

Parmenides: The Principle of Western Thought. The Heidegger Lectures of 1932

**Parménides: el principio del pensamiento occidental.
Las lecciones de Heidegger de 1932**

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Abstract: This article aims to analyse the lectures that Heidegger dedicated to Parmenides in the Summer Semester of 1932. In them Heidegger offers a different interpretation to the traditional one set by Plato and followed by Aristotle and Simplicius. For Heidegger, Western metaphysics did not manage to explicitly show the ontological necessity of the link between *alétheia* and *dóxa*. The Parmenides being is not “*zeitlos*”, but presence. Being can only be interpreted when referred to temporality and to the present. It is our contention that feeling dissatisfied with the way tradition has transmitted Parmenides’ original thought, Heidegger suggests a new reading of the foundational poem of the Greek philosopher that intentionally breaks with Western metaphysics, the Roman culture, Christianity and Judaism.

Key-words: Heidegger, pre-socratic, Parmenides, temporality

Resumen: Este artículo tiene como objetivo analizar las lecciones que Heidegger dedicó a Parménides en el semestre de verano de 1932. En ellas, Heidegger ofrece una interpretación distinta de la tradicional, fijada por Platón y seguida por Aristóteles y Simplicio. Para Heidegger, la metafísica occidental no logró mostrar explícitamente la necesidad ontológica del vínculo entre *alétheia* y *dóxa*. El ser parmenídeo no es “*zeitlos*”, sino presencia. El ser solo puede interpretarse en referencia a la temporalidad y al presente. Sostenemos que, insatisfecho con el modo en que la tradición ha transmitido el pensamiento originario de Parménides, Heidegger propone una nueva lectura del poema fundacional del filósofo griego que rompe deliberadamente con la metafísica occidental, la cultura romana, el cristianismo y el judaísmo.

Palabras clave: Heidegger, presocráticos, Parménides, temporalidad

“Φοβουμα ουν με ουτε τὰ λεγόμενα
συμιομεν, τιτε διανοούμενοσ ξιπε πλύ
πλέον λειπομετηα”

Platon, *Theaetetus*, 184a¹

“Wer die Maßstäbe solchen denkenden Sagens kennt,
muss als Heutiger aller Lust verlieren, Bücher zu
schreiben”

Heidegger²

1. Introduction and purpose

In the spring semester of 1932, Heidegger devoted his lessons to *The Principle of Western Philosophy*. In these lessons, he deals with the interpretation of two pre-Socratic authors: Anaximander and Parmenides.³ In this research article, we propose to present the lectures dedicated to Parmenides.⁴ These lectures are of interest not only because they highlight Heidegger's thought and thematic priorities at crucial moments in his personal life and in the history of his country, but also because they propose an interpretation of the texts of this pre-Socratic author, which aims to be original, and because it has exerted a remarkable influence throughout the 20th Century.

It is difficult to overstate the importance of the most established interpretations of the work of Parmenides of Elea in the construction of the bulk of European metaphysics. These are interpretations that point to Parmenides as the author who seals a fundamental tension between being and time, that is, between the ontological necessity of the identity and the ontological inconceivability of the otherness.

Here we will confine ourselves to mentioning the earliest references, which had a very decisive impact on the traditional understanding of the pre-Socratic author. We should remember in this context the interpretation of Parmenides that emerges in two of Plato's dialogues, *Sophist* and *Parmenides*. In the first case we find the figure of "parricide" as the way to settle the relationship between being and not being (the not being in a sense *is*). Parmenides explicitly appears in that dialogue as the very father of the Platonic metaphysical system, as the origin of the meaning of the notion of being and its relation to thought and time. It is true that Plato must "kill the father" in order to further elaborate on the relationship between being and not being, but it is no less true that this

¹ "I fear, therefore, that not only the meaning of his words [of Parmenides] will be understood, and that his thought will go far beyond us ..." (Plato, *Theaetetus*, 184a).

² "Whoever knows the dimensions of such an expression of thought, must lose as a person who lives today all the desire to write books" (Heidegger, GA 10, 74). Citations of Heidegger's work follow the Gestamtausgabe (GA), Klostermann, Frankfurt a. M.

³ Cf. GA 35.

⁴ In previous study, we looked at the attention Heidegger paid to Anaximander. Cf. (Boada Sanmartín, 2022)

determines an understanding of the Parmenidian notion of being that gets petrified.⁵

Dialogue functions as a mode of philosophical transmission: the scene of the aged Parmenides and the young Socrates suggests that the concern with the question of Being is conveyed across generations. At the same time, the dialogue as a whole underscores that Parmenides stands at the origin of this debate—largely because he appears as its “Father” (the term “parricide” leaves no room for another interpretation)—of that very concern which finds its continuity in Plato’s writing.

We should also remember here the Aristotle’s well-known references to *Metaphysics* (986b 31) and to *Physics* (Book One, especially chapters 2 and 3) that have been so influential in consolidating the traditional interpretation of Parmenides.

Heidegger recognizes that Aristotle has a grasp of the question of Being on a level with Parmenides. Certainly, Aristotle expresses himself in very critical terms with respect to Parmenides (for example, in *Physics* I 3, 186a). There Aristotle claims that Parmenides’ solution is “deceptive, it conceals the truth” (*täuschend, sie verdeckt das Wahre*). And yet, it is not Aristotle who poses the problem in accessing the primordial character of Parmenides’ question of Being. According to Heidegger, it is precisely the Stagirite who “helps this truth to become a truly philosophical truth, that is, a genuine question.” (*verhilft nämlich dieser Wahrheit dazu, eine wahrhaft philosophische Wahrheit zu werden, d.h. eine wirkliche Frage*) (cf. GA33, pp. 26–27). Aristotle’s work represents both an enrichment (*Bereicherung*) and a transformation (*Verwandlung*) of Parmenides’ question of Being. The problem lies in how posterity has understood Aristotle: “later on, only the various concepts of being and the ‘categories’ were systematized according to the mathematical idea of science.” (*wurden später nur die verschiedenen Seinbegriffe und ‘Kategorien’ gemäss der mathematischen Idee der Wissenschaft in System gebracht*) (GA33, p. 31). For this reason, Heidegger maintains: “It may be difficult, indeed almost hopeless, to bring this relation (between Being and beings).to genuine clarity by means of what has been handed down to us from Aristotle.” (*Es mag schwer, ja fast aussichtslos sein, dieses Verhältnis (the relation between Being and beings) in eine wirkliche Klarheit zu setzen mit Hilfe dessen, was uns von Aristoteles überliefert ist*) (GA33, p. 32).

On the other hand, besides Plato and Aristotle, we will have to refer later, albeit briefly, to Simplicius (the last known author who had access to the entire poem of Parmenides) for his decisive influence in the interpretation of this pre-Socratic philosopher.⁶

The “canonical” version of the pre-Socratic author spans over centuries and is, in one way or another, the one that gets to Heidegger, through Hegel, Nietzsche and Reinhardt.⁷

⁵ Cf. Heidegger, *Platon: Sophists*, GA 19, esp. 425-434. Also, Badiou, 2015, p. 24.

⁶ Cf. (Cordero, 2015, 2017) (Licciardi, 2016)

⁷ The author of *The Will to Power* reads Parmenides on the basis of the traditional interpretation when he writes: „Parmenides hat gesagt *man denkt das nicht, was nicht ist* - wir sind am

For Heidegger, there is a contrast between the primitive and fundamental character of Aristotle's thought and the way the tradition has transmitted it to us. In this sense, we can only reach the fundamental understanding that Aristotle has of Parmenides if we manage to "first free ourselves from the image that the post-Aristotelian era, up to our own time, has formed of Aristotelian philosophy." (*"uns zuvor frei gemacht haben von dem Bild, das die nach aristotelische Zeit bis in unsere Gegenwart sich von der Aristotelischen Philosophie gemacht hat."*) (GA33 31/32), beginning with the medieval tradition, which reduces the question of the relation between being and unity to the formula *ens et unum convertuntur*. It should also be added that Heidegger mentions an exception within this tradition that loses the original meaning, namely Kant — provided, of course, that "one does not take Kant in the sense of the Kantians." (*"nimmt man freilich Kant nicht im Sinne der Kantianer"*).

As we will highlight throughout this article Heidegger sets out to interpret Parmenides' thought in a very different way from the one he received from the Western philosophical tradition. To understand the underlying meaning of this interpretation, one must take into account both Heidegger's will to destroy Western ontology and the general idea that Western tradition, rather than conveying the origins of Greek thought, conceals them.⁸ The basic purpose

ändern Ende und sagen *was gedacht werden kann, muss sicherlich eine Fiktion sein*" cf. Nietzsche, *Wille zur Macht* § 539. When Heidegger accepts that Parmenides is the father of the western philosophy he has in mind a completely different interpretation of the Eleatic author, than the Nietzsche's interpretation. While Nietzsche identifies Parmenides with the founder of Plato's metaphysics, Heidegger understands that, in fact, Parmenides has very little to do with Plato. Heidegger could accept the counter-legend (to put it with Alain Badiou), which is Nietzsche's interpretation, if he also accepted that the main contribution of Parmenides' philosophy is the identification of Being and Thought in a logical sense. But Heidegger, as we will highlight in this article, determines a new meaning, different from that which he inherits from tradition and on which Nietzsche's dialectical response depends entirely. Heidegger's "deconstruction" in relation to the thought of the metaphysical Parmenides is thus much more radical than Nietzsche's response when he states that "we are at the other extreme." Cf. (Badiou, 2015, p. 24ff)

⁸ Cf. *Sein und Zeit* § 6, p. 21 "Die Aufgabe einer Destruktion der Geschichte der Ontologie". Here we can read: „Die hierbei zur Herrschaft kommende Tradition macht zunächst und zumeist das, was sie »übergibt«, so wenig zugänglich, daß sie es vielmehr verdeckt. Sie überantwortet das Überkommene der Selbstverständlichkeit und verlegt den Zugang zu den ursprünglichen »Quellen«, daraus die überlieferten Kategorien und Begriffe z. T. in echter Weise geschöpft wurden. Die Tradition macht sogar eine solche Herkunft überhaupt vergessen. Sie bildet die Unbedürftigkeit aus, einen solchen Rückgang in seiner Notwendigkeit auch nur zu verstehen. Die Tradition entwirzelt die Geschichtlichkeit des Daseins so weit, daß es sich nur noch im Interesse an der Vielgestaltigkeit möglicher Typen, Richtungen, Standpunkte des Philosophierens in den entlegensten und fremdesten Kulturen bewegt und mit diesem Interesse die eigene Bodenlosigkeit zu verhüllen sucht. Die Folge wird, dass das Dasein bei allem historischen Interesse und allem Eifer für eine philologisch »sachliche« Interpretation die elementarsten Bedingungen nicht mehr versteht, die einen positiven Rückgang zur Vergangenheit im Sinne einer produktiven Aneignung ihrer allein ermöglichen“. Heidegger first uses the notion of 'destruction' in his course WS 1919/20 (GA58 139ff; 61-62, 205). But it is in the conferences of the WS 1921/22 dedicated to Aristotle where Heidegger uses this term to apply it to (a) the philosophy of the Stagirite

that guides the Heideggerian reading of Parmenides' poem is to emancipate it from the fundamental presupposition of ontology that conceives Being as a permanent and supratemporal identity.⁹ Heidegger's reading is determined by the conviction that the philosophy of the beginning (metaphysics²) has been falsified by tradition.¹⁰

It should be noted that in *Being and Time* Heidegger had emphasized that this was not just a theoretical question, but a thesis laden with consequences. When the *Dasein* tries to understand himself and his world on the basis of this ontological tradition, he finds that his temporal existence has been left without any interpretive ground, precisely because existence and temporality have been placed outside what tradition has considered the truth.¹¹ Ontology predisposes us to understand Being as something detached from our most immediate reality, in which case our own existence would be left without truth, without cognitively relevant language and without the possibility of being thought.¹²

In this sense, an exhaustive analysis of Heidegger's reading should pay attention not only to the thesis of the identity of being and thought, but also to the consequences that derive from it: unity, the absence of movement, the eternity of being, the ontological rejection of time and of sensitivity as a path that leads to knowledge, etc.¹³

To the extent that Heidegger regards Parmenides as a primordial thinker, he cannot take for granted the most established interpretation of the Eleatic according to which being has nothing to do with time. In other words, that time is not or that being is timeless. In these lectures, the German philosopher deems superficial all interpretations of Parmenides that claim that being is alien to temporality.

The purpose of this article is twofold: firstly, to clarify how Heidegger disarticulated the most traditional interpretation of Parmenides¹⁴ and, secondly, to understand why, nonetheless, Heidegger considers Parmenides to be a fundamental author. Despite radically altering the meaning of the Eleatic thinker's philosophical contribution, there is at least one element of coincidence with the metaphysical tradition: to consider Parmenides as a fundamental author.

First, we will highlight Heidegger's relationship with Parmenides and the reasons behind his interest in rethinking the content of this author's work. Second, we will emphasize the importance of Heidegger's reliance on Diels's 1903 edition when commenting on Parmenides' texts, as well as his understanding of

interpreted from scholasticism and (b) to metaphysics itself in order to emphasize what he calls the "end of philosophy" (GA61, 35).

⁹ Cf. (Barash, 1994, p. 117). In particular, it is a question of distancing oneself from the canonical interpretation (as Cordero describes it – Cf. Cordero, 2017) according to which, among other things, "Parmenides happens to be the philosopher of the one and immobile Being, opposed to the "everything flows and nothing remains" of Heraclitus".

¹⁰ Cf. GA35, 1.

¹¹ Cf. (Barash, 1994, p. 117).

¹² "Dessen [des Daseins] Sein findet seinen Sinn in der Zeitlichkeit", we read at GA2, 19.

¹³ Cf. Aristotle, *Physics*, especially chapter 3. Cf. (Reale, 1997, pp. 113–115)

¹⁴ In this regard, see Plato's lessons GA34 and GA2 25-26, 100, 171, 219ff.

the need to offer a meaningful, comprehensive vision of the fragments. Then, we will briefly present the history of Parmenides' text as it has been transmitted through tradition. We will underline the influence of Simplicius in consolidating a particular interpretation of Parmenides, the innovations introduced by Reinhardt, and the way in which Heidegger receives these developments in preparation for his own interpretation.

Next, we will turn to Heidegger's understanding of the texts as presented by Diels. We will begin with fragment D-6, where Heidegger interprets Parmenides' fundamental phrase (*Ur-Satz*) in a way that differs from traditional interpretations. We will see how this reinterpretation gives rise to the possibility of a "third path" (beyond the two envisaged by tradition: the path of thinking and the path of opinion), which accommodates a description of existence as *errare*. Finally, we will focus on fragment D-8, where Heidegger unfolds his interpretation of Parmenides' *Wesensatz*, of time, and its relation to Being. Contrary to the traditional interpretation, Being is not *zeitlos*, and still less "eternal"; rather, there is no Being beyond the present (*Zeitsatz*). Parmenides' Being is not an object of abstract or exact thought; in fact, Heidegger shows that it can only be understood as presence, from the perspective of *Dasein*, the existent.

2. Heidegger and Parmenides

We know that the German philosopher addressed issues related to the Eleatic thinker during the summer semester of 1922 (cf. GA62, 209-231) and that he would keep on addressing them in other important writings.¹⁵ The attention paid to Parmenides is neither sporadic nor limited to the need to contextualise other more or less relevant authors. There is, therefore, no aim of interpreting Parmenides as a propaedeutic to any other author of whom Parmenides would be the precedent. It is our contention that one of Heidegger's interests in Parmenides is motivated by the willingness to highlight the weaknesses of the philosophical tradition that gave birth to this specific interpretation of his famous poem. Moreover, the general reason that leads Heidegger to the interpretation of Parmenides (as well as of Anaximander and Heraclitus) is philosophically very significant in Heidegger's course of thought.¹⁶ In line with

¹⁵ Cf. The works in which Heidegger deals with Parmenides are (apart from the (GA35) that we address in this article: *Einführung in die Metaphysik* GA40, GA51, GA54, GA7 (cf. "Moira"), GA8, GA11, GA15, 403-407, GA7. Cf. (Trawny, 2012, p. 271).

¹⁶ Cf. GA55, GA7 ("Logos", Heraklit Fragment 50, 1951, pp. 211-233; "Aletheia", Heraklit Fragment 16, 1954, pp. 263-287), GA15 (Eugen Fink: Heraklit. Seminar Wintersemester 1966/67). In relation to these three authors, Heidegger writes in 1944 (cf. GA54, 10-11): "Anaximander, Parmenides und Heraklit sind die einzigen anfänglichen Denker. Sie sind es nicht deshalb, weil sie das abendländische Denken eröffnen und beginnen. Schon vor ihnen „gibt“ es Denker. Jene sind anfängliche Denker, weil sie den Anfang denken. Der Anfang ist das in ihrem Denken Gedachte. Das hört sich so an, als sei „der Anfang“ dergleichen wie ein „Gegenstand“, den die Denker sich vornehmen, um ihn durchzudenken. Aber es hiess schon allgemein von dem Denken der Denker, es sei ein Zurücktreten vor dem Sein. Wenn

Trawny (and against what authors like Most suggest) we believe that there is a plan in Heidegger's work to include these pre-Socratic authors in order to provide a global reinterpretation of the Greek original thought and of the Western metaphysical tradition.¹⁷

It is also worth mentioning that the conferences entitled *The Principle of Western Philosophy* are included in a coherent sequence of works that Heidegger produced in the 1930s.¹⁸ In this sense, special mention should be made of the lectures on Aristotle in the summer semester of 1931 and those on Plato in the winter semester of 1931-1932.¹⁹

Heidegger seems to be aware in 1932 of a certain tentative character in his reading of Parmenides. In the form of a footnote, Heidegger indicates that the interpretation he offers in these lectures is "insufficient" even though regarding some things, he claims he has understood what is essential (GA35, 103). Surely this observation is due both to the fact that Heidegger has in mind to continue his meditation on the texts of Parmenides (the appearance of later works allows us to interpret it in this sense), and to the acknowledgment that "The work [of Parmenides] has not gotten to us entirely, but for the most part in fragments" (GA35, 103). In this sense, it must be said that to address the interpretation of the Eleatic author, Heidegger resorts firstly to the work of Diels, published in 1903, where for the first time the *ipsissima verba* of pre-Socratic authors were published.²⁰ The importance that Heidegger gives to the presentation and arrangement of Parmenidian texts by Diels contrasts with the little authority he gives to the translations of this Hellenist.

Despite the fragmentary nature of the preserved writings, we should emphasize that Parmenides is among the pre-Socratic authors an exceptional one since, in his case alone, an attempt was made to reproduce a supposedly original structure of the Poem.²¹ This is an important fact, if we consider that the coherence of the whole cannot be detached from the ordering of the parts. Having broadly accepted the division presented by Diels, Heidegger decided

innerhalb des denkerischen Denkens das anfängliche Denken das höchste ist, dann muss sich hier ein Zurücktreten besonderer Art ereignen. Denn diese Denker „nehmen“ sich den Anfang nicht so vor, wie ein Forscher seine Sache „in Angriff nimmt“. Diese Denker denken sich den Anfang auch nicht aus wie ein selbstgemachtes Gedankengebilde. Der Anfang ist nicht etwas von Gnaden dieser Denker, womit sie so und so vorgehen, sondern umgekehrt: der Anfang ist dasjenige, was mit diesen Denkern etwas anfängt, weil es sie dergestalt in den Anspruch nimmt, dass von ihnen ein äusserstes Zurücktreten vor dem Sein gefordert wird. Die Denker sind die vom Anfang An-gefangenen, von ihm in ihn Eingeholten und auf ihn Versammelten“.

¹⁷ “Certes, Heidegger n’a commencé à lire les Présocratiques de façon évidente et programmatique que pendant la Seconde Guerre Mondiale” ((Most, 2010, p. 243)). Cf. (Trawny, 2012, p. 268ff).

¹⁸ Cf. (Trawny, 2012, p. 268ff)

¹⁹ Cf. GA33 and GA34 respectively.

²⁰ Cf. (Most, 2010, p. 240ff). The importance that Heidegger grants to the presentation and arrangement of Parmenidian texts by Diels contrasts with the little authority he gives to the translations of this Hellenist.

²¹ Cf. (Cordero, 2017).

to approach Parmenides on a different basis than the one he uses to approach Anaximander or Heraclitus.

The fact that these set of conferences of 1932 have not been published until 2010 explains the reason why they do not fall under the criticism directed by Most in 2002 according to whom Heidegger's interpretation of the Greek thought consistently privileged the parts to the whole, fragments to parts, sentences to fragments, and single words to sentences".²² We do not deny that Most is right when it comes to Anaximander or Heraclitus. Nevertheless, the conferences on Parmenides of 1932 require that we revise this general accusation (that before the publication of the GA35 would make sense). As we will try to highlight, in 1932 Heidegger systematically revised all the fragments or quotations of the Eleatic author and, regardless of whether he could emphasise particularly dense expressions, he did not limit himself to segregating words from the sentences, or sentences of the fragments, but to offer a more comprehensive overview.

3. The poem of Parmenides

The above-mentioned work of Diels represents the culmination of a very long operation of reconstruction of the pre-Socratic texts that dates back to the s. XVI.²³ Needless to say, the interpretations of Parmenides are strongly influenced by the way these fragments have been translated, published, and commented on throughout history.²⁴

What is original and pioneer about the work of Diels is that he presented in an organized way the *ipsisima verba* of the pre-Socratic thinkers without the mediation of successive commentators. This opened the possibility of understanding them not so much as predecessors of Socrates and Plato, but as "autonomous" authors valued for their own. According to tradition, pre-Socratic thinkers should be measured by whether or not they contributed to pushing Greek thought to the formulation of the great philosophy of the s. V-IV BC. Diels's work placed the most archaic authors in a different perspective and, in this way, also helped, in part, to assess the value of the tradition that had interpreted them.²⁵

As we have already suggested, in a sense, Parmenides is an exception when compared to the other pre-Socratic philosophers, especially if we consider that his Poem has gotten to us less fragmented and uncertain than did the work of other thinkers.

²² Cf. (Most, 2002, p. 89)

²³ In 1573, Henri Estienne published the book *Poiesis Philosophica* in which he collected 67 verses from Parmenides. Cf. (Cordero, 2017).

²⁴ According to Hegel (cf. his commentary on Parmenides in his History of Philosophy) the most prominent commentators on Parmenides' work are Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Sextus Empiricus, and Diogenes Laertius.

²⁵ Cf. (Most, 2010, p. 240ff)

Specifically, we have received 19 fragments. Beyond the first ordination of Theophrastus, in the time of Aristotle, we owe the origin of the textual organization of these fragments to Simplicius (480–560), who lived about ten centuries after Parmenides. It was Simplicius that settled what came to be the traditional division of the poem in three parts: a proemi (already mentioned by Sextus Empiricus - fragment 1); one part dedicated to the way of Truth (ἀλήθεια) (from fragment 2 to fragment 8 verse 52) and, finally, another to the way of opinion (δόξα) (from fragment 8 verse 53 to fragment 18-Simplicius did not know fragment 19). If we want to leave aside the fragment that Sextus Empiricus placed at the beginning, the poem of Parmenides is, roughly speaking, divided into two parts. This double (-triple) structure, inspired by Simplicius, was accepted by the European tradition until authors like Füllerborn (1795) or Susemilhl (1899). It is also the structure that is consolidated by Diels (1903) and Reinhardt (1916).

Following Cordero's work, we consider it relevant to note that the structure of the poem as it was settled by Simplicius is not philosophically neutral. There are reasons to think that Simplicius ordered the texts influenced by philosophical categories that come from Plato and Aristotle. This is Cordero's position that we would like to retain: "We do not hesitate to state (...) that Simplicius applies to Parmenides an Aristotelian-Platonic scheme that has nothing to do with the philosophy of the Eleatic..." (Cordero, 2015, p. 38) In this sense, Cordero states that "our modernity has carried out only a few lifts to rejuvenate this dichotomy: as the intelligible object par excellence is "the Being", the first part of the poem is often called the "Way of Truth or of Being" and as the sensible is assimilated to phenomena, the second part is called the "Way of Appearances."²⁶

Cordero contends that Parmenides has a philosophy of his own, alien to the one Simplicius transmitted of him via the Platonization and Aristotelianization of his thought, but at the same time he believes that none of the s. XX interpretations of his Poem -including Reinhardt and Heidegger's- challenges the one developed by Simplicius, which would have taken us away from its original meaning.²⁷

Beaufret, on the other hand, contends that the interpretation of Karl Reinhardt (1916) is novel and that it introduces remarkable philosophical discontinuities.²⁸ According to the French author, Reinhardt's novelty is

²⁶ (Cordero, 2015, p. 37).

²⁷ (Cordero, 2017). See also Kurfess's serious reservations about Cordero's thesis on the Platonization of Parmenides' thought by Simplicius. Cf. (Kurfess, 2012, p. 137ff)

²⁸ Regarding this book, Gadamer claims: „Was [Reinhardt] in seinem Parmenides-Buch geleistet hat, war wahrhaft bahnbrechend. Wir fangen erst heute an zu ermessen, wie die innere Nähe, die Reinhardt zwischen Parmenides und Heraklit aufdeckte, eine ganze Dimension des Fragens geöffnet hat. Durch ihn ist die Forschung und die philosophische Deutung der Vorsokratiker neu in Bewegung gekommen.“ Cf. (Gadamer, 1977, p. 154) Heidegger quotes Reinhardt in *Sein und Zeit* p. 223. There he acknowledges that Reinhardt first understood and resolved the internal link between the two parts of Parmenides' poem, but adds that he does not explicitly show the basis or ontological necessity of the link between ἀλήθεια and δόξα

twofold:²⁹ firstly, Parmenides would not have conceived the notion of *doxa* as the result of an imprecise way of perceiving reality or as a controversial reaction to a certain philosophy (Heraclitus or the Pythagoreans). According to Reinhardt, for Parmenides the source of error would be the result of a kind of "original sin" that has been affecting man since the dawn of time.³⁰ Thus the error or *doxa* should not be understood as a contingent addition or as independent from the notion of *alétheia*. Both categories – *dóxa* and *alétheia* – would be closely related to a whole from which they would get their meaning.³¹ Secondly, the great novelty of this interpretation would lie in the fact that it puts in crisis the interpretation of Diels and of Willamowitz (and with them a tradition of more than two thousand years) according to which the poem of Parmenides proposes the existence of a bipartition: on the one hand the truth (the thinker who thinks of the being) and on the other hand error, that is, the opinions of mortal men who, slaves to sensibility, do not understand the horizon of a unique and immutable truth. Reinhardt, on the other hand, understands Parmenides' thought on the basis of a tripartition: (i) the path of truth, (ii) the path of error, and (iii) the path of human error, that is to say: that position which starts from a worldview which is not entirely correct, but which is not a pure absurdity neither.

Reinhardt thus introduces an important element of novelty, for he does not equate the path of opinion simply with a perceptual error; rather, the path of opinion is the expression of an "Art Sündenfall" of knowledge. In this way, he opens the path toward understanding the difference between a merely logical error (an absurdity) and an error related to an existence that "errs" (*errare*). It is, therefore, a new way of understanding the tension between the path of truth and that of opinion.

In the 1932 conferences Heidegger addressed this controversial interpretation of Reinhardt. It is our contention that these conferences give continuity to what he wrote in *Being and Time* where, referring to Reinhardt, Heidegger pointed to the idea that although Reinhardt was the first one to understand and resolve the internal link of the two parts of Parmenides' poem, he missed to show either the foundation or the ontological necessity of the link between *alétheia* and *dóxa*.³² We will see how Heidegger thematizes here the profound

Ξα. It is our contention that this comment is very relevant in considering Heidegger's intention to read Parmenides in 1932, five years after the publication of *Sein und Zeit*. Heidegger again shows recognition to Reinhardt's work in 1935 (cf. GA40, 82), this time in connection with the book on Sophocles, published in 1933.

²⁹ Cf. (Beaufret, 1973, p. 53ff)

³⁰ (Reinhardt, 1916, p. 26): "...sie [die Göttin] stellt keine Forderungen, sie gibt nicht an, wovon man auszugehen hätte, sondern sie redet wie von einer Begebenheit der Vorzeit, einer Art Sündenfall der Erkenntnis, der alle anderen Irrtümer unserer Vorstellungen mit Notwendigkeit nach sich gezogen habe".

³¹ Cf. (Beaufret, 1973, p. 53)

³² Cf. GA2, 223. We understand that this comment is very relevant when considering the intention with which Heidegger read Parmenides in 1932, five years after the publication of *Sein und Zeit*.

unity between the two notions and how he shows that Parmenides does not have a metaphysical thinking, as he disagrees with the idea of a supramundane being, beyond appearances and movement.

4. Diels fragment 1, 4, 5, 6. The original statement of the being

Reading Diels' first fragment (D 1, 1-32)³³ allows Heidegger to identify the essential question of Parmenides' thought, that is, the question of the essence of truth (GA35, 112). This is also the question of the essence of being, which, in turn, implies an understanding of what non-truth is.³⁴ Because the truth of the δόξα is only shown in the way that leads to the truth (ἀλήθεια) and that we find described in this first fragment.

We find a first fundamental determination of the essence of truth in fragment 5 of Diels in the well-known sentence: τὸ γὰρ αὐτὸ νοεῖν ἐστὶν τε καὶ εἶναι. Heidegger will call it "the original statement" (*Ur-satz*).³⁵ The importance of this expression is difficult to undermine, not only because tradition has read it as the principle of identity between being and logical thought,³⁶ but also because, according to Heidegger's reading, it acts as the foundation of the distinction between the two paths, that is: the path of being and that of not being. Because where there is being, there is also perception (or thought) and vice versa, where there is no perception, there is nothing (*Nichts*): "the sentence justifies the separation of the ways" (*der Satz begründet der Scheidung der Wege*) (GA35, 120).

While the usual translation of this statement is: "the same thing exists for thinking and for being"³⁷, Heidegger introduces a remarkable variation: "the same is to perceive [*vernehmen*] than to be" (GA35, 115).³⁸ Heidegger interprets the meaning of fragment D5 as follows: "Where there is being there is perception and conversely, where there is perception there is being" (GA35, 116).

³³ With the abbreviation K&R followed by the fragment and page number of (Kirk et al., 1983) K&R Fr. 342, 266/374.

cf Diels:

³⁴ Heidegger does not say lie, but untruth (*Umwahrheit*).

³⁵ Cf. K&R Fr. 344 269/377.

³⁶ Cf. GA2, §44, 212.

³⁷ "the same thing exists for thinking and for being" (K&R Fr. 344 269). Also: "denn dasselbe ist Denken und Sein" (Diels, 1960, p. 231). In *Einführung in die Metaphysik* Heidegger refers "Denken und Sein ist dasselbe" as a traditional translation. He translates "*Zusammengehörig sind Vernehmung wechselweise und Sein*" (cf. GA40, p. 154).

³⁸ Cf. GA2, §36, 171. In this paragraph Heidegger explicitly quotes Parmenides' phrase. Rather than translating it, he explains that: "Sein ist, was im reinen *anschauenden Vernehmen* sich zeigt, und nur dieses Sehen entdeckt das Sein" (italics ours). We believe that it is equally important to remember the relationship proposed by Heidegger between the phrase of Parmenides and the first sentence of Aristotle in his *Metaphysics*. In this, the "existential genesis of knowledge" becomes explicit, which Parmenides' phrase already foreshadows. In GA2 §44, 212 Heidegger translates "*vernehmendes Verstehten*".

But why, we might ask, does Heidegger not translate here simply $\nu\omicron\epsilon\acute{\iota}\nu$ as "denken," as Diels, among others, does? To what extent is it important to distance oneself from the most accepted translation and opt for "vernehmen"? Why is it significant?

What does the verb "vernehmen" mean in this context? Heidegger argues that the Greek verb means: to catch with the eyes, to look, to look at something, to consider or weigh (*be-denken* (!)), "to place in front" (*vor-nehmen*) (GA35, 117). In order to refine the meaning of the translation of $\nu\omicron\epsilon\acute{\iota}\nu$ by "vernehmen", Heidegger argues that: "Being is given only in understanding and all understanding is understanding of Being. Being and understanding of Being is the same, they belong together in one".³⁹ This is the meaning of the *Ur-satz* or original statement. For this reason, we can also interpret, therefore, the verb $\nu\omicron\epsilon\acute{\iota}\nu$ in the sense of understanding (*verstehen*). It should also be noted that when we say that Being is to perceive or understand we are not saying that their relationship is based on the existence of two autonomous realities, but that one and the other occur together: where there is being there is an understanding and vice versa (... *wo Sein ein Verstehen und umgekehrt* or ... *denn dasselbe ist Vernehmen sowohl als Sein*) (GA35, 119 and 115). In this way Heidegger wants to show that the typically metaphysical debate about realism/idealism applied to the reading of Parmenides' thought ultimately depends on a deficient interpretation of the author's text. Metaphysical interpretations do not understand what is essential in the text and, in this way, they also fail to understand the criterion that allows the fundamental distinction between the two paths, the one which leads to being ($\zeta\ \pi\omega\varsigma\ \xi\sigma\tau\iota\nu$) and the one which leads to not being ($\acute{\omega}\varsigma\ \omicron\upsilon\kappa\ \xi\sigma\tau\iota\nu$)—cf. D4.⁴⁰

Why is metaphysical understanding deficient? Heidegger explicitly rules out the two most characteristic options — both the idealist and the "realist" understandings.

"The idealist interpretation: all beings are posited through thinking; thinking as judging — beings are not 'in themselves' but only by the grace of thinking; opposed to this, the appeal to the fact that things 'are' even when we do not think them." For metaphysics, the available options are either an understanding of being that depends on thought (in the sense of logical thinking), or an understanding that posits a being foreign to understanding — a being, therefore, that may or may not be understood, because understanding does not affect the constitution of being "in itself." But neither of these allows one to think Parmenides' sentence: "For he does not say that beings are thinking, but that being belongs together with perceiving" (GA35, p. 120).

For this reason also, metaphysical comprehension fails to grasp the difference between the understanding of the truth (or understanding of the being) and the erroneous understanding (or understanding that does not understand what is). It is worth noting that the text of Parmenides does not say that the

³⁹ "Sein gibt sich nur dem Verstehen, und jedes Verstehen ist Verstehen von Sein. Sein und Seinsverständnis ist *dasselbe*, sie gehören in einem zusammen" (GA35, 117).

⁴⁰ Cf. K&R Fr. 344, 269/377.

beings (*Seiende*) are the thought, but the being always goes (*zusammengehöre*) with perceiving (*Vernehmen*) (GA35, 120).

According to Heidegger, the meaning of Parmenides' sentence goes in an entirely different direction. Heidegger states that "from this there first becomes clear an essential connection between the access to something and that very something (*der Sache*) itself. The sentence plays a *decisive role* within the reflection on the possible and impossible ways of approach to beings as such" (GA35, p. 117). This is a decisive statement that allows one to understand the fundamental link between being and the path that grants access to it. For this reason, as we shall see, the references to the third path will be of such great importance for Heidegger.

But fragment D6 gives rise to a more precise and decisive commentary on the fundamental characteristics of the possible ways, determined in terms of the relationship with the being.⁴¹ Unlike what we read in D4 (in which Parmenides seemed to establish only two possible ways –D4.3 and D4.6)⁴², this fragment 6 refers to three possibilities (GA35, 120 ff.).

First, the way of knowledge, one that understands that Being (the being as Being) is the *Is*. The not Being has no "is" (*das Sein nämlich (das Seiende qua Sein) ist das Ist. Das Nichtsein hat kein "es ist"*) (GA35, 120). This first path points to the idea that the understanding of truth implies the understanding of the ontological difference. The understanding of being (*Sein*) opens up in and through the entity (*Seiendes*). And this means that being is not another entity, but only occurs in relation to the entity, which is always something understood. "*Das Sein des Seienden 'ist' nicht selbst ein Seiendes.*"⁴³ At the same time, the entity never exists

⁴¹ Cf. K&R Fr. 345, 270/379.

⁴² Cf. Diels translates fragment 4 as follows: "Wohlan, so will ich denn sagen - du aber vernehme und pflege die Kunde -//welch Wege des Suchens und Fragens alleine denkbar sind:// Der eine, daß es (das Sein) ist, und daß es nicht nicht sein//kann;// das ist der Weg der Überzeugung der zur Wahrheit gehört. //Der andere aber, daß es (das Nichtsein) nicht ist und nicht sein kann -//ein Weg, so sage ich, ganz und gar nicht zu begehen, //denn Nichtsein kannst du nicht erkennen noch etwas darüber sagen - //es nicht zu (be) greifen." Heidegger's version of D4.3: "Der eine: wie es ist und wie (es, das "es ist") un möglich Nichtsein"; D4.6: "Der andere aber, wie es nicht ist und auch wie notwendig Nicht-sein, dieser also, so gebe ich kund, iste in Fusssteig, zu dem überhaupt nicht zugeredet werden kann". Cf. K&R 269-270/377-378.

⁴³ Cf. *Sein und Zeit* § 2 p. 6. This ontological difference that Heidegger reads in Parmenides becomes radical when, in *Einführung in die Metaphysik*, we read: "Suppose that there were no indeterminate meaning of Being, and that we did not understand what this meaning signifies. Then what? Would there just be one noun and one verb less in our language? No. *Then there would be no language at all.* Beings as *such* would no longer open themselves up in words at all; they could no longer be addressed and discussed. For saying beings as such involves understanding beings as beings -that is, their Being- in advance. Presuming that we did not understand Being at all, presuming that the word "Being" did not even have that evanescent meaning, then there would not be any single word at all. We ourselves could never be those who *say*. We would never be able to be those who we are. For to be human means to be *sayer*." (Translation by Gregory Fried and Richard Polt, Yale Nota Bene, 2000, p 86 ["Angenommen, es gäbe die unbestimmte Bedeutung von Sein nicht und wir verstünden auch nicht, was diese Bedeutung meint. Was wäre dann? Nur ein Name und ein

without being.⁴⁴ This understanding of truth is not given immediately, but as an “uncovering” (*Unverborgenheit*); therefore, as we shall see, it is important to combine this first path with the third.⁴⁵

Second, the way of the “impossible not Being” (a path described as impracticable or “*ungangbare*”, which offers no vision or leads anywhere). Actually, this path is not a path because, Heidegger tells us, from the beginning it is at the end. It is the path that leads to nothing (*Nichts*) (GA35, 118).

Third, the most common way of humans. The text speaks in the plural, because it is the most covered path, although not the only one that a man can take. In any case, it is the way opposed to that of the wise man (singular, cf. D1 3)) (GA35, 122). It is a way characterized not so much by lie as by error, in the sense of erring (that is, “going randomly from one side to the other”). Nor can we characterize it as pure absurdity, and therefore we cannot say that it would be unacceptable as it is unacceptable to claim that A is non-A.⁴⁶ We cannot exclude that this way is accompanied by some knowledge. Moreover, Heidegger adds: “This ignorance (*Nichtwissen*) does not mean that they have no knowledge; on the contrary, in the end they have too much and of many different types. But that is not knowing - they do not have the measure of what is essential or of knowing in the proper sense of the word. (GA35, 123)

As we have already noted, this third possibility, inspired by the interpretive line opened by Reinhardt, assumes that the options presented by Parmenides cannot be determined exclusively by the hand of logical possibilities (the only alternative to identity is contradiction; the only alternative to thought and truth is the absurd), but as an existential possibility that is defined in relation to truth.⁴⁷

According to this third possibility opened by D6, Heidegger refers to men who see, hear, and speak, but who actually see nothing, hear nothing, and that say nothing when they speak (GA35, 124/132). In any case this has nothing that has to do with the $\nu\omicron\omicron\varsigma$, with the understanding of being. The lack of this understanding and this essential gaze is existentially accompanied by the absence of tranquillity and peace (*Ruhe*)⁴⁸; it is associated with the discontinuity in

Zeitwort weniger in unserer Sprache? Nein. *Dann gäbe es überhaupt keine Sprache.* Es gäbe überhaupt nicht dieses, dass in Worten Seiendes *als ein solches* sich eröffnete, dass es angesprochen und besprochen werden konnte. Denn Seiendes als ein solches sagen, schliesst in sich ein: Seiendes als Seiendes, d. h. dessen Sein im voraus verstehen”]. (cf. p. 62; GA40 p. 67).”

⁴⁴ “daß das Sein nie west ohne das Seiende, daß niemals ein Seiendes ist ohne das Sein” GA9 S. 306.

⁴⁵ Cf. also *Einführung in die Metaphysik*, GA 40, p. 219.

⁴⁶ Cf. (Beaufret, 1973, p. 57)

⁴⁷ Cordero, in the line of Pierre Hadot, also points to the idea that the philosophy of authors such as Parmenides was not formulated in Greece in an abstract way, as mere theoretical or academic options, but as ways of living. Cf. (Cordero, 2004, p. 19) Cf. (Hadot, 2009, p. 168): «... les philosophes qui ont fondé des écoles ont voulu, en faisant cela, proposer des modes de vie».

⁴⁸ Cf. § 36 *Sein und Zeit*. „Die beiden für die Neugier konstitutiven Momente des *Umwertens* in der besorgten Umwelt und der *Zerstreuung* in neue Möglichkeiten fundieren den dritten Wesenscharakter dieses Phänomens, den wir die *Aufenthaltslosigkeit* nennen.“

the interpretation of the being and with the inconstancy as a way of existing. In a word, it is the erratic understanding of being. Heidegger uses in this context the pronoun “man” described in *Being and Time*: “one is simply” fleetingly interested in this or that (*man* “*interessert*” *sich bloss*) but without reaching an understanding of being (GA35, 125).⁴⁹ It is obvious that the fact that Heidegger used the same expression in 1932 as in 1927 is not a coincidence.

This third way, characterized by *errare*, does not so much signify an incorrect or false way of perceiving the truth. *Errare* is not due to an imprecision of calculation or an intellectual lack of concentration preventing us from correctly following a deduction, nor does it refer to a logical contradiction. This *errare* points to a way of existing. We cannot expect to understand and to live in just any manner. Heidegger will unfold this in greater detail in *Introduction to Metaphysics*, when he comments on D-6.⁵⁰

This third way is the way of appearance (*Schein*), the one that explains why it may seem that we are speaking but say nothing; that it may seem that we are looking but see nothing; that it may seem that we are philosophizing but are merely devoting a fluctuating attention to topics that we find “interesting”. At this point, it is crucial to remark that this way of existing does not result from the fact that the senses (seeing or hearing ...) are especially obtuse, which would entail difficulties in understanding; it is rather the other way around: the senses get collapsed because the understanding of the *man* is a non-understanding. “They see well enough and listen and speak and say; but they see and however they do not see; they listen and however they do not listen; they speak and however they say nothing” (GA35, 124).

Heidegger’s text continues to elaborate on the existential form of this third way described in fragment D6 while emphasizing the manifest inability of the “one” to become sensitive to difference. In short, people without judgment, without the ability to distinguish being from not being.⁵¹ It is the fleeting gaze that has no judgment and throws everything into the same drawer, without the capacity for discernment or distinction to understand what in reality has “power and rank” (*Macht und Rang* (GA35, 126)) and, therefore, without having either the capacity for decision and determination. The existence that crosses this way is thus dragged from a corner to another (*Richtungslosen Hin und Her*).⁵²

In the third way, that is to say: in the way of the opinions of the mortals (βρωτῶν δόξας) (cf. D1 30) -, the banal form of existing proper of the erratic life is based on the word and reduces it to γλῶσσα (*Gerede*), a notion that is

⁴⁹ Cf. especially GA2 §27, §35-§38.

⁵⁰ Cf. *Einführung in die Metaphysik*, GA40, p. 121 and ff.

⁵¹ D6 7-9: “ἀκριτα φύλα, οἷς τὸ πέλειν τε καὶ οὐκ εἶναι ταύτων νενόμισται καὶ ταύτων”.

⁵² It’s difficult not to think of the words written in 1927: “Jeder Vorrang wird geräuschlos niedergehalten. Alles Ursprüngliche ist über Nacht als längst bekannt geglättet. Alles Er kämpfte wird handlich. Jedes Geheimnis verliert seine Kraft. Die Sorge der Durchschnittlichkeit enthüllt wieder eine wesenhafte Tendenz des Daseins, die wir die *Einebnung* aller Seinsmöglichkeiten nennen.”, cf. GA2 §27.

in clear tension with that of *λόγος* (D1 33-37).⁵³ The first stands for the mere articulation of sounds that does not reach the category of the word. The second, on the other hand, corresponds properly to the attitude (*Haltung*) of the first way, through which one arrives to the *νοεῖν* of being (GA35, 132/133). The verb *λέγειν* indicates to make a choice (*lesen*)⁵⁴ and to concentrate (*sammeln*) on a point; in any case *λέγειν* does not refer exactly to verbalizing linguistically, as to an inner attitude in the use of the word that predisposes us to its comprehension (*vernehmen*) (GA35, 132).

It is important to abandon the idea that the third way has nothing to do with the first. Apart from the fact that both the first and the third, unlike the second, lead somewhere, it must be said that the relationship between them has a more systematic dimension: the third mediates the experience of the first. The third way is the erratic way, the most common of men whose understanding is a lack of understanding (*Ihr Verständnis ist ein Unverständnis* (GA35, 126)). But according to Heidegger, the purpose of Parmenides in describing this way is not to arrogantly mock the ignorant or those who do not understand anything essential (GA35, 123/127), but to emphasize that the way that leads to understanding (the way of the singular man) is the one that eludes the general form of human knowledge (the one that escapes the tribe *-Sippschaft*), that is: the way of the gregarious opinion (*δόξα*). “The first way, the only one that actually offers a full vision of all the richness and all the pure fullness of being, would be as such without understanding and without transit, if it was not understood that the third way is in an essential way linked to it (...) From 3 to 1!” Heidegger writes. “Also therefore there is no 1 without 3” (GA35, 129).

We come to understand (being) because we understand the meaning of living erratically; in fact, the way that leads to the truth begins precisely with understanding this. This understanding is the result of a differentiation (*unterscheiden*) which, in turn, triggers a decision (*entscheiden*) (GA35, 132). This is the very way of Parmenides: he abandons the way of men who do not distinguish (between what is and what is not) and who do not decide (GA35, 129/130).

There seems to be a profound affinity between this way of understanding man’s position in general terms and Reinhardt’s 1916 commentary we quoted earlier, when he referred to human ignorance as an “*Art Sündenfall der Erkenntnis*”, as an immediate and almost universal starting position.

We understand, then, that the description of the third way moves in the realm of the existential description of the “man,” described in *Being and Time*. The translation of *γλωσσοα* by *Gerede* seems to us an eloquent example of this interpretive way.⁵⁵ Heidegger reads Parmenides in 1932 in connection with the description made in *Being and Time* where *Gerede* is the everyday form of speech, analogous to how curiosity is the everyday way of understanding. When Heidegger refers to the uncritical man of erratic understanding as the

⁵³ Diels translates *γλωσσοα* for “Zunge”, i.e. “tongue”. K&R Fr. 346, 271/380.

⁵⁴ In the sense of taking to a center, as the verb to gather (grapes) suggests.

⁵⁵ Cf. GA2 §35.

one who is characterized by the fact that he is fleetingly "interested" in this and that, we cannot help but relate it to §36 of *Being and Time* dedicated to curiosity (*Neugier*). In the context of the 1932 lessons, then, Heidegger continues to relate the understanding of being to a way of being of the Dasein.

The third way described by the goddess *Ἀλήθεια* has its correspondence with a way of existing. We understand, then, that the statement: „Die Problematik der griechischen Ontologie muß wie die einer jeden Ontologie ihren Leitfaden aus dem Dasein selbst nehmen“, still has full authority in Heidegger's understanding of Parmenides' thought.⁵⁶

5. Fragment 8 from Diels

In his 1932 conferences, Heidegger dedicates special attention to fragment D8. This is surely justified both by the philosophical density of the text and by the importance of this fragment to understand the most decisive contents of Parmenides' thought. As we have already noted, our purpose is not to enter into a thorough analysis of all the comments Heidegger makes, but to identify those that are most decisive in determining his interpretation.

In fragment 8 Parmenides identifies a set of signs or characteristics of being (*σήματα*) that can be grouped into two categories: (1) those who deny or express something in negative (unbegotten, imperishable, immovable ...) and (2) those that express something positive (unity, simplicity, totality ...).

Considered as a whole, the negative *σήματα* have in common the fact of excluding movement or of becoming traits associated with being. Thus *ἄτρεμες* (without trembling or without "Beben") or *ἀτέλεστον* (not so much that it has no end, as that it lacks nothing to reach perfection or that it is not unfinished). The question is how to understand these denials. Heidegger argues that, against what has been commonly understood, these *σήματα* should not be understood as properties or predicates of being (GA35, 144) but as aspects or points of view (*Hinsichten*) proper to the gazes directed at the being. They do not indicate a lack or deprivation of being, they rather indicate that this gaze is a gaze that separates us (a *Weg-sehen*) from the vision of being (*das Hinsehen in sich ein Weg-sehen, ein Hin-meg-sehen*) (GA35, 144). Thus, negative characteristics point out not so much to what the being is deprived of as to what the gaze that is directed at the being is deprived of. In short, they show that this gaze is not up to the task: "These negations that appear with the "without" do not mean: the being lacks something, it has a lack, but on the contrary: the one who denies

⁵⁶ Cf. GA2 § 6, p. 25. Heidegger will unfold the interpretation of these three ways and their relationship to being, not being, and appearance (Schein) in *Introduction to Metaphysics*. (cf. GA40, 84 ff.). The fundamental relationship between the first and the third way ultimately depends on the fact that being thought of in the Greek way (i.e., as *φύσις*) cannot be conceived apart from appearing. The distinction between being and not being does not coincide with the distinction between being and appearing. Moreover, "Sein heisst Erscheinen" (GA40, 77). That is why there are not two ways, but three.

is not worthy and does not meet the standard. His measure is another” (GA35, 144/145).⁵⁷

5.1 The statement of time

The first element of the positive *σήματα* that we would like to highlight in these pages is the one related to Heidegger’s comments on the expression: *νῦν ὁμοῦ πᾶν* (D6, 5).⁵⁸ This expression is especially important because it enables a preliminary understanding of the relationship between being and time.

The initial question we have raised is the meaning of the notion of *νῦν* (now, present). We know from the same verse in which this expression appears, that *νῦν* is opposed to *ποτέ* (the past or what was). Heidegger is quick to point out that, on the one hand, this contrast does not lead to understanding the present moment as a reality integrated in a sequence of moments that go from the past to the future. On the other hand, the fact that the essence of the "now" is not shown in the fluidity of temporality, should not make us think that it manifests itself essentially in what is Christianly understood as the "*nunc stans*", and even less in the sense of eternity. (GA35, 146).

Faced with these interpretations, Heidegger contends that the understanding of the nature of the now is inseparable from the understanding of being as the One (*das Eine*) (GA35, 170), that is: as an essence alien to otherness, as an essence that remains calm, at rest (*κεῖται*) and without movement (*ἀκίνητον*). And yet, what is crucial is that this be in rest should not be interpreted in any way as a feature that is out of time. At this point Heidegger refers to *Being and Time* §78 et seq. and to the vulgar way of understanding time as what most powerfully prevents us from having an original understanding of it.

In the same verse D8.5 we find the expression: *οὐδέ ἦν οὐδ ἔσται* (“Being was not and will not be”). This, Heidegger argues, is a way of expressing the relationship between being and time (GA35, 163). The verses 19 et seq. explain this relationship: being has no future or past. If the being is, then it can have nothing to do with the past or the future. Being can only relate to the present.

What the interpreters (*Ausleger*) have argued so far is that being has no time (*Zeitlosigkeit des Seins*). Ironically, Heidegger adds: “We completely identify the absence of time with eternity, and then we already have everything in the best order”⁵⁹ (GA35, 164), although in the whole tradition it is not clear whether

⁵⁷ “Diese Verneinungen mit “ohne” wollen also nicht sagen: dem Sein fehlt etwas, es leidet Mangel, im Gegenteil: das Verneinte ist seiner nicht würdig und ihm nicht gemäss. *Sein Mass ein anderes.*”

⁵⁸ Diels: “...weil es allzusammen nur im Jetzt vorhanden ist”; Heidegger: “...denn als Gegenwart “ist” es all-zumal” (GA35, 135); K&R 273/382: “since it is now, all at once”.

⁵⁹ “Setzt man dann noch vollends Zeitlosigkeit gleich Ewigkeit ist alles in schönster Ordnung”.

“eternity” means absence of time or supratemporality. In any case, it is obvious that this observation is aimed at the metaphysical and Christian understanding of temporality.

We must remember at this point an initial statement by Heidegger in the 1932 lectures that affects both the comments of Anaximander and those of Parmenides (cf. GA35, 1), for it guides us on the meaning that pre-Socratic thought has for Heidegger: the philosophy of the beginning (that is, Greek philosophy), was altered and falsified by Romanism (*Römertum*), Judaism and Christianity.⁶⁰ We must not lose sight of the fact that the resumption of an original understanding of the relationship between being and time as established by the philosophers of the beginning (including Parmenides) is, therefore, to banish (*abbrechen*) these three obstacles, whose influence reaches as far as Hegel (“*die Vollendung der abendländischen d.h. christlich umgebildeten Philosophie*” (GA35, 165)). The Christian understanding of the relationship between being and time is therefore perceived as an obstacle to understanding the principle of Western Greek thought. Bearing this in mind we get to know *against* whom Heidegger speaks explicitly.

As Heidegger emphasizes, neither in this nor in other fragments Parmenides claims that the being is *zeitlos*, that is, with no relation with time. Moreover, Parmenides said nothing about eternity. Strictly speaking, what is said in the texts of the Eleatic thinker is that being has a relationship with the present and only with the present. Certainly, it is said to have no past or future, but nowhere is it said to be *zeitlos*. Because “present” is actually a form of temporality; even more, a temporality that allows us to understand the meaning of the past and the future.⁶¹ The present allows us to understand the past as what is no longer and the future as what is not yet, but we cannot transcend the present, in a way similar to the fact that the unity of being prevents plurality. To claim, supposedly from Parmenides’ thought, that being is eternal or that being has nothing to do with time is simply mere superficiality (GA35, 165).

We have little doubt that this is a core issue in Heidegger’s proposed interpretation of Parmenides. While tradition holds the *Zeitlosigkeit* and *Ewigkeit* of the being of Parmenides, Heidegger opens a new interpretive path: “The explanation [*Erörterung*] of being with respect to time brings nothing negative as a result: absence of past and of future, but something positive: the being is in relation to the present and only to it” (GA35, 165).⁶² This is what Heidegger

⁶⁰ “Römertum, Judentum und Christentum haben die anfängliche Philosophie -d.h. die griechische- völlig verändert und umgefälscht.” Cf. in this context (Spanos, 2001), especially with regard to the case of the understanding of Greece that modern Germans have. Heidegger emphasizes that the enlightened and romantic vision of Greece is deeply mediated by the Roman vision. Heidegger is especially sensitive to the idea that Rome and its imperial understanding act as a real historical obstacle to understanding what ancient Greece was. In this sense cf. GA54, pgs. 60ff. Cf. “Vom Wesen der Wahrheit”, GA34. Simplicius’ contribution should also be considered at this point.

⁶¹ “Gegenwart ist so sehr Zeit, dass von ihr aus erst Vergangenheit und Zukunft gefasst zu werden pflegen” (GA35, 165).

⁶² “Die Erörterung des Seins in Hinsicht auf Zeit hat nichts nur negativ ergeben:

describes as the Parmenides statement about time (*Zeitsatz*): being is the present (*Sein beisst Gegenwart*).⁶³

5.2 The essential statement

To understand what Heidegger describes as the essential statement of being, it will be necessary to begin by the interpretation of verses D8, 6-14 where it is stated that the being is ἄγενετον, that is, unbegotten. How should this attribute of being be understood and how could it be shown that birth (γένεσις) is not proper of the being? (GA35, 152).

A first question to highlight at this point is that, when we propose to understand the meaning of the "unbegotten" character of being, we cannot be guided by demonstrations of what we generally call "logic", because this logic focuses exclusively on saying and "thinking" about the being (*Seiende*). It is the "dialectic" that Heidegger describes as a façade, in the sense that it does not point to the fundamental understanding of being. That is, logic as we understand it (Heidegger calls it the "logic of exact thought") does not address the question of being (*Sein*).⁶⁴ The latter is done by philosophy, and this "has its own Logic, of which we know nothing" (GA35, 154). We cannot understand Parmenides with a manual of logic and foolishly proclaim that his interpretation of being is guided by the principles of identity and non-contradiction. The procedure, then, for coming to show the meaning of ἄγενετον cannot be based on an argument, for example, such as that of reduction to the absurd.

In fact, if we ask ourselves about the origin of Being, it is because we are still in the way of the doxa; this is an essential characteristic of the δόξα way of understanding according to which in order to understand something we need to detect its origin. (GA35, 156).

Where could the Being come from? Could it come from Nothing (from Not Being)? Parmenides' answer is no. And yet, the reason why Parmenides denies this possibility is not the one that has normally been put forward. It has usually been understood that Parmenides rules out this option because we cannot know anything about the not Being. Or because to state the not Being implies disregarding the principle of non-contradiction.⁶⁵ But such an understanding of the impossibility of the nothing (or not Being), says Heidegger, fails to capture Parmenides' rationale. In fact, the position of the Eleatic can be summed up by saying that there is only being where there is "perception and saying" (*Vernehmen und Sagen* - νοεῖν, λέγειν). The origin of being is neither φατόν nor νοητόν, nor can it be said or perceived. The

vergangenheits-, zukunftslos, sondern etwas Positives: das Sein steht im Verhältnis zur Gegenwart und nur zu ihr".

⁶³ In GA2 § 6, 25 we read: "Seiendes ist in seinem Sein als "Anwesenheit" gefasst, d.h. es mit Rücksicht auf einen bestimmten Zeitmodus, die "Gegenwart", verstanden".

⁶⁴ "...die Logik des genauen Denkens" (GA35, 155).

⁶⁵ Cf. Plato, *Sophist*, 260a-263d.

reason is not that we cannot know anything about it, but that such an origin cannot *be*. (GA35, 157).

According to Heidegger, D8 15-16 (ἡ δὲ κρίσις περὶ τούτων ἐν τῷ δ' ἔστιν· ἔστιν ἢ οὐκ ἔστιν)⁶⁶, expresses the essential statement of being (*Wesensatz*). For him, between being and not being what is at stake is a matter of domination (*Herrschaft*): either it is being that dominates or there is no domination. According to Heidegger, whomever came to this vision has grasped being in its essence (GA35 162). This is precisely the fundamental decision (*κρίσις* or *Grundentscheidung*) that leads us to an understanding of the justice (*δικη*) of being. And this has a very important consequence: it also means that for the being there is no possible pact with nothingness (*Nicht und Nichtigen*) and there is no possible pact with the appearance (which is not identical to the nothing).⁶⁷ Being, then, finds itself with all harshness in the face of not being, completely excluding it. Thus we arrive at the formulation of the *Wesensatz vom Sein*: the being is simply no not being (*Sein ist schlechthin un-nichtig*) or the being is simply without negation (*Sein ist schlechthin ohne Nicht*).⁶⁸ There is, therefore, a radical separation of ways, that of being and that of not being.⁶⁹

At this point Heidegger confronts us with the question of the relationship between the the original statement or *Ur-satz* ("being is in a necessary relationship with perceiving (*vernehmen*)"), the statement of time ("being is in a necessary relationship with the present") and the essential statement (*Wesensatz*) ("being is without no being") (GA35, 166). How do these three statements relate?

To begin with: do the first and second (*Ur-satz* and *Zeitsatz*) statements say the same or different things. Is being without no being because being is present; or is being present because it is without no being? In order to answer these questions, we need to understand that it is the statement of time that has preeminence (*Der Zeitsatz hat Vorrang*); in other words: what allows us to understand fundamentally why being does not have an origin nor has an end (neither a past nor a future) is that it is only present. There is no being beyond the present.

Heidegger interprets the presence of being in the light of verses 22-25 of fragment D8, when he refers to the last of the characteristics or signs (*σήματα*) of being, the *συνεχές* (*Zusammenhalt*, continuity). In this sense he contends

66 Diels: „Die Entscheidung aber liegt hierüber in Folgendem: es ist oder es ist nicht“; K&R 273/383: “the decision on these matters rests here: it is or it is not“; Heidegger: „Sein herrscht oder Nichts oder es gibt keine Herrschaft“.

67 Cf. Plato, *Sophist*, 260d.

68 GA35, 166.

69 We do not consider Alain Badiou's position to be negligible when he states, while commenting on this moment in Heidegger's production, that the essential thing is that philosophy depends on a decision. The chariot described by Parmenides in the first fragment is precisely the metaphor that shows the place of the decision of philosophy. Philosophy would be lost the moment we assert that there is only one way. Cf. (Badiou, 2015, p. 27ff) In *Einführung in die Metaphysik* Heidegger introduces in relation to Parmenides two differences which are literally fundamental to philosophy. First, the difference between being and not being; second, the difference between being and appearing. Both are constitutive of philosophy.

that being cannot have parts because the parts would be beings that would imply a discontinuity or an intermediary between being and being, that is to say: no being. The exclusion of discontinuity also means the exclusion of the movement of being, which implies that being cannot transcend or go beyond what it is. So everything is full of being. Therefore, there is neither distance nor proximity, nor absence but only presence (GA35, 167). There is, therefore, a massive resistance of being to any contact or intersection with what is not or with negativity or with otherness (GA35, 170). It is remarkable that in this context, Heidegger makes a virtually indistinguishable use of *Anwesenheit* and *Gegenwart*, which we could translate by presence and present. "Presence, which bears the pure fullness and the pure dominion of proximity and distance, is present." (GA35, 168) or "Being is present (*Gegenwart*) and presence (*Anwesenheit*)". However, as we will highlight, Heidegger will find the time to emphasise that these notions are not synonymous.

6. Diels fragment 2

At this point, Heidegger addresses the seemingly puzzling text of fragment D2. In it we read something that, at the outset, radically contradicts what has been said so far about the characteristics of being.⁷⁰ In this passage, Parmenides refers to the presence (*das Anwesende*) as that which includes the absent (*ἄπρόντα*-, that is, the opposite of what is present). So, contrary to what has been said, it is now claimed that the absence is also a feature of being. However, according to Heidegger, this contradiction is not so much due to the fact that Parmenides cannot justify his statements, as to our inability to understand it (GA35, 175).

At this point it is necessary to understand the meaning of "presence". First of all, the present (*παρόντα*) is that which is in the realm of "Da", that is, that which is in front of our eyes, that which is within reach ... Curt: "Das, was da, ist anwesen" (GA35, 176). However, it must be acknowledged that the dividing line between what is present and what is absent cannot be drawn in an exhaustive way. For example, we can invoke the existence of a presence linked to our memory, when we think of the Black Forest ... in this case, what is absent is given in the form of a certain presence that is not immediately perceptible. But since being does not admit any denial, neither presence nor absence can be understood as what it is not, but as something that is. Absence is a form of being, that is, a form of presence: "... it must be present precisely when and because it is ab-sent, precisely as ab-sent it must be present!"⁷¹

But how far does this presence go? Parmenides answers this question in verses 2-4 of the fragment when he uses the expression *κατὰ κόσμον*, that is, presence encompasses the whole world, in all directions. Not just

⁷⁰ K&R Fr. 349, 275/385.

⁷¹ "... ja es muss sein gerade wenn und weil es ab-wesend ist, gerade als ab-wesendes muss es anwesen!" (GA35, 177).

nature, but what Heidegger calls *Seiendes im Ganzen*.⁷² Hence a definition of the world: "The unity of the totality [of the cosmos] in the whole is the world" (GA35, 177).⁷³

Absence is presence for the $\nu\omicron\hat{\upsilon}\hat{\varsigma}$, who perceives being, because every entity (Seiende) is in relation to being (Sein). This is precisely the meaning of the statement: the being cannot be divided or fragmented: "The $\nu\omicron\epsilon\hat{\iota}\nu$ neither chunks, nor disperses, nor fragments, but unifies (the) presence in an original unity" (GA35, 177). The $\nu\omicron\epsilon\hat{\iota}\nu$ is the one who in the first place forms and maintains this presence, the one who takes care of the "is". Thus, thought is the present (*Gegenwart*) because it brings all entities together in a fundamental unity, since every entity is in relation to being. In other words, being as $\nu\omicron\epsilon\hat{\iota}\nu$ makes present (*vergegenwärtigen*), therefore, in reality it is not that the absence belongs to the essence of the being in the form of presence, but that the presence is, contends Heidegger, so fundamentally one, unitary, simple (*Einfache*) that without it the absence is not possible (GA35, 177). By contending that we can make a city like Berlin present (*vergegenwärtigen*), while being in Freiburg, Heidegger emphasises that we are broadening the scope of presence. Indeed: the presence (*Anwesenheit*) now goes beyond what immediately surrounds us, but it is not that this sphere expands because we have dragged into it something that was not present (Berlin), but the other way around: we can make the absent become present because we have expanded the scope of presence. The character of thought is precisely making things present (*Gegenwärtigen*). For this reason, Heidegger argues that "the original statement (*Ur-satz*) and the statement of time (*Zeit-satz*) say "the same"" (GA35, 179). Just as there is a fundamental unity between thinking and being, there is also a fundamental closeness between thinking and a form of temporality, that is, the present (*Gegenwart*).

In this sense it is not superfluous to remember the fundamental relationship (*Zusammengehörigkeit*) that occurs between $\nu\omicron\epsilon\hat{\iota}\nu$ and of $\lambda\acute{\epsilon}\gamma\epsilon\iota\nu$. Thought (*Vernehmen*) is not given in isolation, nor is it given in the form of a being in the hand (*Vorhandenes*); thought is given rather in relation to being.⁷⁴ To the extent that thought is what sustains unity and to the extent that it brings together (*Sammeln*) in presence, so too the $\nu\omicron\epsilon\hat{\iota}\nu$ is $\lambda\acute{\epsilon}\gamma\epsilon\iota\nu$. Where there is no understanding (or thought) of being, there is no language (*Sprache*) and vice versa: where there is no language, there is no understanding of being: "All language can only be said in Being" ("*Alle Sprache ist nur im Sein sagbar*"), for this reason, adds Heidegger, neither the animal nor the plant exist (GA35, 177). There is no being that is not understood or said, just as there is no understanding that is not an understanding of being by a *Dasein*.

⁷² Cf. $\kappa\alpha\tau\grave{\alpha}$ $\kappa\omicron\varsigma\omicron\mu\omicron\nu$, cf. „Vom Wesen des Grundes“ in *Wegmarken*, 123-175.

⁷³ "Die Einheit der Ganzheit dieses im Ganzen ist die Welt".

⁷⁴ In verse 34 of the D8 we find the expression: $\tau\alpha\upsilon\tau\omicron\nu\delta\prime$ $\epsilon\sigma\tau\iota$ $\nu\omicron\epsilon\hat{\iota}\nu$ $\kappa\alpha\iota$ $\omicron\upsilon\nu\epsilon\kappa\epsilon\nu$ ξ $\sigma\tau\iota$ $\nu\omicron\eta\mu\omicron$. Diels: „Denken und des Gedankens Ziel ist eins“; Heidegger: „Dasselbe aber ist das Vernehmen und das, deswillen die Vernehmung“; K&R, Frg. 352, 277/388: "What can be thought is only the thought that it is".

We should not forget verses 37-40 of D8 where it is emphasised that the most common way of speaking about being by a *Dasein* is to focus exclusively on the entity (*Gerede*). The text distinguishes between *ὀνομάζειν* and *λέγειν*. In the first case it is the tendency to name, but not to speak in the sense of saying the being. *ὀνομάζειν* is typical in the way of the *δόξα*: the tendency to give names, to stabilise and harden reality and, in doing so, the tendency to create a world of knowledge formed by words. We put names to appearances by fixing them and, in this way, we prevent a proper understanding of being: "the meaning and weight of the word must be saved and rescued through the recognition of the essence".⁷⁵

Final considerations

Gadamer recalls that every statement is always motivated; no statement should be understood by exclusively paying attention to what it says.⁷⁶ Bearing it in mind, we would like to contend that Heidegger's interpretation of the work of the two pre-Socratic authors (Anaximander and Parmenides) in 1932 was a very thorough and highly motivated one.

First of all, the conferences about Parmenides respond to the need to destroy the prevailing understanding of ontology of Western tradition. This global goal does not arise only in the works of 1932, but dates back to the early 1920s, as it sustains the bulk of the work of reinterpreting Western metaphysical thought.

Heidegger reads the pre-Socratics in general and Parmenides in particular with the desire to leave behind a tradition which, in his view, has falsified the thought found in the beginning (*Anfang*). In this sense, he explicitly emphasises that the traditional understanding of Parmenides' thought is simply superficial. Dissatisfaction with the way tradition has transmitted Parmenides' original thought manifests itself. Heidegger's will to break up the tradition that falsifies the original thought and to offer a new interpretation of the fundamental thought of the Greeks that leaves aside metaphysics, the Roman culture, Judaism and Christianity suggests a clearly revolutionary attitude.

One of the main purposes of these conferences is to shatter the idea that Parmenides had a completely abstract thought and who, by following the principles of what Heidegger calls "the logic of exact thought", has determined the meaning of being at the margins of time. Parmenides' thought, like Greek ontology as a whole, can only be understood from the *Dasein*.

Having read the fragments of Parmenides, we cannot say that the Parmenidian being is *zeitlos*. There is a temporality of being, although this temporality is not to be conceived (metaphysically) as the otherness opposed to the

⁷⁵ "Bedeutung und Gewicht des Wortes immer bewahrt und eingelöst werden durch die Erkenntnis des Wesens" (GA35, 192). Concerning the meaning of *δόξα* cf. GA34, pp. 246ff. See also GA35, 184.

⁷⁶ Cf. (Gadamer, 1967, p. 54)

idea of supratemporal identity. The temporality of being is determined in the form of the present, which is what allows us to understand the meaning of the past and the future. Moreover: being is the present.

This intimate relationship between being and time allows for the disarticulation of the traditional interpretation of Parmenides, while leaving aside the idea that the timeless being is on the side of truth and that time is on the side of appearances and on the way of opinion. Likewise, in an epistemological dimension, it undermines the conviction according to which the way of truth has nothing to do with the way of opinion.

But Heidegger not only destroys and disarticulates the traditional interpretation, but opens a new horizon to understanding the texts of the pre-Socratic author. Heidegger makes Parmenides comprehensible on the basis of the categories introduced in his 1927 work and thus moves towards a new interpretation of the author Eleatic.

Like so many authors of his generation, Heidegger feels heir to Reinhardt. In 1927, in *Being and Time*, he expressed his gratitude to the author of *Parmenides und die Geschichte der griechischen Philosophie*, but he had also pointed out in what sense Reinhardt's book had failed to understand the relationship between the way of the δόξα and the way of the ἀλήθεια. A reading of the 1932 texts highlights that the future Rector of the University of Freiburg takes into account this deficit of Reinhardt's contribution and that he proposes an alternative formulation that he will complete three years later in *Introduction to Metaphysics*. In fact, Heidegger pays attention to the need to relate these two (three) ways and therefore not to understand them in isolation. Reading Diels fragment 6 is, at this point, crucial. The truth of the δόξα "can only be attained in the way of truth" ("ist aber offenbar nur zu gewinnen auf dem Weg der Wahrheit") (GA35, 112).

In the light of the third way, Heidegger explores an existential dimension of Parmenides' thought: the third way (like the first) are not mere logical expositions of the determination of being, they are not mere deductions derived from the analysis of the ideas, but ways to relate to the truth.

This revolutionary attitude of Heidegger, clearly formulated in 1932, also paves the way for interpreting both Heidegger's political decisions a few months later, and the link these decisions may have with his philosophical production. We can read the texts of 1932 in the light of Karl Löwith's interpretation of Heidegger's philosophical production and political decisions in the early 1930s. More specifically: that between the motivations that are at the basis of decisions made in the political field and the motivations that are at the basis of their philosophy, there is a line of continuity.⁷⁷ This line of continuity revolves around his desire to radically overcome tradition in favour of a thought that thinks in an original way.

⁷⁷ Cf. (Löwith, 1989, p. 56ff)

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