

PARMENIDES AND THE ONTOLOGICAL DIFFERENCE

ABSTRACT: The aim of this article is to explore the ontological difference within Parmenides's poem "Peri physeōs," with a specific focus on line B 2.3, which reads: "exists, and it is not possible not to exist" (estin te kai hōs ouk esti mē einai). By interpreting "ouk esti" as a negative judgment and "mē einai" as a negative predication, I argue that this line already conceals the essence of the ontological difference, insofar as being *is not* an entity, and entities are *not-being*. This interpretation draws on Plato's notion of negation and difference as discussed in "The Sophist," as well as on Kantian infinite judgment. The distinction between these two negations enables the development of the concept of a meontological difference between "non-being" and "non-entities," which lies at the core of the ontological difference between being and entities, and also illuminates Heidegger's pairing of *Ereignis* and *Enteignis*. Additionally, I argue that Heidegger's interpretation of Heraclitus in light of truth as alethēia relies on a similar double-negativity. Finally, I show the illuminating potential of examining the ontological difference in Parmenides by analyzing Heidegger's 1949 preface to the third edition of the treatise "On the Essence of Ground" (1929).

KEYWORDS: Ontological difference, Negative predication, Negative Judgement, Meontology, Presocratics, *Ereignis*.

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*"The richer the 'nothing,' the simpler the being."*²

The question of the ontological difference preoccupied Heidegger since his so-called phenomenological period to his later thinking of *Ereignis*. Indeed, the difference between being and entities is so pervasive throughout his thought that it can blur the notorious split between Heidegger I and Heidegger II.³ His later thought seems to be an incessant attempt at clarifying and refining the difference on its own terms, undeterred by the differentiated things or by the differentiating mind.⁴ His private notes – collected in volumes such as *Das Ereignis* (GA 71) or *Zum Ereignis-Denken* (GA 73) – make this point clear. In the following, I will pursue the

² GA 65, p. 245: "Je reicher das 'Nichts', umso einfacher das Seyn."; *Contributions to Philosophy (from Enowning)*, trans. P. Emad and K. Maly, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000. The translation is slightly modified. In the following, I will quote only according to the page number of the German editions of Heidegger's works (Gesamtausgabe), since most of the English translations from Heidegger also provide the German page number.

³ See, for instance, P. Emad, "'Heidegger I,' 'Heidegger II,' and *Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis)*," in *From Phenomenology To Thought, Errancy, And Desire*, ed. by Babette E. Babich, Dordrecht: Springer Science+Business Media, 1995. Although it might seem that Emad questions the relevance of importing the ontological difference into Heidegger's later thought, saying that "both transcendence and ontological difference should be surpassed" (Emad, "Heidegger I, II," p. 138), he nonetheless acknowledges that "in the deepening and opening of the thinking of 'Heidegger II,' 'Heidegger I' is not lost, but, itself retained and deepened." (Emad, "Heidegger I, II," p. 143). The latter remark is assumed in the present paper, in the course of which I will point out some traces of this retention and deepening in Heidegger's later thought.

⁴ GA 73.2, p. 930: "Die Differenz – nicht: Relation (weder nachträgliche – noch nur stiftende (wie?)) zwischen Differenten. Nicht der Hin- und Her-trag zwischen für sich Bestehenden, sondern der Aus-trag des Aufgehens der Zwiefalt – das Zwischen."

thread of the ontological difference with an eye to interpreting Parmenides. In the first two parts of the paper, I will address the issue of the ontological difference with regard to the poem *Peri physeōs*, questioning how we can trace the ontological difference back to Parmenides. I will do so by interpreting and translating one line from his poem, which contains the first thing the goddess says to the young rider in pointing to the path of truth: “*hē men hopōs estin te kai hōs ouk esti mē einai*”.⁵ The focus of my analysis will be on the negations *ouk esti* and *mē einai*. I will interpret the former in terms of a difference-making judgement, and the latter as a negative predication. In the third and final part, I will state the limitations of my interpretation with the prospect of furthering and deepening it with regard to Heraclitus. I will conclude with a brief analysis of Heidegger’s preface from 1949 to the third edition of the treatise “On the essence of ground” (1929).

1.

In the following, I will deal with only one line of Parmenides’s poem, which contains the so-called “Parmenides’s thesis”: “*hē men hopōs estin te kai hōs ouk esti mē einai*”, translated by Leonardo Taran as “‘exists’ and ‘it is not possible not to exist’”.⁶ This utterance introduces the first significant thing that the goddess says to the young charioteer in revealing the path of truth. It is to be expected that the first thing she says will be of the utmost importance and

⁵ Parmenides, fr. 2, v. 3. Cf. M. Conche, *Parménide. Le Poème: Fragments*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1996, p. 75.

⁶ Just like L. Taran (*Parmenides*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965, p. 32), C. H. Kahn (“The Thesis of Parmenides,” in *The Review of Metaphysics*, XII, 1969, p. 707) also gives a modal translation: “The first way is *that it is and that it cannot not be.*”

thus will reveal the truth in its fullness. But, perhaps surprisingly, the goddess is not content with a plain and simple proclamation of being (*estin*), as if being were not enough, for she immediately adds that “there is no not-being,” *te kai hōs ouk esti mē einai*. It becomes important then to ask: what does this addition do to the meaning of her initial saying? What is changed with regard to the simple *estin*? Without going in minute details, the answer to these questions depends on the meaning we ascribe to the conjunction *kai*. Roughly speaking, one can understand its role either synthetically, i.e. as adding something more to what was said, or analytically, as making explicit what was left unsaid. I believe that the latter is the case, since – properly understood – being is self-sufficient inasmuch as there is neither need, nor possibility for anything else to be added to it.⁷ Which means that when reduced to their essential core – free from the redundancy of the conjunction – the words of goddess read as *estin ouk esti mē einai*, that is “being is not not-being”.⁸

⁷ This follows from a couple of characterizations of being, such as (in fr. 4, v. 2) “it cannot cut of Being from holding fast to Being” (Taran, *Parmenides*, p. 45), or (in fr. 8, v. 4) “whole, unique, immovable, and complete”, and also (in fr. 8, v. 5-6) “Being [...] is now altogether, one, continuous.” (Taran, *Parmenides*, p. 85). If being cannot be separated from itself, it is also impossible to rejoin it back.

⁸ It must be noted that “being” should not be interpreted here in a substantial way, i.e. as an entity. Rather, “being” verbally expresses the existence in a way that precludes any substantializing and, for that matter, any subjectification. It is true that the elimination of the conjunction significantly alters the original phrase, which rather says something along the lines of “on the one hand there is, and on the other hand there is not not-being”. Yet, it is also true that this disjunction presupposes the fact that being is not not-being. In fact, this is the fundamental presupposition of the fragment, and for this reason I will treat it as such. I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for highlighting this aspect. More on the elliptical structure of

This is a more literal translation that maintains a hermeneutical neutrality regarding the saying.⁹ Yet I believe that this seeming neutrality already conceals an interpretation, which gives favor to the difference between being and entities.¹⁰ But in what way does the ontological difference transpire from this wording? I will show this by analyzing step by step both negations within the phrase: “is not” (*ouk esti*) and “not-being” (*mē einai*).

In proper order, let’s begin with the first negation. Generally, we express the difference between two things through a negative judgment, that is by saying “it is not”.¹¹ To take just a couple of distinctions from the poem itself: the night *is not* the day, and the path of truth *is not* the path of belief. In both cases, we tell the

this phrase, see Marcel Hosu, *Das tautologische Denken im Lehrgedicht des Parmenides*, Cluj: Editura Școala Ardeleană, 2020.

⁹ Marcel Conche opts for a translation in which both negations are preserved, without rendering them in modal terms: “l’une qu’il y a et que non-être il n’y a pas”, M. Conche, *Parménide*, p. 75. I align with him on this. For a translation of “*ouk esti* with ‘(it) is not’ and *mē einai* with ‘non-being’”, see S.F. Galango, “Non-being in Parmenides, DK B2,” in *Anais de Filosofia Clássica*, 2020, 28, p. 17.

¹⁰ As Heidegger remarks (GA 55, p. 63): “[...] for every translation is in itself already an interpretation”. The translation is slightly modified.

¹¹ For an extensive analysis of the negation in the light of Reinach’s phenomenological theory of negative judgment, see D. Dahlstrom, “Negation and Being,” in *The Review of Metaphysics* (December 2010), p. 64. With regard to negation understood in terms of difference, he mentions that “For Aquinas, access to the very subject matter of metaphysics is crucially dependent upon the distinctive negative judgment he labels *separatio*.” (Dahlstrom, “Negation and Being,” p. 248). Bosanquet, quoted by Dahlstrom, puts it as follows: “Negation is simply the *logical, conscious expression of difference*,” which also amounts to Russell’s and Ayer’s notion of negation as difference (Dahlstrom, “Negation and Being,” p. 255). The same follows from Heidegger’s confrontation with Hegel, in which he writes: “Die Kennzeichnung der Hegelschen ‘Negativität’ als *Unterschied* des Bewußtseins.” GA 68, p. 13.

difference by copula-negation: *A is not B*. This rule certainly holds for entities, but does it also apply to the difference between being and entities? In fact, according to Heidegger's own formulation, it does. In the lecture-course from 1927, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, where the expression "ontological difference" appears for the first time, Heidegger characterized it as follows: "The ontological difference says: an entity is always characterized by a specific constitution of being. Such being *is not* itself an entity. [Dieses Sein selbst *ist nichts* Seiendes.]"¹² The use of negation here is not just a manner of speech, since by only *saying* that A is not B, we *do* in fact differentiate A from B.¹³ Later on, Heidegger himself briefly noted down the formal structure of the difference in terms of negation: "13. The Difference / formally as | relation of negation | / a not b".¹⁴

It seems that negation comes up again and again when Heidegger deals with the difference. For instance, in *What is Metaphysics?* Heidegger glosses over the role of negation, saying that the "not" could be understood as a means of differentiation. He points out that negation as an act of mind is secondary to the "not" itself, rooted in and revealed by nothingness as such.¹⁵ On other several occasions, Heidegger spoke about the significance of a proper understanding of the "not," and its importance for the

¹² GA 24, p. 109. The emphasis is mine and the translation is slightly modified.

¹³ Heidegger touched on this point in his analysis of negation ("as letting be seen") in his lecture-course on *The Sophist*, GA 19, p. 559. He stressed the importance of paying attention to the disclosive character of the "not", by which we reveal something of the real (like someone's absence), and not just formally negate at the level of simple judgement. See GA 19, p. 570: "Every 'not,' in every saying of 'not,' whether explicitly expressed or implicit, has, as a speaking about something, the character of exhibition."

¹⁴ GA 73.2, p. 1087.

¹⁵ GA 9, p. 117.

philosophical thinking.¹⁶ But, for the purpose of the current interpretation, it is noteworthy to emphasize Heidegger's take on negation with regard to the inceptual thinking of the Greeks. In his interpretation of Heraclitus, which must be read essentially in accordance with Parmenides – inasmuch as both of them are inceptual thinkers¹⁷ – he stressed the need to take the inceptual thinking just as it appears, paying close attention to its form: “the fidelity we owe to the inceptual word demands that we leave it in its negating form, especially since, presumably, the negation in the inceptual word is something other than a mere form of linguistic expression.”¹⁸ By way of this hermeneutical indication, I will analyze Parmenides's line word by word.¹⁹ My task thereby will be to deploy the ontological difference from within of Parmenidian saying.

But, beforehand, a remark on Heidegger's thinking of the difference must be made. Although the relevance of the ontological difference for Heidegger's later thought was questioned by some reputed scholars, I believe that we must distinguish several steps or moments in thinking the difference.²⁰ It appears to me that the

¹⁶ See SZ, pp. 285-286, for the significance of “the *ontological meaning of the notness* [Nichtigkeit],” and GA 19, p. 560, for the phenomenological significance of the disclosive “not”. Even earlier, in his interpretation of religious experience, Heidegger pointed to the fundamentally distinct character of the philosophical negation with respect to merely formal or logical one (*non privativum / non negativum*), which he calls “the enactmental not [vollzugsmässigen Nicht],” GA 60, p. 209.

¹⁷ GA 55, p. 339.

¹⁸ GA 55, p. 96.

¹⁹ On this point, see also Heidegger's observation on Heraclitus: “The more unblemished the ordinary thought remains secured in the word, all the more carefully must we safeguard the intact word and consider its appearance.” (GA 55, p. 35) The same holds for Parmenides as well.

²⁰ P. Emad, “Heidegger I, II,” p. 138; T. Sheehan, “A paradigm shift in Heidegger research,” in *Continental Philosophy Review*, (2001), 34, pp. 188-189. Sheehan

ontological difference itself must be differentiated according to the ways in which we are prepared to grasp it. In a note from *Zum Ereignis-Denken* (GA 73.2), Heidegger sketched the steps of thinking the difference, which I will call “the four moments of the ontological difference”. The arrow he draws clearly illustrates a sort of going in-depth:

↓ der ausgesprochene Satz: Sein ist nichts Seiendes
 der ungedachte Spruch: Sein: nichts Seiendes
 die ungehörte Sage: Anwesenlassen und Anwesendes
 ↓ die ungesagte Sache: Lassen – Gewähren: Lichtung des Sich-verbergens,
 Lassen: Lichten – Freigeben – räumen – zeiten – ²¹

One can easily note the distinction between (1) the expressed thesis (*der ausgesprochene Satz*) and (2) the unthought saying (*der ungedachte Spruch*). According to the first, “being is not an entity”. However, the same appears more simply in the unthought saying as “being: not entities”. But what is the difference between (1) and (2)? Moreover, why is there a need to go further into (3) the unheard word (*Sage*), and (4) the unsaid issue? Perhaps, it is noteworthy that the four

is right in seeing the ontological difference at the heart of the whole history of philosophy, but this does not mean that Heidegger distanced himself from it, nor that we should do so, for – as Heidegger writes (GA 55, p. 151) – “this difference is operative everywhere in Occidental history but is the least questioned and least thought-through, and is never taken *as* the difference that it is”. Moreover, what “if the difference between being and beings is an essential difference – or, indeed, is the inceptual difference itself”, GA 55, p. 150. Heidegger’s conditional is only rhetorical, and thereby should be read as asserting what he is asking.

²¹ GA 73.2, p. 1234. That *Lichtung* must be thought in accord with the ontological difference, see GA 73.2, p. 983: “Die Lichtung als solche – denn austragend Sein und Seiendes.” The same holds for the third moment, GA 73.2, p. 1344: “‘Ontologische Differenz’ und Anwesenlassen das Anwesende”.

moments of the difference reflect Heidegger's own movement from the temporality of being to the truth of being in search for latter's proper meaning.²² The letting-be as the presence of what is present has certainly temporal overtones, whereas the clearing of self-concealment – which frees both space and time in their co-originary belongingness – points to unconcealment as *a-lētheia*.²³

Going back to the first two moments, which will constitute the central focus of my interpretation, I think that (1) “the expressed thesis” deals with the negation as *ouk esti* (copula negation), while (2) “the unthought saying” deals with the negation as *mē einai* (concept negation or negative predication). A clarification of both negations, and what is behind them, is required. That is to say, it is important to have a clear grasp on the

²² Originally, the ontological difference – the way Heidegger put it back in 1927 as “being is not itself an entity” – delineated itself within the context of the temporal analysis of transcendence that, according to Heidegger, enables the understanding of being, and hence enacts the difference between being and entities. The coupling of transcendence, regarded as temporally structured, and truth as *alētheia*, dates as early as from 1928 (GA 26, p. 281): “There is accordingly a deep insight in the Greek word for truth, *a-lētheia*. Beings must first of all be torn from concealment; concealment must be removed from beings, and it gets removed inasmuch as temporalizing temporality provides the occasion for world-entry.” Moreover, at this point, temporality itself is interpreted as the originary movement (GA 26, p. 256) of world-disclosure which as such is not a being, but rather the *nihil originarium* (GA 26, p. 272): “World is the nothing which temporalizes itself primordially, that which simply arises in and with temporalization. We therefore call it the *nihil originarium*.” See also GA 73.2, p. 929: “Differenz aus |Transzendenz | qua Temporalität.” See also GA 73.2, p. 1091: “Unterscheidung selbst als Seyn – in ihr als Wahrheit des Seyns west die Transzendenz.” See also GA 73.2., p. 1355.

²³ The fourth moment is *beyng* itself, “das Seyn als die Wahrheit (Zeit-Raum)” (GA 66, p. 100). See also GA 73.2, p. 1301, and p. 1382; GA 65, p. 268: “Wahrheit als *Lichtung* für das *Sich-verbergen*.”

me-ontological difference in order to understand in turn the ontological difference itself.²⁴ This is the big lesson we can draw from Plato's *Sophist*, which was summarized by Owen under the title of "Parity Assumption," according to which "any light thrown on either being or not-being will equally illuminate the other".²⁵

²⁴ To the best of my knowledge, the expression "meontological difference" was used for the first time by Stanislas Breton, "L'un et l'être. Réflexions sur la différence méontologique," (in *Revue Philosophique de Louvain*, Quatrième série, 83, nr. 57, 1985, pp. 5-23) in the context of neo-Platonic distinction between being and the One (which is beyond being). A similar usage of the expression can be found in Cornel-Florin Moraru's article, "The Forbidden Path Of Late Greek Thinking. Meontology And Meontological Difference In Damascius' *De Principiis*," in *Revue Roumaine de Philosophie* 61, 1, Bucharest, 2017, pp. 145-156. In 2018, (in "Nimicnicia răului și diferența meontologică. Schița unei interpretări meontologice a problemei răului la Platon" [The Nothingness of Evil and the Meontological Difference: A Sketch of a Meontological Interpretation of the Problem of Evil in Plato], in *Revista de filosofie*, LXV, 2, București, 2018, pp. 176-188) Moraru drew on the Platonic analysis of not-being, making the difference between not-being and non-existence (see also Viorel Cernica, *Fenomenul și nimicul I. Proiectul fenomenologic – concept și aplicații*. București: Paideia, 2005), which is close to the way I understand the meontological difference, namely as the difference between not-being *as* entities, and non-entity *as* being.

²⁵ G.E.L. Owen, "Plato on Not-Being," in *Plato. A Collection of Critical Essays. I: Metaphysics and Epistemology*, Palgrave Macmillan, 1971, p. 230. In the words of the Eleatic Stranger, the principle sounds as follows: "since being and not-being participate equally in the perplexity, there is now at last some hope that as either of them emerges more dimly or more clearly, so also will the other emerge." Plato, *The Sophist*, 250E-251, trans. H.N. Fowler, William Heinemann Ltd, London, 1921, p. 391. See also J. Beaufret, *Dialogue with Heidegger: Greek Philosophy*, trans. Mark Sinclair, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2006, p. 39. This principle was expressed by Heidegger himself most clearly, to my knowledge, in the *Introduction to Metaphysics* (1935), which Beaufret quotes, in saying: "Since the inception of the question of what is, the question of what is not and of

Heidegger himself, as the motto of this article suggests, endorsed the idea that a proper understanding of being finds its appropriate elucidation in a corresponding understanding of not-being.²⁶ Accordingly, Heidegger notes in *Über den Anfang* (GA 70) something akin to the Aristotelian *to (mē) on legetai pollachōs*:²⁷

The nothing is polysemic and oscillates like being in its history:

1. "The nothing" can mean the common nothing – full absence of entities.

Nothing has gone side by side with it. But it does not do so superficially, as an accompanying phenomenon; instead, the question about Nothing takes shape in accordance with the breadth, depth, and originality with which the question about beings is asked on each occasion, and conversely. The manner of asking about Nothing can serve as a gauge and a criterion for the manner of asking about beings." GA 40, p. 18.

²⁶ See also GA 65, p. 266: "In the entire history of metaphysics, [...] 'being' is always grasped as beingness of beings and thus as these beings themselves. As the result of philosophy's asthenia in differentiation, still today all 'thinkers' begin, as it were, by equating being with beings. *Correspondingly, the nothing is always grasped as a non-being [Nichtseiende] and thus as something negative.*" The emphasis is mine. Heidegger then proceeds to differentiate nothing as non-being from the original nothing understood as being, i.e. as the unconcealment and freeing, which corresponds to the fourth moment of the ontological difference. It is important to notice the verbal aspect which Heidegger ascribes to the original nothing, which the nothing as mere counter-stance to being lacks. GA 65, pp. 266-267: "the nihilating [das Nichtende] in be-ing [Seyn] itself, which for the first time actually *sets us free* into be-ing and its truth as the most sheltered gift." And: "be-ing (and that means the nothing) is the in-between [*Inzwischen*]" . In accordance with the latter remark, see GA 70, p. 49: "Das Nichts im anfänglichen Sinne ist das Inzwischen, dessen Lichtung in der Unterscheidung beschieden wird als wesende Stätte der Ankunft." See also GA 66, p. 312.

²⁷ Aristotle's original phrase, "'being' is used in various senses", refers only to being. See Aristotle, *The Metaphysics*, Γ. 2., 1003 b, trans. Hugh Tredennick, London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1933, p. 147.

2. “The nothing” can signify the essence-less as lack of essence of being.

In (1) the nothing is differentiated against the entity. In (2) the nothing is differentiated against being (as unconcealment – emerging).²⁸

The first kind of nothing, we could say, signifies being as non-entity (“absence of entities”), whereas the second one expresses entities – in their emergence – as not-being.²⁹ I will return to this polysemy of not-being later.³⁰ For now, it is incumbent to bring one more reason for understanding the difference in terms of negation – besides the formal one mentioned above – belonging to the Greek tradition itself. Insofar as our ultimate goal is to give a hermeneutical translation of Parmenides’s line – *estin ouk esti mē einai* – in terms of the ontological difference, I believe that, in addition to the conceptual analysis of difference in terms of negation, we must find a ground for a differential notion of negation rooted in ancient Greek thought. Otherwise, we will project too much of our own upon Parmenides. Fortunately, we can find such a basis in *The Sophist*, where Plato repeatedly draws on the difference as negation, understanding *heteron* in terms of *ouk esti*. For instance, when the Eleatic Stranger differentiates between

²⁸ GA 70, pp. 48-49.

²⁹ Even though Heidegger was reluctant in endorsing this reversal, being cautious of not trespassing into dialectical, i.e. metaphysical thinking, nonetheless, sometimes he put the parity above in more or less the same terms. See for instance GA 65, p. 101: “‘not-being’ here does not mean total disappearance, but rather (a) not-being as a way of being: being and yet not; and (b) in the same way being: having the character of nothing and yet precisely being. [Nichtsein als eine Art des Seins: Seiend und doch nicht; und ebenso Sein: nichthaft und doch gerade Seiend.]” Heidegger pointed to the same me-ontological difference in his confrontation with Hegel, in GA 68, p. 29.

³⁰ See GA 66, p. 312, for a disambiguation of the nothing.

the forms, he claims that motion “is entirely *other (heteron)* than rest” and therefore “it is not (*ou [...] estin*) rest”.³¹ And later: “motion again is other (*heteron*) than the same. [...] Therefore, it is not (*ou estin*) the same”.³² The structural rendering of *heteron* (difference) in terms of *ouk esti* (is not) follows clearly from the repetition above.³³ Moreover, as Kahn argued, “to draw the necessary distinction between ‘not being X’, in the sense of being different from X, and ‘not-being’ *tout court* – to distinguish negation as difference from negation as nonentity – was precisely the task of Plato in *The Sophist*.”³⁴ And Heidegger himself, who chooses an excerpt specifically from *The Sophist* as the motto for *Being and Time*,³⁵ was well aware of the differential nothing at work in the fundamental cleavage between being and entities, as he expressly mentioned in *Zum Ereignis-Denken*: “The nihilating as the

³¹ Plato, *The Sophist*, 255 e, trans. H. N. Fowler, pp. 410-411. The emphasis is mine.

³² Plato, *The Sophist*, 256 a, trans. H. N. Fowler, pp. 410-411. The emphasis is mine.

³³ Plato, *The Sophist*, 255 e. For Plato’s notion of difference understood in terms of negation, see J. L. Ackrill, “Plato and the Copula: Sophist 251-259,” in *Plato. A Collection of Critical Essays. I: Metaphysics and Epistemology*, Palgrave Macmillan, 1971, pp. 213-214. Ackrill distinguishes Plato’s uses of *estin*, which sometimes appears in copulative sense, and other times as identity-statement (or as difference-statement in case of negation, viz. *ouk esti*): “[Plato expands] *ouk estin* into *metechei thaterou...* (shares in difference),” *ibidem*. The negation and the difference are inextricably linked. I think it is not far from the truth to say that, for Plato, *heteron* is the *ratio essendi* for negation (both *ouk* and *mē*), whereas negation is the *ratio cognoscendi* for the *heteron*.

³⁴ Kahn, *The Thesis of Parmenides*, p. 719. See also M. Dixsaut, “La négation, le non-être et l’autre dans le *Sophiste*,” in *Études sur le Sophiste de Platon*, Bibliopolis, 1991, pp. 165-214; and Heidegger GA 19, p. 385. The same follows directly from the words of the Stranger, Plato, *The Sophist*, 257 b-c.

³⁵ For the more complex relationship between Plato and Heidegger’s *Being and Time*, see C. Partenie, “Imprint: Heidegger’s Interpretation of Platonic Dialectic in the *Sophist Lectures* (1924–25),” in *Heidegger and Plato. Toward a Dialogue*, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2005, pp. 42-71.

character of the difference between entities and being [Das Nichten als Charakter der Differenz zwischen Seiendem und Sein]³⁶

Given this interpretation of *ouk esti* as difference, I think that we are justified – both with regard to Greek and to Heidegger’s thinking – in translating, for now, *estin ouk esti mē einai* as “being is different from not-being”. In doing so, however, we arrive at a tautology that is undoubtedly in the true spirit of Parmenides, but is not the ontological difference whatsoever. In order to get to the latter, we must proceed further and analyze the second negation, *mē einai*.

2.

The negation *mē einai* seems to require a simple translation: not-being, just as we have in German *Nichtsein* or in French *non-être*.³⁷ But it would be strange for the goddess to refer to not-being in order to prevent the young man from following the path of thinking not-being.³⁸ Upon a closer look, we take notice that *mē einai* is a negative predication, which lies at the core of what was called in the history of philosophy “infinite judgement”. According

³⁶ GA 73.2, p. 978. To give just a few more examples: GA 71, p. 124, “Sofern aber das Nichts das Seyn ist, ist das Seyn wesentlich der Unterschied.”; GA 73.2, p. 930: “Im Unterschied – beruht das Nichten. / Das Nichtende – ‘das Nichts’ – ist das Seyn (Differenz).” Also, in GA 65, p. 267: “Als nichthaftes wesend ermöglicht und erzwingt es zugleich Andersheit.” Heidegger already saw the connection between negation and difference in interpreting Plato’s *Sophist*, GA 19, pp. 557-559.

³⁷ GA 73.2, p. 973: “(einai) eon – esse, être, sein.”

³⁸ S. Austin, *Parmenides and the History of Dialectic: Three Essays*, Las Vegas, Parmenides Publishing, 2007, p. 9: “It might be, as some have maintained, that the goddess’ own speech is partly on the negative route, that she is guilty of self-referential inconsistency.” Cf. also S.F. Galango, “Non-being in Parmenides,” p. 23.

to Daniel Heller-Roazen, the history of negative predication goes back at least to Aristotle's notion of indefinite names (*onoma aoriston*).³⁹ On Aristotle's view, the term "non-man" is different from the simple negation "is not man" in virtue of the indefiniteness implied by the former, and excluded by the latter. Just as the "term 'non-man' indicates the opening up of the subject to an infinity of predicates, with the exception of the predicate 'man',"⁴⁰ so too – on our account – the term *mē einai* entails all there is (*ta onta* or *ta panta*) with the exception of being itself (*einai* or *hen*).

The negative predication has a long history from which we can draw its complexities.⁴¹ Perhaps its most trenchant formulation was given by Kant in discussing the infinite judgment. Kant observes about the latter that: "nothing is said by my proposition [viz. 'the soul is *non*-mortal'] but that the soul is one of the infinite multitude of things that remain if I take away everything that is mortal".⁴² On his account, stating "S is *non*-P" entails – in transcendental logic – that the concept of S is attributed to the sphere of everything that is not P.⁴³

³⁹ D. Heller-Roazen, *No One's Ways. An Essay on Infinite Naming*, New York: Zone Books, 2007, p. 19: "Evoking the expression 'non-man,' Aristotle comments: 'It is not a name, nor is there any correct name for it. It is neither a phrase nor a negation. Let us call it an indefinite name [*onoma aoriston*]'."

⁴⁰ A. Longo, "Infinite Judgments: The Non-Being of the Idea," trans. Martijn Buijs, in *The Being of Negation in Post-Kantian Philosophy*, ed. by Gregory S. Moss. Springer Nature Switzerland AG, 2023, p. 142.

⁴¹ See D. Heller-Roazen, *No One's Way*, 2007.

⁴² Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood, Cambridge University Press, 1998, pp. 207-208.

⁴³ For the place of the infinite judgment in Kant's transcendental logic, see C. Serck-Hanssen, "The Significance of Infinite Judgment," in Margit Ruffing, Claudio La Rocca, Alfredo Ferrarin & Stefano Bacin (eds.), *Kant Und Die Philosophie in Weltbürgerlicher Absicht: Akten des XI. Kant-Kongresses 2010*, De Gruyter, 2013, p. 411 *et infra*.

There have been numerous critical discussions revolving around Kant's notion of infinite judgment, which can hardly be summarized here, but which are worth considering in order to glimpse some of the intricacies of the current interpretation.⁴⁴ The main problem with it – as Mark Siebel convincingly argued – is that concept-negation (the *non-P* within the infinite judgment) does not entail an absolute complement (viz. the infinite), but only a relative one: “a negative predicate is not applicable to anything not falling under its positive counterpart but to a somehow limited class of things. It thus determines a *relative* complement to the extension of the corresponding positive predicate.”⁴⁵ This objection was raised not only in connection with Kant but also with Parmenides.⁴⁶

After putting to the test several interpretations of concept-negation, Siebel argues that it is bogus to speak of an actual infinity entailed by the infinite judgment. To the contrary, the genus-restricted interpretation that he advances says that “a negative concept ‘non-F’ applies to an object if it does not fall under the positive concept ‘F’ but belongs to a genus that limits the extension of both ‘F’ and ‘non-F’.”⁴⁷ For example, the concept negation “non-red” does not signify everything that is not red – like cats, ancient gods and triangles – but rather expresses indefinitely

⁴⁴ These discussions spawn for more than a century. See A.O. Lovejoy, “Kant's Classification of the Forms of Judgment,” in *The Philosophical Review* XVI (November 1907), 6, pp. 588-603, and M. Siebel, “Kant on Infinite and Negative Judgements: Three Interpretations, Six Tests, No Clear Result,” in *Topoi* (2020), 39, pp. 699-713.

⁴⁵ M. Siebel, “Concept Negation in Kant,” in *History of Philosophy & Logical Analysis*, (2022), 25, p. 34.

⁴⁶ For Kant, see Lovejoy, “Kant's Classification,” p. 596. For Parmenides, A.P. D. Mourelatos, “Determinacy and Indeterminacy, Being and Non-Being in the Fragments of Parmenides,” in *Canadian Journal Of Philosophy*, Supplementary Volume II, (1976), p. 51.

⁴⁷ Siebel, “Concept Negation in Kant,” p. 61.

any color except red.⁴⁸ Even if one could say that everything in the universe is either a cat, or not a cat, it is meaningless – let alone misleading – to refer, for instance, to an isotope of hydrogen as “non-cat” in the same way as we refer to a dog as “non-cat”.⁴⁹ The negative predication can have an assertoric force, and a meaningful binding, only if it is delineated within the realm of a “relevant genus,” to use Siebel’s expression, that is common both to the asserted subject and the denied predicate. The misunderstanding arises when we take indefiniteness to be synonymous with infinity. Kant’s use of the “infinite” as the third quality of the judgement bears the traces of Boethius’s translation of Aristotelian *onoma aoriston* as *nomen infinitum*.⁵⁰ The infinity of the judgement has nothing to do with genuine infinity except of sharing the same name. I will not dwell on the complicated matter of the notion of infinity in Kant’s philosophy. However, although I agree with Siebel’s analysis, I do believe that we can distinguish between, on the one hand, a concept negation that expresses an indefinite set of properties bounded by or limited to the genus encompassing both terms (*aoriston*)⁵¹ and, on the other hand, a concept negation that implies a certain notion of infinity (*apeiron* as distinct from indefiniteness). For the task of the present paper, I am interested in the latter.

In his study in pre-judicative hermeneutics, Remus Breazu draws a distinction between the infinite judgement, which always

⁴⁸ Siebel, “Concept Negation in Kant,” p. 43, this argument was brought by Lotze against Kant.

⁴⁹ See Lovejoy, “Kant’s Classification,” p. 596.

⁵⁰ Siebel, “Concept Negation in Kant,” p. 61. Cf. also D. Heller-Roazen, *No One’s Ways*, pp. 40-42.

⁵¹ See Dixsaut, “La negation, le non-être et l’autre,” pp. 185-187. And M. Wiitala, “Non-Being and the Structure of Privative Forms in Plato’s Sophist,” in *Epoché*, XIX, (Spring 2015), 2, p. 280.

entails a relative complement, and the negative predication, which could possibly entail an absolute complement. He writes that the latter, namely the negative predication, “can only have philosophical validity insofar as it has as its ‘matter-of-fact’ (*Sachverhalt*) a relation of a principial order, so that it must somehow engage what the ancient Greeks called *archē*.”⁵² In other words, concept negation (non-P) could entail an absolute complement – everything except P – insofar as P itself has an absolute dimension for the subject-S, functioning thus as its ground (*archē*). The reason for this, as it appears to me, is that the predicate with the role of *archē*, which I will mark off as P(a), cannot admit a higher genus that would encompass both the subject and the predicate. Rather, it is the *summum genus*. An example might clarify the matter. For instance, the locution “non-godly” could entail everything except of what pertains to the divine nature, since God is the creator of everything non-godly, and since we cannot have in principle a higher genus that would encompass both terms: the Creator and the creature.⁵³ The same holds for non-religious *archai* as well, such as Fichtean I (*Ich*). Fichte could divide the whole of existence in half – I and non-I – because the former has a constituting role in transcendental

⁵² Remus Breazu, “Încercarea unei interpretări pre-judicative pornind de la o spusă platoniciană [Undertaking a Pre-judicative Interpretation on the Basis of a Platonic Saying],” in *Studies in the Pre-judicative Hermeneutics and Meontology*, Vol. III Bucharest: Bucharest University Press, 2019, p. 69. The translation is mine. See also Viorel Cernica, “Hermeneutica pre-judicativă – O introducere [The Pre-Judicative Hermeneutics – An Introduction],” in *Studies in the Pre-judicative Hermeneutics and Meontology*, Vol. I Bucharest: Bucharest University Press, 2016, p. 22.

⁵³ The same could be said about the Parmenidian notion of being, which as *agenēton*, cannot be subsumed under a *genos*. Rather, it is in itself the all-containing-one (*syneches*). See Parmenides, fr. 8, v. 3-6.

vein for the latter, i.e. for everything else that is opposite to the I.⁵⁴ In other words, negating a predicate of the ultimate genus involves a complementary affirmation of everything that is not that predicate. By the same token, *mē einai* can be interpreted in terms of negative predication of the principal order-P(a), which gives us everything except being, i.e. each entity but not being itself.⁵⁵

Moreover, to stay on the course of Greek thought, we can find a historical basis for such an understanding of concept negation in the same Platonic dialogue. In *The Sophist*, Plato resorts to negative predication in defining the relations between the forms in a way that suits the interpretation above. Analyzing the relationship between motion and being, Plato comes to a paradoxical conclusion: on the one hand, motion is not-being (*ouk on estin*) because it “is other than being” but, on the other hand, there is motion due to the fact that it “partakes of being” (*ontos metechei*).⁵⁶ It can be said that motion is not-being in the sense that it is different from *Sein* (viz. being as *genos*), but at the same time it must have a kind of being which is undeniably manifest in what there is in motion (*Seiende*).⁵⁷ And the same holds for all the other forms: because each and every form is different from being itself, they all are not-being.⁵⁸ This is

⁵⁴ C.Y.P. Tse, “The Relation between Reality and Negation in Kant, Maimon, and Fichte,” in *The Being of Negation in Post-Kantian Philosophy*, ed. by Gregory S. Moss, Dordrecht: Springer Nature Switzerland AG, 2023, p. 119. See also D. Heller-Roazen, *No One’s Way*, pp. 160-161.

⁵⁵ Being itself is *agenēton* (Parmenides, fr. 8, v. 3) and *anarchon* (fr. 8, v. 27).

⁵⁶ Plato, *The Sophist*, 256 d, trans. H.N. Fowler, pp. 412-413.

⁵⁷ Phenomenologically speaking, there is no movement without the moved; see E. Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, II, trans. J.N. Findlay, London and New York: Routledge, 2001, pp. 5-6. Hence, movement as *genos* must be essentially tied to entities (*ta onta*).

⁵⁸ Plato, *The Sophist*, 256 d, trans. H.N. Fowler, p. 413: “And this extends to all the classes.” As Heidegger puts it (GA 19, p. 385): “all beings are and, as beings, at the same time are not,” more specifically, are not being (*Sein*).

why “in relation to motion,” Plato writes, “not-being is”.⁵⁹ But this not-being (*mē on*) is specifically the manner of being of what is not *the* being.⁶⁰ In other words, this not-being is *Nicht-Sein als Seiendes*.⁶¹ The conclusion of the Eleatic Stranger is that “in relation to each of the classes, being is many, and not-being is infinite in number [*apeiron de plēthei to mēon*].”⁶² The way I interpret this fragment is that each form comprises and partitions a certain amount of reality: some of the entities are in motion, whereas others are, on the contrary, at rest (*stasis*). Yet, regarded from the standpoint of being as *genos*, each form that is not being itself is indistinguishably the same as other forms in terms of not being *the* being.⁶³ Each form – the infinity of what there is – is equally not-being in the face of being as *archē*. And the same holds *a fortiori* for the entities subsumed to one form or another.⁶⁴ They exist as entities (*ta onta*) precisely as not-being (*mē einai*). It is not at all accidental that *apeiron* and *mē on* go together in Plato’s analysis. Because we are dealing here with a predicate of a principial order,

⁵⁹ Plato, *The Sophist*, 256 d, trans. H.N. Fowler, p. 413.

⁶⁰ In this regard, Heidegger notes in his interpretation of *The Sophist* that “This demonstrates [...] the *ousia mē ontos*, the presence of not-being in the Being of *kinesis*.” GA 19, p. 384.

⁶¹ This is a Hegelian take on the matter, GA 68, p. 19: “Was *nicht* ein Seiendes ist, ist ‘Nichts.’”; GA 68, p. 17: “‘Das Nichts’ – als Nicht des Seienden. ‘Das Nichts’ – als Nicht des Seins.” Yet, for Heidegger, Plato’s *mē on* and Hegelian negativity are the same: “Die ‘Negativität’ Hegels und das *mē on* Platons sind dasselbe”, GA 66, p. 293.

⁶² Plato, *The Sophist*, 256 e, trans. H.N. Fowler, pp. 414-415.

⁶³ Dixsaut, “La negation, le non-être et l’autre,” p. 167.

⁶⁴ Heidegger makes this point as follows: “This makes it clear that, just as in the sense of otherness as such, the other is present over and against the one through the *pros ti*, so likewise also in every exchange of otherness into small othernesses, i.e., in the substantive concretions, the *mē on* is an *on*.” (GA 19, p. 391.)

namely being as *genos*, the negative predication will result in an infinity of *othernesses* with respect to being.⁶⁵ All the forms and all the entities which are not being itself, but only partake of it, are to be understood as not-being.⁶⁶ Since when “we say not-being, we speak, I think, not of something that is the opposite of being, but only of something different,”⁶⁷ we are implicitly referring by these very premises to everything – to each and one thing – except being itself.⁶⁸

On the basis of Plato’s notion of negation, I believe that we are justified in taking the negative predication in terms of infinity (*apeiron*). And this interpretation could shed a new light on Parmenides’s line. Understood differentially, as Plato convincingly showed, the negation *mē einai* could be understood as involving all there is with the exception of being itself, in short: entities.⁶⁹ Just as being is not an entity, and regarded from the entitative perspective

⁶⁵ Dixsaut, “La negation, le non-être et l’autre,” p. 205: “Le signe que le non-être n’est pas de même rang que le non-beau ou le non-juste est donc que, coïncidant avec la mise en opposition, il ne résulte pas d’une antithèse particulière: sa nature consiste dans la forme même de l’opposition d’une partie de l’autre à l’être. Mais l’être est universellement participé, ce qui n’est le cas ni du beau, ni du grand, ni du juste. Dans le cas du non-être, que peut signifier alors que s’oppose à l’être ‘une *partie* de la nature de l’autre?’” Answering her question, it must be said that non-being is *all* there is except being.

⁶⁶ Dixsaut, “La negation, le non-être et l’autre,” p. 209: “L’autre fait différer l’être, il le met en opposition, et en oppositions infiniment multiples; pris dans ces oppositions, chaque être est, à chaque fois, non-étant.”

⁶⁷ Plato, *The Sophist* 257 b, trans. H.N. Fowler, p. 415.

⁶⁸ As Heidegger writes: “Das schlechthin Andere zu allem Seienden ist das Nicht-Seiende (was schlechthin nicht ein Seiendes ‘ist’). Aber dieses Nichts west als das Sein.” GA 73.2, p. 1244. We can make the same point in reverse: the simply other than being is not-being, but this very not-being unfolds precisely as entities.

⁶⁹ M. Dixsaut, “La negation, le non-être et l’autre,” p. 207. Dixsaut’s interpretation on *The Sophist* touches on this point briefly.

it is rather nothing (*mē on*), so too entities are not being, and from the perspective of being they are rather nothing (*mē einai*).⁷⁰ In his reading of *The Sophist*, Heidegger touched on this point and concluded briefly that “thus Plato acquires *mē on* as *on*”.⁷¹ It is true that back then Heidegger did not concede the insight of the ontological difference to Parmenides, reading him as equalizing being with all the entities.⁷² After two decades, carefully heeding the inceptual thinking of the Greeks, Heidegger acknowledged the withdrawing-presence of the ontological difference at the dawn of the history of thinking. I believe that one of Heidegger’s private notes testifies to this attempt at thinking the difference *apropos* Parmenides in the light of Plato’s *Sophist*: “Abschied und Parmenides / Das Nichtsein als *Sein* / Das *mē on* qua *on*”.⁷³

To the best of my knowledge, in his “Reading Parmenides,” Jean Beaufret developed this point most acutely by interpreting *mē eonta* of the seventh fragment as *dokounta* of the first one. In asking why do *dokounta* – the phenomenal appearance of entities – “become negatively: *mē eonta*?”, Beaufret is leaning towards an interpretation of negation closely related to Plato’s *Sophist*. His answer is telling:

I think that here it is necessary to be aware of the nature of the negation, which is *mē* and not *ou*. The *dokounta* are *mē eonta* not because they are nothing at all, but to the extent that they cannot identify themselves, even in the case of a god, with what the verb *being* says, given that if they are, they are at once this and something else. This is precisely why, without being the *mē eon* in any way,

⁷⁰ GA 65, p. 101.

⁷¹ GA 19, p. 392.

⁷² GA 19, p. 571.

⁷³ GA 73.1, p. 822. The note ends with the following question and the answer: “Wohin aber anfänglicher das Nicht? / Ins (Ereignis).” This inceptual nothing with regard to *Ereignis* will be the theme of the last section of this paper.

they are *mē eonta*,⁷⁴ that is, what on no account should be confused with the unicity of being. If they should not be confused with being, they have to be differentiated from it.⁷⁵

That is to say, if entities (*ta onta*) are to be differentiated from “what the verb *being* [*einai*] says,” which they cannot identify with, then they are as such – as appearing in the realm of the visible (*dokounta*) – precisely not-being (*mē einai*).⁷⁶

The interpretation thus far has accomplished two things. It showed that (i) *ouk esti* expresses the difference, and (ii) *mē einai* – as a negative predication of a principal order – signifies all there is apart from being, viz. entities. Having thus a clear interpretation of both negations, we can translate now the words of goddess – *estin ouk esti mē einai* – as “being is different from entities”.

3.

The current analysis rests on several unquestioned assumptions, which could render the whole interpretation problematic. In the translation above, I assumed three major and debatable things: (i)

⁷⁴ I think that the use of negations here is confusing. It would be more appropriate to say “without being the *eon* in any way, they are *mē eonta*,” providing that the participle *eon* is read with an accent on the verbal dimension, rendering it on a par with *einai*.

⁷⁵ J. Beaufret, *Dialogue with Heidegger*, p. 47. As to the difference and the first beginning (“*Der Unterschied und der erste Anfang*”), see GA 71, p. 124: “*einai* und *ta onta* / *alētheia* – *ta dokounta*”.

⁷⁶ On this point, see T. Sheehan, “Das Gewesen. Remembering the Fordham Years.” In *From Phenomenology To Thought, Errancy, And Desire*, ed. by B.E. Babich, Dordrecht: Springer Science+Business Media, 1995, p. 169: “In Heidegger’s telling, for the Greeks a thing *is* to the degree that it *appears* (to which he would add: ‘even if – and in some cases, especially if – it appears as not appearing’).”

that we can understand *ouk esti* as a negative judgement, (ii) that we can interpret *mē einai* as a negative predication, and thus (iii) *einai* has the role of *archē*.⁷⁷ Although all three claims could be defended, I will address a more substantial issue that underlies my interpretation as a whole, namely the subordination of Parmenides's thinking to Plato's philosophy enacted by it. Indeed, it can be shown the Platonic nature of all three presuppositions. However, it is clear from the analysis of both negations that the present interpretation stayed only at the level of "the expressed thesis: being is not an entity" (copula negation) and "the unthought saying: being: not entities" (concept negation). In limiting myself to the first two moments of the ontological difference, I do not imply that we should not go further. Quite the contrary, only by revealing the difference in its third moment, i.e. in its temporal aspect as *Anwesenlassen* and *Anwesendes* (Parmenides's *pareonta*),⁷⁸ and furthermore in its fourth – *alethic* – moment as letting-be and self-concealment, will we be able to get closer to Parmenides's inceptual thinking without recasting it in the metaphysical light of being as beingness. But this is a task for another inquiry, which I hope will also point to the essential unity of all four moments of the ontological difference.

Yet the pitfalls of the current interpretation are not due to our lack of understanding. Rather, they appear because of our attempt at having full intellectual grasp of the inceptual saying of the Greeks.⁷⁹ These pitfalls concern the hermeneutical thinking as

⁷⁷ See, for instance, J. Frère, "Platon lecteur de Parménide dans *le Sophiste*," in *Études sur le Sophiste de Platon*, Bibliopolis, 1991, p. 132-136. On being (*l'Étant, to on*) as *archē*. Also, cf. GA 55, p. 56: "Being 'is', with respect to beings, always already the 'older'." Also, GA 73.1, p. 53 "Being – the *archē*.", and GA 66, p. 333, for *genos* as *archē*.

⁷⁸ Parmenides, fr. 4, v. 1.

⁷⁹ In his interpretation of Heraclitus, Heidegger drew attention to the need of arriving at a stand-still of the understanding, in order to grasp something

such, which is guided by the principle of going from the clear into the obscure, from what is near to and representable for our understanding to what is far from and thus obscure for it.⁸⁰ In this respect, perhaps we can apply to the relation between Parmenides and Plato, in reverse chronological order, what Heidegger himself told William Richardson in his letter: “only by way of what Plato has thought does one gain access to what is to-be-thought by Parmenides. But the thought of Plato becomes possible only if it is contained in Parmenides.”⁸¹ This is the hermeneutical circle from which we cannot escape without relinquishing at the same time the act of understanding as such.

Yet we have to bear in mind that the value of the interpretation deployed thus far is not given by the presumed simple fact that we can find the ontological difference in Parmenides. There are no simple facts in hermeneutics to the extent that it is fraught with facticity, which means a situated relation to what we interpret. So, the question now becomes what can *we* learn from Parmenides’s ontological difference that would allow us to grasp it in itself and on our own?

The crux of this interpretation, as I hope to have made it clear, is the double-negative aspect of the ontological difference, which was expressed by Heidegger with regard to Heraclitus’s 16th fragment – *to mē dynon pote* – as follows: “When we take this

of the essential thinking. Ironically, the clearer the interpretation gets, the further it is from the inceptual thinking, which – as Heidegger suggested – has an inherent obscurity to it. GA 55, p. 180: “To think essentially: this means to listen to what is unsaid in the consideration of what is said, and thereby to come into unanimity with what in the unsaid keeps its silence before us.”

⁸⁰ GA 19, p. 11, “It follows the old principle of hermeneutics, namely that interpretation should proceed from the clear into the obscure.”

⁸¹ P. Emad, “Heidegger I, II,” pp. 133-134. I paraphrased Emad’s altered translation of Heidegger’s letter to William Richardson.

combination of words, which is thoroughly permeated by negation, and not only translate it faithfully, but also try to think faithfully what is said in it, then *something confronts us whose fundamental structure [Gefüge] consists in a two-fold 'not,' and in such a way that its condition is of a thoroughly negating sort.*"⁸²

In light of Heidegger's reading of Heraclitus, the interpretation of Parmenides's line unfolded as yet could be pursued further in thinking the difference according to its last two moments. Indeed, analyzing Heraclitus's fragment, Heidegger observed the double-negative aspect of the saying which attempts to grasp the emergence at the bottom of being itself, in a word, of *physis*:

Not only does *to mē dynon pote* contain the particular word for "not" (*mē*), but, indeed, submerging itself (*dynon*) is already a negation, if indeed submergence, thought in a Greek way, is a departing and a vanishing, and thus is the not-emerging and no-longer-emerging and thereby what turns against [das Gegenwendige] emerging. Thus, the combination of words *to mē dynon pote* contains a double-negation.⁸³

On my interpretation, just as *Sein* can be understood as *Nichts* in the sense of *Nicht-Seiende* (*to mē on*), as Heidegger uninterruptedly argued,⁸⁴ so too *die Seiendes* could be understood as *Nichts*, this

⁸² GA 55, p. 124. The emphasis is mine. For the role of the double-negation in Parmenides, see S. Austin, "Parmenides, Double-Negation, and Dialectic," in *Presocratic Philosophy*, ed. by V. Caston and D. W. Graham, London & New York: Routledge, 2016, pp. 95-99. For the essential link between Heraclitus's fragment and Parmenidian *hen*, see GA 70, p. 86.

⁸³ GA 55, pp. 96-97. The same holds for the fundamental word of the inceptual thinking of the Greeks, namely *a-lētheia*, which has an explicit negating *alpha privativum*, and an implicit negation at the bottom of concealment (*lēthe*).

⁸⁴ GA 71, p. 121: "Was schlechthin nicht nichts ist, ist Seiendes. Das Nichts selbst aber ist Sein." See also GA 68, p. 29.

time, in the sense of *Nicht-Sein* (*mē einai*).⁸⁵ The latter negation is the fracture-point of the me-ontological difference between nothing (non-entities) as being and nothing (or *nihilating* / *mē einai*) as beyng, i.e. the unconcealment of entities.⁸⁶ Considering the form, one cannot fail to notice the verbal aspect of the latter: *mē einai* is not and cannot be thought of as *something* which transpires in the appearance of entities as a whole. Not-being as entities (*Nicht-Sein als Seiendes*) is not a conceptual counter-stance to no-thing as being (*Nicht-Seiende als Sein*). Rather, *mē einai* is the counter-movement

⁸⁵ GA 68, 17. While Heidegger acknowledged that being (*Sein*) could be understood as nothing (*Nichts*) in the sense of not being an entity (*Nicht-Seiende*), he was reluctant in admitting that entities themselves are nothing in the sense of not-being (*Nicht-Sein*). And that is because he tried to avoid a dialectical play of concepts. However, he occasionally pointed to a certain notion of entities as being-less (*Seinlose*), differentiating it from *Nichts* as *Sein* in the sense of *Nicht-Seiende*. The dialectical thinking can grasp the relationship between being and entities only in stages, jumping from one to the other through the “nothing” as a common ground, as a synthetic moment between two extremes. Instead, Heidegger wants to think phenomenologically, that is by letting the movement (*Wesung*) unfold itself at the bottom of the difference between being and entities. Hence, he speaks of nothing by pointing to its verbal aspect, revealing the dynamic at play in the simpleness of manifestation.

⁸⁶ GA 65, p. 267: “*Seyn* (und d. h. das Nichts)”. For *beyng* (understood as *mē einai*) in terms of revealing the entities, see GA 69, p. 53: “Denn das *Seyn* ist nicht das Andere zum Seienden, sondern *ist* dieses selbst und *ist* es allein!”; and also GA 65, p. 255: “Only when be-ing [*Seyn*] holds itself back as self-sheltering [*Sichverbergen*] can beings appear and seemingly dominate everything and present the sole barrier [*Schranke*] against the nothing.” *Beyng* as nihilation is the difference which makes room for the appearing presence (being) of entities: “Die Unterscheidung als *Wesung* des *Seyns* selbst, das *sich* unterscheidet und so das Seiende aufkommen läßt im *Aufgang*.” GA 71, p. 127. Moreover, the difference in itself, that is *beyng*, is only possible insofar as “*beyng* is nothing”, *ibid.*, p. 124.

(*Gegenschwung*) at the heart of manifestation of entities in their being, i.e. *Nichtung*.⁸⁷

But Heidegger did not think of these matters in the same way when he interpreted Plato's *Sophist*. According to Heidegger's interpretation of Parmenides from 1924-25:

The universal character of presence [Da], of *einai*, which Parmenides was the first to see, became for him the substantive [sachhaltigen] realm of beings in general. He thus identified the ontological meaning of Being with the ontical totality of beings. To that extent, for every saying "no," there remained left over only the nothing, since indeed it is nothing else than the *hen* as *on*.⁸⁸

"The universal character of presence" testifies to Heidegger's blind spot at that time with regard to the essentially hidden dimension within existence, which later he deemed in *a-lētheia*. His early interpretation of Parmenides aligns with what Mourelatos called "the naïve metaphysics of things".⁸⁹ In this framework, as Mourelatos says, "here then is Parmenides's situation as he ponders a negative predication, 'x is not-F'. He can only conceptualize *F* as a thing, and '*F*' as its name."⁹⁰ This reading of Parmenides as a proponent of a naïve ontology, according to which there are only things in the large sense of the term, disregards the hidden dimension within visibility, the *lēthē* from *a-lētheia*. Since there are only things, nothing is hidden, and nothing goes beyond the reach of plain sight. Therefore, negating the being, as Heidegger put it, can result

⁸⁷ Herein lies the essential *countering-region* (*Gegend*) of entities that Heidegger analyzed with respect to Heraclitus's notion of *Logos*. See GA 55, pp. 337-338. See also GA 65, pp. 267-268.

⁸⁸ GA 19, p. 571.

⁸⁹ Mourelatos, "Determinacy and Indeterminacy," p. 52.

⁹⁰ Mourelatos, "Determinacy and Indeterminacy," p. 53.

only in nothing (*nihil negativum*). However, as Heidegger gradually learned to see what is essentially inconspicuous, he acknowledged that even the thought of this permanent and universal visibility, the *aeizōon*, must be conceived in relation to the hiddenness from which visibility struggles to come forth (*to mē dynon pote*).⁹¹ Claiming that “he can only conceptualize *F* as a thing, and ‘*F*’ as its name”⁹² does not do justice to Parmenides, because the verbal aspect of the participle (*mē*-*eon*) is obscured, let alone the infinitive form (*mē*)*einai* of the verb expressing (*not*)*being*. If we must think grammatically at all, then it would be better to say that Parmenides could also conceptualize *F* (viz. *Physis*) as a process, and “*F*” as its verbal expression. In order to grasp this, we cannot stay at the level of the first two moments of the ontological difference, as Heidegger presumably did in 1920’s. Rather, we must rethink both negations in their dynamic unfolding which, in all likelihood, is expressed by *a-lētheia*, and which was done by Heidegger later, nearly two decades after his reading of *The Sophist*.

According to Heidegger’s later interpretation of Presocratic thought, the double-negativity of *a-lētheia* moves at the heart of unconcealment,⁹³ i.e. of *physis* itself: “The *mē* is said from out of an essential glimpse of the preciousness of *physis*, which, as emerging, bestows appearing [*ta onta*], but which at the same time is not included with what appears.”⁹⁴ On my interpretation, the non-inclusion which Heidegger is talking about is tantamount to *einai*

⁹¹ GA 55, pp. 86-96.

⁹² Mourelatos, “Determinacy and Indeterminacy,” p. 53.

⁹³ I adopted Kenneth Maly’s translation of *Wesen* as “moving at the heart of,” which I find compelling; see K. Maly, “Reticence and Resonance in the Work of Translating,” in *From Phenomenology To Thought, Errancy, And Desire*, ed. by B.E. Babich, Dordrecht: Springer Science+Business Media, 1995, pp. 147-156: 151-152.

⁹⁴ GA 55, p. 144. Here and below, I introduce my explanations in square brackets.

as *ta mē onta* or *Sein* as *Nicht-Seiendes*. “But the inconspicuousness [*Unscheinbare*] of emerging rests in itself and does so only because in its very essence it gives favor to self-concealing.”⁹⁵ Here, the nihilative (*nichtend*) counterpull of entities with regard to their being becomes evident. This means that *ta onta* rest on the inconspicuousness as their other. That is to say, the visible relies on the invisible which, in its turn, conceals itself for the sake of manifestation.⁹⁶ In this regard, *ta onta* are made possible in their appearance only by actively and constantly *not being* – or withdrawing from – that against which they assert themselves in their appearance.⁹⁷ Entities (*ta onta*) are only possible as not-being (*mē einai*). And insofar as being is what entities have as their own, they come to be – in the openness of manifestation, i.e. in the light of their own (*Ereignis*) – by always dis-owning (*ent-eignen*) themselves, i.e. by renouncing the privilege to be, which means at the same time that they come into being as beingless (*Seinlose*).⁹⁸ Entities obtain their own by

⁹⁵ GA 55, p. 144.

⁹⁶ For an extensive analysis of the mutually enabling rapport between *the own* and *the other* – understood as a dynamics of translation – see Bogdan Mincă, “The Enowning of Translation,” in *Pensar la traducción: La filosofía de camino entre las lenguas*, Universidad Carlos III de Madrid, 2014, pp. 169-176.

⁹⁷ GA 73.1, p. 822, Heidegger characterized this relation, underlining its negative aspect, as “*not*-remaining in the concealing concealment [Das *Nicht*verbleiben in dem Verbergenden Bergen].” The rest of his note points to the dynamic of en-owning and dis-owning: “Das Ereignis als Abschied. / Entgegen – als Enteignis – Vermächtnis – aus der Gegend – kommend.”

⁹⁸ This interpretation rests on several assumptions: (i) that the being is what entities have as their own, and therefore (ii) dis-owning is tantamount to a certain lack of being (*Seinlose*); (iii) being and entities are essentially linked, and (iv) entities *are* as such only by not being *the* being itself. The last point can be understood in terms of *mē einai* as *ta onta*, implying thus that *beingless* is tantamount to entities as such. For (i): GA 73.2, p. 1253: “28. Zum Leitsatz. Das Sein als das Eigene des Seienden.” For (ii): GA 70, p.

attaining visibility, and they do so only if being retains its invisible character with regard to the entities brought into appearance.⁹⁹

Against the backdrop of Heidegger's interpretation of Heraclitus, where the ontological difference is deployed to its fullest, the true scope of the interpretation given here to Parmenides becomes more transparent. Playing solely on the difference between being and

122: "Seinlosigkeit ist Enteignung des Seienden"; *ibidem*: "Aber hier erst enthüllt sich die innerste *Nichtung des Seins* selbst, daß es nicht nur Verbergung ist in ihm selbst und Verwehrung, sondern untergänglich die *Enteignung*" (the emphasis is mine); GA 73.1, p. 170: "*Die äußerste Enteignung aber geschieht als Seinsvergessenheit*", and GA 73.1, p. 799: "2. *Dies reine Enteignis [...] Die reine Vergessenheit in der Stätte des Unscheinbaren.*" See also GA 73.2, p. 1355: "das Sichverbergen zeigt sich als Enteignis im Ereignis." For (iii): GA 73.2, p. 975: "Sein ist nie ohne Offenbarkeit von Seiendem zu denken." For (iv): GA 70, p. 122: "das Seinlose ist [...] das Seiende selbst"; GA 70, p. 123: "Wenn das Seiende das Seinlose 'ist'". For the relation between negation and *disowning*, see GA 66, p. 312: "Die Ent-eignung als Wesensgrund der *Verneinung*." As to *Ereignis* and *Enteignis*, see P. Emad, "The Echo of Being in "Beiträge zur Philosophie – Der Anklang": Directives for its Interpretation," in *Heidegger Studies*, VII (1991), pp. 15-35. In this article, Emad translated the latter as expropriation. Later on, in the translation of *Beiträge zur Philosophie* together with Kenneth Maly, *enteignen* (which appears there only as a verb) was translated as *dis-owning*. For my part, I think that the latter variant unnecessarily complicates the matter. Since there is not a trace of the prefix *er-* (rendered in English by *en-*) in *Enteignis*, I see no reason not to translate *Enteignis* more simply as *dis-owning*.

⁹⁹ In his reading of Heraclitus, Heidegger deploys the same phenomenological scheme with regard to the image (as appearing) and imagelessness that beckons to it (GA 55, p. 301): "everything imagistic [Bildhafte] and every image only appears and is brought into appearing from out of the imageless [Bildlosen], which beckons to the image [das nach dem Bild ruft]. The more originarily and essentially the imageless presides, the more it beckons to the image, and the more image-like is the image itself." For the link between manifestation / presence, "not entities [Nichts Seiendes]," and unconcealment, see Heidegger's remarks in GA 73.2, pp. 1344-1345.

nothing (as non-entity), on the one hand, and entities and nothing (as non-being), on the other hand, the ontological difference as such was obliterated. We are compelled thus to go further into all four moments of the difference. Heidegger addressed this point in a brief remark: "The obliteration of difference insofar as 'being' = 'nothing'."¹⁰⁰ Yet he immediately adds below, as if alluding to the path of escaping from this dialectical equation that misses the difference: "But being – as '*being of*' | Nothing – as *nihilation*."¹⁰¹ This suggestion is of the utmost importance since, as simple as it is, it reminds us of the genitive character of the difference, already grasped in the lecture-course from 1927: there are no entities in themselves and there is no being in itself prior to a more original relation between them.¹⁰² This "pure relation without origin,"¹⁰³ however, is not another thing added to the relata; rather, it is no-thing, a dynamic of non-being, i.e. the nihilation (*Nichtung*) as beyng (*Seyn*).¹⁰⁴ Thus, by keeping in mind that being is always the being *of* an entity, and

¹⁰⁰ GA 73.2, p. 1445: "Das Verschwinden der Differenz insofern 'Sein' = 'Nichts'."

¹⁰¹ GA 73.2, p. 1445: "Aber Sein – als '*Sein des*' | Nichts – als *Nichtung*." For lack of a better word, I translate *Nichtung* as *nihilation*. The expression of the ontological difference from 1927 still holds at this point, for it renders both the genitive and negative moments of the difference.

¹⁰² Heidegger did not give up on this in his later thinking, as he writes "[...] Sein und Seiendes sind unzertrennlich; aber in der Unzertrennlichkeit west gerade die Differenz. [...] Auch und gerade Seyn als die Differenz selber ist nie ohne Seiendes und Sein, denn sie west nur als die Differenz beider für beide." GA 73.2, p. 976. See also 73.2, p. 1348.

¹⁰³ GA 55, p. 328. Already back in 1927, besides characterizing being as *not-an-entity*, Heidegger also grasped the "not" that defines the being in relation to its meaning, i.e. temporality. In this sense, Heidegger calls the latter in Platonic manner "*ouk ousia ontos*", the "not-being of entities". GA 24, pp. 401-402.

¹⁰⁴ GA 66, p. 43: "*Unter-schied – Auseinandertrag – Einsprung in dies 'Nicht,' das aus der Nichtung kommt, die das Seyn ist.*"; GA 66., p. 47.

thus that entities are always given in their own presence as *being*,¹⁰⁵ the nothing that is at play in the fundamental difference between being and entities becomes the primal movement of manifestation.¹⁰⁶ That the entities are – given in their being – is the simplest expression of manifestation. And yet manifestation only comes to pass in the struggle for one's own, which for entities is simply *to be*, and for being is precisely *not* to be (an entity). The latter – i.e. being as defined by not-being-an-entity – engages entities as those who, in the course of renouncing their own (*Enteignung als Seinlose*), let the being accomplish *its* own in its retreat from the visible (*Lassen als Sichverbergen*) while giving back to entities their own place in the realm of the open, which those entities *are not* and could never be without (*Lassen als Freigeben*).¹⁰⁷ The emerging appearance of

¹⁰⁵ See GA 73.2, p. 976.

¹⁰⁶ This is the nothing without which entities as such cannot exist: "Aber dieses Nichts gibt es gerade – ohne dieses kein Seiendes *als* solches." GA 73.2, p. 1444. See also GA 65, p. 246, for the nihilative power of being that makes entities become as they are. Heidegger expressed this point keenly in his interpretation of *physis*: "*physis* means the emerging that from itself is a withdrawing into itself, then the two determinations are not only to be thought as simultaneous and existing alongside one another, but rather as designating one and the same fundamental feature of *physis*." GA 55, p. 299. Or, earlier, by pointing to the sameness within both *to mē dūnon pote* and *aeizōon*.

¹⁰⁷ The idea of gaining one's own by letting it go – *Ereignis als Enteignung* – might seem counterintuitive. Heidegger noted the same with regard to Heraclitus, in whose case the logical thinking cannot grasp that "emerging, precisely insofar as it is an emerging, is a submerging." GA 55, p. 116. As Bogdan Mincă remarks: "This exceptional and mutual enabling duality has been named by Heidegger *Ereignis*", Mincă, "The Enowning of Translation," p. 174. That this dynamic of enowning and disowning has to be thought in connection with early Greeks is evident from Heidegger's remark on the "in-ceptual character of the *A-Lētheia*": "Mit dem Anfang bleibt auch verhüllt der an-fängliche Charakter der *A-Lētheia* – das Enteignende der Verbergung, in dem das Ereignen der Unverborgenheit – die Entbergung – beruht."

entities – which “rests in the play in which emerging bestows [gewährt] to self-concealing [Sichverbergen] the favor to remain the protector of the former’s essence”¹⁰⁸ – succeeds through this double receding.

The attempt at grasping this play has to take into account the temporality that it displays, expressed verbally as *Nichtung*, and not nominally as *Nichts*. Heraclitus, on Heidegger’s reading, grasped it with the temporal *mē pote* (not-ever), and the verb (*Zeitwort*) *dynon* (submerging).¹⁰⁹ On the other hand, simply equating being with nothing in a dialectical manner misses the true ontological difference insofar as the entitative generalization of being (*Seiendheit*) is – just like being – also other than entities, and therefore it is also in a sense no-thing (*Nicht-Seiende*): “The beingness is merely the first appearance of the nihilating – insofar as it is [also] *heteron* to *onta*.”¹¹⁰ Heeding the genitive aspect of the ontological difference, which says that being is the being *of* an entity, one would have to stress the verbal aspect of nothing, expressing thus the interplay between presence and absence,

Moreover, in the same note, Heidegger understands *Logos*, *Hen* and *Moirai* (viz. Heraclitus and Parmenides) in terms of *Lassen*, i.e. in terms of the third and fourth moments of the ontological difference (GA 73.2, pp. 1303-1304). See also his note on the ontological difference in GA 73.2, p. 1375.

¹⁰⁸ GA 55, pp. 139-140.

¹⁰⁹ GA 55, p. 86. “The *mē* in the saying is hence still more narrowly qualified through the *pote* – ‘ever,’ ‘at any time,’ a word that indicates a temporality: *mē-pote* – ‘not ever, ever,’ i.e., ‘never’. [...] Precisely through this combination of words (i.e., the *dynon* between the *mē* and the *pote*), the verbal, temporal sense of *dynon* is made conspicuous, and the eventful [*ereignishafte*] essence of the above-named is brought to appearance through this simple and straightforward way of naming.”

¹¹⁰ GA 73.2, p. 930: “Die Seiendheit nur der erste Schein des Nichtenden – insofern *heteron* zu den *onta*.” We can note the Platonic words used to describe the difference.

which moves at the heart of the seemingly simple fact that “there is,” i.e. of goddess’s *estin*.¹¹¹ It is noteworthy that Heidegger’s hermeneutical translation of Heraclitus bears the traces of the ontological difference in terms of “the unsaid issue”. His interpretation revolves around words like *Sichverbergen*, *Freigeben*, and *Lichtung*.¹¹²

Heidegger took up one semester later (in 1944) the same reading of Heraclitus with regard to *Logos* as the fundamental gathering of entities as a whole, which he equated with *physis* or being itself.¹¹³ Since *physis* and *Logos* unfold the same *alethic* structure, the analysis of *physis* will have to find its correlate in a similar analysis of the *Logos*.¹¹⁴ In other words, it will express the double-negativity at the heart of manifestation of entities in their being. The double-negativity I have touched on is expressed as follows:

When looked at from the perspective of human *logos*, this *logos*, while existing in relation to the *Logos*, nevertheless cannot [*nicht*] reach it. When looked at from the perspective of the *Logos*, the *Logos* is somehow present to the essence of the human, without [*ohne*] being properly present to the human. For the human *logos*, the *Logos* is something akin to an absent presence.¹¹⁵

Herein transpires the copulative negation in that the human *logos* is not (*ouk esti*) the *Logos* itself, and the negative predication in that *Logos* is amidst present entities only as absent, i.e. as non-entity (*mē*

¹¹¹ On this regard, see Dahlstrom, “Negation and Being,” p. 267: “Even where one sensation is dominant in the experience, what we apprehend in perception can be a steady interplay of presences and absences. [...] in seeing that something changes or moves, we see that negative facts obtain.”

¹¹² GA 55, p. 163.

¹¹³ GA 55, p. 371.

¹¹⁴ GA 55, pp. 173-174.

¹¹⁵ GA 55, p. 238. The translation is slightly modified. See also GA 65, p. 246: “Seen from the perspective of beings, be-ing [Seyn] ‘is’ *not* a being.”

on). Indeed, because “in a certain sense the *Logos* does not show itself at all,” it “is akin to nothing: namely, the nothing of entities,”¹¹⁶ which for Heidegger is on a par with being. Thus is marked a fundamental me-ontological difference – for “the nothing of entities [...] remains fundamentally different from the nothing of being” – that pushes us forward into thinking the ontological difference in its true light, i.e. in its *alethic* moment. The latter, namely the nothing of being, consists in the mutual letting (*Lassen*) in which both being and entities come to their own.¹¹⁷ “It is here” – in the unsaid issue of *alētheia* itself – “that the originary difference between entities and being presides.”¹¹⁸

So long as “the true in the inceptual sense of the unconcealed [...] is the unsaid that remains the unsaid *only in what is strictly and properly said*,”¹¹⁹ the necessity of the current interpretation – given to the Parmenidian line with regard to both negations – is thereby secured. The true, understood in its *Lassen-Gewähren* movement as *a-lētheia*, is what is properly unsaid: *ungesagte Sache*. But it can remain unsaid only in its explicit, even if yet faulty, rendering as *der ausgesprochene Satz* (*Sein ist nichts Seiendes*) / *ouk esti* and *ungedachte Spruch* (*Sein: nichts Seiendes*) / *mē einai*. Then, it becomes essential to go through what is properly said in order to glimpse the difference in its unsaid, *alethic* moment. The ontological difference is laid bare in *alētheia* due to the double movement of *Lassen*, which lets the self-concealment abide in itself, and lets at once the openness reside in unconcealment. Hence, the double negativity plays the role of wresting entities out of invisibility (*alpha privativum*) while letting invisibility reside in its own (*lēthe*) as the one through

¹¹⁶ GA 55, p. 320. The translation is slightly modified.

¹¹⁷ GA 73.2, p. 1346: “Das Lassen ‘als’ ‘Eignen’.”

¹¹⁸ GA 55, p. 252. The translation is slightly modified.

¹¹⁹ GA 55, p. 135. The emphasis is mine.

whose concealment entities un-conceal themselves.¹²⁰ As against the first two moments of the ontological difference – which are familiar only with a static nothing expressed whether as non-entities, or as non-being – in this case we have a dynamic negativity expressed verbally as “letting”.¹²¹

Indeed, in interpreting Heraclitus, Heidegger comes close to an interpretation of the difference in light of *alētheia*. His analysis dwells on *a-lētheia* as the core of the ontological difference, which made itself known to the inceptual thinking only by withdrawing itself into a futural to-be-thought.¹²² In fact, “the difference between entities and being is for the human the nearest of the near, while remaining, however, for human conceiving, the most distant.”¹²³ In this, Heidegger seems to adopt the Aristotelian distinction between what is closer to us according to being (*kata physin*), and according to our understanding (*gnōsei proteron*).¹²⁴ The four moments of the difference seem to progress from what is closer to human intellectual ability to grasp – the formal distinction between being and entities –

¹²⁰ GA 55, p. 154: “Were the ‘never submerging’ to deny favor to the self-concealing, it would be without that from out of which it, as emerging, emerges, and that in which it as ‘the never submerging’ can unfold.” It is interesting to note that the words of goddess “estin – ouk esti mē einai”, just like the Heraclitean *to mē dynon pote*, have the same double structure as the word *a-lētheia*. The content and the form of the truth (as *alētheia*) which the goddess says thereby coincide.

¹²¹ See GA 9, p. 115, for the verbal notion of nothing whose essence is nihilating: “The nothing does not merely serve as the counterconcept of beings; rather, it originally belongs to their essential unfolding* as such. In the being of beings the nihilation of the nothing occurs.” Next to “unfolding” [Wesen], Heidegger adds in 1949 the following remark: “Essence: verbally; essential unfolding of being. [Wesen: verbal; Wesen des Seins.]”

¹²² GA 55, p. 252 and p. 256.

¹²³ GA 55, p. 339.

¹²⁴ Aristotle, *The Metaphysics*, Δ, 9, 1018 b-1019 a, trans. Hugh Tredennick, pp. 248-249.

to what is closer to the human way of being, in its ownmost intimacy, that is the relation to being as unconcealment. Being closer to our essence, the latter is farther for our intellectual portraying and is thus essentially obscure.¹²⁵

It seems to me that Heidegger laid bare the difference with regard to negation in the most explicit manner in his preface from 1949 to the third edition of the treatise “On the Essence of Ground”. This short text touches on key points made thus far that could serve as a way to conclude the proposed reading of Parmenides. If the current interpretation was on the right track, then we would encounter again the double negation – expressed formally as copula negation (*ouk esti*) and concept negation (*mē einai / on*) – that plays a vital role in thinking the difference between being and entities.

“On the essence of ground,” Heidegger says, “names the ontological difference.”¹²⁶ After giving this brief remark, he expresses the difference as follows: “The nothing is the ‘not’ of entities, and is thus being, experienced from the perspective of entities.”¹²⁷ In accord with the interpretation above, this nothing expresses *einai* as *ta mē onta*, a concept negation that – on the basis of Plato’s notion of *mē on* – I interpreted in reverse order, namely *ta onta* as *mē einai*. Heidegger himself, as we saw, accepted that (i) being could be taken as nothing in the sense of non-entity, while he was reluctant in playing the dialectical game and just flip the coin, saying that entities in turn are not-being. Quite the contrary, he tried to account for the latter phenomenon, namely not-being which entities *are*, by pointing to the inherent negativity at the bottom of manifestation, whereby entities renounce their own (being) in order to get the chance to announce themselves as being

¹²⁵ See GA 55, pp. 39-40, for the obscurity of the thinker as derivative of the obscurity of being itself. GA 55, p. 339: the same holds for Parmenides.

¹²⁶ GA 9, p. 123.

¹²⁷ GA 9, p. 123.

what and how they are: disclosed in the visibility of the open. Hence, Heidegger accepted in turn (ii) that entities as such are beingless (*Seinlose*). At once with this “not” proper to being (*mē einai*), there is also the copulative not that marks the difference between being and entities (*ouk esti*): “The ontological difference is the ‘not’ between entities and being [*ouk esti*]. Yet just as being, as the ‘not’ in relation to entities [that is *mē onta*], is by no means a nothing in the sense of a *nihil negativum*, so too the difference, as the ‘not’ between entities and being [that is *ouk esti*], is in no way merely the figment of a distinction made by our understanding (*ens rationis*).”¹²⁸ Moreover, because simply equating being with nothing misses the ontological difference, by relinquishing the inner movement of differentiating as coming into one’s own, one has to grasp the non-being dynamically, in verbal terms, which Heidegger does: “That *nihilative* [*nichtende*] ‘not’ of the nothing [*mē einai*] and this *nihilative* [*nichtende*] ‘not’ of the difference [*ouk esti*] are indeed not identical, yet they are the Same in the sense of belonging together in the essential prevailing of the being of entities.”¹²⁹ That is to say, by one of Heidegger’s favorite turn of phrases, nothing and nothing are not identical.

Heidegger ends his preface asking: “What if those who reflect on such matters were to begin at last to enter thoughtfully into this same issue [*Sache*] that has been waiting for two decades?”¹³⁰ To my mind, the most suitable response to Heidegger’s question is to take it up and ask again, this time, on our own: what if we were to begin to reflect on this unsaid issue after nearly a century?¹³¹

¹²⁸ GA 9, p. 123.

¹²⁹ GA 9, p. 123. The emphasis is mine.

¹³⁰ GA 9, p. 123.

¹³¹ A previous version of this paper was presented at the conference “In cammino verso i primi filosofi: Martin Heidegger ed Emanuele Severino” on June 19, 2023, in Venice. I express my gratitude to Chris Ioniță, the

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organizer of the conference. The idea for this paper was born during a discussion with my students in a seminar on the *Origin of the European Thought*, which I held in the first semester of the academic year 2022-2023 at the University of Bucharest. I extend my thanks to my students and to my mentor, Professor Bogdan Mincă, for providing the opportunity to bear witness to the rising of ideas through lively dialogue. Special appreciations goes to Anca-Georgeta Ionescu and Marcel Hosu for their insightful comments on this paper, and to Remus Breazu for engaging in extensive discussions during our breaks at the Central Library of Bucharest. It goes without saying that I am greatly indebted to Professor Viorel Cernica for his work in pre-judicative hermeneutics.

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