Sophistes

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Plato's Dialogue and Heidegger's Lectures in Marburg (1924-25)

Edited by

Diego De Brasi
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INTRODUCTION

HEIDEGGER'S LECTURES ON PLATO'S *SOPHIST* AND THEIR IMPORTANCE FOR MODERN PLATO SCHOLARSHIP

DIEGO DE BRASI AND MARKO J. FUCHS

I. General Background

A well-known characteristic of Martin Heidegger's philosophy is his extraordinarily complex relationship with ancient Greek philosophy[1] which has been the subject of detailed and quite controversial studies.[2] Especially Heidegger's relationship to Plato is a real challenge for numerous scholars.[3] Indeed, Plato is very important for Heidegger, since he sees him as the founder of Western metaphysics and aims at an overcoming of what he describes as a one-sided logocentric comprehension of basic assumptions of Greek ontology with his own philosophy.[4] But

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[1] An introductory overview on Heidegger's interest for Greek philosophy is offered in Figal (2011). We will mention here only a few examples of writings dealing with Greek authors: *Grundbegriffe der aristotelischen Philosophie* (GA 18); *Platon: Sophistes* (GA 19); *Grundbegriffe der antiken Philosophie* (GA 22); *Aristoteles, Metaphysik Θ 1–3: Von Wesen und Wirklichkeit der Kraft* (GA 33); *Vom Wesen der Wahrheit: Zu Platons Höhlengleichnis und Theätet* (GA 34); *Parmenides* (GA 54). Heidegger's works will be quoted both following the usual abbreviated form of the German edition (GA = Heidegger-Gesamtausgabe, Frankfurt a. M: Vittorio Klostermann, on-going publication) and the English translations (see bibliography).
[2] Cf. e.g. Gadamer (1995); Günther and Rengakos, eds. (2006); Hyland and Manoussakis, eds. (2006); Steinmann, ed. (2007).
[3] Cf. e.g. Boutot (1987); Bosio (1987); Le Moli (2002); Trabattoni (2009), 93–126; Dostal (1985); Brach (1996); Kim (2010), 148–284; Gonzalez (2009); Zuckert (1996), 33–69.
[4] Peluso (2006), 17.

Heidegger's interpretation of Plato, upon which his reconstruction of the history of philosophy rests, is anything but incontestable from a philological point of view.[5] A serious study of Heidegger's problematic use of Plato's texts which integrates philological and philosophical aspects has been, however, hampered for a long time by the fact that Heidegger himself published only one contribution to the analysis of Plato's philosophy during his lifetime, namely the treatise *Platons Lehre von der Wahrheit*,[6] while the only example of a detailed analysis of a single Platonic dialogue, which is almost comparable to a linear commentary,[7] namely the *Lectures on Plato's Sophist* held in Marburg in the winter semester of 1924/25, remained unpublished until 1992. Only in the last twenty years have scholars had possibility to come to a more nuanced understanding of Heidegger's interpretation of Plato, although they have focused primarily on the importance of the *Lectures* for Heidegger's own thought, neglecting their possible impact on the study of Platonic philosophy. This volume presents the results of a workshop about Heidegger's *Sophist-Lectures* and aims, therefore, at a critical re-evaluation of Heidegger as a (more or less serious) interpreter of Plato.

This introductory essay hence focuses on four aspects. First of all, it will offer an overview on the current state of research. Second, it will argue for a relativization of Heidegger's alleged misunderstanding of Plato. This will be achieved by arguing against some of the criticism expressed by Werner Beierwaltes towards Heidegger's reading of Plato. Third, it briefly examines the "Transition" in the 1924 Marburg Lectures between Heidegger's analysis of the *Nicomachean Ethics* and the interpretation of Plato's *Sophist*, the "Preliminary Remarks" and the "Introduction" to the actual interpretation of the dialogue, describing Heidegger as a somehow unconscious 'forerunner' of the modern dialogical approach. Finally, it will present an overview of the contributions in the volume and suggest further possible research developments.

II. Research Overview

Held from November 3rd, 1924 until February 27th, 1925 for a total of 54 meetings (GA 19, 654/457), the *Lectures on Plato's Sophist* represent the

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[5] See below, III.1.
[6] Lecture held in 1940; first published: Bern 1947; now in: GA 9, 203–238.
[7] Gonzalez (2009), 7. Heidegger himself speaks of "interpretation" (GA 19, 227 Anm. 1/157 n. 1).

beginning of Heidegger's engagement with Plato.[8] Furthermore, for historians of philosophy they are a significant contribution to both a better understanding of the genesis of *Being and Time* and a more nuanced assessment of Heidegger's relationship with ancient Greek philosophy. The two main reasons for such an 'appreciation' of the *Lectures* are obvious: First, they were delivered at a time very close to the publication of Heidegger's *opus magnum*, and both in *Being and Time*[9] and in the *Lectures* themselves[10] one can find clear evidence that Plato's *Sophist* had

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[8] Cf. Heidegger's letter to Hannah Arendt dated October 10, 1954: "What am I doing? The same as ever. And I would like to go through my Plato works once again, starting with the *Sophist* of 1924/1925, and read Plato anew. Anyway—I am just now beginning to see them a bit more clearly and freely, the things I have always been seeking. However, putting it into words remains a tribulation, which only means that even seeing has its difficulties. Will the liberation of language from the dialectic ever succeed?"

[9] Prominently in the Exergue (GA 2, 0/xxix): "'δῆλον γὰρ ὡς ὑμεῖς μὲν ταῦτα πάλαι γιγνώσκετε, ἡμεῖς δὲ πρὸ τοῦ μὲν ᾠόμεθα, νῦν δ᾽ ἠπορήκαμεν… [Plato, *Sophist* 244a]. For manifestly you have long been aware of what you mean when you use the expression '*being*' ['*seiend*']. We, however, who used to think we understood it, have now become perplexed.' Do we in our time have an answer to the question of what we really mean by the word '*being*' ['*seiend*']? Not at all. So it is fitting that we should raise anew *the question of the meaning of being* [*Sein*]. But are we nowadays even perplexed at our inability to understand the expression '*being*' ['*Sein*']? Not at all. So first of all we must reawaken an understanding of the meaning of this question. Our aim in the following treatise is to work out the question of the meaning of '*being*' ['*Sein*'] and to do so concretely. Our provisional aim is the interpretation of *time* as the possible horizon for any understanding whatsoever of being. But the reasons for making this our aim, the investigations which such a purpose requires, and the path to its achievement, call for some introductory remarks."

[10] See e.g., Supplement 32 (to p. 225/155) in the *Sophist-Lectures* (GA 19, 632f./439f.): "The indicated origin of the Greek concept of Being makes clear at the same time, however, that the *Being of beings is interpreted (on the basis of) time*. Why? Because every ontology, as an interpretation, is itself a mode of Being-in. Insofar as the world is to be determined in its Being, these beings must be *experienced*, and the interpreting must address these beings with regard to their Being. Experienceability and addressability of the world include in themselves: letting the interpreting *Dasein* along with the world itself, in which *Dasein* always already is, be encountered purely from themselves. The letting be encountered is based, in its possibilities, on the Being of *Dasein*. But the Being of *Dasein* is temporality. And the pure letting the world be encountered is a making present. As *such*, it is only temporally that it can express *itself* in the appropriate speaking about the world: the Being of the world is presence. The dominance of this notion of Being makes it clear why Aristotle interprets time itself on the basis of the

been tremendously important for Heidegger in the 1920s. Second, they represent the only systematic examination of a Platonic dialogue offered by Heidegger.[11]

Indeed, the *Sophist-Lectures* offer an extensive amount of material to analyze on more than 650 pages: A brief introduction to phenomenology (GA 19, 7–19/5–13); an interpretation of passages from book 6 and 10 of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* and from book 1 of his *Metaphysics* (GA 19, 21–188/17–129); a continuous commentary on the *Sophist* and a digression on the *Phaedrus* (GA 19, 189–610/131–422; *Phaedrus*-excursus: GA 19, 308–352/214–244). However, Heidegger makes it clear from the outset that he does not aim at the exposition of a hermeneutic method, but at an education that is important for the life of every individual:

> […] [T]he authentic task of a lecture course in philosophy at a university is to lead you to an inner understanding of scientific questioning within your own respective fields. Only in this way is the question of science and life brought to a decision, namely by first learning the movement of scientific work and, thereby, the true inner sense of scientific existence. (GA 19, 10/7)

This brief passage presents several elements which can easily be identified as distinctive of Heidegger's philosophical method. Later Heidegger develops the topic of "first learning" by spelling out some well-known programmatic suggestions:

> This past, to which our lectures are seeking access, is nothing detached from us, lying far away. On the contrary, we are this past itself. And we

present, the 'now.' What is present is genuine Being, and the Being *no longer* of the past, as well as Being not yet, can be determined on the basis of it… But if *Dasein* itself must be interpreted ontologically in its Being, i.e., even in its determinate non-genuine temporality of presentifying [*gegenwärtigen*] presence, then temporality in its genuineness must be explicated. But that implies: the beings which emerge in the ontological interpretation of the Being of the world cannot determine the hermeneutic situation of the ontological research which is supposed to interpret the Being of *Dasein* itself. Rather, it is precisely on the basis of this that the mode of Being and the origin of the former is positively clarified ontologically, i.e., is given in the character of Being as conceived in terms of presence.—The immediate meaning of Being."

[11] Although he originally planned to give a series of lectures on Plato's *Sophist* and *Philebus*—cf. GA 19, 7/5 (with the editor's n. 1) and 191/132, with Heidegger's marginal note: "the plan had been to include the *Philebus*"—Heidegger ends his analysis of the dialogue at 263d–264d.

are it not insofar as we explicitly cultivate the tradition and become friends of classical antiquity, but, instead, our philosophy and science live on these foundations, i.e., those of Greek philosophy, and do so to such an extent that we are no longer conscious of it: the foundations have become obvious. […] The goal of our interpretation of the Platonic dialogues is to take what has become obvious and make it transparent in these foundations. To understand history cannot mean anything else than to understand ourselves—not in the sense that we might establish various things about ourselves, but that we experience what we *ought* to be. (GA 19, 10f./7)

Later—while discussing "the question of philosophy in the present age" (GA 19, 254/175)—Heidegger emphasizes again the existential meaning of interpretation:

He who has understood such a dialogue and the inner obligation it carries […] does not need any cultural elevation of the significance of philosophy and the like. If you read the prelude to the dialogue in one stroke [= *Sph.* 216a–219a, n. De Brasi/Fuchs], you must sense the seriousness of this situation, which is still much higher and more decisive than the prelude to a duel, where only life and death are at stake. (GA 19, 257/177f.)

Most scholars have rightly seen in these and similar statements a reference to Heidegger's pivotal topic of the 'new beginning', which his own thinking should clearly represent in the history of philosophy. This is especially true when the *Sophist-Lectures* are considered within the broader context of other works written at the same time as the *Phänomenologische Interpretationen zu Aristoteles* (GA 61) or the lectures—also held in Marburg—on the *Grundbegriffe der aristotelischen Philosophie* (GA 18).[12]

Because of these distinctive programmatic statements, scholars have recently dealt with the *Sophist-Lectures* mainly from a Heideggerian perspective, focusing either on the philosophical and historical background of the lectures themselves or on Heidegger's relationship to Plato. Many interpreters have analyzed Heidegger's methodological premises.[13] Others

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[12] Cf. e.g. Figal (2011), 22–47; Brach (1996), *passim*.
[13] Brach (1996) emphasizes the distinctive character of Heidegger's exegetical method by taking into consideration the interpretations on which he built up his own reading of the dialogue, like the phenomenology of Edmund Husserl, or towards which he was particularly polemical, like the Neo-Kantianism of Emil Lask and of the 'Marburg School'. He follows then the structure of the *Lectures* and analyzes in particular the passages in which, according to him, Heidegger's own philosophy is mostly recognizable (see also Le Moli (2002), 5–22). Peron

have read the actual interpretation of the dialogue, i.e. the main part of the lectures (GA 19, 227–610/157–422) in the light of Heidegger's philosophical leitmotifs.[14] Analyses which have explicitly dealt with Heidegger's interpretation of the *Sophist* and its validity for the study of Plato's thought have focused first and foremost on Heidegger's critique of Plato's idea of dialectics, on the problematic relationship between *lógos*, *noûs* and *theōreîn*, and on the ontological interpretation of the *koinōnía tôn genôn* presented in the *Sophist*. These studies have either attempted to defend Plato against Heidegger's accusations[15] or to elucidate the differences between Plato's and Heidegger's understanding of philosophy.[16] Only few scholars have tried to reduce the gap between the two thinkers. As early as 1991—that is, one year before the lectures were published—Alain Boutot tried to reconstruct the content of the lectures using Heidegger's already published writings. He showed that Heidegger's views on Plato in the 1920s were not as negative as those expressed in *Platons Lehre von der Wahrheit*, the only work on Plato's philosophy published during his lifetime (GA 9, 203–238).[17] Catherine Zuckert confirms Boutot's assumption in her book *Postmodern Platos*, where, on the basis of the then published text of the *Lectures*, she aims at detecting Plato's influence on the genesis of Heidegger's thought. In addition to that

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(2008) focuses also on the preliminary considerations and on the introductory part of the lectures, which are labeled "from the clear into the obscure. From Aristotle to Plato" (GA 19, 10–225/7–155). See for similar approaches also Brach (1996), 276–326; Le Moli (2002), 26–41. Schmitt (2012), esp. n. 3 discusses critically Heidegger's interpretation of the Aristotelian concept of *phrónēsis*, which plays a major role in the *Sophist-Lectures*.

[14] Polt (1996) focuses for example on Heidegger's "topical hermeneutics" to show that this could be a way out of the rigid opposition between objectivism and relativism. Schüssler (1996) analyzes instead Heidegger's hermeneutics using the conceptual pair truth/language, which is of central importance for *Being and Time*. Webb (2000) focuses on the juxtaposition of *noûs* and *lógos*, *phrónēsis* and *sophía* and concludes that Heidegger's attempt to ground the relationship between philosophy and truth on more solid foundations has paradoxically thrown philosophy back to the materiality of the human condition. Perrotta (1999), 84–105 argues that the interpretation of Aristotle, with which the *Lectures* begin, shows that Heidegger already in 1924/25 postulated that 'While-ness' (*Jeweiligkeit*) is intrinsic to Being. Lo Casto (2012) finally claims that Heidegger's study of Plato and Aristotle has led him to interpret the essence of existence as *prâxis* and to consider the latter as inherent in the movement of life.

[15] See for example Hyland (2004), 18–83; Figal (2006); Gonzalez (2009), 8–99; Trabattoni (2009), 13–38 and 93–126.

[16] Le Moli (2002), 41–64; Kim (2010), 231–269.

[17] Boutot (1991).

she plausibly argues that the predominantly negative image of Plato in Heidegger's later writings is connected to his engagement with the works of Friedrich Nietzsche.[18] By contrast, Catalin Partenie and Rosalia Peluso interpret Heidegger's relationship to Plato more critically. Partenie argues that Heidegger intentionally misuses Plato's dialogues and philosophy in order to emphasize his own positions. Nevertheless, Plato's thought acted like an 'imprint' on his own. According to Partenie this is evident in the *Sophist-Lectures*, where Heidegger stresses the importance of Plato's distinction between authentic and unauthentic life, a concept which will be of central importance in *Being and Time***.**[19] Rosalia Peluso's analysis is based, instead, on Popper's criticism of Plato as an enemy of the open society, a criticism that she then extends onto Heidegger too.[20]

Apart from these approaches, however, no in-depth engagement with the *Sophist-Lectures* has taken place in the most recent scholarship on Plato. Heidegger is only sporadically cited in recent interpretations of the dialogue.[21] It is worthwhile, then, to move beyond this *prima facie* proof of Heidegger's engagement with Plato's philosophy. As Glenn W. Most aptly notes, both the attitude of those classicists who simply "ignore Heidegger", and of those few who, although they do not do ignore him, "tend to deplore him […] is mistaken".[22] This obviously does not mean that Heidegger's interpretation should be accepted without critical proof, but it should at least be taken into consideration.

III. Heidegger as an Innovative Interpreter of Plato?

III.1 Beierwaltes's Criticism of Heidegger's Approach to Ancient Philosophy

In order to examine this issue, we first must refute, at least in part, the criticism levelled by the German philosopher Werner Beierwaltes against Heidegger's approach to ancient Greek texts. According to Beierwaltes,

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[18] Zuckert (1996), 33–69, and esp. 37–44. Cf. also Most (2002), 118–120.
[19] Partenie (2005).
[20] Peluso (2006), esp. p. IV–VIII and 236–239.
[21] To our knowledge only in Notomi (1999), 7, who, however, only remarks that Heidegger read in the *Sophist* the essence of Husserl's phenomenology, and Cordero (1993), 277 n. 381, who only notices that Heidegger dealt often with the problem of false statements within Plato and quotes Boutot (1991).
[22] Most (2002), 97.

the following two aspects are characteristic of Heidegger's 'faulty' approach to ancient Greek texts:[23]

1. First and foremost, Heidegger's propensity for trying to "hear the unsaid" in the passages he interprets.[24] However, this 'search for the unsaid' often turns out to be only a construct, by which Heidegger reads into the text what actually is just a result of his own thinking.[25] This allegation, which may certainly be true for many passages in Heidegger's writing, is yet hardly acceptable without further clarification. Even Beierwaltes admits that Heidegger, for example, "[i]n his Freiburg lecture[s] from winter semester 1931-32 *On the Essence of Truth: Plato's Allegory of the Cave and the "Theaetetus"* […] translates *Republic* 509a9-b10 into a […] 'normal' language, which is appropriate both historically and thematically to Plato's Greek. Matters are similar with Heidegger's interpretation of this passage in this context: it can hardly be distinguished taken on its own, i.e., without a view to Heidegger's dealings with Plato's concept of truth, from interpretations common then and even now".[26] A similar restriction is particularly true, as we shall see, in the case of the *Sophist-Lectures*.

2. Beierwaltes's second point of criticism, which is already hinted at in the previous quotation, is also a serious one. He argues that Heidegger's translations of the original Greek text are often historically and thematically inappropriate or even incorrect. Beierwaltes deals primarily with three aspects of Heidegger's

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[23] Beierwaltes (1994); Beierwaltes (1995) and Beierwaltes (1998). These essays are now gathered in Beierwaltes (2011), 345–425. Cf. also Most (2002), 116f. and Gonzalez (2009), 1f.

[24] Heidegger himself expresses this hermeneutical rule in, e.g., *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik*, where he asserts: "Certainly, in order to wring from what the words say, what it is they want to say, every interpretation [*Interpretation*] must necessarily use violence. Such violence, however, cannot be roving arbitrariness. The power of an idea which shines forth must drive and guide the laying-out [*Auslegung*]. Only in the power of this idea can an interpretation risk what is always audacious, namely, entrusting itself to the concealed inner passion of a work in order to be able, through this, to place itself within the unsaid and force it into speech. That is one way, however, by which the guiding idea, in its power to illuminate, comes to light." (GA 3, 202/141).

[25] Beierwaltes (1994) = Beierwaltes (2011), 371–388.

[26] Beierwaltes (1994), 84 = Beierwaltes (2011), 372.

approach to the Platonic texts:[27] a) Heidegger's tendency to 'try to resuscitate' the "*original* meaning"[28] of words. According to Beierwaltes this is illustrated by the fact that Heidegger's translations are often characterized by an "*etymologizing approach* to root words (and not only to them)".[29] b) Linked to this is a systematic associative process: After a Greek word is grasped in its 'original' meaning, Heidegger would 'yarn' further associations within the word field of the German equivalent term, so that "Greek is rather thought of as *German*"[30]. c) This eventually leads to an indistinguishable mixture of translation and interpretation.[31] In order to refute, at least partially, this allegation, it could be argued, like Kosmas Raspitsos has, that one would have to look for "the πνεῦμα and not the γράμμα" of Greek thought in Heidegger's 'return' to the Greeks.[32] But this would obviously only lead into a vicious circle. The fact remains that the translations Heidegger gave in the *Sophist-Lectures*, although they might appear 'creative', are nevertheless mostly appropriate. Let us consider, for example, a passage in which scholars have believed to discover a misunderstanding of the Platonic text by Heidegger.[33] *Sph*. 228c1 reads: "ὅσ' <ἂν> κινήσεως μετασχόντα κτλ…" Heidegger translates: "something that bears in itself κίνησις". A more correct translation would be: "what takes part in κίνησις". But the interpretation resulting from Heidegger's translation differs little from a mere philological analysis. If the sentence "ὅσ' <ἂν> κινήσεως μετασχόντα" indicates the soul,[34] then Heidegger does not translate μετέχω inappropriately into German. Rather, Heidegger's translation is a slight, perhaps even didactically motivated reinterpretation of a properly-conceived concept (something that bears something in itself participates in it) that brings out more clearly Plato's intended meaning. Even passages in which Heidegger actually 'manipulates'

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[27] Beierwaltes (1995) = Beierwaltes (2011), 345–369, whose arguments we refer here, deals mainly with Heidegger's relationship with ancient Greek culture (*Griechentum*) in general, and particularly with his approach to texts of the Presocratics.

[28] Beierwaltes (2011), 354.

[29] Beierwaltes (2011), 356.

[30] Beierwaltes (2011), 358.

[31] Cf. Beierwaltes (2011), 362.

[32] Raspitsos (2013), 86.

[33] Cf. Kim (2010), 241–2 with n. 49. Kim notes, however, that "Heidegger's mistranslation of *metaschonta* […] has no effect on his point".

[34] Fronterotta (2007), 260 n. 64.

the Platonic text to his own scope can be explained from a similar perspective. For example, *Sph*. 218c4ff. reads: "δεῖ δὲ ἀεὶ παντὸς πέρι τὸ πρᾶγμα αὐτὸ μᾶλλον διὰ λόγων ἢ τοὔνομα μόνον συνωμολογῆσθαι χωρὶς λόγου". A philologically correct translation could be: "we ought always in every instance to come to agreement about the thing itself by argument rather than about the mere name without argument" (transl. Fowler). Heidegger translates: "it is always important in each case to find the subject matter itself and to agree upon it by way of discussion, i.e., by exhibiting, uncovering, rather than simply agreeing on the word, the denomination, χωρὶς λόγου, without a demonstration on the basis of the subject matter itself" (GA 19, 251f./174).[35] Apart from some unhappy rendering,[36] Heidegger's hermeneutical translation rightly points out that the word *lógos* does not have a precise meaning in this passage, since it probably indicates both the discursive and dialectical procedure which underlies the search and the definition by which we verbally express the characteristics and properties of the research matter.[37]

Beierwaltes's criticism has to be taken seriously and it certainly cannot be rebutted without further consideration. However, the given examples have pointed out that this criticism should neither be raised as peremptorily as Beierwaltes and many others did. We surely still have to discuss Heidegger's enthusiastic claim that Aristotle expressed and developed key issues of Platonic philosophy "more radically and […] more scientifically" than Plato himself (GA 19, 11f./8). But this problem is so complex that it cannot be examined here.[38] If, however, we abstain from general and prejudiced conclusions about Heidegger's methodology, we will have the opportunity of a productive, objective, and sober approach to his interpretation of the *Sophist*.

III.2 Heidegger as Interpreter of the Sophist

If we now turn to Heidegger's interpretation of the *Sophist*, we should first acknowledge that Heidegger attaches great importance to the definition of the sophist as mirror image of the philosopher. Heidegger develops this

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[35] Brach (1996), 373 n. 39 remarks: "I do not need to comment on this translation".
[36] Examples are 'it is important' for δεῖ or the interpolation of 'to find the subject matter itself' while the Greek only has 'to agree upon the thing itself'.
[37] Fronterotta (2007), 206f. n. 19. *Contra* e.g. Cordero (1993), 216 n. 21.
[38] See on this the comprehensive book of Barbara Peron (2008).

line of argumentation mainly in the "Transition" and in the "Introduction" to the actual interpretation of the *Sophist*. Therefore, we will take a closer look at this passage in the following pages. However, it is helpful to point out some brief characteristics of the dialogue first.

The *Sophist* forms with the *Theaetetus* and the *Statesman* a trilogy in which the three main themes of Platonic philosophy are discussed (epistemology: *Theaetetus*; ontology: *Sophist*; politics: *Statesman*). Furthermore, the topics of each dialogue, the internal textual references (*Tht*. 210d2–4; *Sph*. 216a1–4; *Plt*. 257a1–5), and the repeated announcement of a treatment of the *philósophos* (*Sph*. 216c–217a; 253e–254b; *Plt*. 257a3–5) support the assumption that Plato intended a gradual preparation for the never written inquiry into the nature of the philosopher when writing the trilogy. The *Sophist* has a special role within the trilogy:

1. As a thematic transition between the *Theaetetus* and the *Statesman***,** the dialogue deepens Plato's position on the relationship among epistemology, ontology and politics, which has been introduced in the *Republic* through the claim that philosophers should become kings or vice versa for a state to flourish (*Rsp*. 473c–d) and the allegory of the cave.
2. Besides, the *Sophist* is the first dialogue in which Plato links the problem of determining the nature of the philosopher not only with the definition of the sophist, but also explicitly with the question about Being (*Sph*. 243d; 246a; cf. *Plt*. 286b).[39] In fact, he first makes the stranger from Elea—one of the main interlocutors of the dialogue—define the sophist as someone who can allegedly provide precise images of reality, but only in order to use this definition later as a starting point for his inquiry into the possibility of false statements and of Non-Being.

That the conversation represented in the *Sophist* will primarily be a detailed inquiry into the nature of the sophist (218c5–7) does not appear as a contradiction in this context, but rather as an innovative, however, far too little reflected systematic dimension of the dialogue.

Precisely from this point of view Heidegger's interpretation is fundamentally different from traditional ones. While many scholars have interpreted the announcement of a work on the philosopher either ironically or literally,[40] Heidegger argues that the *Sophist* fulfils the task of clarifying what a philosopher is. Heidegger shows not only a relatively

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[39] See on this Frede (1996).
[40] See the discussion in Erler (2007), 239.

good knowledge of secondary literature originating from the field of classical philology, but seems to anticipate some exegetical intuitions that have been 'rediscovered' and systematically applied only in the last 30 years. Some aspects of Heidegger's analysis of the *Sophist* are, indeed, quite similar to the modern *dialogical approach*. Let us consider, for example, what Heidegger says about the philosophical meaning of the literary form of the dialogue:

> [...] [T]he elucidation of the meaning of διαλέγεσθαι will, at the same time, allow us to understand why in general the dialogue considers that which it does consider precisely by taking the form of a dialogue, and why Plato philosophizes in dialogues. The reason is not the trivial one that Plato was an artist and wanted to present even such matters, whatever they might be called, in a beautiful way. The reason is, rather, an inner need of philosophizing itself, the radical acceptance on Plato's part of the impetus he received from Socrates [...]. (GA 19, 195/135)

The following passage also shows clearly how similar Heidegger's analysis and the *dialogical approach* are: "On the contrary, it is precisely the dialogue on the sophist that accomplishes the task of clarifying what the philosopher is, and indeed it does so not in a primitive way, by our being told what the philosopher is, but precisely Socratically" (GA 19, 245/169). Therefore Heidegger seems to believe, 1) that for Plato the form of dialogue is the reflection of the thinking process, i.e., of philosophy itself, 2) that all Platonic dialogues, even the later ones, are Socratic by their nature, and 3) that the dialogue itself provides information for the reader about how to solve the problems dealt with in the conversation. Of course, these claims must be examined in the light of Heidegger's interpretation of terms like 'dialectic',[41] *lógos*, *tékhnē* etc. Besides, as we will see below, Heidegger also has a tendency to repeatedly disregard the discursive moment (*dialégesthai*) practiced in the dialogue in favour of a pure 'looking at' (*noeîn*).[42] Furthermore, it must be acknowledged that

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[41] See on this Figal (2006).

[42] This ambivalence can be found also in later texts. Cf., e.g., Heidegger's lecture *What is philosophy* (*Was ist das—die Philosophie?*), delivered in 1955 (GA 11, 3–26). Here Heidegger emphasizes on the one hand the necessity of a "discussion with what has been" (10/35), or, more precisely, "with the thinking of the Greek world" (11/35), in order to ask the question about the nature of philosophy and the Being of being (*Sein des Seienden*). Therefore he claims explicitly that "it is one thing to determine and describe the opinions of philosophers. It is an entirely different thing to talk through with them", after he has just specified few lines before that "this mutual talking of what always anew peculiarly concerns

Heidegger's 'dialogical approach' is in at least two points different from the contemporary one. As Drew Hyland and Francisco Gonzalez have argued,[43] Heidegger does not recognize the fundamental differences between the Socratic method as it is displayed in the *Theaetetus*, and the method used by the Stranger from Elea, nor does he abandon the mouthpiece theory, i.e., the assumption that the main interlocutor acts as Plato's mouthpiece in a Platonic dialogue.

However, these restrictions do not invalidate the fact that Heidegger is the first interpreter of the *Sophist* to give up the common[44] subdivision into *introduction* (216a–218b), *enclosing shell* (218b–237b; 264c–268c), and *kernel* (237b–264b), and to argue for the thematic unity of the dialogue— or, at least, it is part of his rhetorical strategy to point this out (GA 19, 232–235/160–162). He argues, indeed, that the output of the dialogue, i.e. the question about the definition of the sophist, determines the rest of the whole inquiry. Consequently, the digression about the being of Non-Being is, according to him, only a development of the main problem (GA 19, 406–414/281–286).[45] Besides, Heidegger claims in his analysis of the "preceding preparation of the dialogue", that the setting of the dialogue and Plato's characterization of the interlocutors anticipate the dialogue's main concerns: for Heidegger, these are the question about the nature of the sophist as an image of Non-Being—and thus indirectly about the nature of the philosopher—and likewise, with regard to method, the *lógos* as 'instrument' of philosophy. For example, Heidegger interprets the fact that the Stranger comes from Elea as an explicit indication that the dialogue will be a confrontation with the doctrines of Parmenides. He argues, further, that the Homeric quotation (*Sph*. 216a5 = Hom. *Od*. 17.485–7) is a successful attempt by Socrates (and Plato) to draw the attention of the Stranger (and of the reader) to the problem of the relationship between philosophy and the divine. Similarly he claims that the fact that true philosophers always appear disguised in different shapes

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philosophers as being the Same, that is talking, λέγειν in the sense of διαλέγεσθαι (conversing) is talking as dialogue" (19/67). On the other hand, however, the discussion with Greek philosophers is based on a "conversing with that which has been handed down to us as the Being of being" (20/71); in other words: "our discussion with philosophers must also be addressed by the Being of being" (19/67–69).

[43] Hyland (2004), 28–53; Gonzalez (2009), 50–63.

[44] Cf. the recent interpretations of Kolb (1997) and Eckl (2011).

[45] It should be noted that a new attempt to understand the dialogue as a programmatic whole has been made only in the last years of the 20th century, cf. Notomi (1999), 1–73.

in the eyes of the ignorant[46] is the cause which necessarily led Plato to
make some restrictions in his inquiry into the nature of the philosopher
(GA 19, 236–246/163–169). These restrictions bring Heidegger to a still
highly controversial issue:[47] during the conversation Socrates asks his
interlocutors and mainly the Stranger from Elea to determine the nature of
the sophist, the statesman, and the philosopher (*Sph*. 216d–217b). Like
many other scholars of Plato, Heidegger notes that this passage has led
many interpreters to believe that Plato expresses here his intention to write
a trilogy on the three figures, but never fulfilled his project because in fact
only two dialogues, the *Sophist* and the *Statesman*, have been written. This
observation causes most interpreters to ask further questions, such as:
"Why has not Plato written the *Philosopher*?" or "Should we maybe look
for the *Philosopher* in another dialogue (e.g. the *Parmenides* or the
Theaetetus)?"

But Heidegger chooses a different solution, which is as presumptive as
any other. We have already quoted the most important passage: According
to Heidegger, Plato never wanted to write a trilogy, and the *Sophist* itself
accomplishes the task of describing the philosopher by its own dialogical
procedure. The passage 253c8f.—Heidegger argues—supports this
reading. Here the Stranger from Elea claims: "Then, Theaetetus, what
name shall we give to this science? Or, by Zeus, have we unwittingly
stumbled upon the science that belongs to free men and perhaps found the
philosopher while we were looking for the sophist?" (transl. Fowler). On
the basis of this assumption, namely that the dialogue is a thematic unity
aiming at the determination of the nature of the sophist and of the
philosopher, and on the basis of his analysis of Plato's dialectic (GA 19,
189–208/131–143; 308–352/214–244), Heidegger can continue his
interpretation of the dialogue. Unlike those exegetical approaches that try
to explain the problem of the possibility of false statements and of Non-
Being by making use of categories of the philosophy of language,[48]

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[46] *Sph*. 216c3–d2: πάνυ γὰρ ἄνδρες οὗτοι παντοῖοι φανταζόμενοι διὰ τὴν τῶν
ἄλλων ἄγνοιαν "ἐπιστρωφῶσι πόληας" οἱ μὴ πλαστῶς ἀλλ᾽ ὄντως φιλόσοφοι,
καθορῶντες ὑψόθεν τὸν τῶν κάτω βίον, καὶ τοῖς μὲν δοκοῦσιν εἶναι τοῦ μηδενὸς
τίμιοι, τοῖς δ᾽ ἄξιοι τοῦ παντός· τοτὲ μὲν πολιτικοὶ φαντάζονται, τοτὲ δὲ σοφισταί,
τοτὲ δ᾽ ἔστιν οἷς δόξαν παράσχοιντ᾽ ἂν ὡς παντάπασιν ἔχοντες μανικῶς.
[47] Cf. Gill (2012).
[48] For example by emphasizing the different meanings of the verb 'to be', by
distinguishing between statement types or between different types of false
statement, etc. All these approaches, however, are based on the assumption that
one must focus on the propositional aspect of *lógos* in order to understand Plato's
solution to the problem. See on this e. g. Kneale and Kneale (1962), 17–22, and
Owen (1971).

Heidegger prefers a more complex division of the various functions of *lógos* (onomatic, delotic,[49] intentional, logic), which allows him to interpret false statements as deception. Since every *lógos*, understood as revealing or 'unconcealment' of Being, has an uncovering character by its own nature, "λόγος can be modified into a non-disclosure only in the sense of concealing, distorting, obstructing, not letting be seen" (GA 19, 602/417). Precisely this dual aspect of *lógos* as revealing and at the same time as virtual possibility of concealment or disguise, which Heidegger elaborates in his concise readings of the *Sophist*, allows not only to understand the sophist as deceiver, but also enables the philosopher to define himself as 'revealer' or as someone who lets beings be seen in their Being (cf. GA 19, 610/422).

In our view, Heidegger's approach—not his whole interpretation of the *Sophist*—is often appropriate. Whether it can also be helpful for a better understanding of the Platonic dialogue remains an open question. A possible argument in support of this claim could be formulated as follows. First, the *Sophist* certainly presents an example of the philosophical method developed by Plato, which consists of the interaction of *synagōgē* and *diaíresis*. Second, the last three definitions of the nature of the sophist show the proximity between sophistry and philosophy, while the difference is made clear in the seventh and final definition by what Heidegger rightly calls "Ontological Discussion". The sophist is a mocking artist, a master of deception, because he, who is in Non-Being, 'predicates' Non-Being. Therefore, the philosopher is the mirror image of the sophist, the one who is in and can 'predicate' Being. And he is the only one able to unveil the sophist's deceptions.

IV. Aims of this Publication, Overview of the Contributions in this Volume, and Outlook

IV.1 Aims of this Publication

In the light of this situation, the present publication aims at facilitating a philologically, historically, and philosophically sound meta-interpretation of Heidegger's approach to the *Sophist* through the interdisciplinary collaboration of representatives of classical philology and philosophy. This has methodological and content-related aspects, both concerning the

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[49] "'Onomatic' means 'naming,' λέγειν as linguistic expression. 'Delotic,' from δηλοῦν, denotes λέγειν as revealing, letting be seen." (GA 19, 582/403)

historical-philological side on the one hand and the philosophical side on the other.

1. In terms of methodology, the question is whether some of Heidegger's interpretative approaches that seem to violate at first glance the Platonic text nevertheless prove to be at least in part philologically sound after a more detailed analysis. Heidegger's interpretation of the dialogue can, thus, contribute to a better understanding of the *Sophist* without the need to endorse Heideggerian orthodoxy.

2. Concerning the content of Heidegger's interpretations, the focus of the more philological essays of this book lies on an examination of those sections of the *Lectures* which have hitherto been less investigated by scholars of Plato's *Sophist*, e.g. Heidegger's interpretation of *tékhnē* and *symplokē* or his interpretation of particular passages of the dialogue (especially 248a–249b, 255c–d, 255d–257c).

3. From a philosophical point of view, the question is to what extent the methodological approach to the *Sophist* Heidegger uses to unfold the philosophical content of the Platonic dialogue allows us to draw substantive and methodological conclusions about Heidegger's own philosophy.

These different goals are pursued by the different contributions to this book, as the following section will show in a brief summary.

IV.2 Overview over the Contributions

Jens Kristian Larsen considers whether Heidegger's preoccupation with ontology renders him blind to the ethical dimension in Plato's thought. More precisely, Larsen asks whether Heidegger's interpretation of the relation of sophistry and philosophy is adequate and whether his claim that Plato denies a moment of normativity in the life of the philosopher superior to the sophist's is convincing. Larsen concludes that Heidegger's 'destructive' reading of Plato does not distort Plato's theory in the *Sophist* but rather articulates structures that are important to Plato. This gives us a much deeper understanding than many traditional readings of Plato do. In addition, Heidegger's ontological interest (which is the background for his reading of Plato) does not conceal the ethical or political dimension in Plato.

Catalin Partenie investigates Heidegger's approach toward Plato's *Sophist* via a reconstruction of Aristotle's philosophy and argues that Heidegger's actual guideline throughout the *Lectures* was not Aristotle, but his own thinking at the time, which he brought to its fullest development in the fundamental ontology of *Being and Time*. According to Partenie, this becomes clear when we focus on three of the most important motifs of Heidegger's early main work, namely the ontological constitution of *Dasein*, the two dimensions of human existence (authentic and inauthentic), and the existence of a primordial *as* as the basic structure of understanding. These three aspects can also be found (in a less articulated form) in the *Sophist-Lectures*. As Partenie points out, this leads to two conclusions. First, what Heidegger's reading of Plato reveals is not so much what Plato himself said in his dialogues, but rather Heidegger's own philosophizing. However, this shows, second, that a philosopher should go beyond the authors he interprets, confront them with the big philosophical questions and cut his own way through them.

Laura Candiotto focuses on the *héteron* in Plato's dialogue and Heidegger's interpretation of this category. By discussing especially chapters 78 and 79 of the *Sophist-Lectures* she shows that the negation involved in the *héteron* is understood by Heidegger as the foremost shape of relationality. In particular, Candiotto argues that Heidegger intends to see negation not as a dialectical tool but as the disclosive power able to show the 'things themselves'. This gives the opportunity to understand Plato's philosophy as a 'philosophy of relations'. According to Candiotto's reading, the function of the *héteron* is to enlighten the relationships among beings, showing how negation does not suppose an isolating opposition but a complementary relation within the *héteron* as a category.

Nicolas Zaks argues that Heidegger's reading of the *Sophist*, especially his insight into the relational character of the 'in-itself' (*autó kath'hautó*), can be taken as a starting-point for synthesizing different contemporary interpretations of Plato's dialogue while also revealing problems these interpretations have to face. Incidentally, it is also possible to apply this approach to the question of temporality in the *Sophist*. By using Heidegger's approach one can argue that—even contrary to Heidegger's own suggestion—Plato was not blind to the temporality of the human being that affects his disclosing of the world; on the contrary, one could say that in the *Sophist* he shows this temporal dimension in its philosophical guise.

Argyri Karanasiou's article aims at demonstrating that Heidegger, in his Marburg Lectures from 1924/25, has accurately pointed out that the concept of interrelation (*symplokē*) appears in Plato's thought as early as

his *Symposium*. Heidegger emphasizes that in Plato's understanding, *symplokē* as the blending of *lógos* with *héteron* forms the false *lógos*. This concept offers the possibility of comprehending the phenomena of image-making (*eídōlon*, *eíkōn*, *phantasía*). Moreover, Heidegger draws attention to the fact that by solving the riddle of 'something existing' as 'something that at the same time does not exist', Plato took a step toward the ontological comprehension of the *aísthēton*. Therefore, the true philosopher must accept that 'what is' consists of 'what is changeless' and 'what is in change' both together.

Maia Shukhoshvili discusses the concept of *tékhnē* in Plato's *Sophist*, since this dialogue distinguishes and defines many different *tékhnai*. She works out that Heidegger's interpretation of this concept as some kind of 'knowing-how' offers the best definition of this term. All human activities that are mentioned in the *Sophist*, such as horsemanship, hunting, cow-herding, farming, calculation, geometry, strategy, piloting a ship, chariot-driving, political craft, prophecy, music, lyre-playing, etc., are nothing but different kinds of 'knowing-how'. The width of Heidegger's understanding of *tékhnē* as knowing-how makes it possible to justify the numerous different ways of speaking of *tékhnē* without ambiguity.

Olga Alieva's chapter concentrates on Plato's discussion of the concept of falsehood in the *Sophist* and Heidegger's reading of Plato's suggestions. While Plato's solution focuses mainly on the propositional dimension of *lógos*, on its subject-predicate structure, Heidegger, in sharp contrast, endeavours to get rid of propositions and the correspondence theory of truth while interpreting the *Sophist* and to replace it by his conception of truth as 'unconcealedness'. Furthermore, Heidegger attempts to elevate falsehood to the ontological level. As Alieva elaborates, Heidegger draws attention to the most intriguing problem, namely the 'disclosive' potential of the Platonic λόγος, but seems to have gone too far in his struggle against 'modern logic' and thus misreads those passages in Plato where the propositional aspect of falsehood comes to the fore. Alieva does not deny the ontological problems implied in the 'falsehood paradox', but argues against Heidegger that at least some categories of modern logic are indispensable for an adequate interpretation of Plato's "ὀρθολογία περὶ τὸ μὴ ὄν". These categories can only be excluded at the expense of Plato's ontology, and this is the case in Heidegger's lecture course.

As this synopsis shows, Heidegger's readings of the *Sophist* prove to be fruitful and have at least in part philologically convincing results. At the same time, some of Heidegger's basic interpretive premises seem to provide material for extended controversial discussions, particularly his

fundamental ontological assumptions, his interpretation of the *lógos*, and his characterisation of the Platonic dialectics. And finally, there are certain aspects of Heidegger's approach that concern his theses about the history of metaphysics. These seem to remain rather doubtful, e.g., his idea that a reading of the *Sophist* has to begin with an extensive analysis of Aristotle. However, these results mainly concern the philological level of Heidegger's interpretation. The next section will turn to the question of how Heidegger's methodological approach to Plato's *Sophist* and its results can be interpreted on a philosophical level.

IV.3 Outlook

Let us start with a formulation from the *Sophist-Lectures* that shows what Heidegger regards as the basic concern of any philological-philosophical reading: to "let the texts speak for themselves" (GA 19, 228/157). In this claim lies a deep connection between Heidegger's understanding of phenomenology and textual hermeneutics. Letting the texts speak for themselves ideally requires a preparation that facilitates a reading of the text in question without any difficulties of understanding. However, Heidegger is convinced that such a preparation is not what scholars usually believe it to be, i.e., a scholarly philosophical education "in systematics" (GA 19, 373/258). On the contrary: according to Heidegger, education in this sense rather conceals the content of the texts; it fails to provide us with a fruitful approach to the classic works and to fulfil the task to discover the things themselves, "for that education does not make one capable of posing a proper substantive question" (GA 19, 373/258). Education (*Bildung*) in Heidegger's eyes does so because it gives the scholar's approach to the texts a sort of hermeneutical pre-structure that guides and shapes his interpretations, suggests the author's intentions even before the actual readings, and thus does not "let the texts speak for themselves".

So what is required to let the texts speak is primarily an unimpeded view of the thing at issue. According to Heidegger, this thing at issue in the case of Plato's *Sophist* is 'Being'. But one has to be more precise. In Heidegger's view, the *Sophist* is the first text where Being is mentioned not merely as an abstract concept; instead, Being here denotes the life-forms of the sophist and of the philosopher, two modes of how *Dasein* exists. This concretization of what Being means is connected with a definition of the method and basis for the ontological investigation, namely *lógos* and *légein*. This is, according to Heidegger, Plato's specific contribution to the history of Western metaphysics, although Plato himself

was not yet fully aware of the range of his innovation, but confounded the bespeaking of Being (*légein*) with the vision of Being (*noeîn*). This distinction is explicitly drawn by Aristotle who fulfils what Plato insinuates, and that is why Heidegger puts the extensive discussion of Aristotle's approach in front of his discussion of the *Sophist*. However, even this perspective on Plato's dialogue requires in Heidegger's eyes an at least partial escape from *Bildung* and—in this sense—an 'uneducated' view of things. Heidegger claims that his interpretation of the *Sophist* must remain inconceivable to somebody whose approach does not "grasp it [the *Sophist*, n. De Brasi/Fuchs] originally enough" (GA 19, 205/142).

This interpretation of Heidegger's method is parallel to the basic structure of *Being and Time*. Here Heidegger also finds it necessary to develop a complete ontological investigation of *Dasein* before he begins with a destruction of the history of ontology. Moreover, we can recognize here a certain Husserlian heritage in Heidegger. This becomes clear when Heidegger prefers a purely intuitive and descriptive 'access' to the phenomena that reminds us of Husserl's method of *epochē*. If we put this into the words of the *Sophist* we could say that there must be a *noeîn* that could then be discussed and debated in the context of *dialégesthai*.

This is not, however, Heidegger's last word on the matter, and this is true not only for *Being and Time*, but also for Heidegger's *Lectures on the Sophist*. In the latter, Heidegger rejects this idea of a pure *noeîn*—and thus of Husserl's *epochē* and philosophy of evidence—by ridiculing a certain "romanticism which believes that it can step directly into the open space, that one can, so to speak, make oneself free of history by a leap" (GA 19, 413/286)—just as Husserl meant to do with his phenomenological method based on evidence and intuition.

On the contrary, Heidegger claims early in the *Lectures on the Sophist* that in order to gain access to the phenomena, we need not neglect, but rather work ourselves through tradition, viz., the classical texts. The reason for this lies in Heidegger's conception of 'fallenness' (*Verfallenheit*) of *Dasein* to the 'They Self' (*das Man*) and to tradition. This 'fallenness' is a primary state of all *Dasein* and concerns *Dasein* not only in its everyday existence but also in its scientific exercises. The way 'fallen' *Dasein* considers things is 'idle talk' (*Gerede*) which blocks or disguises (*verstellen*) what real Being is instead of revealing it. In Heidegger's eyes, also the above-mentioned *Bildung* of the educated philosopher and scientist in a certain sense qualifies as 'idle talk'. Things become even more complicated since 'idle talk' and tradition also affect our efforts to escape it. In this perspective, Husserl's conception is an attempt, but not a success to break through the ban of tradition: Husserl clearly saw the

necessity to overcome the traditional philosophical concepts in order to regain original ontological research on the one hand; on the other hand, Husserl's phenomenology, which is based on evidence and intuition, remained within the philosophical domain of Cartesianism and thus within the paradigm of subjective transcendentalism, i.e., a philosophy fundamentally based on the concept of the subject. On the basis of these assumptions of Heidegger's, it seems that there cannot be a pure *noeîn*. Thus, one has to take the detour via *légein* and *dialégesthai* (and the consideration of the classical texts in general) in order to 'break through towards being'.

As we have seen, the ambivalent structure of *noeîn-légein* and of disguising-revealing also applies to *lógos*. *Lógos* has the ability to reveal being, but normally and primarily (*zunächst und zumeist*) tends to disguise it. This leads to the question how to meet the above-mentioned claim to "let the texts speak for themselves". If there is no access to a pure *noeîn* that could reveal true Being and if all that is left for us is the classic texts and a *légein*/*dialégesthai* that rather tends towards disguising than revealing, how can we then know that our readings of the texts (i.e., our *légein*) are actually adequate? This problem also applies to Heidegger's own readings: how can Heidegger know that his interpretations of the *Sophist* not only reveal Plato's true intentions, but also truly grasp the way Being appears here?

It therefore seems that we have arrived at a paradox at the end of our introduction. However, there are a few important aspects we still want to point out. First: the paradoxical situation described above does not seem to be a problem or even a fault of Heidegger's philosophy alone. It rather seems that there is an ambivalence in understanding and interpretation as such. Second: Heidegger himself is inconclusive in his evaluation of *dialégesthai* and the relation of *légein* and *noeîn* in Plato's *Sophist*, and this inconclusiveness seems to mirror the ambivalence embedded in both understanding and interpretation. This could mean that Heidegger's inconclusiveness ultimately exposes the fundamental problem of his own hermeneutical method in his interpretation of Platonic dialectics. But then we could assume that a philological clarification of Platonic dialectics could also lead to a clarification of Heidegger's approach, and thus that we could gain insights into the philosophical problem of understanding by examining the meaning of Platonic dialectics—insights inaccessible for any attempt based on pure *noeîn*.

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