LECTURES GIVEN AT THE RISE OF NATIONAL SOCIALISM

“Fried and Polt’s translation of Martin Heidegger’s Being and Truth is a well-crafted and careful rendering of an important and demanding volume of the Complete Works.”

—ANDREW MITCHELL, EMBRY UNIVERSITY

Martin Heidegger

BEING AND TRUTH

TRANSLATED BY Gregory Fried and Richard Polt

IN these lectures, delivered in 1933–1934 while he was Rector of the University of Freiburg and an active supporter of the National Socialist regime, Martin Heidegger addresses the history of metaphysics and the notion of truth from Heraclitus to Hegel. First published in German in 2001, these two lecture courses offer a sustained encounter with Heidegger’s thinking during a period when he attempted to give expression to his highest ambitions for a philosophy engaged with politics and the world. While the lectures are strongly nationalistic and celebrate the revolutionary spirit of the time, they also attack theories of racial supremacy in an attempt to stake out a distinctively Heideggerian understanding of what it means to be a people. This careful translation offers valuable insight into Heidegger’s views on language, truth, animality, and life, as well as his political thought and activity.
Being and Truth
Studies in Continental Thought

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BEING AND TRUTH

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ON THE ESSENCE OF TRUTH

Winter Semester 1933–1934
§1. The question of the essence of truth and the willing of what is true in our Dasein

We are asking about the essence of truth. To begin with, this means that we want to find out what truth “in general” is, what such a thing “really consists in.” So this questioning about the essence of truth is obviously a “profound” and “important” undertaking. Or does it only seem to be? Let us consider what it means to think about something like the essence of danger, to provide an extensive discussion of the universal concept of danger—and meanwhile to overlook actual dangers and to be no match for what is dangerous. What about this: to set out on a profound contemplation of the essence of honor, diligently to work out the universal concept of honor—and at the same time to be without honor and to act without honor? And this: to chase after the essence of truth, to fight keenly over the structure and content of the concept of truth—and meanwhile to fail to recognize and to neglect what is true?

Is this not a highly insidious procedure? To brood over the essence of things and to think behind the cover of concepts—and abstract oneself from the things themselves? To evade reality through the semblance of profundity?

It seems a completely baseless and idle undertaking to ask about the essence of truth, when the urgency of our Dasein assails us and the only thing that matters is that we ourselves be true and remain in the truth. Who would hesitate here for even a moment, when the choice stands before us either to think through the general concept of truth or to grasp and bring to fulfillment what is true in our being and acting? Who then still doubts the insidiousness and idleness of the question about essence?
So let us drop it; let us not seek the essence of truth in general, but instead let us grasp what is true, the true that is the sole law and support for our Dasein here and now. This true—how is it recognizable so that we can set it apart immediately and certainly from the untrue? This true—how is it certified as the true? Who or what can vouch that this true is not a great, singular error? Can we achieve and hold firm to the true without being sure that we are actually falling victim to the untrue?

How could we be sure of this, if we do not decide and have not decided between the true and the untrue? How can we decide here, if we do not distinguish the true from the untrue? And how can we distinguish here, if we do not know what makes the true true and the untrue untrue?

And how can we do that, when we do not know what truth is and what untruth is, and what their essence consists in? Precisely when we want, in the highest and unique passion, only what is true in our Dasein, we are unable to do without knowing what truth is and what distinguishes and divides truth from untruth. As insidious, grandiose, and empty as the question of essence sounds, knowing about the essence of truth is nevertheless unavoidable.

Accordingly we were entirely in the right with our plan to ask about the essence of truth; for we are asking about it in order to know what truth in general is. But then on the other hand, the point still stands that we will lose ourselves in the universal concept, that we will be chasing after a mere idea, or, in plain language: we will remain stuck with the look that truth in general offers us, we will re-present this look (which surely is something) and set it up before us—hence the talk of intuition of essences. In asking about essence, we become onlookers and forget both acting and actuality.

As unavoidable as it is to know about essence, we must take into the bargain the insidiousness, as well as the risk of baselessness, of every question of essence. So it seems, and so has it seemed for a long time, since Plato defined the essence of things as “Idea.”

But the first question is whether essence as such is attained by this definition, or whether this conception of essence as “Idea” was not the starting point for a great, centuries-long error. That is a question; that is, it is by no means settled that the essence of a thing—for example, the essence of truth—should be sought in what we think of as the concept of truth in general, whether essence should be located in the Idea and sought there.

But if this question must remain open, then there is suddenly something different about the insidiousness of the question of essence.¹

¹. We must ask about essence. Accordingly, the questioning as such is not insidious. What, then? Essence?
Then in the end, it is not asking about essence *per se* that is insidious, but rather simply and solely the customary way in which one determines the *essence of essence* in advance, precisely as the *representation of something* in general—as concept and Idea.

Therefore everything hinges upon how we pose the question of essence, that is, *what we really* understand by the essence of something and *what kind of understanding* this is. This gives us a clear and simple indication of how we should proceed: before we ask about truth in its essence, we should thoroughly and firmly establish how matters stand with the *essence of essence*.

Admittedly, there still remains the suspicion that we are now really losing ourselves in the highest heights of so-called abstraction, where there is no more air to breathe. Essence of truth—that at least still seemed somewhat definite in content. But essence of essence? Now everything evaporates; it really borders on empty wordplay.

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**§2. The question of the essence of essence.**

Presuppositions and beginning

a) Dasein’s becoming essential in authentic care for its ability to be and the putting to work of the essence of things.

The how of essence

We begin to characterize essence as such when we say: *essence essences,* and when we explain this as follows:

The essence of our *people* is what rules throughout our doings from the ground up and as a whole, insofar as we have come to ourselves.

The essence of our *state:* what impels and secures our people as a whole to the structure of an enduring Dasein that answers for itself and takes action.

The essence of *labor:* what permeates the achievement of gaining power over the world in its smallest and greatest facets, as the empowerment of our Dasein.

The essence of the *world:* what assails our Dasein as a whole, in its depth and breadth; what either drives us away from ourselves or lifts us out beyond ourselves into the greatness of our fate.

The essence of *human Dasein:* that into which we are thrown and bound; what we in our Dasein conquer or what defeats us; our occasions for joy or cowardice.

The essence of the world and the things of the world, and the essence of human Dasein in the world: both are *one* as the essence of beings as a whole. This essence cannot be brought together in thought and represented in empty concepts and displayed in a conceptual sys-
Because this essence of beings as a whole rules beings through and through in many forms, ruling all beings in accordance with their ways of Being, it can be exhibited only when human beings—peoples in their power relations, in their works, in the manner in which they bear their fate—transform the spirit of the earth. The essence of beings comes to the light of day only when human beings, rooted in their heritage and vocation, put essence to work. The essence of things is put to work through the confrontation with beings, insofar as we rise to the essence of things in this confrontation or are destroyed in it. How the essence of things is put to work depends on how and how far we ourselves as a people, and each individual among the people, become essential in our Dasein. Essential: that means bound into the law and structure of beings.

The fundamental achievement, through which alone our Dasein can become essential, is the awakening of the courage for ourselves, for our Dasein in the midst of the world. The courage for one’s own originary Dasein and its concealed powers is the fundamental precondition for every working-out of the essence of things. This courage first forges our disposition, the fundamental moods in which Dasein soars out to and back from the limits of beings as a whole. Essence does not make itself known through a casual notion, does not display itself in doctrine. Essence opens itself up only to the originary courage of Dasein for beings as a whole. Why? Because courage moves forward; it releases itself from what has been so far, it dares the unaccustomed and makes the inevitable its concern. But courage is not the mere wish of a spectator; rather, courage anchors its will in clear and simple tasks; it compels and harnesses all forces, means, and images.

Only insofar as the one care of human Dasein, the care concerning Dasein’s ability to be and its having to be, becomes care pure and simple, is the human venture into the world fulfilled. Only in this way does the world’s mastery hold sway and display itself in law, organization, deportment, and work. Only thus does what is as a whole, as well as each individual thing, open up in its essence.

In the ordinary hustle and bustle, a human being—indeed, often an entire people—chases and hastens after arbitrary objects and opportunities, through which they are transported into greater and lesser moods in which they want to be confined. And human beings are surprised when they see themselves compelled to devise and supply ever new means of stimulation and excitement. They do this instead of grasping that the reverse is needed from the start: to create and to awaken fundamental moods through originary courage—that then all things become visible, decidable and durable. I repeat: this is the courage for what is originary as one’s own.
Yet if *this* is how things stand with essence, then not only is the question about essence not insidious, but it is the very questioning that unrelentingly holds us in actuality and impels us to a decision there. Essence is not what can be grasped representationally, for all representation is setting-aside [*alles Vor-stellen ist weg-stellen*]. We do not want to set essence aside but to come to grips with it, and we want to do so in the resoluteness that reaches forward by acting together, in courageously coming to grips with essence by *reaching forward*.

And if we now want to grasp the essence of truth, that is, work it out, then this means that, through our acting, we must experience and demonstrate how much truth we can endure and withstand. This is the measure by which truth displays itself to us on each occasion, namely, as that which makes our Dasein sure, bright, and strong in its Being.

But in contrast, if we were to arrive simply at a pedantic so-called “definition” that brought together all the familiar features of truth, then that would lead us astray.

b) The question of the what of essence.

Harkening back to the Greek inception

We may now have clarified *how* essence essences, but not *as what*. So far, the innermost content of the essence of beings as a whole has not been determined. To ask about this—that is, to want to figure out what the Being of all beings consists in—is sheer arrogance. And yet we may not evade this question. If it must remain without an answer, then we must also actually experience this, and in the experience of this failure, come to fathom our Dasein.

The essence of beings essences. But what does it really consist in? This is not a question raised by an individual, although it may in each case be an individual who raises this question in language, in a sentence. The question itself resonates in our Dasein—and it has done so for generations, since our Dasein received its fundamental orientation through the inception of Greek philosophy. Since then, the question and the attempts at answering it have persisted. Since then, everyone who asks this question must listen to its inception just in order to arrive at the right context for the resonance of the question as such. This does not mean turning back to antiquity and making it out to be the rigid standard for all Dasein. If we *harken back* to this Greek inception, this is *not an arbitrary whim* or just some pedantic habit, but rather the deepest necessity of our German Dasein.

This means learning to grasp that this great inception of our Dasein has been cast out over and past us as what we have to catch up with—again, we do this not to complete Greek civilization, but rather fully to draw on the fundamental possibilities of the proto-Germanic ethnic essence and to bring these to mastery.
We must grasp that our Dasein, with all its progress and achievements, lags behind as measured against the inception—and has run off course and lost itself.

§3. The saying of Heraclitus.
Struggle as the essence of beings

When we, with the originary courage of our Dasein, directed forwards, hearken back to the voices of the great inception—not so as to become Greeks and Greek-like, but rather to perceive the primordial laws of our Germanic ethnicity in their most simple exigency and greatness and to put ourselves to the test and prove ourselves against this greatness—then we can hear that saying which gives the first and the decisively great answer to our question about what the essence of beings consists in and how it essences: πόλεμος πάντων μὲν πατήρ ἐστι, πάντων δὲ βασιλεύς, καὶ τοὺς μὲν θεοὺς ἔδειξε τοὺς δὲ ἀνθρώπους, τοὺς μὲν δούλους ἐποίησε τοὺς δὲ ἐλευθέρους.2 (Heraclitus, fragment 53, Bywater XLIV.3,4)

How forgotten, misunderstood and debased this saying has become is proved precisely by its relatively frequent employment. War, struggle is the father of all things—one does not know what more to say. One cites this fragment mostly on occasions when one is, as it were, apologizing for the fact that there has been any conflict. And the sense of it, then, is that struggle (unfortunately?!?) just happens.

This is not the occasion to undertake a formal and comprehensive interpretation, but simply to interpret the fragment in view of our immediate question, which is also our guiding question, our broader and proper question.

a) The first part of the saying. Struggle as the power of generation and preservation: innermost necessity of beings

One word stands great and simple at the beginning of the saying: πόλεμος, war.3 This does not mean the outward occurrence of war and the celebration of what is “military,” but rather what is decisive: stand-

2. [A conventional translation would be: “War is both the father of all things and the king of all things, and on the one hand it shows forth the gods, on the other, human beings; on the one hand it makes slaves, and on the other hand, the free.”]
3. Only one fact about Heraclitus has been handed down with relative certainty: he stemmed from the noble lineage of masters in the sixth or fifth century bc.
5. The two major parts of the saying: 1) up to καί; 2) to the end.
ing against the enemy. We have translated this word with “struggle” [Kampf] in order to hold on to what is essential; but on the other hand, it is important to bear in mind that it does not mean ἀγών, a competition in which two friendly opponents measure their strengths, but rather the struggle of πόλεμος, war. This means that the struggle is in earnest; the opponent is not a partner but an enemy. Struggle as standing against the enemy, or more plainly: standing firm in confrontation.

An enemy is each and every person who poses an essential threat to the Dasein of the people and its individual members. The enemy does not have to be external, and the external enemy is not even always the more dangerous one. And it can seem as if there were no enemy. Then it is a fundamental requirement to find the enemy, to expose the enemy to the light, or even first to make the enemy, so that this standing against the enemy may happen and so that Dasein may not lose its edge.

The enemy can have attached itself to the innermost roots of the Dasein of a people and can set itself against this people’s own essence and act against it. The struggle is all the fiercer and harder and tougher, for the least of it consists in coming to blows with one another; it is often far more difficult and wearisome to catch sight of the enemy as such, to bring the enemy into the open, to harbor no illusions about the enemy, to keep oneself ready for attack, to cultivate and intensify a constant readiness and to prepare the attack looking far ahead with the goal of total annihilation.

πόλεμος, struggle (to stand up against the enemy) encompasses and permeates πάντα, all; πάντων—beings collectively, all as a whole. From this we derive from the start the scope of the saying: it does not only deal with struggling as a human activity; it deals with all beings. And struggle is furthermore not just a mere epiphenomenon (something pervasive, to be sure, but only accessory), but rather what determines beings as a whole and determines them in a crucial way. It does this in every case in two distinct forms.

πατήρ—βασιλεύς [“father . . . king”] does not just mean that in addition to the “father,” progenitor, there is also the ruler as well; instead they are sharply distinguished and yet at the same time brought into a relation by the μέν—δέ [“both . . . and”]. Accordingly, “father” has a deepened meaning. The first thing this means is that struggle does not just allow each being to go forth into what it is, it does not just direct and control the emergence of beings. Instead, struggle also rules their persistence; beings are in their constancy and presence only if they are preserved and governed by struggle as their ruler. Therefore, struggle in no way steps back from things as soon as they have wound their way into actuality, but rather precisely this subsequent persisting and being actual is authentic only in struggle. Through this, the full do-
main of the power of struggle first becomes clear; it becomes clear how in all beings, insofar as they are, struggle already constantly holds sway from the start, that is, constitutes beings in their Being.

In holding sway, struggle pervades the whole of beings with a double power: as power of generation and power of preservation. It hardly needs mention that wherever no struggle reigns, standstill, leveling, equilibrium, mediocrity, harmlessness, decline, fragility and tepidity, decay and collapse, in short: passing-away sets in on its own.

This means that the powers of destruction and ruination have their home in beings themselves; in struggle and through struggle they are only subdued and bound. And even then, these powers are still understood too negatively and not in the Greek sense, for these powers fundamentally break forth as the unbridled, the unrestrained, the ecstatic and wild, the raving, the Asiatic. We must be on our guard against devaluing these powers according to the Christian standards of evil and sin and thereby casting them into denial. Neither does struggle, then, mean picking fights arbitrarily; struggle is the innermost necessity of beings as a whole and therefore the confrontation with and between the primordial powers. What Nietzsche characterizes as the Apollonian and the Dionysian are the opposing powers of this struggle.

So much for the interpretation of the first major part of the saying, up to the καί [and]. In brief: 1) the essential power; 2) the domain of power; 3) the double character of power (generation and preservation); 4) the two as belonging together.

b) The second part of the saying. The sway of the double power of struggle and the decisive domains of power

This is now explained by the second major part, which begins with καί, and here we experience two things: 1) in what manner the double power of struggle holds sway; 2) which domains of power count as the decisive ones and what this means. Furthermore (to elaborate): the generating and preserving sway in all beings is of the following kind.

Of πόλεμος it is said: ἔδειξε—ἐποίησε; we translate this as: “it displays, it lets come forward” (and we elaborate this as follows: “into openness”). The customary and “correct” translation is: it “engenders,” it “makes.” Our translation, by contrast, is meant to clarify the genuinely Greek sense of the words. Accordingly, what matters is not simply that struggle has some result—or the reverse, that some actuality points back to struggle as its cause; but what is above all being said here is the sense in which the Greeks understand in advance the manner by which beings come to Being through struggle. The meaning of Being implies this: having been placed on display—as stamped, limited, subsistent shape—placed into visibility, or better, perceptibility. Whatever is displayed and directed into its belonging to “beings,” “is.”
And ἐποίησε means the same thing; in this, one should not so much see the mere completion of a making, but rather that making, setting-forth, accomplishes the fundamental task of setting something, as finished and at rest in itself, into availability and perceptibility. For the Greeks, then, a being is whatever is stamped within limits and thereby present, and in such presence, constant. Being: stamped subsistent presence.

So above all it becomes clear how immediately struggle, in the holding sway of its power, pervasively reigns over the Being of beings as such. For struggle proves to be setting things into Being and holding them there, by making them emerge yet holding them fast. Origin of Being.

We are now asking about what is expressed in the second major part of the saying: which domains of power count as the decisive ones, and what this means. This part speaks of gods, human beings, servants, and masters. Obviously these are not just any arbitrary areas within the whole of beings, but rather beings as a whole are decisively determined precisely by these.

How so? Could not other domains serve just as well? Why not animals and plants, land and sea, fire and air, the living and the dead? Why is it restricted to the human and the divine? But this is asking the wrong question. How so? Because we are not holding onto the fundamental content of the saying. What this means is that it has nothing to do with naming certain regions of beings as examples, but rather with making the fundamental modes of Being visible in their origin from the essence of Being: being god, being human, being servant, being master.

And furthermore, it is not sufficient to take these fundamental modes of Being simply as a list of various types, but rather they must be taken only in their originary character. This means: the essence of Being is struggle; every Being passes through decision, victory and defeat. One is not simply only a god or just a human being, but rather in each case a decision takes place in struggle, and thereby struggle is transposed into Being; one is a servant not because there simply are servants, in addition to other types, but because this Being contains in itself a defeat, a denial, a deficiency, a cowardice—indeed, perhaps a will to be lowly and base.6

It is now clear that struggle sets things into Being and holds them there; it constitutes the essence of Being, and in such a way that struggle permeates all beings with the character of decision, with the constant sharpness of the either-or: either them or me; either to stand or to fall.

6. Confrontation and decision in struggle are what is essential in Being; this fundamental character modifies itself, and in each case the domains of Being are modified in accordance with it. But then is even Being anthropomorphic!? Yes and no! Question!! In brief: from these modes of power only the immediate indication of Being—exhibited in these modes of power most proximately and vividly.
This decision in struggle that characterizes all Being imparts a fundamental mood to beings: victorious jubilation and will at the same time as the fearsomeness of unbridled pressure (resistance), grandeur and fury united—something that we are incapable of saying with one word, but for which the Greeks have a word that recurs in the great poetry of the tragedians: τὸ δεινόν [usually translated as “the terrible” or “wondrous”].

The saying of Heraclitus is therefore, taken as a whole, precisely a saying and not a mere assertion that would establish something or other; it is not a scientific proposition, but a philosophical declaration that speaks from the highest fullness, in the greatest simplicity, and in a definitive form. And we must listen to this declaration appropriately, put ourselves at its command, and allow ourselves to be sobered by the self-ruling gravity of this primal declaration.

§4. On the truth of the Heraclitean saying

a) Two traditional meanings of truth. Truth as un-concealment (ἀ-λήθεια) and as correctness

In the interpretation of the saying of Heraclitus, we said how and as what essence essences: as struggle. Now, right away someone might want to ask: on what basis is the truth of this saying grounded—how does this truth prove and demonstrate itself?

In the end, the “truth” of such a saying is precisely of such an exceptional kind that, from the start, it would be a mistaken requirement to demand a proof in the ordinary sense here.

In other words, we cannot really understand this saying at all, if we know nothing about the manner of truth that is appropriate to it in particular; and how are we supposed to know this, if we do not know about the essence of truth and the possible forms of truth? On the other hand, this saying is supposed to give us an indication of what the essence of essence (Being) consists in, so that we know sufficiently what we are asking about when we ask about the essence of truth. It is becoming clear that we are going around in a circle here: first we seek

7. Angst in its deepest depth! Not “anxiousness” and fear. Angst as only the great and heroic human being knows it! And whoever says that he does not know authentic angst has not yet proven that he is courageous, but only that he is dull and stupid. (Philosophy of angst—rationalism.)

“In our days, angst rightfully enjoys very little popularity.”—What then is resoluteness other than the precondition for great and essential angst, otherwise it would indeed be useless and idle play and would have nothing of greatness and strength.
the truth about essence in order next to grasp the essence of truth. You can’t have one without the other.

But this remarkable abyss in our questioning, which now we see, is always the unmistakable sign that we are asking about something that is first and last, that is, we are standing in the midst of a philosophical question.

But how to find a way out of this circle?—Not at all! For then we would be giving up the proper standpoint. So all we can do is move in a circle—but how? A first response might be: as we did before with the truth of essence, we will now seek to grasp the essence of truth in such a saying, and so we will go back to the inception of philosophy in order to be on the lookout for a corresponding declaration about the essence of truth.

But this is entirely superfluous, for precisely the same saying, the one that speaks of the essence of essence, also tells us about the essence of truth. The saying certainly does not seem to be talking explicitly about truth at all. But it only seems this way.

In order to see that the same saying is in fact speaking about truth as well, we need only remember the Greek word for what we call truth: ἀ-λήθεια, which is aptly translated as unconcealment. Admittedly, not much is gained by this, as long as we do not transpose ourselves into the full strength of this word’s meaning and thus make it clear to ourselves that at issue here is not just another explanation of the meaning of just another word.

We understand the meaning of the Greek word for truth in a provisional yet unambiguous way: unconcealed, not veiled and not covered over. And then how does it stand with the word “truth” [Wahrheit] in our own language? So what do we really mean by it when we say it? If we don’t want to fool ourselves, we must readily admit that for the most part we fumble around, as it were, with a highly imprecise meaning of the word. In any case, the meaning of this word is not as unambiguous and simple as that of the Greek word; for the German meaning is non-visual and non-sensory and therefore has no immediate perceptual counterpart.

On the other hand, however, the word “truth” is not just a meaningless sound; we “think” something by it and use it, correspondingly, for specific things and, accordingly, not for other specific things. For example, with respect to the factual situation that we call “sickness,” we say precisely sickness and not truth; with respect to the factual situation that we call “bravery,” we say bravery and not truth, because we mean something else with this word.

8. Indeed we must, otherwise we commit the elementary logical error of deriving b from a and in the same breath a from b. Nonsense!—according to vulgar thinking! Not so in this questioning about the first and last.
Yes, fine! But what do we mean, then, if we do use the word with such certainty? What do we understand, then, by truth in the first place?

We usually proceed very securely with questions of this sort. To clarify what truth itself means, we cite this or that truth. And how does this happen? We say, for example: “2 and 1 is 3”; “The earth orbits the sun”; “Winter follows fall”; “On the 12th of November the German people will cast the vote that determines its ownmost future”; “Kant is the greatest German philosopher”; “There is noise on the street”; “This lecture hall is heated.”—These are individual truths.

How are these truths? I mean to say, these are propositions, assertions. Certainly—but they each contain something “true,” a truth. Yet “where” is this true contained? Where is it hiding, then? And above all—what does the “true” that these sentences contain consist in, then? In what way, for example, is this “proposition” true: “This lecture hall is heated”? But why bother to explain such obvious things? The proposition is true precisely because it says that which is. It’s the simplest thing in the world. The proposition reproduces what we find in front of us: the fact that this lecture hall is heated. In other words, the proposition agrees with how things stand, with the state of affairs. And precisely this agreement is its being-true, what is true about the proposition. The assertion agrees with reality in the sense that, in what it says, it directs itself toward reality. The being-true of the sentence consists in its correctness. With this we have grasped what we initially think in an indistinct way with the word “truth.” And “correctness” also contains something perceptual. Truth means correctness.

Our concept of truth and the Greek concept of truth take their perceptual intelligibility from entirely different domains and relations. ἀ-λήθεια, unconcealment, is taken from the factual situation of concealing, veiling, or in turn, unveiling and unconcealing. “Correctness” is taken from the factual situation of the directedness of something towards something, from the factual situation of gauging and measuring. “Unveiling” and “measuring” are entirely different factual situations.

Let us leave it at that. We are not yet asking whether, in the end, these two entirely different concepts of truth might nevertheless be

connected to one another and in what way—and indeed whether they must go together. There is something more important for us now.

b) The indeterminate prior knowing of truth and the superior power of Being

We have just made clear for ourselves, by taking an entirely unartificial path, what we really mean when we ordinarily use the words “truth” and “true,” namely: correctness and correct. But with this, we have brought an entirely different factual situation into view, namely: that we already understand in advance what truth and true mean. By no means have we just now learned and experienced for the first time that truth amounts to correctness; rather, at most we have now noticed for the first time that we always already fundamentally knew this in advance, even if indistinctly, that we automatically, so to speak, and constantly hold onto this knowledge.

A remarkable situation, this! For it relates not just to the meaning of the words “truth” and “true,” but also others: house, river, animal, space, mountain, people, time, and so on—indeed, the whole of language! We think of something with these words. We understand animality in advance—and only because of this can we speak of something that we encounter as an animal; we understand the birdlike—and only because of this can we speak of something as a bird; we understand spatiality—and only because of this can we speak of something as situated “in” space; we understand the mountainous . . .

By understanding such things, we are, as it were, out beyond in the “real”—as we call it: the individual, present-at-hand animals, birds, spaces, and mountains. Indeed, only to the extent that and because we understand animality, the birdlike, spatiality, and the mountainous, can we encounter the real, the individual—each this and that—as that which it is.

A remarkable situation? No! A provocative one—presuming that we are not dulled and too enslaved by the tyranny of the self-evident. As if this situation were self-evident. But let us once seriously attempt to exist while giving up our understanding of animality, spatiality, thingness, and so on—would animals, space, things, or indeed any being whatsoever still be given to us? No. Perhaps some hazy rush of some unbearable confusion—which could only be endured in madness.

But madness certainly exists; and therefore precisely what we, in our good bourgeois and presumably superior manner, call the “normal” is not “normal” at all but something tremendously unique, a uniqueness that can be endured only if one constantly forgets and falsifies it into some everyday thing.

So before which—or better, in which—fundamental situation do we stand, then? We comport ourselves and maintain our Dasein in the
midst of the multiplicity of beings; yet we are not first and properly
delivered over to beings, but rather first we are bound to that which in
each case this individual, multiplicitous being is, what and how it is: its
Being. If this Being were not in power over us and, consequently, in
our knowing, all beings would remain powerless. Only because human
beings are transposed into the superior power of Being and have in some man-
ner mastered that power, only because of this are human beings capable
of holding themselves up in the midst of beings as such. This bond to the
superior power of Being is for us the deepest essence of human beings.

§5. On truth and language

a) The human bond to the superior power of
   Being and the necessity of language

Because and only because human beings are of this essence, they exist
in language, and indeed there must be something like human language.
The animal does not speak because it cannot speak. And it cannot
because it does not need to speak. It does not need to speak because it
does not have to. It does not have to because it does not find itself in
the urgent need to speak. It does not stand in such a need because it is
not compelled by need. It is not compelled because it is closed off to the as-
sailing powers. Which powers? The superior power of Being!10

It follows that the fact that the human being is exposed and open to
the superior power of Being, and the fact that we speak, are one and the
same fundamental fact in the essence of human beings. In turn, what it
means to remain shut out from the capacity for speech is something one
can see in a cow or a chicken, or indeed any animal. And at the other
extreme, it is just as impossible for a god to “speak” (the “word” of God).

Initially, our explication of the word ἀ-λήθεια, “truth,” yielded only
this point: that in language, words already contain a certain intelligi-
bility of things. But then we saw that language has a place in the es-
sential constitution of human beings. This is so because human beings
can exist only because they are bound to the superior power of Being.
To exist: to be a being oneself such that this being, as a being, “is” in
the midst of beings as such and as a whole.

We could content ourselves with the point that obviously language
as well as other “phenomena” characterize the particular essence of
human beings, but that here we are not dealing with the essence of
human beings but rather with the essence of truth. Certainly—but it is
not yet settled whether the question of the essence of truth is not the

10. The other way around! (Heidegger’s presumably later addition.)
same as the question of the human essence, and furthermore, whether precisely in this whole constellation of questions the question about the essence of language must not play a preeminent role.

From an external standpoint the answer is not immediately clear, above all not as long as we persist in the usual notions and opinions about language. On this subject we will now make only the most provisional remarks.

b) The logical-grammatical conception of language

The dominant approach to individual languages and to language in general is passed on to us through what we call grammar. By this we understand the theory of the elements, structures, and rules for structures in a language; separate groups of sentences, individual sentences, and sentence types; analyzed into groups of words, individual words; words into syllables and letters, γράμμα. Hence the name.

The grammatical conception of language is taken for granted in the customary notion of language, especially in linguistics and in the so-called philosophy of language. Moreover, this view has taken hold in a centuries-long tradition and can claim for itself a certain semblance of naturalness. For what is more accessible and tangible than just this analysis and ordering of the otherwise completely unmanageable amalgam of a living language in sounds, letters, syllables, words, word-constructs, and sentence structures?

But it is important to recognize the provenance of this reigning grammatical representation of language. It derives from the Greeks; it developed in the age of Greek sophistry and rhetoric and found its authoritative form in Plato and Aristotle. At the basis of this is the experience that speaking, discourse, is speaking with one another, public transaction, advising, assemblage of the people, judicial proceedings; speaking of this kind is having a public opinion and consulting, deliberating, and thinking. And in connection with the question of what thinking and opining and understanding and knowing are, contemplation arrives at discourse, speaking, as what is immediately accessible and in reach of the senses. Discourse is given and is, just as are many other things; it “is” as the Greeks understood the Being of beings: the available, stamped, durable presence of something. Language is something present at hand, and as such gets taken apart and put together in determinate parts and structures. Accordingly, the emphasis is on exhibiting what is at all times the most constant and the most simple and enduring fundamental structure, in the sense of the Greek conception of Being.

As such a fundamental structure of discourse, after long and difficult consideration, there finally emerges in Aristotle the notion of the simple sentence that has the character of discourse: “The stone is hard,” and the like. Discourse is therefore that in which something
present-at-hand has something else present-at-hand asserted of it. Assertion: ὄνομα, ὀήμα: κατηγορεῖν [name/noun, utterance/verb: predication]. Hence the categorical, simple sentence counts as the fundamental structure of discourse; λέγειν—λόγος (see below).

What deals with and knows about (ἐπίστασθαι) λόγος and what λόγος is, is ἐπιστήμη λογική [knowledge or science of λόγος]—“logic.” As we said, the real occasion for considering discourse was the power that discourse has to define, instruct, and seduce, insofar as in discourse, thinking and contemplation are at work. But because engaging in discourse is simply thinking out loud, thinking that is made public, that is generally accessible, reflection on discourse (λόγος) becomes the form of the theory of thinking, “logic.” In other words, it is by no means obvious that “logic” should be the theory of thinking; rather, this has its unique grounds in the character and course of Greek philosophy.

But contained in this fact that the theory of thinking and knowing developed as “logic” is another essential fact. Since thinking constitutes the area of questions for logic, reflection on λόγος as the theory of language, that is, grammar, is dominated at the same time by logic as the theory of thinking. In other words, all fundamental grammatical concepts concerning linguistic structures and word-forms derive from logic, that is, from the theory of thinking, a thinking that is conceived as comprehending beings (what is present at hand). Substantivum, verbum, adjectivum [noun, verb, adjective]—these names for word-forms go back to forms in which beings are comprehended in their Being by thought. In brief: grammar comes under the dominion of logic, and indeed of a very particular Greek logic, one that lays the ground for a very particular conception of beings in general. But this grammar dominates the manner in which language is represented. And with this arises the more or less explicit representation of language as if it were primarily and properly the verbal expression of thinking in the sense of the theoretical observation and discussion of things.

One easily sees that this is a monstrous violation of what language accomplishes; consider a poem or a living conversation between human beings: the tone of voice, the cadence, the melody of the sentences, the rhythm, and so on. It is true that later, as well as in the present day, people have sought to supplement this theory and to hold the logical-grammatical conception of language in check; nevertheless, the old grammatical-logical representation has endured. And it will endure so long as (a) the mode of thinking and representing endures as it has been accepted in Western thinking by way of Greek logic, and (b) the question concerning the essence of language is not at long last developed from the ground up.

But this task can be carried out only by way of a simultaneous deconstruction of the grammatical-logical mode of representation, that
is, by leading this mode back to its concrete, particular starting point, that is, by destabilizing the grammatical representation of language. Here we have to be led by a positive determination of the essence of language.

c) The characterization of language as sign and expression
In this task, the first thing that must be decided is the following set of questions: To which “category” does something like language belong? Is it even possible to subordinate language to a more universal concept, or is it something ultimate in itself, which cannot be derived from anything else? If it is something ultimate, how is it then to be understood on its own terms? Into which equally originary context can it be integrated?
To clarify: already in the inception of the logical-grammatical conception of language, a characterization of language came to light that has maintained itself to the present: discourse makes thinking public, and accordingly discourse is the expression and sign of thinking. With the phenomena of expression and sign, one believes one has finally found those characteristics by which language may be classified and subordinated. Like gesture, for example, language is a form of expression. The meaning of the term language has also been correspondingly determined: we speak of “body language,” “the language of flowers,” “the language of nature,” and by these we always mean the giving of signs, expression. Language is a way of giving signs, and so it is classified according to a general phenomenon. At the same time this means that the other phenomena that are indirectly connected to language as a sign are also conceived in this way. In other words, sounds and letters, or a group of these as a word, are signs for what the word means. For its part, this meaning of the word, that which we understand by it (in hearing and reading it), is the expression and sign for the thing that the meaning signifies. So one recognizes three levels: the sound of the word, the meaning, and the thing—which stand in a relationship that is designated by the sign. This particular conception of linguistic forms was also already developed among the Greeks, above all in Aristotle (φωνή, νόημα, πρᾶγμα [sound, thought, thing]). Later, νόημα and πρᾶγμα were taken up by logic, and φωνή was assigned to physiology and psychology (phonetics!).

d) Toward a positive delimitation of the essence of language
What subsequently developed as linguistics, or the science of language, is a mixture of these entirely different questions and programs of inquiry. Doubtless it will bring ever new facts to light for us, but only by way of a path that is hopelessly misguided. For it is certainly not possible that an originary and essential conception of the essence of language could emerge from the science of language, because for its part the science of language already assumes such a conception. First a real insight into the
essence of language must be gained through more originary contexts of experience, and then science can build upon this ground.

But this essential insight must now pass through a decision on this question: does language stand under the higher and broader characterization of it as gesture and expression and sign, or is it precisely the reverse: are human gesture and expression and sign given only because *human beings exist in language*? And what then is language, if not expression and sign? Something ultimate? But not for itself, but rather in the essential context of human Dasein?

Do human beings speak only because they want to designate and offer information about something—a thing, a being—so that language is a tool for the designation and presentation of information? Or do human beings in general have something to give information about and to give a name to because and insofar as they speak, that is, are able to speak? Is language an imitation—albeit a richly developed one—of beings as a whole, or are these beings as a whole, as beings, *made powerful and unfolded only in and through language*?

Do human beings speak because they want to declare and communicate something, or do human beings speak because they are the entities who can keep silent? In the end, is the originary essence of language the ability to keep silent? And what does that mean? Is keeping silent merely something negative, not speaking, and simply the outward appearance of noiselessness and quiet? Or is keeping silent something positive and something deeper than all speaking, whereas speaking is not keeping silent and no longer keeping silent and not yet keeping silent?

Whoever has not experienced and asked these questions from the ground up lacks all the preliminaries for access to the essence of language. Such a person immediately falls victim to conventional and very correct opinions. Unless we work through the above questions, there can be no adequate knowledge from which a science might first grow.

*The ability to keep silent is therefore the origin and ground of language.*

All speaking is a breach of keeping silent, a breach that does not have to be understood negatively.

e) The ability to keep silent as the origin and ground of language

In order to further clarify our conception of the essence of language we should now characterize the ability to keep silent. Here we come...
again to that philosophical situation that we have already encountered: circularity. This circularity makes itself known now in that we are supposed to speak about keeping silent—and this is highly problematic. For whoever discourses about keeping silent is in danger of proving in the most immediate way that he neither knows nor understands keeping silent.

On the other hand, with the remark that one should not speak about keeping silent, one could sell oneself short all too cheaply and relegate keeping silent, as a dark and “mystical” thing, to the so-called emotional premonition and intimation of its essence. So long as we are engaged in philosophy, this must not be. But we also must not believe that with the help of a “definition” we have come to grips with keeping silent. What is at stake for us now is the minimally necessary clarification that will allow us further to unfold the question about the essence of truth.

The attempt to trace back the essential origin of language to keeping silent seems at first to run contrary to everything that we said at the start about human beings and language when we distinguished the human being from the animal. The animal cannot speak, because it does not have to speak. So the animal is in the happy position of being able to keep silent, and the facts show this quite evidently. Animals certainly do not talk; therefore, they keep silent—indeed, they are silent all the time. In fact, just as the human being, if not simply mute by birth, cannot keep silent at all, we must say, on the grounds of our conception of the ability to keep silent as the essential origin of language, that the animal is prepared for and capable of speaking to a much higher degree, because it can keep silent more—indeed, constantly.

The animal, according to our position, must really have a higher capacity for language than the human being. This is obviously not the case. So we arrive at a remarkable and absurd state of affairs: the entities that have the higher capacity for language are unable to speak, and those (human beings) that have the lesser capacity, because they can hardly keep as silent as the animals, are able to speak, indeed they are even able to construct the most elaborate languages. Human language arises from the inability to keep silent, and consequently from a lack of restraint. The miracle of language is therefore based on a failure. Something has gone wrong here! Let us reconsider!

We came to these remarkable results on the basis of the following assertions: (a) the ability to keep silent is the origin and ground of language; (b) animals are able to keep silent, because they do constantly keep silent—in contrast to human beings. But can animals really keep silent? A superfluous question: animals demonstrate that they can at any given moment. They simply don’t talk. But in order to keep silent, is it enough simply not to talk? Does the window somehow keep
silent? No! But it does not talk, either! Certainly! But likewise, it cannot keep silent either. Therefore only the entities that can talk have the capacity to keep silent. Keeping silent is a mode of the ability to talk. Hence even a mute is unable to keep silent, even though he says nothing. He cannot even provide proof that he is able to keep silent, because for that, he would have to be able to talk.

So by no means is keeping silent simply not talking, which applies even to a window and the like. But neither is keeping silent simply being mute. The window is not mute; for that, it lacks the capability to vocalize. Even animals are unable to be mute, although they have the capacity to vocalize: roaring, bleating, barking, twittering. For us, to be struck dumb in the broader sense is of course to cease vocalizing; in the narrower, proper sense, vocalization is the vocalization of speech. Someone mute by birth can therefore be mute only because and insofar as he has the drive to speak—and in a certain manner is able to speak inwardly and does “speak.” But even being mute is not yet a keeping silent, because keeping silent is not-talking in the sense of being unwilling to talk, whereas the mute would precisely like to talk. This indicates that the mere lack of vocalization—whether vocalization is impossible (as in the case of the window), or simply not actual, as when one is struck dumb or is mute—is not equivalent to keeping silent. This confirms our earlier proposition that keeping silent can by no means be conceived as a mere negation. Keeping silent is indeed a not-talking, but not every not-talking is keeping silent. Keeping silent is rather, at the very least, the not-talking of someone who can talk. As we said before, it is a definite, exceptional way of being able to talk. This is already evident in the fact that by keeping silent we are often able to say something much more definite than by the most longwinded talking.

So much for now to clarify keeping silent. But by clearly delimiting it against an inadequate characterization of it as not talking, we have clarified ourselves right into a difficulty. Our guiding proposition ran as follows: keeping silent is the origin and ground of language. But now we are saying exactly the opposite: keeping silent is a definite possibility of the ability to speak and the ability to talk. Whoever is able to talk—and only such a person—is essentially able to keep silent. Whoever keeps silent is able to talk and must be able to talk. Accordingly, being able to talk is the precondition, the ground for the possibility of keeping silent, but not the reverse, as we asserted at the outset. Yet we did not just assert this at the outset, but we even assert it now: the ability to keep silent is the origin of language.

Note that with this proposition, I pass decisively beyond what is said in Being and Time, §34, page 164 and following. There, language was indeed brought into an essential relationship with keeping silent; the starting point for a sufficiently originary conception of the essence
of language was also laid down, in opposition to the “philosophy of language” that has reigned until now. And yet I did not see what really has to follow from this starting point: keeping silent is not just an ultimate possibility of discourse, but discourse and language arise from keeping silent. In recent years, I have gone back over these relationships and worked them through. This obviously cannot be explained here. Not even the different manners of keeping silent, the multiplicity of its causes and grounds, and certainly not the different levels and depths of reticence. Now only as much will be communicated as is needed for the advancement of our questioning.

Whoever keeps silent and whoever wills to keep silent must, as one puts it, “have something to say.” But what does that mean? Certainly not that he must really talk in the sense of speaking. What we have to say, we have and maintain in an exceptional sense. We have it and keep it with us in advance. But it is not as simple as having information about something or other that others just don’t have. True, this keeping things to oneself is a mode of Being in which we close ourselves off against the public, letting nothing out. But this is not what is decisive, as it also applies to the distrustful, the underhanded, and the “deranged.”

The above-mentioned mode of keeping things to oneself suggests being constrained, narrowness. But authentic keeping things to oneself is something positive: that mode of Dasein in which the human being is not “buttoned up,” but rather is opened up to beings and to the superior power of Being. Not opened up in the sense, though, that one chases after every random attraction and incident and disperses oneself in their diversity. Rather the reverse: it is the openedness for beings that is gathered in itself.

Gathering, for its part, is not obstinate egocentrism and mere navel-gazing: compared to essential Dasein, these too are no less ways of being lost and dispersed. In fact, they are even worse, because they still offer the semblance of being concerned with the self.

Keeping silent is gathering, the gathering of one’s entire comportment so that this comportment holds to itself and so is bound in itself and thereby remains properly oriented and fully exposed to the beings to which it relates. Keeping silent: the gathered disclosedness for the overpowering surge of beings as a whole.

Everything great and essential—and this belongs to its essence—always has beside it and before it its non-essence as its semblance. Keeping silent therefore looks like keeping oneself closed off, and yet it is fundamentally the opposite, so long as it maintains its authentic essence.

Keeping silent thus turns out to be the happening of the originary reticence of human Dasein, a reticence by which Dasein brings itself—that is, the whole of beings, in the midst of which it is—into words.
And the word is then not a replica and facsimile of things, but rather the binding formation, the bound holding-itsel-together of that gathered disclosedness and of what is disclosed within it. The next step is to show how this fundamental mood of reticence gives voice to sound and vocalization.

The word breaks silence, but only in such a way that it becomes a witness to that reticence and remains a witness, as long as it remains a true word. The word can fade away into mere words, discourse can fade away into mere idle talk; this is the non-essence of language, whose insidiousness is as great as the miracle of language.

We now see this much:

1. Keeping silent is nothing negative.
2. It should not simply be understood externally, in terms of vocalization, as the interruption or lack of vocalization (mere quiet, “silence in the forest”).
3. Neither does keeping silent pertain to the so-called mineness of human beings, to gathering oneself together in the sense of isolating oneself.
4. Rather, keeping silent is the distinctive character of the Being of human beings, and on the ground of this Being, human beings are exposed to the whole of beings. Keeping silent is the bound gathering of this exposure.
5. So neither does keeping silent mean saying nothing as a form of submission, as evasion and flinching, as incapacity. Such modes of keeping silent are only forms of its non-essence, whereas the essence of keeping silent as the bound gathering of exposure is superiority, that is, power. It is that power that both empowers vocalization into word and language and also empowers us to set ourselves against the superior power of Being and to maintain our position in it—and this means to speak and to be in language.

The ability to keep silent as reticence is the origin and ground of language. It must be noted that what has been said here can offer only a rough indication of the essential character of language. But this indication must do in order to make it clear that although the grammatical representation of language is not accidental, it remains superficial and inadequate; that above all, language and the question of its essence are very tightly interwoven with the question about the essence of the human being. The conception of language becomes a yardstick for how originary and broad the question of the human essence is. But both questions of essence now concern us only because—as we have asserted—they are connected to the question of the essence of truth.
f) Language as the gathered openedness
for the overpowering surge of beings

How is the question of the essence of language interwoven with the question of the essence of truth? So far, we know two things about this: ἀλήθεια = unconcealment; truth = correctness. But we have never asserted that we have definitively reached and fully circumscribed the essence of truth with this clarification of the meaning of a word. Rather, from the word’s meaning, we draw an indication of the essence. So far, from the explanation of language and of the word, we know nothing about whether a word’s meaning, as such, immediately informs us about the essence of a thing; in fact, it could also be the case that the meaning of a word only gives a hint concerning a particular aspect of the essence of the thing, and therefore might just as well harbor the danger that we grasp the non-essence of the thing.

Be this as it may, explanation of words is not comprehension of essence; but neither is it irrelevant, for even if the explanation hits upon the non-essence, the explanation still always contains an indication of the essence. Of course, what is called for here is an appropriately thoroughgoing critique. For very specific reasons, philosophy has up to now developed no critique of the cognition of essence. The meanings of alētheia and truth that we have derived are only signs of the fundamental factual situations of concealing and measuring. It remains an open question whether with these, the essence of truth is exhausted or even adequately ascertained. We raised the question: does the essence of language stand in relation to the essence of truth, and in which relation?

Language breaks silence, that is, it brings it to word. And keeping silent turned out to be the gathered disclosedness for the overpowering surge of beings as a whole. The word does not simply eliminate keeping silent. Rather, the word brings silence along within itself, that is, for its part, the word becomes the disclosure that communicates itself, whether a listener is there or not. Every word is therefore spoken from the disclosedness of beings as whole, however narrow and indeterminate this sphere of disclosure may seem to be.

The word itself is not coined as the sound of a word; rather, the coining of the word arises from the prior and originary minting of the disclosure of beings. We must be on guard against taking the derivative distinction among the sound of the word, its meaning, and the thing it refers to, and reading this distinction back into the originary, creative speaking; we must be on guard against understanding this speaking as giving signs. In addition, the creation of language and language as a tradition are not the same and involve completely different ways of speaking. In historical language, the two interpenetrate.
In the word, in discourse, beings exhibit themselves in their disclosedness. Neither is there just a being and next to it a word, nor is there a word as a sign without the being. Neither of the two is separate, and neither is attached to the other in a one-sided manner; rather, both are attached to the being in the word.

Above all, the originary gathering of keeping silent loses itself, disperses itself, and displaces itself in the multiplicity of words and their organization. But it is not as if everything drifts apart into individual things; rather, because they arise from keeping silent, word and discourse remain tied to silence and operate as the bond that stamps—as gathering, in a secondary sense. And this is the character of language that the Greeks experienced directly and named with the names λόγος, λέγειν, selecting, gathering. What these words express is that the human being, as a discursive being, stands by that very fact in confrontation with beings, and wills to become powerful in the face of multiplicity and obscurity and boundlessness through the simplicity, clarity, and stamping force of saying. This gathering in the λόγος puts what is talked about together and thereby exhibits it. In such exhibition beings are gathered as what they are and are thus revealed, δηλοῦν.

g) Language as lawgiving gathering and revelation of the structure of beings

Earlier we heard that Being is οὐσία for the Greeks, stamped, subsistent presence of something; not-Being is simply the absence of οὐσία. The broader sense of presence implies that if beings are a multiplicity, then this being and that being are insofar as they have co-presence. Hence we encounter this characteristic of Being early on: the co-presence of the one with the other. Strictly speaking, there simply cannot “be” something single, something solitary in itself as a being. For a being as single—for itself—already lives, as it were, by excluding all that is absent and therefore in a relation to it: ὁν [that which is] is always ἔννοι [common, being with], οὐσία [Being] is always παρουσία [Being present].

In Heraclitus, we find a saying that teaches us something about this: διὸ δεῖ ἑπεσθαί τῷ ἔννοῳ . . . τοῦ λόγου δ’ ἐόντος ἔννοι ζωοῦσιν οἱ πολλοὶ ὡς ἰδίαν ἐχοντες φρόνησιν.12 “Therefore it is necessary to follow the co-present . . . Although discourse {as gathering} pertains to co-presence {of the one with the other}, the human crowd behaves as if each had in each case his own understanding.”13 This saying contrasts the masses with—whom? The difference is not between the

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13. [A conventional translation would be: “Therefore it is necessary to follow what is common . . . while reason is common, the many live as if they had an understanding of their own.”]
many and the few in number, but rather in their manner of Being and
discoursing. The masses are undisciplined; they let themselves get
c caught up in whatever is going on, disperse themselves in arbitrar-
ness, and blather about all sorts of possibilities and impossibilities,
even though discourse and language pertain to the gathered, that
which belongs together, the constant, and the delimited.

Whoever wishes to hold himself apart from the arbitrariness and
unrestraint of opinions must inquire into the connectedness of be-
ings. That is, he must fit into and take shelter in the structure and law
of things and, accordingly, stand in the discipline of language. Such a
person should not debase discourse and abuse it in blather.

We take from this saying a threefold lesson:

1. On the essence of λόγος: it is gathering, and it pertains to the
With and the Together of beings.

2. On the essence of Being: it is ξυνουσία, co-presence of the one
and the other, structure and assignation.

3. λόγος, as what gathers, relates to nothing other than beings;
and precisely because of this—because it gathers in itself the
structure or jointure of beings—it enjoins beings, it contains the
rules, and thereby itself becomes the measure and the law.14

Language is the law-giving gathering and therefore the openness of the
structure of beings. We now see without difficulty the connection be-
tween language, λόγος, and truth, ἀλήθεια. The setting-out and set-
ting-fast that collects is a setting-forth, and thereby makes things vis-
ible and reveals them. Consequently, it is a happening in which
something previously inaccessible and veiled is torn from its conceal-
ment and set into un-concealment, ἀλήθεια, that is, truth.

h) Language as λόγος and as μῦθος

Here we must take notice: λόγος as such means, for its part, only a very
particular experience and conception of the essence of language. The
Greeks also know a second and older one: language and word as μῦθος.

But here the word does not have the collecting force, the force that,
as it were, braces itself against beings and stands firm against them. As
μῦθος [usually translated as “myth” or “story”], the word that comes
upon human beings is that word that indicates this and that about the
entirety of human Dasein. It is not the word in which human beings
give their account of things, but rather the word that gives them a
directive.

The word as μῦθος gives clues and indicates; the word as λόγος
takes hold and brings itself and human beings into the clear. Language

first becomes λόγος through and with philosophy, that is, in the moment when human beings, bound and suspended in the midst of beings, step forth against beings as such and address them on their own, with respect to what beings are. But the originary λόγος of philosophy remains bound to μῦθος; only with the language of science is the bond dissolved.

We saw that language as breaking silence and language as λόγος show in each case the inner essential relation to truth in the sense of ἀλήθεια (unconcealment). This shows us what connection exists between concealment (the fact of truth) and language.¹⁵

§6. The double sway of the struggle (ἔδειξε—ἐποίησε) as indication of the connection between Being and truth

But all this should serve us only as a preparation for coming to grips with our leading task at this time. That task is indicated in our assertion that fragment 53 of Heraclitus, which gave us insight to the essence of Being, at the same time also gives us insight to the essence of truth, even though it apparently does not specifically and literally talk about ἀλήθεια.

We are now in a position to prove this assertion. According to the saying, the essence of essence (the essence of Being) is struggle—in its double role as progenitor and ruler. The second part of the saying clarifies the manner in which struggle holds sway: ἔδειξε—ἐποίησε. In our introductory interpretation, we already deliberately emphasized that we do not get to the decisive point with the usual, so-called literal translation. Instead: ἔδειξε—sets out; ἐποίησε—lets come forth. These translations are meant to indicate that a being comes into Being, in and through struggle, when it is set out. Set out—into where? Into the visibility and perceptibility of things in general; but this means into openness, unconcealment, truth. Likewise, ποιεῖν is not just a making; rather, it is the letting-go-forth in which the forth means forth out of the previous absence and concealment, into the state of being set forth, so that beings stand in openness, that is, “are.”

Struggle brings beings into Being, and this means at the same time: struggle sets beings out into unconcealment, into truth. Therefore we really must expand the translation, always in keeping with the sense: struggle sets out and lets come forth—that is, into openness (truth).

If one understands truth as correctness or as some other characteristic, then certainly one will search the saying in vain for something about truth. But if we understand truth in a Greek way—that is, in the only way that is at all suitable for this archaic Greek saying—then it becomes

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immediately clear that it is “also” a discourse about truth. And we will have to ask: is this by accident or inner necessity? Presumably the latter, for the saying does not speak of πόλεμος as the rise of Being and then in addition about openness. Rather, the characterization of struggle as holding sway is in itself discourse about setting out into openness. What is this saying? The essence of Being (of essence) stands in an inner connection with the essence of truth and vice versa. But then our question, the guiding question of the essence of truth, is in itself and necessarily the question of the essence of Being.

And more than this. At the beginning of our work, when we were merely preparing the question, we already received an answer to the guiding question. And, as will be shown, this answer is the decisive one, namely, that the essence of truth is essentially one with the essence of Being itself.¹⁶

§7. The historical transformation of the essence of truth and Dasein

We are still far from measuring the full scope of this insight. But this realization allows us to grasp for the very first time what is happening with us today, with our people—and with human beings in general on this earth. This grasp of our history that we are striving for here has nothing to do with a philosophy of history that hobbles behind reality and dissect it after the fact. Instead, this grasp of Being compels us into struggle and transposes us into decisions that grasp out into the future and prefigure it.

But we must first conquer this realization about the essential connection of truth and Being and prepare the conquest through the corresponding questioning. With this in view, our interpretation of the saying of Heraclitus was only a first encounter with truth, which has only apparently sunk back into the nothingness of the past.

But above all, in order to really take part in knowing the essential connection of truth and Being, we must overcome the great obstacle that opposes a genuine insight into the essence of truth. And this obstacle is nothing less than the entire history of Western Dasein up to now, a history in whose tradition we stand, whose power now becomes all the more obstinate as the great transformation of human Dasein arises in a more originary and irresistible manner.

At this point, it is getting embarrassing that there are more and more people who believe they have discovered that liberalism must be refuted. Certainly it should be overcome, but only when we comprehend

¹⁶. Truth of the saying, and each Dasein that understands this saying.
that liberalism is just a marginal epiphenomenon, a very weak and late one at that, rooted in great and still unshaken realities. And there is the danger that the overzealous killers of liberalism will quickly turn out to be so-called “agents” of a liberal National Socialism, which just drips with the naive and upright innocence of the youth movement.

The question of the essence of truth has nothing to do with pitting some scholarly theory of the concept of truth against some other theory, nor with supporting some philosophical standpoint against another. We have neither desire, nor time, nor need for this. Rather, the question has to do with this alone: actively coming to grips, or failing to come to grips, with the moment of world history into which the spirit of this earth has entered. Everything else is superfluous, a waste of time.

But if this is how things stand with us, and we leave aside all the paraphernalia that pertain to a lecture like this on philosophy, according to the customary notions and expectations, and we contemplate that which we cannot attain without a struggle in our labor, then we see that we are under the power of, and entangled in, a tradition that sweeps over us in a manner that is as great and rich as it is petty and empty.

Our first encounter with Heraclitus gave us an indication of how to construct our questioning and move forward. This should tell us from now on that we will not and cannot think up the essence of truth from nowhere using empty concepts, or snatch it out of thin air without any standpoint. We will put the essence of truth to work only if we put our own Dasein to decision in its essence, that is, in the whole of its rootedness, commitment, and choice.

We can do this only if we know where we stand, what surrounds the place where we stand, what tradition rules over us without our knowing—and indeed rules over us so thoroughly and decisively that we believe that the usual conception of the essence of truth must have always been valid and above all remain valid.

§8. The disappearance of truth as un-concealment in the traditional transmission of the concept of truth

And what is this conception? We pointed it out before: truth grasped as correctness. It should be emphasized again and again that this characterization of the customary conception of truth is not complete, although it does indicate its fundamental framework.

a) The long-accustomed conception of truth as correctness.

The agreement between proposition and thing

Correctness: to direct oneself by, to measure oneself by; the factual situation of measuring. Completely different is the factual situation of
concealment. The latter at the inception; the former at the end. Today, no more ἀλήθεια. How did it come to this? Do the two have any connection at all? Or parallel to ἀλήθεια, a different concept? But then how are they still the same? And which conception of the essence of truth will be decisive for us in the future: ἀλήθεια or correctness, or both, or neither of the two? How do things stand with the concept of truth as correctness, and where does it come from?

1. Correctness = agreement; true propositions; correct: “This coin is round.” Agreement between proposition and thing—that’s as clear as it gets.

2. Likewise, this always comes up, entirely independent of the so-called philosophical standpoint: this concept of the truth is, so to speak, the fundamental feature of a healthy common sense; and thinkers of entirely different kinds have agreed on this point, for example, Kant no less than Thomas Aquinas.

Kant

“The explanation of the term truth, namely that it is the agreement of cognition with its object, is granted here and presupposed” (Critique of Pure Reason, A 58/B 82). Truth is “agreement of our concepts with the object” (ibid., A 642/B 670).

Thomas Aquinas

Quaestiones de veritate, question I.

Aristotle

On Interpretation, chapter 1. σημεῖον, σύμβολον; ὁμοίωσις [sign, symbol; likeness].

These are not just three stages but three worlds—and yet in each case, there is this fundamental notion of measuring up that has a peculiar power from which human Dasein finds it hard to extricate itself.

All the more necessary, then, to go deeper into this conception of the essence of truth. This happened by way of a simple example: this coin is round. (Notice: earlier: truths—propositions.)

1. The “aporia” of agreement. A proposition is “correct,” it “agrees,” that is, it agrees with the thing. Agreement: a connection, a relation—and one of difference. Even equality is possible only between different things, even if this difference is only numerical (metaphysically). For example, two coins are equal, they agree with one another, they coincide in the same what-Being and appearance. Likewise, a truth: a true proposition as true “in agreement” with the thing. Proposition and thing: there is no question of their difference. The round coin that is made of

17. {On the traditional determination of truth, see also Appendix II, addenda 7–8.}
metal—the assertion that is nothing material at all. The coin is “round”—the proposition has no spatial form whatsoever. I can buy something with the coin—the proposition isn’t legal tender at all.

So then, given this complete difference between proposition and thing, how is one supposed to agree with the other? By the way, one might say, if pressed, that every proposition, say, when it is written down on the blackboard, is after all something extended in space, that is, the letters and words. But this just makes it all the more clear how little one can talk here about “agreement” between something like a “proposition” and a thing like a “coin.”

But obviously no one means the written form of the proposition as what must stand in agreement, but rather what the proposition means. Sure—but where is that, then? And does it have anything at all to do with the “coin”? Just as little as with a window, tree, street, sky, triangle or any other random thing.

As soon as we inquire into this just a bit more decisively and persistently, one difficulty after the other shows up, and what seemed clear and within our grasp, is completely dark and incomprehensible.

2. The characterization of truth as correctness displaces truth into the proposition. The statement is precisely that which is true or false. This conception is already found in Aristotle. This conception has, in the most recent times, developed into the notion of truth as “validity.” The proposition is valid. In part, this is a way out from the difficulties of the theory of agreement; but it is a way out that really leads way off—a way not to be followed. It still insists that the location of truth is the proposition; the Being-true of the proposition is equivalent to and decides about the Being of things. The meaning of beings is nothing other than the Being-true of valid propositions about them. This is a last reflection of the essential relation between truth and Being, but now turned exactly on its head: truth is not based on Being, but Being on truth.

b) The last struggle between the earlier (inceptive) and later concept of truth in the philosophy of Plato

But these considerations regarding the reigning conception of truth have persuaded us that this concept is really very old, reaching far back into a tradition, all the way back to the Greeks—that is, into the time in which the other conception of essence prevailed. Why was this inceptive conception forgotten and driven back? What happened there? Is the later conception the deeper and more tenable one? Or is it the reverse: is the later conception the lesser one? Is its ascendance based on the fact that the inceptive and originary conception lost its power and became ineffective? And why?

Therefore, we are not so much asking when and with whom the reigning concept of truth qua correctness first arose; rather, we want to
know what happened there, such that the reign of the inceptive and perhaps more originary concept of truth was dissolved by the concept that has long since become the customary one. We want to know this, not to enlarge our expertise for the exam in the history of philosophy, but rather to experience what powers are reigning over our Dasein when that Dasein stands under the dominion of the customary concept of truth.

How did the reigning concept of truth come to its reign? How did it repress the earlier one? What happened here? Is this happening still in effect today? In what way? And why is it that we seem to know nothing about it anymore? We want an answer to these questions with the intention of knowing how things stand with the essence of truth.

We will now trace the rise to power of the concept of truth that is customary today and its confrontation with the earlier concept. We will follow this most directly at the point where the earlier and the later concepts collide, as it were, in a final struggle. That happens in the philosophy of Plato. This philosophy is, as it were, nothing other than this collision. But we do not want to present this philosophy as a system, which it is not; we especially do not want to relate what Plato professed in logic, ethics, and the philosophy of nature, history, and religion. Fortunately, he did not yet philosophize in these academic categories.

We will come close to him only if we talk with him in the form of conversation in which he himself composed his work: in dialogues. In the course of one semester we might be able to come to terms with a single one of the many Platonic dialogues with some degree of thoroughness—and we would then have to set aside our guiding question. Therefore, we choose a solution that is in a certain way prescribed for us.

§9. The start of the investigation with the myth of the “allegory of the cave” as the center of Platonic philosophy

A passage is found in one of the great Platonic dialogues, the Republic or Politeia, at the beginning of book VII, that could really have a place in any Platonic dialogue. It presents, so to speak, the single center of Platonic philosophizing. First and foremost, this is not some arbitrary discussion and certainly not a disputation. Rather, it is the telling of a μῦθος, the μῦθος of the underground cave, known by the name of “the allegory of the cave.”

Here we also have an opportunity to see how, in later Greek philosophy, μῦθος once again thrusts itself forward beside the λόγος that is really appropriate to philosophy. This can only be a sign that we stand in a decisive transition here, decisive for two thousand years. Plato
always speaks in μῦθος when his philosophizing wants to say something essential with the greatest intensity.

The μῦθος speaks of a story—and in order to understand it, it is essential that we actually go through the story ourselves. I will not go into the usual interpretations of the μῦθος. Above all, we will not get caught up in technicalities of interpretation. It is clear that this interpretation cannot be achieved without real knowledge of the language, without mastery of Platonic philosophy, and without intimate familiarity with Greek Dasein in general. For us, it is not a matter of introducing the techniques and mastering the methods for interpreting Platonic dialogues; rather, it is a matter of awakening and carrying out the question of the essence of truth.

Therefore, for you, the authentic understanding of the μῦθος does not depend, in the first instance, upon whether you understand Greek well or badly or at all; it does not depend on whether you know much or little or nothing at all about Plato; rather, it depends on this alone: whether you are ready to take seriously the fact that you are sitting here in the lecture hall of a German university—that is, whether something unavoidable, something that has an enduring effect, speaks to you in the story of the underground cave that is to be interpreted.
PART ONE

Truth and Freedom:
An Interpretation of the Allegory of
the Cave in Plato’s Republic
Chapter One
The Four Stages of the Happening of Truth

§10. Interpretive procedure and the structure of the allegory of the cave

Our answer to the question of the essence of truth had to pass through a decision. We cannot, as it were, think up the essence of truth in an indifferent rumination. Instead, what is at issue is the confrontation in history with the tradition of two fundamental conceptions of the essence of truth, both of which emerged among the Greeks: truth as unconcealment or truth as correctness. The *originary* conception as unconcealment gave way.

Here we cannot decide without further ado whether it was the inner superiority of the latter conception (correctness) that gave it the upper hand over the originary concept, or whether it was a mere inner *failure* that led to the predominance of the conception of truth as correctness. We must begin *at the point* where the two conceptions are still engaged in struggle.

*Plato’s* philosophy is nothing but the struggle between these two conceptions of truth. The outcome of this struggle determined the spiritual history of the millennia to come. This struggle is found in Plato in *every* dialogue, but in its highest form it is found in the *allegory of the cave*.

The fact that we put the allegory of the cave into this context, that we see the struggle between the conceptions of truth in the story that the allegory tells, indicates a quite definite conception. The interpretation of the myth of the cave leads into the heart of Platonic philosophy.

*The story of the cave in Plato’s Republic* is found in book VII, 514a–517b. We cite the text of the Platonic dialogue by the edition of Henricus Stepha-

1. {Recapitulation at the beginning of the session of 5 December 1933, reproduced from the lecture transcript of Wilhelm Hallwachs. Cf. note 4, below.}
We divide the text into four sections—and this means that we divide the whole story into four stages.

I. Stage 514a–515c.
   The situation of the human being in the subterranean cave.

II. Stage 515c–e.
   The liberation of the human being within the cave.

III. Stage 515e–516c.
   The authentic human liberation into the light.

IV. Stage 516c–517b.
   The look back and the attempt to return to the Dasein of the cave.

We proceed in such a way that we will elucidate each stage on its own, while attending from the start to the fact that the individual stages on their own are not what is essential, but rather what lies between them: the transitions from one to the next. This means that what is decisive is the whole course of the happening: our own Dasein should participate in completing this course, and should thus undergo movement itself. When, for instance, the first stage has been elucidated, we may not set it aside as something over and done with; we must take it along with us into the transition and the subsequent transitions.

At first I will always supply the translation of the text of the whole section, and then the interpretation will follow. It would be more convenient to refer you to the text or to one of the usual translations. But this is ruled out by the very fact that every translation is an interpretation.

The μῦθος is presented in such a way that Socrates tells the story of the cave to Glaucon, with whom he is conversing.3, 4

2. (The basis for the text here is Heidegger’s personal copy of Platonis Opera, ed. Ioannes Burnet (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1899 sqq.), vol. 4.)


4. (Martin Heidegger’s handwritten text for the lecture course of Winter Semester 1933–1934 ends here. For the main part of the course—i.e., the interpretation of the allegory of the cave and the Theaetetus—no new text was prepared. According to Heidegger’s note above, the lectures that follow were delivered on the basis of the handwritten text of the lecture of the same name from Winter Semester 1931–1932. (See Martin Heidegger, Vom Wesen der Wahrheit (GA 34), ed. Hermann Mörchen. Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1988.) [English translation: The Essence of Truth: On Plato’s Cave Allegory and “Theaetetus,” trans. Ted Sadler (London and New York: Continuum, 2002); this edition includes the German pagination.] Due to both textual and conceptual deviations from the text of 1931–1932, the following text of the lecture course of 1933–1934 is reproduced from the transcription by Wilhelm Hallwachs, which Heidegger preserved among his records. For more details, see the editor’s afterword at the back of this volume.)
Socrates: Make an image for yourself of human beings in an underground, cave-like dwelling. Upwards, toward the daylight, it has an entrance that extends along the length of the whole cave. In this dwelling, human beings have been chained since childhood by the legs and neck. Hence, they remain in the same position and look only at what is in front of them [as we would say: what is present at hand before them]. [They can neither leave their place nor turn their heads.] They are unable to move their heads around because of the chains. But light [brightness] comes to them from behind, from a fire that burns far above. But between the fire and the prisoners [behind their backs] there runs a road along which, imagine, a little wall has been built, like the partitions that entertainers set up in front of an audience and over which they show their tricks.

Glaucón: I see [I represent that to myself].

Socrates: Now see, along this little wall, human beings carrying all sorts of implements that poke up over it: statues and other sculptures made of stone and wood, as well as all sorts of equipment designed by human beings. Some of the people carrying these things are talking, as is natural, and the others keep silent.

Glaucón: You are introducing an odd image there, and odd prisoners.

Socrates: They are human beings like us. For is it your opinion that such creatures would see anything of themselves or others than the shadows that the firelight behind them casts upon the cave wall facing them?

Glaucón: How else, if they are compelled lifelong to hold their heads immobile?

Socrates: But what about the equipment being carried by? Don’t they see the very same thing, namely, its shadows?

Glaucón: What else?

Socrates: If they were in a position to discuss with one another what they have seen, don’t you believe that they would consider what they see to be actual beings?

Glaucón: Necessarily!

Socrates: But what if the dungeon had a echo from the facing wall? Do you believe that whenever one of those passing behind them spoke, they would take anything but the passing shadows to be what was speaking?

Glaucón: No, by Zeus!
Socrates: Therefore such people [these prisoners in the cave] would consider nothing else to be the unconcealed than the shadows of fabricated things.

Glaucon: Absolutely!

The first section depicts the condition of human beings in the underground cave, which has its way out above, toward the daylight that nevertheless does not shine in. In the cave there are human beings chained by the legs and neck; they are forced to look straight ahead at the wall of the cave that faces them. Behind them burns a fire that casts a light. Between the fire and the prisoners there is a passageway behind a little wall; objects—implements and equipment—are carried back and forth along this passageway. Sometimes the carriers keep silent, sometimes they talk.

If there were an echo in the cave, then the prisoners would attribute the sounds of the words to the human beings they saw on the wall. This is the question: how does the presentation of this first stage end? With an explicit indication that what is at stake here is ἀλήθεια in the sense of the unconcealed. Socrates says that these prisoners would take nothing other than shadows of things to be the unconcealed. So the question is how these human beings relate and behave toward the ἀληθές, the unconcealed.

As strange as the condition of these human beings is, and as odd as the setting is, these human beings are nevertheless related to τὸ ἀληθὲς, to the unconcealed itself: human beings from childhood on, by their nature, are set forth into the unconcealed, no matter how strange their condition may be. Human beings are set forth in advance into the unconcealed, that is, into a connection to the things πρὸς τὸ πρόσθεν [facing what is in front of them]. To be human means to stand in the unconcealed and relate to it.

But precisely because of this, the question will arise: what is unconcealed to human beings in this condition? It is simply what they immediately encounter, what faces them. These are the shadows that the people behind them cast against the wall in the glow of the fire.

§12. What is unconcealed in the cave

This presentation is ambiguous and calls for more precision. The prisoners see the shadows, to be sure, but they do not see them as shadows. What they see, we call mere shadows. They themselves are not in a position to call what shows up on the wall in front of them shadows. For this, they would have to know about the fire and about the light that it casts. Yet the prisoners cannot know anything about all this.
Although we can ask what is unconcealed, this is a question that the prisoners have no occasion to ask. They have to take the shadows as beings themselves. They have not noticed that the light is behind them and comes from behind their backs. Here we must distinguish between fire and light, *lux* and *lumen*, the source of light and brightness (like door and doorjamb). We use the expression “light” in a double sense (source of light and brightness).

The people there have no relation to the fire and the light, so they are unable to tell bright from dark. What they see is not a *semblance of something else*, but *beings themselves*, τὰ ὄντα = that which is. Automatically, so to speak, the prisoners take what is played out in front of them as that which is.

If they could discuss among themselves, διαλέγεσθαι, what is given to them and encountered by them, that is, if they could talk about a thing among themselves . . . (It would be misguided to want to think here about dialectic and dialogue. *Plato’s dialectic* has its roots here, insofar as beings are not communicated, but instead, what one encounters is first addressed as a being.—Connection between the *Being* of things and the *discourse* of language.) So if they could express themselves, they would address it without further ado as *what is*. Man is such that he relates to the unconcealed as something that is. We designate this relation of man to something that is as the *comportment* on the basis of which, and within which, man comports himself toward beings and stands in relation to them, as *Being* toward something that is. Beings as revealed.

We want to clarify the concept of *relationship*. An *animal* that comports itself thus and so. The animal cannot comport itself toward something that is, otherwise it would have to be able to speak. (Dog in relation to the bone!) We will encounter the fundamental relationship between animal and man again as we proceed.

These people really do not even have an experience of themselves and of the others. They see, at most, their own shadows, without recognizing them as such; they are completely given over to what is given. They have no relationship to themselves.

The unconcealed is not given to them as unconcealed. They are not familiar with the difference between the concealed and the unconcealed. They are completely gone, they are all eyes and all ears for what they are encountering.

This is quite a remarkable situation these people are in. Glaucon calls it ἄτοπον, a situation I don’t know how to place anywhere, I have no place for it within what I am familiar with.

This situation is the everyday situation of man; it is not an exception but the situation of man in everydayness, insofar as he is given over to idle talk, to the customary, what lies closest at hand, the every-
day, business as usual. Man in everydayness loses himself, forgets himself in the press of things.

Now, what is listed in this first characterization? The situation: shadows; people in chains; fire and light, a light that burns behind them; people who have no relationship to this; people who do not understand the unconcealed.

All these moments seem at first to be accidental elements in the depiction of this remarkable situation; but they are all connected. It is precisely this inner connection that constitutes what we will exhibit as the essence of truth.

If we restrict ourselves completely to the first stage, we must participate in all of this, completely caught up in what is playing itself out on the wall in front of us. Even there, and already there, what we know as ἀλήθεια, unconcealment, reigns. So we are not talking about truth as correctness, but as unconcealment.

B. The second stage (515c–515e5)

§13. A “liberation” of the human being within the cave

In our previous lecture, we attempted to interpret more precisely the first stage of the people in the cave by bringing out the individual moments more precisely. We closed with a reference to the last sentence, which makes it clear that what is at stake is the ἀλήθές, the unconcealed.

The unconcealed here is definitely and positively stated: it is not some arbitrary unconcealed but rather the unconcealed, such that human beings in every circumstance are related to the unconcealed and in the broadest sense stand in truth (and in untruth). To be human and to exist as human means, in the end: to stand in truth.

So then what is, in this circumstance, the unconcealed, the true? What is the unconcealed to them, then? The shadows! But they do not experience them as shadows. A precondition for that would be telling the difference between light and dark. That is impossible for them. The light and the source of light are at their backs. But they cannot turn themselves around. Accordingly, this arrangement of the illumination in the cave as a whole is essential to the status of the human beings, and so is their being chained.

The people address the unconcealed as beings. The unconcealed is what is. The people are not just in the unconcealed, they are in it through διαλέγεσθαι—first, in the sense of talking things through

5. [In the session of 5 December 1933. The recapitulation from the beginning of the session of 7 December 1933 has been inserted by the editor here.]
with one another. Second, this means the manner of talking and asserting in which beings are grasped in their Being: dialectic.

This is only a crude outline. We saw in the explication of the condition of the people in the cave that they are not in a position to experience themselves and others as beings; instead, they can experience only the shadows that they themselves cast. Therefore, they have in no way reached the distinction of light and dark and are entirely caught up in what the senses have to offer. Their condition is ἄτοπον, entirely exceptional, impossible to place. But precisely this condition is the everyday condition of human beings.

As we said before, we should not simply line the stages up one after another; instead, we must always carry forward with us what has been said about the previous stage. The first stage described the situation. The second stage must begin with a story, because it is about a story (a happening). What happens?

SOCRATES: Now envision what it would mean for someone to be released {λύσις} from the chains and have his lack of discernment healed, and consider what must necessarily and essentially occur as a consequence {οἵα τις ἂν εἴη φύσει}, if the following should happen: one of them is unchained and compelled suddenly to stand up, to turn his neck around, to go and to gaze upon the light. But he could do all this only in pain, and, owing to the blaze of the fire, he would be unable to look at those things whose shadows he saw previously. Assuming that all of this were to happen to the prisoner, what do you believe he would say if someone were to claim that previously he had seen empty nothings, but now he was nearer to beings and turned toward what is more a being so that he saw more correctly? And if someone were to show him each of the things being carried past {which he would now see directly} and compelled him to say what each one was, don’t you believe that he wouldn’t know how to begin, and would hold that what he had seen before was more unconcealed than what was now being shown to him?

GLAUCON: Absolutely!

SOCRATES: And surely if someone required him to look, not just at the things but now at the light itself, then wouldn’t his eyes hurt, and wouldn’t he turn away and flee back to what he had the capacity to see; and wouldn’t he be of the opinion that these {namely, the shad-

The Second Stage [136–137]

ows were in fact clearer, more visible, than what one had just now wanted to show him?

Glaucon: That’s how it is!

We see that in the second stage a story begins. History begins. Something happens. The interpretation must now clarify what is happening here and what, through the happening, is being said to us about the essence of truth.

The chains by which these prisoners are bound by leg and neck are taken off. The question needs to be asked: What does this happening bring with it (οἷς τις ἄν εἰη φύσει)? What must now happen by an essential necessity? Not some arbitrary event, but a happening that touches the essence of human beings.

This is the question: what is the aim of the removal of the chains as a happening? The happening makes it evident, [. . .] ἠγεῖσθαι τὰ τότε [he would hold that what (he had seen) before . . . ]. Someone unchained in this way would have to hold that the ἀληθές he had previously seen was more unconcealed than what he was looking at now, namely the things that he formerly had behind him and which he now would see in front of him.

What is at issue again is the ἀληθές, but now in an entirely different sense: ἀληθέστερα (the comparative) = truer, more unconcealed. Something is happening now with unconcealment. Unconcealment starts to move, so to speak.

In the first stage, the following are connected with unconcealment: chains, light, Being. But now that this unconcealment starts to move, we get a first sense of what the relationship is between being enchained and light, and between light and unconcealment.

§14. Expanded conception of unconcealment in the failure of the first attempt at liberation

What is most striking is the talk of unconcealment in the comparative. Unconcealment can be unconcealment to a greater or lesser degree. This does not mean a numerical difference in unconcealment—not shadows anymore, but something else that is unconcealed. The mode of unconcealment has clearly changed. What the prisoner saw before

7. [Geschichte means either “story” or “history.” Throughout his interpretation of the allegory of the cave, Heidegger seems to trade on this ambiguity.]
8. [One word illegible here.]
9. [W. Hallwachs’s note: “The inner relation of the enchained and the fact that they are also interwoven??”]
and what he is looking at now—that is, the shadows and the things that used to be behind him—now move apart. Each has the fundamental property of being accessible, each is unconcealed.

Now they move apart; and in fact, now each is judged differently, as it is established that what is shown now is more, μᾶλλον ὄντα. Not only the true and unconcealed has degrees and levels, but so do beings. Something can be in Being to a greater or lesser degree; even man can be in Being to a greater or lesser degree.

The increase of unconcealment itself is perhaps just a consequence of a quite definite nearness of man to beings, a nearness that depends on the human way of Being in each case.

One point is now clear: truth and Being-true are not some indifferent, universal thing, not something immutable that remains the same for everyone. And not everyone has the same right to every truth, nor the same strength for it. Every truth has its time. Particular truths, particular human beings find their own time at particular times. It won’t do to talk to everyone about everything. Truth has its degree, its rank, and its nobility—in each case according to the way in which man himself is worthy of standing near or distant from beings.

The nearness or distance changes the unconcealed, in a certain sense. The second point is an initial insight into the relation between the two forms of truth, unconcealment and correctness. In Plato, these two forms collided.

The one who is turned toward what is more of a being, toward what is more than something else, sees more correctly, ὀρθότερον. Correctness comes up in connection with unconcealment. The correctness of seeing and looking is based on the bestowal and nearness of Being in each case, on the way in which beings are revealed and unconcealed. Truth as correctness is impossible without truth as unconcealment.

When one has grasped this, one can only wonder how it was possible to attach the concept of truth exclusively to correctness or validity. In order for all discourse and defining to direct themselves toward something, beings must be unconcealed in advance. The concept of correctness already brings unconcealment with it.

The question of rank order is thereby already decided. The more originary and higher concept is truth as unconcealment. Truth as correctness is grounded upon it. Yet there are differences of opinion about what has more truth or Being.

We must ask: how does the unchained prisoner determine what he prefers if he turns back toward the shadows, and if he looks upon the shadows as the unconcealed—if, turned toward the shadows, he has calmly accustomed himself to that place, so that his eyes are no longer in pain from the blazing glow of the fire? He goes along with what he likes, what makes no trouble for him, what takes care of itself; he goes
along with what demands no effort, with business as usual. The standard for his preference is the preservation of untroubled immunity to every demand, to every necessity. But now, what would provoke him to turn to the things themselves? After all, he is making quite an amazing effort to chase after the shadows.

So it is not enough just to take away the chains; he has to be turned around. The liberated man resists, because this liberation—that is, this removal of the chains—is supposed to happen suddenly. He is not cured when the chains are suddenly removed. He is not yet able to recognize what he used to see as shadows.

Instead of shadowy images, he is now placed before the light (the blazing glow) of things. He has no other possibility for comparison. On the one side he has the comfortable view of the shadows, on the other, the painful blaze. He will make an effort to escape his confusion and return to his peaceful condition.

Taking away the chains is not an actual liberation, it is only an external liberation. It does not take hold of the man in his own Being. It does not change his inner condition, his will. His will is a not-willing. He shrinks back and shrinks away from every demand. So he is also far from understanding that in each case, man is only as much as he has the strength to demand of himself.

The second stage, which looks like a liberation, remains a failure. We experience what is being said about the essence of truth by means of the second stage—over and above the first: now it is clear that human liberation, and the turn toward beings and the Being of things, cannot be carried out as long as the man does not know about the unconcealed as unconcealed. He is unable to make the distinction, for he has no insight into unconcealment: shadows, things, self, light, Being and beings.

How must we think the essential connection between the Being-free of humans and their relationship to light, concealment, and unconcealment if we want to grasp the inner essential structure of truth as such?

C. The third stage (515e5–516e2)

§15. The authentic liberation of the human being to the originary light

In the last session we interpreted the second stage and by doing so we experienced that through the attempt at a liberation, two things were distinguished for the first time: what was previously seen, what we call the shadows, and what is now shown. At the same time, this distinction opens up a difference in kind whereby the things themselves

10. For the second stage was already a liberation to the light—but not really.
and the fire in the cave are addressed as the truer, as the more revealed, as what is more.

In turning toward what is more, looking and asserting must also be formed more correctly. This is the first passage where we encounter the doubling of the concept of truth. At the same time, this passage shows us that truth as correctness is grounded upon truth as unconcealment.

It might now be assumed that the liberated prisoner willingly turns toward the truer Being; however, this is absolutely not the case. On the contrary, we experience that the man who has been rid of his chains wants to go back to the shadows, because he takes them for what is truer. We saw that the absence of all compulsion, of all pain, was decisive for him; what he saw previously (the shadows) is considered more comfortable.

Why does it come to this? The liberation happens suddenly. It brings confusion with it because of the brightness and the glare of the light. It is obvious that such a turning around requires a slow rehabilitation and that before the latter is embarked upon, one cannot speak of an authentic liberation. This attempt at liberation as merely removing the chains will not be taken up again in the third stage.

Socrates: But if someone were now to drag him {the one rid of his chains} by force along the rough, steep ascent from the cave and not let go of him until he had pulled him out into the light of the sun, wouldn’t the one who was dragged feel pain and resist, and as soon as he came into the brightness, his eyes full of the glare, wouldn’t he also be unable to see even one of the things that he was now being told were the unconcealed?

Glaucon: No, at least not immediately.

Socrates: In my opinion, it would require a habituation for him to see what is above. And surely at first he would most easily be able to look at shadows, and next, in water, the mirrored reflections of human beings and other things, and only later {the things} themselves. And among these {the things themselves and no longer the shadows and reflections}, he will more easily observe at night those found in the heavens and firmament itself, looking into the brightness of the stars and moon. He will be able to look at them more easily than he would look by day at the sun and its light.

Glaucon: Certainly!

Socrates: So, finally, in my opinion, he will be able to gaze not just at the reflection of the sun in water and elsewhere but at the sun itself as itself, in its proper place, and observe how it is.

Glaucon: Necessarily.

Socrates: And next he will come to the conclusion about it {the sun} that it is what bestows the seasons and governs the years and every-
thing that has a visible place and that it is also the ground for everything that they [in the cave] saw in a certain way (and so is also the ground for the possibility of the shadows in the cave).

GLAUCON: Obviously, he would arrive at this conclusion after the other {one after the other}. {At the same time, this rehabituation distinguishes the different regions.}

SOCRATES: What then, if he were to remember the first dwelling, and the wisdom of that place, and those who were prisoners with him back then? Don’t you believe that he would count himself lucky for the reversal that happened to him, but pity those others?

GLAUCON: Very much so!

SOCRATES: And what if back then {in the cave} they had among themselves agreed on honors, praise, and awards for the one who sees the things passing by the most sharply and best keeps in mind what tends to pass by before and after and at the same time, and who thus is most ready to predict what will come within this realm of shadows? Do you believe that he would long for such {honors} and that he would envy those who stand in renown and power among the people down there? Or wouldn’t he much prefer to endure what Homer speaks of, namely “to serve some other impoverished man for hire,” \(^\text{11}\) and wouldn’t he prefer to take anything upon himself rather than to take these {the shadows} as the true, the unconcealed, and to live like that {like the prisoners}?

GLAUCON: In my opinion, yes. He would rather suffer anything else than live in this way.

You can already see roughly that the third stage brings about an authentic liberation.

In the third stage, a second attempt at liberation occurs in which the one rid of his chains is dragged out, hauled out of the cave into the daylight, where it becomes possible to experience particular appearances, shadows, mirror images in water, and so forth, and finally daylight and the sun.

In the third stage we see the core of the whole story, because we grasp the connections: the connection between shadow and light, concealment in shadow and unconcealment in light; all of this, in turn, in connection with the opposition between enchained and liberated. The question in the third stage is how, in this story, the essence of truth gets clarified.

\(^{11}\) {Odyssey XI, ll. 489–90.}
§16. Liberation and unconcealment.
Four questions about their connection

We already saw from the rudimentary content of this stage that this liberation no longer consists in the negative, but in climbing up to the light of day, and thus also in passing beyond artificial light, the fire in the cave. But here, too, the aim is truth: τὰ νῦν λεγόμενα ἀληθῆ, what is addressed now in this liberation as unconcealment.

We were observing the situation of the human being, whether in chains or freed. Each situation, each stage, has its own kind of unconcealment and truth. The kind and manner of truth depends on the kind and manner of the human being. This is not to say that truth is subjective, that it depends on arbitrary human preference. That is not the case at all.

1. The transition to what is now unconcealed happens βίᾳ [by force]. The one found in the cave must be dragged out. The liberation is violent. It involves acts of violence, and thus a resistance on the part of the man; he does not want to leave his old situation at all. The climb is onerous, along a rough path. Liberation demands effort. Here, what is distinctive about Greek Dasein comes to light. The Dasein of the Greeks is not as most prep-school teachers present it—not lying on one’s back in the sun, not golden blessedness and cheer, but a great, immense struggle with the most immense and darkest powers, a struggle that is apparent in Aeschylus’ tragedies. The rough path is the last remembrance of this struggle. Liberation is no walk in the park.

2. Neither undoing the chains nor merely coming out of the cave is enough for the liberation to reach its goal and succeed. The authentic happening of the liberation first begins outside the cave by way of the man’s rehabilitation, συνήδεια—a slow, steady re-habituating, in which he slowly grows familiar with what is out there; this means with the brightness out there, with the light, not so much with the particular things.

The reeducation takes this direction first: the man’s gaze (i.e. his comportment) is at first guided toward what, outside the cave, has a certain kinship with what was in the cave. So at first he does not understand the light and the sun, but his eyes are drawn to the shadows, to the reflections. This is why he also sees best at night, by the stars and moon. At first he gets used to dim light.

3. Only once his gaze has slowly been rehabituated do his eyes get used to the daylight and to what is in the daylight, and finally to

12. [Reading ἀληθῆ for ἀλήθεια. See German p. 167, below, and Republic 516a3.]
the source of light, the sun, which is not only light but also rules over time, as the cause of time. Then as now, time was measured by the sun. The sun says what time it is; time is bound to it.

Time and all that shows itself depends on the sun and its light. The sun is the ground of Being and of all that man encounters there, even of every worn-out (?) and manmade fire, and thus even the fire in the cave. All this first becomes intelligible by virtue of the sun. The sun itself is the ground of all Being.

4. The authentic liberation demands not only violence but endurance, a long courage that is sufficient to run through the stages in all their heights, a courage that can endure setbacks. Only this intimate acquaintance with the stages in their necessary order can ensure success.

When we get clear on the whole situation and the whole happening, according to this interpretation, everything seems to be transparent and clear. Only one difficulty remains: what is this whole happening supposed to mean? After all, the whole thing is an allegory.

The starting point is precisely a sensory image of the life of human beings as they live outside the cave. But what does the life of human beings outside the cave signify?

An interpretation can be found in Plato himself (517b ff.): the cave is the picture of human beings as living on earth under the vault of heaven. We are, in a way, in a cave. The fire in this cave is the sun. The shadows are the things we deal with. But what does the stage outside the cave depict? This “outside” means the sojourn of man in the place above the vault of heaven (ὑπερουράνιος τόπος) [Phaedrus 247c], that is, the place of the idea. The sun is nothing other than the highest of the ideas, the idea of the good.

Now, we do not yet know what an idea is. The fire in the cave is the sun, its shining is the light of the sun, the shadows are what we see every day. We are, in a way, prisoners, inasmuch as we are bound to the self-evident, to business as usual.

What do we encounter if we exit the cave? Can we still get out of the cave? What does that mean?

We saw that what is being discussed in the third stage is rehabituation to the light. That is the authentic process of liberation, whereby the things outside become visible in the right way. Here too, a connection between light and freedom, unconcealment and Being is apparent—an obscure connection, to begin with.

13. [Abgängig: the editor has marked this reading as uncertain. It is possibly a misreading of abhängig, “dependent.”]
A new world emerges: the world of the ideas, which is represented by the heaven above heaven. We are faced with four questions:

1. What is the connection between idea and light?
2. What is the connection between light and freedom?
3. What is the connection between freedom and beings?
4. What is the essence of truth as unconcealment that now comes to light from these three connections?

For the moment I will leave aside the idea of the good. Plato already treated it in detail earlier, in book VI. We will come back to the question of the connection between the good and the idea only at the end of the story, in the context of the whole. Only on that basis will we be able to enter into the confrontation with the Platonic conception that determined the next two millennia.

§17. On the concept of the idea

a) Preliminary remark on the significance of the doctrine of the ideas in the history of spirit

What is the connection between idea and light? What does idea mean? With this question, we touch upon a fundamental element—indeed, upon the fundamental constitution—of our Western historical Dasein. With the help of what Plato’s doctrine of the ideas prepared, the Christian concept of God was conceived. This became the standard for the next millennia, for what is genuinely real and unreal. The doctrine of the ideas became the standard for the conception of the Being of things in general.

Secondly, at the beginning of modernity, Plato’s doctrine of the ideas developed and helped to form the modern concept of reason and of rational natural science. Even Romanticism depends on the reign of the idea.

Rationalism and the idea of God come together in the highest completion of Western thinking, in Hegelian philosophy. It is no accident that Hegel himself identified himself as the one who had completed Western philosophy, to the extent that it is the Greek world reconstructed in a Christian way.

From here, there developed in the nineteenth century: 1. Marxism’s doctrine of ideologies, which can be understood only on the basis of Hegel; 2. the new interpretation of Christianity through Kierkegaard.

14. {On this point, cf. the lecture of the same name of Winter Semester 1931–1932 (GA 34), appendices 3 and 4, pp. 324–25.}
These ideas, blended and made innocuous, produced the characteristic picture of cultural philistinism that finally drove Nietzsche to despair. Nietzsche saw the coming struggle in advance. Nietzsche struggles on three fronts: a) with humanism; b) with a baseless Christianity; c) with the Enlightenment. In keeping with the urgency of the circumstances, he drew his weapons from these three armories themselves.

Since then, there has been no further clear, originary, spiritual-historical position or attitude left for human beings. Only mishmash! Human beings today are no longer able to see and to experience their own position on the earth. They will once again be able to do so from the moment that they experience the fundamental condition for doing so, namely, the necessity of coming to a decision in the face of the essential powers of humanity in general, Dasein itself, in so far as the powers of humanity press upon them and compel them to a choice.

This tremendous moment into which National Socialism is being driven today is the coming to be of a new spirit of the entire earth. In this perspective, it must become plain what it means to get clear about this and about much else.

The doctrine of the ideas contains living powers that still dominate us even today, even if they are entirely flat and unrecognizable. We are asking ourselves systematically about the connections from which something like the idea of the doctrine of the ideas grew.

b) The fundamental orientation of knowledge toward “seeing” and what is seen

When we look at our circumstances with an eye to this history, we might say: inasmuch as our everyday circumstances are depicted by the condition of the human beings in the cave, we human beings are given over to the everyday—by that which offers itself to us, by the shadows on the wall. What all this means is that, in carrying on in this way, we are not with genuine beings and not in genuine truth. There is out beyond this something else, which is depicted by the daylight—or to speak without images: the idea. The word “idea” comes from ἰδέα (εἰδεῖν), with the root vid-, in Latin videre, to see. ἰδέα means: what is seen in seeing.

The question is simply this: what is it that is seen in seeing, what is it that we see in seeing? In other words, what does “seeing” mean?

If we proceed from the natural concept of seeing, seeing means a behavior, the fact that we perceive something with the eyes: benches, book, door.—But with what do we see, really? If we look more closely into whether we in fact see the book with our eyes, do we see it with our eyes? What do we see with them?
This becomes plain if we contrast it to what we hear with our ears. We perceive something, hear noises. We see colors, brightness, illumination, bright-dark. But we don’t just see colors, but rather the whole shape, the spatial form. But things already get difficult here, for the spatial shape is not given in seeing alone. I can also feel it. Movement is not just given through seeing, I can also hear it: for example, a car.

The perception of spatial shape is no longer limited to one sense organ. With the eyes, we perceive only color and illumination. We call perception with the eyes or with the senses in general sensation. Seeing colors as sensation! But if we see this book, are we sensing it? No! We sense only the particular coloration. There is no sensation of the book cover. We do not see the book at all; at most we see a specific color, but never the book.

And nevertheless we say: I see the book! I see and I do not see. Thus the expression and term “seeing” is ambiguous.

The question is whether seeing with the eye is the originary seeing or whether seeing with the eye is a specific mode of seeing, whether something like the eye is integrated into the process of seeing. Why should the organ for seeing be the eye in particular?

The organic composition of the sense organs is, taken purely metaphysically, accidental. Any other apparatus would alter nothing in seeing. The organ as organ is not essential; rather, what is essential is the behavior into which the organ is integrated. The eye does not see at all. It is just a passageway, not an endpoint; it is not the seer’s own seeing. The eye can never see a book.

From this we see that the expression “seeing” has a remarkable breadth that, we must now suspect, is attached to words in the Greek world—to the meaning and the concept of ἴδεα.

Our designation for cognition in general and for theoretical scientific cognition is also drawn from this connection to what is seen. “Theoretical” comes from θεωρεῖν, which means nothing other than looking, seeing. Knowing is oriented to the fundamental phenomenon of the idea and of what is seen.

The connection between idea and light is no accidental one; rather, light is a condition for the possibility of experiencing what is visible, whether living or not. On what paths and in what phases did the natural concept of seeing achieve this expansion, such that what is seen means that which, as idea, constitutes genuine Being and reality?
§18. Idea and light

a) On the idea in the context of Platonic thought.

The priority of seeing and its broader concept\textsuperscript{15}

We attempted to decide how to ground the determination of the essence of truth through a confrontation with Platonic philosophy, to begin with, because it is in this philosophy that the concepts of truth, having come to life, are set forth in such a way that the one—the concept of correctness—gains the upper hand, while the other—the concept of unconcealment—moves into the background.

We have interpreted what really happens inside the cave and the liberation of the man from the cave. We attempted to extract the core content. In this attempt, we ran up against the need to interpret the whole allegory in advance. Plato shows what this allegory exhibits as a sensory image of human Dasein.

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{ll}
\textit{in the image} & \textit{without an image} \\
in the cave & under the vault of heaven \\
shadows & things as we see them immediately \\
fire & sun \\
outside the cave & \textit{ὑπερουράνιος τόπος} [place above the heavens] \\
things themselves & ideas \\
in the light of the sun & in the light of the highest idea, the idea of the good
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

Now, what does Plato mean by the \textit{ὑπερουράνιος τόπος} [place above the heavens]? What does the “idea” mean, and what does the idea of the good mean? What we call ideas develop for the first time in the context of Platonic thought. The discovery of the idea is to be made understandable on the basis of the inner context of Plato’s way of posing questions.

The entire spiritual Dasein of the West is determined to this day by this doctrine of ideas. Even the concept of God arises from the idea, even natural science is oriented toward it. Christian and rationalist thought are combined in \textit{Hegel}. Hegel, in turn, is the foundation for currents of thought and worldviews, above all for \textit{Marxism}. If there had been no doctrine of ideas, there would be no Marxism. So Marxism cannot be defeated once and for all unless we first confront the doctrine of ideas and its two-millennia-long history.

For the moment, we want to restrict ourselves to the allegory of the cave. What does the word “idea” mean for Plato—and thus for the entire history of the spirit? What connection is there between the idea

\textsuperscript{15.} {Recapitulation at the beginning of the session of 19 December 1933.}
and what is presented in the image as the sun, fire, and light? What does light mean? What is the connection between idea and light?

ἴδεα (ἴδειν, to see) = what is seen, what is perceived in seeing. Now, what does “seeing” mean here? Seeing as perceiving with the help of the eyes. We see the book, so we say. But if we look more precisely at what we actually see with the eyes, distinguishing it from what we hear from the ears, we reach the conclusion that with the eyes, we see things such as color, brightness, and something shiny.

But we also say: we see that something is moving. But we hear this too. For example, we hear that a car is getting closer or farther away. But the perception of things in motion is not restricted to the senses of hearing and seeing. I can also feel it. The proper domain for visual perception is color, brightness, clarity. So we really cannot say: we see the book. And the dog does not “see” the book either, nor can it ever see it; it sees something colored.

If we now say, despite all this, that we see the book, then we are using a concept that is broader than seeing as sensory perception. This broader concept becomes definitive for ἴδειν and ἴδεα. So, in the strict sense, I cannot see the book.

b) The seeing of what-Being. Idea and Being: presencing—self-presence in the view

But we can say: I see in this given, tangible, audible, visible, graspable thing that it is a book. I see this in it. What is given offers me insight, a look at a book. So that as which something offers itself (as chalk, as book, as lamp) is that within which the relevant thing presents itself, that is, exhibits its self-presence.

The Greeks call the presentness of a thing Presence. Presentness is equivalent to Being for them. οὐσία = presence, that as which a thing is presencing; that which is its essence, or in short, its Being; that as which a thing offers itself, what a thing looks like = εἶδος. ἴδεα is just another form of the word εἶδος. ἴδειν: the seeing of a thing. ἴδεα: the appearance, the look that it offers; that in which something shows itself as it is; what something looks like, the appearance of something.

For the Greeks, the idea is nothing other than Being, what something is: the Being that pertains to it.

If we look more closely, supposing that our comprehension were limited to the realm of what the things give us—color, brightness, and the like—if we had only all these as givens, then we would have no world at all.

I can identify this thing in front of me as a book only insofar as I know and understand in advance what a book is. If we did not have the understanding, the possibility of seeing this book as a book could never come up. But instead there is a distinctive advance knowledge of things on
the basis of which the particular, factual things in each case are given to us in their Being-such-and-such, and can become accessible.

In the first stage, the prisoners see only shadows, because they are in chains and are incapable of knowing anything about fire and light, because they are given over only to the shadows, which are the only things they accept as the given. We, in everyday Dasein, are given over to the things, we comport ourselves toward them in the opinion that we see a thing and just need to open our eyes. In this we know nothing about the fact that at bottom, in experiencing a thing we must already know about the essence of things in advance.

c) The essence of light and brightness:
transparency that is perceived and seen in advance

The prisoner in the cave must be freed and led out, he must reach a realm in which he sees the light (the idea as daylight). The light is the sensory image of the idea.

What fundamental function do the idea and light have in common? What is the essence of light?

We already indicated earlier [German p. 132] that we must distinguish linguistically between

ϕῶς: light, brightness, lumen and
πῦρ: fire, source of light, lux.

Our word “light” has the double meaning of ϕῶς and πῦρ. ϕωσφόρος (phosphorus) is a thing that carries a source of light with it, an illuminator, a bearer of brightness.

What does light mean? What is the essence of light? On what basis can the essence of the idea be depicted in a sensory image as light?

Our concept of cognition is oriented to seeing and light. Theoretical cognition, theory (θεωρία), is looking, perceiving in the broadest sense. It is no accident that later, in Christian speculative thought (already in Augustine), God is conceived as the lumen. In distinction from God we have the natural light of reason (lumen naturale).

So in what does the essence of light consist? Color is the sort of thing that belongs in the domain of sight; but obviously brightness is not something thinglike. We cannot grasp brightness as if it were some thing. Brightness is, as it were, ungraspable—like the nothing, like emptiness.

Nevertheless, for centuries already there have been theories of light (Newton; the particle theory, the wave theory, the electromagnetic theory, etc.). All these theories may be correct as physical theories, and yet they can be untrue and miss the phenomenon. They cannot illuminate the essence of light. The issue here is not periodic changes of condition, it
is not a question of comprehending the process as one of movement; the issue is the clarity and the light in which we human beings move—the essence of light itself. We can grasp light only if we hold firmly to the phenomenon, tying it to our natural seeing and looking.

Even looking is not explained either in physiology or in psychology, because looking, in its highest, proper sense, is a phenomenon that is not reached at all by any natural science—for example, when one human being looks another in the eye.

Let us see how things stand with brightness and darkness. We see something colored, sparkling, glittering. If we say in addition that we also see bright and dark, we do not get at the sense of the matter. We always see bright and dark to begin with. When we wake up from sleep, we never see things, to begin with, but bright and dark. However, bright and dark are not just also seen, but are the condition for the fact that I see or do not see things in general.

Brightness and darkness have a certain priority, consisting in the fact that brightness and darkness make it possible for something to be seen or not to be seen. From this we can gather that brightness and darkness are always what we already see in advance; we gather that we always see things and light together, and in the darkness we no longer see. Light, brightness, darkness are what is seen in advance in all perceiving. Things must first stand in the light in order to be visible.

Now, what does brightness mean? What does the bright really bring about in the human seeing and grasping of things? The [German] word Helle [brightness, clarity] comes from Hallen [resounding], so originally it does not belong in the domain of the visible, but in the domain of tone, of sound. A tone can be clear or muted. Clarity is not originally a special characteristic of the visible, but it was first transferred to the visible in language. We speak of a clear, bright day. But this transference is not accidental; it emerged from many insights. Here again, the deep truth of language reveals itself.

If a transference has taken place here, we must ask: what do clarity (as a fundamental property of tone) and light have in common? The clear tone, that is, the resounding tone, can be intensified into a shrill [gellenden] tone. The nightingale is what shrills through the night. The muted tone is left behind.

The clear and the shrill have the character of the piercing. This is the moment that links light and tone: light, too, spreads and penetrates; it enables the piercing quality of sight. Light and the clear are the transparent, what one can see through. The essence of clarity and light consists in enabling one to see through, in being transparent. Chalk is not transparent. Glass and water are transparent.

But clarity, brightness, is transparent in a different sense than glass is. To be transparent, a glass requires light—it still needs light and its
“transparency.” Light and brightness are a more originary form of the transparent; they are what makes it possible for us to see-through.

Darkness is only a limit case of brightness, that which no longer lets our gaze pass through. A wooden wall is also impenetrable, because it does not have the possibility of letting the gaze pass through. But darkness has the possibility of being penetrated by the gaze.

The character of light is what lets through, the character of darkness is what blocks the way of the gaze. To sum up the character of each: a) light is what is perceived and seen in advance, and b) as such, light is also what lets the gaze and seeing pass through.

On the basis of this double characterization it is not hard to clarify how light can emerge as the sensory image of the idea. ἰδέα = εἶδος, appearance of something, what a thing is, its what-Being, in short: its Being. I must already understand (see) in advance what a thing is—book, door, window. This understood essence (book, door, window) is what lets the gaze pass through in order to see it as a thing (book, etc.)—that which must be known in advance in order to let a being be encountered as this being.

Accordingly, the seeing of ideas does not signify anything fantastic, but rather something originary. For to grasp what is simplest and press it into words, to understand the Being and essence of things in advance = understanding of Being.

If man did not have this understanding of Being in the ground of his essence, then he could not even relate to beings; he could not say “I” to himself and “you” to another. He could not speak. The essence of language and the sight of the ideas are the same as existing as a human being.

This perceiving of shadows, coming into the light, and perceiving of things, are connected to undoing the chains, to the liberation from the cave. The next question is: what connection is there between light and freedom, between idea and freedom?

What is the entire contexture of what we call the essence of truth?

§19. Light and freedom

a) On the determination of man on the basis of seeing, hearing, and speaking

The elements that constitute the inner connection in Plato’s story are the following:

1. idea and light;
2. light and freedom;
3. freedom and beings;
4. the question about the connection between all these factors and truth.

We have previously attempted to clarify idea according to its essence. The word ἰδέα is related to a fundamental fact about the conception of human beings in Greek Dasein (and therefore in the entire spiritual life of the West, too). In this conception of human beings, visual comprehension, θεωρεῖν (from which “theory” derives) takes on a predominant role—the eye, seeing. Accordingly, the seen becomes especially preeminent in the comprehensive conception of the world.

But alongside this, another fact also emerges, even if late—that is, first with Aristotle—a fact that rules over Greek Dasein as essentially as ideas and seeing. This is hearing. Indeed, Aristotle asks whether hearing might not somehow be the higher sense and, accordingly, whether it might condition the higher comportment of human beings.

In this context, hearing and seeing are not conceived of as confined to mere sense perception; rather, they are taken more broadly, as listening to what has been spoken, hearing the word of the other. Language is the fundamental element of the being-with-one-another of human beings. For the Greeks, discourse is a defining moment for the essence of human beings. The human being is a ζῷον λόγον ἔχον, that is, the sort of living being that has the capacity for talk, the sort that, insofar as it exists, speaks out to others.

This hearing the other, and at the same time, one another, is therefore no merely acoustic phenomenon; rather, it means hearing a summons, lending an ear to a wish, listening to an order, assignment, and so on.

In the same context [Politics 1.2], Aristotle also says that the human being is a ζῷον πολιτικόν [usually translated “political animal”]. This phrase was later much abused, as when one translated it as, “The human being is a social being.” But this is not what is meant here; rather, the human being is the sort of living being that belongs from the start to a with-one-another in the state. This with-one-another cannot be understood as based on the fact that there are many human beings whom one must keep in order; instead, we belong with one another to the state, we exist on the basis of the state. And this existence fulfills itself and takes shape through discourse, λόγος. The science that is concerned with the ability to talk, rhetoric, is the fundamental science of human beings, the political science.

In this connection we understand by what right, even in the face of the overpowering definition of the human being as seeing ideas, Aristotle nevertheless arrived at the question of whether hearing does not have preeminence. But the issue did not reach a complete decision. Therefore, both definitions were later misinterpreted and reinter-
preted: λόγος was taken as reason. The idea itself was also misinterpreted. (We will come back to this later.)

So, what is the meaning of idea? It is the look of things that we already have in view in advance when we see individual things, when we want to grasp this and that. ιδέα = Being that is viewed in advance.

Now, about light.

1. Light, if we are to take this phenomenon as we immediately experience it, gives itself to us as that which we always view in advance in the sense of bright and dark, even if we do not grasp it objectively.

2. We have shown that brightness is the transparent, the penetrating, that which seeks and creates a way through, what allows a way through.

From this, we will now arrive at the common feature of idea and light, which will enable us to see how the idea is depicted by the sensory image of light. Idea and light enable us to grasp beings, to provide us with a connection and pathway to individual things, to what they are.

b) Freedom as binding oneself to the illuminating

We must provisionally outline what freedom means, not arbitrarily according to some random concept, but rather by holding to what the story in the allegory itself shows us.

The second stage resulted in one mode of liberation, the third in another. The liberation in the second stage is nothing other than the removal of the chains on the neck and legs. Liberation here is therefore a mere taking-away of something, becoming free from something, no longer being bound by something. Hence, the second stage means lack of restraint, therefore something negative. Someone liberated in this way consequently falls into confusion; he is helpless as soon as he gazes into the fire and wants to go back to the chains. What he really seeks is support, certainty, and stability: these are what he finds lacking in the supposed liberation at the first stage.

The third stage does not merely take away the chains, but leads the human being up and out of the cave into the light. Now, to be free is not to be released from something but to be led forth to something. Not to be free from, but to become free for something—for the light.

In this, a step-by-step habituation to the light takes place. Habituation is nothing but becoming increasingly accustomed and binding oneself to the light and the source of light; habituation is binding oneself to the self-binding and becoming accustomed to the light, putting oneself under the binding obligation of what the things in the light demand, and willing this.
We therefore see two different modes of liberation (or of freedom). The latter stands in connection with the light, freedom in the positive sense. We see that to become free in the authentic sense means to bind oneself to the light, to habituate oneself to it.

How are looking into the light and habituating oneself to the light an increase in freedom? Light and brightness as what illuminates. But light has yet another characteristic that is also expressed in language. Compare Schiller: “Bright as day the night is lit.” The night is permeable, something like a forest clearing free of trees, so that it allows a view through it. Light liberates, it sets free a passage, an opening, an overview; it clears. The dark is cleared, goes over into the light.

Binding oneself to the light is what liberates. Binding oneself in this way is the highest relation to freedom, is being-free itself.

§20. Freedom and beings (Being)

a) Freedom as binding oneself to the essential law of Dasein and of things

Freedom, to be free, means to bind oneself to what makes one free, what lets one through, the penetrable, or to speak without images: the ideas, which are depicted in a sensory image as light.

The ideas give the appearance of beings, that is, their Being. Becoming free for the light means making the effort to authentically understand what things are, binding oneself to the essential law of things on the basis of which we first grasp things in their Being-such-and-such.

The freer we become and the more originally we bind ourselves to the essential laws of things, the nearer we come to beings and the more we come to be. In each case, the degree and the extent of human actuality depends on the degree and the greatness of human freedom. This freedom is not lack of restraint; rather, it is all the greater the more originary and broad the binding of man is, the more that in his comportment, man sets his Being back into the roots of his Dasein, into the fundamental domains into which he is thrown as a historical being.

These are theses and things that man today finds difficult to understand. All scientific cognition secures nearness to beings only if it grows from a historical binding of man to Dasein.

(This is not being said for purposes of the “Alignment.” Nor is it necessary for me to defend myself. . . . If one now demands of scholars that they subscribe to a proclamation that all science is grounded. . . . This all indicates that today, our Dasein is confused. A transformation of our entire Dasein is necessary, a transformation that can come about only step by step, and cannot be dealt with by knowledge alone.)

b) The view of essence that reaches ahead as a projection of Being (with examples from nature, history, art, and poetry)

The point is that freedom means binding to the essential law of humanity. Originary binding means a binding that must take place in advance; we do not first grasp essence on the basis of the greatest possible investigation of facts, but instead, we can determine facts only once we have comprehended the essence of things.

This is the fundamental condition for all sciences. I will give some examples here to show that all comportment, even the knowing comportment toward beings, even scientific comportment, is grounded on an originary view of essence that must develop in each case according to the depth of human beings.

Let us think of particular great discoveries about nature (by Kepler, Newton, Galileo). What is the basis for the great achievements of these much-admired natural scientists from the beginning of modernity? What is the difference between modern natural science and that of antiquity? One may say that modern science introduced the experiment. But that is an error. Neither does the meaning of modern science lie in the fact that, in contrast to the earlier, qualitative form of observation, quantitative observation gained ground—“mathematization”!

Both things already existed among the Greeks, and both fail to characterize modernity, because both have the decisive point as their condition of possibility: namely, that Galileo, with the means of ancient physics, established a new fundamental position toward actuality; that, before all experiments and all mathematics, before all questions and determinations, he first laid down what should belong to the essence of a nature, in that he approached it as the spatiotemporal totality of the motion of mass-points. By reaching ahead into actuality, he laid down what a nature should be. Only on the basis of this approach did it become possible to experiment, to question nature, to listen in on it, as it were,

17. [Gleichschaltung: the Nazi party’s systematic program of eliminating all rival organizations and ideologies, bringing all political and civic institutions into line with the will of the Führer.]

18. (This and the following ellipses are omissions in the transcript by Wilhelm Hallwachs.)
and then to measure it. So here is a quite *definite advance understanding* of what nature as a being should be.

It is a completely different question whether, regardless of this approach and despite it, nature was held directly close to man and kept within his power, or whether quite different domains inserted themselves between nature and man, so that this hollowing out of man could come about—so that man no longer has a relation to nature. *Technology* has blocked this relation.

How great the distance has become, natural science itself is quite incapable of deciding. That is philosophy’s prerogative. “The worldview of the natural sciences” is nonsense from the start.

Another area of knowledge is that of the *science of history* and its knowledge of human work and fate. *Burckhardt* is not a great historian simply because he read sources and promulgated them, or because he discovered manuscripts, but because on the basis of the greater depth of his existence, he had a view of the essence of human action that reached ahead, a view of what human greatness, human limitation, and human fate are. He *actually understood the Being* of this domain, he had an *understanding* of it *in advance*. Only thereby did he manage to research the facts in a new way.

Now, one says that since then, science has made powerful progress, that so much new material has been discovered that an individual would no longer be in a position to achieve a synthesis. The very fact that one speaks of a synthesis proves that one does not know what one is talking about. *In advance* of all synthesis, there must be the *fundamental understanding* of what history is. This first makes it possible to experience and comprehend facts.

Only the weakness of today’s humanity has brought us to the point where we are now just piling up facts. It is as if this infinitely increasing material were the reason why we do not see any history anymore. Humanity remains in submission to the hopelessness of its inner impoverishment and inner baselessness.

The fact that every essential, fundamental relationship to actuality is conditioned by this view of essence applies to *art* as well, and above all to *poetry*. Art and its essence have been misinterpreted, just like history. One sees art and artworks as that in which the artist expresses his psychic life! The essence of art does not consist, either, in picturing reality. Nor is its purpose that we should take pleasure in it, should enjoy it, but rather, the innermost sense of all artistic formation is to reveal the *possible*, that is, the *free, creative projection* of what is *possible for the Being of humanity*.

Through art, we first attain the basis and directive for seeing reality, for comprehending each individual reality as what it is, in the light of the possibilities. This is why poetry signifies far more than all science.
The great poets Dante, Shakespeare, Goethe, Homer have achieved far more than any scientist.

This binding oneself to what things are in their essence, this projection that reaches ahead, is what makes the individual being in everyday reality visible in the first place. Freedom, that is, the binding to the essential lawfulness of things, is a fundamental precondition for beings, a precondition for beings to announce themselves as such.

This binding is to be achieved by the individual human being. But the achievement is not up to the arbitrary will of the individual, but depends on the historical Dasein of humanity.

If idea, light, and freedom go together in this way, this will clarify what Plato wants to say in the allegory about the essence of truth as unconcealment.

Next time we will attempt to bring the essence of freedom and the essence of light and beings into close connection with the essence of truth.

§21. On the question of the essence of truth as unconcealment

a) The doctrine of ideas and the question of truth

We were asking about the essence of truth. In this question, we were not seeking a detached, abstract concept, which, the more general it is, the more empty and unrestrained it becomes. Rather, we were seeking the essence of truth as that which rules our Dasein through and through as a historical Dasein and thereby defines it. This essence cannot be conceived in the moment on the basis of some accidental circumstance; rather, it must be drawn from the decision for the future through historical confrontation.

In this confrontation, we have encountered two fundamental orientations of the essence of truth: truth as unconcealment and truth as correctness, as they were experienced and grasped conceptually among the Greeks.

We have seen that, with the Greeks in the sixth century, the concept of truth as unconcealment was driven back and the concept of correctness became predominant. In Plato, the two fundamental orientations collided once more, although Plato neither knew this nor intended it. Instead, this collision happened on its own under the compulsion of the questions raised.

19. {Recapitulation at the beginning of the session of 8 January 1934.}
We have focused on Plato’s philosophy, not because it deserves our particular esteem, but because it is the crux of Greek philosophy. It is no accident that one characterizes Plato’s philosophy as the *doctrine of ideas*. It is not accidental, although it is not necessary either, that this doctrine has been grasped only from this point of view.

For us, the issue is whether we can arrive at an essential understanding of the essence of truth through the doctrine of ideas. If we talk of the doctrine of ideas, then we are displacing the fundamental question into the framework of ideas. If one interprets ideas as representations and thoughts that contain a value, a norm, a law, a rule, such that ideas then become conceived of as norms, then the one subject to these norms is the human being—not the historical human being, but rather the human being in general, the human being in itself, or humanity. Here, the conception of the human being is one of a *rational being in general*. In the Enlightenment and in liberalism, this conception achieves a definite form. Here all of the powers against which we must struggle today have their root.

Opposed to this conception are the finitude, temporality, and historicity of human beings. The confrontation in the direction of the future is not accidental either; rather, to the extent that our philosophical questioning has not just now, but for decades...\(^{20}\)

On the basis of this new starting point, as it has been developed in our thinking, the whole concept {of beings and of Being}\(^{21}\) is entirely new. *On this basis we will ask about the essence of truth and here we will complete the confrontation with antiquity.*

The *inception* is decisive. Only the *inception* of things is *great, powerful, and fruitful* in itself. Plato sets down this inception in a myth (*not* in a definition), in the story of the prisoners in the cave. This story develops in four stages. Up to this point, we have presented the first three stages.

The third stage encompasses the authentic liberation of the human being from the cave into the light of the sun. This gives us various elements: idea, light, freedom, beings, truth. We were to observe the connection between *idea and light, light and freedom, freedom and Being,* and finally *the connection of all of these with truth.*

b) Degrees of unconcealment.

The ideas as what is originally unconcealed (*ἀληθινόν*)

and what *is* in the proper sense (*ὄντως ὄν*)

We will attempt a coherent presentation of what we presented in the previous lectures, as it is set down in the Platonic approach. Every interpretation of a poetic work goes beyond what is to be interpreted;
it must understand the author better than he understood himself, so that in this way we can create something positive for ourselves, given that we ourselves did not create the work in question. Our interpretation maintains itself in the orientation to Greek philosophy, but it goes beyond Plato.

Now, in the third stage, what is said directly about truth? [The liberated prisoner would be unable to see even one of] τὰ νῦν λεγόμενα ἄληθη (516a3)—even one of the things that are now claimed as unconcealed in this state of liberation from the cave. ἄληθη [“unconcealed,” plural]—it is not one Being that is spoken of, but rather a multiplicity (multiplicity of the ideas), τὰ νῦν [the things now].

Unconcealment is also spoken of in the second stage, in the comparative: that what is seen in the second stage is more unconcealed (ἄληθέστερα, 515d6–7) than what was seen in the first stage. There is, therefore, an increase in unconcealment. So presumably an increase will also take place in the third stage—in fact, in the third stage the highest level will be reached, which is followed by no further levels, so that we stand beside what is unconcealed in the proper sense and in the first rank.

What is now unconcealed in the third stage is the most unconcealed of all that is given within the domain of truth. Granted, Plato does not use the expression ἄληθέστατα [most unconcealed], but instead, as he does in other places, when he speaks of the genuinely unconcealed, he uses the word ἄληθινόν. This is a very particular construction that can be made clear through examples. τὸ ξύλον = wood; ξύλινον = wooden. Hence, ἄληθινόν = what is unconcealed through and through, what constitutes pure unconcealment.

The question is now whether Plato in fact addresses the ideas as what is most unconcealed and whether he calls what is most unconcealed ἄληθινόν, true and in Being. True in the sense of unconcealment means the unconcealment of Being, the revelation of Being: beings are the revealed. Accordingly, the increase in the revealed corresponds to an increase of Being, μᾶλλον ὄν, what is to a greater degree.

In the second stage, what is seen is what is to a greater degree, a being in the more genuine sense. The first stage describes how the prisoners take what has been assigned to them, the shadows, as what is. Here in the third stage, which describes the genuinely revealed, the genuine beings also come to light.

Where Plato now speaks of these, he expresses a characteristic in the following way: τὸ ὄντως ὄν, the being that is in such a way that only something that is can be. The being that is a being through and through is the highest intensification of the unconcealed. The ὄντως ὄν is the highest intensification on the part of the ὄν [what is], just as the ἄληθινόν is the highest intensification on the part of the ἄληθές [the unconcealed]. (Both are the idea.)
We need to show that the idea is in fact addressed as the revealed. We will take up two characteristic passages as evidence in order to make clear the inner connection between the ideas and the designation ὄντως ὄν, what genuinely is.

Republic, book VI, 490a8ff.: The question here concerns the kind of human being whom the Greeks call a φιλομαθής, one who has the drive to learn. What kind of human being is this, the one who authentically wills to know?

. . . ὅτι πρὸς τὸ ὄν πεφυκὼς εἰς ἀμμαλάσθαι ὃ γε ὄντως φιλομαθής, καὶ οὐκ ἐπιμένοι ἐπὶ τοῖς δοξαζομένοις εἶναι πολλοῖς ἐκάστοις, ἀλλ' ἱε καὶ οὐκ ἀμβλύνοιτο οὐδ' ἀπολήγοι τοῦ ἔρως, πρὶν αὐτοῦ ὃ ἐστὶν ὄντως ἐκάστοι τής φύσεως ἄμασθαί ὃ προσήκει ψυχής ἐφάπτεσθαι τοῦ τοιοῦτον—προσήκει δὲ συγγενεῖ—ὥ ὑπεράσχας καὶ μνείες τῷ ὄντως, γεννήσας νούν καὶ ἀλήθειαν, γνούτε τε καὶ ἀληθῆς ζῷη καὶ τρέφοιτο καὶ οὕτω λήγοι ὡδίνος, πρὶν δ' οὔ;

This one, the one who authentically wills to know, is one who, in his very essence, feels a fervor for what is as such, who cannot stand idle among the assortment of individual things, which one so commonly takes for what is (first and second stages of the cave). In contrast, he sets out on the path, he is constantly under way and does not allow himself to be dazzled by what is right in front of him, he does not relinquish ἔρως [eros, passion] until he has grasped what constitutes the what-Being, the essence of things within the whole of what is, and has done so by using the capacity suited to grasping this what-Being: eros. With this capacity, he brings himself together with the ὄν ὄντως, with what is in the genuine sense. By engendering understanding and unconcealment, he will truly know and live and nourish himself, and thereby rid himself of pain.

The one who, in the drive to know, reaches out to grasp the ideas, is inspired by the drive to bring himself together with what genuinely is. The idea is grasped here as what is genuinely.

Our next question is: does Plato also refer to this Being that most is as the most unconcealed?

Second passage: Sophist, 240a7ff. The issue here is, what is an εἴδωλον? In the first three stages, we have seen that human beings are not in a position to look right away into the light and at the sun. Instead, their blind eyes must slowly become accustomed {to the glare and the brightness of the light and the sun}.²³

22. {Heidegger’s variant reading of the text; Oxford edition: ὃ ἐστιν.}
23. {Conjecture; gap in Hallwachs’s transcript.}
This difference between εἴδωλον and ἰδέα, or εἶδος, plays an important role in the philosophy of Plato. εἶδος (ἱδέα) means the look of something itself, what, for example, makes a house what it is. εἴδωλον is an image, a likeness; it too is a kind of look. For example, a photograph also gives us a look, but it does not give us the house itself. εἶδος is applied to the things themselves. The essence of the house is τὸ κοινὸν [the common], what pertains to each individual house. Individual houses, tables, and the like are likenesses, εἴδωλα, to the extent that each looks like the essence. εἴδωλον is the name for the individual being. This chair is a quite specific image of chairs in general.

—Τί δήτα, ὦ ξένε, εἴδωλον ἂν φαίμεν εἶναι πλήν γε τὸ πρὸς τάληθινὸν ἀφωμοιωμένον ἐτερον τοιοῦτον;  
—Ετερον δὲ λέγεις τοιοῦτον ἀληθινὸν, ἢ ἐπὶ τίνι τὸ τοιοῦτον εἶπες;  
—Οὐδαμῶς ἀληθινὸν γε, ἀλλ’ ἐοικὸς μέν.  
—Ἄρα τὸ ἀληθινὸν ὄντως ὃν λέγων;  
—Οὕτως.

—What should we understand by εἴδωλον? What should we understand by likeness or copy other than that which is likened to the genuinely unconcealed and consequently is secondary and heterogeneous? {Here, an image of something is given, an image that in a certain sense is likened to the thing itself. In this sense, it is a second thing just like the prototype. This is correct in a certain sense, but it is also a distortion.}

—Another thing like this, that is, another genuinely unconcealed thing, do you mean? {If the copy is designated as a second thing just like what it copies, then it too is an ἀληθινὸν.}

—No, I mean that the image is like the being itself. {The copy is indeed like the genuine object in a certain sense, but as the copy it is never the authentic object itself (ἀληθινὸν).}

—So do you understand by ἀληθινὸν the ὄντως ὃν, the unconcealed in the genuine sense, what is in the genuine sense {the idea}?  
—Yes, that’s it.

In Plato, then, the idea is what is in the genuine sense. The third stage, which treats the unconcealed in the sense of the idea, also treats what is unconcealed in the highest sense and therefore what is in the highest sense.

c) The ideas as what is seen in a pre-figuring (projective) viewing

How can the ideas be called what is unconcealed in the first rank? They are, so to speak, the vanguard for the genuinely true, they prepare the way for experiencing and pre-figuring a specific idea, a form;
they carry out a projection. This first makes it possible to show how individual things look and how individual things are to be grasped.

They (the ideas) achieve what comes first of all; they open the entryway to, the experience of, individual beings. They are what is true, because they first achieve all this. They give access to Being, just as light is the condition for our seeing individual things. They open up the understanding of what a thing is, as a pre-understanding. This gives access, it gives light, it is the condition of the possibility for us to see individual things. (The openness of beings and their belonging-together arise from Being and from the idea.)

The ideas, then, let the openness of beings arise with them. Hence, they themselves are genuinely what is true. Arise with! They themselves, by themselves alone, cannot achieve this, because we cannot speak of the ideas by themselves. It lies in the essence of the idea that it is always related to a seeing. The relation to a seeing belongs to the idea. This characteristic of what Plato calls the idea is no mere supplement; to be seen always belongs to the idea. (What is seen is always in relation to a seeing. Idea is always seen.)

This is a special kind of seeing, which is different from experiencing things. We encounter things, things come counter to us, are given to us. Grasping the ideas has nothing to do with tracking down some present-at-hand thing somewhere. The ideas are at all only in and through a beholding that first creates what can be beheld, a special sort of creative seeing. This sighting is not gaping at something; rather, it is catching sight, creating. Kant says that the human being, taken in this sense, is creative.

d) On the question of the character of the Being of the ideas

With this determination of the essence of the idea, we have achieved an essential insight, namely, that the ideas are not values present at hand somewhere, not a set of rules posted somewhere; instead, they are, and are encountered, in the comportment of human beings as they catch sight of things.

But neither are they just something subjective, an invention, a fantasy of human beings. They are neither objects nor subjects. This distinction between subject and object is by no means suitable and is unable to express the relationship between beholding and the idea itself.

What the ideas are, how they are, and whether they can be addressed as Being could not be answered up to this point—not because the question, as question, has not been adequately examined, but rather because it has not yet been posed at all.

Against the many attempts to pass off the idea as something subjective or, alternatively, to ground it objectively—this is still the most
philosophically valuable and genuine conception: Augustine’s conception of the idea as correlate of divine thought—not the idea in itself, floating about freely, but rather in relation to an absolute subject, God. This is simply a deflection of the question, but nevertheless, it endured until Hegel. Since then: decline. It was not so long ago that one wanted to tell us that there are something like ideas in empty space, values in themselves, on the basis of which culture might then be formed.

Now, what follows for the conception of the essence of truth as it is in the third stage? With respect to what genuinely is, there are no truth and openness in themselves any more than there are ideas in themselves; rather, openness becomes, and it becomes only in the innermost essential relationship with human beings. Only insofar as the human being exists in a definite history are beings given, is truth given. There is no truth given in itself; rather, truth is decision and fate for human beings; it is something human.

But where can we find a human being who can definitively say what the truth is? This objection seems correct—when as we are doing here, truth is conceived as something human. One says that such a conception leads to relativism and then to skepticism.

We pose an opposing question! If it is said that this concept degrades the truth, then I ask in advance: does one know what human being means here and what is human? Or is the question of who man is perhaps a fundamental question, and even one that stands in an innermost connection with the question that we are asking, namely, the question of truth?

We are asking what the human being is and what is human. A problem arises: What is the inner connection between the essence of truth and the essence of the human being? Does the essence of truth determine the essence of the human being—or the other way around?

§22. The happening of truth and the human essence

a) The allegory of the cave as history (happening) of man

In our previous session we tried to grasp the whole content of what is presented in the third stage, with the intention of experiencing how the essence of truth is to be determined on the basis of this stage. We have done so in a quite preliminary way. What is being directly said here about the true, the unconcealed?

What is under discussion is what is unconcealed now, in the third stage. We can gather from the entire content that a certain intensifica-

24. {Recapitulation at the beginning of the session of 11 January 1934.}
tion of the unconcealed is at work. (Even in the second stage an intensification already took place.) The third stage deals with the most unconcealed, the ἀληθινὸν, what is unconcealed through and through, what has no remnant left of concealment: the idea as what most is, that which genuinely constitutes what is.

This authentic being is in turn the most unconcealed. We proved this on the basis of two passages in the Republic and the Sophist. The φιλομαθής [lover of learning] is the one who endeavors to experience what is most of all, what authentically is; the one who is driven to strive for what is most of all.

The ἀληθινὸν is what is unconcealed in the highest sense. What does it signify that the idea is the truest, the most unconcealed? We said that the idea is what always precedes in all unconcealment. So the understanding and experience of the idea is the precedent that must be comprehended in order to understand the particular. The view of the idea opens up the view to the Being of the particular.

The idea clears, it sheds light on the particular. Because the ideas are originally involved in providing access to the particular being. they constitute the origin of the unconcealed. They are essentially implicated, because the idea as what is seen gives sight. They are implicated, yet are never in themselves truth and validity.

But what is seen is given only as long as there is a seeing—seeing not as mere staring, but projecting, creative seeing, catching sight in the sense of creative viewing; taking into one’s gaze and thereby first bringing about what one catches sight of.

Ideas are neither objectively present at hand, nor a matter of subjective opinion. Both orientations (as two poles) are equally askew and miss what was initiated in Plato, but not developed.

Nevertheless, truth in the genuine sense (unconcealment) is not the idea, but the seeing of the idea, the catching-sight of the idea or the creative projection of the essence of things.

Therefore truth is not an incident but a happening (the creative projecting of things). This happening, which up to now we have exhibited in its essential moments—which we posed to ourselves as questions about light and freedom, freedom and beings, truth and beings (Being)—is now resolved into a happening of the creative catching sight of things.

This catching sight is a self-binding. This binding of oneself is the authentic essence of liberation. This liberation is an access to beings.

b) Unconcealing as a fundamental characteristic of human ex-sistence

We can now indicate this happening in language on the basis of an opposition. We speak of ἀλήθεια (unconcealment); the contrary concept is concealment. Accordingly, we can say: the contrary happening is
unconcealing. This unconcealing happens through the creative projection of essence and of the essential law. This is a happening that happens with humanity itself. Revealing things in human history is something human.

This was the source of the objection that with this, the essence of truth is degraded to the preference and prerogative of the individual human being. Truth is humanized. This objection seems justified at first. In response to it we demand that the objector inform us what human means, give us a definition of the essence of humanity. What is man? This cannot be answered arbitrarily.

If up to now we have been considering the allegory of the cave (as the happening of the liberation of man for what is genuinely unconcealed), we must experience what man is on the basis of this story, because on its basis we experience what truth and unconcealment are.

We are not humanizing the essence of truth: to the contrary, we are determining the essence of human beings on the basis of truth. Man is transposed into the various gradations of truth. Truth is not above or in man, but man is in truth. Man is in truth inasmuch as truth is this happening of the unconcealment of things on the basis of creative projection. Each individual does not consciously carry out this creative projection; instead, he is already born into a community; he already grows up within a quite definite truth, which he confronts to a greater or lesser degree.

Man is the one whose history displays the happening of truth.

There is one more thing that we can experience here. By way of the allegory of the cave we gain access to the essence of man insofar as he is that essence, in relation to himself, as himself. In this context we experience what man is, and we recognize that this question of who man is simply cannot be answered, say, by picking some random person on the face of the earth, listening in on him and interrogating him. This question can be answered only if it is correctly posed. One must always ask first: Who are we?

c) On the essential determination of man.

Truth as a fundamental happening in the human essence

We could not yet decide what man is (as viewed now from the allegory of the cave). This we can decide only if we participate in the entire “story” of the liberation. The liberation does not happen without violence (βία). So if man wants to know who he is, he himself must engage in the movement of these questions and become unsettled. The question is posed only where a decision is posed for man—a decision about himself and his relation to the powers that afflict him.

25. [Conjecture: gap in Hallwachs’s transcript.]
Thus the question of who man is, is a question with its very own character and cannot be compared to other questions, such as “What is a table?” or “What is a house?”

For the time being, we will simply have to stick to the answer that the allegory of the cave gives us. We must say: man is the one who, insofar as he is, comports himself toward beings as revealed, and who in this Being, becomes revealed to himself.

Man is this being who comports himself to beings as revealed because the fundamental happening is precisely that creative catching sight of the essence of things by reaching forward. Terminologically, we say: the human way to be is existence.

Only human beings exist. That is, in this manner of speaking we are taking the words “existence” and “exist” in a sense that is supposed to express solely the Being of man. Ex-sistence: man is ex-sistent, something that steps out of itself. In and during his Being, he is also always outside it. He is always with other beings, and it is only on this basis that he has his essential relation to himself, exposed to beings as a whole.

This fundamental mode of man as existing, as stepping outside himself, having stepped out into the confrontation of Being—we can get clearer about this mode of man by contrasting it to the Being of a plant, say, which has in common with man the fact that it is alive. But the plant, in its living Being, is completely confined within itself, dull, without relation to anything else that we call “revealed.”

The animal is also, to a certain extent, confined within itself, has no consciousness “of itself,” but has a different relation to its environment, so that it is benumbed by the environment, to which the animal relates on the basis of its drives. But the environment is something essential that belongs to the animal. The animal is confined within itself and at the same time benumbed. The essence of the organism is precisely to be connected to an environment, but to be benumbed in this connectedness.

With man, this connection to the environment is cleared. Man understands the environment as environment; he is thereby able to master it and form it.

Things are different with the stone, which is not confined within itself, because it is not opened up in the manner of living things. It simply occurs.

The fundamental act in the human way of Being is this, that man understands the Being and essence of things in advance, that is, the fundamental happening of truth. If man were not put into this happening, then he would be unable to exist, to be as man.

From this point on, we must free ourselves from a centuries-old error, the error of saying that man is an animal with reason as a supplement. We must rather define man from above, and then his charac-
ter as a living thing is to be determined. Reason should not be a super-
structure added to the human body; instead, embodiment must be transposed into the existence of man.

This is why even an infant is not some sort of animal, but is immediately human. None of the utterances of a young human being may be grasped on the basis of animal biology; race and lineage, too, are to be understood on this [higher] basis, and are not to be represented by an antiquated biology based on liberalism.

The essence of truth opens itself to us not in just any cognition, in just any property, but as the fundamental happening in the human essence. With this, the question has been posed; but by no means has an answer been reached. We must say that all statements such as “man exists,” “truth is the fundamental happening of existence,” “the ideas have the character of truth”—these are all philosophical statements.

Philosophical truth is of a different sort from everyday truth. Scientific truths can and must be proved in a twofold sense. It must be possible to support what scientific propositions say with facts, or to derive them using formal logic.

In both regards, philosophical statements cannot be proved. But this is no flaw, for what is essential in all things in general is unprovable, and the advantage is precisely that every access to philosophy entails a fundamental disposition and a fundamental decision on the part of human beings. There can be no philosophy that is standpoint-free, with whose aid we find the truth. That is an error and a fraud.

We initially took the essence of truth as unconcealment; now we see that it is a happening, in the sense that a thing is taken out of concealment through unconcealing. This happening is the fundamental happening of man. It is subject to quite definite conditions and forms of its occurrence.

D. The fourth stage (516e3–517a6)

§23. The return of the liberated man into the cave

With this answer, we seem to have reached the goal of our question concerning how Plato defined ἀλήθεια. (Ascent and liberation would bind one to the idea.) But obviously Plato’s allegory still has a fourth stage. The ascent into liberation, which began inside the cave and led out up into the light, goes no further now in the fourth stage. Instead, the story goes back. The fourth stage presents the descent of the liberated prisoner back into the cave.

Let us resume narrating the full story.

SOCRATES: And now consider this: if the one who had become free in this manner were to descend back down {into the cave} again and
sit back down in the same place, wouldn’t he suddenly find his eyes full of darkness there, having come out of the sun?

Glaucon: Very much so.

Socrates: And if now, while his eyes were still defective, he had to compete again in asserting opinions about the shadows with those continually enchained, before he had adjusted his eyes again to the dark—which requires no insignificant period of time—wouldn’t he be exposed to ridicule there, and wouldn’t they say of him that he had made the ascent only to come back with his eyes corrupted and that going up is a complete waste of time? And the one who now wanted to lay hands on them to release them from the chains and to lead them up and out: if they (the enchained prisoners) could get hold of him to kill him, wouldn’t they actually kill him, too?

Glaucon: Certainly.

What happens here in the fourth stage? On the surface, we turn back to where we already were at the beginning, to what we already know. Taken this way, the fourth stage brings nothing new.

In this section, there is no more talk of what we have always asked about: the ἀλήθες [the unconcealed]. For all the gradations of unconcealment have already been displayed. There is no more talk of light, freedom, what is, and ideas.

If we consider this, we might at first doubt whether this last segment should be taken as a last stage, whether Plato is not just providing a particular conclusion without essential content. That is how it looks on the surface, if we forget that the story as a whole is dealing with human history.

But if we do pay attention to this, then we really begin to wonder. The story ends with the prospect of death, which has not been dealt with up to this point. This glimpse of the possibility of the fate of death is not an accidental feature of animal life. Death is everyone’s concern, as the ultimate exit; therefore, this is an essential section that determines the whole. We must attempt to draw out the essential strands, as we did in the other stages.

The whole story ends with the prospect of the fate of being killed, of the most radical expulsion of a human being from human community. Whose death is at issue here? The death of the one who makes it his task to will the liberation of the prisoners in the cave.

This liberator has not been dealt with up to this point. Now we hear explicitly about the liberator as part of this story. Earlier we heard that the liberator will commit acts of violence, and accordingly he gets paid back with an overpowering counter-violence.

The decisive question is, who is this liberator? And how is his existence to be grasped? What does a more precise characterization of the
liberator tell us about liberation—and therefore about the entire fate of the revelation of Being?

§24. The philosopher as liberator. His fate in the happening of revealing and concealing

The person of whom Plato speaks in the fourth section, who descends again, who perhaps seizes hold of some person or other to lead him out, is none other than the philosopher.

We know that in other passages, Plato defines the philosopher as follows: “The philosopher is the one whose innermost desire is to take into view what is, as such. It lies in the essence of the brightness of the place where the philosopher stands that he is never easy to see; for the view of the masses is incapable of seeing when it gazes toward what exceeds the everyday.”

We can already gather what is being said here from the Greek word “philosophy.” The ἰσοφὸς is not the “wise man,” but one who understands how to do something, who knows a matter from the bottom up and thus can carry out the decision that sets standards. (The expression ἰσοφὸς did not arise immediately with Greek philosophy, but later.) φίλος: the friend, the one who has the drive, the one in whom the innermost “must” is decisive.

Philosophy has nothing to do with science. All science is only research into things in a limited domain, with a limited way of posing questions. One cannot determine philosophy definitively on the basis of a science, such as philology, mathematics, biology, and so on. Instead, philosophizing is a fundamental way of being human that precedes all science.

Such a philosopher is the one who has climbed out of the cave, gotten used to the light, and then climbs back down as the liberator of the prisoners. This philosopher exposes himself to the fate of death, death in the cave at the hands of the powerful cave dwellers who set the standards in the cave.

Plato wants to remind us of the death of Socrates here. One will say that this case is unique, that in general the philosopher’s fate does not include drinking the cup of hemlock. On the whole, philosophers have had a pretty good time of it, superficially speaking. “They sit in their studies and occupy themselves with their thoughts.” But this would be a superficial way of thinking.

26. {Plato, Sophist 254a8–b1. Cf. Heidegger’s more literal translation in the lecture course of the same name from Winter Semester 1931–1932 (GA 34), p. 82: “. . . for the view of the soul of the masses is incapable of sustaining the gaze at the divine.”}
We are dealing here with an allegory. Killing does not have to consist exactly in offering the poison cup. Bodily death is not what is meant. And besides, this death is not the most difficult; it can take place biologically in sleep, in an unconscious state. What is really difficult about dying is rather that death in its full relentlessness stands before the eyes of man during his whole Being. Inner life becomes null and powerless.

This fate is one that no philosopher has yet avoided. This fate would still be ineluctable even today—if there were any philosophers. The killing consists in the fact that the philosopher and his questioning are suddenly transferred into the language of the cave dwellers, that he makes himself ridiculous before them, that he falls prey to public ridicule. Therefore it belongs to the essence of the philosopher that he is solitary; it lies in his way to be, in the position he has in the world. He is all the more solitary because in the cave he cannot retreat. Speaking out from solitude, he speaks at the decisive moment. He speaks with the danger that what he says may suddenly turn into its opposite.

Nevertheless, the philosopher must climb down into the cave, but not in order to get into debates with the cave dwellers there, but only in order to seize this or that person whom he thinks he has recognized and lead him up the steep path, not through a one-time act but through the happening of history itself.

When we try to grasp the final section, we see that the end cannot be a matter of indifference. But we have not yet decided the question of the inner connection of this end with the whole history of the liberation of the man from the cave that has been carried out up to now.

We saw that what characterizes the individual stages of the story is the way in which, from stage to stage, truth and unconcealment change and intensify. In the fourth stage, we had no further experience of truth. But can we conclude from the fact that in the fourth stage, the topic is not explicitly ἀλήθεια, light, what is—can we conclude from this that ἀλήθεια is no longer central to what is happening here?

What happens in the fourth stage? The liberated man turns back into the cave, he himself is supposed to be in the cave, if only in order to liberate one other person. The one who has been filled with the sight of light is now supposed to go back to the cave dwellers and get into a conversation with them. He can do this only if he remains himself. On the basis of this attitude, he will say what he sees with his new eyes.

What he catches sight of, is from the start something different from what the cave dwellers see. He knows and sees what is light and what is shadow, what is true reality and what is semblance. He can decide from the start what sort of reality it is that the cave dwellers take as what is. He is in a different situation from the cave dwellers, who are incapable of recognizing the shadows as shadows. He thus recognizes that
there are people to whom something is revealed, something like what he recognizes as the shadows. But he also recognizes that what is revealed to them does not constitute true reality. Instead, he recognizes that although a certain unconcealment does subsist within the cave, the people cling to the shadows, so what is unconcealed for the prisoners—the shadows as such—at the same time covers up (genuine) unconcealment for them.

The ἀλήθεια (in the cave) is also real, to be sure, but as such it conceals the reality outside. The unconcealment out there takes place in unison with the reality of the shadows. With the return of the liberated prisoner into the cave, he realizes above all that in unison with unconcealment, concealment, semblance, and deception happen and must happen. Accordingly, only now does he gain insight into the necessity of liberation; he realizes that this liberation cannot lead to some tranquil enjoyment and possession outside the cave, but that unconcealment happens in history, in the constant confrontation with the false and with semblance.

This leads to the fundamental insight that there is no truth in itself at all, but instead, truth happens in the innermost confrontation with concealment in the sense of disguise and covering up.

Thus we say that man, insofar as he exists, is thrust into relations on the basis of which beings and the world are revealed to him. Man, insofar as he exists, is in the truth. But it is evident that man exists as a historical people in community.

Man exists in the truth and in the untruth, in concealment and unconcealment together. These are not two separate spheres; instead, standing in the truth is always confrontation, an act of struggle. To persist in untruth is to slacken in the struggle. The more intensely man as historical man is afflicted and overwhelmed, the more intensely a people is afflicted and overwhelmed, the more necessary is the struggle for truth, that is, the confrontation with untruth.

The precondition for this is that the human being engaged in struggle must first of all decide for reality in such a way that the truly determinative forces of Dasein will illuminate the history and reality of a people and bring Dasein into them. Reality cannot provide the people with a place to stand; instead, spirit and the spiritual world of a people develop within history. History is not fulfilled in a time frame that ends in 1934 or 1935—maybe not until 1960.
§25. Being free: acting together in the historical con-frontation of truth and untruth

a) The philosopher’s freedom: being a liberator in the transition

In the previous session, we attempted to get clear about the fourth stage. What does it involve? What is its position within the whole? We discovered that the fourth stage is no mere appendix, nor a recapitulation: instead, the person under discussion here is fundamentally different from the other inhabitants of the cave. He has been transformed and he now has a different fate.

Plato designates him as the philosopher. Through this story, he intends to show what the philosopher is. The philosopher is a liberator, and he is only as such a liberator. Authentic freedom does not consist in dragging an inhabitant of the cave out into the light and leaving him there to laze about in the sun. Authentic freedom does not consist in tranquil enjoyment: to be free means to be a liberator.

The philosopher is not secure; as a liberator, he acts with others in the history of those who belong with him in a community according to their Being. Given what we have said, all human beings would have to become philosophers if they wanted to exist authentically. This is true inasmuch as being a philosopher, among the many possibilities for existing, means the fundamental way in which man takes a stance with respect to the whole of beings and toward the history of human beings.

We derive the fundamental character of philosophical Being from the allegory. We see that what makes one human is not to be bound in the cave, to feel at ease and to chatter away; nor is it to be in the opposite

1. {Recapitulation at the beginning of the session of 18 January 1934.}
condition outside of the cave. Instead, the human is the transition out of the cave into the light and back into the cave. This transition is the authentic history of man, a fate that one cannot shake off by declaring that one is not interested in philosophy. A fate can only be surmounted—or one can founder on that fate without knowing it.

b) Truth and untruth. Modes of untruth as concealment

This story is supposed to tell us what truth is. Our interpretation of the fourth stage allows us a remarkable expansion of this question: we concluded that only the one who turns back is in a position to comprehend what those down below are seeing, namely, the shadows. On the basis of the return, the difference between Being and seeming only now becomes possible. Only now does the difference between unconcealment and idea as opposed to the concealed open up.

But if this transition belongs to human history, if human beings cannot get away from it, then this means that there is no pure unconcealment. Instead, to this unconcealment there also belong semblance, disguise, and the covering-up of things, or, as we also say: untruth.

This is the decisive answer: untruth belongs to the essence of truth. Untruth is not simply truth’s opposite; rather, only as confrontation is truth as unconcealment cast into untruth and embedded there.

From this there follows a double concept of untruth. In Greek, truth is a negative, a privative in the expression “unconcealment.” Now we understand why the Greeks do not express truth positively. From the very first, what is must be torn out of concealment into history, must be wrested from concealment. Truth is not a possession.

The initial counter-concept to unconcealment in the sense of truth is, in a formal linguistic sense, concealment; but now we see that for us this would be untruth. But if something is concealed, that does not yet mean that we therefore know something false; it is simply not knowing. The concealed has a double sense: 1) something with which we are unfamiliar; 2) something to which we have no possible connection.

Concealment is a characteristic of what we call a secret. But concealment is not untruth in the sense of falsehood. Rather, concealment is the concealed in the sense that something is covered up, disguised to us. Mere seeming.

It belongs to the essence of seeming that it appears to us, that it shows itself. What a thing is, is its εἶδος, its look. Seeming means that something only seems (looks) as if; for example, a stage set of a house.

From this we arrive at the view that what we routinely call untruth is integral to entirely essential relations. First, concealment is the secret of the not-yet-experienced, of what cannot be experienced; second, it means covering-up, disguise, seeming. Accordingly, if philosophy is this primor-
The idea of the good as highest idea: the empowerment of Being and unconcealment

When we look over the whole in this way, we recall that we have not completed our interpretation of this story as regards a major point, for we asked: what does the fate of man as liberator look like?

It has come to light that he has the ability to catch sight of the highest of the ideas, ἡ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ ἰδέα, the idea of the good. We have said that we wanted to leave the elucidation of what Plato understood by the highest idea until the end. We now want to ask, considering the whole story: what does this highest idea of the good mean? With this, we will also gain some insight into Platonic philosophy.

The ideas are in a place above the heavens (ὑπεουράνιος τόπος), out beyond the heavens (in the allegory: outside the cave). This ascent out of the cave, to speak without any allegory, is the progress to a place, the upward path that the soul traverses to reach a place that Plato calls the τόπος νοητός. νοητός = the apprehensible; νοεῖν = to apprehend; νοῦς = the faculty of apprehending, reason; τὰ νοητά = the ideas.

Plato says: in the field of what can be apprehended by man in general, what is caught sight of last is the idea of the good; and it can barely be brought into view, only with trouble, with effort. The ascent, and thus the history of liberation, comes to an end only when man’s apprehension has reached what can be apprehended only last, τελευταία ἰδέα. The idea of the good is what stands, in a certain sense, at the end.

τέλος (τελευταίος), end, does not mean goal. Neither is it a negative concept. It means end in the sense of limit, limitation—the form that stamps and thus really determines everything, the limit that really embraces and determines all.

2. {Gap in Hallwachs’s transcript.}
3. [Alternate translation: “anticipates his own fate.”]
a) The idea of the idea. On grasping the highest idea on the basis of the general essence of idea

Plato speaks of the idea of the good in two major passages: at the beginning of book VII of the Republic and in book VI, 506–511. Now we want to get clear about what the idea of the good really means here.

To begin with, as regards grasping the idea: it can be glimpsed only with effort, so it is even harder to speak of it, much less conceive of it. In both passages, Plato speaks of this idea only indirectly, in the sensory image with which we are already familiar: the sun as the sensory image of the highest idea.

If this is how matters stand with the highest idea—that one can barely catch sight of it—then we must get clear that everything depends on bringing our questioning in the right direction, that we cannot just run out and snap it up, in a readymade formula as it were, an answer that’s handy for everyday use. We may not apply standards from our everyday life and opinions as we try to grasp what Plato means here.

On the other hand, we have to get clear that Plato is not thinking about something mysterious, some sort of remote thing that you can get to only with tricks, or with an extraordinary vision based on an enigmatic faculty; instead, Plato insists quite soberly that one has to attain what is at work in the idea through serious, step-by-step philosophizing, by asking one’s way through. Only philosophizing labor, not a so-called intuition, leads to what Plato intends.

Even then, what we are to grasp cannot be said, at least not in the way that everything else that we can learn and know can be said. What is to be known philosophically must be known and said, or not said, in a different form from that of all scientific cognition.

But then again, the unsayable in the strict sense is what I run up against if I exert myself and have exerted myself to reach what is sayable in the highest sense. Not what any dunderhead can say, but the sayable that assails us more and more as we work our way through things with the greatest rigor.

Two ways to Plato’s views are possible: 1. A thorough interpretation of book VI. But with this, we would pass beyond the frame and context of our work so far. 2. We will try to discover what “highest idea” means here by a process of intensification, on the basis of the characteristics of the essence of the idea that we clarified earlier. We then want to see whether what we have attained in this way is what Plato says elsewhere about the highest idea.

1. The extrapolation of the highest idea from the general essence of idea,
2. Investigation of whether the result accords with what Plato says.
So we must try once again to characterize the essence of the idea; we must see what the ideas are. The ideas are what is most unconcealed and what most is. They are the most unconcealed, inasmuch as they make possible the unconcealment of particular beings in their Being-such-and-such. They are what most of all is, in that by virtue of [them, Being becomes understandable, “in the light of which,” as we still say today, that which individually is, is first of all a being, and is the being that it is.]\(^4\) So it is apparent that the characterization of the essence of the idea already involves a highest intensification. The idea as such is something that has been intensified to the highest degree: the most unconcealed and what most of all is.

Now we should ask: is a still higher intensification possible? For there is still supposed to be a highest idea over and above this, what genuinely lets unconcealment and Being arise and makes them possible.

We also saw that the idea has the function of letting beings become visible in that which they are, and thus letting truth arise. The highest idea has the task of making unconcealment in general possible, of empowering beings to be what they properly are as beings. This amounts to the formal extrapolation of the idea of the idea.

If we ask for the content of what the highest idea is and what the good means, we must free ourselves from every sentimental notion, but also from conceptions that have become run-of-the-mill through Christian morality and then in secularized ethics. ἀγαθός, good, originally has no moral meaning.

The good, for the Greeks, is not the opposite of the evil, much less of the “sinful.” There is sin only where there is Christian faith. But neither is the good to be understood in the feeble sense of “he’s a good person” (but a bad musician)—in an innocuous, ladylike sense.

ἀγαθός is when we say, as after a confrontation or discussion: good, the matter is settled (after a decision). The good is what succeeds, stands fast, holds up, what is fit for something. A pair of good skis, boards that hold something up. What demands the highest decision and the highest seriousness and intensity of Dasein.

It is hopeless to want to comprehend the essence of the good on the basis of the Christian concept—this concept will not take us one step closer to understanding what the good actually means.

The idea of the good has a completely different sense. We now want to look at Plato himself and ask how he, for his part, expresses himself regarding the good as the highest idea. In our next session we want to get into the closing section of book VI, in order then to make it clear in what sense the essence of truth coincides with the highest idea, and thus with the essence of the good.

\(^4\) {Gap in Hallwachs’s transcript. Editor’s conjecture based on the lecture course of the same name from Winter Semester 1931–1932 (GA 34), p. 99.}
b) Approach to the complete determination of the idea of the good as the highest idea

We ask: what do we understand by the idea of the good? Furthermore, what does the essential determination of the highest idea yield us for the determination of the essence of truth?

We have cited two major passages from Plato’s *Republic* (VI, 506–511; VII, 517a–e). Plato does not clarify the essence of the highest idea directly; this already tells us that the highest idea is hard to grasp and even harder to say. The *sensory image of the sun* is the *path* to clarifying what Plato understands as the highest idea.

We now want to pursue this path of clarification: on the basis of the essence of the idea that we explained earlier, we will set out in advance what the highest idea is, using a procedure of intensification. Then we want to examine to what extent Plato’s own interpretation corresponds to what we ourselves have set out in advance as the essence of the highest idea.

The idea was the ὄντως ὄν and the ἀληθινόν, that which most is and is most revealed. The ἀληθινόν is what in the first place, that is, before all things, must be revealed to us in order for us to grasp a being as such. We must understand in advance what it means to be a book. In every thing, the idea is the *most genuine* Being and the *most unconcealed*.

This elucidation of the idea shows that a characteristic of the idea is intensification. This characteristic of intensification means that this, as what is highest, is, insofar as it rules, also the origin for what stands beneath it, that is, for what is revealed to us as something that is. The idea as such has the general function of making possible this characteristic of ruling, making beings as beings possible in their openness. It is the *essence* of the idea to make beings possible.

The highest idea is the good. ἀγαθός means for the Greeks what prevails, what stands firm. Being good means to prevail, to stand firm, and thus to take a stand, to provide a place to stand. The essence of the idea corresponds to this: what makes possible that which is and is revealed. The idea as the enabling must be what truly prevails and makes things stand ready. Hence the *highest* idea is the good. So much for the *formal* explanation, so to speak.

We now ask how Plato, for his part, develops the essence of the highest idea of the good on the basis of the sensory image.

As regards the essence of matters of state in general—the state, πόλις—Plato accepts the principle that the *rule* of human being-with-one-another in the state must essentially be determined by a definite kind of ruling human beings, and a definite form of ruling.

Taken in the usual sense, one who rules in the state must be a *philosopher*. This naturally does not mean that professors of philosophy should
become Reich-chancellors—that would be a disaster from the start. But it means that the people who are endowed with the rule of the state must be philosophizing human beings. Philosophers, as philosophizing human beings, have the task and function of φύλακες, guardians. They have to be on guard to make sure that rulership and the state’s ruling structure are thoroughly under the sway of philosophy—not as some system, but as a knowing that is the deepest and broadest knowledge of man and man’s Being.

On the basis of this knowing, standards and rules are to be established within which every authentic decision and setting of standards takes place. In a state, says Plato, there can be only a few such guardians.

Now, Plato’s whole work (the Republic) is concerned with the question: in what way, by what means, and in what form can a state educate its own guardians of this sort? In this context Plato asks (in the allegory of the cave as well) what knowing is.

Plato did not pose the question of the essence of knowing because it belongs to the academic concept of epistemology, but because knowing constitutes the innermost content of the Being of the state itself, inasmuch as the state is a free, which also means binding power of a people. This is why the question of the essence of knowing is the fundamental question.

§27. The idea of the good and light as the yoke between seeing and the visible—truth and Being

Plato says that those who know in the highest sense must be united in knowing—in a knowing that is acquired every time by beginning with verbal knowledge, that is, with what is common chatter, but that ascends upward along the steep path from the cave to understand and grasp the ideas.

a) Seeing (ὁρᾶν) and understanding that apprehends (νοεῖν)

To explain this knowing and grasping of the ideas adequately, Plato distinguishes between two fundamental modes of cognition:

1. seeing with the eyes, ὁρᾶν,
2. νοεῖν, the apprehending understanding of the ideas.

This latter knowing, in the sense of knowing the true essence of things, is to be explained through the sensory image of natural apprehending and understanding. Here Plato presents the essence of genuine comprehension through the ideas, explaining this essence as a schematic counterpart to natural seeing and what pertains to it. Thereby Plato also displays what pertains to genuine comprehension.
In this context Plato presents the idea of the good anew. In the following schema, there stands on one side the phenomenon that we take as our point of departure: seeing, ὡρᾶν, seeing with the eyes; on the other side stands that which is to be symbolized by this seeing: νοεῖν as the seeing and grasping of the idea.

To all seeing there belongs the following:

1. the performance of the act, the activity of seeing, ὡρᾶν,
2. something that is seen in this activity of seeing, what is caught sight of (the thing seen), ὧρωμενα.

Correspondingly, we understand knowing as:

1. the seeing of the essence of things, νοεῖν,
2. what is understood and grasped in this, νοούμενα.

Proceeding from ordinary seeing, Plato says: for the act of seeing to be performed, there must be a possibility and a capacity for it. There must be something that makes the performance of this act possible. Similarly, there must be something that puts a being in the position to become something visible, that enables the being to happen.

An enabling power, δύναµις, is required for the fact of seeing and being seen in each instance. These powers, δυνάµεις, which enable the performance of seeing and the fact of being seen, must be one and the same. Both of these, seeing as act and being seen, must be joined in the yoke (ζυγόν) of the same power.

If we now focus on these facts and formally transpose them to the higher seeing of things, we can say, on the basis of natural experience, that in order for things to become visible, it must be bright. To visibility there belongs the enabling power, brightness, light, and therefore the sun.
Therefore the *yoke* just mentioned, the one that joins both (όφαν and ὀφώμενα), is in some sense the *light*, and correspondingly the source of light = the sun (φῶς, ἥλιος). As we said, in keeping with this fundamental thought that these powers of seeing and being seen go hand in hand, the light, the sun, must be the enabling power for seeing itself. (It is impossible that different powers underlie seeing and being seen.)

We know from our earlier discussions that, among all the forms of sensory perception, the Greeks gave preeminence to *sight* and *seeing*. The most preeminent sense is ὀψὶς [sight] because, in their experience, from their very Dasein, ὀψὶς makes things in their unmediated presence accessible in their form and in their interrelation. For the Greeks, to have an unmediated stamp means to be.

The sense that makes *beings* accessible is ὀψὶς. Therefore, light and the sun must also be the enabling power for *seeing*. (This is taken as the starting point for constructing a higher seeing.)

To say it in Greek: sight or the eye must be ἥλιουσι. Goethe says: sun-like. The eye must be defined by light. The act of seeing is lit. We also say, when something comes over us, when we grasp something in a really new and creative way: I see the light, I’ve had a flash of inspiration. What this points to is that we grasp seeing itself as standing under the power of light and the sun.

This seeing, ὀψὶς, ὀφαν, is that mode of unmediated perception that is the most complete (πολυτελεστάτη αἴσθησις). It becomes the way to explain how we comprehend the essence of the idea.

For the idea as νοούμενον to be comprehensible, there must be a *yoke* here too, a *light*, as it were. This light must have a *light source*.

The light is what enables us to comprehend what *is*; it is Being, οὐσία, and at the same time, ἀλήθεια, openness. Plato, in a genuinely Greek fashion (in contrast to our conception today), says: truth is not something like the condition for the possibility of thinking and comprehension, but rather it is the condition for the possibility that *something comprehended* is given, the condition for *beings* themselves (openness corresponds to comprehensibility).

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Just as the eye must obviously be ἡλιοειδής, so must the comprehension of the idea (νοεῖν) have a character that corresponds to what determines and enables this yoke as yoke (the ἀγαθόν). It must be ἀγαθοειδής [like the good]. As the eye is sun-like, so must the comprehension of the idea be ἀγαθοειδές.

b) The good as the higher empowering power for Being and truth in their linked essence

This is only a preliminary explication of sensory seeing and the non-sensory comprehension of the idea. We perceive that what extends the span of the yoke, so to speak—light and Being and truth—is determined by something higher. “And so this, what grants unconcealment to the knowable beings and lends to the knower the capacity to know, is the idea of the good” (book VI, 508e1ff).

It should be noted that one and the same ground enables knowledge of the idea and the openness of the idea: the good—that although Being and unconcealment or truth do essentially co-participate in enabling essential knowledge, something still higher is given. “There is still something higher to esteem, beyond Being and truth, something that surpasses the power of these, and only by virtue of this, which surpasses truth, is knowledge really possible” (book VI, 509a3–4). Final passage (509a9–10): “But fix your eye once more, as we have been doing, on the image for the highest idea, namely, the sun! The sun may be plumbed still more deeply and more thoroughly to draw forth yet more correlations.”

A further characteristic of the sun as sensory image of the good is developed:

SOCRATES: In my opinion, you might say that the sun bestows upon the visible things not just the quality of being seen, but also their emergence, growth, and nourishment, while the sun itself is not becoming.

GLAUCON: How could it be!

SOCRATES: And so we must now also say that not only does being known (ἀλήθεια) belong to the knowable things on the basis of the good, but even this {namely, that these things are always something composed in this and that way; in short, Being}, and that therefore Being, too, belongs to them only on the basis of the good, while the good itself is not a type of Being, but is beyond Being and towers over it in power and worth. (Book VI, 509b2ff)

This, in the whole of the Platonic corpus, is surely where Plato expresses his decisive thought about the good.

The good is beyond Being, ἐπέκεινα τῆς οὐσίας (book IV, 509b9), and therefore = nothing (to put it formally). This means that if we ask
about the good as we would ask about a good thing, then we will not find it, we will always run up against the nothing. The good can never be found at all among beings or Being. It requires that we ask in a different way.

The *ἀγαθόν* is not simply beyond Being; *in its beyondness*, it is precisely related to Being and truth (*ἀλήθεια*), namely, as that which empowers both of them as what they are. With respect to worth and δύναμις and power, the good is superior to everything else; the good is itself also power, the power of empowering. The good is the highest power, in that it empowers what is already the most powerful, raising it to the level of the ὄντως ὄν and the ἀληθινόν. The good is the most powerful, which deploys itself and stands fast before everything else and for everything else.

In the treatment of the essence of the good, what is at issue is not content, nor is it values; rather, what is at issue is a *how*, the manner of the deployment of power. It (the idea of the good) becomes perceptible not when I take it as a thing, but when I submit myself to the power, thereby orienting and opening up my comportment so that I adjust myself to the power and so that power as power addresses me. What is at issue here will never be grasped by “sound common sense.”

Exactly the same characterization is found at the close of the allegory of the cave (book VII, 517c3). Plato says: in the field of νοεῖν, of the really knowable, the good itself (*αὐτόν*) is mistress. And this mastery is explained in this way: it bestows, it gives. παρέχειν is not simply to bestow; it is both a bestowing and a holding—giving (and letting go), and in giving, holding. In other words, *the good gives and it binds.*

With this we discover how the sun corresponds to the good. The good binds (a) ἀλήθεια, that which pertains to the seen, openness, together with (b) νοῦς, the capacity for conceiving and understanding, for the understanding of Being.

The good is the empowerment of Being and of unconcealment to their essences, which intrinsically belong together. (But this says nothing if it is only a definition and is not conceived on the basis of how we hold ourselves.)

In the image, the good is what emanates the yoke from itself, as it were, and yokes together Being and truth so that something is possible that fulfills itself among human beings in historically free human beings.

§28. The development of the essence of truth as history of humanity

a) Review: the inner order of the question of the essence of truth

We are approaching the conclusion of an essential line of thought. So now we should once again lay out and follow the inner order of our inquiry.

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6. (Recapitulation at the beginning of the session of 25 January 1934.)
We asked ourselves: what is truth? We had two answers: (1) truth as unconcealment, ἀλήθεια; (2) truth as correctness, adaequatio. Each has a particular relation to the other. To begin with externals: truth as unconcealment is the older, truth as correctness the more recent. Today “correctness” dominates exclusively.

We asked whether this initial conception (unconcealment) was there at the inception only chronologically, or whether this inception is at the same time meant substantively, in the sense of the origin, so that correctness arises from unconcealment, and arises in such a way that it gains a superior power and becomes exclusively dominant.

These are not questions of some “history of philosophy,” but questions of essence, questions whose Being is based on the moment of our Dasein itself. These two answers, correctness and unconcealment, do not merely offer a content, two definitions. They are only the law-like summations of two interpretations found in Dasein’s comportment among beings as a whole and toward itself. Why did the universally accepted definition become dominant?

These two conceptions are grounded in turn on fundamental orientations. The issue is not the difference between two definitions, but the opposition between two fundamental positions in the history of man. The question of truth does not hang in the air; it is historical. The issue is not the conceptual differences between various human epochs, but differences in the innermost Being of man.

These two differentiated concepts are in juxtaposition, even if the juxtaposition goes unspoken. We have tried to grasp this juxtaposition of the two concepts of truth in a passage where both determinations are found in an originary way, in Plato.

Plato answers the question, “What is truth?” by means of the allegory of the cave, in four stages. The third stage provides the culmination. Only the fourth presents and defines the authentic liberation; it is not, so to speak, a mere appendix.

In characterizing the third stage, we passed over the closer determination, the peak, as it were, of the whole happening, from which the whole can be surveyed—namely, the determination of the highest idea of the good.

We illuminated the highest idea of the good in two steps.

1. We attempted to discover what the highest idea might be with a free construction, as it were. The highest idea is what makes possible Being as well as unconcealment. The good, ἀγαθόν, is a word from everyday language that means nothing other than this: what makes possible, what prevails before everything else and determines it. ἀγαθόν never signifies a content, but a “how,” a distinctive mode of Being.
2. We tried to exhibit how Plato himself delimits the highest idea. He works with a presentation in sensory images. The sensory image of the highest idea is the sun, and in relation to the sun, the comprehension of the highest idea is sensory perception with the eyes.

By means of correlation we will now show how the *good* is like the sun in its own domain. This fundamental state of affairs is, as it were, the basis for showing how the ἀγαθόν, the good, in its domain—the idea—is like the sun, in order to clarify which question is the decisive one in determining the ἀγαθόν.

In the state of perceiving with the eyes, there stands on one side the act of seeing, on the other being seen. There is an inner connection between seeing and the visibility of things. Both require a δύναμις, a making-possible. This is the same for both. The bridge, as it were, is light. The eye must be sun-like, and so must the visible being.

To the sun-likeness of seeing—both that of the eye and that of the visible being—there corresponds the goodness of the idea and of the comprehension of the idea. Both must have arisen from a common origin in order for the bridge to be possible.

b) The good as the empowerment of truth and Being in their belonging together

Now it is important for us to see what features of the highest idea Plato gains by characterizing it through sensory images. To put it in brief slogans, it becomes apparent from the passage in book VI that the highest idea, the ἀγαθόν, is ἐπέκεινα τῆς οὐσίας, beyond Being, over and above Being, towering over it; towering not in an indefinite sense or in a spatial sense (a higher stratum), but towering over Being in two quite definite respects: πρεσβείᾳ καὶ δυνάμει (book VI, 509b9): (1) *age*, older origin and thus a higher rank; (2) *power*.

The good towers over Being in rank and in power. We should gather from this that in general the ἀγαθόν is seen only in these two respects, that it has rank and that it is powerful.

This is the first feature, from book VI. Book VII is immediately connected to it (allegory of the cave). The idea of the good here is κυρία παρασχομένη ἀλήθειαν καὶ νοῦν (book VII, 517c4). From this (κυρία [sovereign]) we see the good’s character of mastery. Furthermore, it is παρασχομένη, granting; to grant something and to bind by the granting. The good, as the sovereign mistress, grants (1) truth, makes truth possible, and (2) Being or the understanding of Being, νοῦς.

The idea of the good, as highest idea, is what towers above, grants mastery, and binds. We can sum up this description—what towers above, grants, and binds—in the fundamental act of empowering (that which empow-
ers). This feature is nothing other than what we know as δύναμις, what makes possible.

The first conception was formal. The second conception pointed us to mastery, power, rank. We must leave it at that. If we ask what Plato understood by the idea of the good, we must stick to this fundamental characteristic, in order not to fall into the mistake that nearly everyone makes, the mistake of taking some individual thing for the good. \textit{The good is empowerment}.

In interpreting Platonic philosophy, one has said rather often that Plato gave up the idea of the good in his late period. This way of thinking is typical of philosophy professors, who change their view every year and think that with this, they are developing.

What is essential in a philosophy is that it is the same from its inception to its end. It never occurred to Plato to give up his doctrine. This we can gather without further ado from the Seventh Letter. Here we encounter the undiminished dominance of the good.

What do we gather from this treatment of what the whole story offers in the way of a response to our question of what truth is? What do we gather from the characterization of the highest idea as regards the essence of truth?

1. The first result is that truth, \(\alpha λη\thetaε\alpha\), is itself nothing ultimate, but stands under a higher empowerment. In this there lies already the methodological indication that the illumination of the question of truth must get clear about the fundamental fact that truth is nothing ultimate.

2. The second result is the fundamental context within which something like truth belongs. We should not poke around in other concepts to find out what truth is; instead, we must be directed toward finding the space and horizon through which and in which truth is surpassed, is empowered in its essence, and is under a more powerful form.

3. This applies not only to truth and its essence, but also to \textit{Being}. Being too is nothing ultimate, but over Being there still stands something else. The question is what.

4. The fourth result is that not only are both—truth and Being itself in general—subordinate to something higher from which they receive their origin, but both are also interconnected in this subordination. \textit{Truth} as the openness of beings, \textit{Being} as the possibility of grasping beings, both stand under a yoke (\(\zetaυγόν\)), inasmuch as the yoke extends over both and thus first makes possible their essential connection. The \(\alpha γαθόν\) has the character of a yoke, it forms the span that joins the experience of the openness of things to the experience of their Being.
5. What we gather from the essence of the good—that it is what empowers truth and Being to their inner connection and to their own proper essence—this for its own part stands in an essential relationship to man, as that which liberates man and precisely thereby binds him, and in this *binding*, brings authentic *necessity* into human Dasein as the presupposition of *freedom*.

6. This fundamental relation of man to what authentically liberates him is his *liberation* itself, and at the same time his *history*. Human history is a history that Plato has presented through images, a story that tells us that liberation takes place as working one's way up into the unconcealment of things. This means that the transformation of the essence of man in his Dasein is not a change in man's external situation, but an *innermost change in the Being of man*.

c) Philosophy as παιδεία of humanity for the innermost change in its Being.

The development of the essence of truth through human history

Plato himself has a very clear concept of this. He says after the presentation in book VII (521c5) that this whole story—what goes on with the people there and plays itself out in the course of the ascent, the happening of this whole transformation—is not, as it might seem to be, a mere turning of a potsherd in the hand, but a *leading of the essence of humanity around and out* (ψυχῆς περιαγωγή). The whole human essence is transfigured by being led out from a certain night-like day to a true day. Plato calls the Dasein in the cave a night-like day; it is not absolute darkness; even here, humanity stands in a certain openness.

This leading around and out (περιαγωγή) of humanity from one situation into the other is the ascent to what is, as such; we say of this happening that it is really *philosophizing*. The ascent to what is, as such, is really philosophizing. To sum up: the question of the essence of truth is thus the question of the first essential history and the essential transformation of man through and in philosophy.

With this, the question of the essence of truth, and truth itself, gain a fundamental place within the essential vocation of man—a fundamental place of which Plato also knew; he expressed it in *Phaedrus* (249b5): “For how could the soul (the essence of man) come into the figure of man if it had not seen what is unconcealed in things?”

Man as he is, insofar as he exists, is determined by the fact that he has already seen the unconcealed, as it were, and thus brings with him the luminous glimmer of the essence of things—and he is this way only insofar as he *develops* this glimmer. The question of the essence of truth is the dominant question for man.
This is said in the introduction of the story at the beginning of book VII (514a1ff.): Μετὰ τὰ ταύτα . . . “After this, make yourself an image of our essence and understand this (direct your gaze) not in terms of just any features, but according to how its παιδεία is, as well as its ἀπαιδευσία.” This is an indication that in listening to the story, we should direct our gaze to our own nature, to our innermost essence and Being in regards to παιδεία and ἀπαιδευσία, and not only as regards both individually, but looking at both together.

In German we have no word to express what the Greeks mean here. παιδεία is usually translated as “education” [Erziehung] or “cultivation” [Bildung], or more recently (Jaeger) as “formation of Greek humanity.” But this is an academic notion; this is not what is at stake, it is humanistic. παιδεία means, to paraphrase: the inner binding-fast of human Da-sein on the basis of the steadfastness that holds fast to what fate demands. In contrast, ἀπαιδευσία means failure, powerlessness, not standing fast.

In the later, post-Platonic period, however, the meaning did develop in the direction of cultivation and education.

In our context, this means that what is at stake in this story is precisely the essence and Being of man—in regards to how he is in his ground. This grounding, fundamental happening in which the essence of truth develops through human history—and in this history, man acquires this inner steadfastness—this fundamental happening is philosophy.

But one will not comprehend even this fundamental thought of Plato, that the fundamental happening of history is philosophy, if one moves within ordinary conceptions. So first it is necessary to muffle, so to speak, all the points of view from which one is used to talking about philosophy.

1. Philosophy is not a cultural phenomenon, some domain of so-called spiritual creation within which works are produced that posterity admires. One can take philosophy this way, but then one does not understand it.

2. Nor is philosophy an opportunity and form in which individual personalities develop their talents by developing philosophy, and put themselves on display through their work.

3. Nor is philosophy an area of scholarship where research is carried out as in science and where there might be progress. In philosophy there is no progress. It is not an area of teaching and learning that can be systematized.

4. Nor is philosophy a worldview in the sense of the conclusion and

rounding out of a conception of things, a summation, as it were, of the individual results of the sciences and of human experience.

5. Nor is philosophy a particular form in which an individual human being, who perhaps is detached from traditional religion, creates a standpoint for himself.

Instead, philosophy is a fundamental happening in the history of humanity itself (not of some arbitrary human being), which has the character of a quite distinctive questioning, a questioning in which and through which the essence of humanity transforms itself. This fundamental happening is not up to the arbitrary choice of an age and a people, but is older than we are and extends beyond us. For us, the question is whether we comprehend this necessity or whether we believe that we can break away from it.

On 30 January 1933: 8,9 Kolbenheyer 10 Every age and every people has its cave, and the cave dwellers to go with it. So do we today. And the prime example of a contemporary cave dweller and of the gossipy entourage that goes along with him is the popular philosopher and cultural politician Kolbenheyer, who made an appearance here yesterday. Here I do not mean Kolbenheyer as a poet, whose Paracelsus we admire. 11

8. [Heidegger’s notation on the cover page: “In the lecture course 30.1.34.” On page 1 of the manuscript, next to the title, Heidegger wrote, “Kolbenheyer: In the lecture course on the day after the speech.” On 29 January 1934, Kolbenheyer had given a speech in Freiburg on “The Value for Life and Effect on Life of Poetic Art in a People.” The speech was written in 1932 and was delivered repeatedly in larger German cities during 1933; it was published in E. G. Kolbenheyer, Gesammelte Werke (Munich: Langen & Müller, 1941), vol. 8, pp. 63–86.]

9. [Wilhelm Hallwachs did not record Heidegger’s remarks. His speech is reproduced here from his surviving handwritten notes and is printed in italics to distinguish it from the text of Wilhelm Hallwachs’s transcript. [In the translators’ judgment, this typographical device is not necessary for the English-language reader. The Hallwachs transcript resumes with section d, German p. 214.] Hallwachs mentions the speech in his transcript simply in the following form: “After a delay of nearly an hour, Heidegger appears and first delivers a speech on the occasion of the anniversary of the National Socialist revolution, in which he concludes by indicating the tasks of the university, which he sees in awakening the future and preparing for it spiritually. He then returns to his theme.”]

10. [Erwin Guido Kolbenheyer, born 1878 in Budapest as the son of a Carpathian German, died 1962 in Munich. In the Third Reich, Kolbenheyer was a widely read writer and spokesman for the National Socialist regime. Cultural functionary since 1933 in the Prussian Academy of Arts; joined the National Socialist party in 1940.]

11. [Kolbenheyer’s trilogy of novels: Die Kindheit des Paracelsus (1917), Das Geist der Paracelsus (1921), Das dritte Reich des Paracelsus (1926). His further works include Karlsbader Novellen 1786 (1935) and Das gottgelobte Herz (1938).]
He is bound to the shadows and takes these as the only definitive reality and world; that is, he thinks and speaks in the schema of a biology that he got to know more than thirty years ago—at a time when it was the fashion to fabricate biological world views (cf. Bölsche\textsuperscript{12} and the Kosmos books).

Kolbenheyer does not see, he cannot and does not want to see:

1. that this biology of 1900 is based on the fundamental approach of Darwinism and that this Darwinian doctrine of life is not something absolute, not even something \textit{biological}, but is historically and \textit{spiritually} determined by the liberal conception of humanity and human society that was dominant in the English positivism of the nineteenth century.

2. Kolbenheyer does not see and cannot see that his biology of plasma and cellular structure and organism has been fundamentally surpassed, and that today a completely new way of posing the problem of “life” is taking shape, an approach that is deeper in principle.—Destruction of the concept of the organism, which is only an offshoot of “idealism,” isolated subject, “I,” and biological subject. Fundamental constitution: relation to the environment, and this not a consequence of adaptation but, to the contrary, the condition of possibility for adaptation.

3. Kolbenheyer does not see and does not want to see that, even when the essential determination of life is more originary and appropriate than that of the nineteenth century, even then \textit{life} (the way of Being of plant and animal) does not constitute \textit{the dominant whole} of reality.

4. Kolbenheyer does not see and cannot see that, even if bodily life is in a certain way the \textit{supporting ground} of human Being and of the ethnic sequence of its generations, this still does not yet prove that the \textit{supporting ground} also has to be the \textit{determining ground}, or even that it can be.

5. Kolbenheyer does not see and cannot see that man as people is a \textit{historical} entity, that to historical Being there belongs the decision for a particular \textit{will to be} and \textit{fate}—engagement of action, responsibility in endurance and persistence, courage, confidence, faith, the strength for sacrifice.

All these fundamental modes of conduct of historical man are possible only on the basis of \textit{freedom}.

\textsuperscript{12} [Wilhelm Bölsche (1861–1939), writer on nationalities and nature.] [Several of Bölsche’s books were published by Kosmos, a “society of the friends of nature.”]
But it is not enough to recognize, perhaps, these manifestations of human Being (after all, they are hard to deny), merely in order then to distort them into biological functional capacities. One thereby perverts decision—engagement—freedom—the courage for sacrifice into a process that is encumbered from the outside and fit into the biological reality which has been presupposed as the only definitive reality, without seeing and grasping that in engaging oneself and enduring and sacrificing, a way of Being that is different in principle becomes powerful—different in principle from, say, the functioning of gastric juices and sexual cells and tending to the brood. One fails to grasp that this way of Being does not arise from bodily Being simply because it is bound to the body; that this Being does not, among other things, “also” play itself out in the bodily organism, but rather it is precisely bodily engagement and struggle that are dominated and gripped by authentically, historically responsible Being (nobility!). The Prussian nobility—merely grown like an apple on a tree, or grown from historical experience in the spiritual-political reality of the world of Frederick the Great?

In principle this way of thinking is no different from the psychoanalysis of Freud and his ilk. And in principle it is also no different from Marxism, which takes the spiritual as a function of the economic production process; whether I take the biological or something else instead of this is all the same for the decisive question regarding the way of Being of the historical people.

6. Due to the blindness of this biologism to the historical, existentiell, fundamental reality of man or of a people, Kolbenheyer is incapable of truly seeing and grasping today’s historical-political German reality; and this reality was not there at all in his speech—to the contrary: the revolution was falsified into a mere organizational operation.

7. What is on exhibit here is the typical attitude of a reactionary, nationalistic, and folkish bourgeois. According to this attitude, the “political” is an unspiritual, disagreeable sphere which one leaves to certain people who then, for example, make a revolution. The bourgeois then waits until this process is at an end before he gets his turn; now he is ready for the task of belatedly providing the revolution with spirit.

For this tactic, one naturally appeals to a saying of the Führer: the revolution is at an end, the evolution is beginning. Yes—but we don’t want to deal in counterfeit money. Evolution—certainly, but only where the revolution is at an end. But where the revolution has not yet come to an end but rather has not even begun—as in spiritual matters and, for example, in the educational system—how do things stand there?
We are grateful for the role that spiritual workers of this sort play in life, for they are doing nothing but bringing to light a perhaps unintended justification of the most trite reactionary position. The facts demonstrate it: the weightiest objection to the speech and the clearest sign of how questionable it is, is the deafening applause that I do not begrudge Herr Kolbenheyer.

8. Whoever has experienced and grasped even the slightest part of the new German reality that stands before us must already know after Kolbenheyer’s first sentences how things stand with his attitude. He takes “vocation” as a purely economic phenomenon, which it has become in the bourgeois age. He does not see that it is precisely vocation that is being experienced and grasped anew in its essence from the ground up (not on the basis of so-called spirit), namely, in its fundamental political character and on the basis of the essence of labor.

9. Kolbenheyer is a folkish kind of man, a nationalist; he talks of estates and rejects the delusion of class—and yet he does not stand in the new political reality, but somewhere above it. Instead, he thinks and speaks within a spiritual world that was modern thirty years ago among intellectuals; he takes this world for the only true one and takes himself to be authorized to impart the impeccable answer without delay to every question set before him—like the advice columnist in a newspaper.

10. All honor and admiration to Kolbenheyer the poet, but yesterday’s speech was a political, and that means a spiritual fiasco that could not have been conducted more perfectly.

If the poet Kolbenheyer had told us how art grows in a transformed way from the new reality and by shaping it in advance, builds a world, then—yes; but what we have here is just a bad popular philosophy.

The man of the cave sits in his dwelling and knows nothing of the history of the violent liberation and highest obligation. He measures everything with his standards and believes: in 1933, the revolution; in ’34 and after, spirit as a supplement.

Evolution—certainly! Development, solidification, and radically questioning obligation = clarification of the revolutionary reality.—But not: revolution as something over and done with, and afterwards the development of what the so-called spiritual people believe about it. That is completely superfluous. But what remains decisive is helping to shape the historical-political reality so radically in all domains of Dasein that the new necessities of Being come to have effect and take shape without falsification.
d) On the proper approach to the question of the human essence

Quite schematically, we can say that we are asking about man. This is the guiding question that we must pose in all our reflections, the question of historical man. In asking this question, we must ask in the correct way. This—asking in the correct way—is the task of the philosophy of the future. This asking is the fundamental happening, philosophizing.

Now, if we ask about man, we see that this question has, up to now, always been posed in the form: what is man? In this form of the question there already lies a quite definite advance decision. For in this, it has already been decided that man is something constituted in such and such a way, to which this and that component belongs. One takes man as an entity that is put together out of body, soul, and spirit. Each of these components can then be considered individually in definite forms of questioning. Biology asks about the body of man, plants, and animals; psychology asks about the soul; ethics asks about the human spirit. Everything can be summed up in an anthropology.

All these disciplines have accumulated a tremendous amount of information about man. Nevertheless, they are not in a position to answer the question of man, because they do not even ask this question anymore.

The authentic revolution in the question must be that the question as a question must already be posed in a different way. We do not ask, “What is man?” but “Who is man?”

With this question, we establish a direction of questioning that is different in principle. With this, it is posited that man is a self, a being that is not indifferent to its own mode and possibility of Being; instead, its Being is that which is an issue for this being in its own Being.

Man is a self, and not a living thing with some spiritual endowments, but a being that in advance decides about its own Being, in this or that way. This is a quite different fundamental position, based on man’s possibility and necessity of Being.

Only because man is a self can he be an I and a you and a we. Being a self is not a consequence of being an I. This self-character of man is at the same time the ground for the fact that he has his history.

I say that the question of man must be revolutionized. Historicity is a fundamental moment of his Being. This demands a completely new relationship of man to his history and to the question of his Being.

Terminologically, I have designated this distinctive characteristic of man with the word “care”—not as the anxious fussing of some neurotic, but this fundamentally human way of Being, on the basis of which there are such things as resoluteness, readiness for service, struggle,
mastery, action as an essential possibility. Only as long as man decides for or against his distinctiveness . . . There is mastery only where there is also readiness for service.

On the basis of this question concerning the essence of man, his Being is revolutionized, the way he stands in relation to his historical tradition and historical mission is revolutionized.

13. [Gap in Hallwachs’s transcript.]
§29. The disappearance of the fundamental experience of ἀλήθεια and the necessity of a transformed retrieval of the question of truth

a) The question of the essence of truth as the question of the history of the human essence

We want to present a brief summary of the thoughts in our foregoing lectures. By clarifying the highest idea of the good, we want to grasp something about the essence of truth, to grasp which characteristics pertain to the essence of truth as a whole.

1. Truth is not something ultimate, but stands under something still higher, the idea of the good.
2. This also applies to Being.
3. Truth as unconcealment (a characteristic of objects) and Being as subject (what is seen) both stand under a yoke. And this yoke that holds Being and truth as object and subject together is the good.

Yet this good stands in an inner connection to the essence of man, as our last session explained. This liberation of man to the highest idea is the authentic essential history of man, whose Dasein is governed by philosophy.

This essential history of man in the allegory of the cave tells us that the transformation in the individual stages is not the mere turning of a potsherd in the hand, but an exit from night-like day into the real day; it is philosophizing.

1. (Recapitulation at the beginning of the session of 1 February 1934.)
The entire presentation of the allegory of the cave at the beginning of book VII is also introduced accordingly. The topic of this story is the history of man, our φύσις [nature, Being] in regards to παιδεία and ἀπαιδευσία. παιδεία does not mean education or cultivation; instead, παιδεία is the binding-fast of man in Dasein, insofar as he holds steadfastly to what is demanded of him; the topic is existence as a determination of man, and indeed the highest. This fundamental happening of man is philosophy.

The question is what philosophy is. This question and the question of truth depend on the fundamental question: what is man?

Today we are used to getting the answer to this fundamental question from sciences such as biology, psychology, anthropology, sociology, typology, and so on. These sciences, all together, provide diverse information about man and yet no answer, because none of them asks about man anymore, because they are already grounded on a quite definite answer, namely: man is something that is given among other things, something that consists of body, soul, spirit, personality . . . This is disseminated and expounded. All of this is correct, and yet, in the deepest sense, untrue.

A definite mode of questioning is already pre-delineated in these disciplines. Through this mode of questioning, the answer is already given in advance, that is, a definite range of possible answers is already demarcated. And no matter how far these disciplines may be developed, they will never get beyond what they have already decided about man in advance.

The way of questioning that lies at the foundation of these sciences can only be: what is man? The decision has already been taken in the question: man is something constituted in such and such a way. One might believe that the question cannot be posed in any other way.

Yet this is possible. We do not ask, “What is man?” but “Who is man?” In this way of posing the question, a decision has also been taken, namely, that man is a self, not a present-at-hand being but a being that is delivered over to itself in its Being. The self is not to be fit into the realm of present-at-hand things, but is delivered over to the constant choice and decision that it has to bear.

What is decisive is not that the self knows about itself, but that this knowing, in the sense of self-conscious knowing, is only a consequence of the fact that its own Being is an issue for this being.

This fundamental characteristic, that its own Being is an issue for it, itself belongs to the Being of this being. We designate this Being as care. This care has nothing to do with some sort of irritable surliness, but designates the fundamental characteristic of the self, that its Being is an issue for it. How—this is left to the choice and mission of man.

Only insofar as Being is care does a way of Being become possible such as resoluteness, labor, heroism, and so on. But because man has
these possibilities, he also has, on the other side, the possibilities of innocuousness, busy-ness, cowardice, slavery, money-grubbing, and so on. These are not, as it were, regrettable additions. Only where there is busy-ness is there labor. Only on the basis of this Being (as care) is man a historical entity. Care is the condition of possibility for man’s ability to be a political entity.

b) The existential determination of human Being and the question of the truth of humanity

We designate this way of Being as care, insofar as we distinguish it as existence from other ways of Being (such as rock, animal). Although the tradition uses the expression “existence” simply for Being as actuality, we want to understand by existence a way of Being in the sense of care, and thus the relationship of Being in care, the fact that Being itself is an issue. Thus, we cannot say “the animal exists” or “the stone exists.” We make a distinction that fundamentally separates us from the way of Being of other domains. Every being that does not have the character of existence, everything that is in such a way that its own Being is closed off to it, all these beings that meet our eyes in any form whatsoever, beings that we encounter and experience only insofar as we address ourselves to them—which kind of being and its Being we call the categorial.

κατηγορεύειν = to speak out, to address something as what it is. A category is a determination I assign to beings insofar as I encounter them as something other. Organism, procreation, propagation are categorial determinations.

In contrast, tradition, decision, struggle, insight, are determinations that pertain to existence: existential concepts.

Because care characterizes the self as self, and in this we see the fundamental trait of man, we must say that man as we encounter him and as we experience him—as the you, I, we—is grounded in the fact that man is a self. The characteristic of Being a self is the condition for the fact that man is an I, and not vice versa. The self is the originary source that makes I and you possible. Only on the ground of the self is there the struggle for priority between I, you, and we.

Who man is, can be said only in philosophizing. We must beware of slipping into a false claim by laying down some definition. We can get farther in the domain of the question of who man is only by experiencing more of the essence of philosophy.

Can man know and find out something about the essence of the self at all by beginning with himself? How do we know that we know, and can know, who we ourselves are?

This question flows into the next: where do we get the truth about man himself? Only with this question does philosophy enter what is ultimate for it.
If man is a distinctive being, due to his existence, then the truth about him will also have its own character. Of what sort is this truth? According to Plato, we get an experience of what truth is from the essential history of man (in the allegory of the cave).

c) The lack of questioning about the Being of the good as yoke and about unconcealment as such

Here we are back in the circle, in the realm in which it becomes clear that we are philosophizing, that is, that we are standing firm in the question of what truth is. We must proceed through the circle as a circle. Standing firm in the question means not flagging in the questioning.

Precisely the highest peak, the elaboration of the idea of the good, must now become questionable for us. The ἀγαθόν has no content of its own, but means a way in which something is—something that prevails, that holds firm, that stands firm, that is upright and fit.

This ἀγαθόν in human Dasein is characterized by Plato as a yoke that yokes together, on the one hand, Being in the sense of the understanding of Being as the seeing of the idea, and on the other hand, truth in the Greek sense as the unconcealment of beings. Expressed in the language of modern philosophy, on the one hand the subject, on the other the object. The ἀγαθόν is the ζυγόν that completes the span.

With the question concerning this yoke-like character we encounter something questionable, inasmuch as Plato does not explain how matters really stand with this yoke. The explanation does not ensue because the question is no longer posed, because what stands under the yoke is posited in advance as two juxtaposed things, in order then to ask subsequently in what relationship they stand.

This rigid approach was incapable of inquiring into the specific character of the yoke in its Being; instead, what stands beneath the yoke is reinterpreted into subject and object, present-at-hand things. The question concerning the yoke is no longer posed.

Plato then determines the essence of Being, the essence and kind of Being as idea, in this characterization: that what is, is what is seen, what
I see about a thing in advance. This characteristic is ambiguous. On the one hand, the idea is what is seen, and thus is always linked to a seeing. But on the other hand, what is seen is always such-and-such, so it can be taken in two ways: as what it is, and also as something that is seen, as such.

The character of the idea falls back behind the content of what in each case comes forward as an individual thing that is seen. The ideas retain only this content (such as table, house, mountain), so that this being, seen in this way, is taken as a present-at-hand being; we see the individual things on the one hand and the ideas on the other hand, the individual perceptible mountain and the idea of the mountain. Between them is a χωρισμός [gap].

On this basis, the whole nexus of the ideas is taken as an objective stratum with various domains. With this, Plato’s starting point is given up—his attempt to see the span between seeing and what is seen.

This is the occasion for diverting the question of the subject, and of subjectivity and objectivity, from its true path; the determination of truth as unconcealment is not developed, that is, what is seen in this originary issue is not exhausted.

ἀλήθεια as truth (unconcealment) is not a feature of the assertion, the proposition, but a characteristic of the things themselves that are; it happens to and with a being, without altering itself. Beings are to show themselves as they are.

Now, here unconcealment and openness move into the background. Unconcealment itself is not really questioned anymore, but reflection focuses on what stands in unconcealment in each case. Unconcealment becomes the term for that which is unconcealed.

The philosophy of Aristotle seeks and asks about ἀλήθεια. (Aristotle says that it asks about truth.) Philosophy asks about the unconcealed as such, that is, about beings in their Being. ἀλήθεια = ὄν, οὐσία, εἶναι [what is, beingness, to be]. This means, for the Greeks: whether or not they experienced it (?), they did not succeed in putting it (?) in the place where it can be interrogated.²

Connected to this is the fact that the essences themselves are posited as something present at hand, and are established as prototypes. Things are then images of the prototypes. But with this, one arrived at ὁμοιωσις, adaequatio [conformity]. Individual things to which human thinking assimilates itself.

The Greeks accordingly had two interpretations of truth. Truth as openness prevailed first, but for essential reasons, truth as the assimilation of thinking and seeing took over.
In Plato, we experience the two kinds of truth flaring up once again. From Plato on, the determination of truth as a property of the proposition gains the upper hand. Today it is so self-evident that no one would allow himself to fall into believing otherwise, on pain of penalty.

d) The necessity of a transformed retrieval

Now, why don’t we want to just leave things as they are with this concept? Such self-evidence in a conception is usually already an embarrassment, and is a sign that the question has slipped into the self-evident. Why aren’t we leaving it at that? I have already indicated the inner difficulty.

To begin with: “This chalk is white.” This is the proposition. The sense of the proposition, the nexus of meaning, is something totally different from the chalk itself, with which the sense is supposed to correspond. The sense is questionable. The correspondence of our thinking to this thing is possible, then, only if the thing is revealed to me in advance as it is given to me. Supposing that the correspondence of the proposition (with the thing) were a characteristic of truth, then the thing would already have to have truth so that the assertion could be measured against it. So the assertion already presupposes the openness of things.

A still more essential problem is that this concept of truth cannot help us determine human truth. On this basis we cannot comprehend conviction, inner decision, or the truth of a work of art.

We cannot even raise a question about these authentic truths on the basis of the usual concept of truth. Hence the inner necessity of posing the question of truth anew, not in isolation from the tradition, but neither by reaching blindly back into the inception of philosophy.

Given these two fundamental possibilities of interpreting truth, unconcealment and correctness, we must take up the question of the essence of truth anew and pursue it further, in the context of the historical situation of our Dasein. Precisely that which came to light for the first time among the Greeks, but which the Greeks could not get in hand, is to be extended on the basis of our concepts.

If we now take a look at things formally, we gather two points:

1. Truth is a happening that happens with humanity itself, that is not possible without the history of the human essence. Truth is something that happens to beings, a happening based on the entirety of human being.

2. Truth as unconcealment is essentially related to concealment: pulling one out of the cave, assailing the concealed, tearing beings out of concealment.

If we move in the direction of Greek experience, we must ask: what is it, really, that unconcealment assails? What does concealment mean?
We ask historically: to what extent did the Greeks know in their philosophies about the concealment of things, about what must be overcome in the happening of truth? We will see how against truth as unconcealment there stands *untruth* or *nontruth*. But nontruth is ambiguous. For the concealed can be conceived in two ways.

1. What has not yet been taken from concealment,
2. the concealed that was once taken from concealment, but sank back into concealment.

The first is the concealed, pure and simple. The second, which has passed through a process of unconcealing, is the hidden, the covered up, the disguised. We will encounter still further distinctions within both senses. Only in this way will we discover the kind of philosophizing that represents the contrary concept to the Greek concept of truth.

§30. The lack of questioning about the essence of concealment from which the un-concealed can be wrested

a) The transformation of the question
   of the essence of truth into the question of untruth

We have brought the question of the essence of truth to a relative conclusion, inasmuch as the allegory of the cave showed us to what extent truth is connected with the *Being of man*. Truth is unconcealment. *Unconcealment* does not exist somewhere in itself, but is only insofar as it happens as the history of human beings.

Insofar as human history happens, the things that are, as a whole, come into openness. Now, this human history is not the history of theoretical thinking and opinion, but the total history of a people, such as happens before us, to a certain extent, with the Greeks.

That history has as a driving force within it the *liberation of man to the essence of his Being*. This liberation begins with *Homer* and is fulfilled in the formation of the Greek states, in conjunction with worship, tragedy, architecture, and so on, together with the awakening of *philosophy*.

This total happening carries out a *projection* of the world within which the Greek people exists. This projection of the world is the presupposition for the fact that man moves within what we call today a worldview. The worldview is not a derivative superstructure, but the projection of a world that a people carries out.

If today the Führer speaks again and again of reeducation for the National Socialist worldview, this does not mean promulgating this or

3. {Recapitulation at the beginning of the session of 15 February 1934.}
that slogan, but bringing forth a total transformation, a projection of a world, on the ground of which he educates the entire people. National Socialism is not some doctrine, but the transformation from the bottom up of the German world—and, as we believe, of the European world too.

This beginning of a great history of a people, such as we see among the Greeks, extends to all the dimensions of human creativity. With this beginning, things come into openness and truth. But in the same moment, man also comes into untruth. Untruth begins only then.

Openness is always limited, definite. The limit of an openness is always what is not revealed, what is concealed. This is the genuine sense of untruth. The concept, taken in this sense, has nothing inferior or derogatory about it, but signifies untruth only as what is not revealed.

The expression “untruth” is ambiguous; it can mean: (a) non-openness = concealment, and (b) concealed and yet at the same time revealed in some way. This is the essence of seeming—something that looks like something else; insofar as it looks like something else, it conceals something. This last characteristic is what we designate as untruth in our sense. From the essence of the Greeks we see that their concept of truth belongs immediately and intimately together with the essence of untruth. Truth, for the Greeks, is nothing but the assault on untruth. This is already expressed with the construction of the word ἀ-λήθεια: a negative, privative expression, which brings to light the fact that truth is something that must be wrested away from untruth. With us, the word “truth” is a positive expression.

Now, along what lines can the essence of truth be exhibited more primordially as unconcealment, as the assault on untruth? The issue is the inner essential connection between truth and untruth.

b) Preliminary clarification of the fundamental concepts: ψεῦδος, λήθη, and ἀ-λήθεια

Here, to begin with, we again want to stick with the concept in the word. How do the Greeks designate what we call untruth? The Greek word for untruth in the narrower sense of falsehood is ψεῦδος. The Greeks do not express the concept contrary to truth with a contrary word formed from the same stem. We also see that with the Greeks, untruth is expressed positively, and truth negatively (ἀ-λήθεια).

If the word for untruth is taken positively by the Greeks and if it has a different stem, what experience lies at the basis of this word? If we want to get clear about this primordial word, we are not just doing linguistic history, but we are convinced that language is always the interpretation of a people’s Dasein, that word coinages give expression to completely essential fundamental experiences.

What does ψεῦδος mean for the Greeks? We want to clarify this with our loan word “pseudonym.” It is put together from ψεῦδος (false) and
ὄνομα (name). But “pseudonym” does not mean “false name.” What is the thing, what does it mean? If, say, we called the chalk a sponge, we would be applying a false designation to it. A pseudonym is not a false name, but a designation behind which the author hides, a covering name that hides him. It is not that the name does not correspond to the author. The work faces the reader under a label behind which there hides someone other than what the name on the book says. The facts about the author are covered up, distorted.

That is the fundamental meaning of the Greek ψεῦδος: to turn the thing around in such a way that it is not seen as it really is. ψεῦδος is what twists and distorts.

Now, the Greeks also have a contrary concept and contrary word for ψεῦδος. It appears, for instance, in Democritus: ἀτρεκής (from τρέπω, to turn); that which is unturned, untwisted. The contrary concept ψεῦδος does not simply mean the false, but rather the distorted. The decisive moment is the twisting.

This meaning of ψεῦδος underlies a further development in the history of the meaning. ψεῦδος means what is turned toward man and his perception not only in such a way that what hides behind it is covered up, but also in such a way that there is the illusion that something is hiding behind it, when at bottom there is nothing behind it at all.

This means not only what is twisted, but also what is null, that behind which there lies nothing. This is the meaning that also comes out in the middle-voice form (ψεύδεσθαι): making something into nothing, explaining it in a way that is null and void.

A type of λόγος, discourse, that is null, that contains nothing and even deludes us by passing something off on us that is different from what it means—that is the lie.

These, then, are the main directions taken by the linguistic expression ψεῦδος.

Now we ask whether the Greek word for truth, ἀλήθεια, also found a corresponding positive word form. This is, in fact, the case, although this word form does not coincide with the concept of truth. The reference to the positive contrary concept should make it clear that truth and unconcealment of things are not a property of a proposition, not a property of cognition, but an objective happening into which the things themselves enter.

This becomes clear from the concept contrary to ἀλήθεια: λήθη, λάθω, λανθάνω = I am concealed, I remain concealed. This characteristic of remaining concealed applies to reality, to the thing that is.

An example of the “I remain concealed,” of a definite type that we tend to translate as “forgetting,” is found in Thucydides, book II, the end of chapter 49. During the course of the Peloponnesian War a great plague broke out in Athens, and its course and consequences are de-
picted. “Many people lost the use of their limbs once the illness came over them; some lost their eyes, others were attacked (assailed) immediately, once they recovered, by the remaining-concealed of all beings alike. And thus it came about that they knew nothing either of themselves or of their kin.”

The topic, then, is the remaining-concealed of all things alike—a happening that breaks in on human beings like a fate. This (falling away) has the consequence that human beings as individuals are unable to know anything about themselves or about others. ἄγνοια [ignorance] = consequence of ληθη [concealment, oblivion] [. . .]4

We say simply: they lost their memory. This is a purely subjective expression that does not do justice to Greek reality. ἔλαβε: seize them, befall them. ληθη is an objective power; it came over people like φόβος, ἄλγος, ὑπνος [fear, pain, sleep]. (A quite definite mode of openness.)

Only through a quite specific process of subjectivization does ληθη receive the subjective meaning of forgetting. The question is whether forgetting can be explained at all in a subjective way. For this word λανθάνω (I am concealed) also calls for a very definite construction in the Greek language, such as λανθάνω ἥκων = I remain and am concealed as one who is coming. Concealment is a characteristic of my Being itself, and not a property based on the other’s failure to grasp what is going on.

Openness, as well as concealment, is for the Greeks an objective happening. This is why in the Greek way of thinking, the true can substitute for Being. For what is unconcealed is precisely what is. Being true and Being are generally synonymous in Platonic language. On the one hand, Being means for the Greeks being present, not absent, not concealed; on the other hand, truth means unconcealment.

This equivalence has persisted in Western thought, and is still taught today—but in a different sense. Today one says: what is, is what is posited in a proposition as being.

These remarks should suffice to prepare us for the substantive question.

4. {In Hallwachs’s transcript there follow two fragmentary sentences marked with question marks, whose sense is unrecognizable and which are thus not open to conjecture.}
PART TWO

An Interpretation of Plato’s *Theaetetus*
with Regard to the Question of the Essence of Untruth
§31. On the question of the essence of ἐπιστήμη

In order to clarify the essence of untruth in the sense of falsehood, we will follow similes that Plato employs, as he does in all essential areas of questioning—two similes from the Theaetetus. We do this to evaluate how the concept of untruth has been passed over and how this has led to a situation in which the whole question about the essence of untruth and falsehood counts as a secondary one.

We have no logic of error, no real clarification of its essence, because we always take error as negative. This is the fundamental error that dominates the entire history of the concept of truth.

Theaetetus is taken to be the most important dialogue in the so-called theory of knowledge. One refers to this dialogue to demonstrate that the Greeks, too, were already busy with theory of knowledge. Through this conception, the interpretation of the dialogue is dragged off onto a completely false path.

The Greek question is, τί ἐστιν ἐπιστήμη?—How should we translate it?1 The way we conceive of the content of the dialogue depends upon this translation.

ἐπίσταμαι = I place myself in front of something, I step close to something, I engage myself with it in order to dominate it, to do right by it, to be a match for it. To understand how to deal with a thing—be it the preparation of a piece of equipment, be it the conduct of a military undertaking, or be it the performance of a task in teaching and

1. [A conventional translation would be: “What is knowledge?”]
learning—everything that in some sense requires that one know one’s way around a thing: this is what the Greeks designated as ἐπίσταμαι.

So the word does not designate science. Science—for example, geometry, mathematics—is certainly one mode of this know-how, but it is not the mode of know-how pure and simple. In ἐπιστήμη is realized the whole multiplicity of all questions and levels of know-how in all regions of human Being.

Therefore, because the concept has this broad meaning, the question arises: what is the inner, common core here that is ἐπιστήμη for human beings? This question does not pertain to theory of knowledge; instead, what must be explained is what the genuine essence is in all these modes of comportment in know-how.

If one makes the orientation of the question clear from the start, one is then also assured of steering the dialogue away from the sphere of science. Science is only one form of knowing, even if from one perspective it is perhaps the highest.

The question seems to aim at presenting the features or properties that belong to every form of knowing. It is a question about the essence of knowing.

If we are asking about the essence of knowing here, then the question about the essence of knowing is a question about human Being (about the essence of human beings). But this question has a completely different methodological character from questions such as: what is a house? a table? a book? These are things that lie before me as objects, things I can interrogate as something present at hand. By contrast, the question “What is knowing?” is a question about the human being himself as a being who is, who acts, who is historical. With this, the question is oriented to an answer that cannot be found in some statement. Rather, this question about the human being is at the same time a question about the measure, law, or rule that the human being, as one who knows, sets for himself.

Behind the question “What is knowing?” is concealed another claim entirely, a quite definite attack by the person who questions on the very person questioned, that is, an attack on the human being inasmuch as he hunkers down in the familiarity of his views and opinions. This attack on the human being is nothing other than the essence of philosophy.

With this, it is presumed methodologically that the answer does not consist in an enumeration of moments, but rather that the answer exposes itself only in the course of a confrontation, a struggle within which quite definite fundamental positions for man come to light.

This is precisely why this dialogue has its particular agonistic character. That does not just mean testing oneself in the sense of proving that one is in the right. Instead, the agonistic character consists in the
fact that the opponents question their way ever more reciprocally into the most acute questioning possible.

So in the end, the dialogue concludes without giving an answer. But the answer lies precisely in the confrontation, not in some flat proposition that gives the definition at the end. The answer is so prodigious that up to this very day, philosophers have not exhausted its essential content, have not even taken up the question.

This assumes, as all historical interpretations do, that the interpreters themselves have experienced and clarified within themselves the essence of the things they are questioning. Only then are one’s eyes likely to open.

We now wish to attempt to elucidate the main features of this Platonic approach to the essence of untruth, for if we can manage to do this, we will have the problem as a whole in hand.

§32. Fundamental points concerning the Greek concept of knowledge

a) The basis for the detour through Greek philosophy

In our previous session, we broadened the question of the essence of truth in principle by posing the question of the essence of untruth. This question is unavoidable if one has gotten clear about the originary concept in the Greek word (ἀ-λήθεια)—for unconcealment has within it the relation to concealment.

The Greek word ψεῦδος has the meaning of disguise, covering up, seeming, falsehood. So then, from the very start, the question of the essence of untruth arose together with the question of truth. Yet it took centuries until the question of the inner connection between truth and untruth was seen and posed.

We want to answer the question of untruth along the same lines as the question of truth; we want to examine the question by way of the Greek approach to it, and specifically Plato’s approach. We have carried out our guiding question by way of Greek philosophy.

But why the detour through the Greeks? Why can’t we simply answer the question on the basis of today’s needs? We are taking this detour because the answer depends on the way of posing the question. The answer always corresponds to the scope and depth of the questioning. The scope depends on the originality and essentiality of a people that poses it.

Because the question is not posed today anymore as an essential question at all, because it has atrophied into a topic for scholars, it has lost its

2. {Recapitulation at the beginning of the session of 20 February 1934.}
greatness. Hence the fundamental significance of first restoring the question to its rightful greatness and intensity, in order to gain standards for what the question means. If we had these standards, then we would not be faced today with the question of the sciences in a way that relegates it to idle talk and idle scribbling, where every journalist is allowed to jump in—then such barbarism would not be possible.

We want to reeducate ourselves for real seriousness. This is why we are taking the detour. We want to consider the question of the essence of untruth exactly as we considered the question of the essence of truth.

The Greek term for untruth is ψεῦδος. We note (1) a completely different stem of the word, which corresponds to a different fundamental experience: the experience of hiding, of twisting (dislocation). (2) Our concept of truth has a positive character, whereas the Greek is negative (ἀ-λήθεια).

Nevertheless, with the Greeks the two words stand opposed to each other as antonyms. This is possible only because the meaning of both words deteriorated right away.

ψεῦδος (known to us in the loan word “pseudonym”) means falsehood—not only as incorrectness, as we often understand it, but also as when we speak of a “false person.” We do not mean an “incorrect person,” a person whose comportment does not follow the rule; that need not be a false person. This twisting of the state of affairs, putting up a front behind which the actual state of affairs is otherwise—this is the essence of the ψεῦδος. This meaning is sharpened when the front that is turned toward us, the semblance, is such that behind it there stands nothing at all. Thus ψεῦδος gains the meaning of null, vain.

ψεύδεσθαι: (1) to be insufficient (?), (2) to speak in such a way that although something is said, what is said covers up precisely what is meant.

This fundamental meaning was extended so far that in the end it gained dominance over ψεῦδος as the contrary concept to ἀλήθεια. The latter completely disappeared from the realm of experience of the West.

b) The breadth and the fundamental meaning of the Greek concept of knowledge and the origin of the question of untruth

Transition to the topic at hand. We want to develop this question, too—what is untruth?—on the basis of a text by Plato, following the question as it is asked in the Theaetetus; not for the sake of congruence with our earlier discussions, but because Plato in fact poses the question of the essence of the ψεῦδος in a fundamental sense for the first time in the Theaetetus.

We should note, however, that this question was already essentially prepared in pre-Platonic times. The question of truth brings with it the question of untruth, but this coupling does not yet amount to any es-
sentential insight. To the contrary, in the beginnings of Greek philosophy there persisted a fundamental difficulty in grasping the essence of seeming, of the null, of the false. This difficulty is based on the principle: what is, is; what is not, is not.

Now if error, as the false and null, is something negative, and if what is not, cannot be, then there can be no error and no falsehood. But on the contrary, falsehood and lies constitute a power in human Dasein. The power of untruth stands opposed to the non-Being of the null, which is not at all.

It was thus an essential step in philosophy to grasp this question in the first place and to develop how it is to be understood: how that which in itself is null, such as the false, the erroneous—how, nevertheless, this could be, and could be allowed to develop its power.

As a result of this question, the question of the essence of Being was subjected to an essential transformation. It was recognized that even what is not, the null, is. But we must also say how it is. This demands a transformation of the essence of Being, which, however, was carried out only in its first stages. And there matters have stood to this day.

The question of untruth is no arbitrary question. Neither is it simply about the contrary concept to truth. It inserts us into the fundamental question of all philosophizing and all knowledge. We want to see on what path the question is posed and developed by Plato.

We can also get closer to the question by saying: is there error because man gets into errancy and because this errancy subsists somewhere in itself, so to speak; or is there this errancy only because man errs, and does he err only because man, in the ground of his Being, is errant? Among the Greeks, however, the question does not reach this level.

To begin with, we ask along Plato’s lines: where does the false as what is not and as the null belong, and how is this possible in general? For this it is necessary to get clear about the fundamental features of the dialogue in the course of which Plato comes to this question—that is, we must define the guiding question of this dialogue and then follow the course of its questioning and its development up to the point where, within the question of ἐπιστήμη, the question of the ψεῦδος comes up.

Next we must determine on what basis and in what space this question arises for the Greeks. First we will develop the guiding question up to the point where the question of the ψεῦδος comes up; then we have to get closer to the question of the ψεῦδος and the fundamental ways it is treated.

The guiding question is: τί ἐστιν ἐπιστήμη? What is knowing? This question does not mean: what is science? And it does not deal with the doctrine and theory of science, but with the question of the essence of knowing in a quite broad and originary sense (that is, in the Greek sense).
ἐπίστασθαι means: to oversee a thing, to stand over it, to stand before and understand it, to be fit for it, to know one’s way around it. Simultaneously with ἐπιστήμη, the word τέχνη is used (the root of our “technique”), erroneously translated as “art.” τέχνη is not a way of fabricating, but a cognitive concept, a concept of cognition, knowledge, know-how, being capable of forming, producing something.

For the Greeks, art too is a kind of knowing, an actualization of truth, a revelation of beings themselves, of beings that were not yet known before. Art was the fundamental way in which reality was discovered. Only through formation does humanity learn the greatness of Being.

Among the Greeks, the word “knowledge” had the very broad sense of every type of know-how, not only the knowledge that was later termed theoretical knowledge. Knowledge means gaining a foothold and standpoint in the openness of things and their happening.

Only with Aristotle did a separation between ἐπιστήμη and τέχνη come to pass, but in such a way that even here the fundamental meaning of knowledge is retained. ἐπιστήμη is knowledge of and familiarity with a particular field; τέχνη is knowledge that is directed to handmade and other products.

This is the knowledge (in the broad sense) that is the topic of the question, τί ἐστιν ἐπιστήμη; τί ἐστιν, what something is, we call the question of essence. In the question of essence, what something is, we intend to experience what belongs to an object as such. What is a house? What belongs to such a thing as a house? The answer is supposed to bring out what belongs to every thing, what pertains in general to some matter at hand, the universal concept that delimits what, in general, belongs to a thing.

But now, if I ask about the essence of Frederick the Great, this being that has been and will be given only once, this cannot be some universal concept. The essence of a thing cannot be found in what belongs to it in general; instead, universal characteristics are only characteristics derived from an essential content. I do not look for the universal characteristics that can be found in it, but for what makes possible this thing, the inner possibility of a thing.

I ask further about the ground of the inner possibility and thus about the genuine essence, I ask about the inner possibility of what we call knowing. This question—what is knowing?—is today one that everyone who pretends to join in the discussion of the question of the essence of science must have thought through to the very end.

The course of the question has the following character. A series of answers to this question are proposed, which are always rejected as inadequate. In the end, the dialogue concludes negatively: it has no result. But the result is not what stands at the end, but is the course of
the questioning itself. This course is always also the path (the essence) of every philosophy.

The act of questioning and the persistence in questioning are what allow the essence of things to open up; every answer ruins the question. Only in the question is truth that is capable of becoming knowledge possible and given.

Therefore we must prepare ourselves for the fact that what is at stake here is a philosophy, and not storytelling. Behind the rejections of the answers, there in fact hides an answer.
§33. The first answer: ἐπιστήμη is αἴσθησις. Critical delimitation of the essence of perception

a) αἴσθησις as the fundamental form of apprehending things and allowing them to come upon us.

The determinate, yet limited openness of αἴσθησις

Τί ἐστιν ἐπιστήμη? This is the guiding question of the dialogue Theaetetus. The first answer runs: ἐπιστήμη = αἴσθησις, to know is to perceive, is perception. This answer will be rejected later on, but initially we will ask why precisely this answer is given and why this answer is given as the first.

We may make the assumption that in the dialogues the interlocutors do not babble randomly back and forth. Rather, the sequence of the discussion unfolds on the grounds of an originary understanding and speaking with one another.

Why precisely this answer? One can of course recall something from psychology textbooks: perception (αἴσθησις) is the lower cognitive capacity as compared to a higher one. But this is not what the conversation is about, nor is it a question of Plato’s wanting to refute Protagoras and perceptual relativism. His goal is not to refute but to exhibit the matter at hand.

The ground [for the first answer] in Plato’s text is more essential and deeper: it lies in the relationship between what ἐπιστήμη is in fact and what αἴσθησις means for the Greeks. We can recognize that this answer is not arbitrary from the fact that Aristotle, when he wants to designate the highest kind of knowing, νοῦς, designates this appre-
hending as αἰσθησίς τις [a kind of perception]. By this, he does not mean that somehow the essential relations of mores or of all the historicity of Being can be smelled with the nose or heard with the ears. Instead, αἰσθησίς in its proper meaning as perceiving is taken up first as the essence of knowing, spontaneously as it were, because for the Greeks, perceiving and being perceived mean the same thing as φαίνεται: to say that this shows itself, something shows itself, is the same as saying that something is perceived.

“Something shows itself”: a Greek understands this in the sense of presenting itself; it gives itself in its presence and, in this presence, it becomes revealed. Being perceived—the fact that things enter the realm of experience—is the happening in which things come to manifestation, come into openness, show themselves, appear. We should not debase its meaning by thinking of it only in terms of ears, noses, and the like. Its meaning is a self-showing that openly comes forth.

φαντασία also has this meaning and not the later meaning of the fantastical, the merely imaginary; rather, it is the becoming-visible, the self-showing, of a being as it is. Plato says: φαντασία and perception are the same, the same happening as being perceived. When someone speaks from the perspective of a “theory of knowledge,” it makes perfect sense that φαντασία would be a mere fancy, not the same happening as what is perceived.

In being perceived, the openness of things happens: immediate, everyday experience. In the question of what knowledge is, this has led to giving this answer: knowledge is perception.

How does this conform to the fundamental meaning of knowing: to understand one’s way around a thing, to oversee it? To the extent that I am a match for the matter at hand, then it is in my grasp, it is at my disposal, it is open to me. Despite the fact that this answer is fundamentally justified, it is rejected, not because it is simply false and does not hit upon the facts of the matter, but because it is insufficient.

It does hit the mark that something like openness has to do with knowing, but knowing as standing in openness in the sense of truth is more than this. Truth is not simply openness; rather, it is the openness and unconcealment of beings.

We can clarify the distinction by way of an example. A stone that lies on the ground clearly stands in a spatial relationship with the ground, in that it lies upon it. But the ground upon which the stone lies is not given to the stone. The stone does not encounter the ground; it is not accessible to the stone. Things are different for the dog running on the ground. The dog can feel the ground in its paws. Something is given to the dog. But what is given to the dog is not accessible to it (as street, hot surface, and so on), it is not revealed to the dog. Something is revealed—the relationship between the dog and the
ground—but not as a being that is so and so and is understood as such and such. There is an openness, but not an openness of beings.

Plato seeks to show that \( \alphaίσθησις \) belongs, in a certain way, to knowing and to the knowable, but that at the same time something essential is lacking.

b) The insufficiency of \( \alphaίσθησις \) for distinguishing the manifold domains of what is perceived and the characteristics of their Being

In the previous session,\(^1\) we started out with the meaning of the word \( \psiεύδος \) and we moved on to the question of what this untruth really is. At what point in the *Theaetetus* does the question of \( \psiεύδος \) get introduced? By determining this place, we will determine in advance the horizon within which the question is posed.

The *guiding question* of the dialogue was: what is knowing? This is *knowing* in the widest sense, according to which knowing illuminates, raises up, carries, and leads each mode of human comportment. It is precisely the multiplicity in which knowing is experienced that has raised in advance the question of *unity*. At issue is not the specialized question of what science is; that question develops only incidentally.

Two fundamental concepts and words go together for the Greeks: \( \epsilonπιστήμη \) and \( \tauέχνη \). That they go together testifies that knowing should not be taken as science but rather as know-how. Science is only a very specific mode of knowing, and it has very definite boundaries. With the blurring of this boundary between philosophy and science it came about that the question of knowing was deformed and today has been entirely lost.

This *guiding question* about what knowing is, is clarified through a variety of answers without any of these answers being taken as conclusive.

Why does this statement unfold as the first answer: knowing (\( \epsilonπιστήμη \)) = perception (\( \alphaίσθησις \))? Knowing means planting one’s feet (\( \epsilonπίστημι \) [I know, I stand on]), taking a stand within the openness of beings as what are to be unveiled first of all. To what extent does \( \alphaίσθησις \) correspond to this fundamental conception of \( \epsilonπιστήμη \)?

\( \alphaίσθησις \) = perceiving is an entry into a *definite* openness. The answer that \( \epsilonπιστήμη = \alphaίσθησις \) lies close at hand because \( \alphaίσθησις \) comes upon us immediately, because it is the fundamental form in which things are *there* for us. Given the originary experience and the fundamental character of Being, this had to be the first answer.

In being perceived, there lies a definite openness that Plato expresses with the term \( \phiαίνεται \) = shows itself, comes upon us. With this characterization of perceiving as openness, it is not yet established what knowing is: standing (\( \epsilonπιστασθαί \)) in the truth and untruth of beings.

\(^1\) {Recapitulation at the beginning of the session of 22 February 1934.}
We illustrated this by discussing how a stone, an animal, and a human being relate to the ground. For the stone, the ground is not revealed; for the animal, it is, inasmuch the ground pushes against the animal, but the animal is unable to experience the ground as ground. The human being, in contrast, is able to experience immediately where, how, and upon what we are standing; the human being has an experience of what is supporting us here and how it is constituted.

This first answer—knowing is perception and being perceived—is rejected because, while a certain openness surely takes place in perception, this openness is not yet in itself the openness of beings as such. In a certain sense, αἴσθησις is necessary, for through it something comes upon us, but perception and being-perceived are insufficient to make openness equal the truth of a being for us.

Plato now shows that, for us, the perception of things is more than the mere encounter with things. When I gaze out through the window and listen to the song of a bird while at the same time seeing the color of the foliage of the trees, I can take in both through immediate experience. I experience the coloration of the leaves and the song of the bird, and I can distinguish each immediately as different.

If I experience each (the song and the color of the foliage) as not the same, then this question follows: on what grounds is such an experience of this given domain possible? I can see the color, I can hear the song, but the difference—that the song is different from the color—I can neither see nor hear. I can neither see nor hear, and yet I immediately take in the otherness of both.

This emphasizes that, when we take in the multiplicity, a mode of experience enters into the Being that is given directly, a mode that is not encompassed by αἴσθησις. What is involved here that goes above and beyond mere apprehending, so that we can experience being-different all at once?

c) The soul as the relation to beings that unifies and holds open

One usually answers: thinking! But this is no answer, because what thinking is still stands in question. Plato does indeed speak of διάνοια (from νοῦς and διά), which we are accustomed to translate as “thinking.” διάνοια = to run through something given in advance, to go through it and under it, in that I take it in thoroughly in all directions according to how it is and what it is.

This is, first of all, an assertion about what the given makes accessible to us, over and above αἴσθησις. Plato carefully and clearly says that beyond our merely allowing something to come upon us, it must somehow happen that we take in what we encounter as a being, and this must happen in such a way that we ourselves, for our part, comprehend the given.

The soul, the essence of the human being, must itself, for itself—from itself and for itself—get involved in the sphere of beings and in
relation to them: ἡ ψυχή, ὅταν αὐτὴ καθ’ αὑτὴν πραγματεύεται περὶ τὰ ὄντα (187a5ff). Not merely taking things in through the senses—the human being involves himself with what he encounters, with what he takes in.

There are two things going on: (a) taking in or perceiving; (b) involving oneself. From this it is clearly evident that both must be grasped, and in their unity, in order to offer an answer to the question about ἐπιστήμη, an answer in which beings as beings will be revealed.

The first answer (ἐπιστήμη = αἴσθησις) is not simply false; it provides the positively determined condition for the possibility of beings—but this answer is insufficient.

§34. The second answer: ἐπιστήμη is δόξα

a) The double sense of δόξα as view: look and belief

Keeping in view the development of the first answer, we once again pose the question, “What is knowing?” The second answer is that knowledge is δοξάζειν, δόξα. We can initially translate the word as “belief.” But this translation is incomplete.

We pose the question: why is this answer given now? We can gather why by considering what the Greeks think of with the word δόξα, on the basis of its original content. δόξα—δοκέω = I show myself to others, I also show myself to myself; still better, as we say in German: I feel a certain way [ich komme mir vor: literally, “I come forth to myself”], so and so strikes me [kommt mir vor] as peculiar. I myself can strike myself in such and such a way, offer a definite look, appear such and such.

This fundamental meaning of the Greek word δόξα can be documented without further ado in as many passages as you like. We wish to cite a passage from our dialogue (143e4ff.). At the beginning of the conversation, Socrates challenges Theodorus to tell him of a very promising person among the Athenian youth, so that Socrates may engage him in philosophical conversation. Theodorus replies: I do know such a youth, and if he were beautiful I would hesitate to name him; lest I make it seem to anyone that I have (lest I strike anyone as having) a passion for him: μὴ καὶ τῷ δόξῳ ἐν ἐπιθυμίᾳ αὐτοῦ εἶναι (143e7). This coming forth, this striking people as being such and such or otherwise, was translated by Schleiermacher as, “so that no one may believe of me” (Werke II, 1, 3rd ed. 1836, p. 132).

Here we find the same fundamental relation between language and word-concept that we met in the contrary concept to truth, in λανθάνω.2

2. [See above, [German] pp. 229–30.]
The German speaker always grasps the situation beginning with the other ("one believes"), but the Greek begins with himself: δοκέω, λανθάνω [I seem, I escape notice].

An example from Homer, Odyssey VIII, 93, where Odysseus says that he remained concealed before all the others as one who was shedding tears. A person, then, remains in a certain concealment. We do not say: he remained concealed to all the others. We say: he shed tears without any of the others noticing. We speak beginning with the other who is perceiving.

These are quite clear proofs of the tremendous power that ἀλήθεια had in the Greek experience of Dasein. Before we enter the confrontation with the Greeks, our fundamental task is to have a completely clear knowledge of how they stood in relation to beings.

The word δόξα also belongs among these fundamental meanings: I come forth; that which comes forth, that is, strikes others as such and such, that which shows itself; the look, the appearance of something, the respect in which something—an achievement, a person—stands; also fame. δόξα θεοῦ in the New Testament = the majesty of God. But what is decisive is this meaning of δόξα: looking a certain way, standing in visibility and respectability.

Now, this meaning goes together with a second meaning. The second we grasp in a certain sense with the words believe, belief. With this, a double meaning comes to light. We are familiar with this double meaning when we translate δόξα as view. A picture postcard or vista postcard, is a card that shows a picture, a vista—a view in the objective sense; it shows the look of a landscape as it strikes us. View in the objective sense of a multiplicity of objects. But we also use the word "view" in this sense: My view is . . . The postcard has no belief, it offers a look. So there is a double sense: (a) as a characteristic of the thing, look; (b) in the sense of believing, thinking such and such. This double character always resonates among the Greeks from the start; it is based on what the word means.

From this clarification of the fundamental meaning of δόξα and δοξάζειν we can already gather why the second answer must run as it does.

b) The apparent suitability of δόξα as ἐπιστήμη: its double character corresponds to αἴσθησις and διάνοια

Two things belong to the experience of a being (for the Greeks): (1) the being somehow comes upon us, but also (2) on our part there is a way of grasping it. Both seem to be fulfilled in δόξα. (1) Color of the leaf, song of the bird, given to me by sight and hearing. To this there

3. {. . . ἔνθ᾽ ἄλλους μὲν πάντας ἐλάνθανε δάκρυα λείβων.}
belongs (2) the grasping of both as different; thinking such and such about them, having a view about them.

This requirement of an experience in order for it to give us a being as a being is satisfied by the twofold character of δόξα. The first meaning of δόξα corresponds to αἴσθησις [perception] (φαίνεται [it shows itself]), the second to διάνοια [thought].

There are also other places in Plato where it is shown that the fundamental meaning of human cognition is δόξα, although Plato himself does not at all develop the special combination of meanings in δόξα; he does not even see it in this connection, but rather finds himself and moves within the turbulence of this whole ambiguity.

c) The multiple ambiguity of δόξα. The split between letting-appear and distorting: the arising of the ψεῦδος in the question of the essence of knowledge

As soon as the second answer has been given, a further problem intrudes. Something that presents a look, that appears in such and such a way, can immediately, insofar as it appears, create an illusion. In this (in the illusion) there lies the possibility that what shows itself may conceal what lies behind it.

Accordingly, δόξα as belief can have a view about something that corresponds to the object, but it can also, as a view, hide the object. Each of these two-sided meanings can either fit the object as it is or disguise it.

This ambiguity is found in the essential duality of the phenomenon in our word “view”: it can be correct or incorrect, it can hit or miss. This involves some leeway, a distinctive sort of wavering, to which there nevertheless corresponds a firmness, inasmuch as I insist on the view without being able to prove that what I believe in this view is true.

This double character makes it the case that the wavering can be just as great as the resoluteness that stands behind it. This constitutes the sense of an authentic, genuine faith. The possibility: it could at bottom be so, it could also be otherwise; nevertheless, the insistence: it is so. This is characteristic of faith, quite independently of belief in the sense of a justified cognition.

With this we have reached the point where the ψεῦδος, the untrue, the distorting, the false, comes up; and because δόξα is view and has in it the possibility of creating an illusion, distortion belongs to it. A view is always in danger of being a mere view, mere seeming, of being unmasked as mere seeming. At the moment when the question of knowledge comes up against δόξα, it becomes necessary to get into ψεῦδος.

Now we must pursue ψεῦδος on its own, and thus deviate from the dialogue. We must point out only one notable fact, that in considering the second answer Plato, who at bottom is really aiming at the question,
“What is knowledge?” dwells on the question of the distorted view (ψευδής δόξα).

If a view (δόξα) has something to do with knowledge, it is the true belief—or so one would believe; then I know the thing. But we are faced with the remarkable fact that Plato deals with δόξα ἀληθής [true belief] only very fleetingly (200b–201c), while ψευδος is treated much more thoroughly (187c–200).

Interpreters have wondered over and over why Plato always deals with falsehood so extensively. There is no reason other than that Plato consciously ran up against a fundamental problem of philosophy in general.

This much is clear: the question of ψευδος is treated in the context of the question of δόξα. This whole investigation of the distorted view (δόξα ψευδής), of believing something distorted, is set forth in the preliminary investigation (187d–191) and the main investigation (192–200).

The preliminary investigation is a characteristic Platonic development of the problem. It does not get into this phenomenon of “false belief” directly, but rather tries to develop the whole difficulty and wondrousness that lies in the problem of a “false view.” The aim is to unfold this entire wonder, the τέρας.4 Only the main investigation tries to find the answer in a positive way.

We have been so thoroughly warped by the long development, so deformed as regards the simplicity and greatness of the original question, that we cannot at all re-experience how the Greeks ran up against the phenomenon of a false view. We cannot feel the strangeness of the phenomenon anymore.

The phenomenon of the false is so puzzling for the Greeks because it cannot initially be brought into the domain with which they are familiar.

Plato now attempts to show through three examples that this phenomenon of the false view is so wondrous that we have to say: this really cannot be. It is shown in three phases that there cannot be a false view.

This is opposed just as vigorously by the position that there is such a thing as the power of error, of distortion, of the false. Plato forces us to decide. Which is true? Must we hold to the impossibility of the false, or hold that we stand under the power of the fact of the false?

4. [Reading τέρας (“marvel,” “monster,” or “wonder”) here for πέρας (“limit”); cf. Theaetetus 188c4.]
§35. Preliminary investigation:  
the impossibility of the phenomenon of ψευδὴς δόξα

a) The arising of the ψεῦδος in the elucidation of δόξα as ἐπιστήμη

The second answer to the question, “What is knowing?” runs as follows: knowing is δόξα, belief, view. We sought to display the word δόξα in its fundamental meaning, and we ran up against a special ambiguity.

We grasped this ambiguity in the word “view,” which has the sense, first, of the look that something offers, as in a postcard vista; second, it also means “it is my view;” “it is my belief.” Both meanings lie in the one word δόξα and resonate in one another.

A further division of meaning is made possible on the basis of this ambiguity. A view can be a positive force; it can hit the mark. But the appearance can also miss the mark. A view can give a thing as it is, but it can also offer a mere appearance in the sense of semblance. It can be a mere view, a mere belief.

It was important to elucidate this fundamental meaning of δόξα because in Plato, in the discussion of whether δόξα constitutes the essence of knowing, the question arose concerning the ψευδὴς δόξα, the ψεῦδος, the false, the untrue. The place where the ψεῦδος emerges in Plato is, as it were, fixed. We will confine ourselves to considering the ψευδὴς δόξα.

Even though this investigation into false belief does not really come under consideration immediately for the question about the essence of knowing, it is remarkable that Plato has nevertheless treated false be-

1. [Recapitulation at the beginning of the session of 27 February 1934.]
belief in considerably more detail in comparison to the treatment of true belief. This suggests that behind this is hidden a \textit{fundamental problem}. 

b) The field of vision of the preliminary investigation as an advance decision about the impossibility of the phenomenon

According to the stage of philosophical questioning at this point, the \textit{preliminary investigation} of the question about false belief should demonstrate the \textit{impossibility} of something like \textit{a false belief}. This impossibility is demonstrated on the basis of ancient propositions that were valid until then for Greek philosophy. We can trace this in short order.

We therefore want to establish the question in advance: is something like a false view possible \textit{at all}? In order not to leave the discussion lying in abstraction, we wish to invoke an example mentioned in the dialogue (188b6ff.): if someone in Athens takes a man who is approaching him for Socrates (when in truth it is Theaetetus), then this false view that I have about a man I am encountering is not accidental (one might observe, as a matter of comparison, that Theaetetus, just like Socrates, has a snub nose and is popeyed). I therefore take Theaetetus for Socrates. I am laboring under a false view regarding the person I am encountering.

But on the basis of recognized philosophical principles of ancient philosophy, this cannot be possible. The proof unfolds in this way:

\textit{α) The alternatives of familiarity and unfamiliarity}

Granted, if I should labor under a false view like this, then because of this I have, in a certain way, a familiarity with the person encountered: [he is] snub-nosed, popeyed—but at the same time, since I take Theaetetus for Socrates, I am not familiar with the person encountered. Therefore, one could insist that with respect to one and the same thing (the same man), I am both familiar and unfamiliar. But in relation to an object there is no possibility other than being either familiar or unfamiliar with it.

Therefore we would have to be familiar and unfamiliar with the same object at the same time. But this is impossible. This proves in principle that something like a false view cannot be. According to fundamental principles, it is not possible that someone, insofar as he is familiar with something, is unfamiliar with the very same thing, or that someone, insofar as he is unfamiliar with something, has familiarity with the same thing.

But while this is indeed correctly developed on the basis of fundamental principles, it still contradicts the facts of the matter. The \textit{deduction from fundamental principles stands against the facts of the matter}.

The real meaning of this reflection is to indicate and explain what really belongs to this remarkable phenomenon, one that is called a
marvel: namely, that I do not see one object, but rather two, and at the same time, that I operate in both familiarity and unfamiliarity—to explain that and why something like familiarity and unfamiliarity with one and the same object is possible.

β) The alternatives of Being and not-Being

The second proof of the impossibility of a false view or believing something false, \( \psi\nu\nu\delta \delta\xi\varepsilon\nu \), goes like this: the false is the null, but the null is the nothing. Therefore, to believe something false means to believe nothing.

It is asked whether there is such a thing in other contexts. My activity is a seeing because I see something. But if I see nothing, my activity is not a seeing; when I hear nothing, it is not a hearing.

If, correspondingly, I now believe nothing, then there is no believing whatsoever. Believing dissolves into itself. Something either is, or it is not.

It is not just the case that in a false view, I am familiar and unfamiliar with the same thing at the same time. Behind this is hidden the question of whether that which is null is necessarily a nothing. Plato finds the way for the first time.

γ) \( \psi\nu\nu\delta \delta\xi\varepsilon\nu \) as \( \alpha\lambda\lambdao\deltao\xi\alpha \) (substitution instead of confusion)

The third proof proceeds in another manner. The false view is seen dogmatically as \( \alpha\lambda\lambdao\deltao\xi\alpha \), a believing in which I exchange something that I believed at first for something else, such as when I encounter Theaetetus and substitute the person encountered for Socrates. I substitute Theaetetus for Socrates.

It is shown that this really never occurs. “It does not even occur in dreams that we take an ox for a horse” (cf. 190c2–3). There is no substitution. A false view in which such a thing would happen is impossible.

This also refers to a phenomenon that in fact lies concealed in the false view, in which I substitute something encountered for something else: I take something that looks this way, not as itself, but as something else.

All three of these arguments have reached the conclusion that, on the basis of prevalent principles, something like a false view is simply impossible. Against this stands the actual matter of fact of the existence of error, illusion, and falsehood. Which must now yield? The matter of fact, which is experienced on a daily basis, or the principles that have been valid for hundreds of years?
§36. The decision for the phenomenon of ψευδὴς δόξα

a) On the scope and character of the decision

The decision is made for the facts, against the principles (but only against these particular principles)—for the phenomenon, for the necessity of opening one’s eyes now, before we engage in any deduction—in order to see what is going on in false belief.

The decision, in the sense of giving up a thing that at the time was self-evident for the Greeks, is the decision that carried and determined Platonic philosophizing. Plato expressed himself on this point in the Sophist [241d], saying that by giving up the proposition that something either is or is not, he had to become the murderer of his own father (Parmenides). With this saying Plato wants to announce the depths that this decision reaches. By way of this decision, the world is seen in a fundamentally new way.

We ourselves today have been standing—not just, as some might say, for the last year, but for quite a few years—before a still greater decision for philosophy, a decision that in its greatness, its breadth, and its depth extends far beyond even the decision of Plato’s time. It finds expression in my book Being and Time. A transformation from the ground up.

The issue is whether the understanding of Being is transforming itself from the ground up. It will be a transformation that will first of all provide the framework for the spiritual history of our people. This cannot be proved, but it is a faith that must be borne out by history.

With this reflection Plato shows that it is necessary to retract the previous propositions altogether. He pursues the line of thought that leads him to what is positive about ψευδὴς δόξα, and thereby sees what the false is, given that the task at hand is now to disregard philosophical principles and stick to the phenomenon.

This cannot mean, as up to now one has always believed, that something like the facts of the matter in themselves could be grasped, purely on their own. Every fact is grasped or graspable by us only if we put it into a particular perspective, see it under particular principles. There is no such thing as being able to see things purely, without prejudice.

Everything that we experience or interrogate, we see and interrogate in a particular perspective. Because this is so, in the unprejudiced inspection of a factual situation we must not only open our eyes, but at the same time we have to know from which perspective I am seeing the object—whether the state of affairs is created by the perspective, whether the understanding corresponds to the object.
This does not mean that everything depends on one’s standpoint. There is always a standpoint; but the question is whether a standpoint is genuine. It is not that I simply determine [the state of affairs], but the question is whether [I have adopted] a really appropriate standpoint. It must be decided whether the perspective in which I am questioning corresponds to the object itself.

Plato has defined the task—not methodically, but with immediate inspiration—through the preliminary investigation: we must be able to attain a point of view that makes it possible for there to be such a thing as being both familiar and unfamiliar with an object. A cognition in which an object that has been grasped is exchanged with another.

b) The new starting point for posing the question by way of the deepened question concerning the constitution of the soul

The posing of the question is directed into quite different dimensions. Where does something like a false view belong? A false view is, in any case, a condition of ourselves, a definite comportment. The human self is designated in Greek with ψυχή, soul. πάθος ψυχῆς is a condition of our soul, a definite comportment of human Dasein.

Accordingly, false views cannot adequately be clarified until man has first been clarified in this regard. So in illuminating falsehood, we run up against the question of what the human soul is.

Plato offers two similes for it; in these similes, just as in the procedure of the allegory of the cave, the question is led back to the question of humanity. Here too, the question of untruth emerges as a question about the soul, about the constitution of the soul, about the essence of human Dasein.

We want to pose three questions:

1. In what sort of contexts does Plato pose the problem of false views?
2. To what extent can the essence of δόξα be grasped in the light of these sorts of comportment?
3. What does this imply for the essence of ψεῦδος, of untruth?

Plato deals with the question of what the domain of origin for false views is by presenting two similes, in which the soul is presented first as

1. κήρινον ἐκμαγεῖον, a wax block, and then
2. as a περιστερεών, an aviary, taken as an ἀγγεῖον, box, container.

One should not insist on these images in every respect; they have been devised only for a very particular purpose. The images are supposed to help us understand a comportment of the soul. Historians have demonstrated that Plato took these images from somewhere
else. That may be so. But what is decisive is what Plato makes of them.

§37. Determining the soul more deeply and broadly through two similes

a) The wax simile. Being mindful (making-present)

We ask, what is the first image (191c8ff.) meant to say? The soul as a wax block. This block is, given the various human types, now pure, now impure, now hard, now soft, receptive in different ways to the impressions that impinge upon the soul from the world.

Plato says that this feature of the soul is bequeathed to the soul by μνημοσύνη [memory], as the mother of the muses; it is an originary gift of the soul’s essence; it belongs to the soul’s essential constitution. This μνημονεύειν means: to be mindful of a thing, to have a connection to an object, to a thing, even when the object is not immediately present, as it is in αἰσθησις.

The capability of the soul to make something present, even when it is not there, is exhibited here in the image—to retain a connection to something absent, without leaving our location. We have an immediate relationship of Being to particular locales—Berlin, for example, or the Baltic Sea—without our being physically present there. This relationship is given by way of the image of the wax tablet.

Now, it has happened in the course of the development of the history of philosophy that one has mistaken this image and its way of illustrating the issue for the issue itself, that one takes the facts in such a way as to think that somewhere there are facts that somehow enter into the soul. Through this, the fundamental fact of the matter is not recognized from the start: that I can have and constantly do have an immediate connection of Being to what is absent.

The corporeality of human beings certainly plays a mediating role, but what role corporeality plays is a further question that can be posed only if the fundamental relationship is clarified.

We designate the relationship as a making-present, by virtue of which the domain of beings within which I am constantly moving extends out beyond what I see with my eyes and hear with my ears. This whole domain of what we, as it were, preserve, is what we call the preserve. This is what we live amidst—much more intensely and immediately than we live in what we immediately perceive and grasp when we act.

By virtue of this connection, two things happen:

1. The relation of making-present can slacken on our part and work itself loose, allowing the things in making-present to slip
away from us into forgetting. Forgetting is a specific mode of making-present.

2. Or, our relation to the content of the world is such that things become different without our involvement; things withdraw from us, so that we cast out into the void with our projects.

From us there arise certain connections—free forms in the sense of imagination and fantasy, and beyond these, creative formation (projection). Plato says that the soul has a characteristic expansiveness, 

εὐρυχωρία [194d], that towers out over the narrowness of what is merely grasped with the senses.

b) The aviary simile. Modes of containing

The symbolism of the second image, an aviary (197b8ff.), intrinsically belongs with the first image. According to the second image, the soul is an aviary into which particular doves fly from our earliest youth onwards. We become acquainted with beings of various sorts, we move according to specific representations that are distinguished by Plato in three ways. There are some that keep together in tight flocks, {those that break away from the flock = things in their particularity and uniqueness}, then those in looser groups = mutable things and relations, and finally those doves that are to be found among all the others = all those representations and concepts that play a co-determining role in every relation. For example: each object is an object, but each on the other hand is another (each is different from the other).

This results in the following: unity, otherness, difference, multiplicity.

Whoever possesses such an aviary possesses the doves in this cage, in this container, but does so in different ways. First, by sitting in a house, in a room, and having the doves under a roof. In this way, he can possess them and add to his possession. But he can also grasp a dove inside the container. There is the fundamental possibility of taking something out of this domain and having it in a stronger sense, taking on a relationship of Being with it. This is the difference, that something can be absent and present.

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2. [Gap in Hallwachs’s transcript. Editor’s conjecture based on the lecture course of the same name from Winter Semester 1931–1932 (GA 34), p. 305.]
§38 Clarification of the double sense of δόξα.

Mistakes are made possible by the bifurcation of δόξα into presencing and making-present.

What does this clarification show us? We see the possibility of δόξα as a correct view. To return to our example: we take the man we meet, who looks like Theaetetus and also is Theaetetus, as Theaetetus. What is going on here?

First of all: what is given to us is what confronts us, the particular appearance of a particular person. At the same time, we look at what we encounter, we look at it as Theaetetus. Here we are moving within a remarkable mode of grasping things.

We can picture it this way: the person confronts us; we take him as Theaetetus. We grasp him on the basis of a particular way of representing him, on the basis of our knowledge of Theaetetus. In experiencing what confronts me as Theaetetus I do not simply take in what I perceive, but I take in what I perceive as Theaetetus in a re-grasping = in such a way that I have a definite view of him. I already know in advance who and what Theaetetus is, regardless of whether he is confronting me or not. I grasp what confronts me on the basis of a knowledge by virtue of which I can make Theaetetus present to myself at any time.

Human beings move in the direction of what immediately confronts them, but at the same time they move within the grasping of the content domain, that is, what they have experienced earlier. All cognition has this remarkable double character. δόξα is both. When I have a view of something, I see what I encounter from a particular perspective. This double meaning is not accidental; every view is intrinsically bifurcated in accordance with its essence. With this, the solution to the question has in principle been found.

If we now move on to false belief, if we take what confronts us as Socrates instead of Theaetetus, what we took to be impossible in the preliminary investigation is now the case.

I have a particular view of the one confronting me, a particular familiarity with him (snub-nosed, popeyed), the appearance of a particular person, but in actuality I have no acquaintance with the one confronting
me, inasmuch as I take him for Socrates. Here we have a simultaneous familiarity and unfamiliarity that concern two different objects.

The second difficulty lies in the fact that what confronts me in δόξα (as a false view) is not null, but is such that what is actually confronting me is taken as something else. What we have here is a certain exchange, in that I take him for Socrates instead of Theaetetus. This switch is a confusion.

When I exchange an object, I give away one object in return for the other; but when I confuse them, this means that I hold onto the object and grasp the other together with it. Both are held together in this distinctive grasp. This bifurcation is a fundamental structure of δόξα; it makes it intrinsically possible that I can either grasp what is present at hand confronting me, or mistake it.

The domain of making-present is always broader than what is present at hand. So I can always either grasp or mistake the object on the basis of the domain. With this it is given that untruth, falsehood, is built into this fundamental constitution of human Dasein, that it always moves in the present and at the same time in making-present.

This bifurcation makes possible both truth and the false. These, truth and falsehood, stand under the same conditions, namely, that the domain is broader than the object. Whether truth or untruth is attained is always a question of decision, a question of struggle.

§39. The essence of truth as historical man’s struggle with untruth.

Untruth is posited with the enabling of the essence of truth

The essence of truth is the struggle with untruth, where untruth is posited with the enabling of the essence of truth. This struggle, as struggle, is always a specific struggle. Truth is always truth for us.

For us today, the true is not so much some particular truth as it is knowing about the essence of truth itself. We grasp this more deeply if we grasp what the bifurcation means.

What this says is that man, insofar as he exists, must always stand fast by that to which he is immediately bound, and that he exists only in what he projects himself into and what he gives form to in the sense of binding to the given and projecting upon what is freely created.

What is conceived formally here as the inner constitution of man is nothing other than the distinguishing fact that man—man as historical—exists in the togetherness of a historical people, with a specific, historical mission, and exists in the preservation of the forces that carry him forward and to which he is bound. δόξα is just the offshoot, formally conceived, of this distinguishing feature. This fundamental con-
stitution is the domain within which the struggle for the truth must play itself out.

If we today stand before the question of whether a people just this once grasps its full essence, then this means that we are asking whether the people is strong enough—whether it, in itself, has the will to itself, to stand up to the will to its own essence. It means asking whether we will grapple with this, whether we will take on as our task this knowing and will to know in their full intensity and hardness, or whether we are of the opinion that culture and spiritual life are a supplement that produces itself by itself, while we look on as if it were a game.

So we stand or fall by the will to knowledge and spirit. Today, there is much talk of blood and soil as forces that are frequently invoked. The literati, who are still around even today, have seized upon these forces. Blood and soil are indeed powerful and necessary, but they are not sufficient conditions for the Dasein of a people.

Other conditions are knowledge and spirit, but not as an addendum to a list. Knowledge first brings a direction and path to the blood’s flow, first brings to the soil the fecundity of what it can bring to term. Knowledge lets the nobility of the soil yield what the soil can bring to term.

The decision lies in whether we are capable of taking on all this with adequate originality and strength—whether we are capable of giving our Dasein a real weight and a real gravity; only if we succeed in this shall we create the possibility of greatness for ourselves.

Great things are revealed only to great men and to a great people. Small men take small things as huge.

The true is something for us to achieve, the decision about our mission. Only through the decision of this struggle will we create the possibility of a fate. There is fate only where a human being exposes himself, in a free decision, to the danger of his Dasein.