

Heidegger's *Parmenides*: On the (Dis)Relation Between Truth and *Techne*

“Holiness does not live or die with the men that die.
Whether they live or die, it cannot perish”
(Heracles in Sophocles's *Philoctetes*, 1444-45).

“Not to be born surpasses thought and speech.
The second best is to have seen the light
And then to go back quickly whence we came”
(Sophocles, *Oedipus at Colonus*, 1224-26).

This brief essay is the opening of a task: an attempt to understand, and to seek out the truth within, Heidegger's philosophy. I do this cautiously and with “care,” for though I am aware that Heidegger has said some “essential” things within the scope and context of Western philosophical dialogue, I am also aware that he had his subjective biases - socio-cultural and political.

One of the fundamental elements, or dichotomies, I will assert to be underlying Heidegger's *Parmenides* is a clear distinction made between the truth (of Being as *aletheia*) and *techne* (“truth” as it has been (re)produced by man). Therefore, I will interpret Heidegger in a critical light, utilizing his analysis of truth and *techne*, as the base, or “ground,” of my task - to “uncover” the essential elements within his *Parmenides*, and in his philosophy as a whole.

We will begin by looking at the context of Heidegger's *Parmenides*: Who is Heidegger's intended audience? When was it written? What are the circumstances and how is it historically situated?

Heidegger's *Parmenides* is the result of a series of lectures given to his students in Freiberg in 1942-43. It should not have to be pointed out that Germany is in the midst of a war at this time (versus most of the rest of the world - including the Western powers who had greatly suppressed the German people (socially, politically and economically) after World War I had ended some twenty years earlier). In the

following ‘Addendum’ (which was prepared as the recapitulation of pages 77-79 - but was not included in his lectures), Heidegger writes in an exhilarating moment:

The highest form of suffering is dying one’s death as a sacrifice for the preservation of the truth of Being. This sacrifice is the purest experience of the voice of Being. What if German humanity is that historical humanity which, like the Greek, is called upon to poetize and think, and what if this German humanity must first perceive the voice of Being! Then must not the sacrifices be as many as the causes immediately eliciting them, since the sacrifice has *in itself* an essence all its own and does not require goals and uses! Thus what if the voice of the beginning should announce itself in our historical destiny? (167).

Although the first two sentences could be said to announce a “universal truth” in Heidegger’s philosophy, if one should look at this statement in its entirety, it could easily be interpreted as a “motivational” speech prepared for a young group of students who may be called upon at any time to sacrifice their lives in defense of the “German” way of life, or manner of Being - or, on another level, for a political end that Heidegger has in view. Although it is not my intention to criticize Heidegger’s relation with National Socialism here, I do not think it should be ‘concealed’ or forgotten, nor dismissed without mention, either. I will follow Smith’s understanding of this topic when he says, “Heidegger’s association with National Socialism was not an accident on the part of a politically naïve thinker. Nor was it a momentary fascination” (Smith, 176, fn1).

We read in *Introduction to Metaphysics* (a volume published in 1953, but which contains reworked lectures from 1935): “The works that are being peddled about nowadays as the philosophy of National Socialism but have nothing whatever to do with the inner truth and greatness of this movement (namely the encounter between global technology and modern man) - have all been written by men fishing in troubled waters of ‘values’ and ‘totalities’” (quoted by Smith, 177, fn3). Smith claims that this is “clearly an indictment of mainstream National Socialism” (ibid.), and such comments perhaps reflect Heidegger’s problems with certain party members who are running the show in Germany at the time. “Nevertheless, National Socialism was seen by Heidegger as better equipped to respond to the rootless nihilism of technological modernity than any other available modern political dispensation [...] For a time, National Socialism was viewed as a basis for a people in search of renewal and a new

beginning in the face of rootless, urban, bourgeois cosmopolitanism” (ibid.). To understand how Heidegger could support such a position we will have to look much deeper into his *Parmenides* and into his manner of thinking as a whole.

In this process of seeking the essence, or ‘root,’ of Heidegger’s philosophy, I will focus upon the continuity rather than the discontinuity of the Heideggerian text. Thus, the infamous ‘reversal,’ or ‘turn,’ (*Kehre*)¹ will be viewed, not so much as a “change” in Heidegger’s way of thinking, but as a re-view, or re-turn, toward the truth of Being (*aletheia*), with a deeper research into its “absent” or “primordial counter-essence,” *Lethe* (P, 94). I propose, however, that (around the period beginning with his *Introduction to Metaphysics* - a book that roughly coincides with Heidegger’s quitting his position as rector and “active” participation in the Nazi party (Smith, 184, fn2)) Heidegger may have had a “change of heart” that resulted from his disenchantment with the ‘actuality’ of National Socialism, i.e. with the inability of National Socialism to *directly* promote the ends, or ‘possibilities,’ that Heidegger proposed for the “advancement” or “rebirth,” of the German people, e.g., via a “return” to a Greek (pre-Socratic) way of “seeing” and experiencing Being. Heidegger will “now” focus on influencing the *praxis* of the German people *indirectly* via the influence of his philosophy.

The following quote from *Introduction to Metaphysics* could be called ‘Heidegger’s wish’:

Philosophy can never *directly* supply the energies and create the opportunities and methods that bring about a historical change; for one thing, because philosophy is always the concern of the few. Which few? The creators, those who initiate profound transformations. [Nonetheless], it spreads [...] *indirectly*, by devious paths that can never be laid out in advance, until at last, at some future date, it sinks to the level of a commonplace [...] (quoted in Smith, 184-5, emphasis mine).

¹ In reference to his *Kehre* between *Being and Time* and *Time and Being*, Heidegger writes in *Letter on Humanism*, “This turning is not a change of standpoint from *Being and Time*, but in it the thinking that was sought first arrives at the location of that dimension out of which *Being and Time* is experienced, that is to say, experienced from the fundamental experience of the oblivion of Being” (LH, 208). This search for the location of the “fundamental experience” (in *Da-sein*, of the *Lethe* of Being), one could say, then, is what underlies his entire philosophy. The *Parmenides* will involve an in-depth discussion of *Lethe* and its close relation to *aletheia*. Heidegger will even go so far as to say that *aletheia* “is itself by essence founded on *Lethe*” (P, 125).

We shall see this *wish* brought out more in what follows.

Parmenides' proem is called *On Nature*. 'Nature' here is our Western understanding of *Physis*. In *The Question Concerning Technology* Heidegger writes, "*Physis* is indeed *poiesis* [bringing-forth] in the highest sense. For what presences by means of *physis* has the bursting open belonging to bringing-forth, e.g., the bursting of a blossom into bloom, in itself (*en heautoi*). In contrast, what is brought forth by the artisan or the artist, e.g., the silver chalice, has the bursting open belonging to bringing-forth, not in itself, but in another (*en alloi*), in the craftsman or artist" (*QCT*, 293).

Physis, then, would correspond to the emergence, or bringing-forth, of Being, while *techne* relates to the bringing-forth, by man, of 'technology' and 'art'; and, on another level, it has a close relation with 'science' *episteme*. *Techne*:

stems from the Greek. *Technikon* means that which belongs to *techne*. We must observe two important aspects with respect to the meaning of this word. One is that *techne* is the name for the activities and skills of the craftsman, but also for the arts of the mind and the fine arts. *Techne* belongs to 'bringing forth,' to *poiesis*, it is something poetic.

The other thing that we should observe with regard to *techne* is even more important. From the earliest times until Plato the word *techne* is linked with *episteme*. **Both words are terms for knowing in the widest sense. They mean to be entirely at home in something, to understand and be an expert in it** (ibid. 294, emphasis mine).

In a similar way Heidegger relates to the *physis* of *Dasein* (Heidegger's ontological reference to man): "This entity which we ourselves in each case are and which includes inquiry among the **possibilities** of its Being, we shall denote by the term '*Dasein*'" (*B&T*, 27, emphasis mine). In other words, in our Being, as entities (i.e., 'factically', ontically), we are (ontologically) in the question of Being itself. There is no subject-object distinction here. *Dasein* 'is' Being questioning itself, and is therefore always involved in an understanding of the truth of Being (i.e. of Being in Its 'unconcealment,' or 'uncovering,' *aletheia*²) via *logos*. "In the word and as word

² Heidegger emphasizes one etymological source of the term *aletheia*, "uncovering," to argue that the truth is not created by man, but is 'revealed' by Being. In *Being and Time* he states: "To say that an assertion '*is true*' signifies that it uncovers the entity as it is in itself. Such an assertion asserts, points out, 'lets' the entity 'be seen' ([*apothansis*]) in its uncoveredness. The *Being-true* (*truth*) of the assertion must be understood as *Being-uncovering*" (261). On the other hand, "'Being false' ([*pseudesthai*]) amounts to deceiving in the sense of *covering up*

the Being of beings is given in relation to the essence of man in such a way that the Being of beings, in virtue of this relation to man, lets man's essence emerge and lets it receive the determination we call the Greek one" (*P*, 68).

But *Dasein* is not Being. Man (*Dasein*) "is to *Zoon logon echon* - the being that emerges from itself, emerges in such a way that in this emerging ([*physis*]), and for it, it has the word. In the word, the being we call man comports itself to beings as a whole, in the midst of which man himself is" (ibid. 68).

Nor is *Dasein* an animal or a thing. Heidegger is critical of the Roman interpretation of *Zoon* as 'animal.' *Zoon* means 'living being' and, for the early Greeks 'living being' "is *physei on*, a being whose Being is determined by *physis*, by emergence and self-opening" (*P*, 68). The Romans, thus, transform the early Greek understanding of the essence of man: "*Zoon* becomes *animal*, *Logos* becomes *ratio*. Man is *animal rationale*. In modern thought *ratio*, reason, is the essence of subjectivity, i.e., of the I-hood of man" (ibid.). As a result of this transformation, modern man has Forgotten (*Lethe*) his relation to Being, i.e., man lives in the "oblivion" of Being.

Heidegger often hyphenates the word *Da- Sein* to indicate the 'openness to Being' characteristic of human existence (versus the traditional German usage of *Dasein* to relate to 'existence' in general - i.e., to the Latin *existentia*). Heidegger claims (in his Letter on Humanism) that when he indicates in *Being and Time* (p. 67): "The essence of *Dasein* lies in its existence," he means that "man occurs essentially in such a way that he is the 'there' [*das* 'Da'], that is, the lighting of Being. The 'Being' of the *Da*, and only it, has the fundamental character of ek-sistence, that is, of an ecstatic inherence in the truth of Being. The ecstatic essence of man consists in ek-sistence, which is different from the metaphysically conceived *existentia*. Medieval philosophy conceives the latter as *actualitas*" (*B&T*, 205).

Concerning the ontological difference of *Dasein*, Heidegger distinguishes between beings, entities (*Seienden*), and the Being (*Sein*) of entities - i.e., between empirically existing things (as actuality) and their essence (as potentiality). This is similar to the

[*verdecken*] putting something in front of something [...] and thereby passing it off as something which it is *not*" (ibid. 57).

Aristotelian notion of *ousia* ‘substance.’ But Heidegger will emphasize the ‘potentiality,’ or possibility aspect, over the ‘actuality,’ active aspect, of *Dasein*. In *Being and Time* (63) and in a Supplement of 1969 to his “*My Way to Phenomenology*” (82) Heidegger writes, “Higher than actuality stands possibility.”

To get a better idea of the distinction between actuality and possibility we quote from Heidegger’s *Letter on Humanism*. On **action/actuality**: “[T]he essence of action is accomplishment. To accomplish something means to unfold something into the fullness of its essence, to lead it forth into this fullness - *producere*. Therefore only what already is can really be accomplished” (*LH*, 193). On **possibility/potentiality**: “Being is the ‘quiet power’ of the favoring-enabling, that is, of the possible [...] When I speak of ‘the quiet power of the possible’ I do not mean the *possible* of a merely represented *possibilitas*, nor *potentia* as the *essential* of an *actus* of *existensia*; rather I mean Being itself, which in its favoring presides over the essence of humanity, and that means over its relation to Being” (*LH*, 196).

Heidegger will thus say that an ‘authentic’ relation to Being can only come about through a properly grounded *praxis*. Possibility relates to *praxis* (political and moral possibility), as actuality relates to *theoria* (theoretical activity, i.e., to science, or to what has a relatively fixed way of ‘being seen,’ or understood, via its definition). Man is always already in a *polis* - which has an already established custom (*nomos*), order (*themis*) and ethic (*ethos*). In fact, Heidegger believes that ***ethos* is the ground for the political**, and he repeatedly asserts that “every ‘sense of Being’ implies an *ethos*, and every *ethos* points towards a distinct sense of Being” (Smith, 183-5). However, for Heidegger, as with Aristotle, *praxis* in general, is habitual, occurring in the realm of ‘everydayness’:

The Self of everyday *Dasein* is the *they-self* [...] As they-self, the particular *Dasein* has been *dispersed* into the ‘they’, and must first find itself. This dispersal characterizes the ‘subject’ of that kind of Being which we know as concerned absorption in the world we encounter as closest to us. [...] *Dasein* is for the sake of the ‘they’ in an everyday manner, and the “they” itself articulates the referential context of significance. When entities are encountered, *Dasein*’s world frees them for a totality of involvements with which the ‘they’ is familiar, and within the limits which have been established with the ‘they’s’ averageness. [...] Proximally *Dasein* is ‘they’, and for the most part it remains so (*B&T*, 167).

See also *Being and Time* (239):

As something factual, Dasein's projection of itself understandingly is in each case already alongside a world that has been discovered. From this world it takes its possibilities, and it does so first in accordance with the way things have been interpreted by the 'they'. This interpretation has already restricted the possible options of choice to what lies within the range of the familiar, the attainable, the respectable - that which is fitting and proper. This leveling off of Dasein's possibilities to what is proximately at its everyday disposal also results in a dimming down of the possible as such. The average everydayness of concern becomes blind to its possibilities, and tranquilizes itself with that which is merely 'actual'.

Thus, the problem is how to get out of the stagnancy of 'everydayness.' But how will Heidegger solve this? Now that we have reached the "end of history," i.e., now that Being has been transformed into the 'present-at-hand' and made subject to the control and manipulation of science; now that Western education pumps out regurgitated "knowledge," and the media and entertainment industry control our thoughts and ideas; i.e., now that Da-sein is seemingly trapped within an increasingly mundane global society which quenches its vacuous thirst for life on the endless capitalist stream of technological garbage, how does the "authentic community" arise? Or, we could ask, how does a *polis*, and *Dasein* itself, "renew" itself, i.e., acquire new meaning and a new sense of "life," according to Heidegger?

Being and Time was concerned with *Dasein*'s "awakening" existentially (via anxiety and anticipation) and coming face to face with one's "own-most non-relational potentiality-for-Being": Being-towards-death. "Anxiety is anxious *about* the potentiality-for-Being of the entity so destined, and in this way it discloses the uttermost possibility. Anticipation utterly individualizes Dasein, [... it] *reveals to Dasein its lostness in the they-self, and brings it face to face with the possibility of being itself, [...] in an impassioned freedom toward death - a freedom which has been released from the Illusions of the 'they', and which is factual, certain of itself, and anxious*" (B&T, 310-11).

Another element, within the structure of Dasein, which summons us to "life" from the lostness of the 'they,' is the call, or appeal, of conscience. Here the call is from an impersonal 'It' - "'It' calls" [*Es' ruft...*]. "The call comes *from* me and yet *from*

beyond me” (B&T, 320). And it is only to the extent that we have “heard” the call, and, in a sense, that we have given it to ourselves - by understanding it in terms of that potentiality-for-Being which **we ourselves have chosen** - that Dasein “can be said to be answerable [vorantwortlich]” (ibid., 334) - that is “as concerned Being-in-the-world and Being with Others” (ibid., 325).

But “choice,” for Heidegger, seems very relative to one’s historical fate. “Our fates [which require as the ontological condition for their possibility, the state of Being of care] have already been guided in advance, in our Being with one another in the same world and in our resoluteness for definite possibilities. [...] Dasein’s fateful destiny in and with its ‘generation’ goes to make up the full authentic historicizing Dasein” (B&T, 436). And one’s destiny can only become “free” in relation to the communication and struggle which comes with Being with Others.

Thus, we see how *Dasein* can become conscious and aware of itself and its possibilities within the community of a people. Dasein is, thus, shown to be the “*kind of Being* which truth possesses” (B&T, 257). However, in *Being and Time* Heidegger does not (to my knowledge) develop the theme of how a *polis* comes to have new life and meaning. But he does point in the direction of Parmenides (and indirectly to Aristotle) as providing us [Western man?] with the “*primordial* phenomenon of truth” (ibid).

Heidegger foreshadows his *Parmenides* when he says:

The goddess of Truth who guides Parmenides, puts two pathways before him, one of uncovering, one of hiding; but this signifies nothing else than that Dasein is already both in the truth [*aletheia*] and in untruth [*doxa*]. The way of uncovering is achieved only in *krinein logoo* - in distinguishing between these understandingly, and making one’s decision for the one rather than the other (B&T, 265).

Thus we see that Heidegger will interpret Parmenides’ proem, *On Nature*, as portraying an ontological relation between *aletheia* (as ‘truth’) and *doxa* (as ‘untruth’).

We will now turn to the Parmenides proem itself as Heidegger translates it in his *Parmenides*. We notice that Heidegger does not begin with the opening lines, but “it would seem arbitrarily [...] with verses 22-32” (P, 4), this after informing us that we should strive for a “genuine relation to the primordial thinkers” (P, 2); of the problems of translation; that we need to heed “the claim arising out of the thoughtful word” (P, 3); etc. He begins with:

And the goddess received me with sympathy [...] ‘[I]t is not an evil fate (*moira kake*) that has sent you to travel on this way (*odon*) - and truly this way is apart from men, outside their (trodden) path - but, rather, rule and order (*Themis te Dike te*). There is, however, a need for you to experience everything (*pantha*), both the stable heart of well-enclosing unconcealment (*aletheies*), **as well as the appearing in its appearance to mortals (*broton doxas*)**, where there is no relying on the unconcealed (*tes ouk eni pistis alethes*). Also this, however, you will learn to experience: how the appearing (in the need) remains called upon to be apparent, while it shines through everything and (hence) in that way brings everything to perfection (4, emphasis mine).

Here we see that “the appearing in its appearance to mortals” will refer to *doxa* - what he has referred to as “untruth” above. And we have also been informed that achieving a “genuine relation to the primordial thinkers” involves “making one’s decision for the one [*aletheia* truth, ‘unconcealment’] rather than the other [*doxa* - what he will now refer to as concealment, i.e., how Being reveals itself, as appearance, while remaining necessarily concealed or withdrawn].” And one’s choice between the two, Heidegger has informed us, is always very much involved with one’s fateful destiny and one’s ‘generation’ as “concernful Being-in-the-world and Being with Others.”

Thus, we have yet to discover how a *polis*, community, and thus one’s generation, can be enlivened and one’s possibilities refreshed. How does Heidegger propose that an entire group of people will awaken and achieve a “genuine relation to the primordial thinkers” and, thus, to truth?

In his *Introduction to Metaphysics* Heidegger will say this occurs via philosophy:

What philosophy essentially can and must be is this: a thinking that breaks the paths and opens the perspectives of the knowledge that sets the norms and hierarchies, of the knowledge in which and by which a people fulfils

itself historically and culturally, the knowledge that kindles and necessitates all inquiries and thereby threatens all values (quoted in Smith, 185).

And how does this “essential” thinking come about? Is it via *techne*?

Techne is a productive activity that is apart from *theoria* and *praxis*. In its highest form *techne* is creative. Who is creative according to Heidegger? The “essential thinkers” - the creative few “who initiate profound transformations” (See ‘Heidegger’s wish’ that I quoted above - p. 3). In the *Parmenides* we are informed that “Anaximander, Parmenides, and Heraclitus are the only primordial thinkers” (*P*, 7). Thus, we could say that the task of “philosophers” is to strive to think in the way of the primordial thinkers and to set the example for others in one’s community. That would appear to be, at least, one way to honor Heidegger’s prerequisite for a *revolution* in one’s communal manner of thinking - in an *indirect* way. We can see this further illustrated in Heidegger’s analysis of Aristotle.

According to Aristotle, the polis is self-supportive or self-renewing in relation to an already existing socio-political ethos. In his *Nichomachean Ethics* the *praxis* of the polis was “renewed” via high standards of education, and by the following of the “practically wise” exemplars (who utilized *phronesis* in conjunction with *Eudaimonia*) within the polis. Smith claims that, “[For Aristotle, the] political community had as its primary end the education that leads to the habits and virtues that make *praxis* possible [...] A stable political community was in turn the prerequisite for the theoretical life” (Smith, 31, fn 22). But we can take this further.

In the *Parmenides* Heidegger relates *phronesis* to “philosophy” in that both mean “to have sight for what is essential” (*P*, 120). It is the “insight of the intuition that looks into what is properly intuitable and unconcealed” (ibid). *Eudaimonia* refers to “the holding sway in the appropriate measure of the ‘Eu’ - the appearing and coming into presence of the *daimonion*” (ibid). Heidegger relates the *daimonion* (i.e., the ‘demonic’, the ‘uncanny’) to an “inner voice” that ultimately arises from “invisible and ungraspable Being” (ibid, see also above p. 7 the reference to the “*Es ruft*” in relation to the Call of Being). Further, ‘the uncanny’ in its essence is “the

inconspicuous, the simple, the insignificant, which nevertheless shines in all beings” (P, 105).

The *daimones*, which we could say are the voice(s) themselves, are said to reside in the abyss between earth and heaven. They are the extraordinary ones “who point and give signs” (P, 104), across the chasm which separates *Lethe* and *aletheia*, toward what we perceive as “ordinary,” i.e., they are the “out of which all that is ordinary emerges” (P, 102). Heidegger claims that they are “more essential than any being [and, as such,] they determine every essential affective disposition from respect and joy to mourning and terror” (P, 106). Ultimately, Heidegger will relate the *daimones* to *theaontes* (the gods) who ‘bring things to view’ as *historia* (P, 111).

Daimonios topos is an ‘uncanny district,’ i.e., the “place” where Being (via *daimones*) shines forth in history. The *polis* is the “essential abode” where historical man resides. It is “the ‘where,’ as which and in which order [*Dike*] is revealed and concealed [...] wherein the Being of man in its relation to beings as a whole has gathered itself” (P, 95-6).

Mythos is the primordial naming of Being in its emerging forth via the Word or *logos*. “The word is in its essence the letting appear of Being by naming. [...] And] *mythos* is the only appropriate mode of the relation to appearing Being” (P, 112). It is the “disclosive legend” (P, 114), the original gathering and naming of the gods who ‘bring to view’ “all that is.” “In *mythos* the *daimonian* appears [...] and it is *daimonian* which] determines the basic relation of Being to man” (P, 117). Or to state this otherwise, it is through *mythos* that the truth of Being shines forth in the *polis*.

A similar relation exists between Being and art (*techne*) - “the setting into work of the unconcealedness of Being” (P, 117). Heidegger states that for the Greeks, “beings appear in their Being and in their ‘essence’ not only in the ‘word’ but equally in sculpture³” (P, 115). The Greeks did not rank their arts competitively, nor did they try

³ This idea of Greek sculpture is also revealed in Rudolph Steiner’s “The Roots of Education” (in *The Essential Steiner*, ed. by R. McDermott, San Francisco: Harper, 1984, p. 346): “We must be sculptors and as such we must develop a feeling for the world, the kind of feeling that was present in the humanity of olden times as a sort of instinctive consciousness. It was clearly expressed in the orientalism of prehistoric times, thousands of years before our era, but we still find it in Greek culture. Just think how the materialistic artists of today are often

to classify them. Architecture, sculpture, poetry, carpentry, shoemaking, and even handwriting are all skilled crafts which realized a *telos* that was given in Being; and we should not forget the link between *techne* and *episteme* as mentioned above (p. 4). Heidegger even claims that *aletheuein*, to disclose the unconcealed, still permeates the essence of *techne* up to the time of Aristotle (*P*, 50). But Heidegger will still claim that “poetizing and thinking have a priority” (*P*, 117). And this “priority” lies upon the fact that art could not exist without the Word.

The essence of the word does not at all consist in its vocal sound, nor in loquacity and noise, and not in its merely technical function in the communication of information. The statue and the temple stand in silent dialogue with man in the unconcealed. If there were not the *silent word*, then the looking god as sight of the statue and of the features of its figure could never appear. [...] These “works” *exist* only in the medium of the word, i.e., in the medium of the essentially telling word, in the realm of the legendary, in the realm of myth (*P*, 116).

But since *techne* has come to be understood in terms of technology, i.e., since technology has become the new *mythos* of the powers-that-be and has served to cut us off from a “true” relation to Being, the question is how can we (when I say “we” I am not sure exactly who I am talking about: Western man? Modern man? Dasein? The German race? The world? The global community? Alienated man? The *polloi* (the masses)?) reach a “new” level of awareness of Being? Do we need a new myth? Can philosophy, and thus, “philosophers,” set the example for others to follow, i.e., can philosophy provide “us” with a new myth? And education? Is it possible to modify the education system to such a degree, to expound this new level of awareness, if education itself is entrenched in the myth-at-hand?

Heidegger gives us varied answers. In his *Introduction to Metaphysics* (quoted from above) Heidegger seems to think that philosophy can fulfill the task. However, in the *Parmenides* (*P*, 86) he suggests that “Being has withdrawn itself from man and modern man has been plunged into an eminent oblivion of Being.” But this movement

baffled by the forms of the Greek sculptors. They are baffled because they think that the Greeks worked from models, which they examined from all sides. But the Greeks still had the feeling that man was born out of the cosmos, and that the cosmos itself forms the human being. When the Greeks created their Venus de Milo (which is the despair of modern sculptors), then they took what streamed out of the cosmos, and although this could only reveal itself imperfectly in any earthly work, they strove to express it in the human form they were creating as far as they were able to do so....”

to oblivion, to *Lethe*, to the “primordial essence of the clearing of Being” (*P*, 163), would appear to be what Heidegger embraces.... a movement to an *Abgrund*, to an Apocalypse. Letting The Mystery Be.

But what is the essence of truth for us? We do not know, because we neither comprehend the essence of truth nor do we comprehend ourselves, and we do not know who we ourselves are. Perhaps this double ignorance about the truth and about ourselves is itself one and the same. But it is already good to know this ignorance, and precisely for the sake of Being, to which the reverence of thinking belongs (*P*, 162).

Now we may weep, indeed,
Now if ever we may cry
In bitter grief against our fate,
Our heritage still unappeased.
In other days we stood up under it,
Endured it for his sake,
The unrelenting horror. Now the finish
Comes, and we only know
In all that we have seen and done
Bewildering mystery.
(Antigone in Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus*)

Only a God can save us⁴.....

⁴Martin Heidegger, "Nur noch ein Gott kann uns retten," *Der Spiegel* 30 (Mai, 1976): 193-219. Trans. by W. Richardson as "Only a God Can Save Us" in *Heidegger: The Man and the Thinker* (1981), ed. T. Sheehan, pp. 45-67.

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