova (2010).

clarification of issues in semantics, epistemology, and metaphysics. To gain clarity about the situation, it is helpful to consider a conception of negation and its force that has been foundational for this tradition, the one suggested by Frege in the 1918-19 article "Negation."

In an obvious sense, Frege's conception of negation is not the one that Heidegger attributes to the "reigning and never-challenged doctrine of 'logic.'" For on that conception as Heidegger describes it, "negation is a specific act of the intellect." In the 1918-19 article, however, as usual throughout his writings, Frege distinguishes sharply between acts, for instance of judging or asserting, and the *contents* that are (for instance) judged or asserted. The latter are not, in Frege's terminology, acts or activities of the intellect or any other actor; rather they are, in Frege's terminology, thoughts, and can essentially be grasped as one and the same thought by different thinkers at different times. On Frege's account, it must be possible to entertain or grasp thoughts prior to judging them true or false; indeed, the whole process of inquiry largely consists in the advance from the grasp of a thought to this judgment. In particular, a propositional *question* (such as "Is the sun bigger than the moon?") contains a "demand that we should either acknowledge the truth of a thought, or reject it as false." (p. 346). It must thus be possible to recognize the thought as such, prior to the determination, and it must be possible to grasp a thought even if it is false. Frege accordingly argues that it is incorrect to hold that the "being" of a thought consists in its truth; for false thoughts must also be available to be grasped in order for propositional inquiry to be possible. "The very nature of a question demands a separation between the acts of grasping a sense and of judging." (p. 348)

As Frege acknowledges, one might recognize the distinction and still think of negation as a kind of act, negatively correlative to judging. But the recognition of thoughts as contents which can in principle be judged either true or false itself shows that this conception of negation is wrong, or at least limited. For the negation of a thought is true if and only if the thought is false, and vice-versa; but it must be possible to have both a thought and its negation available to one before either is judged to be true or false. Similarly, what is added to a sentence by the word "not" or by other linguistic markers of negation cannot be understood as an activity (for example an activity of denial, negatively correlative to (positive) assertion or judgment), for then its inclusion in a sentence would have to express a special kind of force, correlative to assertion but negative. But it must be possible to express a negative sentence (for instance as the antecedent of a conditional) which includes the word "not" without, thereby, affirming or denying anything.³⁸ Thus "not" (and other verbal indicators of negation) cannot indicate a particular kind of force, either of assertion or denial. These considerations lead Frege to the view that the negation expressed in language by "not" and similar expressions is not a kind of judgment, assertion, denial, or indeed any kind of act. Rather, what is expressed by the "not" is a "possible component of a thought," and is not to be identified with anything exterior to this content.

³⁸ The consideration is parallel to the consideration that it must be possible to use a positive sentence without (positively) asserting it; the point is just that it follows from this that, just as "It is true that ..." does not express assertoric force, "it is false that..." or "...not..." cannot express a different kind of force.

As we have seen (chapter 1, above), for Frege the special and unique connection of sentences evaluable as true or false with thoughts ensures that thoughts exhibit a particular kind of unity, not to be identified with the compositional or synthetic unity of several constituents separately bearing individually representational contents. This unity provides the basis for his further argument, in “Negation,” that negating a thought is not to be understood as an activity of separating or dissolving. The negation of a thought is still a thought, and still bears the specific kind of unity characteristic of thoughts; negation itself is accordingly not to be understood as a separation or division of what is supposed to be united or composed in a “positive” thought. This contrasts with the conception articulated by Plato’s Eleatic Visitor in the *Sophist*, and further developed by Aristotle, on which, as we have seen, a positive sentence, as composing a name for a subject and a verb which is conceived as the name of a property or “action”, is thought of as such a compositional unity, and a negative sentence is thought of as a differentiation or separation of what is named in the subject term from what is named in the predicate. In fact, both traditional claims – that a “positive” sentence is a compositional unity of separately referential parts and that its negation results from the separation of what is thereby composed – are to be rejected, according to Frege, on the basis of the special unity of the thought as a possible bearer of truth or falsity. In fact, as Frege notes, it is by no means clear that there is a motivated distinction between “affirmative” and “negative” judgments or thoughts, since one and the same predicative term (for instance “immortal”) may be seen indifferently as “positive” or “negative” without altering the content of any sentence in which it is used. Since there is no fundamental logical motivation for a view on which “positive” sentences are uniformly to be distinguished from “negative” ones, both are to be treated equally as expressing unified thoughts, equally capable (in general) of being true or false. As a result, according to Frege, both true and false thoughts must equally be treated as actually having “being” in the same sense.

With this, Frege rejects Plato’s picture, as well as Aristotle’s, which (as we have seen) both understand negation as a kind of diaeresis or separation of what is named in the subject from what is named in the predicate. The basis for the rejection is Frege’s recognition of the specific non-compositional unity of the sentence and its constitutive link this enjoys with the possibility of being asserted, which must hold indifferently of all propositional contents (whether conceived as “negative” or “positive”) and which cannot itself be marked explicitly in any linguistic predicate. How, then, is what is expressed by “not” “contained in the thought” for Frege? The analogy that Frege draws explicitly here, is, as usual, that between the structure of a thought and the sentence that expresses it: thus “The world of thoughts has a model in the world of sentences, expressions, words, signs” and “To the structure of the thought there corresponds the compounding of words into a sentence...” (p. 351). However, with respect to the question of what is specifically expressed by the word “not” in English, the analogy is, at best, strained; for on Frege’s own admission, one and the same thought may be expressed by two sentences, one which involves “not” and one which does not (e.g. “Jesus was not mortal”; “Jesus was immortal”). In particular, the unity of both “positively” and “negatively” expressed thoughts which verifies that negation is not to be opposed to assertion, judgment, or composition as a correlative but negative act, also involves that it is not generally possible to recognize a distinctive range of thoughts as *individually* including any constituent corresponding to the “not” or to negation. All that can be said is that for each

thought there is an “opposite,” i.e. a thought which is related to it in such a way that if the first thought is true, the second is false, and vice-versa.

This conception of negation underlies the (later) designation of negation as a “truth-function,” though the sense of “function” here must not be that of any kind of act, process, or occurrence. Rather, because of the separation of negation and the other “truth-functions” from any such act or activity and because of the unitary possibility of *any* propositional contents figuring in the logical relationships they allow, they are not conceived as having *any* representational meaning, but are rather structurally characteristic of the system of possible contents and their rational relations as a whole. Accordingly, on this picture, negation and the other truth-functions are characteristic of the constitutive structural and logical relations of the domain of (judgeable) contents as a whole, without themselves naming, designating or referring to any content, act, or object; they characterize, in the structural relations they introduce, the structure of what can be asserted *using* the referential and quantificational devices of (Fregean) logic, without themselves referring or quantifying. Frege’s picture is in this respect already well on the way to Wittgenstein’s atomistic “picture” theory, whose fundamental insight is (as LW says), that the truth-functional “connectives” do not represent. Rather, they characterize structurally the inherent logical relationships among possible contents, here conceived as those that can be expressed by means of names, variables and predicative terms along with the truth-functions in a quantificational language.

This leaves entirely open, however, the questions of the *actual constitution* and *underlying temporality* of the realm of *possible* contents itself. As we have seen (chapters 1 and 3), Frege’s metaphorization of the realm of senses as a timeless “third realm” beyond those of the physical and the individual-subjective does not significantly clarify the question of its temporal basis or ontological genesis; rather, it simply ignores these questions or substitutes for an answer what must be seen, from a perspective of ontological questioning, or of a real consideration of the being of language, as a mythology. This is not to deny the point of the metaphor on the level of what it intends to capture: namely, the specifically *logical* character of the relations relevant to truth that exist among the contents expressed by sentences in a language, and the distinction of this character from any empirical or ontic relationships. It is part of drawing the distinction that what is expressed by a sign of negation, as well as by the other truth-functional signs, must rigorously be distinguished from any type of act, process, or indeed any ontic event; nevertheless, maintaining the distinction by itself does not fully illuminate what is meant by “logical” structure itself. In particular, as we have seen in chapter 3, in specific connection with the “transcendental” character of truth, the application of the Fregean structure *presupposes* the availability of a range of contents or of the realm of sense and does not significantly illuminate the basis of this availability itself. The applicability of the Fregean devices of quantification and truth-functional structure, in particular, presupposes both a determinate and previously specified range of beings over which the quantifiers can range and that they are given as bearing determinate properties and standing in determinate relations. Both of these presuppositions invite (or even demand) a further question of the givenness of sense, and as we have seen, an ontological/hermeneutic development of this question is requisite to the further clarification of the generic meaning of “truth,” on any reasonable conception of what is meant by it as it is used in natural languages.

The specific questions that are left open here can be clarified, from an ontological point of view, as concerning two issues which commentators have in fact noted as limitations or problems for Frege's approach. The first is the issue of the relationship between *content* and *force*. As we have seen (cf. chapter 1 above), Frege often suggests that the assertoric (or other) force of utterances must be separated from their content; it is the content, rather than the force, that is logically tractable and that defines what can be grasped independently of what, specifically, is to be done with it (whether, e.g., it is to be judged, doubted, questioned, etc.) Nevertheless Frege never develops a general theory of assertoric or any other kind of force as it finds expression in language, and there are moreover positive reasons to suppose that no such theory can be given. For as Frege notes in "Negation", while there is generally no specific marker of assertoric force in natural languages, the force of assertion is nevertheless in some way "bound up" with the predicate, so that (as he says elsewhere) the predication of truth is (in some sense) implicit in any predication whatsoever, whether or not it plays a role in assertion specifically.³⁹ As we saw in chapter 1, it is necessary to recognize that the force of assertion is thus, in an obscure way, indicated in the structure of predication itself, without being able to be expressed there by any direct linguistic formulation or sign. The recognition points to the way in which a general theory of contents, such as Frege's, necessarily communicates with a general account of force, even if the distinction between acts and contents is rigorously drawn. As Frege indicates, as well, in "Negation," the connection between contents and assertoric force, however it may be drawn, is also closely connected with the nature of negation and with any possible understanding of it as an "operator" on or "function" of contents. Even if Frege's insistence on limiting the scope of a properly logical theory to relations of (truth-evaluable) contents prevents him from considering the broader problems of the relationship of content itself to force, setting Frege's project within a broader setting of ontological questioning can point to the way in which the very idea of content, in the structure of predication which also inherently involves the possibility of negation, both presupposes and problematizes an ontologically prior clarification of what is involved in both affirmation *and* negation as operators of force. Here, in particular, ontological questioning stands to clarify the temporal and ontological bases for what appears in Frege's picture as the always-already *a priori* availability of judgeable contents or modes of presentation of the true and the false, including their constitutive logical structure, on the basis of its own more ontologically penetrating development of the specific phenomenon of truth.

The second issue with respect to which the limits of Frege's own approach here appear is the issue of the *specification of domains*. As has often been noted, although the application of the Fregean quantifiers does not by itself demand any specification of the particular domain over which the variables involved are considered to range, it is standard to construe universal generalizations of the form "All A's are B's" as quantified conditionals (of the form, for all x, if x is an A, it is a B). This suggests, however, that it is impossible or meaningless to state claims with full generality which are considered to range over all objects or possible variable places, for instance "Everything is physical." However, the possibility

³⁹ Thus, e.g., if I ask whether the sun is bigger than the moon, I simultaneously ask *whether it is true that* the sun is bigger than the moon, etc.

of claims of this sort in ordinary language cannot be gainsaid; nor is it plausibly possible (or desirable) to avoid all negative existential claims (e.g. “There are no unicorns”), which themselves have the form of universally quantified negative claims (“for all x, x is not a unicorn”). Nor can the difficulty be solved by requiring (as is sometimes done) that a particular “domain of quantification” or “universe of discourse” be specified in advance before any meaningful application of the quantifiers can be made. For in an obvious sense, the specification of such a domain itself presupposes the prior availability of a broader domain from within which it can be specified. Even if it is considered to be impossible or meaningless to apply quantification without first specifying a domain of quantification – a consideration that appears to sit poorly, in any case, with much ordinary usage – the iteration of the question of the possibility of this specification will obviously tend, at the limit, to elicit the necessity of a prior possibility or presupposition of coherent reference to the totality of what is, or of beings as a whole. Here, indeed, what appears to be necessarily presupposed is not just a general or vague reference to “whatever is,” but indeed a determinate conception of this totality in terms of its overall logical and categorial structure, insofar as it must be the presupposed basis for any *further* delimitation of specific domains of beings or entities.

It is with these questions in mind that we can now return to Heidegger’s claim about the priority of “the nothing” as the specific ontological basis for negation and other aspects of logical structure, while bearing Frege’s logical picture of negation, also, firmly in mind. On the Fregean conception, as we have seen, the possibility of negation characterizes the domain of logically judgeable contents or of thoughts in a basic, structural sense. Here, in particular, negation is a kind of reversibility of such contents, such that the negation of a content is understood to reverse its truth value. The universality of this possibility throughout the whole domain of judgeable contents is an aspect of the basic connection of such contents to the possibility of being true *or* false and results immediately from the general intelligibility of propositional questions which may have a “yes” or “no” answer. Negation is thus a characteristic structurally grounded possibility with respect to the *totality* of judgeable contents, and as such plausibly constitutively *linked* to the constitution of this totality itself. However, as we have seen, Frege leaves the actual basis for the constitution of the totality of judgeable contents almost completely obscure; in particular, though he often points to the compositional analogy between thoughts and linguistic sentences, he does not rely on (nor could he have, given his commitments to the objectivity and timelessness of contents of thought) any reference to (empirical) language in describing the ontology and temporality of the realm of sense. Frege’s picture thus, all by itself, invites the question of the broader basis for the logical structure of negation and the other “truth-functions,” as well as, along with, as an integral part of this question, the question of the *applicability* and *force* of negation (as an “operation”) across the whole domain of judgeable contents and references to beings. Thought not only as a question of activity or performance but also regulation or prohibition, this is nothing other than the question of the basis and “normative” force of the law of noncontradiction (among other presumably “logically binding” principles).

Frege’s picture of the logical nature and force of negation thus organically involves an implicit and requisite reference to the totality of contents and of beings, a reference which itself is given no further positive explanation in Frege’s account. Here, because what is in question is the specific basis for the

applicability of the central logical “possibility” or “operation” of negation *tout court* and hence that of the constitution of a domain of possibly true or false judgeable contents “governed” by logical principles and characterized by their structure, the question must not be one simply of further *logical* conditions but also of the broader *ontological* preconditions whose elaboration must be further grounded in an ontological clarification of the phenomenological structure of truth. This clarification, however, is just what, as we have seen, Heidegger’s account gestures to; in particular, in situating the question of truth in the constitutive context of the ontological difference between being and beings, Heidegger points to the way the specific phenomenon of truth as disclosure irreducibly manifests this difference. The account in “What is Metaphysics?” further develops this conception of truth as involving the possibility of recovering a conceptually explicit understanding of being, one which is phenomenologically related to the totality of beings in being set over against it, as is what he refers to here as “the Nothing”. If this conception of the ontological difference can indeed be considered basically illuminating with respect to the structure of the specific phenomenon of truth, it is also plausible that it stands to illuminate the *logical* structure of the totality of truth-evaluable contents which is the domain of Frege’s conception of the scope of quantificational logic. In particular, the structural interconnections that appear in the logical interrelations of the particular contents thereby involved themselves point to, if considered as characterizing the whole domain of possible content, the broad possibility of a constitutive reference to totality, and thus by themselves pose the question of the position from which such a reference might be possible, either implicitly or explicitly. Heidegger’s picture addresses this question by pointing to the *ontic-ontological* structure of Dasein as the structure of truth as (ontic-ontological) disclosure, and as capable of gaining the position for an explicit retrieval of the implicit grasp of beings as a whole that is always already presupposed in factual life, through the fundamental possibility of an attunement to what is set over against this totality, the Nothing that first emerges phenomenologically in the “totalizing” attitude of Angst.

This is also the basis on which it is possible to respond to a commonly formulated response to Heidegger’s position, on which it cannot be maintained that “the Nothing” is the basis for negation, since Heidegger’s apparently nominative reference to “the Nothing” is itself nonsensical or logically impossible. On the position suggested by this response, it is rather supposed to be obvious that negation is, rather, the foundation for “nothing,” in that “nothing” always has the meaning of “not any thing”, and demands completion, within a sentence, by binding the quantifier apparently involved and specifying its domain of application. For example, on this view, “nothing” has significance in contexts such as “There is nothing in the box” or “I found nothing to speak of”, but requires such additional context in order to make sense, and even there cannot have the significance of a noun or noun phrase.⁴⁰

We have already seen that it is implausible from the perspective of normal usage that existential and universal quantification can only be employed in restricted or previously delimited domains of quantification; what speaks against this is not only ordinary claims about the totality of things and negative existential judgments, but also the way that any such specification of domain presupposes, at least implicitly, a larger domain from within which *it* could intelligibly be carried out. So even if the

⁴⁰ Carnap (obviously), also Tugendhat, “Das Sein und das Nichts”. Also, Sartre?

meaning of “nothing” must indeed be logically connected with that of “not any thing,” it appears possible and trenchant to consider that at least in some cases this “not any thing” can be considered to have essentially unlimited scope, or at any rate to range over, and hence involve the intelligibility of, the totality of things or beings. From this perspective, the kind of “totalizing” experience involved in Angst as Heidegger describes it indeed might naturally be put as the experience that (for instance) “there is nothing”, i.e. there are really (in the most basic sense of “being” or “existence”) no beings. It is then certainly possible to nominalize what appears or becomes phenomenologically manifest in this kind of experience or phenomenon; and it is certainly not unreasonable to suppose that just this is what Heidegger himself has taken himself to have done with his nominative references to “the Nothing.” As Heidegger himself notes, the nominalization should not be taken as construing the Nothing “as an object”, since to do so would be to convert it “into something and not nothing”. But this is no reason to maintain that it is generally impossible, or that sentences involving the nominalized form may not be phenomenologically illuminating and ontologically indicative.

The situation is more closely analogous to Frege’s own usage in distinguishing between concept and object as logical types; drawing the distinction itself necessarily involves that concepts are referred to, at least in general, which violates the strict delimitation which Frege places on the logical functioning of concept- and object-words, according to which concept-words can only predicate and can never refer to objects. As Frege himself recognize, such a usage is in fact necessary owing to the structure of language and indispensable in indicating logical distinctions (he described these as “elucidations” and they can be connected to Wittgenstein’s showing/saying). Here, ordinary language thus already, in a certain way, points beyond the domain of its constitutive strictures to provide the possibility of phenomenologically or ontologically indicating the basis of their logical force and application. It is true that Heidegger in 1929 is not completely clear about this basis, since he does not have in view a conception of logic that as sharply distinguishes act from content as does Frege’s, and also that his descriptions of the phenomenon of the “nothing” as grounded in the *experience* of Angst may invite anthropological or personal-subjective suggestions which are, even on Heidegger’s own telling, quite alien to the structural/ontological problematic of Dasein and truth itself. Nevertheless, what is specifically thought and indicated here is, as we have seen, already as Heidegger says, a more original ontological basis for the specific force of logical laws and principles, including the law of noncontradiction, to the totality of beings as such and as a whole, a basis which can be grasped by an explicitly indicative description that recovers explicitly the relation to totality that is implicitly presupposed in the very ontico-ontological structure of Dasein as it is constituted by the phenomenon of truth.

III

As we have seen, Heidegger’s picture of being and the nothing in the 1920s yields a position from which it is possible to consider the *ontological* basis of the *logical* structure of negation; this position depends, in particular, on the specific conception of the *totality of beings* against which “the nothing”, in Heidegger’s sense in 1929, is opposed. Because, as I have argued, the structure of negation as a logical

function is plausibly intimately connected to this possible or actual reference to the totality of beings or of contents, the conception provides the specific ontological terms in which it is possible to consider the broader questions of temporality and constitution that are left to one side by Frege's own account of the realm of sense. Heidegger's picture in 1929 illuminates these questions, in particular, by pointing to the ontological *difference* between being and beings as the specific ontological basis for the structure of truth, in terms of which the structure of logical contents must itself be understood. With this indication, Heidegger points to the way in which any account of negation, as well as logically articulated falsehood and truth, must be related to the possibility or actuality of a conception of the totality of beings; this conception is necessarily presupposed, in particular, in any positive conception of the "normative" force of logical norms or principles, including the law of noncontradiction.

This is not to say, however, that Heidegger's picture in the 1920s has yet attained full clarity in tracing the implications of this difference, or (in particular) describing the *temporal* structures that it ultimately underlies. Indeed, as we have seen in part I, above, to the extent that Heidegger's picture in the 1920s commits him to a conception of the kind of repetition or iterability that is structurally involved in the *logos* as secondary or derivative with respect to matters "originally" given in themselves, this picture does not yet formulate the consequences of a rigorous thinking of *pre-originary* difference (such as can be found, by contrast, in Derrida and Deleuze). Indeed, it tends to replicate a topological conception of negation as an *ontic* separation of beings rather than ontological (or ontic-ontological) type of differentiation grounded in the difference between being and beings. This topological conception is explicit in Plato's account, in the *Sophist*, of negation as produced by the mixing of difference with the other great types, and is there closely connected with the mimetic or representationalist picture of predication on which individual elements of sentences, including predicative terms, represent separately existing entities. But Heidegger's picture in "What is Metaphysics?" also retains the topological picture of negation, at least in residual form. For although it clearly identifies the phenomenological basis of negation and its force with the differentiation between *beings as a whole*, on one hand, and *being*, on the other, Heidegger's picture here still presupposes the possibility of a (complete and univocal) *delimitation* of beings as a whole. Here, the Nothing thus stands over against beings as a kind of presupposed externality; but the possibility of the delimitation, and hence the temporal conditions for the possibility of having beings as a whole in view at all, are not further interrogated.

In the 1930s, though, Heidegger develops a radicalized understanding of the implications of the ontological difference in the context of the deepening of the ontological problematic which is now carried out, from *Being and Time's* question of the being of beings to what he calls in the *Beitraege zur Philosophie: vom Ereignis* the "grounding question" of the *truth* of being itself. This radicalization underlies the transition or turn in Heidegger's own thinking from the "preparatory analytic" and "fundamental ontology" of *Being and Time* to the later "history of being" project. As we shall see, it also yields a specific temporal basis for the radicalized critique of *omiosis* or *identity* which Heidegger now undertakes against Plato and the entire metaphysical tradition. This radicalized sense of pre-originary difference, developing from the "ontological difference" but also overcoming it in a certain way, provides the deep-seated ontological critique of the principles of identity and of sufficient reason which he undertakes in a series of treatments beginning in the 1930s. As I shall argue here, although there is

no correspondingly sustained investigation in Heidegger's corpus of the specific basis of the principle of non-contradiction, this radicalization of the ontological difference can indeed, in parallel fashion, also produce a historically motivated basis for the ontological critique of the principle of non-contradiction, and along with this, significantly clarify the logical structure and ontological foundations of negation, falsehood, and illusion.

Early in the *Beitraege*, Heidegger announces, in connection with a thinking from and toward the essential happening of being, or Ereignis, the new question of the "truth of beyng" [Wahreit des Seyns] in contrast to the "previous question of philosophy," which has asked only about beings:

The question of being [Die Seinsfrage] is the question of the truth of beyng. When grasped and worked out historically, it becomes the grounding question [Grundfrage], as opposed to the previous question of philosophy, the question about beings (the guiding question [Leitfrage]).

By contrast with the earlier "guiding" questioning about beings, the "grounding" question is here specified as the question of the "truth" of beyng itself. This question of the "truth of beyng" is further understood as the question of an "openness for essential occurrence [Wesung] as such" (p. 60/76) and as the question of the ultimate ground for the appearance of *any* being (p. 8/7). Thus thought as the ground of all possible appearance, this "essential swaying" of beyng [wesung] is designated as *Ereignis* (p. 8) and a preliminary and transitional "thoughtful speaking" of, and from, it is attempted. This attempt at thinking and speaking is, according to Heidegger, to be understood as a "directive" and "indication" on the way to a possible "leap" from the previous question of beings to the new question of the truth of beyng in itself, without reference to beings. Nevertheless, the task toward which it is directed remains, as in *Being and Time*, related to the specific question of the grounding of domains of beings, up to and including beings as a whole; here, for example, this task is specified as that of the "retrieval of beings out of the truth of beyng." In particular, this "task" is carried out by means of a distinctive questioning about "sense" [Sinn] as "the grounding of the projected domain"

The question of 'sense,' i.e., according to the elucidations in *Being and Time*, the question of the grounding of the projected domain, or, in short, the question of the *truth of beyng*, is and remains *my* question and is my *unique* question, for at issue in it is indeed what is *most unique*....

The question of the 'sense of beyng' is the question of all questions. As we unfold this question, we determine the essence of what is here called "sense" that within which the question as meditation [*Besinnung*] persists, that which it opens up as a question: the openness for self-concealing, i.e. truth. (p. 11; transl. slightly modified)

The new "grounding" question of the truth of Beyng thus results from a historical and ontological deepening of the problematic of sense and truth already pursued in *Being and Time*. As we have seen, for Heidegger in *Being and Time*, sense is fundamentally Dasein's temporal projection of possibilities onto what are thereby constituted as intelligible entities; the possibility of this projection is itself closely

related to that of disclosive truth in that both take place on the ground of Dasein's fundamental hermeneutical structure of interpretation, that of the "hermeneutic-existential" as. Here, Heidegger deepens the linked question of the basis of sense and truth into the question of the basis of projection itself, or of the kind of opening and concealing that is characteristic of Dasein as such. Da-sein is itself, accordingly, no longer seen as a positive given phenomenon to be described or illuminated; rather, it is to be achieved or accomplished by way of a transformative *grounding* of Dasein itself in the truth of being. This is, in particular, to be achieved by way of a thoughtful meditation on this truth, which also has the significance of an "appropriation" of Dasein by, and into, Ereignis as being's event.

In developing the "grounding" question in contrast to the previous "guiding" question, Heidegger points toward a "leap" which prepares for an "other beginning", outside the ambit of the traditional interpretation of being which determines how it is understood, according to Heidegger, from Plato to Nietzsche. Within this traditional determination, according to Heidegger, the question of being takes the form of a questioning of beings as beings (*on e on*) whose most general form is the question "what are beings" (*ti to on*) and whose answer is given by a determinate conception of the being of beings, for instance (in the most characteristic example) by Aristotle in determining the overarching categories of *ousia* or substance. In the scope of this traditional questioning, being, according to Heidegger, is always understood as "beingness", or as the most *general character* of beings as such. Here (for Aristotle and the whole subsequent tradition up to Nietzsche), in particular, "being (as beingness) is always and only meant as the *koinon*, the common and thus what is common to every being." (p. 60/75) Thus, despite Aristotle's denial that being itself has the character of a genus,

The traditional understanding of being as beingness, in other words, characteristically operates by looking to the specific characteristics of beings and locating them within a more general structure which sees their ultimate essence or most generally definitive characteristic as the basis for their unity within a *koinon* or "common" that ultimately encompasses all that is. The specific determination of this structure takes various historical forms, but in each case the overarching structure of logical and ontological characteristics is determined on the guideline of specific characteristics of beings in accordance with the "guiding" question about beings:

The answer to the guiding question is the being of beings, the determination of beingness (i.e. the providing of the "categories" for *ousia*). Various realms of beings become important in various ways for later, post-Greek history. The number and the type of the categories as well as their "system" change, but the approach remains essentially the same, whether based immediately in *logos* ["discourse"] as assertion or following determinate transformations in consciousness and in the absolute spirit. From the Greeks to Nietzsche, the *guiding question* determines the same mode of asking about "being." The clearest and greatest example attesting to this unity of the tradition is Hegel's *Logic*. ...

By contrast, in the transition to the grounding question of the historical truth of being, what is sought is not the general character of beings but the deeper underlying conditions for the possibility of *any* appearance of beings whatsoever. Accordingly, for the grounding question as opposed to the guiding

question, “the starting point” is no longer “this or that being;” nor, indeed, is it “beings as such and as a whole” (p. 60); it is rather the possibility of a “leap” into truth as the “clearing and concealing” of *beyng* itself.⁴¹ This question accordingly extends to the question of the underlying ground of the possibility of *any* of the various historical *determinations* of what is seen, through shifting historical categorizations, *as* their total or general character, and of the more basic ground for *all* of these determinations in *beyng* itself. This implies that the kind of basic positionality recurrently involved in the traditional interpretation of the basic character of beings, which makes possible determinate conceptions of beings as a whole, is here subjected to a deeper historical questioning of the ground of *its* possibility which takes in the “entire history of the guiding question” (p. 61) on the ground of its more basic historical determination by *beyng* itself:

The guiding question, unfolded in its structure, always allows the recognition of a *basic position* toward beings as such, i.e., a position of the questioner (human being) on a ground which cannot be fathomed or known at all from out of the guiding question but which is brought into the open through the *grounding* question. (p 61).

In this way, the question of positionality that is implicit in the history of the guiding question and its determinate conceptions of the generality of beings, and implicitly answered in advance with each such conception, can only be unfolded explicitly with the leap to the deeper grounding question that asks after the underlying truth of *beyng*. The result of this unfolding is the historical *questioning* of the way being is determined as beingness in the context of each of these determinations of beingness as generality or *koinon*, and the correlative delimitation of the history of these determinations as a whole against the anticipation of the transition to the “other” beginning from *Ereignis*.

For this reason, the transition from the “guiding” to the “grounding” question itself implies a radicalization and partial overcoming of what was earlier thought as the “ontological difference” between being and beings. In particular, according to Heidegger, it is here necessary to understand the question of the being of beings as pointing toward the deeper, grounding question of the “truth of *beyng*” rather than as it has been understood within metaphysics, wherein it is answered in terms of beingness, universality and the *koinon*:

In accord with the Platonic interpretation of beings qua beings as *eidōs* – *idea* and of the *idea* as *koinon*, the being of beings becomes altogether the *koinon*. To be the “most general” becomes *the* essential determination of being itself. The question of the *ti estin* [“what it is”] is always the question of the *koinon*, and thereby is given for the entire thinking of beings as such the framework of the highest genus (highest universality) and *specification*. The main realms of *beings* are precisely sheer *specialia* of the universality of beings, i.e. of the universality of being. And in this way the character of the guiding question is reflected in the distinction between *metaphysica generalis* and *metaphysica specialis*. In the guiding question, a possible coupling of *metaphysica generalis* and *metaphysica specialis* is no longer an issue at all, since they are

⁴¹ Here, “*beyng* can no longer be thought on the basis of beings but must be inventively thought from itself.” (p. 8)

indeed coupled in the way just named, a way that is very external to beings and afortiori external to beyng. Utterly groundless pseudo-questions arise here as long as the unrecognized basis of the guiding question and the distinction between the two disciplines are from the start taken to be self-evident.

The confusion increases altogether if a solution to the question is sought with the help of the “ontological” difference developed in fundamental ontology. For this “*difference*” is indeed not a way of approach to the guiding question: it aims instead at a leap into the basic question. And it does so not in order to play vaguely with henceforth fixed terms (beings and being) but, rather, in order to go back to the question of the truth of the essential occurrence of beyng and thus to grasp in a different way the relation between beyng and beings, especially since also the interpretation of *beings* as such is transformed (sheltering of the truth of the event) and it becomes impossible to unwarily smuggle “beings” in as “represented objects,” “things objectively present in themselves,” or the like.

For Heidegger in the *Beitraege*, the questioning attempted in Being and Time is itself at best “transitional,” and can only prepare the way for a “grasping” of the “truth of beyng out of the latter’s *own* essence”, namely, as Ereignis (p. 197). On the way to the posing of the more basic question of this truth, a thinking of the ontological difference is, according to Heidegger, both necessary *and* “disastrous”; in particular, because it itself arises from the inquiry into “beings as such” in their “beingness,” it does not immediately permit the leap into the grounding question of the “truth of beyng itself.” Indeed, Heidegger suggests, insofar as the ontological difference suggests an inquiry into the “unity” of its terms (being and beings), the question is quixotic and can never lead to the deeper position “from which it could be seen that the distinction no longer is primordial”. p. (197) Foregoing this conception of unity, it is necessary instead, Heidegger suggests, to “leap over” the distinction and indeed over the “transcendence” that was earlier thought as the surpassing of beings by being in order to achieve the “creative grounding of the truth of beyng” which is the “leap into the event [*Ereignis*] of Da-sein”.

As we have seen (in chapter 1, above), in Plato’s *Sophist* the debate between the materialists and friends of the forms over the mutual relationship between being and becoming, which forms the crux of the “gigantomachia” over being, is apparently resolved by the Eleatic visitor with his suggestion of the series of logical and structural *koinonia* that link the great types in the soul, in the articulate structure of the spoken *logos*, and in the overarching logical grammar that is seen as presiding over both. The specific problem of non-being, which is both logical and temporal, is resolved, in particular, by the suggestion of a phenomenalization of non-being in the person of the Sophist which is itself made possible by the *koinon* or mixing of the great types, and in particular by the mixing of difference with being to produce non-being as differentiation from what is. On this conception, which itself prepares the way for Aristotle’s conception of logical categorization as the structure of differentia of genus and species, the appearance of non-being, illusion, and falsehood is thus itself understood as a mimetic or

quasi-memetic phenomenal *presencing* of non-being whose specific condition of possibility is the superior structure of the logical/ontological/psychological *koinon*. This mimetic or quasi-mimetic conception then invites the question of the ground for the distinction between the good and the bad copy, the icon and the phantasma, which Plato's visitor answers by pointing to the structural correspondence or non-correspondence of *logoi* and states of affairs with the overarching structure of types and forms in their determinate possibilities of mixing or combination. The characteristic "ti estin" question of identity is thus answered in terms of the articulate structure of the logos and its correspondence to the superior grammar of types or forms. As we have seen, the solution depends ultimately on the necessary a priori existence of the types or forms with their determinate possibilities of mixing and combination, and it does not explain or account for this structure. Additionally, it fails ultimately to clarify, particularly in the case of non-being, the ultimate basis of the possibility of the requisite structural correspondence itself.

In the *Beitraege's* development of a critical recounting of the history of the pursuit of the "guiding" question which is characteristic of the metaphysical tradition up to Plato, Heidegger suggests that the determination of beings in terms of *identity* plays an early and essential historical role in the development of the relationship of thinking and being from the Pre-Socratics to the modern configuration of "experience" and "machination" or technology. This determination is simultaneous with a "collapse" of truth as *aletheia* into truth as "correctness" [Richtigkeit] which itself pre-determines the modern and contemporary interpretation of thinking as representation and truth as correspondence. This early development is marked, according to Heidegger, by the interpretation of *noein* as "nous of the idein of an idea" and "koinon and logos as apophansis ["assertion"] of the kategoriai ["categories"]" (p. 155). In this development, "thinking, as a faculty, falls prey to a 'psychological' –i.e. ontic – interpretation" and the "relation already *prepared* by Plato between *psyche* and *aletheia (on)* as *zugon* [yoke]" becomes, as it does explicitly in Descartes, "the ever-sharper subject-object relation" (p. 155). In this development, in particular, "Thinking becomes the I-think" and the unity of thinking and being becomes the unity of the unifying *function* of synthetic thought in the "transcendental unity of apperception" (Kant) or in the absolute self-identity of the self-positing "I" (Fichte).

At first, all efforts then implicitly strive to make this relation itself (thinking as the thinking of the I-think-something) purely and simply the ground of the beingness of beings and indeed through assumption of the inceptual determination of beings as what is *en*.

In this manner, identity becomes the essential determination of beings as such. Identity derives from the *aletheia* of *phusis*, from presence as unconcealed gatheredness into unconcealedness. (p. 156)

But each of these later developments are only possible as outgrowths of the "Platonism" that "dominates" the history of metaphysics, or of the determination of beingness as constancy and presence (pp. 153-54) and thereby determines the development of the metaphysics of presence from the relationship of thinking (as presenting and representing) and being as beingness.

A particularly decisive moment in this development, according to Heidegger, is Plato's determination of the *idea* on the basis of a mimetic or representational relationship between it and sensible particulars. Here, the *idea* is originally thought as the *look* of something in which it both comes to presence and which supplies its constancy in presencing. This look is then understood as a "unifying One," as being itself (on) is thought as unifying, and "as a consequence" the idea is now interpreted as *koinon* and being itself as the "most general" (p. 164). The *idea* is now thought, with respect to individual beings, as having a *koinon* character, that of gathering them into unity, and accordingly as what best "satisfies the essence of beingness" and is therefore qualified, over against the many sensible entities, as the "ontos on" or "what is most eminently." (p. 164) Along with this, truth in the sense of *aletheia* "collapses" and is transformed into *omoiosis* or correctness, from whence it will subsequently develop into *adequatio* and certainty. (p. 169). In the Platonic determination of the relationship between the idea and the particular on the basis of *koinon* and *omoiosis*, there arises therefore "a mode of representation which in various forms radically rules over the subsequent history of the guiding question and thereby also over Western philosophy as a whole." (p. 169) In this determination of the idea as the *koinon*, according to Heidegger, is to be found the condition by which the *chorismos* between thinking and being becomes "a sort of being"; here is to be found the origin of "'transcendence' in its various forms" as well as the specific sense of the representation of the *a priori*. Subsequently, transcendence is understood in an "ontic" sense as the surpassing of one being over all others (as in Christianity), in an "ontological" sense whereby it refers to the surpassing that "resides in the *koinon* as such," namely in a system of categories "beyond" and "prior to" beings, or, finally, in the sense of the fundamental ontology of *Being and Time*, where it is understood as Da-sein's structural surpassing as such, and thereby related to the prior understanding of Being which is there treated as definitive of Dasein's projective being-in-the-world. Through the conception there developed of understanding as "thrown projection", Heidegger says, transcendence as it is treated in *Being and Time* already indicates a standing of Dasein "in the truth of being". However, even that conception is here to be overcome, along with every sense of transcendence, in favor of a deeper consideration of the ultimate basis for projection itself in Da-sein's "enduring" of the "open realm of concealment." (p. 170)

The history of the interpretation of being as presence which Heidegger describes as the history of the determination of being as beingness (and hence in terms of beings) is, by contrast, one of increasing obscurity, forgottenness, and withdrawal with respect to being itself. In this progressive withdrawal, *aletheia* is understood as correctness and finally as universal representability, and thinking more and more takes on the character of uniform representation and availability for a regime of "lived experience" that stands over against machination or the technological manipulation of beings as paired and mutual expressions of the contemporary understanding of the basic character of being. In close connection with the contemporary dominance of a reign of "calculative thinking", "machination" is here specified as the interpretation of all beings as "representable and represented" (p. 86) and as such "on the one hand, accessible in opinion and calculation, and, on the other hand, providable in production and implementation." It correlates with, on the side of the experiencing subject, the comprehensiveness of a regime of "lived experience" understood as a "basic form of representation" which "promotes and entrenches" a humanist or "anthropological" way of thinking (p. 104) rooted in

the conception of the human being as *animal rationale* and intimately connected to the dominance of the categories of “culture” and “worldview” as prevailing ways of thinking and representing beings (p. 102).

In this way of thinking, all that counts as “being” is “what is or can be the object of a lived experience” in being able to be brought before one in representation. (p. 102). To this conception of being as what is representable corresponds the apparently *unlimited* representability of beings in machination; here, there is no limit to what can be given for representation, since there is “*nothing* that is, or could be, given” to representation “*as a limit.*” Instead, “everything is humanly possible, as long as everything is calculated in every respect and in advance and the conditions are provided.” (p. 107) This unlimited calculability means that “the incalculable is merely that which has not yet been mastered in calculation but which in principle will also be incorporated some day;” here, there is, accordingly “in no way ...anything *outside calculation*” (p. 95) and because of the certainty about beings which this in-principle calculability of everything provides, “the question of the essence of truth” is itself “no longer needed”. (p. 95) Here, accordingly, “there is no problem that is not solvable, and the solution is merely a matter of number applied to time, space and force.” (p. 98)

This universal calculability is, according to Heidegger, just one aspect of an “abandonment by being” [Seinsverlassenheit] which is the “ground” and “more original” essential determination of what is grasped (though dimly) by Nietzsche as the world-historical process of nihilism. (p. 95) What Nietzsche grasps under the heading of “nihilism” is now rejected and warded off, with increasing desperation, by the unlimited elevation of what were at first only means to goals into goals in themselves; for instance, the elevation of a *people*, their “cultural assets”, and all “cultural politics” here become elevated to absolute ends. This elevation, however, is itself “the most insidious form of nihilism and therefore its highest form.” (pp. 109-110). Here, nihilisms of different forms battle with each other, as, for instance, Heidegger says, in the battle between the nihilism of Christianity and the “crude nihilism” of Bolshevism. But the whole process forecloses what is in fact “*the decisive domain regarding being or non-being.*” (p. 110) But the “abandonment by being” which the growth of nihilism, in all of its forms, at last expresses is itself the determining basis of a “unique era in the history of the truth of being” (p. 95). In this era, “of long duration,” “truth hesitates to put its essence into clarity” and beings are accordingly “disappropriated of being.” The process culminates with Nietzsche’s metaphysics of the will to power; in this metaphysics, “truth deteriorates into a necessary illusion” and an “unavoidable stabilization introduced into beings themselves.” (p. 157). Nevertheless, although in this culmination and end, the Western metaphysics of presence is “furthest from the question of the *truth* of being” it is, Heidegger says, also “closest” to this truth in that with this end, “it has prepared the transition to this question.” (p. 157). In this configuration, machination itself “withdraws” and tends to hide itself behind determinations such as “actuality,” objectivity and constancy. Both this withdrawal and the actual dominance of machination that it obscures are, however, aspects of the ongoing withdrawal of being itself; in fact, the dominance of machination *is* the “essential occurrence of being”. (p. 101)

According to Heidegger, the dominance of machination and of lived experience thus belong together in a deeply interlinked but also initially obscure configuration which is, if grasped in its actual togetherness,

a clue or indication to the culmination of the history of the interpretation of being as beingness and thus to the “hidden” history of *Being* itself. In particular, “the coming together of machination and lived experience contains a peculiar event within the hidden history of being.” (p. 105) This event both summarizes and completes the history of the interpretation of being as beingness. For if the history of this interpretation is the history of the relationship of thinking, understood as representational grasping, and being, understood as beingness, then “Machination and lived experience constitute as a formula the more original version of the one expressing the guiding question of Western thought: beingness (being) and thinking (as representational grasping). “ If machination and lived-experience are thought together, this therefore indicates, according to Heidegger, not only their mutual belonging but also “an equally essential *non-simultaneity* within the “time” of the history of being”. In particular, machination is the “early” but initially distorted “essence of the beingness of beings.” But as it comes more and more to the fore in differing interpretations, it also “draws back” behind what at first seems its “extreme opposite,” namely personal lived experience. If, however, the deep link between the two is grasped in thoughtful meditation, “then at the same time the basic thrust of the history of the first beginning (the history of Western metaphysics) is already grasped out of a knowledge of the other beginning.” (p. 101). In this way, “Machination as the essential occurrence of beingness provides a first intimation of the truth of being itself”. (p. 100)

In the radicalization of the ontological difference that Heidegger carries out in the *Beitraege*, the difference between being (as beingness) and beings that appears in each of the epochal configurations of metaphysics is thus itself thought on the deeper ground of the truth of being and *Ereignis*. This radicalization is the key to Heidegger’s description of a history of metaphysics that is opened and closed with two configurations of thinking and being that both figure, in different ways, the universality of representation: the initial configuration that Plato thinks as the psychological and semantical *koinon* ensured by the superior structural *koinonia* of the *eidei*, and the final one of machination and lived-experience which finally yields the domination of nihilism and the “completion” of the thrust of the “first” history of being as the history of beingness. The “non-simultaneity” of these configurations opens the temporal difference in which the whole history of metaphysics will have come to pass, in which the epoch of the determination of being as presence will have opened, progressed through the series of particular epochal determinations of the beingness of beings, and finally exhausted itself in completion and closure. In this history, both the beginning and the ending configuration have a specifically *logical* determination, marked in the beginning in Plato’s thought of the logical *koinon* and at the end in the universal calculability of beings, itself achieved by means of a “mathematization” and application of universal countability that has its ground in the presumed universal applicability of calculation to all problems and in the specific technologies that accomplish it. The basis for this universal calculability is itself the “logical” conception of thought as oriented toward being in its ability logically to comprehend and discern in representation the superior *koinon* structure of the *eidei*.

By radicalizing the thought of the “ontological” difference between being and beings, which characterizes every determinate configuration of the intelligibility of beings, Heidegger thus prepares a position from which it becomes possible to pose the deeper and broader question of the truth of being in itself, and thereby to interrogate, from a position that itself stands outside the “guiding” question of

beings, how the “metaphysical” interpretation of being as presence is itself temporally constituted as a whole. In carrying out this radicalization, Heidegger accordingly points toward a thought of the closure of the epoch of metaphysics that is itself determined as the trace of a withdrawal, that of being itself in its “holding back” from its own truth. This holding back is evident, according to Heidegger, in the specific structure of the epochal determination of each configuration of intelligibility, where beings appear in the light of some particular being that is elevated to the position of “highest” standard, whereby it becomes the measure of beingness or being “in general,” as well as, in a different and more total way, with respect to the whole epoch of the interpretation of being as presence itself. Here, by contrast with the position of “What is Metaphysics,” negativity is not thought simply as destruction and nihilation but as abandonment and nihilism; it is no longer the outcome of a specifically phenomenized “nothing” standing over against the totality of beings, but rather of the epochal event of being itself, which grants each of the specific configurations of the history of being as presence and also withdraws from them in *their* totality. It is this thought that leads Heidegger to wonder, early in the *Beitraege*, whether, “if the event becomes a withholding and a refusal” it is “only the withdrawal of being and the surrendering of beings into non-beings,” or whether, on the other hand, “the refusal (the negativity of being) [can] become in the extreme the most remote appropriation...?” (p. 9) Grasped in the view of a history of being determined by the grounding question of being rather than beings or their beingness, therefore, negativity is first and foremost withdrawal; only secondarily, and only relative to a particular logically regulated configuration of beings, is it determination. This evinces a *primary* negativity of Being which cannot be understood in terms of cancelling, destruction or negation, but must rather be understood in terms of its differentiation from itself, its separation from itself of the thought of beingness and the generality of being as *koinon*. This self-differentiation is both, equiprimordially, appropriation *and* expropriation; it is the trace of a fundamental difference that is not the difference between two terms but which must be grasped, in the historical trace in which it manifests as withdrawal, be seen as *Ereignis* itself.

IV

As we saw above (section II), negation, considered as a *logical* function of senses, presupposes and depends upon the implicit or explicit reference to a *totality* of contents, the whole articulated “realm” of thoughts or of propositional senses, as Frege conceives it. In the structure of this totality, thought as containing the totality of modes of presentation of objects and entities, as well as concepts, and thereby linking their systematic structure to the possibility of truth, is to be found also the basis for the totality of possible references or of objects. The totality of beings is, as we have seen, thought in a related but different way by Heidegger in 1929 as set over against the “nothing” and being itself, and in the historical and temporal radicalization of the ontological difference carried out in the *Beitraege*, the various epochal configurations of the being of beings *each* have the structure of making possible a *particular* phenomenization of the totality of beings (while the historical totality *of* such configurations is itself thought as bounded at the beginning and end as the totality of metaphysics, over against the truth of being, which grants presence). In each of these cases, the logical specification of negation and

its distinctive logical structure *internal* to the constituted totality – including the scope and force of the application of the law of non-contradiction itself as ground for the coherence of contents – is, as I have argued, closely related to the constitutive structure of the totality itself. In fact, as we have seen, whereas Frege’s own theory does not provide anything like a positive theory of the temporal and ontological *constitution* of the realm of (linguistic) sense, Heidegger’s conception of the ontological and ultimately being-historical basis for the constitution of sense can plausibly provide the relevant and needed supplementation. This involves setting specifically *logical* negation in a broader framework, one in which it is related ultimately to a pre-original difference that itself radicalizes the ontological difference between being and beings. Nevertheless, the internal dynamics of specifically logical negation and logical contradiction with respect to the totality of reference here become significant, both as characterizing the problems to be solved and as, themselves, indicators of the broader ontological and temporal situation.

As is well known, Frege’s attempt to ground arithmetic on logic and naïve set theory in the *Grundgesetze der Arithmetik* depended on the application of an “unrestricted” principle of comprehension – the so-called basic law V – which implies (in more contemporary set-theoretical language) that to each linguistically well-defined predicate there corresponds a set of just those elements falling under it. The assumption, along with the whole project in its initial formulation, famously came to grief when Russell pointed out the antinomy of the set of all sets that are not self-membered; such a set is a member of itself if it is not, and is not if it is. Thus, the apparently well-defined property of being “non-self-membered” cannot correspond to a set, on pain of irreducible contradiction, and it appears that the basic principles of set formation must be limited or modified if the contradiction is to be avoided. In particular, this appeared to Frege to show that the logic at the basis of mathematics must itself have extra-logical foundations, and though he accordingly considered his own logicist project to have failed, he worked for much of the remainder of his life on various attempts to rectify the situation. Russell’s own solution was to impose a regimented structure of hierarchical levels or “types” on the set-theoretical universe; on this solution, it is excluded at the outset that any set include itself, since sets of lower types can only be included in sets of higher types. Additionally, there is, on Russell’s picture, no limit to the hierarchy of types; accordingly, there is no possibility of forming, at *any* level, a set containing all sets or the totality of all that exists, or the (closely related) Russell set. Somewhat similarly, in the now-standard Zermelo-Fraenkel axiomatization of set theory, two fundamental axioms guarantee the impossibility of forming a total set of all sets. First, the axiom of foundation prohibits the formation of any self-membered set. Second, the axiom of separation (or restricted comprehension) guarantees that a set can be formed as the extension of a predicate *only if* it is segmented out from some larger set already considered to exist. Thus the set of all sets, if it were to exist, would on the intuition underlying the axiom, have *already* to exist and would accordingly presuppose itself.

Both Russell’s picture and the broader and looser picture enshrined in the ZF axioms and sometimes described intuitively as the “iterative conception” of sets⁴² thus impose limitative or restrictive devices

⁴² Boolos

to foreclose the structural combination of negation, reflexivity, and totality, from the point of view of naïve comprehension, yield Russell's paradox and other related contradictions. The positive intuition underlying the application of these devices is, with respect to the question of the constitution of sets, basically *constructivist*; in particular, Russell's conception appeals to a picture of sets as hierarchically "formed" in temporally successive stages, and the "iterative conception" itself turns centrally on the idea of an iterated process or operation of set formation. On both conceptions, accordingly, the "set theoretical universe" is pictured as in some sense inherently "open" or uncompleteable, since there is and can be no end to the iteration of the process of formation. In this way the possibility of contradictions of the Russell type is apparently foreclosed; however, as I have argued elsewhere, the nature of the "operation" of set formation here remains obscure, and indeed subjects the idea of set constitution to an intuition of psychological, operative, or constructive "formation" that appears to be quite alien to it and unmotivated with respect to it (except perhaps in a *post hoc* fashion by the desire to avoid contradiction itself).⁴³ Moreover, it is plausible that the very application and motivation for the limitative devices involved in both of these approaches, which apparently preclude reference to or discussion of the *total* universe of sets, in fact *presuppose* just this reference even in stating or indicating what is precluded.⁴⁴

As I have argued in *The Politics of Logic*, an alternative to this consideration of the Russell paradox and other related contradictions and limit-paradoxes as structures fatal to the integrity of any positive theory and thereby to be foreclosed or prohibited by prohibiting totality itself is to consider them, instead, as positive formal indications of the structure of totality and of its own internally constitutive logical structure. Here, the significance of contradictions of the Russell type is no longer that of demanding that restrictive maxims or limitations be placed on the idea of (unlimited) comprehension, but rather that of showing what is positively involved in the particular kind of relation of language to the world that is implied in this idea, including the structures of contradiction and antinomy that must necessarily be considered to be co-implied in it, given the paradoxes. Affording full and unrestricted rights to the principle of (unlimited) comprehension, in this way, in the context of a naïve set theory admitted to be inconsistent, means that it is not subjected to the intuition of any kind of constructivist, psychological, or iterative intuition, but rather considered to capture the positive structure of the relationship between (linguistic) intension and objective extension in itself, including the inherent logical and metalogical dynamics of the one and the many that characterize the predicative grouping of a diversity of individuals "under" any unitary concept or predicate.

A positive motivating basis for this conception of naïve (and inconsistent) set theory as capturing the inherent dynamics of predication can be found in some of Cantor's own statements about the motivations for the creation of set theory. For example, in 1883 Cantor wrote,

⁴³ PofL; also Parsons, Hallett.

⁴⁴ Domain principle

By a 'manifold' or 'set' I understand in general any many [*Viele*] which can be thought of as one [*Eines*], that is, every totality of definite elements which can be united to a whole through a law. By this I believe I have defined something related to the Platonic *eidos* or *idea*.

Here, Cantor expresses the thought that the specific unity of set formation corresponds to or correlates with the kind of unity thought by Plato as the "one over many" of the *eidos* or *idea*; on this conception, the specific unity of the extension of an arbitrary concept, or (in the Platonic jargon) the participants of an linguistically specifiable idea, is understandable as a "whole" summarized or encompassed by the single idea itself, and the relationship of participation or predication is itself expressed by the 'ε' of set membership. On this picture, set membership is thus (borrowing T.E. Forster's nice phrase) an "allegory of predication", in the sense that the systematic structure of set membership and set relations (including, as I shall argue, its constitutive paradoxes) can itself be considered to capture or structurally indicate the underlying structure of predication as such. The picture receives further intuitive support from Peano's own motivations in introducing the symbolism still used for "element of" or "member of," the symbol 'ε' which Peano related to "est" or the "is" of predication.

As I have argued elsewhere, a consideration of the implications of naïve set theory can in this way provide a powerful metalogical basis for the structural and critical consideration of the predicative structure of language in relation to the world as such.⁴⁵ This is so, in particular, with respect to the question of *totality*, or of the significance of the ordinary and structural presupposition of a total universe of all that can be referred to, of the sayable or thinkable, or of beings as such. In particular, Russell's paradox and the related set-theoretical and semantic paradoxes show that this totality must be characterized at its limits by a structure that is inconsistent in a particular way. As Graham Priest has shown, this particular kind of limit-contradiction can be theorized as an "inclosure;" it results from the combination of three features which are plausibly structurally characteristic of any of the totalities of the thinkable, sayable, or existent as such. The first of these features is existence; the universe or totality must in some sense exist as a whole. The second is "closure" the universe or totality must be able to be referred to from some position; The third is diagonalization: given any arbitrary subset of the total set, there must be an element outside the subset. The combination of these features results, when the diagonalization operator is applied to the total set itself, in the contradiction of an element that is both inside and outside the total set.

As I have argued in *The Politics of Logic*, consideration of the specific structure of inclosures allows for a broader critical understanding of the structural dynamics of totalities at the limits and thereby offers a position from which it is possible to understand the specific meta-structural basis for the "normative" or prohibitive force of the specific prohibition of contradiction within them. In particular, it is possible on this basis critically to interrogate the overdetermined structure that we have already noted with respect to historical instances of the basis of the prohibition of the set-theoretical paradoxes as well as for the

⁴⁵ Reference to PofL.

more general prohibition of contradiction as such. By means of this overdetermined structure, as we have seen, what is said to be impossible or incoherent is *also* positively prohibited, foresworn or enjoined against. Contradiction is thus both, in necessarily overdetermined fashion, an impossibility and a danger; as I have argued at greater length in *The Politics of Logic*, much of the constitutive and prohibitive force of the traditional law of non-contradiction results from the problematic conjunction of these incompatible presumed features of contradictions. By contrast, from a position that recognizes the necessity of inclosure as structurally characteristic of totalities insofar as they involve phenomena of self-reference or self-inclusion, it is possible to interrogate and critically challenge this “normative” force along with the specific mandates and practices it has historically facilitated and continues to support today. From the resulting “paradoxico-critical” position, the positive existence of the limit-paradoxes that show up in set theory thus has a basic structural significance in characterizing the structure of any linguistic totality as such and in pointing to the specific positions at which total regimes of thought, action, practice, or technology can be interrogated in terms of their structural constitution and potentially transformed.

What does this development of the meta-formal implications of set-theoretical paradoxes have to tell us, though, about the ontological situation of beings as such, both in relation to their being and to the *interpretation* of being as presence which, according to Heidegger, orients the whole of the metaphysical tradition from beginning to end? Here, it is helpful to briefly consider the radical and formally audacious consideration of set theory that has been undertaken by Alain Badiou under the overarching maxim that “mathematics is ontology.” For Badiou, specifically, the maxim expresses that mathematics as founded on set theory in its standard, ZF axiomatization also captures all the underlying principles and structures of ontology, or of a theory of “what is expressible” of “being qua being”.⁴⁶ The universality of set-theoretical structure in this sense captures the countability of all beings, for Badiou, and formalizes the conditions under which any “multiplicity” can be understood as presented or counted as one. In particular, the ZF axioms for Badiou give rise to a constitutive structure which is “the presentation of presentation” (p. 27) and which systematically displays “being qua being” in that it offers a systematic theory of the conditions of possible presentations, which yield, according to Badiou, the only “access to being” which is “offered to us” (p. 27). In particular, according to Badiou, there is and can be no *direct* presentation of being itself. However, it may still be the case, according to Badiou that an axiomatic structure, through the laws it lays down for the structure of all counting-as-one, *implicitly* presents being, or at any rate what is “expressible” of it, by presenting presentation itself. The presentation in axioms of the structure within which “being qua being can be rationally spoken of” is thus the same, according to Badiou, as the axiomatic presentation of the systematic conditions under which any multiplicity can be considered as presented or “counted-as-one”. The result, according to Badiou, is a systematic formal theory of being which steadfastly refuses to locate it an “exceptional” position outside the structure of coherent discourse and transmissible knowledge by axiomatically presenting presentation itself in the rigorous formal axiomatization of ZF set theory. Badiou suggests that this presentation of presentation accordingly offers formal grounds for opposing all “ontologies of presence” which presuppose the possibility of a presentation of being as such, outside structure, on the

⁴⁶ p. 8

basis of an exceptional position or a transcendent experience (Badiou sees the paradigm for these “ontologies” in Plato’s conception of the Idea of the Good as *epekeina tes ousias* and thus as the supreme but exceptional condition for being). To these ontologies Badiou opposes a formalization of predication, a deductive invention, and an ideography (or “concept-writing,” as in Frege’s *Begriffsschrift*) that will jointly “oppose – to temptation of presence – the rigour of the subtractive, in which being is said solely as that which cannot be supposed on the basis of any presence or experience.” (p. 27)

According to Badiou, this rigorous presentation of being qua being as the “presentation of presentation” is equally opposed to the “Heideggerian thesis of a withdrawal of being.” Specifically, according to Badiou, “It is not in the withdrawal-of-its-presence that being foments the forgetting of its original disposition to the point of assigning us – us at the extreme point of nihilism – to a poetic “overturning”” (p. 27). Rather, according to Badiou, the “ontological truth” is that “it is in being foreclosed from presentation that being as such is constrained to be sayable, for humanity, within the imperative effect of a law, the most rigid of all conceivable laws, the law of demonstrative and formalizable inference.” (p. 27) In particular, the axiomatic of set theory formulates a rigorous theory of the conditions under which multiples can be “counted as one” and thereby makes “multiples”, which are generally conceived as in themselves inconsistent, presentable and *consistent* sets. In this sense, according to Badiou, the operation or structure of the “count-as-one,” which is spelled out inexplicitly but with the positive force of law in the axiom system, formulates the “system of conditions through which the multiple can be recognized as multiple” at all.

This conception of the axiomatic structure of the “count-as-one” itself formulates the consequences of an “axiomatic decision” that is, according to Badiou, at the origin of his “entire discourse.” The decision is that of the “non-being of the one.” (p. 31). In the first pages of *Being and Event*, Badiou announces the decision that “the one *is not*” as a decision to “break with the arcana of the one and the multiple in which philosophy is born and buried, arcana of the one and the multiple in which philosophy is born and buried.” (p. 23). The decision has the consequence that, on the one hand, there cannot be supposed to exist a One of all that exists, a universe or totality of beings; and on the other hand, that “the one, which is not, solely exists as *operation*” (p. 24), namely that of the “count-as-one” whose structure is formulated by axiomatic set theory. In Meditation Three of *Being and Event*, Badiou reads Russell’s paradox and the related set-theoretical paradoxes as confirming the non-existence of the one-all or the totality of all that exists. In particular, according to Badiou, due to the paradoxes it is necessary to abandon the hope of explicitly defining the notion of a set or of set membership; similarly, it is obligatory to “prohibit paradoxical multiples;” this involves, in particular, to prohibiting formulas “which induce incoherency,” including even the prohibitive formula $\sim (a \in a)$ itself. The conception here, in other words, is of an effectively prohibitive axiomatic *control* of linguistic formulation whose dictates *themselves* cannot be expressed internal to the language itself regulated, in that any such expression would result in the “ruin of the language” by introducing inconsistency within it. (p. 43)

As Badiou notes, it is relevant in relation to the status of this prohibition that Cantor himself anticipated, even before Russell demonstrated his result, that the assumption of the existence of a set of all sets, as well as certain other “too large” sets, would lead to inconsistency; accordingly, he designated these

“pure inconsistent multiplicities” and identified them with the divine or absolute (as opposed to the consistently formalizable “mathematical” infinities treated in his theory of transfinite ordinals and cardinals). With this recognition, according to Badiou, Cantor “wavers” between the onto-theological thought of a supreme infinite being of the absolute and a “mathematical ontology” for which paradox “fixes the point of non-being from whence it can be established that there is *a* presentation of being.” Specifically, according to Badiou, set theory “designates” pure or inconsistent multiplicities as “pure non-being”; set theory thereby legislates on “what is not”, thereby “enacting, under the effect of the paradoxes – in which it registers its particular non-being as obstacle (which, by that token, is *the* non-being)” the axiomatic decision of the non-being of the one-all. (p. 42) Mathematical set theory thus “indicates,” “designates,” “fixes,” or “legislates on” non-being by fixing it as the “beyond” of inconsistent multiplicity, which occupies the place that would be occupied by the One-All if it could exist. In this respect, it constitutively *excludes* what is (from the perspective of being qua presentable) the non-being of the inconsistent one-all, foreclosing it with the force of an axiomatic prohibition whose force itself cannot itself be explicitly stated. But there is nevertheless, according to Badiou, another kind of “figure” of what in the multiple does not conform to the consistent law of the “count-as-one,” a kind of “phantom remainder” of the non-being of inconsistency that is prohibitively excluded from its operation. In particular, “once the entirety of a situation is subject to the law of the one and consistency, it is necessary, from the standpoint of immanence to the situation, that the pure multiple, absolutely unrepresentable according to the count, be *nothing*.” (p. 53). This “nothing,” though “by itself...nothing more than the name of unrepresentation in presentation,” is there, within presentation, a kind of “phantom of inconsistency” or the designation of “that undecidable of presentation which is its unrepresentable.” (p. 55). Badiou also terms this “nothing” “the void” and identifies it, in the context of ontology, with the empty set, which according to Badiou, amounts to “naming the void as multiple” (p. 59). As Badiou notes, the introduction of the empty set allows the canonical set-theoretical construction of the natural numbers from it alone by means of iterated operations of set formation. In this sense the void or empty set is, according to Badiou, “*the sole term from which ontology’s compositions without concept weave themselves*” (p. 57)

The void or empty set thus manifests, within ontology, a kind of delicate point at which the inconsistency that is constitutive of being in itself and which cannot appear as such within (consistent) ontology is nevertheless allowed to appear by means of a pure “act” of auto-nomination:

Naturally, because the void is indiscernible as a term (because it is not-one), its inaugural appearance is a pure act of nomination. This name cannot be specific; it cannot place the void under anything that would subsume it – this would be to reestablish the one. The name cannot indicate that the void is this or that. The act of nomination, being a-specific, consumes itself, indicating nothing other than the unrepresentable as such. In ontology, however, the unrepresentable occurs within a presentative forcing which disposes it as the nothing from which everything proceeds. The consequence is that the name of the void is a pure *proper name*, which indicates itself, which does not bestow any index of difference within what it refers to, and which auto-declares itself in the form of the multiple, despite there being *nothing* which is numbered by it.

Ontology commences, ineluctably, once the legislative Ideas of the multiple are unfolded, by the pure utterance of the arbitrariness of a proper name. This name, this sign, indexed to the void, is, in a sense that will always remain enigmatic, the proper name of being. (p. 59).

Here, the non-specificity of the name of the void with respect to what it names is simply the necessary result of the non-being of the one. This non-being requires, according to Badiou, that the name or indication within ontology of the inconsistency that is incapable of being named as such take the form of the self-consuming auto-nomination of the void. At the very limits of the possibility of presentation, there is therefore necessarily a singular and unique presence that subsequently grounds the whole hierarchy of ontological construction, a phantom-like remainder within the realm of ordered, constructed being of what constitutively escapes and precedes it, which in constituting the natural numbers, thereby makes possible the whole consistent realm of countable being.

As I have argued in *The Politics of Logic*, Badiou's axiomatic decision against the One-All is itself just one side of a duality of possible orientations of thought toward being that are open in the wake of Russell's paradox and the related paradoxes. The dual is that of *consistent incompleteness* and *inconsistent completeness*. The paradoxes themselves show the untenability of the combination of consistency and completeness which is characteristic of the two older orientations of (what I have called) "onto-theology" and "constructivism", and thus necessitate, as I argue there, that one or the other of these orientations (what I call the "generic" and the "paradoxico-critical") must be adopted if they are comprehended at all. But they leave open which one, and it is equally possible to take the "generic" orientation that Badiou adopts, which combines the application of the rigorous mandate of consistency to all that can be described or considered to exist with the denial that *any* situation can be complete or total, or the "paradoxico-critical" one that I defend in the book, which by contrast *affirms* the existence of a one-all or total universe along with its constitutive paradoxes and antinomies. Though there are various reasons for adopting one of the post-Cantorian orientations or the other, relative to specific problems, one reason for favoring the paradoxico-critical orientation is that it is from this perspective alone that it is possible critically to interrogate on formal grounds the force of the traditional prohibition of contradiction that figures in the force of the "law of noncontradiction", and thereby to allow the specific phenomena of constitutive inconsistency, in-closure, and undecidability at the limits positively to appear.

From the paradoxico-critical perspective, several objections can be made to Badiou's picture of the interrelationships of presence, being, and the nothing as figured or manifest in the empty set. To begin with, as we have already seen, Badiou's understands sets as the result of a "counting as one" which forces or permits the mutual consistency of the set's elements, allowing them to be presented within ontology as consistent beings. This is to appeal to an *operational* conception of set formation: sets exist

as consistent and presentable only insofar as the “count as one” has somehow or at some time been performed. But the nature and basis of this performance are themselves obscure; moreover, it is unclear how any such operative conception of the “formation” of sets by means of any kind of act, performance, or temporal operation could underwrite a theory of ontology or of all that *can* be said of being as such. Here, Badiou’s picture appears to replicate the problems that have been the focus of objections against the constructivist or hierarchical pictures (such as Russell’s theory of types and the “iterative conception” of sets) that arose in the attempt to preserve the consistency of axiomatic set theory in the wake of the paradoxes. In particular, the prohibition of inconsistent totality appears to require the imposition of a hierarchical picture on which there is, or can be, no “formed” totality of all sets since the “formation” of ever-larger sets can only ever have proceeded so far through the iterated stages. The picture is complicated, in itself, by the consideration that any reasonable consideration of the foundations of actual mathematical claims and arguments apparently requires that not only finite but also many infinite totalities must be considered to be already “formed” in this sense; it is thus incumbent upon a defender of the picture to clarify how such infinite totalities may be considered to be created in finite time. But even more problematic for the picture is the clear sense in which the “formation” of ever-higher levels itself appears to require, *even as an “open” and indefinitely extensible “possibility,”* implicit or explicit appeal to the actual existence of the totality of the domain in which each stage of formation takes place. If there were not such an implicit or explicit appeal, it is reasonable to hold, it would not be possible to defend the intuition that the continuation of the process of formation “must always” be possible, or to make sense in operative terms of the supposed “operation” of the iteration of set formation itself. The coherent motivation of the hierarchical and operative picture would thus seem to depend on constitutive implicit or explicit reference to exactly what it is supposed to exclude: the totality of the set-theoretical universe, or of all that exists.

By contrast with the constructivist picture ensconced in Russell’s theory of types and the iterative conception of sets, Badiou’s conception of the “count as one” does not aim to capture an operative process viewed as taking place entirely *within* the “ontological” domain of hierarchically ordered existence. Rather, for Badiou the operation of the “count as one” is the condition for the possibility of any presentation or regime of presence, insofar as it allows what would otherwise be “pure inconsistent multiplicity” to be *consistently* presented. But with respect to the inconsistent totality that is held, on both pictures, not to exist, the operative intuition is much the same. On both kinds of pictures, it is the axiomatic structure that implicitly dictates the conditions for set formation which *also* implicitly formulates the prohibition of the inconsistent one-all, a prohibition which must not, officially, even be stateable as the prohibition *of* anything, since it must be impossible to name or designate what is thereby prohibited. The prohibition is nevertheless necessary in order to ensure or produce the existence of an ordered realm in which consistency can always be assumed. The assurance is founded on the mandate that Badiou formulates as the “most rigid of all conceivable laws,” that of “demonstrative and formalizable inference” in accordance with the law of noncontradiction. According to Badiou, only the adoption of an axiomatic system can formulate this mandate in a way that does not involve naming that which cannot, on the picture, be named: that “being” which is, in itself “pure inconsistency” and which does not, on Badiou’s own prior axiomatic decision, ever count as one in its totality.

As we have seen, though, this leaves the underlying *motivation* of the adoption of the axiom system essentially obscure, and moreover leaves the status of the prohibition and mandate themselves which are thereby adopted completely unclear. In fact, the problem is not just that the prohibition of inconsistency is here unmotivated, but that it actually undermines itself, in that it must apparently amount to the prohibition of what *cannot* be stated, described, or positively referred to in any case. The prohibition which yields the specific possibility of the “count-as-one” as an operation governed by the particular axiomatic system of ZF, as well as the adoption of this system to preserve consistency itself in the face of the paradoxes, must thus be the prohibition of the presentation of what is anyway unrepresentable, the constitution of the regime of presentation and ontological being by way of the enjoinder against the presentation of what can in no way be.

This is, of course, the same overdetermination that we have repeatedly seen in relation to theories of negation and of the specific basis of the law of non-contradiction, from Parmenides onward. As we have seen, the overdetermination involved in the enjoinder against the presentation of what-is-not corresponds directly to the topological picture of negation, on which negation is pictured incoherently as, on one hand, drawing an ontic line between types of beings (those that “are” and those that “are not”) and, on the other, drawing an absolute line around all beings as such. The incoherent overlap between the two moments of this picture, whereby the “realm” or domain of non-being is first designated, and then its designation is prohibited, makes for the overdetermination of force that appears to underlie the motivation for the application of the law of non-contradiction itself. The law must therefore appear to be affirmed and maintained from a position which is itself strictly impossible by the lights of its own mandate. This is the position of an actual undecidability of being and non-being, or of the recognition of the positive reality of contradiction, which the application of the law of non-contradiction officially prohibits. Badiou’s conception of the count-as-one, the ontological realm of presence, and its axiomatic demarcation from the broader open horizon of being in itself as inconsistent multiplicity appears to replicate this picture, this time under the specific impetus of the paradoxes which demonstrate the impossibility of the combination of totality and consistency. The paradoxes lead Badiou to deny the existence of the one-all because of the inconsistency necessarily involved in it, but in so doing he remains constrained to *refer* to this inconsistency, and hence to the being “in itself” which is thus said not to exist.⁴⁷ Inconsistency then itself appears doubly and ambiguously, both as “being in itself” prior to the putatively determined operation of the “count-as-one” and as “non-being” from the perspective of axiomatic ontology or the theory of presentation. It is only under the condition of this double appearance of inconsistency that the mandate of consistency can itself be considered to be instituted and maintained by the adoption of the particular axiomatic system (here, ZF set theory) which, subsequently regulating ontological existence by means of a determined structural conception of consistency and constructability, is thereby considered to express everything “of being” that is expressible at all.

⁴⁷ In this sense, far from “making an end” to the Parmenidean theme of the one and the many, Badiou has just recaptured its deepest topological structure.

An alternative can be found in paradoxico-criticism's recognition of the necessity of the constitutive reference to totality, which also must be seen, in light of the paradoxes, as constitutively inconsistent. From the perspective of paradoxico-criticism, accordingly, there is not and cannot be any *absolute* prohibition of inconsistency; rather, inconsistency is recognized as, on the one hand, deeply characteristic of the being of totality as such and, on the other, as capable of being foreclosed or restricted only within certain *particular* and specific constituted domains of regulative force. It is always possible to prohibit contradictions, but only on the basis of a specific determination of what will *count* as one. Such a determination takes place with the constitution of a language, or a determinate configuration of intelligibility, and this constitution always *has* as one of its conditions a determination of the sense of negation by means of the constitution of a particular figure of the totality of beings or of all that is sayable about them. But although these constituted figures each themselves constitutively involve an idea of the totality which must accordingly itself be inconsistent, they are temporally variable; as we have seen in connection with Heidegger's radicalization of the ontological difference in the context of the history-of-being project, it here becomes possible to consider a deeper *temporal* determination of the characteristically metaphysical determination of "beings as a whole and as such" in the series of differing historical epochs of the being of beings. The epochality of each of these determinations reflects the character of being itself, which holds itself back and withdraws with respect to each epoch that it determines, and in the growing abandonment of beings by being, thought as beingness or the increasingly empty generality of the *koinon*. Here, in other words, both logical negation *and* the specific force of the logical law of noncontradiction are understood as the constituted result, in relation to specific metaphysical epochs, of the deeper differentiation that is characteristic of being in relation to beings (the ontological difference) and, even more deeply, of being in itself. This pre-originary difference, differentiating itself, itself produces the specific sense of any determined system of reference to the (inconsistent) totality of beings, on the basis of which a particular sense of negation and a subsequent regulation of inconsistency can appear.

To see things this way is not simply to deny, however, Badiou's intuition that there is nothing "outside" formal structure, or even the specific use of set theory in theorizing the structures of being, non-being and nothingness. In particular, as we have seen, on the paradoxico-critical orientation the relationship of set membership symbolized by ' ϵ ' can be seen as an "allegory" or formally-indicative metaphorization of the logical structure of linguistic predication itself. This interpretation gains concreteness and motivation not only from Cantor's suggestion that the unity of the set can be specifically related to the unity of what Plato understood as the (predicative) idea, but also from the actual formal use of the structure of set membership as representing relations of subsumption under predicative concepts, as for instance in figuring the relationship of "satisfaction" in Tarski's approach to semantics and to truth-definition. If, however, set theory is appealed to in this way as illuminating the structure of possible predication *in general*, then the relevant set theory is not necessarily ZF; rather, the specific possibility of *inconsistent* predication, which appears positively necessary if we are to explicitly predicate anything of totality at all, must be included as at least a structural possibility. We can do so, and also put the formal intuition of a relationship between set theory and predication on a firm and general basis, by appealing to the naïve set theory essentially formulated by Frege in the *Grundgesetze*; in particular, here

it is possible and necessary to affirm the axiom of *unlimited* comprehension, which calls for a determinate and existent extension for each linguistically meaningful predicate.

After Russell and Cantor, it is clear that to do so is to acknowledge the necessary structural existence of paradox, contradiction and inclosure as a constitutive feature of the phenomena of totality, sense, and truth themselves. With respect to the Fregean logicist project of grounding mathematics on set theory, this acknowledgment also points to a necessary “outside” of the constituted domain of arithmetic founded on the iteration of operations of set formation, what Badiou calls “ontology”. The phenomenon of this inconsistent “outside” is, however, also characteristic of the structure of sense in relation to reference itself; for as is shown by Russell’s paradox, sense can only be generally correlated with reference on pain of recognizing the total domain of sense as *constitutively* inconsistent. Thought in terms of its broader ontological determination, this inconsistency looks two ways, in an “inward” and an “outward” direction: inwardly, it points to the necessary structural contradictions which inherently arise for any constituted domain of sense in relation to its totality and what it understands as the basis of its own constitution; outwardly, it points to the phenomenon of a specific *excess* of sense over reference, such that there is always “too much” sense in relation to the realm of reference, or too much structural *presentation* to be recaptured by any consistent regime of presence.⁴⁸ As we have seen in connection with Heidegger, this structural excess of sense can itself be understood, in relation to the temporal phenomenon of projection that is ontologically constitutive of sense as such, as the outcome of a more basic differentiation that is pre-original difference itself, and which underlies the historical constitution of every determinate regime of sense. Thought being-historically and as a radicalization of the ontological difference between being and beings, this pre-original difference ultimately grounds all such determinate regimes and makes for the very possibility of the imposition and maintenance of a determined conception of negation and contradiction within them. What *appears* therein as non-being, negation and privation thus has a more determining and global source in the primary and pre-original excess of the differentiation of difference itself.

To put things this way is not actually to disagree with anything Badiou says about “being in itself” as inconsistent multiplicity or its foreclosure from specific presentation within a determinate axiom system designed to preserve consistency, such as ZF; indeed, it is a consequence of the inherent inconsistency of totality demonstrated by the paradoxes that the whole of beings, if it is to be thought or referred to at all, must be thought or referred to as *outside* any such system. However, it *is* to insist upon the cogency of a question about the possibility of presentation which is itself posed in a sphere that is not limited *a priori* to *consistent* presentation, and thereby to keep open the question about the broader ontological foundations for the specific phenomenon of consistency itself. As we have seen, Badiou answers this question only by the reference to a broader sphere of being as “inconsistent multiplicity” and to the force of an obscure operation of “counting as one” which constitutes the domain of presentation on the basis of the superior mandates of the axiomatic system. But the reference to “inconsistent multiplicity” which is thereby excluded must itself be incoherent if these mandates are in force, and the operation of the “count as one” and its force in maintaining consistency have the

⁴⁸ For this “excess of sense”, see *The Politics of Logic*, --

overdetermined structure we have seen repeatedly, that of the prohibition of the ostensibly impossible or the requirement of the ostensibly necessary. Approaching the broader ontological (or metalogical) situation in a less prejudiced manner, it must be acknowledged both that any axiomatic system capable of capturing *all* arithmetic relationships (and thus the “real structure” of beings insofar as they are countable) must be inconsistent, and on the other that the consistency of any system capable of capturing arithmetic relationships at all cannot be proven or guaranteed by its own internal means.⁴⁹ To acknowledge this is to acknowledge that the decisionist or axiomatic force of any mandate intended to enforce the consistency of a determinate system of presentation by differentiating, *from* the explicit or inexplicit totality of inconsistent being itself, a determinate regime of the maintenance of consistency is itself possible only on the broader basis of an understanding reference, implicit or explicit, to this broader totality itself. This is at the same time, by contrast with the delimitative gesture which results in the prohibition of the expression of what must be expressed in the very prohibition, to affirm the unlimited power of language in relation to this totality, and to all the predicates of various types (including, eminently, “sense”, “truth”, or “being”) which appear to involve it.

What, then, of Badiou’s conception of what is for him the specific ontological *phenomenon* of the ‘nothing,’ its appearance in ZFC set theory at the very *foundation* of the hierarchical constitution of numbers as the empty set? From the perspective of the broader application of naïve set theory in view here, it is not necessary to deny the existence or uniqueness of the empty set, or to deny that it can be considered to ‘present’, in a particular sense of ‘present’, the inconsistent totality of being itself. As we have seen, the idea of a specific phenomenalization of the nothing, by means of which a first explicit relation to being itself (over against the totality of beings) becomes possible, is the key idea of Heidegger’s position in “What is Metaphysics?” In his later development of the being-historical project, the possible phenomenalization of the “nothing” of any determinate epochal thinking of the being of beings is itself seen on the more radical basis of a pre-originary and *pre*-phenomenal differentiation of difference. This does not mean, however, that the grounding of each total epochal configuration does not “appear”, within these configurations, as nothingness and nullity; indeed, that it does so in each case is the exact correlate of the assumption of a constitutive order of the founded and the founding within the field of ontic relations, which is characteristic of metaphysics in each of its configurations. From this perspective, therefore, it is not necessary to deny the specific phenomenon of void, or of ground as ab-ground, at the “bottom” of each foundationally constituted total order; but this phenomenon ultimately tells us more about the constitutive structure of founding and founded than about the broader ontological situation of the relationship of being and beings itself. From the paradoxico-critical perspective, indeed, as we have seen, it is necessary to think a priority of difference as *pre*-originary, which is to say that it is necessary to think of it as prior to *any* foundational order. From this perspective, there is indeed a void at the bottom of all constituted and founded things, and the intuition formulated in the standard construction that “weaves” the numbers from the void captures the necessity that any such order must indeed foreclose its *own* total foundation from any possible presentation. But *this* entire structure of the founding and the founded, including the very possibility of generating the ordinal numbers and of counting as such, must itself be thought as conditioned by a

⁴⁹ This is the content of Gödel’s first and second incompleteness theorems, respectively.

more original or pre-original difference which contains, in itself, no hierarchy and no privileged order of beings. If at the bottom of the construction of constructible things is the atomic void, it is thus also necessary to think as prior to the order of possible construction an infinite and bottomless affirmation of difference. “Before” the constitution of (consistent) hierarchy and before even the phenomenon of the “nothing” at its origin, it is accordingly necessary to think a pre-original difference at the root of phenomena, a difference that shows up or phenomenalizes itself, within any hierarchical order or within the order of (numerical, ordinal) hierarchy itself, only as irreducibly split between, on the one hand, the nullity of the foundation (the zero) and, on the other, the openness of the “indefinite” possibility of its hierarchical progression.⁵⁰ To consider the way in which the whole hierarchical regime of number, “woven” from the void but also thought as irreducibly “open” in its indefinite development, is thus constituted only under the condition of a specific prohibition of the inconsistent whose force must always be equivocal, and of a prohibitive limitation of language with respect to its own inherent powers of predication, is to consider a specific origin of number from a field of broader relations correlative to the “virtual” field induced or presupposed by sense itself; it is, in other words, to contemplate an “ideal genesis” of number, under the constraint of consistency, imposed upon a determinable but indeterminate field itself constituted by pre-originary difference.

From this perspective it is also necessary to challenge Badiou’s specific proposition, according to which the empty set is the “proper name” of being, even *within* the context of the founded hierarchy that ZFC captures and the standard pictures of the realm of sets represent. In particular, this proposition can be opposed, in an obvious way, to Derrida’s conception of the pre-originary difference that he figures as a *differance* and ‘trace’ that is, ‘in a certain way, older than being.’ On Derrida’s conception, in particular, “there will be no unique name, even if it were the name of Being.” (p. 27). The point of his insistence here is explicitly *not* to oppose the metaphysical or ontotheological thought of a specific name of being to the thought, equally ontotheological (in the mode of “negative theology”) of Being as an ineffable being or essence, transcendent in its perfection to all and any possibility of naming or description.⁵¹ It is, rather, to point to the structurally *necessary* unnameability of *differance* as the pre-originary condition for all constituted structures and all possibility of reference itself.⁵² In this way, the pre-originary difference at the ultimate root of all phenomenalization and presence does not have a name, not even the name “being in itself” and not even the name “inconsistency”. The empty set is itself not such a name, and in naming the void it does not name inconsistent being in itself. What it *can* be considered to do, under the specific limitative condition of the *prohibition* of inconsistency, is to *indicate* pre-originary difference, or rather to trace it by means of a dynamic tracing that is also, simultaneously, erasure. In this precise sense, the empty set is not a name but an indicator, a formal indicator of the very meta-

⁵⁰ Miller vs. Badiou: Mark and lack (?) – also: ideal genesis of number (Plato).

⁵¹ ‘There is no name for it’: a proposition to be read in its *platitude*. This unnameable is not an ineffable Being which no name could approach: God, for example.” (p. 26)

⁵² “Older” than Being itself, such a differance has no name in our language. But we ‘already know’ that if it is unnameable, it is not provisionally so, not because our language has not yet found or received this *name*, or because we would have to seek it in another language, outside the finite system of our own. It is rather because there is no *name* for it at all, not even the name or essence of Being, not even that of “difference,” which is not a name, which is not a pure nominal unity, and unceasingly dislocates itself in a chain of differing and deferring substitutions.” (p. 26)

structural basis of form itself in the tracing of the determination that will, for Heidegger, separate presence from presencing, being “in itself” from its determined phenomenalization in metaphysics. As Derrida emphasizes, the mode of this indication communicates with that of an irreducible temporality, or even a constitutive undecidability of temporality and spacing, that situates the constituted time of numerical order and founded hierarchy in undecidable relation to a more complex and undecidable play of the trace, which is both temporally “older” and more immediate than the “original” temporality of being and even of *Ereignis* “itself.”

Along these lines and following Derrida in a certain affirmation of the “play” of this trace, it is certainly possible to formulate, on the basis of the paradoxico-critical orientation, a further critique of Badiou’s picture of the specific conditions for the kind of systematic theory of “appearances” that he calls, in *Logics of Worlds*, a “phenomenology,” to be set alongside the “ontology” developed in *Being and Event*. This conception of phenomenology depends upon, in particular, the intuition of an imposed and hierarchical order of structure, itself committed to a constructivist and atomist picture of composition, and ultimately incapable (as I have suggested elsewhere) of grounding in any motivated way the distinction it presupposes between the order of things in themselves and that of their phenomenally constituted appearances.⁵³ Since I have developed this critique elsewhere, I will not repeat it here; what is important to note in the present context is just that Badiou’s conception of a “phenomenology” of the determinate structuring of appearances as distinct from the general ontology of situations itself presupposes, in each case of what Badiou understands as a phenomenally structured world, the prior imposition or constitution of what he calls a “transcendental”, a determining structure of relations whose own positive ontological and temporal conditions of existence Badiou does little to clarify.

On the other hand, though, within the ambit of the question of the basis of *presence in general* – the distinctive Heideggerian question which must be posed, it seems, in a way that is both broader and more specified than the question Badiou treats under the heading of a “phenomenology” of appearances (broader because it is equally phenomenological *and* ontological; more specified because its presence is here understood as irreducibly both spatial *and* temporal) – it is possible on this basis to reconsider Badiou’s specific rejection, in the opening pages of *Being and Event*, of the “Heideggerian thesis of the withdrawal of being”. As we have seen here, this Heideggerian thought of withdrawal, developed first as the ontological difference and second, more deeply, as the epochal withholding of being itself, points toward or communicates with a thought of pre-original difference out of which the specific structure of what Heidegger designates as the truth of Being and Ereignis must themselves be thought. Under the condition of the paradoxical “closure” of the metaphysics of presence in the exhaustion of its constitutive structure of representation, this points to the position from which this

⁵³ In particular, in the “axiom” of “materialism”, according to which every atom of appearing is also a real (ontological) atom, we see the basic and basically ungrounded assumption of an atomistic correspondence within structure. With Heidegger, we should rather see phenomenology and ontology as the *same* topic, and both as having unitary conditions in what relates the field of possible ontical presencing itself to its ‘exterior’ (structural or temporal or ontological) conditions.

truth can again be thought as the leap to what is wholly other, the “other” beginning of another history. What is ultimately at stake here, therefore, is not the nostalgic recovery of an origin, or the thought of the recapitulation of a presence full in itself but inaccessible to structure. It is thus a misreading (at least of this strand of Heidegger’s text) to suppose, as Badiou does, that it envisions the withdrawal of being from presence only as the prelude to a poetic or mystical recapitulation of what is itself a figure of presence, or of the full and adequate presentation, beyond structurally determined sense, of the general extra-structural (e.g. “extra-logical”, poetic, religious or mystical) conditions of presentation themselves. Rather, as I have suggested, the thought of withdrawal is itself the thought of a structurally inherent undecidability characteristic of structure as such, and in fact positively indicated on the basis of the very dynamics of structure and constitution in relation to their own constitution and regulative force. What withdraws is not, then, something simply exterior to structure, but it also not something that can be simply named within it; it is, rather, indicated in the metalogical reflection that considers and decomposes the possibility of structuration and reference themselves. In withdrawing, it traces; the trace is the trace of the presentation of presence, or of the successive determination of the inconsistent totality by way of the specific mandate of consistency throughout the history of metaphysics. Such a conception of what withdraws as the structurally indicated *temporal* trace of what is never simply present but is nevertheless problematically presupposed in every ontological-ontic structure of sense and reference, and every conception of the normative force of logic in relation to negation and contradiction, might be the specific condition for a critical recovery of Heidegger’s conception of the truth of being in our time.

V

As we have seen, on a straightforward reading of the solution suggested by the Eleatic visitor in the *Sophist* to the problem of falsehood and negativity posed by Parmenides, the solution grounds the specific possibility of negativity, and thereby falsehood, in the specific phenomenon of non-being which is itself made possible by the limited mixing of difference with the other great types under the overarching condition of the logical koinon. In a passage in *Difference and Repetition*, however Deleuze points to the possibility of a different reading of Plato, one that elicits the properly “dialectical” moment of questioning which precedes and also envelops this positive solution itself in the text of the *Sophist*:

We are not concerned at the moment with the distinction which should be drawn between the two instances of the problem and the question, but rather with the essential role which both together play in the Platonic dialectic – a role comparable to that which the negative will play later, for example in the Hegelian dialectic. However, it is precisely *not* the negative which plays this role in Plato – so much so that we must consider whether or not the celebrated thesis of the *Sophist*, despite certain ambiguities, should be understood as follows: ‘non’ in the expression ‘non-being’ expresses *something other than the negative*. On this point, the mistake of the traditional accounts is to impose upon us a dubious alternative: in seeking to ground negation, we are satisfied if we manage to posit, in being itself or in relation to being, some sort of non-

being (it seems to us that this non-being is necessarily the being of the negative or the ground of negation). The alternative is thus the following: either there is no non-being and negation is illusory and ungrounded, or there is non-being, which puts the negative in being and grounds negation. Perhaps, however, we have reasons to say *both* that there is non-being *and* that the negative is illusory. (p. 63)

As we have seen above, taking seriously the implications of the pre-originary difference which is pointed out, in different ways, by Heidegger, Deleuze, and Derrida, allows us to discern an origin of negation in the more basic structure of difference and differentiation; on the Heideggerian position, this more basic structure underlies, in particular, the constitution of any total domain of reference to beings, whereby it also appears as limit-contradiction and paradox and thereby gives significance to the specific “non” of non-being. As I have tried to show, the picture can in fact be independently motivated through a consideration of the structure of specifically *logical* negation, such as occurs in Frege’s own discussion of negation and is further articulated in his picture of sense. In developing the conception further, Deleuze points to a specific priority of the *problem* or of the *question* in the differential grounding of negation and non-being, indicative of a primary structure “in Being” itself:

Neither the problem nor the question is a subjective determination marking a moment of insufficiency in knowledge. Problematic structure is part of objects themselves, allowing them to be grasped as signs, just as the questioning or problematizing instance is a part of knowledge allowing its positivity and its specificity to be grasped in the act of *learning*. More profoundly still, Being (what Plato calls the Idea) ‘corresponds’ to the essence of the problem or the question as such. It is as though there were an ‘opening’, a ‘gap’, an ontological ‘fold’ which relates being and the question to one another. In this relation, being is difference itself. Being is also non-being, *but non-being is not the being of the negative*; rather it is the being of the problematic, the being of problem and question. Difference is not the negative; on the contrary, non-being is Difference: *heteron*, not *enantion*. For this reason non-being should rather be written (non)-being or, better still, ?-being. In this sense, it turns out that the infinitive, the *esse*, designates less a proposition than the interrogation to which the proposition is supposed to respond. (pp. 63-64).

The claim, according to which the infinitive “being” itself should not be considered to have, primarily, a referential meaning but should rather be considered in terms of the specific structure of interrogation and response, finds ample confirmation in Frege’s own conception of the basis of negation in relation to the constitution of the realm of sense itself. As we have seen (section II above), Frege’s primary appeal in arguing for a realm of indifferently true or false contents of thought graspable in thought is the structure of the interrogative question: since it must be possible to comprehend a question prior to knowing its answer, it must be possible to grasp the contents of indifferently true as well as false sentences as well. For Frege as for Deleuze, in other words, the specific structure of the question has a general priority *over* negation and non-being with respect to the constitution of the domain of sense itself; this priority extends to the very determination of the structure of sense as such, and cannot be treated as simply one separable element or external factor with respect to it. This provides an

alternative, as I have tried to show, to any picture that accounts for the phenomenon of negativity in terms of the specific appearance of phenomenalization of non-being among beings; in a deep sense, this is the key to overcoming the basically mimetic conception in which falsehood is understood as illusion.

As I have argued, this relationship between the origin of negativity and the constitution of sense points to a different sort of determination of the negative, not out of non-being or its phenomenalization, but out of the inherent reflexive dynamics of totality itself in relation to itself and what it encompasses; in particular, I have argued that the specific structure of logical negation cannot appear except correlatively with the constitutive structure of limit-paradox and contradiction which is structurally characteristic of *any* total constituted domain of sense. Here, it becomes possible to consider that negation and contradiction have an actual structural basis, not in any psychological attitude, act, or indeed in any ontic relationship whatsoever, but indeed in the inherent *metalogical* dynamics of totality and consistency as they show up in metalogical structures such as that of Russell's paradox.⁵⁴ To consider this structure as determinative of negation is, as Deleuze says, not to point to any subjective determination or any contingent insufficiency in knowledge; rather, it is to consider the question of the basis of logical structure from quite a different position than that involved in any subjectivist, psychological, or indeed ontic conception. It is to consider, in particular, the priority here of a very special kind of question in relation to the structure of negation, non-being, and falsehood: the kind of question that asks after the conditions of possibility of a logically determined field of content *in general* from a position that is not simply exterior to it. This is the sort of question that is posed in the ill-defined field sometimes discussed as "metalogic", where it leads to the specific results of Cantor, Russell, and Gödel; as we have seen, it is also the kind of question posed by Heidegger in asking after the ultimately temporal basis of the sense of beings in their differential relation to Being itself. As Deleuze suggests, discerning this kind of problematic, in Plato's text, behind or enveloping the specific kind of solution given by the Visitor in the *Sophist* can also elicit the specific sense of the dialectic involved in Plato's own conception of the "method" of synthesis and diaeresis, prior to its later fixation in the Hegelian idea of determinative negation. As Deleuze suggests, to understand Plato in this way is to see the dialectic as a process of differentiation, prior to and at odds with representation, capable of bringing out that aspect of what Plato thinks as the Idea that is itself linked to being itself, prior to and independent of mimesis and identity.

It can also, as Deleuze says, indicate the way to a reading of Heidegger that brings out what, in his text, retains the status of the posed problematic, with its specific priority in relation to structured sense. In particular, as Deleuze points out in a brief "Note on Heidegger's Philosophy of Difference," there are many *indicia* in Heidegger's corpus of a more originary difference at the root of all posing of the ontological problematic and ultimately responsible for its structure. First, in the 1949 preface to *The Essence of Reasons*, Heidegger designates the ontological difference as the "not between beings and Being"; as we have seen, this points toward a more radical determination of the ontological difference itself in the late, being-historical project, now thought *temporally* as the withdrawal of Being from beings. Second, as Heidegger explains in *The Essence of Reasons* itself, the ontological difference is

⁵⁴ Cf. Bova (2010); also *The Politics of Logic*,

primordially related to questioning itself; in particular, it is the “being of questions”, whereby, as Heidegger says there, particular domains or determinate fields are marked out for possible coherent questioning. (We shall develop this consideration of the relationship of the demarcation of fields to questioning and the basis of both in ontological difference further in chapter 7, below). As Deleuze further notes, this means that “difference is not an object of representation”; in particular, in ontological difference there appears a primary difference that cannot be subordinated to identity or related as a third term to the two supposedly self-standing terms of Being and beings. In fact, as Deleuze also notes and as we have seen, Heidegger himself would come to repudiate his own earlier conception of the “transcendence of Dasein” which figures, in *The Essence of Reasons* and other early texts, as such a third term; this repudiation, as we have seen, is intimately related to the thorough repudiation of identity and similitude that Heidegger carries out in the *Beitraege* and which allows him to criticize the specific way in which *omiosis* and *mimesis* figure in Plato’s own conception of the *idea* as *koinon*. This leads, as Deleuze points out, to the late position expressed in “The Principle of Identity,” on which difference, which cannot be subordinated to identity, must be thought in terms of a “same” that precedes identity and is rather the “belonging-together of what differs, through a gathering by way of the difference.” (p. 66) Each of these claims points to a deepening recognition, Deleuze suggests, that “the Heideggerian *Not* refers not to negation but to questioning”; in particular, the ontological difference itself and its progressive deepening point to the ever-deepening posing of the question of a differential ground at the heart of the ontological problematic of the sense of the being of beings, or the historical problematic of the truth of being itself.

Deleuze himself endorses all of these suggestions of a primary ‘correspondence’ between difference and questioning at the level of the ontological problematic; by pointing to this correspondence Heidegger has given “renewed splendour to the Univocity of Being.” Deleuze asks only whether Heidegger has in fact fully succeeded in it:

If it is true that some commentators have found Thomist echos in Husserl, Heidegger, by contrast, follows Duns Scotus and gives renewed splendour to the Univocity of Being. But does he effectuate the conversion after which univocal Being belongs only to difference and, in this sense, revolves around being? Does he conceive of *being* in such a manner that it will be truly disengaged from any subordination in relation to the identity of representation?

Deleuze does not answer the question decisively; but he poses, in response, the further suggestion that Heidegger does not in fact completely succeed in thinking the univocity of Being which, in its repetition, owes nothing to identity and representation: “It would seem not, given his [Heidegger’s] critique of the Nietzschean eternal return.” (p. 66)

As I have argued, the thought of a pre-originary difference at the basis of negation, non-being and totality allows for a rigorous metalogical position from which the nature of contradiction and the force of the law of non-contradiction can be considered and interrogated on its deeper ontological ground. It

allows us to see, in particular, how this force is maintained on the overdetermined basis of the edict, originally formulated in Parmenides, which prohibits the impossible and demands the necessary of thought in relation to being as against non-being. This edict and its force, as we have also seen, captures in a basic sense the relationship between thought and being in what Heidegger treats as the “first” beginning, also co-determining the official conception of the nature of non-being in the *Sophist*, the basis of the explicitly stated law of non-contradiction in Aristotle, and logical pictures of the relationship of thinking and being up to Frege and the early Wittgenstein. On Heidegger’s treatment in the *Beitraege*, the specific relationship of being and thinking that is conceived here, beginning explicitly with Plato’s conception of the idea, as representation and identity, culminates with the contemporary configuration of machination and lived experience, in which everything becomes calculable and experiencable on the basis of representation and being as beingness or the *koinon* maximally withdraws. But in the historical maximization or completion of this withdrawal, Heidegger also sees the possibility of the futural reversal or leap in which, beyond the effectivity of trafficking with beings that is characteristic of our present is suddenly reversed into the disclosure of the truth of being itself that will close the epoch of metaphysics as a whole and inaugurate a wholly other history.

As I have argued elsewhere and will attempt to verify in part II, below, the “normative” force with which the logical or rational prohibition of contradiction is maintained in determinate languages and systems of thought is, viewed from a metalogical perspective, coeval with or actually identical with the value and regulative assumption of an instrumental “effectivity”, or of the general guarantee by technical means of the unproblematic and reliable functioning of rule-governed systems for the regulation and production of beings. The development of this value reaches a kind of limit, as I shall argue, with the contemporary technological regime of “information” and computational technologies of “information processing.” Here, as Heidegger himself clearly points out, the idea of universal calculability, as it is presupposed and maintained in the practices, activities and organization of everyday life around the planet, has a basic and indicative significance with respect to the character of the present and its continuing “metaphysical” determination. Moreover, it is no longer possible, for reasons Heidegger did not appreciate as well as the ones he did, to hope to find any simple “exterior” to this unlimited domain of calculability, at least among existing activities and practices (for instance, particularly, those that are seen as determined by existing “cultures” and “ways of life”); rather, what an ontologically and being-historically grounded understanding of the present actually requires is a logically and temporally penetrating critique of the very ideas of practices, techniques, and technologies themselves as they produce and underlie the contemporary global configuration. Here, the metaphysical “reign” of logic is manifest in the actual basis of computing technology in the mechanization of (Fregean) logical relations, which makes possible the definition of a “universal” calculating machine that structurally underlies all actual programmable computers. Thought not just as the basis for specific technologies but as the character of the contemporary interpretation of beings, this regime is characterized by the countability and measurability of all things, save perhaps for an artificially created domain of what is conceived of as the “human”, “emotional,” or “incalculable” and relegated to the (actually strictly correlative) domain of lived experience. But the regime is prepared, from a long way off (both historically and logically speaking) by the actual conception of number, countability, and measurement as the conceptual and practical basis for the demarcation of domains of beings (up to and including the domain of the

“objective” itself) in which the calculative handling of, and trafficking with, beings is thereby possible. The dynamics of this preparation are figured or actually instantiated by the fates of Frege’s logicism, in relation to the assumption of a universally comprehensive language adequate, in its demarcation of sense, to the infinite countable totality of the world.

Seen in these terms, the late-Heideggerian critique of the contemporary metaphysics of technological enframing has as its necessary correlate an ontologically grounded critique of the law of noncontradiction as it operates, historically and in contemporary life, in producing and regulating determinate configurations of thought and practice. This force of the law of noncontradiction is clearly related, in a basic sense, to what is envisioned as the force of logic and logical thinking themselves, both as “intrinsic” characterizations of thinking and in relation to a world conceived as thinkable in its totality. This force, I have argued, can be understood not only from a being-historical position but also from a metalogical one, in which logic itself confronts and provides terms for understanding the basis of its own force, evincing the ultimate ground of the force of coherent reasoning in limit-contradiction and of the effectively decidable in the underlying undecidability of being.

What remains to be asked is just the question of the *temporality* of this basis: how is the effectiveness of logic in regulating thinking supported by or actually constituted on a temporal basis that is not that of eternal presence but rather rooted in the more complex arche-temporal structure of disclosure and truth itself? As has often been noted, Aristotle’s own formulation of the principle of non-contradiction, according to which “It is impossible for the same thing to belong and not to belong at the same time to the same thing and in the same respect”⁵⁵ depends on two conceptual elements which appear extrinsic to the “logical” character of the principle itself (which might be expressed, in and of itself, as $\sim(A \cdot \sim A)$). The first is the reference to “respects” in which something may belong, and the second is the reference to time (“at the same time”). While the first element introduces the Aristotelian regulation of “belonging” or predication according to “respects” which unfolds in the systematic structure of substance and accident, species and genera, the second introduces a particular regulation of becoming, a segmentation of time in relation to the simultaneity of the “now”, which domesticates the contradictoriness of becoming by spreading it out and dispersing it through the punctual succession of moments. As we shall see in more detail in part II, though, the actual dialectical basis for this regulation is more originally visible in Plato’s own struggles, in the late dialogues, with and against the paradoxes of an “unlimited becoming” which appears to manifest the basic character of temporal becoming itself and threatens, as is repeatedly marked in Plato’s text, to undermine every stable identity by letting all things flow off into their opposites and every process of becoming overleap its limits. This problem of “becoming-unlimited”, often identified with a sophistic position, but also that of Heraclitus, according to which the rights that must be accorded to becoming and change in relation to being end, finally, with becoming overtaking all being and making everything unintelligible, is opposed in the late dialogues by a variety of figures of limitation, counting, and measure, including the constitutive reference to a compositional method of the logical “synthesis” of linguistic elements conceived on the model of the limited and regulated phonemes or atomic elements of language in relation to the unlimited continuity

⁵⁵ *Metaph IV 3 1005b19–20*

of voice. But there is also, in the late Plato and marked more by allusion and allegory than explicit description, the suggestion of a *prior ideal genesis of number and discrete order* itself, on the basis of the irreducible dialectical dynamic of the one and the “indefinite” dyad.

As we shall see in more detail in part II, the interrogation of the being-historical basis for the contemporary configuration of the dominance of calculability and machination thus ultimately involves, in reading the history of this basis in the specific metalogical features of the metaphysical tradition back to Plato, uncovering the deep problematic of becoming-unlimited as it underlies the being of number. This also necessarily involves, as we shall see, considering in a basic way the structure of the unlimited and the infinite itself, as it is shown or evinced by using contemporary metalogical and formal methods, and also as it still appears as a kind of foreclosed but dangerous remainder in Plato’s texts, prior to its subsequent domestication in Aristotle’s conception of potentiality. This domestication is itself strictly correspondent, in Aristotle, to the first definition of “logic” in terms of the syllogistic forms; but it forecloses a more original significance of the relationship of the *logos* and the form as idea, which is thought by Plato in terms of the capacity of the logos, before or beyond representation, to capture the real of “what is”, of being in itself. The analytic up to this point has attempted to show how the nature and force of logic, as it thought from Plato to Frege, constitutively includes and structurally evinces a basic ontological problematic of truth with respect to which it operates both as putative solution and regulative delimitation. But is it possible to bring into view, on this basis, the more original relation of *logic to time*?