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Towards a Genealogy of the Metaphysics of Sight: Seeing, Hearing, and Thinking in Heraclitus and Parmenides

by Jussi Backman

Among modern interpreters, it has become a commonplace to regard the classical Greeks as a "people of the eye"[1] with a general predilection for the visual sense. One of the most prominent facets of this alleged Greek visuality is the predominance of optical terms and metaphors in the Greek language and particularly in its philosophical terminology, extending to its most fundamental concepts such as ἰδέα 'aspect,' 'look,' or 'visible figure', οἶδα 'to know' (= 'to have seen'), and θεωρία 'contemplation' (the disinterested look of the spectator).[2] Undoubtedly the most influential interpretations of Greek thought as a metaphysics of vision and visibility, and of the implicit understanding of being underlying this imagery, are those of Martin Heidegger, who develops his readings into a critical account of the foundations of the Western metaphysical tradition as a whole. In his most important texts, Heidegger accordingly seeks alternative images and terms in order to

[1] A prominent characterization of the ancient Greeks as *Augenmenschen*, "eye-people," can be found in Bruno Snell, *Die Ausdrücke für den Begriff des Wissens in der vorplatonischen Philosophie*, (Philologische Untersuchungen) 29 (Berlin, 1924), p. 69.

[2] For a comprehensive list of Greek optical terms, see Charles Mugler, *Dictionnaire historique de la terminologie optique des Grecs: douze siècles de dialogues avec la lumière* (Paris, 1964).

contribute to a genuinely *post*-metaphysical approach to intelligibility and its correlation with the human being's capacity to encounter and constitute meaning.[3]

Heidegger's narrative of Greek metaphysics is focused on Plato and Aristotle and retains a sharp distinction between pre-Platonic and post-Platonic philosophy. While the pre-Platonic thinkers of the "first beginning" of philosophy—first and foremost, Anaximander of Miletus (flourished ca. 600 BC), Parmenides of Elea (fl. ca. 500 BC), and Heraclitus of Ephesus (fl. ca. 500 BC)[4]—were not yet "metaphysical" thinkers in Heidegger's sense, they prefigured the Platonic and Aristotelian hierarchical and systematic ontologies (described by Heidegger as the "first completion of the first beginning"[5]) in important ways and can therefore be designated as "pre-" or "proto-metaphysical." Nonetheless, some of the key elements that Heidegger singles out as emblematic of Platonism are largely absent from the pre-Platonics. Notably, the understanding of the intuitive intellect, νοῦς, as a kind of immediate nonsensory vision, as well as the associated use of optical and ocular terminology to characterize thinking and intelligibility, are primarily Platonic innovations that emerge together with the Platonic Idea as a fundamental philosophical concept.

In this essay, we will first take a look at the background and the key theses of the Heideggerian account of Greek "metaphysics of sight" as it is manifested in

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[3] For studies of Heidegger's reappropriation and critique of Greek optical metaphysics, see David Michael Levin, *The Opening of Vision: Nihilism and the Postmodern Situation* (London, 1988); "Decline and Fall: Ocularcentrism in Heidegger's Reading of the History of Metaphysics," in *Modernity and the Hegemony of Vision,* ed. David Michael Levin (Berkeley, CA, 1993), pp. 186–217; William McNeill, *The Glance of the Eye: Heidegger, Aristotle, and the Ends of Theory* (Albany, NY, 1999).

[4] I make no attempt here to order Heraclitus and Parmenides chronologically; it seems most probable that they were roughly contemporaries and unaware of each other. Heraclitus is often regarded as the older of the two, but their standard birth dates are based on Diogenes Laertius's biographies, the sources of which Hermann Diels has shown to have been conventional and unreliable, and on the obviously fictitious description of Parmenides in Plato's *Parmenides*. See Plato, *Parmenides*, in *Platonis opera*, ed. John Burnet, 2 (Oxford, 1901), 127b1–c5; Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae philosophorum*, 2 vols., ed. Herbert S. Long (Oxford, 1964), 9.1.2–3; Hermann Diels, "Chronologische Untersuchungen über Apollodors Chronika," *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie* 31 (1876), 33–36. See also John Burnet, *Early Greek Philosophy,* 4th ed. (London, 1948), pp. 169–170.

[5] Martin Heidegger, *Besinnung*, ed. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann (Frankfurt am Main, 1997), p. 383; *Mindfulness*, trans. Parvis Emad and Thomas Kalary (London, 2006), p. 339.

Platonic thought; we will use the Heideggerian readings as a guideline and source of inspiration without concurring with all of their interpretive theses.[6] On this basis, we can proceed to investigate the extent to which this account applies to the pre-Platonic texts, particularly to the fragments of Heraclitus and Parmenides. Is there a primacy of vision and the visual, or of any of the other senses, before Plato? What is the relationship between thinking and the senses in pre-Platonic philosophy? Considering these questions will enable us to trace the initial context and function of the visualization of thinking and to thus draft a provisional genealogy of ocular metaphysics.

1. *In an Ideal Light: Heidegger and the Platonic Metaphysics of Sight*

One of the first modern thinkers to explicitly regard Greek philosophy as a "metaphysics of sight"—and to attack it for precisely that reason—was Martin Luther, whose largely implicit but decisive influence on the young Heidegger has been studied by John van Buren and other scholars.[7] In his quest to release Christian theology from the yoke of Aristotelian scholasticism, accompanied by his well-known diatribes against "the blind pagan master" Aristotle,[8] Luther contrasted the metaphysical concentration on immediate "visibility," in the sense of intelligible presence to immediate intuitive apprehension, with the Pauline emphasis that the

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[6] One particularly problematic facet of Heidegger's readings of Heraclitus and Parmenides, and one that we will not discuss here, is his notion of φύσις, in the sense of "appearing" and "emerging into presence," as their basic word, even though the term is very sparsely attested in either thinker. Martin Heidegger, *Metaphysik und Nihilismus,* ed. Hans-Joachim Friedrich (Frankfurt am Main, 1999), p. 89: "[T]he thinking of Heraclitus and Parmenides is a 'physics' in the sense of a conceiving of the essence of φύσις as the being of beings."

[7] See John van Buren, *The Young Heidegger: Rumor of the Hidden King* (Bloomington, IN, 1994), pp. 157–202; "Martin Heidegger, Martin Luther," in *Reading Heidegger from the Start: Essays in His Earliest Thought*, ed. Theodore Kisiel and John van Buren (Albany, NY, 1994), pp. 159–174, 439–442. See also Christian Sommer, *Heidegger, Aristote, Luther: les sources aristotéliciennes et néo-testamentaires d'Être et Temps* (Paris, 2005); Benjamin D. Crowe, *Heidegger's Religious Origins: Destruction and Authenticity* (Bloomington, IN, 2006).

[8] See Luther's 1520 open letter "To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation"; Martin Luther, *Werke: Kritische Gesammtausgabe*, 6 (Weimar, 1888), p. 457; *Three Treatises* (Philadelphia, 1970), pp. 92–93. See also van Buren, *The Young Heidegger*, p. 163; "Martin Heidegger, Martin Luther," p. 171.

Christian "goes about by faith [πίστεως], not by sight [εἴδους]."[9] For Luther, "the kingdom of Christ is a hearing kingdom [*hoer Reich*], not a seeing kingdom [*sehe Reich*]. For the eyes do not guide and lead us to discover Christ and to learn to know him, but this is a task for the ears [. . .]."[10] In his 1515–16 lectures on Paul's epistle to the Romans, Luther notes that while "philosophers and metaphysicians [. . .] so immerse their eye [*oculum*] in the present state of things [*praesentiam rerum*] that they speculate [*speculentur*] only on their quiddities and qualities," the apostle Paul "turns our eyes away from beholding [*intuitu*] things as they are now [. . .] and directs us to regard them in terms of what they will be."[11] This contrast was relevant for Luther's distinction, in his 1518 *Heidelberg Disputation*, between the intellectual "theology of glory" that considers the "invisible things" of the revelation to be intelligible and manifest in the inherent qualities of actual things and works, and the "theology of the cross," which regards even visible things in terms of faith in "the cross," i.e., in the transcendent activity of divine grace.[12]

In the post-Hegelian era, the Lutheran critique of Greek metaphysics was reappropriated by Count Paul Yorck von Wartenburg, Wilhelm Dilthey's friend and collaborator and one of the founding figures of philosophical hermeneutics. In the historical and hermeneutical "psychology of life" outlined in his *Bewusstseinsstellung und Geschichte (*State of consciousness and history, 1892–97), Count Yorck describes "ocularity" as a key feature of Greek philosophy:

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[9] 2 Cor. 5:7; *Novum Testamentum Graece,* ed. Eberhard Nestle et al., 27th ed. (Stuttgart, 1993).

[10] In a sermon at Merseburg on August 6, 1545; Martin Luther, *Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, 51 (Weimar, 1914), p. 11. See R. Konersmann, C. Wilson, and A. von der Lühe, "Sehen," in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, ed. Joachim Ritter and Karlfried Gründer, 9 (Darmstadt, 1995), p. 123.

[11] Martin Luther, *Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe,* 56: *Die Vorlesung über den Römerbrief* (Weimar, 1938), p. 371; *Lectures on Romans,* trans. Wilhelm Pauck (Louisville, KY, 2006), p. 235. Translation modified. See van Buren, *The Young Heidegger*, p. 198; "Martin Heidegger, Martin Luther," p. 168; Thomas Sheehan, "Heidegger's 'Introduction to the Phenomenology of Religion,' 1920–21," *The Personalist* 60 (1979), 322.

[12] Martin Luther, *Werke: Kritische Gesammtausgabe*, 1 (Weimar, 1883), pp. 353–365; *Martin Luther's Basic Theological Writings*, ed. Timothy F. Lull and William R. Russell, 3rd ed. (Minneapolis, MN, 2012), pp. 14–25. See van Buren, *The Young Heidegger*, pp. 157–168; "Martin Heidegger, Martin Luther," pp. 161, 167.

> Making the totality of givenness [*Gesamtgegebenheit*] visible and evident is the manner and motif of the Greek way of thought; its historicity consists in this adjudication of self-consciousness that liberates ocularity [*Okularität*] and grants it independence in order to thus acquire an organ for mastering givenness.[13]

Yorck argues that the very foundations of Platonic and Aristotelian thought—the category of "substance" (οὐσία), the notion of theoretical contemplation as the supreme aim of human activity, as well as the Platonic Idea as such—are rooted in a "liberation of ocularity from all other sensuality" and in the notion of beholding (*Schauung*) as the fundamental intellectual activity.[14] Like Luther, Yorck sees in the emergence of Christianity a decisive break with the optical imagery of Greek metaphysics, leading to the breakthrough of a radical new sense of temporality and historicity.[15]

Heidegger was familiar with Yorck's work only through the latter's correspondence with Dilthey (first published in 1923), but the ideas expressed there had an immediate impact on Heidegger's *Being and Time*,[16] which emphatically quotes a passage where Yorck notes the provenance of metaphysical words from ocularity and the need to seek alternative expressions.[17] On the basis of his readings

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[13] Paul Yorck von Wartenburg, *Bewusstseinsstellung und Geschichte*, ed. Iring Fetscher, (Philosophische Bibliothek) 442 (Hamburg, 1991), p. 85.

[14] Yorck, *Bewusstseinsstellung*, pp. 61–62, 67. Cf. Ingo Farin, "Count Paul Yorck von Wartenburg", in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Winter 2014 Edition)*, ed. Edward N. Zalta <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2014/entries/yorck/>.

[15] Yorck, *Bewusstseinsstellung*, p. 43–44.

[16] See the section dedicated to Count Yorck in Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 18th ed. (Tübingen, 2001), pp. 397–404; *Being and Time*, trans. Joan Stambaugh, revised by Dennis Schmidt (Albany, NY, 2010), pp. 377–384. See also Martin Heidegger, *Der Begriff der Zeit* (Frankfurt am Main, 2004), pp. 3–15; *The Concept of Time: The First Draft of Being and Time*, trans. Ingo Farin (London, 2011), pp. 1–10.

[17] Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, pp. 402–403; *Being and Time*, p. 382. The quotation is from *Briefwechsel zwischen Wilhelm Dilthey und dem Grafen Paul Yorck von Wartenburg 1877–1897*, ed. Erich Rothacker, (Philosophie und Geisteswissenschaften) 1 (Halle, 1923), pp. 70–71.

of Augustine's notion of *concupiscentia oculorum,* "the desire of the eyes,"[18] and Aristotle's description of the human being's constitutive urge to know (εἰδέναι, literally, 'to have seen'), evidenced by the privilege of the sense of vision,[19] Heidegger develops his existential account of "curiosity" (*Neugier*) as the desire to *see more*.[20] This analysis involves the historical thesis that the Western philosophical tradition has basically understood being in terms of that which shows itself to immediate intellectual vision or intuition:

> Being is what shows itself in pure, intuitive perception [*Vernehmen*], and only this seeing [*Sehen*] discovers being. Primordial and genuine truth lies in pure intuition [*Anschauung*]. This thesis henceforth remains the foundation of Western philosophy.[21]

This notion is an aspect of Heidegger's more general claim that the tradition has understood being in terms of the model of constant presence (*beständige Anwesenheit*) which posits as a standard of being that which most constantly shows itself to pure apprehending or encountering-as-present (*Gegenwärtigen*).[22] In this account, the Western metaphysics of sight is rooted in a metaphysics of presence. As Heidegger explains in his 1940 lecture course on *European Nihilism*, the classical Greeks were a "visual" people, a people "of the eye" (*Augenmenschen*), not by virtue of some

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[18] Augustine, *Confessions,* in *Patrologia Latina*, ed. Jacques Paul Migne, 32 (Paris, 1845), 10.35.54–57; see Martin Heidegger, *Phänomenologie des religiösen Lebens,* ed. Matthias Jung, Thomas Regehly, and Claudius Strube (Frankfurt am Main, 1995), pp. 218–227; *The Phenomenology of Religious Life,* trans. Matthias Fritsch and Jennifer Anna Gosetti-Ferencei (Bloomington, IN, 2004), pp. 162–169.

[19] Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, ed. W. D. Ross (Oxford, 1924), 980a21–27; see Martin Heidegger, *Phänomenologische Interpretationen ausgewählter Abhandlungen des Aristoteles zur Ontologie und Logik*, ed. Günther Neumann (Frankfurt am Main, 2005), pp. 56–113, 387–390.

[20] Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, pp. 170–173; *Being and Time*, pp. 164–167. See Martin Heidegger, *Prolegomena zur Geschichte des Zeitbegriffs*, ed. Petra Jaeger, 3rd ed. (Frankfurt am Main, 1994), pp. 378–384; *History of the Concept of Time: Prolegomena*, trans. Theodore Kisiel (Bloomington, IN, 1992), pp. 274–277.

[21] Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, p. 171; *Being and Time*, p. 165.

[22] Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, p. 26; *Being and Time*, pp. 24–25.

contingent psychological or cultural peculiarity but because of their fundamental metaphysical outlook for which the fundamental criterion of "to be" was presence, in the sense of accessibility to immediate apprehending:

> Because being [*Sein*] means presence [*Anwesenheit*] and constancy [*Beständigkeit*], "seeing" is especially apt to serve as an elucidation for the grasping *of* what is present and what is permanent. In seeing, we have the perceived "over against" [*gegenüber*] us in an emphatic sense, provided that an interpretation of beings [*Seienden*] does not already underlie our seeing. The Greeks did not explain relations with beings through seeing because they were "visual people" [*Augenmenschen*]; they were "visual people," so to speak, because they experienced the being of beings as presence and constancy.[23]

Seeing is the paradigmatic metaphysical sense because it is affords a particular kind of access to beings as present. What is it that distinguishes visual access from that provided by the other senses? Vision is not the most *immediate* form of sensory access; as Aristotle emphasizes in *De anima*, vision precisely requires distance, a transparent medium of visibility between the visual organ and the visual object.[24] Touch is more immediate in the sense that there is no spatial gap and no clearly defined limit between that which touches and that which is touched. Somewhat problematically, Aristotle takes the bodily *flesh* itself to be the medium of touching, conjecturing that the actual organ of the tactile sense must be something internal to the body[25], but in *Metaphysics* 9.10, describing the simple intuitive apprehending of non-discursive truths as the most immediate form of access, he takes recourse

[23] Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, 6th ed., 2 (Stuttgart, 1998), p. 199; *Nietzsche*, trans. Frank A. Capuzzi, ed. David Farrell Krell, 4 (San Francisco, 1991), p. 167. Tr. mod.
[24] Aristotle, *De anima,* ed. W. D. Ross (Oxford, 1961), 419a12–21.
[25] Aristotle, *De anima*, 422b17–423b26.

precisely to a tactile metaphor (θιγεῖν or θιγγάνειν 'to touch upon').[26] Hearing, on the other hand, is the proper vehicle of learning and understanding;[27] as *the* linguistic sense, it gives us access not only to particular sounds but also to universal λόγος in the form of general discourses, concepts, rules, and narratives. What, for Plato, distinguishes vision from the other senses is its "sharpness" (ὀξύτης),[28] i.e., its *determinacy:* vision gives us a privileged kind of access to the *limits* of things, their colors, contours, and shapes, and thus discloses them as distinct, definite, and delimited. As Heidegger puts it:

> The ancients considered that things are given most completely in seeing, namely in their immediate presentness [*Gegenwart*], indeed in such a way that the present being has the character which, for the Greeks, belongs to every being: πέρας, i.e., it is *limited* [*begrenzt*] by its firmly circumscribed look [*Aussehen*], its *figure* [*Gestalt*].[29]

Aristotle accordingly notes that vision is the source of a great number of distinctions (διαφοραί):[30] our visual field is more clearly and intricately differentiated than our auditory or tactile fields. Unlike touching, seeing also makes a clear distinction between that which senses and that which is sensed. Vision is the "objectifying" sense *par excellence* since, as Heidegger puts it, it discloses what is seen as "over against" or "opposite" (*gegenüber*) the one who sees—as something separate, at a distance.

As the path of access to things as distinct, definite, and separate, vision is the sensory paradigm of the Platonic Idea in the sense of the determinate and distinct

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[26] Aristotle, *Metaphysics,* 1051b22–25.
[27] Aristotle, *Metaphysics,* 980b21–25.
[28] Plato, *Phaedrus*, in *Platonis opera*, 2, 250d3–4.
[29] Martin Heidegger, *Vom Wesen der Wahrheit: Zu Platons Höhlengleichnis und Theätet*, ed. Hermann Mörchen, 2nd ed. (Frankfurt am Main, 1997), p. 102; *The Essence of Truth: On Plato's Cave Allegory and Theaetetus*, trans. Ted Sadler (London, 2004), p. 74. Tr. mod.
[30] Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 980a26–27.

identity, the "what it is," of each kind of thing, as the figure or form that sets things of the type P apart from other things as being P and not Q:

> The word ἰδέα means that which is seen [*das Gesichtete*] in the visible [*Sichtbaren*], the view [*Anblick*] that something offers. What is offered is the respective look [*Aussehen*] or εἶδος of whatever is encountered. The look of a thing is that within which, as we say, it presents [*präsentiert*] itself to us, re-presents itself [*sich vor-stellt*] and as such stands before us. The look is that within which and as which the thing presences [*an-west*]—that is, in the Greek sense, *is.* [. . .] In the look, that which is present [*Anwesende*], that which is [*Seiende*], stands there in its whatness [*Was*] and its howness [*Wie*]. It is perceived and taken, it is possessed and had by an accepting [*Hinnehmens*], it is the disposable presencing [*Anwesende*] of what is present: οὐσία.[31]

As the whatness that makes a being visible as the specific and distinct being that it is, the ἰδέα provides the delimiting outline of the being, the limit that identifies this being as *what* it is and differentiates it from what it is not. However, in the Platonic approach, this differentiating identity is at the same time essentially discursive and conceptual. As Socrates puts it in Book 6 of the *Republic,* even though beauty is spoken of in the plural in the sense that we attribute it to many numerically different things, the "what it is" (ὃ ἔστιν) thus predicated—the beautiful itself—is in each case one and the same. The many beautiful things can be seen with the eyes (ὁρᾶσθαι); beauty as such can only be intuitively grasped (νοεῖσθαι).[32] The "what it is" is what lets every particular thing be *seen* as a distinct and particular kind of *thing*, but in order to do this, it must be a specific *kind*, a generic conceptual identity *named* by a

[31] Martin Heidegger, *Einführung in die Metaphysik*, 6th ed. (Tübingen, 1998), p. 138; *Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Gregory Fried and Richard Polt (New Haven, CT, 2000), pp. 192–193. Tr. mod.
[32] Plato, *Republic*, in *Platonis opera*, ed. John Burnet, 4 (Oxford, 1902), 507b2–10.

single predicate.[33] In order to become noetic vision, sensory vision must therefore be penetrated by the generality of conceptual discourse, which properly belongs to the realm of hearing; by itself, the visual sense is incapable of discovering the conceptual articulation underlying visual articulation. Socrates tells us in the *Phaedo* that it was this very discovery that discouraged him from pursuing the purely empirical study of nature: for fear that his soul might be "blinded" by the attempt to grasp things solely through the eyes and the other senses, he decided to continue his investigation into the truth of beings (τῶν ὄντων τὴν ἀλήθειαν) by means of conceptual discourse (ἐν λόγοις).[34] As Charles Kahn notes, "[t]he fundamental conception of the [Platonic] Forms is, from the beginning, linguistic rather than visual in its orientation [. . .]. [T]his conception is dominated not by the metaphor of seeing [. . .] but rather by the notion of essential *Being* as specified by the *what-is-X?* question."[35] Nonetheless, it would be hasty to conclude from this, with Kahn, that "[i]t is a mistake [. . .] to suppose [. . .] that the etymological connections of the terms *idea* and *eidos* with the verb *idein*, 'to see,' are in any way essential or decisive for Plato's conception of the Forms."[36] Rather, the Platonic approach presupposes that vision, the access to beings as delimited and articulate, *is* discursively and conceptually structured. Seeing takes place through a conceptual framework and is thus permeated by hearing; vision and λόγος are inextricably intertwined. In Kant's words, "thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind."[37]

A fundamental reason for the generic nature of the Idea can be found in the way in which Plato often describes conceptual identities as *functional* identities, as particular functions or purposes in terms of which beings are ultimately identified as belonging to a particular *kind* of beings. These functions can obviously be fulfilled by

[33] Plato, *Republic*, 596a6–7.
[34] Plato, *Phaedo*, in *Platonis opera,* ed. John Burnet, 1 (Oxford, 1900), 99e2–100a2.
[35] Charles H. Kahn, *Plato and the Socratic Dialogue: The Philosophical Use of a Literary Form* (Cambridge, 1996), p. 355.
[36] Kahn, *Plato and the Socratic Dialogue*, pp. 354–355.
[37] Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, ed. Jens Timmermann (Hamburg, 1998), A 51, B 75; *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 193–194.

several numerically distinct particular things.[38] The type of looking involved in the ἰδέα or εἶδος as a "look" is thereby linked to a very specific context—that of production, ποίησις. The ἰδέα becomes the normative model, the paradigmatic example to which the craftsman looks for guidance in the process of implementing a specific kind of utensil in a particular material, and this looking is, of course, not a sensory one, but rather a "looking away" (ἀποβλέπειν) from the material at hand towards the ideal and immaterial function.[39] This view of Platonic metaphysics as a "production ontology" is brought up by Heidegger in his 1949 Bremen lecture on *The Thing*:

> In the process of production [*Herstellens*], of course, the jug [Heidegger's example in the lecture; J.B.] must first show its look [*Aussehen*] to the producer. But what shows itself here, the look (the εἶδος, the ἰδέα), characterizes the jug solely in the respect in which the vessel stands over against the producer as something to be produced. [. . .] Plato, who conceives of the presence of what is present in terms of the look, [. . .] experienced (decisively, indeed, for the sequel) [. . .] everything present as an object of producing.[40]

The attribute *constant* in Heidegger's reading of the Greek understanding of being as *constant presence* must therefore be emphasized. *Constancy* requires a degree of *determinacy;* sensory visual access to the material world of continuous change must be complemented by a noetic "looking away" towards the ideally permanent (functional) identity in terms of which a being can be identified in its "what it is." In

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[38] See, e.g., Plato, *Cratylus,* in *Platonis opera,* 1, 389a5–390d6; *Republic*, 596a5–602b10.

[39] Plato, *Cratylus*, 390e1–4.

[40] Martin Heidegger, *Vorträge und Aufsätze*, 9th ed. (Stuttgart, 2000), p. 160; *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York, 2001), p. 166. Tr. mod. See also *Bremer und Freiburger Vorträge*, ed. Petra Jaeger (Frankfurt am Main, 1994), p. 7; *Bremen and Freiburg Lectures,* trans. Andrew J. Mitchell (Bloomington, IN, 2012), pp. 7–8; *Holzwege*, ed. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann, 8th ed. (Frankfurt am Main, 2003), pp. 13–14; *Off the Beaten Track,* trans. Julian Young and Kenneth Haynes (Cambridge, 2002), p. 10.

the *Republic*, Socrates shows that it is precisely the specific *mediated* character of vision that makes it the paradigmatic sense, structurally analogous to the intuitive intellect.[41] In order to function, seeing, unlike the other senses, requires the presence of a third factor in addition to the eye and the object of sight: light, which, as Aristotle formulates it, is the actuality of the transparent medium of visibility *as* transparent.[42] In an analogous manner, noetic insight into the ideal identities of things is possible only in terms of a third factor: the Idea of the Good (τὸ ἀγαθόν), that is, ideality as such. Just as the sun is the source of visibility, the Idea of ideality, that is, the inherent teleological structure through which beings are disclosed in terms of their purpose—of an ontological ideal of goodness in the sense of appropriateness or aptness—is the source of intelligibility that makes individual Ideas, individual purposes, intelligible. The sun is thus to be regarded as an offspring (ἔκγονος) and counterpart (ἀνάλογον) of the Good. Just as the Good stands to the intellect (νοῦς) and its objects (τὰ νοούμενα) in the purely intelligible sphere of intellectual vision (νοητός), the sun stands to sensory vision (ὄψις) and its objects (ὁρώμενα) in the sphere of sensuous visibility (ὁρατός):[43]

> In Greek thought τὸ ἀγαθόν means that which is fit for [*taugt*] something and enables another to be fit for [*tauglich*] something. [. . .] [T]he "Ideas" make something fit to appear in its whatness and thus to be present in its constancy [*in seinem Beständigen*]. [. . .] [W]hat makes every Idea fit to be an Idea—in a Platonic expression, the Idea of all Ideas—consists in making possible the appearing, in all its visibility, of everything present. [. . .] Therefore the Idea of Ideas is that which makes fit [*das Tauglichmachende*] as such, τὸ ἀγαθόν.[44]

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[41] Plato, *Republic*, 507c6–509c2.
[42] Aristotle, *De anima*, 418b4–20.
[43] Plato, *Republic*, 508b12–c2.
[44] Martin Heidegger, *Wegmarken,* ed. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann, 3rd ed. (Frankfurt am Main, 1996), pp. 227–228; *Pathmarks*, ed. William McNeill (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 174–175 (trans. Thomas Sheehan). Tr. mod.

However, the sensuous and the intelligible are not simply two separate realms; rather, they are two intertwining components, two possible poles of orientation, of discursive vision. A central purpose of the Platonic analogy between the sun and the Idea of the Good is to liken discursive vision primarily oriented to the sensible to seeing in the dark: due to the absence of sufficient (intelligible or sensible) light, both are deficient modes of vision that fail to grasp the true determinate identity of what is seen and capture only perspectives or impressions (δόξαι).[45] Seeing correctly (ὀρθῶς), i.e., directing one's vision to that which *is* more (constant; μᾶλλον ὄν)[46], presupposes that that which sees and that which is seen are connected under the "yoke" (ζυγόν) of proper illumination.[47] The Platonic metaphysics of sight is thus a metaphysics of light, more precisely, a "solar" metaphysics of the ideal *source* of light—an "ontotheological" approach in the Heideggerian sense that all vision, all access to the presence of beings, is constantly referred back to a supreme and ideal "source" or "cause":

> This highest and first cause [i.e., the Idea of the Good; J.B.] is named by Plato and correspondingly by Aristotle τὸ θεῖον, the divine. Ever since being [*Sein*] was interpreted as ἰδέα, thinking about the being of beings [*Seienden*] has been metaphysical, and metaphysics has been theological. In this case theology means the interpretation of the "cause" [*Ursache*] of beings as God and the transposition of being onto this cause, which contains being in itself and dispenses being from out of itself, because it is the most beingful [*Seiendste*] of beings.[48]

[45] Plato, *Republic*, 508d4–9.
[46] Plato, *Republic*, 515d2–4.
[47] Plato, *Republic*, 507e6–508a2.
[48] Heidegger, *Wegmarken*, pp. 235–236; *Pathmarks*, pp. 180–181 (trans. Thomas Sheehan). Tr. mod.

2. *Hearkening to the Voiceless Voice: Heraclitus's Protometaphysics of Hearing*

In the light of Heidegger's account of the profound complicity between the Platonic notion of Ideas and the paradigmatic status of vision, it is not surprising that traces of a metaphysics of sight are hard to find in pre-Platonic philosophy. Andrea Wilson Nightingale has shown that "in the pre-Platonic thinkers, there is little if any evidence that knowledge takes the form of 'seeing' truth. [. . .] The emphasis is on discourse and hearing rather than spectating or seeing."[49] A "physics" of sight did exist very early on; Empedocles and Democritus were among the first philosophers to develop optical and physiological accounts of the phenomenon of vision, described in detail in Theophrastus's *De sensibus*.[50] However, the use of optical metaphors in philosophical terminology was scarce, and there is no sign of any particular ontological primacy of seeing as a privileged mode of access to beings.

The Heraclitus fragments tend to treat seeing and hearing as equally important senses. In his fragment B 55, Heraclitus tells us that he prefers (προτιμέω) things accessible to sight (ὄψις), hearing (ἀκοή), and learning (μάθησις)[51]—presumably to things that are not thus accessible. Fragment B 101a does suggest a certain primacy of sight: "For the eyes [ὀφθαλμοί] are more precise [ἀκριβέστεροι] witnesses than ears."[52] The quotation is by the Hellenistic historian Polybius, who comments: "Among our organs there are by nature two through which we learn all things and through which we are active in multiple ways, {hearing and sight}, and according to Heraclitus, sight is by far more truthful [ἀληθινώτερας]."[53] It seems, however, that "truthful" is Polybius's own interpretation of the greater *precision* attributed to sight

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[49] Andrea Wilson Nightingale, *Spectacles of Truth in Classical Greek Philosophy: Theoria in Its Cultural Context* (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 32–33.

[50] Theophrastus, *De sensibus*, in *Doxographi Graeci*, ed. Hermann Diels (Berlin, 1879), pp. 500–506, 513–524.

[51] Heraclitus, 22 B 55, in *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker: Griechisch und deutsch*, ed. Hermann Diels and Walther Kranz, 6th ed., 1 (Berlin, 1951) [hereafter cited as DK].

[52] Heraclitus, DK 22 B 101a.

[53] Polybius, *Historiae,* ed. Theodor Büttner-Wobst, 3 (Leipzig, 1893), 12.27.1. The words "hearing and sight" are a clarifying addition to the manuscript text by Alfred Fleckeisen.

by Heraclitus. The parallel status of seeing and hearing, as well as their subordination to λόγος, conceptual and discursive articulation, is evident from B 107, "The eyes and ears of those possessing barbaric [βαρβάρους] souls are poor witnesses for human beings,"[54] which Sextus Empiricus interprets convincingly:

> In terms of the knowledge [γνῶσιν] of truth, the human being seems to be arranged into two faculties: sensory perception and discursive articulation [λόγῳ]. Heraclitus considered sensory perception [. . .] to be unreliable and posited discursive articulation as a standard [κριτήριον]. But he rejected sensory perception, saying, as the phrase goes: "The eyes and ears… [B 107]," which amounts to saying that barbaric souls tend to trust inarticulate [ἀλόγοις] sensory perceptions.[55]

As the onomatopoetic term indicates, the foreign speech of "barbarians" was regarded by the Greeks as inarticulate and garbled, and one can suppose that "barbaric souls" are "irrational" (ἄλογος) precisely in their inability to grasp the fundamental articulation of things in accordance with λόγος, the basic discursive structure of intelligibility. This lack of discursive and conceptual articulation—the lack of concordance with the "unapparent framework" (ἁρμονίη ἀφανής)[56] that structures the "manifest" framework of sensory experience—impairs even their seeing and hearing, more precisely, their ability to make sense of their particular sensations by placing them into a wider discursive framework.

Λόγος, discursive "reason," articulates beings into basic pairs of binary conceptual opposites, such as freeman/slave, war/peace, divine/mortal, male/female,

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[54] Heraclitus, DK 22 B 107.
[55] Sextus Empiricus, *Adversus mathematicos,* in *Sexti Empirici opera,* ed. Hermann Mutschmann, 2 (Leipzig, 1914), 7.126–127.
[56] Heraclitus, DK 22 B 54.

day/night, winter/summer, or living/dead.[57] In these binaries, each term is conceptually dependent on its opposite: being free only makes sense in contrast to being a slave and vice versa, being male is meaningful only in distinction to being female, and so on. In this sense, λόγος is also the fundamental *unity* of discursive meaning: in their interdependency, all opposed terms inextricably belong together and intertwine with their opposites in a differential interplay. Λόγος lets all things belong together *as* differentiated. As the most perfect framework (καλλίστη ἁρμονία) it is an internally tensional (παλίντροπος) unity, like that of a bow or a lyre, that is, one emerging from the reciprocal agreement (ὁμολογεῖν) of differences or oppositions (διαφέροντα).[58] As such, λόγος is universal and common (ξυνός) to all[59], the divine law or norm (νόμος) governing all things.[60] Interestingly, Heraclitus seems to compare λόγος to a "light" of intelligibility in fragment B 16: "How could one conceal oneself [λάθοι] from that which at no time sets [τὸ μὴ δῦνόν ποτε]?"[61] Clement of Alexandria interprets this from a Platonic or Neoplatonic perspective: while one can possibly remain concealed from sensuous [αἰσθητόν] light, in the case of purely intelligible, noetic [νοητόν] light, this is impossible.[62]

However, in their normal and unreflected everyday mode of experiencing, human beings ignore this universal and law-like character of λόγος and pretend to possess a private and individual discursive capacity of their own.[63] Just as in sleep one leaves the shared world for the private world of one's dreams, humans turn their back to the common structure of rational thought even when awake[64]; they are "absent even in their presence."[65] To have a barbaric soul is to ignore the universality

[57] Heraclitus, DK 22 B 53, 57, 60, 62, 67, 88, 111.
[58] Heraclitus, DK 22 B 8, 51.
[59] Heraclitus, DK 22 B 2, 114.
[60] Heraclitus, DK 22 B 33, 114.
[61] Heraclitus, DK 22 B 16.
[62] Clement of Alexandria, *Paedagogus,* in *Clementis Alexandrini opera,* ed. Wilhelm Dindorf, 1 (Oxford, 1869), 2.10.99.
[63] Heraclitus, DK 22 B 2.
[64] Heraclitus, DK 22 B 1, 26, 73, 89.
[65] Heraclitus, DK 22 B 34.

of conceptual discourse, to be deceptively focused on the contents of one's private experience without placing them into a shared framework of rationality. This is what the problematic fragment B 46 seems to suggest: "[Heraclitus] called presumption [οἴησιν] the sacred disease [ἱερὰν νόσον] and said that vision [or: visible appearance, ὅρασιν] is deceptive."[66] Οἴησις 'presumption' has the double sense of 'conjectural belief' and 'inflated self-confidence'; "the sacred disease" presumably refers here, as in later usage, to epileptic seizures, characterized by a temporary insensibility to external sounds or sights and compared by Aristotle to sleep.[67] In sticking to one's private experience, one is in a dreamlike state, cut off from the common world of logical organization and conceptual articulation, and one's visual impressions become random, superficial, and deceptive.

It seems that for Heraclitus, the value of visual perception as the most "precise witness" among human sensory faculties is entirely subordinate to logical and conceptual structure. "Precision" seems to refer to the superior capacity of sight to make distinctions and to differentiate its field, emphasized, as we saw, by Aristotle. However, B 7 seems to point out that this superiority is contingent upon the factual physical structure of the sensuous world: "If all beings were to turn to smoke, noses would make the distinctions [διαγνοῖεν]," [68] that is, if the material world were different, some other sense, such as smell, could just as well be the most relevant source of differentiation. Thus, B 98 remarks, in the darkness of the nether world, the souls of the departed would have to orient themselves with the help of the sense of smell.[69] The image of the world going up in smoke seems to be connected to Heraclitus's use of *fire* as the elemental image of the fundamental unity and interchangeability of all things in λόγος. The sensuous world-order, the κόσμος, is

[66] Heraclitus, DK 22 B 46.
[67] Aristotle, *De somno et vigilia,* in *Parva naturalia,* ed. W. D. Ross (Oxford, 1955) 457a7–9. See also Emmanouil Magiorkinis, Kalliopi Sidiropoulou, and Aristidis Diamantis, "Hallmarks in the History of Epilepsy: Epilepsy in Antiquity," *Epilepsy & Behaviour* 17 (2010), 103–108.
[68] Heraclitus, DK 22 B 7.
[69] Heraclitus, DK 22 B 98.

ultimately an ever-living fire[70] in the sense that just as gold is the universal medium of exchange for goods, fire as the all-consuming element is a medium of exchange for all things.[71] Clement tells us that as the fundamental element, the Heraclitean fire is organized by the λόγος that administers (διοικέω) the totality of beings;[72] Hippolytus of Rome explains that everlasting fire is, for Heraclitus, the *cause* of the internal administration or "economy" (διοίκησις) of the totality of beings, and is itself capable of thought (φρόνιμον).[73] Just as λόγος unites all things by differentiating them, fire distinguishes (κρινεῖ) and comprehends (καταλήψεται) all things.[74] In this sense, the ever-living fire that always was, is, and will be, is the "never-setting light" that illuminates the world-order as a structured and measured totality.[75]

Heraclitean "rationalism" thus leaves the bodily senses in a secondary and subordinate position. However, it is important to note that since λόγος is a discursive structure—and thus, in the Greek "phonocentric" perspective, primarily oral and spoken discourse—, there is a clear *metaphorical* primacy of hearing. Aristotle tells us that Heraclitus's book began with these words: "For human beings are always unable to gather [ἀξύνετοι] the discursive articulation of being [τοῦ λόγου τοῦ ὄντος], before hearing [ἀκοῦσαι] it and even after they have first heard it [. . .]."[76] In their normal unreflective ignorance of λόγος, humans are "inept at

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[70] Heraclitus, DK 22 B 30.

[71] Heraclitus, DK 22 B 90.

[72] Heraclitus, DK 22 B 31; Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata,* in *Clementis Alexandrini opera,* ed. Wilhelm Dindorf, 3 (Oxford, 1869), 5.104.

[73] Heraclitus, DK 22 B 64; Hippolytus of Rome, *Refutatio omnium haeresium (Philosophumena)*, ed. Miroslav Marcovich, (Patristische Texte und Studien) 25 (Berlin, 1986), 9.10.7.

[74] Heraclitus, DK 22 B 66. This quotation is from Hippolytus, who seems to read Heraclitus as a prophet of the final conflagration at the Biblical last judgment and therefore uses the future tense. However, there is no reason to suspect that these verbs are not identical to, or equivalent with, the ones actually used by Heraclitus.

[75] Heraclitus, DK 22 B 16, 30. Heidegger, in his commentary, suggests reading these fragments together, even though he himself reads the "never-setting light" in the sense of φύσις as constant "emergence-into-presence"; see Martin Heidegger, *Heraklit*, ed. Manfred S. Frings, 3rd ed. (Frankfurt am Main, 1994), p. 90.

[76] Heraclitus, DK 22 B 1; first lines quoted and commented in Aristotle, *Rhetoric,* ed. W. D. Ross (Oxford, 1959), 1407b14–18. The main manuscripts of Aristotle have τοῦ ὄντος, "(the λόγος) of being";

hearing [ἀκοῦσαι] as well as saying [εἰπεῖν]";[77] even though they are constantly faced with λόγος, they are "deaf" (κωφοί) to it.[78] And yet λόγος is not *a* voice, not the audible voice of a human being such as Heraclitus himself, but *the* voice, the voiceless voice of the discursive structure of being, the fundamental discursiveness that makes all rational discourse possible. "Having heard [ἀκούσαντας] not me but discursive articulation itself, it is well-advised to articulate in agreement [ὁμολογεῖν] with it: All is One [ἓν πάντα εἶναι]."[79]

We find then, in Heraclitus, not a metaphysics of sight, not a noetic seeing of supersensible identities with the Platonic "eyes of the soul,"[80] but rather a strangely analogous protometaphysics of hearing, characterized by an emphasis on listening to the "unapparent harmony," the soundless discursive articulation of being that makes all merely human vocalization and speaking possible. In his Heraclitus lectures, Heidegger describes this hearing as an "authentic hearing"[81] that he calls "hearkening" (*Horchen*):

> As auditory sensing [*Empfinden*], hearing [*Hören*] constantly takes place in terms of a listening [*Hören auf*] to something in the sense of hearkening [*Horchens*]. However, our hearkening is, in each case, already in itself in a certain way attentive [*horchsam*] to what is to be heard, prepared for it or unprepared as well—in some way, an obedience [*Gehorsam*]. Obedience is the ear required for proper hearing. The audible [*das Hörbare*], that which can be attentively perceived [*Vernehmbare*], need not be anything phonetic or noisy. [. . .] From Heraclitus's saying we gather only that knowledge [*Wissen*] arises in attentive

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a later variant, adopted by Diels and Kranz, is τοῦδ' ἐόντος, "the present λόγος," which would make the passage refer to Heraclitus's own discourse.

[77] Heraclitus, DK 22 B 19.

[78] Heraclitus, DK 22 B 34.

[79] Heraclitus, DK 22 B 50.

[80] The expression is used, e.g., in Plato, *Republic*, 533d2.

[81] Heidegger, *Heraklit*, p. 246.

> listening to the Λόγος, which, in contrast to the human discourse [*Rede*] of the thinker, is indeed not a vocalization [*Verlautung*] [. . .].[82]

3. *The Vision of Pure Presence: Parmenides' Insight*

For a first indication of a metaphysics of sight, we will have to look at Parmenides. As Nightingale rightly points out, even the outset of Parmenides' Poem is dominated by discourse and hearing, and by a general deprecation of the senses.[83] In the opening of the Poem, which frames it in the imagery of Homeric and Hesiodic epic poetry, the narrator-thinker is carried in a divine carriage upon a "daimonic" path, that is, a mediating way between the mortal and the divine realms.[84] In Sextus Empiricus's highly interesting and not altogether implausible reading of the passage as an allegorical departure from sensory evidence, the screeching wheels on either side of the carriage are likened to the ears, while the "maidens of Sun" leading the way represent the eyes.[85] In any case, the daimonic way leads the thinker beyond the "gates of the paths of Night and Day," that is, beyond the most basic binary oppositions that constitute the discursively articulated and sensuous world of mortal experience, into the divine realm of fundamental unity.[86] Here, the thinker is greeted by an anonymous goddess, who is rather unexpectedly not angered by the thinker's transgression beyond the mortal realm but welcomes him and goes on to disclose her teaching, divided into two main parts: one concerning the fundamental truth, unconcealedness, or evidence (ἀλήθεια)[87] regarding being, the other concerning the

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[82] Heidegger, *Heraklit*, p. 260.
[83] Nightingale, *Spectacles of Truth*, p. 33.
[84] Parmenides, DK 28 B 1.1–3, reading, with the manuscripts and Diels, δαίμονος 'of a deity' rather than δαίμονες 'deities,' preferred by Kranz.
[85] Sextus Empiricus, *Adversus mathematicos*, 7.112–113.
[86] Parmenides, DK 28 B 1.11–21. I follow here, in outline, the interpretation of Mitchell Miller, "Parmenides and the Disclosure of Being," *Apeiron* 13 (1978), 12–35; "Ambiguity and Transport: Reflections on the Proem to Parmenides' Poem," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 30 (2006), 1–47.
[87] On ἀλήθεια as "evidence," see Ernst Heitsch, *Parmenides: Die Fragmente: Griechisch und deutsch*, 3rd ed. (Zürich, 1995), pp. 90–98.

views, impressions, or "acceptances" (δόξαι)[88] of "mortals," that is, of humans in their everyday, unreflective attitude, regarding being. Specifically, the purpose of the teaching is to show how the mortal acceptances inevitably arise and gain their relative justification or acceptability in terms of the "divine" level of evidence.[89] The learning (πυθέσθαι) required of the thinker is of an explicitly acoustic nature: it consists in hearing (ἀκούσαι) the tale or narrative (μῦθος) related by the goddess[90], and the part on Truth, the source of all true conviction and persuasion (πίστις, Πειθώ)[91], is also referred to as a "convincing account" (πιστὸς λόγος).[92]

Parmenides' goddess is even more explicit than Heraclitus in her censure of reliance on the senses in the quest for fundamental evidence. The "mortals," that is, human beings in their ordinary dealings with the world, are without insight in any respect (εἰδότες οὐδέν)[93] regarding Ἀλήθεια; they are "deaf [κωφοί] as well as blind [τυφλοί]"[94] precisely in that their scope is restricted to the situated and relative perspective of the senses in which things are either contingently there or not, are identical with themselves but different from all other things. They wander about "double-headed" (δίκρανοι)[95] in the sense that they are constantly looking "in two directions," at being (being-there, being-*x*) and at nonbeing (not-being-there, not-being-*y*). For them, " 'to be there' [πέλειν] and 'not to be there' [οὐκ εἶναι] are

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[88] On the δόξαι as "acceptances," see Alexander P. D. Mourelatos, *The Route of Parmenides: A Study of Word, Image, and Argument in the Fragments* (New Haven, CT, 1970), pp. 194–221.

[89] Parmenides, DK 28 B 1.22–32. The relationship between the Δόξαι and Ἀλήθεια has, of course, always been a highly disputed point. I follow here essentially the reading proposed by Hans Schwabl, "Sein und Doxa bei Parmenides," *Wiener Studien* 66 (1953), 50–75, heavily influenced by Karl Reinhardt, *Parmenides und die Geschichte der griechischen Philosophie* (Bonn, 1916), pp. 5–10. Reinhardt, who introduced the "phenomenological" reading that does not see Parmenides as simply rejecting the δόξαι but as inquiring into their necessary origin, was praised by Heidegger as the first one to properly grasp the correlation between the two parts of the Poem; see Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, p. 223n1; *Being and Time*, p. 214n39.

[90] Parmenides, DK 28 B 2.1, 8.1.

[91] Parmenides, DK 28 B 1.30, 2.4.

[92] Parmenides, DK 28 B 8.50.

[93] Parmenides, DK 28 B 6.4.

[94] Parmenides, DK 28 B 6.7.

[95] Parmenides, DK 28 B 6.5.

established as the same [ταὐτόν], and not the same."[96] Their thinking or awareness (νόος) of being is "errant" (πλακτός), directed by the "want of resources" (ἀμηχανίη) characteristic of bare sense perception. Because of this, they are "undecided" (ἄκριτα), that is, unable to make the crucial decision (κρίσις) between being and nonbeing.[97] This is precisely what makes the mortal path oppositional and differential, "internally tensional" (παλίντροπος, which some scholars have read as a direct reference to Heraclitus's παλίντροπος ἁρμονίη).[98] Therefore, the goddess admonishes the thinker, it is essential not to let oneself be forced by habit (ἔθος) on the "path of much experience" (πολύπειρος ὁδός) upon which one "observes the unwatchful eye [ἄσκοπον ὄμμα] and the roaring hearing [ἠχήεσσαν ἀκουήν], and the tongue [γλῶσσαν]." Rather, the fundamental decision is to be made by purely conceptual and discursive means (κρῖναι λόγῳ).[99]

However natural and meaningful the "internally tensional" mortal experience of "is and is not" may be, the goddess's central teaching on ἀλήθεια aims to show that it must be reduced to a fundamental unity of being. This thesis is essentially based on the "purification" of thinking awareness from its "errant" mortal character, which entails its release from the "errancy" of the senses. From the point of view of Parmenides' epistemology, the enigmatic fragment B 16 is particularly interesting:

> For in whatever way [the human being] is, in each case, disposed as to the compound of much-erring limbs [μελέων πολυπλάγκτων],
> thinking [νόος] becomes available to humans accordingly. For it is the same [τὸ γὰρ αὐτό],

[96] Parmenides, DK 28 B 6.8–9.
[97] Parmenides, DK 28 B 6.5–7. On Parmenides' decision or "crisis," see Jussi Backman, "Unity in Crisis: Protometaphysical and Postmetaphysical Decisions," in *Politics of the One: Concepts of the One and the Many in Contemporary Thought*, ed. Artemy Magun (New York, 2013), pp. 87–112.
[98] Parmenides, DK 28 B 6.8–9. On παλίντροπος as a reference to Heraclitus, DK 22 B 51, see Alois Patin, *Parmenides im Kampfe gegen Heraklit,* (Jahrbücher für classische Philologie, Suppl.) 25 (Leipzig, 1899), pp. 524–527.
[99] Parmenides, DK 28 B 7.3–5.

> that which the nature [φύσις] of the limbs precisely minds [φρονέει], for humans,
> for all and each. For a thought [νόημα] is what goes over and above this [or: what is fulfilled, τὸ πλέον].[100]

Aristotle quotes this passage to support his claim that Parmenides and many of the other Presocratics failed to make the Platonic distinction between the sensuous and the intelligible, considering all awareness to be sensory in nature.[101] The original context of the passage is left obscure. Aristotle's pupil Theophrastus quotes the same passage in his treatise on sensation, reading it as a part of an elaborate physiological theory of sensation he attributes to Parmenides.[102] However, he does not really interpret the passage, and its connection to the theory he describes, allegedly found in the Δόξαι part of the Poem, remains somewhat obscure.[103] While the majority of scholars—Heidegger among them[104]—have followed Theophrastus's interpretation and placed B 16 among the Δόξαι fragments, it is possible to read it instead as part of the goddess's main argument:[105] it seems that she is here explaining how mortal

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[100] Parmenides, DK 28 B 16, interpreting the notoriously ambiguous lines 16.2–3 with Tarán and Mourelatos; see Leonardo Tarán, *Parmenides: A Text with Translation, Commentary, and Critical Essays* (Princeton, NJ, 1965), pp. 253–256; Mourelatos, *The Route of Parmenides*, pp. 253–259.

[101] Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1009b12–1010a15; see also *De anima*, 427a17–b6.

[102] Theophrastus, *De sensu et sensibilibus* (*Doxographi Graeci*, pp. 499–500).

[103] On the problems in Theophrastus's readings of Presocratic philosophy, the questionability of his source material and his dependence on Aristotle, see Ian McDiarmid, "Theophrastus on the Presocratic Causes," *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 61 (1953), 85–156; Hermann Fränkel, *Wege und Formen frühgriechischen Denkens: Literarische und philosophiegeschichtliche Studien* (Munich, 1955), pp. 175–176; Jackson P. Hershbell, "Parmenides' Way of Truth and B 16," *Apeiron* 4 (1970), 3–9; Barbara Cassin and Michel Narcy, "Parménide sophiste: la citation aristotélicienne du fr. XVI," in *Études sur Parménide*, 2: *Problèmes d'interprétation*, ed. Pierre Aubenque (Paris, 1987), pp. 280–281.

[104] Heidegger, *Der Anfang der abendländischen Philosophie: Auslegung des Anaximander und Parmenides*, ed. Peter Trawny (Frankfurt am Main, 2012), pp. 192–194.

[105] It is noteworthy that unlike the other preserved Δόξαι fragments, B 16 is not focused on any binary opposition of the natural world. We should also note that Aristotle (*Metaphysics* 1009b33–1010a3) explicitly associates the passage with ἀλήθεια; cf. Cassin and Narcy, "Parménide sophiste," pp. 277–293. For readings of B 16 in the context of the Ἀλήθεια part, see, e.g., Hershbell, "Parmenides' Way of Truth and B 16," 1–23; David Gallop, *Parmenides of Elea: Fragments: A Text and Translation with an Introduction*, (*Phoenix* Suppl.) 18 (Toronto, 1984), pp. 22, 37, 87.

awareness can be "errant," that is, oriented to the shifting circumstances of particular situations. For the human being, all awareness is fundamentally embodied and thus bound to the particular disposition of the body; humans therefore first and foremost apprehend the situated and contingent objects of the bodily senses. But regardless of these particular objects of sensation, what is fundamentally "minded" and grasped in each situation is the one and the same reality (τὸ γὰρ αὐτό)—that is, the "being there" of the things as such. This basic "thereness" is the dimension that, in an actual act of awareness (νόημα), goes "over and above" all situated perceiving (or: "fulfills" all situated apprehending).

Even though thinking awareness, νόος, is not, for Parmenides, a faculty separate from the bodily senses but always embodied and situated, it is capable of looking away from particular things and of becoming aware of the fundamental identity of all things in their "thereness," their givenness to awareness as such—that is, their *presence*. For thinking in the sense of immediate awareness of things, there is ultimately *only* presence. This is what fragment B 4 explicitly states:

> See [λεῦσσε], all alike, absent things [ἀπεόντα] as firmly present [παρεόντα] to thinking [νόῳ];
> for it [thinking] will not cut off being [τὸ ἐόν] from holding to being,
> neither as dispersed in every way and entirely, along a world order [κόσμον],
> nor as assembled.[106]

What is "absent" in the ordinary sense of the spatial or temporal absence of a particular thing is present insofar as it can be meaningfully thought, that is, intended in thinking and named in discourse—that is, insofar as it is *intelligible*. As Guido Calogero puts it: "[F]or Parmenides, it is in reality one single concept: if the possibility of being is for him, unwittingly, its intelligibility [*pensabilità*], its

[106] Parmenides, DK 28 B 4.

intelligibility, in turn, is its expressibility."[107] Unlike Plato, Parmenides does not separate intelligibility into a realm of its own, apart from its particular spatiotemporal instances. Rather, he regards all particular intelligible things as modifications of intelligibility as such.

We should pay close attention to the first word of this fragment: λεῦσσε 'look,' 'gaze,' 'behold.' This is one of the very rare instances in pre-Platonic texts of an explicitly visual metaphor for an intellectual act of apprehending; it is therefore rather surprising that Heidegger does not pay very much attention to this passage or to B 4 in general.[108] The context is highly significant. The primary task of the learning thinker is to listen to the goddess's narrative account about ἀλήθεια, δόξαι, and their mutual relationship; yet in order to convey her central argument for the transition from mortal δόξαι to the pure intelligible evidence of ἀλήθεια, the goddess resorts to the language of vision, exhorting her hearer to look upon or spectate the pure and absolute presence of all intelligible things to thinking in the sense of meaningful intending, as opposed to the relative presence and relative absence encountered by the "erring" senses. Significantly, the verb λεύσσω is defined by R. A. Prier as a "clear" kind of seeing or beholding that often "describes how a mortal views immortal phenomena" and implies a special, transformative experience.[109]

With this visual insight, the internally tensional path of the mortals breaks apart. Pure thinking awareness will not tolerate the internal tension of "there is and there is not", but leaves the thinker only two alternative ways: the way of the

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[107] Guido Calogero, *Studi sull'eleatismo* (Rome, 1932), p. 18. Barrington Jones notes that for Parmenides "'things that are' and 'objects of thought' are co-extensive" and argues that the whole argument of B 4 "applies [. . .] to all those mental phenomena which admit, to one degree or another, of a characterization in terms of 'intensional inexistence' [. . .]." Jones, "Parmenides' 'The Way of Truth'," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 11 (1973), 291, 294.

[108] For Heidegger's references to Parmenides, DK 28 B 4, see Heidegger, *Phänomenologische Interpretationen ausgewählter Abhandlungen des Aristoteles zur Ontologie und Logik*, pp. 220–221; *Der Anfang der abendländischen Philosophie*, pp. 174–180; *Die Grundbegriffe der antiken Philosophie,* ed. Franz-Karl Blust (Frankfurt am Main, 1993), pp. 65–66; *The Basic Concepts of Ancient Philosophy*, trans. Richard Rojcewicz (Bloomington, IN, 2008), pp. 54–55.

[109] Raymond Adolph Prier, *Thauma Idesthai: The Phenomenology of Sight and Appearance in Archaic Greek* (Tallahassee, FL, 1989), pp. 68–71.

absolute "there is" (absolute presence, absolute intelligibility) or the way of the absolute "there is not" (absolute nonpresence, absolute nonintelligibility).[110] But the choice between these is no true choice. The insight developed in B 16 and B 4 is that thinking as such is *simply* reception of intelligible presence and that being-there as such is simply the givenness of intelligible presence to awareness. Thinking and being-there thus coincide. As the two key aspects of one and the same intelligibility, as receptivity and givenness, thinking (νοεῖν) and being (εἶναι) are one and the same (τὸ γὰρ αὐτό).[111] Thinking is defined by being exclusively bound to presence and excluded from nonpresence. What can be articulated in discourse (λέγειν) and apprehended in thinking (νοεῖν) is simply the "thereness" of intelligible presence; what is *not* is simply and absolutely nothing, not even one (μηδέν), beyond any kind of intellectual grasping or verbal expression.[112]

The "decision" between "there is" and "there is not" has thus always already been decided (κέκριται): "there is not" is to be left alone as unintelligible (ἀνόητον) and nameless (ἀνώνυμον).[113] "Only one account of a way still remains: how *there is* [ὡς ἔστιν]."[114] This way is then articulated by the goddess in the long fragment B 8, the heart of the Ἀλήθεια part of the Poem, yielding the famous "indications" (σήματα) of being as intelligible presence: absolutely identical with itself, absolutely devoid of any internal or external differentiation or opposition, absolutely simple, self-sufficient, self-contained, homogeneous, and unique. In a word, presence as such is *one* in all the central senses of the term, and as such, it is pure temporal presence. In the absolute sense, one can never say "there was" or "there will be"; rather, there simply *is now* (νῦν ἔστιν), "all at once [ὁμοῦ πᾶν], unitarily [ἕν], constantly [συνεχές]."[115] At the end of the fragment, the goddess makes the transition from

[110] Parmenides, DK 28 B 2.1–5.
[111] Parmenides, DK 28 B 3; 8.34–36.
[112] Parmenides, DK 28 B 6.1–2; 2.7–8.
[113] Parmenides, DK 28 B 8.15–18.
[114] Parmenides, DK 28 B 8.1–2.
[115] Parmenides, DK 28 B 8.5–6.

Ἀλήθεια to the Δόξαι in the form of a brief genealogy of the mortal acceptances. The acceptances arise together with discourse and conceptuality when mortals "establish" the binary oppositions, attaching names to notions of which one can never function without the other, thus differentiating the unity of being into a basic duality.[116] On the basis of the few remaining Δόξαι fragments, it seems clear that this "cosmological" part of the Poem was concerned purely with the fundamental binary opposites of sensuous nature: light/night, warm/cold, right/left, and male/female.[117] Like the Heraclitus fragments, the Poem of Parmenides fundamentally seeks to unfold the ultimate unity of these opposites; however, this unity is not discovered in the differentiating-unifying structure of λόγος, of "the voiceless voice" that thinking must hearken to, but in the prediscursive intendability and intelligibility of things, in the very meaningful accessibility of being that puts it within the reach of discursive articulation. This basic level of evidence is best glimpsed, as we have seen, through a *vision of pure presence* that is to guide the hearing of the goddess's oral account.

4. Conclusion

Let us conclude our tentative genealogy. We can see that both Heraclitus and Parmenides seek a way out of the duality of the discursive binary oppositions that, according to Aristotle, dominated the early philosophy of nature;[118] they look for an ultimate unity beyond the contrarieties of discursively articulated being. As Heidegger shows, both are essentially thinkers of ἕν, of the unifying one.[119] However, we have seen that they locate this fundamental unity differently. Heraclitus discovers it in the differentiating structure of discursive and conceptual articulation itself—as differentiating, discursiveness also precisely unifies in making the opposites interdependent moments of the "internally tensional" framework that is a perfect

[116] Parmenides, DK 28 B 8.50–59.
[117] Parmenides, DK 28 B 9–15, 17–18.
[118] Aristotle, *Physics*, ed. W. D. Ross (Oxford, 1936), 188a19–30.
[119] Heidegger, *Einführung in die Metaphysik*, p. 104; *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 145.

"harmony" or concord precisely because of this tension or difference. The insight into this unity-in-difference of intelligibility is thus brought about by hearing, by listening to the articulated unity of this discursive intelligibility as such. For Parmenides, however, the unity of intelligibility is one that *precedes* all differences and oppositions. It is found in the capacity of thinking to intend all things as equally intelligible, and since such intending can only encounter pure presence without absence, it is most fruitfully "visualized" in terms of looking: it is just as impossible to look at something absent as it is to think the unintelligible.

The Platonic metaphysics of sight thus turns out, in a sense, to be a synthesis of the Heraclitean protometaphysics of hearing and the Parmenidean protometaphysics of looking. Platonic noetic vision is no longer the look of Parmenides, which encounters presence *prior to* its articulation, but rather a looking permeated by the audible λόγος, one that sees precisely the determinate identities conferred to things by concepts and names, and sees things in the light of these identities. The "names" which, as the apparent conclusion of the Δόξαι part of Parmenides' Poem puts it, were conferred by human beings upon being in order to distinguish one being from another and which thus produce the ordered world of discursive "acceptances,"[120] become the Heraclitean "divine law" of λόγος—the mediating "audible" structure through which "visible" presence can gain determinacy and constancy.[121]

[120] Parmenides, DK 28 B 19.

[121] This is well formulated by Uvo Hölscher, *Parmenides: Vom Wesen des Seienden: Die Fragmente: Griechisch und deutsch,* ed. Uvo Hölscher and Alfons Reckermann, (Philosophische Bibliothek) 645 (Hamburg, 2014), p. 119–120: "Plato's progress beyond Parmenides [. . .] consists [. . .] in the retrieval of the linguistic character of things and in their ontological hypostatization. All of the essential features of Plato's metaphysics of Ideas are based on the Parmenidean *doxa:* the plurality of 'forms,' their self-identity and difference [. . .]."