

The Logic of Being: Plato, Heidegger, Frege

(Chapter 1 of Draft MS: *The Logic of Being: Heidegger, Truth, and Time*)

Talk given at UNM philosophy dept. colloquium – Sept. 6, 2013

This paper is a shortened version of the first chapter of a new book manuscript, entitled: *The Logic of Being: Heidegger, Truth, and Time*. The book is almost finished and I will be travelling to Freiburg as a visiting scholar this fall to solicit feedback on it. In the book, I attempt to develop the implications of Heidegger's question of Being in a contemporary context, including connections to analytic philosophy and also other developments of philosophical thought since Heidegger wrote. The paper I'll read today is intended to describe a particular problematic about being, thinking, logic and time, which (as I'll suggest) was first described by Plato and which is developed in different ways by Heidegger and by Frege. My aim is not to resolve any of the various specific problems involved in this problematic in any definitive way, but only to clarify the problematic itself, and thereby, hopefully, indicate a possible direction for further phenomenological and logical research. Questions about its relationship to the larger project of the book are very welcome in the Q&A period.

I

In a passage in his late dialogue, *The Sophist*, Plato articulates clearly the interlinked problematic of logic, truth, and time in which, as I shall argue, a continuation of the Heideggerian questioning of being and the legacy of the twentieth-century "analytic" philosophy of language today converge. The passage comes in the course of the Eleatic Visitor's account of the views of his predecessors, amounting to what he calls a "battle of gods and giants" (246a) over the nature of being.¹ The battle is between those (the "giants") who seek to "drag everything down to earth" and define being entirely "as the same as body" and those others (the "gods") who "insist violently that true being is certain nonbodily forms that can be thought about" (245a-b). By contrast with this first group, who despise and refuse to listen to those who claim the existence of anything non-corporeal, the second group "takes the bodies of the other[s], and also what they call the truth, and they break them up verbally into little bits and call them a process of generation instead of being..." (246c). But even those who hold the materialist position, the Visitor argues, must accept the existence of mortal animals. To do so is to accept the existence of ensouled bodies, and thus to count the soul or *psyche* among what is. But as these "rough men" must also admit, souls differ in being just or unjust, intelligent or unintelligent. They must also admit that souls *become* just, or intelligent by the "having and presence" [*hexei kai parousia*] of justice or intelligence; and so it is

¹ Plato, "Sophist", transl. by Nicholas P. White, in *Plato: Complete Works*, edited, with introduction and notes, by John M. Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997).

necessary for even the materialists, if they are to admit souls at all, to admit the possibility of this possession and co-presence within them.

Thus even if the materialist continues to maintain that all that exists is to be understood in terms of its ability to affect bodies, he must be prepared to give a further account of this ability, capacity, or power itself. This account will point, ultimately, to what even those who recognize nothing other than becoming in being must nevertheless identify as the most basic underlying characteristic of whatever is:

Visitor: Then let's go back to questioning [the materialists]. It's enough if they admit that even a small part of *that which is* doesn't have a body. They need to say something about what's common to [*sumphues gegonos*] both it and the things that do have body, which they focus on when they say that they both *are*. Maybe that will raise some confusion for them. If it does, then think about whether they'd be willing to accept our suggestion that *that which is* [*to on*] is something like the following.

Theaetetus: Like what? Tell me and maybe we'll know.

Visitor: I'm saying that a thing really is if it has any capacity [*dunamis*] at all, either by nature to do something to something else or to have even the smallest thing done to it by even the most trivial thing, even if it only happens once. I'll take it as a definition that *those which are* [*ta onta*] amount to nothing other than *capacity*. (247c-e).

The position, which looks ahead, in one way, to Aristotle and, in another, to Nietzsche, identifies capacity, potentiality, possibility, or power as the underlying characteristic of all that actually is or exists. Such a position is, the Visitor suggests, obligatory for the materialists because of their own claim that all that exists is constantly becoming; in particular, once a partisan of the position admits the existence of living souls and *their* possibility of temporal becoming, it is necessary to admit the general existence of possibility or *dunamis* itself.

The discussion now turns to the interpretation of the contrasting position of the "friends of the forms," those who sharply distinguish generation (or coming-to-be) from being, holding that we "interact with" (*koinonein*) the former through the body and senses, but with the latter only through the psuche and logical reasoning (*logismon*) (248a). Both kinds of access, however, whether through the body or through the soul and logos, obviously involve a "dealing with" or having in common (*koinonein*) which must be clarified. As for the materialists, the solution of this difficulty for the "friend of forms," turns on the *actual life of the soul*, or *psuche*, capable of touching in thought and knowledge on the real of being in itself. In particular, the Visitor suggests, one possible position for the friend of the forms is the one just sketched from the position of the materialists: that the possibility of any such trafficking or dealing is based in the power or capacity of two things to come together and affect or be affected by one another (248c). On this position, the commerce of the soul with both generation and being is again rooted in *dunamis*: power, capacity, or possibility. As the Visitor notes, however, the friend of the forms will not initially agree with this definition. For separating being from generation as they do, they will hold that *only* generation (or coming-to-be) involves such a power of body and matter to affect or be affected; being, on the other hand, does not "fit" (*harmottein*) with it:

Visitor: In reply they [the ‘friends of forms’] say that coming-to-be has the capacity to do something or have something done to it, but that this capacity doesn’t fit with being.

Theaetetus: Is there anything to that?

Visitor: We have to reply that we need them to tell us more clearly whether they agree that the soul knows and also that *being* [*ousian*] is known. (248c-d)

While admitting this last claim – that being is in some way known – the friend of the forms nevertheless still resists the suggestion that this knowing involves doing something, or something’s being done to something. For neither can apply, on the view, to being itself, characterized as it is as changeless and immobile.

It is here, though, that the Visitor invokes a consideration that will prove decisive in establishing the actual possibility of a *coexistence* of change and motion with being in itself, that of the actual basis of the understanding of being in the temporal *life* of the being that thinks:

Visitor: But for heaven’s sake, are we going to be convinced that it’s true that change, life, soul, and intelligence are not present (*me pareinai*) in absolute being (*to pantelos*), and that it neither lives nor thinks, but stays changeless, solemn, and holy, without any understanding?

Theaetetus: If we did, sir, we’d be admitting something frightening.

Visitor: But are we going to say it has understanding but doesn’t have life?

Theaetetus: Of course not.

Visitor: But are we saying that it has both those things in it while denying that it has them in its soul?

Theaetetus: How else would it have them?

Visitor: And are we saying that it has intelligence, life, and soul, but that it’s at rest and completely changeless even though it’s alive?

Theaetetus: All that seems completely unreasonable.

Visitor: Then both *that which changes* and also *change* have to be admitted as being.

Theaetetus: Of course. (248e-249b)

Whether or not one can recognize in the position of the “friend of forms” the actual position of Plato himself, or perhaps some earlier version of it, it is clear that what is at issue in the Visitor’s challenge is the deep temporal problem of what Plato elsewhere calls *methexis* or participation, the relationship between the always-changing objects of the senses and their timeless and unchanging but thinkable forms. Through the Visitor’s argument, the friend of forms is forced to admit that there is some real relationship between the temporal realm of becoming and the static realm of thinkable beings in

themselves, and that change and becoming must accordingly *also* be admitted as part of what ultimately is. The consideration that most directly demands this admission is that the living, dynamic soul nevertheless has the capacity to *know* or understand being itself. The problem of this capacity is thus the problem of the *temporal structure* of the *thought of being* as such, or of the possibility, capacity or potentiality by which a being irreducibly situated in time nevertheless grasps the timelessness of what is (on this position) most ultimately real.

On *both* of the opposed views, according to the Visitor, it is thus necessary to admit the privileged existence of a living *psuche* capable of thinking or knowing being as it is in itself. This *psuche* is, moreover, conceived by both the materialist and the formalist as the privileged nexus of a definitive possibility of a *combination* or *mixing in co-presence* which ultimately demands, on either view, the admission of a real relationship of co-existence and interaction between the changeable and moving and being as it is in itself.

The actual form and structure of the potential combination of types in the soul which solves the problem of the relation of being and becoming is, at this point, left obscure. But as the dialogue moves toward its conclusion, the Visitor develops the suggestion of a superior *logical-syntactical grammar* of essential types figured (in a more than simply metaphorical sense) by the actual relations between phonemic or lexical elements characteristic of language.² The suggestion is closely related to the methodology of “collection and division”, or *synthesis* and *diaeresis*, suggested by Plato in a number of late dialogues. Here, it depends also on the recognition, common to the materialist and the friend of forms, of an essential capacity for synthesis or combination rooted in the nature of the soul. In particular, given this possibility of combination in the soul, the Visitor can now argue that such opposite types as *change* and *rest*, even if they cannot associate with one another, must themselves have some capacity for association (*dunata epikoinonein*) with other general types, including particularly *being* itself (251d – 252d). All of those who discuss being and becoming, the Visitor argues, are forced in their very statements to “use *being* about everything, and also *separate, from others, of itself*, and a million other things” (252c). Even those who hold that everything is in motion, in using the signifier “is”, thus admit some possibility of the mixing of being and becoming. In this way, they incessantly “link together... in speech” the various types and attributes determinative of objects and phenomena, and so concretely exhibit the actual mixing and combination of these types.

This leads the Visitor to articulate what has been seen as the first significant conception of the grammatical structure of a *predicative* sentence in the entirety of the Western tradition. Specifically, (261e-262c) a sentence is a combination of names and verbs; it is no more possible for a series of mere names to come together to form a significant sentence than it is for a series of verbs to do so. Rather, someone who utters a simple sentence such as “man learns” puts together a noun with a verb; in so doing, he “gives an indication [*deloi*] about [*peri*] what is, or comes to be, or has come to be, or is going to be.” (262d) Such an indication does not simply consist in naming either things or actions; instead, the “weaving together” of names and verbs into a sentence constitutes what is itself an accomplishment, that of *saying something*. As with the earlier example of letters, and the possible combination of forms

² Compare Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* 371: “Essence is expressed in grammar.”

that it illustrates, the discernment of the specific combinatorial possibilities of these elements thus makes possible the very structure of the *logos* itself, the possibility of saying or asserting rather than simply naming. And it is this structure, as well, which establishes that every sentence must be *about something* [*tinós*]; formed by the combination of a significant subject or name for an object and the sign for an action, the sentence as such thus has the articulate structure of *saying something about something*. It is through this capacity that it is finally possible for a *logos* to be false; in particular, a false *logos* says about its subject something *other* than what is (263a-b).³

The Visitor's rigorously developed solution to the specific problem of the Sophist thus points to two more general problematics of logic and sense, characteristic of the development of reflection on linguistic meaning up to the present. The first is the problem of the nature of *predication*, of the specific structure of sentences, propositions, assertions or judgments, such that something is said, asserted, or judged of or about something else. The second is the problem of linguistic *intentionality*, or of the link between speech and the external reality that it characterizes, describes, denotes, or refers to.

Whether or not the Visitor's solution can be considered adequate in addressing these problems, it is significant for their subsequent development that linguistic sense is here thought as arising from the superior structure of an *a priori* connection of types. The temporal mode of this connection is that of the life of the rational psyche, or the capacities of the *living being* capable of specifically *logical speech and thought*. The conception looks forward to a problematic of the relationship of logical forms to the commonality of a shared life that is as broadly representative of 20th century philosophical inquiry into language as it was already for Plato. Within this inquiry in both its "analytic" and phenomenological forms, the question that arises repeatedly is that of the particular relationship of the *logical form of language* to the *facticity of a life*. In the horizon of this question, it is possible to envision a joint contemporary inheritance of the analytic tradition's investigation of the logical structure of language and the Heideggerian ontological inquiry into the meaning of being.

II

Martin Heidegger's discussion of the "battle of gods and giants" over being, in his comprehensive Marburg lecture course of 1924-25 devoted to the interpretation of Plato's *Sophist*, comes just after he briefly discusses the remark of the Visitor which he would use, roughly 2 years later, as the epigraph for *Being and Time*:

For manifestly [*delon*] you have long been aware of what you mean when you use the expression "*being*". We, however, who used to think we understood it, have now become perplexed.⁴

³ Plato's formulation here closely anticipates the famous "definition" of truth and falsehood that Aristotle gives at *Metaphysics* 4, 1011b, in the course of a defense of the universality of the principle of non-contradiction: "To say that what is is not, or that what is not is, is false; but to say that what is is, and what is not is not, is true..."

⁴ Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 19te. Auflage (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 2006), p. 1 [henceforth: *S&Z*] (Translated as: *Being and Time*, transl. by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, Harper San Francisco, 1962).

The remark, in its original context, is addressed to Parmenides and all those who have earlier attempted a “critical” definition [*epi krisin...diorisasthai*] of the number and types of beings [*ta onta*] (242c).⁵ These predecessors, the Visitor avers, have been “careless,” and have told stories [*mython*] as if to children rather than considering whether their arguments [*legousin*] can genuinely be followed out. In particular, Heidegger suggests, in aiming to deal with being, they have instead told stories about beings or particular things, actually only explaining beings in terms of beings; thus they have “moved naively in the dimension of beings” and thereby failed to enter into the “dimension of the *Being* of beings.”⁶ All of those who have tried to explain being by counting the types of the most proper beings, including monists like Parmenides himself as well as those who hold that being is to be explained in terms of a duality or plurality of principles, have necessarily invoked, in so doing, the specific structure of *legein*, the saying or speaking. In so doing they have already, according to Plato as Heidegger understands him, also invoked “something else” that is “co-said” in *all legein*, or in all speaking about beings, insofar as the *logos* itself includes the possibility of its own saying as a constitutive and implicit moment. And this “something else” is, Heidegger says, “no less than Being itself” (p. 446). It is thus that the Visitor comes to pose the question of what is really meant by the sign “Being,” which all those who discourse about beings and their structure ceaselessly presuppose.

In particular, Parmenides and the Eleatics propose the hypothesis “*hen to pan*,” all is one (244b). Heidegger suggests that we can summarize Parmenides’ principle with the slightly different formulation “*hen on to pan*,” or “all that is, is one.” With respect to the hypothesis thus understood, according to Heidegger, Plato’s demonstration does not have the goal of simply disputing the hypothesis but of showing that in it “there resides a moment which reaches beyond its own proper sense.” (p. 453) The hypothesis raises the problem of the signification of the *name* “being” in relation to what it signifies. Here, invoking a problem that is more fully developed in the dialogue *Parmenides* itself, the Visitor states an inherent dilemma involved in assuming “being” to have such a signification within the scope of the Parmenidean hypothesis of the *hen on to pan*, that being is one. The dilemma is that admission of a *name* of being, in addition to what is named itself, already requires that *there are at least two*, and not only one, as the hypothesis apparently requires. Far from being a mere sophistical problem, according to Heidegger, the problem in fact concerns the very structure of the *logos* as *legein ti*, or as a saying of something “about something”. The fact that every *logos* is a *legein ti*, that every *logos* is about something, here means that the hypothesis, as a *logos* about being, says of being that it is one. Thus the Visitor’s consideration shows that, with respect to the number of being, in Parmenides’ hypothesis itself “there is already given a whole series of phenomena, a multiplicity of characteristics of Being” (p. 461).⁷

Heidegger accordingly suggests that the Visitor’s inquiry as to what is meant by the word “being” [*on*] captures the “genuinely central concern ... of the whole dialogue” (pp. 446-447); this, in particular, is the concern to *prepare* the ground for a possible ontology by posing the question of the meaning of Being

⁵ [Παρμενίδης ἡμῖν διειλέχθαι καὶ πᾶς ὅστις πῶποτε ἐπὶ κρίσιν ὠρμησε τοῦ τὰ ὄντα διορίσασθαι πόσα τε καὶ ποῖά ἐστιν.](#)

⁶ Heidegger, *Platon: Sophistes* (GA 19), herausg. von Ingeborg Schüßler (Frankfurt: Vittorio Klostermann, 1992) [henceforth: *PS*], p. 441. Translated by Richard Rojcewicz and André Schuwer as *Plato’s Sophist* (Bloomington: Indiana U. Press, 2003). (pagination as in German text).

⁷ Transl. slightly modified.

by interrogating the specific relation of the meaning of the *term* “being” in relation to the *logos* that articulates it. The continued trenchancy of the questioning for ontological investigation rests much more, according to Heidegger, in the specific *problematic* it sets up than in any actual solution given by Plato or the Visitor. In particular, “to raise the question of the meaning of Being does not mean anything else than to elaborate the questioning involved in philosophy in general.” (p. 448) In particular, the question at issue in the battle of gods and giants is that of the proper “mode of access to what authentically possesses Being” (p. 467).⁸ In the context of the dialogue, this question of access is posed as the question whether it is *aesthesis* (or sense-perception) directed toward bodies or *noein* (thinking) directed toward forms that gives the most direct access to genuine beings as they are in themselves. By posing the question in this way, Plato formulates the specific requirement that “...the meaning of Being is ...dependent upon the possibility that beings can be encountered by a being which possesses something like the present [*so etwas wie Gegenwart*] in general” (p. 468). But what is shown in the way Plato poses in placing exactly this requirement on the form of an account of the proper mode of access to genuine beings, according to Heidegger, is the inexplicit but guiding presupposition of a specific understanding of the meaning of Being [*ousia*], which guides not only Plato’s questioning but the whole ontological problematic of the Greeks:

This meaning of Being does not naturally lie in the light of the day but instead can be understood explicitly only by means of a subsequent interpretation. The meaning of Being implicitly guiding [Greek] ontology is Being=presence [*Sein=Anwesenheit*]. The Greeks did not get this meaning of Being from just anywhere, they did not just invent it, but rather it is the one borne by life itself, by factual Dasein, insofar as all human Dasein is interpretative [*Auslegendes ist*], interprets itself as well as everything that is a being in whatever sense. In this interpretation there is operative [*lebendig ist*] an implicit sense of Being. And indeed the Greeks drew their implicit sense of Being out of the natural immediate interpretation of Being by factual Dasein, where Being means to be there already at the very outset [*im vorhinein schon da sein*] as possession, household, property [*Anwesen*] – put more sharply: as presence [*Anwesenheit*]. We will make use of this meaning of Being (which we ourselves first make visible, although of course we cannot discuss it further in this context), namely Being=presence, because *in it lies concealed* [*beschlossen liegt*] *the whole problem of time and consequently the problem of the ontology of Dasein.* (p. 467)⁹

The problem posed in the battle of gods and giants thus captures in a very specific way the problem of the ultimate basis of the being of beings as it connects with the problem of time. In particular, according to Heidegger, the problem of the meaning of Being in general here appears specifically as the problem of the most proper mode of access to being in itself, a problem that is already posed with the admission, made by both parties to the battle, that the soul’s knowledge of being is in some way possible. The solution points, according to Heidegger, to what is actually “what today we would call a *consideration of essence* [*Wesensbetrachtung*] or a *knowledge of the apriori*,” (p. 342)¹⁰ that is, in

⁸ Transl. slightly modified.

⁹ Transl. slightly modified.

¹⁰ Transl. slightly modified.

locating the specific possibility of a combination of stasis and kinesis in the structure of the soul Plato develops what is actually an original account of the possibility of *a priori* knowledge, which is now treated, Heidegger notes, in the phenomenological theory of eidetic intuition.

Although Heidegger urges that this solution, in Plato, should not be understood as a subjectivist one, it nevertheless depends, according to Heidegger, on Plato's assumption that "the grasping of the *apriori* resides on the same level as the grasping of the ontical in general" (p. 495). In particular, the factual and substantial existence of the *psuche*, as the basis for the possible combination of the essential types of *stasis* and *kinesis*, is here invoked as the basis for the possibility of knowledge of being as such. At the same time, though, the priority of the *a priori* and the whole possibility that the soul's synthetic capacities can indeed yield knowledge of being depends further on the specific relation of the soul to the structure of *logos*. Plato understands this relation as one of possession or having. But this possession of the *logos* is itself grounded, as Heidegger emphasizes, in a specific conception of the temporality and life of this being as such, what Plato thinks as the being of the *psuche* and its *dunamis* or capacity for logical synthesis.

Plato thus ultimately gives, on Heidegger's reading, what can be called (in an anachronistic but accurate sense) a *psycho-logicistic* theory of being and truth. In particular, it is, for Plato as Heidegger reads him, the temporal capacity of the soul dynamically to synthesize logical elements in actually speaking and thinking that ultimately accounts for the sense and meaning of being in itself, insofar as it is thinkable or knowable. The temporal contact of the *psuche* with the larger structural possibilities established by the pre-eminently existing types is itself guaranteed by this dynamic structure of the *psuche* as the capacity for combining them into a thinkable *logos*. The underlying structural basis for this connection between the *psuche*'s capacity to produce intelligibility and the logical structure of being in itself is the intercommunicating series of *koinonia*, or commons, that Plato thus sees in the capacities of the *psuche*, the structure of the predicative sentence, and the intentional relation between sentences and their objects. All of these are linked together, for Plato, in the notion of a *logical/ontological co-presence* that preserves meaning and ensures seamless communication among the different orders of the psychic, the material, and the ideal. And the ultimate basis of this co-presence is the manifold *koinon* (or common) of the *logos* itself. This assumption of co-presence in the unity of the *logos* is, however, open to interrogation by way of a *a priori* investigation of the phenomenon of presencing itself which Heidegger now undertakes. The investigation yields a deep-seated critical challenge to the underlying assumption of the unity of presence among ideas, their representation in signs, and the capacities of the soul that Plato assumes under the heading of a presumably unified *logos*.

This critique of Plato's psychologism plays an essential role in generating the broader critique of the "logical tradition" of the West, along the guideline of a radicalized questioning of the sense of being, that Heidegger announces in *Being and Time*. In particular, if this critique necessarily takes the form of a deconstructive interpretation of ancient ontology on the more original basis of the problematic of temporality (p. 25), it engages in particular the ancient determination of Dasein as the *zoon logon echon* or as "that living thing whose Being is essentially determined by the possibility of discourse." (p. 25) For this conception as it unfolds in the subsequent development of the Western tradition according to Heidegger, the being of the *psuche* enjoys a recurrently marked priority in the description of the

ultimate basis of meaning and truth; thus for Aristotle, the soul “is, in a certain way, all things,” and Aquinas the “distinctive entity” that is the soul (*anima*) is “properly suited to come together with’ entities of any sort whatever” in such a way as to produce the possibility of truth and ensure its status as a “transcendental,” something that characterizes any subject matter whatsoever (p. 14).¹¹

But the ontological conception that underlies this position depends equally, Heidegger suggests, on taking the presumptively synthetic structure of *logos* and *legein* as “the clue for arriving at those structures of Being which belong to the entities we encounter in addressing ourselves [*Ansprechen*] to anything or speaking about [*Besprechen*] it.” (p. 25) To penetrate beneath this presumptively synthetic structure, it is necessary not only to see it as in fact grounded in a more basic “*apophantical*” structure of disclosure, but also to see that this more original structure, in itself, has nothing to do with the “binding and linking together of representations” or with a “manipulation of psychological occurrences” in an uncertain relation of possible “agreement” with “outside” physical objects (p. 33). In this way, Heidegger’s critique of the psychologistic position on truth that originates with Plato’s conception of the synthetic logical *koinonia* of the *psyche* undercuts any conception of truth as correspondence between the psychological and the physical, or between any two types of (ontic) beings. Here, the relation of correspondence or “agreement” supposed in such a conception to occur between a psychological representation or judgment and its object or objects is revealed as simply the flattened outcome of the more ontologically basic phenomenon of uncovering or disclosure itself.

If, moreover, the Platonic configuration that Heidegger interrogates in the *Sophist* lectures itself arises specifically in the Visitor’s determinate questioning of the Parmenidean hypothesis of the *unity of beings* along the guideline of the *logos*, then the *logical* problematic thereby elicited retains a priority for Heidegger’s deconstruction of metaphysics throughout its whole itinerary. This remains so even, and even in a heightened form, after Heidegger’s thought undertakes the famous “turning” in the 1930s from what he specifies, in the *Beitraege zur Philosophie*, as the “guiding question” of the Being of beings to the historical “grounding question” [Grundfrage] of being’s (or ‘beyng’s’) truth.¹² In the altered conception of the *history of being* to which this leads, the Being of beings is said to be successively “metaphysically” determined according to a series of privileged figures, for instance as *idea*, as *hupokeimenon* and *dunamis*, as *transcendens*, as *cogito* and representing and willing subject, as will to

¹¹ Aristotle, *De Anima* 3. 8, 431b21

¹² “The question of being is the question of the truth of beyng. When grasped and worked out historically, it becomes the *basic question*, versus the previous question of philosophy, the question of beings (the guiding question)...And yet, if beings *are*, then beyng must occur essentially. But how does beyng occur essentially? And *are* there beings? Out of what else does thinking decide here, if not the truth of beyng? Accordingly, beyng can no longer be thought on the basis of beings but must be inventively thought from itself.” *Beitrag zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis)* (GA 65), ed. by Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann (Frankfurt: Vittorio Klostermann, 1989), translated as *Contributions to Philosophy: Of the Event* (transl. by Richard Rojcewicz and Daniela Vallega-Neu, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana U. Press, 2012), (p. 8). Heidegger uses the archaic spelling “Beyng” (Seyn) to indicate being as it may be thought outside its metaphysical determination as the being of beings. Cf. also my *Philosophy and the Vision of Language*, chapter 7.

power and technology.¹³ Each of these determinations grounds the intelligibility of beings as a whole by reference to what is thought as the most essential aspect of their character. Throughout all of these specific determinations, however, the specific structure of metaphysical thinking is visible in its claim to *unify* beings as a whole into a determinate configuration of intelligibility. And according to Heidegger, the specific basis of this claim, through all the various configurations of the metaphysics of the West, is the privilege of the *logos* as the ground of the thinkability of beings as such.

This privilege of the *logos* throughout the succession of differing metaphysical interpretations of the being of beings is marked in the double hyphenation of what Heidegger specifies in a late (1957) lecture as the “onto-theo-logical constitution of metaphysics.” As Heidegger here explains, metaphysics in its thought of beings as a whole always has a twofold determination, as ontology and theology, uniting the ontological determination of “beings as such in the universal and primordial” with their theological determination in terms of “the highest and ultimate.”¹⁴ But the two kinds of determination of the being of beings (from ‘above’ and from ‘below’) are themselves further linked in the thought of the *unity of being and thinking* that makes possible the intelligibility of beings as a whole for each specific, epochal configuration.

Heidegger finds the basis of this unity, as it is thought throughout Western metaphysics, in the specific structure of the *logos* as a gathering and unification that grounds:

Being manifests itself as thought. This means: the Being of beings reveals itself as the ground that gives itself ground and accounts for itself. The ground, the *ratio* by their essential origin are *logos*, in the sense of the gathering of beings and letting them be. They are the *En Pantá*.¹⁵

¹³ The connection of metaphysics with the thought of the totality of beings is already explicit, before the “turn”, in Heidegger’s 1929 Freiburg inaugural address “What is Metaphysics?” (and develops considerations about “world-view” and totality that go back much earlier, at least to the 1919 “War Emergency Semester” course “The Idea of Philosophy and the Problem of Worldview.”) After the middle 1930s, the attempt to consider beings as a whole becomes the characteristic form of what Heidegger describes as all (onto-theological) metaphysics as such. Compare his statement in the *Beiträge*: “Yet does not philosophy as well, and indeed it above all, claim the ‘total,’ especially if we define philosophy as knowledge of beings as such and *as a whole*? In fact it does, so long as we are thinking in the form of the previous philosophy (metaphysics) and are taking this philosophy as it was molded by Christianity (by the systematics of German Idealism). It is precisely there, however, that (modern) philosophy is already on the way to ‘worldview’ (a term which, by no accident, gains ever more validity in the sphere of this ‘thinking’).” (p. 34). Compare also, “The Age of the World-Picture” in *Off The Beaten Track* (1938).

¹⁴ *Identity and Difference*, transl. by Joan Stambaugh (Chicago: U. of Chicago Press, 1969), p. 61. Compare Iain Thomson’s exemplary and perceptive analysis of the “twofold” operation of grounding that is characteristic of ontotheology for Heidegger: “All successful, epoch-grounding metaphysical systems *combine* these two different forms [ontological and theological] of foundationalism, thereby securing our understanding of the being of entities (and so grounding the intelligible order) from *both* the inside out *and* the outside in, microscopically *and* telescopically, floor to ceiling – or, as Heidegger puts it, ontologically *and* theologically, that is, *ontotheologically*.” (Thomson, *Heidegger on Ontotheology: Technology and the Politics of Education*, Cambridge U. Press, 2005), pp. 18-19.

¹⁵ *Identity and Difference*, p. 57.

Thus, the two interlinked structures of ontology and theology that together define Western metaphysics have a further and still unthought unity in the structure of the *logos* itself as the grounding basis for the *gathering*, binding, and presentation of beings in the unity of a whole.

Ontology ... and theology are “Logies” inasmuch as they provide the ground of beings as such and account for them within the whole. They account for Being as the ground of beings. They account to the *logos*, and are in an essential sense in accord with the *logos*-, that is they are the logic of the *logos*. Thus they are more precisely called onto-logic and theo-logic. More rigorously and clearly thought out, metaphysics is onto-theo-logic.¹⁶

Because “metaphysics responds to Being as *logos*,” it is “accordingly in its basic characteristics everywhere logic” and in particular “a logic that thinks of the Being of beings.”¹⁷ In each of the determinate configurations of metaphysics up to the present, the thinkability of beings as a whole in determinate figures of ontological and theological unity is, in fact, itself made possible by the specific grounding unity of the *logos*. In each of these configurations, “logic” is “the name for that kind of thinking which everywhere provides and accounts for the ground of beings as such within the whole in terms of Being as the ground (*logos*).” (p. 59)

If, then, the unifying and grounding character of the *logos* provides an original basis for the various determinations of the Being of beings that comprise onto-theo-logy, Plato’s thought of logical form as permitting the specific capacity of combination of logical elements in the soul originally determines the conception of “being as presence” that underlies it. This Platonic figure seeks to ground the temporality of the logic that links being and beings in the co-presence of the thinkable. It does so by pointing to the correspondence between the psychological form of life of the animal possessing the capacity of *logos* and the overarching logical/ontological structure of the forms or types. The unity of this correspondence allows being as such to be determined as the unity of an ontic totality of beings, a determination which is always characteristic of metaphysics, for Heidegger. The determination forecloses the ontological difference between being and beings in understanding being as such as the thinkable unity of co-presence toward which Parmenides’ hypothesis – *en on to pan* – originally gestures.

In Heidegger’s historical project, which specifies the matter of thought beyond the closure of the epoch of metaphysics as this difference in itself, the determination of beings from Being itself will no longer be thinkable as any ontic relation. Accordingly, it will no longer be possible to think the basis of the conception of the Being of beings as the logical co-presence of ultimate beings in the soul, as the possibility of their subjective representation in the unity of consciousness, or as the result of the synthetic activity of a constitutive transcendental subject. As the “intentional relationship” between subject and world is, here, radicalized into a more ontologically original problematic of unconcealment and disclosure, the logical/metaphysical operation that grounds beings as a whole from the position of an assumed and unquestioned *a priori* deepens into a more basic inquiry into the very temporal structure of ground as the structure of the truth of Being itself. In this deepening, it will no longer be

¹⁶ *Identity and Difference*, p. 59.

¹⁷ *Identity and Difference*, p. 70.

possible to consider the relationship between Being and beings in the figure of a simple limit that bounds and enforces the sense of the totality of beings, theologically and ontologically, from above and below. That there will be no ontic figuration of the limit between Being and beings, except as originary and irreducible difference, means that there is no place from which to draw the line that bounds the metaphysical epoch of presence, unless it be drawn in its own erasure, in the original historical withdrawal of its own definitive trace.¹⁸

III

As we have seen, the problematic of thinking and being to which Plato, in the voice of the Visitor, offers the solution of the logical *koinonia*, is originally the problem of the specific *temporality* of logical thought insofar as it touches on what is thinkable in being itself. In a characteristically trenchant methodological passage in the *Grundgesetze der Arithmetik*, Frege takes up the consequences of precisely the same problematic as it bears on the issue of truth:

For me truth is something objective and independent of those who judge...We can generalize this still further: I recognize a domain of the objective but non-actual, whereas the psychological logicians automatically assume that the non-actual is subjective. And yet it is not at all obvious why what persists independently of anyone's making judgments is actual [*wirklich*], that is, must clearly be capable of acting [*wirken*] directly or indirectly on the senses. Such a connection between the concepts [of objectivity and actuality] is not to be found.

Because the psychological logicians fail to recognize the possibility of the objective non-actual, they take concepts as ideas [*Vorstellungen*] and thereby consign them to psychology. But the true situation asserts itself too powerfully for this easily to be carried through. And thus a vacillation arises in the use of the word 'idea' [*Vorstellung*], appearing at one moment to refer to [*bedeuten*] something that belongs to the mental life of an individual and that combines with other ideas with which it is associated, according to psychological laws, and at the next to

¹⁸ Cf. Jacques Derrida: "Since the trace is not a presence but the simulacrum of a presence that dislocates itself, displaces itself, refers itself, it properly has no site – erasure belongs to its structure. And not only the erasure which must always be able to overtake it (without which it would not be a trace but an indestructible and monumental substance), but also the erasure which constitutes it from the outset as a trace, which situates it as the change of site, and makes it disappear in its appearance, makes it emerge from itself in its production. The erasure of the early trace...of difference is therefore the "same" as its tracing in the text of metaphysics. The latter must have maintained the mark of what it has lost, reserved, put aside. The paradox of such a structure, in the language of metaphysics, is an inversion of metaphysical concepts, which produces the following effect: the present becomes the sign of the sign, the trace of the trace. It is no longer what every reference refers to in the last analysis. It becomes a function in a structure of generalized reference. It is a trace, and a trace of the erasure of the trace.

Thereby the text of metaphysics is *comprehended*. Still legible; and to be read. It is not surrounded but rather traversed by its limit, marked in its interior by the multiple furrow of its margin. Proposing *all at once* the monument and the mirage of the trace, the trace simultaneously traced and erased, simultaneously living and dead, and, as always, living in its simulation of life's preserved inscription." (p. 24).

something that confronts everyone in the same way, an owner of the idea being neither mentioned nor even merely presupposed. These two uses are incompatible...¹⁹ (pp. 204-205)

The basis of Frege's conception of this specific mode of objectivity of the logically articulated concept, like that of so much else in Frege's thought, is the specific link between logic and truth. In particular, if logic is, as Frege says near the beginning of an 1897 work, "the science of the most general laws of truth," this is because its task lies in saying "what holds with the utmost generality for all thinking, whatever its subject matter;" (p. 228) in this way the "word 'true' can be used to indicate" the goal of logic, as "good" points to the goal of the study of ethics, or "beautiful" that of aesthetics.²⁰ (p. 227). As Frege suggests in a roughly parallel passage of the late (1918) article "Thought," if "the reference [*Bedeutung*] of the word "true" is spelled out in the logical laws of truth," it is thus accordingly necessary to consider logic as articulating the laws governing *what is* true, rather than "the laws of taking things to be true or of thinking" as a process or activity.²¹ It is thus necessary, in order to preserve this definition of logic as articulating the laws of truth, to recognize also the privileged link between logic in this sense and being in the sense of *what is*, as opposed to the illusory or false objects of opinion, appearance, or fallible judgment. Recognizing this link is, in turn, sufficient, as Frege says in the *Grundgesetze* passage, to break any presumed link between the being of what is and "actuality" in the sense of the sensible, or of whatever has the capacity to affect or be affected.

A basis for this position can be found in the argument that Frege gives, both in the 1897 "Logic" and in "Thought," for the conclusion that *truth is indefinable*, and in particular that it cannot be identified with any property, feature, or relationship of objects:

Now it would be futile to employ a definition in order to make it clearer what is to be understood by 'true'. If, for example, we wished to say 'an idea is true if it agrees with reality' nothing would have been achieved, since in order to apply this definition we should have to decide whether some idea or other did agree with reality. Thus we should have to presuppose the very thing that is being defined. The same would hold of any definition of the form 'A is true if and only if it has such-and-such properties, or stands in such-and-such a relation to such-and-such a thing.' Truth is obviously something so primitive and simple that it is not possible to reduce it to anything still simpler. Consequently we have no alternative but to bring out the peculiarity of our predicate by comparing it with others. What, in the first place, distinguishes it from all other predicates is that predicating it is always included in predicating anything whatever.²²

In other words, if the truth of sentences were indeed definable in terms of any property, relation, or set of properties or relations, the usefulness of the definition to determine what is involved in the truth or falsity of a particular sentence would depend, in turn, on a determination of whether that sentence indeed *had* the requisite property (or stood in the right sort of relation to something else); and the need

¹⁹ In *The Frege Reader* [subsequently: *FR*] ed. by Michael Beaney (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997)

²⁰ "Logic" (extract) in *FR*

²¹ "Thought" in *FR*, p. 326.

²² "Logic," p. 228; the parallel passage in "Thought" is pp. 326-27.

to make this determination in each case would lead, Frege suggests, to an infinite regress which would have to be traversed in order for the purported definition to be applicable at all.

One might wonder why the regress must be vicious; in particular, a proponent of some particular definition of truth might simply hold that it is reiterated at each stage, without ever leading to any actual incoherence at any stage. But as Dummett points out in his analysis of the argument, it actually has a further premise which suffices to show the untenability of such a picture. The premise is another claim that Frege was probably the first to make, and that has elsewhere been called the “redundancy” or “equivalence” principle.²³ The claim is that the assertion “It is true that ‘A’”, or the predication of the truth of A, is (in some sense) *equivalent* to the assertion “A” (or to predicating what A predicates). Frege states this equivalence principle explicitly elsewhere,²⁴ and it is at least implicit in the current passage in his claim that “predicating [truth] is always included in predicating anything whatsoever.” Given this, however, it is clear that any definition of truth in terms of any property, feature, or relation is untenable. For given any such definition, even while asserting “A,” it would still be open to us to inquire whether “A” had the requisite property, feature or relation (thus, whether “A” is true). But that this is in fact *not* open to us is a direct consequence of the equivalence principle itself.

It is thus a suggestive irony that the principle at the basis for Frege’s general and powerful argument for the indefinability of truth in terms of correspondence or any other notion is, at its basis, just the same one that was subsequently used by Tarski to capture what he considered to be the most important formal constraint on the definition of a *truth predicate* for a particular formal language, L. For *if* applied, in this way, as a constraint on possible definitions of such a language-specific truth predicate, the equivalence principle becomes Tarski’s notorious T-schema:

(T): *s* is true-in-L if and only if *p*

where ‘*s*’ is replaced with a description of a sentence, and *p* is replaced by the same sentence, or a translation of it.

The schema would later prove decisive in many of the formal and informal approaches of the analytic tradition to problems of meaning and truth; in particular, in application to natural rather than formal languages, it would become the basis for Davidson’s powerful conception of the structure of a theory of meaning, grounded in a Tarskian truth-theory, for any particular natural language.²⁵ Nevertheless, as Davidson himself argues in the posthumously published text *Truth and Predication*, the applicability and definability of Tarski-style truth definitions for any number of particular languages still leaves open a larger question, not solved by any number of such definitions: that of the *general* concept of truth, or

²³ Cf. Michael Dummett, “Can Truth be Defined?” in *Frege: Philosophy of Language* (London: Duckworth), pp. 442-470 (esp. pp. 443-45).

²⁴ E.g., in “Thought” he says: “It is also worth noticing that the sentence ‘I smell the scent of violets’ has just the same content as the sentence ‘It is true that I smell the scent of violets.’” (p. 328).

²⁵ See the essays collected in Davidson, *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation* (2nd edition, Oxford U. Press, 2001), especially “Truth and Meaning,” “In Defence of Convention T”, and “Radical interpretation.”

what is held in common by every language and formulated in *each* of the language-specific truth predicates.²⁶

It is in this sense, the sense of the “general concept” as opposed to particular truth-predicates for specific languages L, that truth is plausibly “normative” in the sense that it provides (as Dummett has suggested) a “norm of assertibility” or, as Frege says, that it “points the way” for logic, where logic is, again, the theory that articulates the *laws* of truth rather than simply those of what is held true.²⁷ Any such theory will never, if Frege’s argument is correct, amount to a *definition* of truth.²⁸ But even so, it nevertheless remains open to hold that, as Frege himself says, the *phenomenon* of truth is “indicated” or “pointed toward” by the logical/semantic theory that articulates the logical structure of any possible language. If this is indeed the case, the consequences of the equivalence principle that yields the general argument against definitions of truth will nevertheless have a special and pivotal role in producing this indication. In particular, if, as Frege says, the predication of truth is always “included in” any predication whatsoever, a logical/semantic theory that articulates the constitutive logical structure of predication itself, gestures beyond the properties and relations of beings, toward the constitutive connection of the sentences of a language to their truth-conditions. Beyond beings, such a theory would thus gesture toward the indefinable point at which the sentences of a language bear, in the structure of predication itself, the inarticulate mark of their Being.

Familiarly, the new devices of quantification that Frege had developed in considering the logical structure of mathematical judgments allowed him to repudiate the subject/predicate logic that had been widely presupposed since Aristotle. On Frege’s new conception, it is generally impossible to portray the actual logical structure of a predicative sentence simply by means of the grammatical distinction between subject and predicate. Rather, within the sentence it is necessary to distinguish concept-words from object-words, and to recognize the fundamental difference in their logical nature. Whereas an object-word has an object as its reference, what a concept-word signifies is inherently “unsaturated,” or requires completion by means of an object. More generally, the references of concept-terms are *functions* from objects (or sequences of objects) to truth-values. This leads to a fundamental distinction in the modes of signification of concept- and object-words, which issues in the notorious restriction upon which Frege rigorously insists; namely that a concept-word must never be used in the logical place of an object-word.²⁹ It is thus impossible to *refer* to concepts as we would to things. Similarly, we cannot predicate *of* concepts; as much as we would like to say “the concept ‘horse’

²⁶ “My own view is that Tarski has told us much of what we want to know about the concept of truth, and that there must be more. There must be more because there is no indication in Tarski’s formal work of what it is that his various truth predicates have in common, and this must be part of the content of the concept ... The concept of truth has essential connections with the concepts of belief and meaning, but these connections are untouched by Tarski’s work.” Davidson, *Truth and Predication* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard U. Press, 2008), pp. 27-28.

²⁷ Dummett, “Truth” in *Truth and Other Enigmas* (London: Duckworth, 1978).

²⁸ *Truth and Predication*, chapters 1 and 2; cf. Davidson, “The Folly of Trying to Define Truth,” *Journal of Philosophy*, 93:6 (June, 1996), pp. 263-278.

²⁹ “On Concept and Object”, pp. 181-193.

is a concept easily attained,” to do so would be to violate a fundamental aspect of logical structure and to utter what could only be nonsense.³⁰

As a consequence, the reality or event of predication can never be understood, on this picture, as simply forging an *ontic* relation between entities. In a Heideggerian paraphrase, the being of beings, such as it is expressed or indicated in a predicative sentence, is never itself a being. Or equivalently: *between* what metaphysics since Aristotle thinks of as substances and what are thought as their properties, there lies the genuinely *ontological* structure of unsaturated concepts and saturated objects, which links sentences in a language to the conditions of their truth. Like the ontological difference itself, the distinction between concept and object thus points, in a fashion that resists direct summarization and also leads to its own original paradoxes of meaning, to the generation of sense at the ontological point of the insistence of a fundamental difference that cannot be positively schematized in a figure or captured as a positive substrate.³¹

Only a superficial reading could identify this conception with a “Platonism” in the sense in which that term is usually used today, that in which it refers to a “theory of the forms” as substantial, timelessly existing entities connected to ordinary sensory objects by an obscure relationship of “participation.” The distinction between concepts and objects, for example, by itself suffices to clarify that the unity of a predicative sentence on Frege’s conception is not founded in any relationship between two self-standing entities of any kind. Rather, it is founded in the peculiar kind of unification that occurs in the figuring of a specific object as a definite value of a variable function.³² In the further development of this conception of unity made by Tarski, the formal theory of truth turns on the interpretation of this relation as “satisfaction.” The dynamics of this relation are modeled, not by any memetic or representational account of the relation of universals to individuals, but rather by the mathematical set theory developed by Cantor and Frege among others at the inauguration of the analytic tradition. In this connection, it is necessary to consider both the specific relationship of set theory to mathematics, including the mathematics of the infinite, and the inherent paradoxes definitive of this relationship.

As I have argued elsewhere, specifically, In conceiving of the concept of a set as that of a whole in which a plurality, indifferently finite or infinite, of distinct entities “can be thought as one,” Cantor transfigured the ancient conception of the problem of the one and the many on the basis of a new formal theory of the relation between thinking and being itself.³³ Crucial to this transformation is the possibility of formally conceiving of the infinite as the real domain of an ordered succession of positive wholes, by contrast with the conception dominant since Aristotle on which the infinite is thinkable only as the open potentiality of the unlimited. But if the Fregean conception of sense thus points to an original structural domain of formal unity at the basis of the possibility of presentation, it is no mere accident that Frege’s

³⁰ “On Concept and Object”, pp. 184-85.

³¹ And thus, *a fortiori* (as we shall see), a difference that cannot be captured as a “type” of “form” capable of mixing with others, as in the *Sophist*.

³² Cf. Michael Dummett, “Quantification” in Frege: Philosophy of Language (second edition, London: Duckworth, 1981): “The very sharpness of Frege’s distinction between objects and concepts makes it impossible to compare his doctrines at all fruitfully with those actually advanced by Plato.” (p. 541)).

³³ Cf. *The Politics of Logic*, chapter 1.

own project of logicist reduction of mathematics founders at the point of the paradox demonstrated by Russell in 1901 at the very formal center of this theory in its naïve conceptualization. In the context of Frege's attempt to reduce arithmetic truths to purely logical ones in the *Grundgesetze*, this conception has the consequence that is formulated in his notorious basic law V, which requires that every coherent concept pick out a determinate set or range of objects as its extension. It is this consequence which leads, when applied to the consideration of the totality of beings as a whole, to the contradiction witnessed in Russell's paradox, that of a totality that both is and is not self-membered. This aporetic structure is, as I shall argue in the following chapters, by no means avoidable or dispensable in the context of an ontologically oriented questioning of the meaning and truth of Being itself. Rather, it points, at the very historical limit of the "metaphysical" or ontotheological reference to the ontic totality, to the inherent logical structure of paradox in which the foundations of this reference elicit their own actual incoherence.

Thus, as I shall try to show, the aporias of totality in set theory, far from suggesting a defect or a flaw for the set-theoretical *thought of* the structure of being, can and must be recovered as constituting a *positive* phenomenon and a decisive formal indication of the very underlying structure of the real in which metaphysics (ontotheology) constitutes and decomposes itself. What Russell's paradox and the closely related set-theoretical and semantic paradoxes of totality and reflexivity ultimately witness, in other words, is not a flaw in the set-theoretical *thought of* being, but a flaw in the very structure *of* being, as it necessarily appears in determining and determined relation to the "ontic" totality of beings. It is in such a paradoxical figure of the ultimate logical incoherence of the presentation of the ontic totality of beings that it is possible, as I shall argue, to trace the event of what Heidegger understand as the contemporary (in)-closure of the "metaphysical" epoch of presence.³⁴

IV

As we have seen, both Heidegger and Frege, in different but complementary ways, thus point to a transformative deepening of the problematic that is already laid out in the Visitor's discussion of the positions of the materialists and the friends of the forms. The problematic is that of the *relationship of thought to being* that allows, within what is there determined as a human life, for the *specific possibility of thinking being as such*. If the solution suggested by the Visitor to the problem of this relationship has set the terms for the subsequent development of thought about it in the Western tradition, both Heidegger and Frege, in their radical thinking about the logical structure of the sentence, challenge the specific solution by deepening the general problem to which it responds. Heidegger does so by pointing toward the more original *ontological* phenomenon of unconcealment, which relates Dasein to the very structure of world as such, thereby relating Dasein's factual being back to its sense, and thereby to the Being of beings. Along similar lines, Frege does so by pointing to the place of impersonal and ineffectual *sense* and to its constitutive link with indefinable truth. But if truth is indefinable for Frege, being is

³⁴ For the terminology and structure of "inclosure" see Graham Priest, *Beyond the Limits of Thought*, (second edition, Oxford: Clarendon, 2002). Cf. also my *The Politics of Logic: Badiou, Wittgenstein and the Consequences of Formalism* (New York: Routledge, 2012), esp. chapter 1.

equally so for Heidegger, and for similar reasons.³⁵ In particular, in both cases, the attempt at definition collapses the phenomenon into an empirical or ontic one that appears then to be both ubiquitous and empty. This is the basis of the prejudice which, according to Heidegger, keeps us from raising the question of Being today and of the inevitable vicious regress which, according to Frege and Davidson, results from any ontic account of the basis of predicative truth. In neither case, however, does the impossibility of definition point to the emptiness or meaninglessness of the phenomenon itself. Quite to the contrary, in fact, for both philosophers, the re-interpretation of what at first appears as the mere indefinability of being and truth as, instead, a positive phenomenon grounded in the matters themselves is the first step toward a systematic clarification of their sense.

For both philosophers, as we have seen, this reconsideration implies a radical challenge to any and all *correspondence* theories of truth, according to which truth consists in the structural resemblance, correlation, or representation of a thing or state of affairs by a sentence or mental item. The challenge is radical because what it questions in both cases is the very possibility and ground of *identity*, thereby undermining the thought that truth can be understood, in any sense, as having any ontic ground in antecedently *identifiable* beings at all. Thus, in both philosophers, the thought that truth can be grounded in identity cedes to a more basic thinking of *difference* as the positive basis for the phenomenon of truth. To identify this positive phenomenon, in each case, it is necessary to recognize a specific mode of phenomenalization operating at the very boundaries of the ontic totality and indicated, from within the specific activities, concerns, and judgments of a human life, as the initially obscure supplement of their sense.

These connections point, as I shall argue in detail in chapters 3 and 4, to the contemporary possibility of a unified *logic of truth*, drawing both from Heidegger and from theory in the analytic tradition. This account clarifies the structure of truth along two perpendicular but complementary directions: first, that of the “semantical” description of the logical structure of language as such; and that of the “ontological” conditions for the disclosure of beings. Both dimensions can be pointed out, as I shall argue, by means of a unitary configuration of formal indication; and both dimensions, in their articulation of the structure of judgments and practices of everyday life, are essentially “hermeneutic” in the sense of a “hermeneutics of facticity.” This conjoint hermeneutic configuration cross-cuts at a basic methodological level the usually assumed “divide” between the methods and results of “analytic” and “continental” philosophy.

Further, the suggestion of a unitary hermeneutic configuration points to the possibility of deepening *both* approaches to sense and truth, each in ways suggested by the other. In particular, as I shall argue, on the one hand Heidegger’s ontological and temporal problematic suggests the possibility of an ontological interpretation of the specific conception of *the being of language* underlying the possibility

³⁵“‘Being’ cannot be derived from higher concepts by definition, nor can it be presented through lower ones. But does this imply that ‘Being’ no longer offers a problem? Not at all. We can infer only that ‘Being’ cannot have the character of an entity. Thus we cannot apply to Being the concept of ‘definition’ as presented in traditional logic, which itself has its foundations in ancient ontology and which, within certain limits, provides a justifiable way of characterizing “entities”. The indefinability of Being does not eliminate the question of its meaning; it demands that we look that question in the face.” (S&Z, p. 4)

of a Davidsonian and other structural accounts of linguistic meaning. But on the other, the problematic of the basis of *number and mathematics* that arises in Frege's logicist project, and in particular becomes manifest with the constitutive problems of set theory in its dual reference to totality and infinity points the way to a deepening of the Heideggerian investigation into the ontotheological and metaphysical determination of the being of beings and its "historical" temporality.

The second suggestion may admittedly seem to fly in the face of Heidegger's own self-description of his methods; for as is well known, he often and unequivocally rejects the applicability of "logic" in the sense of formal, mathematical logic or logistics to the ontological/hermeneutic problematic. The point of this rejection is not, as is abundantly evident from Heidegger's own use of the terminology and methodology of "formal indication," to reject the relevance of any and all formal methods to the problems of hermeneutics. Rather, it is to oppose what is here seen as the "empty," merely calculative or "formalistic" technique of logical symbol manipulation to the substantiality of a concrete and disclosive indication or demonstration of the things themselves. The opposition has its roots in the distinction that Husserl adopts from Kant between a "formal" logic capable only of such empty calculation and a "transcendental" one capable of demonstrating the "truth" of beings in the sense of manifestation. But it is in fact overcome in Frege's radical conception of senses as modes of presentation and as thereby constitutively linked to truth. On this conception, as we have seen, the constitutive nexus of sense is the domain of *impersonal* presentation, or of a presentation of beings and truths that founds and decomposes equally the identity of beings and the possibility of linguistic reference to them.

Frege's conception is, admittedly, not without its own constitutive problems, including eminently those involved in the possibility of the extensional reference to *beings as a whole*. But I shall argue (chapters 6 and 7) that these problems, including ultimately the problematic of the relationship between the finite and the infinite which the set-theoretical aporias of totality and infinity display in precise form, cannot ultimately be separated from an inquiry which interrogates the formal and ontological conditions for the possible presentation of beings in their being, up to and including the formal conditions for the metaphysical determination of being as presence itself. It is, moreover, ultimately necessary in the context of this problematic to find terms and means structurally to indicate the place of truth as the anonymous, a-subjective and ineffectual structural "place" of unconcealment. To find these terms and means is not, as I shall argue, to dispute or cast doubt on Heidegger's recurrently reiterated claim of the ultimate dependence of disclosive truth on Dasein. It is, though, to think Dasein itself, outside any reference to the biological or psychological nature of the human subject, as the *impersonal* structure of truth; and the place of unconcealment, outside any reference to beings, as the *ineffective* structure of Being.

For this conception, there will be no *privileged* access to truth, not even the privilege that determines Dasein within the limit of an "authentic" finitude whose individuating end is found in its capability of death.³⁶ It is necessary, in other words, to follow out the ultimate consequences of the claim that

³⁶ Cf. Jacques Derrida, *Aporias: Dying – awaiting (one another at) the 'limits of truth'* (transl. Thomas Dutoit, Stanford U. Press, 1993). For some trenchant critical considerations about Derrida's position, see Iain Thomson, "Can I Die? Derrida on Heidegger on Death", *Philosophy Today* 43:1, (1999), pp. 29-42.

Dasein is, independently of any human or subjective determination, a structure of being in the world; and one that cannot any longer be thought as a subject of capacities in any sense. Such a conception will be, I shall argue, the one requisite to any legitimately *realist* conception of being and truth that also takes seriously the implications of Heidegger's ontological interpretation of truth as unconcealment. It is such a conception of truth that is moreover needed, as we shall see, in order to overcome what has seemed to many commentators to be a significant limitation of Heidegger's approach to truth in relation to ontological constitution: its apparent failure adequately to treat *ahistorical* events and occurrences in the realm of nature (up to and including the "natural" origin of Dasein itself).

If we look beyond Heidegger's own disavowal of the problems of the "foundations" of mathematics and number, it is actually possible, as I shall argue, to discern and verify in other parts of Heidegger's text the applicability and even a certain conceptual *priority* of these problems in connection with the ontological problematic of being, time, and history. In discussing the possibility and structure of the "metaphysical" conception of being as constant, standing presence, Heidegger often makes reference to a conception of time based ultimately on the domain of nature and the kind of (regular, countable, calculable and mathematizable) time characteristic of it. In the culmination of metaphysics, i.e. the contemporary regime of technological enframing correlative to the dominance of a "calculative thinking" that appropriates objects and resources as standing reserve, it is the calculability or mathematical form of natural science that ultimately co-determines the possibility of the technological regime of this handling and trafficking with beings. The two sides of this configuration – the dominance of calculative thinking modeled on mathematical computation, on one hand, and the treatment of beings as raw material for mechanistic manipulation and trafficking – converge, in a way that is predicted by Heidegger himself, though never developed in detail, in the pervasiveness of what is today called "information technology."

This pervasiveness is linked, both historically and conceptually, very closely to the developments of contemporary mathematical logic inaugurated by Frege. In particular, the specific conceptual origin of the computer lies in Alan Turing's analysis of the implications of Frege's logic, at the very boundaries of its effectiveness, for the formalization of the specific question of the solubility of mathematical problems by regular, algorithmic means. As I shall argue in chapter 5, the undecidability and essential ineffectivity that Turing's results elicit point in a significant way to the positive phenomenon of undecidability at the limits of calculative effectivity themselves.³⁷ The regime of "calculative thinking" that comes to dominance and to enjoy an unquestioned privilege in the contemporary configuration of "late capitalist" life and *praxis* is thus, as I shall argue, already prepared from long afar by an implicit or explicit thought of the basis and applicability of number, which underlies a specific conception of time.³⁸

³⁷ Compare also *The Politics of Logic*, especially chapters 6 and 10.

³⁸ In particular if, as Heidegger suggests, the "metaphysical" interpretation of being as presence is itself determined by a particular conception of time, the inauthentic, everyday or "vulgar" one according to which time is a succession of present, punctual "nows", this determination is explicitly and decisively co-original in Aristotle's *Physics* with a particular and specific conception of the nature of number. According to this conception, on which "time is ... number of motion in respect of 'before' and 'after'", time is definitively that which can be mathematically counted and numbered.³⁸ It is thus possible to see

Given this, the positive phenomenon of undecidability and the ultimate ineffectivity that it elicits provide essential *temporal* terms in which this regime can be interrogated and even perhaps transformed.

This leaves, in the other direction, the issue that will perhaps appear to many Heideggerians to be the biggest thematic obstacle to a sympathetic reading of Frege's project: Frege's determination (or metaphorization) of the realm of sense as a *timeless* or *extra-temporal* "third realm" outside the domains of physical reality and the individual-subjective. In relation to the problem of the origin of number and mathematics, the determination may seem to replicate the traditional determination of the temporality of mathematical beings as those which are maximally separate from history and temporal becoming. The question arises of how the being of mathematical objects can be thought on the basis of a more originally grounded interpretation of the modes of temporal being themselves. The question, if posed in relation to Frege's literal or metaphorical picture of the "third realm," bears a strong resemblance to the critical question the young Heidegger repeatedly posed to Husserl's own determination of phenomenological "laws of essence" as grounded in a realm of ideality wholly distinct from the spatiotemporal world: the question of the *being* of such a realm in relation to time. Here, the question of the "a priori" as a specific temporal designation of ontological existence is not just criticized, but also modified and deepened in Heidegger's particular inquiry into the conditions for the possibility of a temporality that transpires structurally "before" all that is empirical.

In reading Heidegger's problematic together with the "analytic" one that arises from Frege's initial conception of the atemporality of sense, it is thus necessary to pose the question of the temporal determination of the structural picture of language that dominates in the analytic tradition. This is the picture on which language as a whole is a structural configuration of signs governed in their combination and use by comprehensive, logically tractable rules. In fact, in the tradition inaugurated and underwritten by this conception, the underlying logical or grammatical structure of language appears in various guises. For example, it appears not only (as in Frege) as a timeless, supersensible structure of laws and norms, but again as a system of conventions (Carnap), as the empirical regularities of language use (Quine), as the explicitation of what is grasped or understood implicitly in coming to understand and master a language (Davidson, Dummett, Brandom), or again as the unique resource of a special type of "imagination", the "projective imagination" that unfolds and projects the ordinary uses of words into ever-new contexts (Cavell). In each case, though, the inherent problems of this structuralist conception, including its essential aporias, can be read as pointing to the depth of the problem of the being of language and its unique relation to the problem of being.

the history of metaphysics, as Heidegger describes it, as in fact opened and closed with determinate and decisive reference to number and mathematics. In this respect, the total "mathematization" of nature achieved in the Enlightenment by Descartes and Galileo is but one determinative moment of a larger regime of thinking and praxis that opens with Aristotle and closes or culminates in the contemporary dominance of technological enframing.

It is thus necessary, in order to grasp and reawaken the ontological problematic as it characterizes our present, to perform a twofold reading with respect to the philosophical traditions that dominate today: on the one hand, to interrogate Heidegger's text with respect to the question of the basis and status of number and mathematics as it is linked both to the problem of thinking the totality of beings and to the problem of time; and on the other, to perform an "ontological" reading of the conception of the structure of language that dominates in the analytic tradition and determines its own key problems and insights. The result of such a twofold reading should be to elicit terms and problems with a critical and potentially transformative bearing on the overarching determinants of contemporary life and practice insofar as they are rooted in the contemporary ontological situation itself. In particular, if, as Heidegger suggests, this contemporary situation is characterized by a certain exhaustion or completion of the metaphysical epoch of presence, then such terms for its critique can be found by developing the distant implications of the original Parmenidean unity of thinking and being, as they figure in the motivation and support of those individual and social practices, habits, techniques and technologies that most globally characterize the organization of life on the planet today.