

Heidegger, Plato and the Problem of Truth (ἀλήθεια–μίμησις– λόγος)

Goran Ružić

University of Niš
The Faculty of Philosophy, Niš

drgoranruzic@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The subtitle of this paper's topic suggests the conceptual frame of Heidegger's interpretation of Plato's ontology. Using the 'allegory of the cave' as an example the term ἀλήθεια (truth) is accounted for in a strong association with the term παιδεία (formation and education). The first part of the Book X of Plato's *The Republic* is used by Heidegger for the explication of the term μίμησις (imitation) and τέχνη (production).

Key words: truth, imitation, production, idea, wisdom, unconcealment.

Heidegger does not accept the traditional assumption used in Ancient Greek interpretation of truth according to which truth is a correspondence (adequacy) between a proposition and an object since he considers that in this way the phenomenon of truth is reduced to the exactness and correctness. The concept of truth is considered to be traditionally formulated as 'veritas est adequatio rei et intellectus' (the truth is a consonance between an object and intellect) and was first established (in a somewhat altered form) by Aristotle¹ to be subsequently accepted by Kant as 'an agreement between cognition and its object'². Heidegger himself also summarizes his understanding of the traditional concept of truth in three statements: "1. The place of truth is a proposition (a logical statement); 2. The essence of truth lies in the consonance between a proposition and its object; 3. Aristotle, the father of logic, ascribed the truth to the proposition as its place of origin. He was also the first philosopher to define truth in terms of 'correspondence'."³. However, for Heidegger the explanation of truth in terms of 'correspondence' is not possible as it reminds him of an equation in the theory of numbers, e.g. number 6 corresponds to 3+3 and it is of a relational character. According to Heidegger, the truth does not have the structure of correspondence between cognition (the subject) and that which is cognized (the object). What creates the ground for the phenomenon of truth is the essential *Dasein* mode of the human being, and that is being-in-the-world. The main question of *Being and Time*, the question concerning the sense of Being requires a semantic clarification of the concept of truth. The recurrence of the

¹ Aristotel, *Metafizika* 1011b.

² Kant(1976), B82.

³ Hajdeger (2007), 254-255.

question brings us back to the tradition of Ancient Greek ontology in which a pre-philosophical and pre-phenomenological (self)understanding of the term *truth* occurred. Listing the basic characteristics of the traditional concept of truth, what we are actually doing (alongside Heidegger) is questioning whether the proposition is the original place of truth. The answer to this question is led by a supposition that it is not possible to examine the phenomenon of truth in isolation, i. e. without it being included into the analysis of the set of necessary terms such as *λόγος*, *being*, *phenomenon* as well as the basic concepts of the existential analytics such as *Dasein*, *exposition* and *representation* (*showing* and *presentation*).

It is beyond doubt that the ancient ontological tradition can be exceptionally useful while considering these questions. However, it should not be taken as a historical collection of the memories of Pre-Socratic fragments and the writings of Plato and Aristotle, but as a genuine directive to thought in its attempt to understand one of elementary words, i. e. *truth*. One of the possibilities of determining the concept of truth is a way (*μέθοδος*) of the *λόγος* (understood as a logical statement). Heidegger rejects this possibility. The statement is not the place of truth if by the word *place* a position is thought to which truth belongs in a fundamental way and thus making it possible. The question that is legitimately imposed is the following: if the judgment, proposition or a logical statement is not the place of truth, where is truth in that case? It is more than obvious that Heidegger is dissatisfied with the interpretation (and translation) of *λόγος* in terms of speech, story, law, reason etc. He indicates to the fact, which will probably be accepted by any classical philologist, that the noun *λόγος* is derived from the verb *λέγειν* which is phonetically close to the German verb *legen* (to place something in the front and underneath), *lessen* (collect, gather, recollect) and Latin *legere* being compatible with the German *lessen*.

The middle voice, *λέγεσθαι*,⁴ means 'to place oneself underneath into gathering of rest'; *λέχος* means 'a rest area'; *λόχος* is a place where something can be stored or leaned against.⁵

Although he does not deny that the primary (dominant) meaning of *λέγειν* is 'to say' or 'speak', Heidegger reenacts somewhat forgotten semantic meanings such as 'gathering and collecting' which are included into a certain 'laying' determined as "...that-which-out-of-itself-together-lies-before-us"⁶. Heidegger makes the last move towards the term *ἀλήθεια* 'that which lies (which is laid) before us is placed in unconcealment (*ἀλήθεια*)'. Therefore, Heidegger translates Ancient Greek term *ἀλήθεια* as a German word *Unverborgenheit*, not as *Wahrheit*, which means he translates *ἀλήθεια* as 'unconcealment' and not as 'truth' respectively. On top of that, Heidegger considers the term *Wahrheit* a non-German word with a false etymology, i.e. a derivation from Latin *verum*: "*Verum*, *ver-* originally means 'closing, covering'. The Roman word *verum* belongs to the semantic field of the Ancient Greek *ἀληθής* 'that which is unconcealed'. Therefore, *verum*, meaning 'that which is concealed', is the exact opposite to *ἀληθής*"⁷. The explanation for the radical re-interpretation of the Ancient Greek *ἀλήθεια* in terms of Latin *veritas* is found by Perović, following Heidegger, in the fact that the Latin terms were founded: "...in the imperial environment, within a position of superiority using treachery and deception to bring the

⁴ The middle voice of the verb *λέγω* is related to the meaning of the verb *λέχθαι*, "to lie down".

⁵ Hajdeger (1999), 168.

⁶ Hajdeger (1999), 170.

⁷ Perović (2006), 54.

enemies to the fall (fallit) and keep them in the secure vicinity of one's own government. Force as security and awareness of one's own domination thus becomes a characteristic of *verum...*"⁸

Insisting that the Ancient Greek verb *λέγειν* means 'laying' as letting that which lies before us be present in unconcealment, Heidegger relates the nouns *λόγος* and *ἀλήθεια*. "Originally *λέγειν* 'laying' has developed, early and in a way that dominates that which is unconcealed, into speech and talk."⁹ The speech gains its essential form due to disclosure of being (presence) that (already) lies before us. This dynamics of transition from the concealed being into the unconcealed is what Heidegger denotes as presence or the being of Being. What presencing means for Heidegger is "lasting in unconcealment".¹⁰ Beside the temporal dimension presencing also has a spacial dimension contained in the *Da-* (here and now). The disclosure of the present in presencing is the 'process' that is termed *ἀλήθεια* by the philosopher from Freiburg and is considered a process of its own kind in liberating the presence from the dimension of concealment. *Ἀλήθεια* as unhiddenness necessitates *λήθη* as hiddenness. This also holds for the relationship between presence and absence. The absent is actually the being that is not here, it is the hidden being. It turns out that unconcealment is based on concealment indebteding its being revealed and disclosed to its being sheltered and concealed. In his interpretation of Heraclitus's fragments Heidegger retains exactly this relation, connection and context of presence and absence equating the *λόγος* with *ἀλήθεια* or *λέγειν* with *λήθη* (*ἀληθής*), respectively. *Ἀλήθεια* in the text *Moirai*¹¹ is the light that enables any presence to appear. Although the essence of *ἀλήθεια* is hidden, it enables the presence of that which is present to emerge as *εἶδος* and *ἰδέα* ('appearance' and 'form'). The insight underlying presencing is that Being is nothing but the presence of that which is present.

Disclosure belongs to the region of unconcealment. That which still has not emerged into the light, which still has not been revealed, i. e. concealment is left behind in disclosure. However, covering and concealment are not any kind of 'deficiency' of absence and presence, but the determinant of the Ancient Greek human existential mode. Heidegger does not claim that there is an equal ontological status of concealment and unconcealment in the process of disclosure. What he claims is quite the opposite: "...concealment has a fulfilling advantage over all other modes according to which that which is present presences."¹² A more precise clarification of concealment is that it indicates shelter and hiddenness in recoil. "It means to remain reservedly hidden in face of the approach of that which is present. It means sheltering that-which-is-present in the inaccessible vicinity which remains in its arrival - in that arrival which is an increasing self-covering."¹³ In order to enhance his argumentation or to create a possibility of an analogical argument Heidegger refers to the root *lath-* in the verb *ἐπιλανθάνεσθαι* which is commonly translated as 'forget'. In a fundamental ontologist's vocabulary this verb certainly does not refer to the act of

⁸ Perović (2006), 52.

⁹ Hajdeger (1999), 171.

¹⁰ Hajdeger (1999), 177.

¹¹ Hajdeger (1999), 200.

¹² Hajdeger (1999), 212.

¹³ Hajdeger (1999), 212.

omitting of a certain fact from memory, but to the general attitude and (existential) conduct towards the presence and absence. Interpreting Heraclitus's Fragment 16 in which the Ephesian wonders "how can one hide from that which never sets", Heidegger is trying to account for the question who or what it is I remain hidden from. He is primarily focused on the etymology of the word τὸ δῶνον 'setting down'. "It is connected with δύω which means 'to wrap' or 'sink'. Δύειν means 'enter something'. The sun enters the sea, it sinks into it... Setting down, in Greek fashion, is happening as an entrance into concealment."¹⁴ The initial and final part of Heraclitus's Fragment 16 are marked with two terms that for Heidegger have the same meaning, i.e. τὸ δῶνον and λήθω. If the sentence is more closely looked at, the use of the negation μή can be observed in τὸ μή δῶνον ποτε (that which never sets) meaning 'that which never enters the region of concealment'. The expression τὸ μή δῶνον ποτε is read by Heidegger as τὸ μὴ πότε δῶνον. The whole of this endeavor is aimed at affirming the expression 'that which never sets' in terms of 'that which is constantly begotten' (τὸ ἀείφουον), i.e. φύσις. Being begotten and generated uninterruptedly (continually, constantly) is what discloses presence. There is a difference between the negation understood as μή and the one understood as οὐκ. "Οὐκ directly denies that to which negation refers, μή, on the other hand, describes something that has emerged in the field of its negation: rejection, distancing, safeguarding."¹⁵ Grammatically speaking, the term δῶνον is seen by Heidegger as a participle and in its verbal form at that, i. e. as 'to set'. 'That which never sets' is reformulated into 'to-never-set' which, nominally speaking, means 'to-never-enter-concealment'. The double negation can be observed in *The Poem* of Parmenides in a sentence (οὐκ ἔστι μὴ εἶναι) that can be word-by-word translated as 'not-is-non-being' or affirmatively as 'is-being'. Fragment 123 by Heraclitus also refers to concealment: 'Φύσις κρύπτεσθαι φιλεῖ'.¹⁶ What we would prefer to translate as 'nature likes to hide' Heidegger translates with an incredible expression: "essencing of things likes to hide" or, even more radically, "emerging (out of self-concealment) bestows benevolence upon self-concealment".¹⁷ With the translation of the noun φύσις 'nature' as the verb 'emerging', which is, by the way, syntactically illegitimate, Heidegger wants to (metaphorically) represent the dynamics of emerging out of concealment and departure into unconcealment. An inelegant expression "essencing of things" (one of the translations of the word φύσις) is used to actually indicate one of the modes of nature's presencing (as an 'originating dwelling' and a 'prevailing domination').

In the text *Platons Lehre von der Wahrheit (Plato's Doctrine on Truth)*, which bears an unusual Serbian translation *Plato's Instruction on Truth*¹⁸, Heidegger is concerned with an interpretation of 'the allegory of the cave' from Book VII of *The Republic* by Plato. We are interested in this interpretation merely in connection with the problem of truth and its relation to Ancient Greek ἀλήθεια. It turns out that the content of the allegory complies with both Heidegger's interpretation of Book VII of *The Republic* and the interpretation of the first part of Book X (*Nietzsche I*) at least in terms of the contentlink to ἀλήθεια. The beginning of

¹⁴ Hajdeger (1999), 214.

¹⁵ Hajdeger (1999), 216.

¹⁶ Hajdeger (1999), 217.

¹⁷ Hajdeger (1999), 218.

¹⁸ T.N. Serb. *Platonov nauk o istini*.

the analysis is marked by an indication to the meaning of the basic terms in Plato's ontology represented through the so called 'theory of ideas'. The beings (things) indicated outside the cave are shown in their image (*εἶδος, ἰδέα*) and not the way they truly look. They are in a way an image of the true being, that is the shadows and silhouettes on the cave arch. The allegory refers to the human abode inside and outside the cave. This habitation is some kind of a journey out of darkness and into brightness. Just as eyes gradually accustom to the transition from darkness to brightness, so likewise the soul exposed to the different regions of Being successively accustoms itself to the same transition. Adaptation and maladaptation of the human soul is, according to Heidegger, the essence of what Plato termed as *παιδεία*, and that is: "...leading the whole human being in the turning around his or her essence".^{19 20} Heidegger's German rendering of the Ancient Greek *παιδεία* is 'Bildung' (*education* literally *formation*). According to him this word indicates two things: "On the one hand formation means forming someone in the sense of impressing on him a character that unfolds. But at the same time this 'forming' of someone 'forms' (or impresses a character on) someone by antecedently taking measure in terms of some paradigmatic image, which for that reason is called a proto-type (*Vorbild*)."^{21 22} An important connection between *ἀλήθεια* (truth) and *Bildung* (education) is seen by Heidegger in the fact that the essence of *ἀλήθεια* and the modes of its change are the preconditions for the possibility of education in their common *ἀλήθεια/Bildung* frame. The answer to the question of Plato's definition of unconcealment (*ἀλήθεια*) is indicated in the contents of 'the allegory of the cave' which, according to Heidegger, relates the essence of truth. It would be an oversimplification to reduce the human habitation to the time beneath the cave arch and the emergence under the heavenly arch. Heidegger differentiates among four stages of habitation: "In stage one, people live chained inside the cave, engrossed in what they immediately encounter... Stage two tells about the removal of the chains... Real freedom is attained only in stage three. Here someone who has been unshackled is at the same time conveyed outside the cave "into the open".^{23 24}

To be free means to be turned to that which is most unconcealed. It is a self-explained fact that the Sun is what's most unconcealed within 'the allegory of the cave' or, in other words, it is the idea of all ideas, i. e. the idea of Goodness (*ἀγαθόν*). Stage four of the 'allegory' consists in the move backwards of the one who has been unshackled – back into the cave. The passage back among the shackled in the cave is clearly the passage from unconcealment to concealment.

The hiddenness can be of various kinds: closing off, hiding away, disguising, covering over, masking, dissembling^{25 26}

¹⁹ Heidegger (1995), 26.

²⁰ T. N. (1998), 166.

²¹ Heidegger (1995), 27.

²² Ibid.

²³ Heidegger (1995), 89–90.

²⁴ Ibid. p. 169.

²⁵ Heidegger (1995), 32.

²⁶ Ibid. p. 171.

The semantic significance of the allegory consists in elements resembling the sunshine, the light of the fire, daylight and visibility in general. Heidegger's accentuation of these metaphors is not accidental: for him the idea is the pure shining just as when we say 'The sun is shining'.

The essence of the Idea consists in its ability to shine and be seen [Schein- und Sichtsamkeit]. This is what brings about presencing, specifically the coming to presence of what a being is in any given instance.^{27 28}

The 'allegory of the cave' refers to the permeation of the idea of Goodness over unconcealment of the self-representing presences (so called *phenomena*) alongside a simultaneous comprehension of this unconcealment. According to Heidegger, a decisive effect on the history of metaphysics will be delivered by Plato's transposition of the essence of truth into the essence of ideas and in this way its transformation into exactness, correctness and consonance. Truth understood as unconcealment is an essential trait of presencing. However, having been taken as correctness of understanding and observation it was transformed into 'an indication of a human relation to Being'. The question of unconcealment becomes the question of an emerging appearance and observation to which the character of correctness is ascribed. Taking a close look at the text throughout his analysis of 'The Republic' from 517b7 to c5 Heidegger confirms that: "...ἀλήθεια would correspond to the ὀρθά (what is correct) and ῥοῦς (apprehending) would correspond to the καλὰ (what is beautiful)."^{29 30} More precisely, there is an intersection in which correctness corresponds to comprehension and unconcealment to the beautiful. It is important to add at this point that ἀλήθεια is not the opposite of ψευδής (falsity, untruthfulness) but that there is the relation of contradictory opposition in terms of correctness and incorrectness. With Heraclitus and Parmenides the term covering the emergence from concealment into unconcealment was *presence*. It was understood as *ιδέα* by Plato, i. e. as the basis for truth. Truth as ἀλήθεια (unconcealment) is for Heidegger the essential mark of Being, whereas correctness (of thinking) is a key word and the characteristic of the cognition of Being. The difference between dwelling below the cave arch and firmament arch is the difference between σοφία (the skill of self-resourcefulness) and another σοφία which is outside the cave and is referred to as love and friendship (φιλοσοφία). In Heidegger's interpretation, for Plato philosophy is the thinking related to the being of Being, whereas the theory of ideas is ἐπέκεινα τῆς οὐσίας (beyond being itself), i.e. metaphysics understood as theology exposing the causes (αἰτίαι) of the entities present being taken as Θεός (god).

Plato's εἶδος is not seen by Heidegger as some kind of concept or the highest universal but as an appearance of the present entities. In comparison to a manifold appearance of phenomena εἶδος is the 'one' understood as the unity of this appearing diversity. It could be said that *ιδέα* and the form is what perdures all changes. More specifically, the *ιδέα* is not in the domain of sensible visibility and cannot be identified with things of the visible world. The idea of mind possesses the primary being in comparison to the beings that were created or produced. It would mean to oversimplify things if Plato was considered to oppose φαινόμενον and ἀλήθεια (an appearance and the unconcealed being). Heidegger's thesis is

²⁷ Hajdeger (1995), 34.

²⁸ Ibid. p. 173.

²⁹ Hajdeger (1995), 39.

³⁰ Ibid. p. 178.

that every being shows itself in three respects (Plato's examples with tables and beds): as a pure presence of the idea, as the production of things and as representation (that which is presented and shown) of an image. The primary being as a pure presence of *εἶδος* reveals something and this is nothing else but *ἀλήθεια*. *Εἶδος* in Plato's use indicated *ἀλήθεια* - the unconcealed being. In a hypothetical hierarchy of the vicinity to or distance from the clear appearance the first place is occupied by *Θεός* (god) who allows the emergence of clear presentation, the second one is the craftsman, and the third one is the artist who only feebly renders the clear appearance of things as he is least capable of reproduction and therefore most distanced from truth. *Θεός* is the one who produces *εἶδος* and *apriori* at that (meaning earlier in comparison to the craftsman and artist). Accordingly, the two subsequent producers perform the same process *a posteriori* in comparison to the clear *εἶδος*. An artist, one could say, produces (*ποιέω*) a small *εἶδος* (*εἶδωλον*) when the kind of appearing and showing in presence is used as a criterion. *Θεός* (god) is the ruler who permeates through the clear presence of *εἶδος* and who pre-determines the *idea* of the craftsman and artist, which makes the latter two subordinated to it (*ιδέα*).

A look at the early Ancient Greek philosophy indicates for Heidegger an insight that philosophy has since its inception placed the truth at the same level as Being, from Parmenides's differentiating understanding to Aristotle's *περί τῆς οὐσίας*. Philosophy understood as a search for truth was defined as the science of truth. Heidegger's conclusion is that if the truth is connected to Being it belongs to the scope of fundamental-ontological problems and bears the mark of existential analytics. The question concerning the essence of truth is posed by Heidegger as the question about the kind of the existing truth alongside an explanation of the hermeneutical-ontological meaning of speech. In his *History of the Concept of Time-Prolegomena*³¹ the philosopher from Freiburg (in his phenomenological phase) speaks of the three-fold concept of truth. The first concept of truth is rendered in terms of the identity of *intentio* (that which is thought) and *intentum* (that which is perceived). It refers to the identity identification of the two correlates mentioned. The second concept of truth is presented as 'the structure of the act of the evidence itself in terms of this covering identification'.³² In this second sense the truth is understood as an act of cognition, as a self-direction-towards (intentionality). In the third sense, the truth is an activity or such acognitive process that enables the true cognition. What is meant by this is a correlative relationship of the perceived being (the existing object) and recognition (of the identity), i. e. the recognition of that particular being. The third aspect of truth is considered by Heidegger to be identical to being, i. e. to have the same sense of being as that which is reflected in truthfulness. Beside the identity of being and truth, phenomenological logic also interprets being in terms of copula, i. e. as 'a structural moment of the state of things itself', of which the formal structure is S=P. In other words, *intentio* (that which is thought) is true in the sense that it results in the state of things itself. It is beyond doubt that the concept of truth is ascribed to intentionality understood as structuring *intentio* and *intentum* (that which is thought and perceived, respectively). Phenomenologically speaking, the difference between the traditional and the fundamental-ontological concept of truth in Heidegger's view lies in the fact that the traditional one is related to the referring acts and judgments, whereas the

³¹ Hajdeger (2000), 56.

³² Hajdeger (2000), 56.

term being (as a determination of an object or the thing itself) is ascribed the sense of a non-referential act or a unidirectional act.

The human is multiply defined as being-in-truth and it is therefore understandable that Heidegger wants to separate the existential-ontological and the derivational propositional-predicative truth. In this context and bearing in mind Aristotle's considerations of multiple ways of existing in truth (*τέχνη, ἐπιστήμη, φρόνησις, σοφία, νοῦς*), Heidegger distinguishes between *λόγοςσημαντικός* (speech) and *λόγοςἀποφαντικός*. Speech as a phonetic articulation of words is simply producing *φωνή* 'voice' whose characteristics are derived from that which is showing itself (*ἀποφαίνεσθαι*) and that which is visible.

*Λόγος is, as Aristotle emphasizes, 'φωνήμετάφαντασίας' so that alongside a phonetic articulation the act of making something visible and noticeable, certain 'φαίνεσθαι', 'φαντασία', which can be seen is also given.*³³

Generally speaking, *λόγος* (as speech) is something phonetic implying something that can have meaning. Furthermore, not every sentence can be seen as an intended theoretical statement (a statement about something). Semantic speech would also account for commands, exclamations, requests, desires etc., that is those statements that do not bear the meaning of the theoretical apprehension of something. Semantic speech comprises a set of statements related to that which is ready-to-hand, whereas apophantic speech refers to the set of statements about that which is present-at-hand, enabling something to be seen, presented something qua something. Apophantic statements are based on semantic (hermeneutic) ones which means that grasping is the basis of the statement. It might seem complicated at first sight, but the truthfulness of the apophantic *λόγος* consists in its unconcealment in a self-showing mode. Heidegger uses a metaphysically enlarged concept of truth that is reflected in the assumption that truth belongs to the existential constitution of the human being (*Dasein*). In this respect, it is easily understood that the human is in truth or untruth. Accordingly, an Ancient Greek human exists in both unconcealment and concealment. The sense of the statement 'Dasein is in truth' is summed up by Heidegger in four points.

*Disclosure in general belongs to the structure of Dasein's being; the structure of Dasein's being is characterised in terms of his/her constitutive disclosure by thrownness... by projection... by fallenness.*³⁴

The background of the true and untrue statements is seen by Heidegger in an existentials called *Erschlossenheit* (disclosure, availability). This term refers not only to the theory or statements, but also tends to prevail over a theory / practice differentiation.

Heidegger pays respects to Aristotle's not defending a thesis that the proposition is the original place of truth and confirms that it is a matter of discussion whether he was the initiator of the correspondence theory of truth at all. Aristotle's *λόγος* is understood by Heidegger as a mode of existence that can be a revealing or covering one. Heidegger claims that Aristotle did not enlarge the concept of truth from *λόγος* to *νοεῖν* (thinking): "the proposition as a mode of uncoverness appropriation and as a mode of being-in-the-world is based on revealing, that is on the disclosure of *Dasein*."³⁵ Finally, as we reach the end of this

³³ Hajdeger (2000), 94.

³⁴ Hajdeger, (2007), 262.

³⁵ Hajdeger, (2007), 266.

text we should be reminded of Heidegger's defense of one more thesis, i. e. the thesis concerning the relativity of truth. That relativity is not reflected in the assumption that the whole truth is subjective and that the subject is the one presupposed in it, but in the fact that we can only presuppose something if it is founded on truth since we are the beings capable of revealing it.

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