READING PLATO WITH HEIDEGGER: A STUDY OF THE ALLEGORY OF THE CAVE

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by

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ........................................................................................................ iv

INTRODUCTION .............................................................................................................. 1

Chapter

I. BENEATH, BETWEEN, AND BEHIND A TEXT ..................................................... 5
   Beneath ...................................................................................................................... 5
   Between .................................................................................................................... 23
   Behind ..................................................................................................................... 31

II. DRAMATIC CONTEXT .............................................................................................. 34

III. PLATO’S FORMS .................................................................................................. 56

IV. CONCLUSION ....................................................................................................... 75
   Aletheia ................................................................................................................... 81

BIBLIOGRAPHY .......................................................................................................... 92
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INTRODUCTION

The allegory of the cave, found in Book VII of most translations of the *Republic*, is arguably the most powerful of the images and metaphors found in the *Republic*. The courageous turning and movement out of the cave of images and into the realm of the light of the *idea tou agathou* has been the subject of seemingly countless interpretations. Martin Heidegger offered an especially provoking one.

In his lecture course *The Essence of Truth* and the later essay “Plato’s Doctrine of Truth,” Heidegger famously argued that the allegory of the cave ushered in a new conception of truth. Before Plato, the Greeks had understood truth, *aletheia*, as unconcealment. It was the allegory of the cave that began the fateful change from truth as unconcealment to truth as correctness. Though Plato was still able to appreciate truth as unconcealment, those that followed eventually lost truth as unconcealment and only understood truth as a property of a proposition—correctness.

Of course, Plato never argued for such a change in the conception of truth. Never in the allegory of the cave does Plato assert that truth was the correctness of a proposition. Heidegger nevertheless argues that such a change is present in the allegory. The change, according to Heidegger, is “unsaid.” By the unsaid, Heidegger is not only referring to the change not being explicitly written into the dialogue, but it is also un-thought. Heidegger suggests that Plato was not consciously aware of what he was pre-supposing in the allegory. In the first chapter I analyze this concept of the “unsaid.”
The “unsaid” is also discussed alongside two similar hermeneutic concepts utilized by other 20th century interpreters of Plato: Leo Strauss and Stanley Rosen. I examine the similarities and distinctions between Heidegger’s notion of the “unsaid,” Leo Strauss’ “method” of “reading between the lines,” and Rosen’s contention that one must be attuned to the “silence” of Plato.

In his essay, “Heidegger’s Interpretation of Plato,” Rosen suggests that Heidegger is not sufficiently attuned to the silence of Plato. This stems from, or at least occurs alongside of, what Rosen assesses is a lack of attention to dramatic context and Socratic irony. While I will argue that some of Rosen’s claims are too strongly put, I will agree in Chapter 2 that Heidegger occasionally misses key context in his interpretation of the allegory of the cave. Because of this, I suggest that there are ethical and political implications of the allegory that Heidegger does not address in The Essence of Truth or in “Plato’s Doctrine of Truth.” Furthermore, Heidegger explicitly denies such implications in his later lectures and publications on Nietzsche.

I assess that there are political and ethical implications of the allegory and that any attempt at understanding the allegory of the cave must address these connotations. For instance, I take the courageous turning and movement out of the cave as a reference to the education of the philosopher kings. The idea tou agathou, I contend, is not simply a metaphysical concept. It is not enough to “know” the idea of the good; one should also direct one’s behavior in light of it.

In the third chapter, I address the so-called “Theory of the Forms.” Throughout his works on Plato, Heidegger is concerned with wrestling Plato’s works and thought from
the dogmatism of many, if not most, interpretations of Plato. Heidegger’s work seems to imply, albeit “unsaid,” that the “Forms” were not to Plato what many later commentators have made them out to be. I take Heidegger’s lead and propose that it is perhaps ill-founded to suggest that there is something resembling a “Theory” of the forms in Plato’s work. I argue, with the help of other contemporary scholars, that there are several problems in giving Plato’s “opinion” and “dialectic” of the forms the appellation “Theory.” One of the largest problems in viewing the forms in this way is the fact that they are discussed and “explained” in such wide and contradictory ways in the dialogues. Contra the “development thesis,” I do not think these contradictions can be explained away by the “development” of Plato’s thought concerning the forms. While I admit there were probably some changes in Plato’s thought, the “development thesis” cannot explain the contradictions that occur within some dialogues. That is, the characterizations of the forms not only change between the dialogues but are sometimes distinct within the same dialogue.

With these problems in mind, along with an examination of the *Seventh Letter* and the *Parmenides*, I make the claim that Plato never intended to create a substantial “Theory of the Forms.” Indeed, I think Plato’s work implies that any attempt to create a Theory of the Forms would ultimately fail. Thinking of the *Seventh Letter*, it seems that Plato thought the forms could not be sufficiently explained in words. Nevertheless, the forms’ existence was necessary and that it is only through, though not contained within, the dialectic that their existence can be recognized.
In my Conclusion, I take the opportunity to work through Plato’s allegory of the cave in light of what was discussed in the previous chapters. I also address the concept most present in Heidegger’s treatment of the allegory—*aletheia*. Heidegger argues that our current conception of truth as correctness is to a large degree the result of the change that is initiated in Plato’s allegory of the cave. In order to be more aware of our intellectual history and understand more primordially “the essence of truth,” it is necessary to confront the conception of truth that existed before “truth as correctness.” Heidegger goes so far as to contend that correctness presupposes *aletheia*—truth as unconcealment.

I assess that Heidegger’s study of *aletheia* is an example of the highest form of interpretation. Heidegger did not examine Plato’s *aletheia* merely to understand Plato’s intent. He used the concept of *aletheia* as a jumping off point to expand his own horizon.

The study here is primarily an attempt to understand Plato’s allegory of the cave. Heidegger’s provoking interpretation offers a way into the text. The topics that could be covered in a study of Plato’s most famous image could fill volumes and, in fact, they do. Using an existing interpretation, such as Heidegger’s, allows for a limitation on the one hand and offers an opening on the other. It is limiting in the sense of narrowing the topics of consideration, but it is within this level of specification that allows for interesting and important nuance to be revealed. The purpose of this project, then, is to use Heidegger’s interpretation as a tool to gain a deeper understanding of the allegory of the cave.
CHAPTER I
BENEATH, BETWEEN, & BEHIND A TEXT

BENEATH

While visible propositions that come to form conclusions compose knowledge in the sciences, in order to get at the “doctrine” of a thinker, Heidegger tells us that we must get at what “remains unsaid.”¹ This unsaid, of course, can only be accessed via what is said. This means, when reading Plato, we must examine each of Plato’s dialogues in light of all the other dialogues. Heidegger assesses that this is impossible. It is not immediately clear why this is the case, but I will assume that he is merely saying that he cannot possibly examine every dialogue in its interrelationship with every other in the confines of the essay “Plato’s Doctrine of Truth.”²

Nevertheless, Heidegger famously continues to assert that what remains unsaid in the “allegory of the cave” is a change in the essence of truth. It is in Plato that we see the beginnings of the change of truth as unconcealment to the current understanding of truth: truth as correctness. Before we carefully analyze Heidegger’s contention that a change in the essence of truth occurs in Plato’s thought, let us back up and examine Heidegger’s “method” of examining the “unsaid” of a thinker. To do this, we’ll look and see where Heidegger’s “method,” if we can call it that, takes him.

² We are, however, left unsatisfied with this explanation. For, despite not being able to explicitly reference and acknowledge each of Plato’s works, it is certainly possible, and ideal, that Heidegger’s interpretation of the “allegory of the cave” would take into account, even if only implicitly, the other dialogues.
Heidegger begins his study of the allegory with a fairly orthodox interpretation of the text. The allegory, according to Heidegger and countless other commentators, is primarily about paideia. Heidegger argues that paideia is not translatable; that given the importance of the word, attempts to translate it into another language would be unsatisfactory. He does, however, give us an account of the term. Paideia, normally translated as “education,” is not the mere “pouring knowledge into the unprepared soul as if it were some container held out empty and waiting.”

In this way, paideia is not an entering of information onto some tabula rasa.

Instead, paideia—“education”—is a radical transformation of the soul. Education is a turning of the soul and a “leading us to the place of our essential being and accustoming us to it.” Thus, it seems to me, paideia is less an acquisition than it is a turning. It is a turning away from the shadows of the cave and toward the light of the good.

Heidegger cites the introduction of the allegory as evidence for his interpretation. Socrates asks his interlocutor, Glaucon, to consider an image “of our nature in its education and want of education”. This sentence seems to support Heidegger’s “translation” of paideia. Paideia for Plato is not an amassing of information but a transformation and an ascent—an ascent out of the cave. Heidegger’s interpretation of paideia seems to be correct. The first sentence of the seventh book, as quoted above, states that the allegory is about education and its relationship to humanity. Other

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1 Ibid., 167.
2 Ibid.
3 Both uses of “education” in this sentence are translations of paideia.
5 Heidegger’s account of translation to be discussed more fully later.
commentators, such as Werner Jaeger, also reject the notion of *paideia* as the pouring of knowledge “into an ignorant soul as if the power of sight were given to blind eyes.” This is a reference to Socrates’ discussion of *paideia* after the allegory of the cave: Socrates says, “education is not what the professions of certain men assert it to be. They presumably assert that they put into the soul knowledge that isn’t it, as though they were putting sight into blind eyes.” *Paideia* is not then, as Heidegger asserts, an aggrandizing of knowledge. It is instead a turning. Further down in the discussion, Socrates notes,

> There would, therefore… be an art of this turning around, concerned with the way in which this power can most easily and efficiently be turned around, not an art of producing sight in it. Rather, this art takes as given that sight is there, but not rightly turned nor looking at what it ought to look at, and accomplishes this object.  

Thus *paideia* is not about gaining knowledge, but is the turning to see the truth, to see the unconcealment of, ultimately, the idea of the good. *Paideia* will be discussed more completely later, where, I will argue, that Heidegger misses the political nature of *paideia*.

Though Heidegger admits the allegory for Plato is primarily about *paideia*, Heidegger tells us he is taking a different tack. Some commentators critique Heidegger for missing the primary points and intents of Plato’s texts. This, at least in this case, is unjustified. Heidegger explicitly explains that his interpretation does not keep with the conventional understanding of the author’s intent, but goes beyond. He goes so far as to

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8 Ibid., 518d.
write, “[T]he interpretation threatens to degenerate into a reinterpretation that does 
violemce to the text.”

By going beyond the text, Heidegger recognizes the dangers of 
such an interpretation. By examining the unsaid, we are more apt to misrepresent the 
author’s views and “doctrines.” It seems, on Heidegger’s terms, that we need to be 
especially careful when examining the unsaid of a thinker in order to avoid doing the 
thinker an injustice.

This realization brings us to another important point of Heidegger’s use of the 
unsaid and of his interpretative “method” more generally. Heidegger is not focused on, or 
particularly interested in, understanding Plato as he understood himself; even if such an 
enterprise is possible or privileged. We must be careful, however, where we take this 
conclusion. This is not to say that Heidegger is only interested in construing Plato’s 
thoughts and “doctrines” to whatever Heidegger pleases. He certainly is interested in 
using Plato for his own purposes. He does this unapologetically. However, he cites the 
text and not arbitrarily. If we remember, the only way one gets to the unsaid is through 
the said. Heidegger gets to Plato’s so-called “doctrines” through an examination of the 
dialogue. We can certainly criticize the results of his study, but charges of dishonesty, on 
the grounds that Heidegger only interprets Plato for his purposes and therefore arbitrarily 
interprets the allegory, are, in the mind of this writer, severely misplaced.

Let us return to Heidegger’s study. As mentioned, despite the primary intent of 
the allegory, Heidegger is using the image of the cave to examine a possible historical 
transition from truth as unconcealment to truth as correctness: “According to our

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10 “Plato’s Doctrine of Truth”, 167.
11 Plato’s “doctrine” will be discussed more fully later.
interpretation, which is made necessary from out of future need, the ‘allegory’ not only illustrates the essence of education but at the same time opens our eyes to a transformation in the essence of “truth.”\textsuperscript{12} In order to get something substantial about truth in the allegory, Heidegger must also demonstrate a connection between \textit{paideia} and truth. The connection between the \textit{paideia} and truth is \textit{aletheia}—unconcealment.

In order to grasp Heidegger’s understanding of \textit{aletheia}, we must come to terms with his manner of translating. He writes,

> But if we are not satisfied with simply translating the words \textit{παιδεία} [\textit{paideia}] and \textit{ἀλήθεια} [\textit{aletheia}] “literally,” if instead we attempt to think through the issue according to the Greek way of knowing and to ponder the essential matter that is at stake in these translations, then straightway “education” and “truth” come together into an essential unity.\textsuperscript{13}

That is, the concepts of \textit{aletheia} and \textit{paideia}, when merely conventionally translated into English, do not seem to be connected, at least intimately. Yet, if we go beyond a “literal,” by which I mean a mere conventional translation and interpretation, the connection becomes clearer. Heidegger tells us that a translation is an interpretation carried through. This conception of translation, as an interpretation, seems to give fodder to critics of Heidegger’s hermeneutics who say that this allows for any arbitrary translation of texts. However, Heidegger’s view of translation seems to be much more honest, and gives the most opportunity to authentically correspond to the text. Heidegger’s view seems to be more empirically accurate in terms of how a translation is actually carried out (as opposed to some sort of ideal of “literal” translation which only obscures). Yes, this does,

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., 168.
on the surface at least, give more power to the translator-interpreter. However, this also
seems to imply more responsibility. The “literal,” word for word translator is merely a
medium between the text and the interpreter. The Heideggerian translator-interpreter, on
the other hand, has a larger job. If the translator-interpreter is to do her job honestly, she
has a responsibility to do justice to the text and the author of the text. Thus, in my view, a
good Heideggerian translator-interpreter is a better scholar than the traditional translator
that thinks he is not doing an interpretation.

The conventional translation of aletheia is “truth.” However, as Heidegger points
out, this is misleading because “truth” has been understood as correctness. Translating
aletheia as truth can therefore be deceptive. Plato, according to Heidegger, did not mean
the same thing by “truth” as we do. Later in the essay Heidegger will say the change from
truth as unconcealment to truth as correctness is underway in Plato. However, aletheia,
for Plato, still retains some of the original meaning of aletheia—unconcealment.
Understanding aletheia as truth as correctness as opposed to unconcealment hides the
connection between aletheia and paideia. Once we see aletheia as unconcealment,
though, the connection becomes uncovered. Heidegger writes,

the fulfillment of the essence of “education” can be achieved only in the
region of, and on the basis of, the most unhidden, i.e., the ἀλήθεστατον,
i.e., the truest, i.e., truth in the proper sense. The essence of “education” is
grounded in the essence of “truth [aletheia].”

Paideia is a turning around, a turning around to face “truth in the proper sense.” It is also
an overcoming of a lack of education. Likewise, aletheia must be understood in

[14] Ibid., 170.
relationship to its opposite—hiddenness. Citing Heraclitus, fragment 123—\textit{phusis xruptesthai philei}\textsuperscript{15}, Heidegger claims that the essence of being, for the Greeks, involved self-hiding. The Greek word for “truth,” \textit{aletheia}, is an alpha-privative. As an alpha-privative, \textit{aletheia} (\textit{a}-\textit{letheia}) is essentially tied to hiddenness. Hiddenness is the usual condition of beings, and it is the “wresting away”\textsuperscript{16} that allows for unconcealment. According to Heidegger, this is present in the allegory. The usual condition is in the cave. The movement into the light is a struggle and it requires heroic effort.

Heidegger contends that we see Plato’s influence in the experience of \textit{aletheia} in Greek thought in the “unspoken event whereby \textit{iđēa} gains dominance over \textit{άλήθεια}.”\textsuperscript{17} Heidegger once again explicitly points out that the allegory does not deal directly with \textit{aletheia}. But it is in this unsaid and un-broached topic that we find Plato’s “doctrine” of truth. Plato, or his character Socrates, does not overtly tell us that \textit{idea} is superior to \textit{aletheia}. But this is there, hidden, implicit in the text. The allegory, by way of images, explains the \textit{idea tou agathou}—the “idea of the good.” Heidegger’s translation of 514c4 is: “she herself is mistress in that she bestows unhiddenness (on what shows itself) and at the same time imparts apprehension (of what is unhidden).”\textsuperscript{18} The mistress is the \textit{idea tou agathou}. By bestowing unhiddenness, the \textit{idea tou agathou} gains superiority over \textit{aletheia}. Unhiddenness can only occur within the realm of the idea of the good. This means, for Heidegger, that truth comes to be associated with \textit{idea} rather than with \textit{aletheia}.

\textsuperscript{15} Commonly translated as “Nature loves to hide.”
\textsuperscript{16} “Plato’s Doctrine of Truth”, 167.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 176.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid.
With truth associated with *idea, paideia* is therefore transformed into seeing the forms. It is not just any vision that is important; it is “correct vision.”\(^{19}\) When we look at those in the cave, those who come up successfully in the life and death struggle to escape the cave are those that are able to see in the light. By becoming acclimated to the light, their vision becomes correct. Therefore, “Everything depends on the ὀρθότης, the correctness of the gaze.”\(^{20}\) This is the transformation from unhiddenness to correctness: “Thus, the priority of ἰδέα and ἰδεῖν over ἀλήθεια results in a transformation in the essence of truth. Truth becomes ὀρθότης, the correctness of apprehending and asserting.”\(^{21}\) So, unhiddenness is still present in Plato’s work. There is still a sense of unhiddenness being a characteristic of beings. However, by focusing on correct vision, there is a shift in focus to human comportment rather than beings unconcealing themselves.

In order for human comportment to be the focus of truth, it is assumed that unhiddenness still be a characteristic of beings. Thus, while it is *aletheia* that is used, said, in Plato’s dialogues, it is *orthotes*, which is unsaid, that is meant by Plato. This unsaid transition to truth as correctness is taken up throughout the history of Western philosophy. Heidegger specifically points to Aristotle, Aquinas, Descartes, and Nietzsche (“Nietzsche’s concept of truth displays the last glimmer of the most extreme consequences of the change of truth from the unhiddenness of being to the correctness of the gaze”\(^{22}\)).\(^{23}\)

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\(^{19}\) Ibid.  
\(^{20}\) Ibid., 177.  
\(^{21}\) Ibid.  
\(^{22}\) Ibid., 179.
This conception of truth is therefore alive with us today. Plato’s “doctrine” of truth is not something in the past, something in the “history” of philosophy; it is “present” with us today. Though it will not be spoken of in detail here, Heidegger extends this analysis to explain the origins of the West’s fixation on “presence” and metaphysics. Both of these are the result of this transformation begun in Plato.

By examining the unsaid, Heidegger believes he is able to uncover the origins of truth as correctness and the more primordial understanding of truth—truth as unconcealment. Plato does not explicitly discuss this movement in the text but, according to Heidegger, it is nevertheless present. The first step in examining the move from unconcealment to correctness was to analyze *paideia*, the primary subject of the allegory of the cave. By understanding *paideia*, not merely by its conventional translation “education” but in the Greek sense of a “turning” to face the “truth,” we are led to the concept *aletheia*. *Aletheia*, conventionally translated into English as “truth,” is not, for the Greeks, our current conception of truth as correctness. Instead, the Greeks understood *aletheia* as unconcealment. The move away from unconcealment is found in the unspoken moment where *idea*, specifically the idea of the Good, gains superiority over unconcealment. Unconcealment, while still occurring, only occurs in light of the idea of the Good. With this focus on *idea, paideia* then shifts from being associated with *aletheia* and instead becomes linked with seeing the forms. Seeing the forms, therefore, requires “correct vision.” Truth then is transformed from the unconcealment of entities to the correctness of vision. While there is still a role for unconcealment in Plato’s thought, this

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23 Ibid., 178-179.
move begins, according to Heidegger, the fateful forgetting of unconcealment, the concealment of unconcealment if you will, and the singular focus on truth as correctness.

So, what is this “method,” for lack of a better word, of examining the unsaid? What does it do for us in terms of understanding the “doctrine” of a thinker? Is it possible to examine the unsaid of a thinker? Does the unsaid constitute evidence? Further, is there enough (or any) evidence to get us to this unsaid? I hope it is clear at this point that Heidegger is not attempting to pull something from Plato’s thought that is not there, or, that he does not have evidence for his claims. Heidegger is simply stating, rightly, that there is more to a thinker than what is written in the text. Not all ideas can be signified by a text. Further, a text is not only about what is conscious in the thinker’s mind. Heidegger’s un-said is also un-thought. In other words, Plato was not conscious of the change in the essence of truth that he was initiating.

What remains controversial is whether and to what extent we have access to the unsaid of a thinker. Heidegger tells us the evidence of the unspoken is the spoken. For instance, in his attempt to show the move from truth as correctness to truth as unconcealment, Heidegger follows the drama of the dialogue and insists that Plato’s focus on seeing the forms assumes a different, or at least the beginnings of a different, experience of truth. Heidegger also appeals to etymology to show how a fuller understanding of a Greek term lends itself to a different, perhaps better, understanding. Thus, the evidence of what is in the unsaid is found in the said.

Is this study of the unsaid worthwhile? Can we be confident about any of the conclusions reached from such an examination? I think an examination of the unsaid is
necessary. How can we understand a text without, to some extent, assuming things about
the writer that are not explicit? For instance, when analyzing a point made by thinker, we
say things like “this assumes that…”. We are constantly, and correctly, examining the
presuppositions of thinkers. Furthermore, part of any interpretation of a text, if it is to be
worthwhile, must examine, to some extent, “content” that exists outside of the written
text. Said another way, in order to get at the meaning of the explicit content of a text,
there must be an examination of the implicit content. There is no understanding of the
words on a page without what is not on the page.

What Heidegger does differently is to address the nature of presuppositions, or at
least address the type of presuppositions in which he is interested. It may be said that
Heidegger is interested in “big” presuppositions. What I mean by “big” presuppositions is
Heidegger seems to be primarily concerned with the presuppositions that determine much
of the rest of a thinker’s thought. This may be why Heidegger says the “doctrine” of a
thinker is to be found in the unsaid. Though the concept of “doctrine” will be discussed
more fully later, Heidegger refers to the content of what is to be found in the unsaid as
the “doctrine” simply because it is left unquestioned by the thinker. This is exactly the
view we have of presuppositions. They exist prior (pre) to the explicit claim (supposition)
made in writing.

We are left with the question regarding the level of confidence we can have in the
conclusions reached from examining the unsaid. First, I think it should be noted that the
level of confidence about the positions that are spoken of, especially from a thinker like
Plato, is not much higher than the positions that are not spoken. In other words, it is
difficult to have a high level of confidence about Plato’s spoken positions. The
difficulties in understanding Plato in general are nearly innumerable. One, take the Greek
language. Attempting to understand a language that is no longer written or spoken and
whose extant texts do not exist in a form easily translated (here I am referring to the lack
of spaces, punctuation, lower case, etc.) is no easy task. Second, there exists a large gulf
in time, space, and therefore political and social realities between Plato’s Greek culture
and our own. Third, Plato wrote dialogues, not treatises. It is rarely if ever clear what
Plato’s actual positions are. Are they the same as Socrates’? If so, when is Socrates being
ironic and when is he not? Similarly, and this will be discussed later, is there also an
esoteric teaching in addition to Plato’s exoteric teachings? This is not meant to be an
exhaustive list of the challenges in reading, understanding, and interpreting Plato. It is
simply meant to show that understanding Plato is not an easy task and it is difficult to
have a high level of confidence in any interpretation because of these challenges.

With these concerns in mind, attempting to recognize and examine the unsaid of
the thinker is but one more step. Here we should be careful. I do not mean to imply that
an understanding of Plato is impossible. I am merely pointing out the reasons why such
an endeavor is difficult. An understanding is, in my opinion, possible, but we have to
come to terms with what it means to have an understanding of a text. The understanding
that I am concerned with does not mean to understand Plato as he understood himself.
This is, in my view, the wrong bearing to take. Though such a goal is so clearly
impossible to achieve, many still approach interpretation as if this were the ultimate goal.
An understanding, if it is to take place, must have a different goal and therefore follow a different path. I agree with Heidegger here.

I think Heidegger is on the right path when he discusses a “genuine historical return” in his lecture course *The Essence of Truth*. According to Heidegger, “No one has ever leapt out over themselves from and at the place where they presently stand.” However, the distance we have from Plato gives us an opportunity. It gives us an opportunity to “leap out beyond our own present”. With distance we are allowed to critically examine our own entrenched ideas. In this way, our distance from Plato allows us to create distance from our present. In particular, Heidegger wished to separate himself from the current conception of truth as correctness by examining the Greek notion of truth as unconcealment.

Though I find value in Heidegger’s conception of “genuine historical return,” I think we can do better. Among other reasons, I find Heidegger’s discussion here disappointing because he does not adequately do justice to those texts he is using to distance himself from the present. In order to better elucidate this point I will briefly discuss what I find to be a better path that, while certainly influenced by Heidegger, slightly changes and in so doing, in my opinion, corrects what I find to be Heidegger’s missteps. Here I am speaking of Gadamer. Gadamer further develops many of Heidegger’s ideas regarding how to gain a valuable understanding of a text, such as expanding Heidegger’s notion about the impossibility of leaping out of our own shoes.

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25 Ibid.
26 Ibid.
while also allowing, I believe, a reader to still be sensitive to the intent of the author, to whatever extent access to the author’s intent is possible or privileged.

In order to understand Gadamer's hermeneutics, we also have to examine his reaction to what he called "Romantic" hermeneutics. Gadamer found Romantic hermeneutics to be overly focused on reconstructing the author's intention. The first problem with this is that it ignores that art asserts truth. In this way, they ignored the mimesis aspect of art. When reading a text, Gadamer thought we should be focusing on an understanding of truth, not in losing ourselves in the author. This brings us to the second problem of reconstructing the author's intention: it overlooks the situated-ness of understanding. According to Gadamer, it is not possible to get into someone else's shoes because we are always in our own. The Romantics wanted to rid themselves of prejudices but, because Gadamer found understanding to always be situated, he thought ridding ourselves of prejudices was impossible. Our goal should be to become aware of our own prejudices, not to try and accomplish the impossible goal of ridding ourselves of them. Further, Gadamer found value in tradition. Not all tradition and authority is valuable but some authority is superior. Because we are finite beings, it is reasonable to accept some traditions.

Because understanding is situated, Gadamer argued that reading a text should involve a "fusion of horizons." He thought the Romantics set up an unfortunate and unnecessary opposition between the reader and the text. Gadamer wanted to engage the

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28 Ibid., 358.
text in a dialogue and find points of agreement. For instance, when reading a classic, such as *King Lear*, we should not try to read the text as Shakespeare wrote it but attempt to recognize both the differences and the common ground. Ultimately there needs to be an attempt at an amalgamation between Shakespeare's tradition and our own.

When attempting to understand Gadamer’s hermeneutics, we also need to understand what he calls “effective history.” Our understanding is always non-definite; meaning, it is open. What Gadamer calls "historical tradition" is always in the process of being defined. It is not static; it is always changing with ongoing events. This becomes very important to our task in hermeneutics. A text's meaning is not set in stone. For instance, the meaning of a great work such as the *Nicomachean Ethics* is not concrete. The meaning of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, according to Gadamer, changes along with our changing historical conditions. Our own historical circumstances are always changing and our reading of the text cannot be the same as someone in France reading the same text in the 19th century.

As intimated above, Gadamer finds understanding to be dialogical. Because dialogue occurs in language, understanding occurs in language. And we, as humans, are beings that can be understood as language. Language is a horizon; it allows an opening up of things. However, there is always a restraint. Because of our situated character, we cannot view all horizons. Our job then is to expand our horizons, and in so doing, alter our horizon. An example of this is someone attempting to spread ideas in a culture that speaks a different language. The ideas will not take on the exact character they did in the

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29 Ibid., 310.
30 Ibid., 163.
original language but they will become fused. So in learning a language, another world so
to speak, is opened to us. However, as one can guess, there are constraints. We cannot
learn every language. Even if we could, we would not understand it in the same way as
someone who is a native speaker. Further, language itself has limitations. It is, at its core,
a result of prejudices. And we, as humans, are always limited by the limits of language.  

I think Gadamer finds a way to adequately temper some of Heidegger’s stronger
notions. Gadamer accepts Heidegger’s rejection of the possibility of leaping out of our
own shoes and into an author’s. However, Gadamer is able to find what I take to be a
proper medium between getting into the shoes of another, a position attributed to those
such as Schleiermacher, and the precarious position of using a text only as a way to
overcome both the present and the text. It seems Heidegger, in rejecting the position of
those such as Schleiermacher, goes too far. As Heidegger knows from his studies in
Nietzsche, a rejection is always a reaction and is not an overcoming.

Gadamer’s position allows us to look honestly at the difficulties of understanding
a text but also allows us to do justice to it and its author. Both Heidegger and Gadamer
place emphasis on the present but Heidegger does so in a way that creates an opposition
and tension between the interpreter and the text. Like Schleiermacher, who creates an
opposition between him and the text by trying to understand the author as he understood
himself, so does Heidegger, but by using a text in order to overcome both it and the

31 Ibid., 238.
32 The Essence of Truth, 10. As we see in The Essence of Truth, Heidegger went to the unsaid and
unthought presuppositions of Plato because he considered Plato to be the beginning of philosophy. Since
the beginning of philosophy, and also the beginning of the history of Truth, needed to be unraveled and
overcome, Heidegger thought he needed to address the implicit and hidden understanding of Truth that
was present in Plato. Thus, the purpose of reading Plato is to overcome him and therefore the Western
philosophical tradition that fatefully followed in the footsteps of Plato’s hidden and unthought “doctrine.”
Gadamer understands the situated-ness of the interpreter and that the interpreter may have uses for the text that the author did not. However, by entering into a dialogue with a text, we can still get more about the text and the author than Heidegger seems to allow. Though our understanding is situated, we still have the text itself (even if it is edited and/or translated). We can also, if it is not in our native tongue, learn the language of the text. As Gadamer points out, since we are beings that can be understood as language, learning a language opens a new world of understanding. Heidegger seems to recognize this, in a sense, when he discusses using a text to overcome a present. The text, in this case Plato’s allegory, opens up possibilities. However, and this is a small but important distinction, Heidegger does not appear to be entering into a “dialogue” with the text, but is, by attempting to overcome the text, is also, like the Romantics, setting up an opposition between him and the text.

What is the problem with setting up an opposition between oneself and a text? Why not use a text solely for your own purposes? One, this project is aiming at an understanding of allegory of the cave. As I discussed previously, we need to examine what we mean by an “understanding” of a text. I think Heidegger lets us do too little, in a sense, and too much in another. By arguing that we cannot understand a thinker as he understood himself, and implying that this leads to the conclusion that we can only use a text, not as an object of understanding, but as a means to some other end, he is overly constricting what we as interpreters can do. By entering into a dialogue with a text, I think we can get some sense, though not completely, of the intent of an author, even one

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33 The Essence of Truth, 7.
as enigmatic as Plato. I am not implying that Heidegger would not recognize or accept these points. What I *am* saying is that these facts lead me to believe that we can get to some understanding, however imperfect and incomplete, of an author’s intent. There is of course the question of whether, even if we accept the possibility of such an understanding, we should accept that understanding as a worthy goal. Perhaps (*a la* Derrida) we should assign as much or more value on the meanings we or others place on the text as opposed to the one intended by the author. This question, however, is not within the confines of this project.

As previously stated, I think Heidegger lets us do too much in another sense. By using an interpretation solely for some other purpose, he appears to be getting ahead of himself. For, how can we use an interpretation as a means without having that initial grasp of the text in mind? In other words, using an interpretation to overcome both it and the interpreter’s present seems to assume we can have some understanding of the text as the author understood it. How else can Heidegger say the move from truth as unconcealment to truth as correctness began in Plato, if he does not first have some grasp of what Plato meant by *aletheia*?

With this discussion in mind, let us return to Heidegger’s “unsaid.” When we view Heidegger’s “method” of examining the unsaid in order to uncover the “doctrine” of a thinker, we should not view it as some mysterious method of gaining access to some otherwise closed-off knowledge. Nor should we view it merely as a means to “violently” read Plato in order to serve some other purpose. Instead, it is a way, an effective one in my mind, to creatively engage with a Platonic dialogue, or any text for that matter. It
involves using the explicit content of the text to get to the implicit, hidden content that exists beyond, or below, what some would call the text itself. As we mentioned, however, Heidegger is not after a simple presupposition such as “John no longer plays the piano” assumes that John played the piano at one point in his life. Heidegger has larger ambitions. Heidegger is interested in the “big” presuppositions that make-up the “doctrine” of a thinker; that is, the undemonstrated, un-broached, and un-thought presuppositions that determine key portions of an author’s thought and texts. This led Heidegger, as we will examine more closely later, to focus on the concept of *aletheia* and how its change in meaning led to a change in the experience of truth.

Whether or not we agree with the conclusions of what Heidegger finds in the unsaid is a different question and will be studied later. For now, we are trying to illuminate some of the ways Heidegger reads Plato. This examination of the unsaid opens up other, related discussions of reading a thinker beyond, or below, the explicit text. Here, I would like to briefly discuss two such “methods” of reading Plato. The first, Leo Strauss, finds a distinction between the exoteric teaching of a thinker, what is explicitly said, and the esoteric teachings, the teachings that are intentionally hidden by the author. The second, Stanley Rosen, looks at the “silence” of Plato. I believe these other “methods” advocated by Strauss and Rosen can complement and inform Heidegger’s project as well as our own into the allegory of the cave.

**BETWEEN**

which is in the foreground; and a philosophic teaching concerning the most important
subject, which is indicated only between the lines.”34 Thus, like the Heideggerian unsaid,
there exists very important content below, or in the case of Strauss, “between,” the words
on the page. Also in both cases, there is a need to go to what is in fact said, or written, in
order to access this hidden content. What is different, though, is that for Heidegger the
content, the unsaid, is also un-thought. This is far from the case for Strauss. The content
“between the lines” is very much in the mind of the writer.

A second difference between Heidegger and Strauss’ reading “methodologies” is
the crucial distinction between “doctrine” and “teaching.” As we saw, Heidegger found
the “doctrine,” that which remains unquestioned in the mind of the thinker, to be of
interest and importance. Meanwhile, Strauss was seeking the teaching, the intentioned
thinking that the writer skillfully places between the lines of a text. A reader, if she is
skillful and careful, will be able to pick up on these “hidden” teachings.

The reason for a writer to hide important teachings from a careless reader is
because of persecution. Strauss explains that writers, even in contemporary times, face
various forms of persecution and compulsion, particularly those writing about politics.
However, Strauss writes, “Persecution, then, cannot prevent independent thinking. It
cannot prevent even the expression of independent thought.”35 Independent thinkers will
always be able to express their thoughts to “reasonable friends.”36 Here he references
Book V of the Republic. There Socrates tells Glaucon, “To speak knowing the truth,

34 Leo Strauss, Persecution and the Art of Writing (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1952), 36.
35 Ibid., 23.
36 Ibid.
among prudent and dear men, about what is greatest and dear, is a thing that is safe and
encouraging. But to present arguments at a time when one is in doubt and seeking—
which is just what I am doing—is a thing both frightening and slippery.”37 Socrates
seems to be hinting that one must be careful with whom we “speak knowing the truth.”
But if we are in the company of intelligent and trustworthy people, we can feel free to
communicate important thoughts that, if expressed to the wrong people, may yield
unwanted and unwarranted consequences.

The thinker can also make his thoughts public, even in writing, “provided he is
capable of writing between the lines.”38 Thus the “reasonable friends” extend to those
who are capable readers. In this way, the writer can disseminate his ideas to those outside
his inner circle and can also protect himself from persecution and censorship. There
seems to be the assumption here that those that are capable readers are not tyrants.
However, the great writer is able to protect himself even from the capable tyrant. The
censor has the burden of proof. As such, “a careful writer of normal intelligence is more
intelligent than the most intelligent censor.”39 The censor has several things to prove in
order to prove that a text is subversive. First, the censor must prove that the author is
intelligent and a careful writer. How else could a writer have written between the lines?
Secondly, and this is a more difficult step, the censor must prove that the writer “was on
the usual level of his abilities when writing the incriminating words.”40 That is, the censor
must demonstrate that the writer did not slip when writing the subversive lines that only

37 Republic, 450d-e.
38 Strauss, 24.
39 Ibid., 26.
40 Ibid.
exist between the lines. And “how can that be proved, if even Homer nods from time to
time?””

Strauss makes the claim that it is only fairly recent commentary that has not
recognized the esoteric teaching of many writers. He cites Schleiermacher as the primary
figure in narrowing the “question of the esotericism of the ancient philosophers.” After
him, interpretors tended to look at Platonic dialogues as if they were Aristotelian treatises.

Like Heidegger, Strauss does not point to some systematic method for spotting
hidden teachings. He does, however, give us a few tell-tale signs of a possible point
where a writer is attempting to tell something to “reasonable friends.” Strauss gives the
example of an historian who doubts a certain “liberal view” of the history of religion that
happens to be sponsored by the totalitarian government under which he lives. The
historian, if he is careful and thoughtful, will state the liberal view and, in so doing, “give
many quotations and attach undue importance to insignificant details”. However,
eventually the historian would quickly state his argument against the liberal view that not
all would catch. Strauss writes, “Only when he reached the core of the argument would
he write three or four sentences in that terse and lively style which is apt to arrest the
attention of young men who love to think.” Those few sentences would not be caught
by all. In the very least, their importance would not be understood. Only those careful
readers “who love to think” will notice. Even then, the “reasonable young reader” may
not fully appreciate the passage’s gravity after the first read. The first read may only yield

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41 Ibid.
42 Ibid., 28.
43 Ibid., 24.
44 Ibid.
boredom. But the following readings will prove more worthwhile when the weight of the terse but powerful arguments can be fully appreciated.

Strauss gives one more indication of there being an esoteric teaching in a text. He tells us, “If a master of the art of writing commits such blunders as would shame an intelligent high school boy, it is reasonable to assume that they are intentional, especially if the author discusses, however incidentally, the possibility of intentional blunders in writing.” Great writers, when it is needed, have the ability to dissemble by including errors in their texts that only a careful reader will spot. This leads to a greater point. A reader must not merely assume that a writer agrees with the conclusions or arguments in the author’s text. This is especially true of those who do not write treatises but have characters and a drama. A character, even if it is the protagonist, does not necessarily represent the author.

What do we do when we spot an obvious error or contradiction in a text? What do we do when Plato’s Socrates clearly contradicts in passing a previous argument? Strauss’ response is, “we must study his whole book all over again, with much greater care and much less naïveté than before.” The possibility of an esoteric teaching means the text must be read again in light of this possibility. The sensitivity to noticing these intricacies has eroded in the recent past, particularly in the United States and Western Europe where freedom of speech and academic freedom are at a radically different level than they were for the ancient, medievals, and even moderns.

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46 Ibid., 32.
Strauss argues that we can look at a society’s view of popular education for clues to that society’s climate for independent thought and the dissemination of that thought. In general, Strauss holds, thinkers prior to the modern era were “more timid in this respect” than thinkers in and “post” the modern era. While philosophers in the modern and postmodern era either sought for or lived in a society of freedom of speech, this was not the case for pre-modern philosophers. Strauss points to Cicero and Plato as examples of pre-modern thinkers that not only lived in times with relatively little freedom of speech but also themselves believed in a fundamental difference between the masses and the few that were interested in and capable of philosophical thought. In the Republic Socrates tells his interlocutor, “Then it’s impossible… that a multitude be philosophic… And so, those who do philosophize are necessarily blamed by them… As well as by all those private men who consort with the mob and desire to please it.” Plato seems to think, if we agree that Socrates’ position here is also that of Plato, that popular education, at least in terms of philosophical education, is not only impossible, but that the masses and many of their leaders are openly hostile to it. The masses, of course, also put to death Plato’s Socrates.

All of Plato’s writings, the ones that are still extant at the time of reading at least, are open to all those that can read. However, only the exoteric teachings can be common. This would seem to be part of Plato’s genius—for Strauss at least. The few that are capable and interested would be able to read between the lines and get to the esoteric teachings, the hidden teachings, the more essential and important teachings.

47 Ibid., 33.
48 Republic, 494a.
Reading between the lines, according to Strauss, will not always produce similar interpretations. He argues that this is not a damning objection to either the existence of esoteric teachings or the possibility of recognizing those teachings. There is not widespread agreement about even the exoteric teachings of thinkers, so it is not a special problem for those interested in reading between the lines.

Strauss points out that censorship of independent thinking occurred often in the past. If he is correct about there existing an esoteric teaching because of suppression, Plato would be an obvious example. There certainly was suppression of independent thinking during Plato’s time in Athens. Plato’s hero Socrates was a victim of such suppression. If we remember, it was not the actual thinking that got Socrates put on trial and sentenced to death, it was his “corrupting the youth;” that is, his spreading of his ideas and promotion of critical questioning. Thus, if anyone has reason to be cautious about an endeavor such as philosophy, it should be Plato.

We have a motive for reading Plato as having a hidden esoteric teaching. We also have to realize that Socrates, the hero-character of the majority of Plato’s dialogues, is not Plato. That is, we cannot assume that every position of Socrates is the same as Plato’s. Socrates is a character in a dialogue and not the author of a treatise. Further, we must also closely examine the points where Socrates and his interlocutors come into agreement. Strauss writes, “The views of the author of a drama or dialogue must not, without previous proof, be identified with the views expressed by one or more of his characters, or with those agreed upon by all his characters or by his attractive characters.”49 It is

49 Ibid., 30.
therefore, according to Strauss, possible but not necessarily the case that Plato agrees
with Socrates or his interlocutors at a given point in a dialogue.

This will be discussed later, but it becomes clear that a dialogue creates more
problems for an interpreter than does a treatise. We must examine to what extent
Heidegger pays attention to the nuance of a Platonic drama. I agree with Strauss that the
“truly exact historian will reconcile himself to the fact that there is a difference between
winning an argument, or proving to practically everyone that he is right, and
understanding the thought of the great writers of the past.”50 Whether Heidegger shows
an understanding of Plato’s allegory of the cave or whether he arbitrarily picks out
portions without regard to the whole of the allegory (or the whole of the dialogue or
Platonic corpus) merely to demonstrate that he is correct about some other argument is an
important question onto which this project hopes to eventually shed light.

It is certainly possible that Heidegger himself had to censor himself because of
the threat of political oppression. There are conflicting reports regarding his relationship
with the Nazi party but it is conceivable there could have been something “between the
lines” in his early studies of Plato. This question becomes especially interesting
considering that some of Heidegger’s texts on Plato, including the Essence of Truth, were
based on lecture notes. Perhaps there is something missing from the lecture notes that
was only addressed, possibly even “unsaid”—gestures, that could not be expressed in the
later publication of the lectures. However, as this project will focus on the political and
ethical implications of the allegory, there seems to be little for us to address “between the

50 Ibid.
lines” in Heidegger’s work on Plato. Later post Nazi-era publications, such as his essay “Hegel and the Greeks,” seem to reaffirm his position that concepts such as dike, justice, are primarily metaphysical rather than political or ethical.

BEHIND

Another notable contemporary reader of Plato also discusses what is not said by Plato. However, Stanley Rosen takes a different tack. Rosen focuses on the “silence” of Plato, which, while related, is distinct from Heidegger’s notion of the “unsaid.” Rosen, in his essay “Heidegger’s Interpretation of Plato” criticizes Heidegger for missing this silence. More specifically, he is not “sufficiently attentive to the silence of Plato.” This conception of silence is not what goes unnoticed by Plato, but is what Plato intentionally does not speak. In this way, he is more closely aligned with Strauss than Heidegger. Both Strauss and Rosen are more concerned, here, with the thought rather than the un-thought. In a poetic passage, Rosen writes,

The dialogues become intelligible only when we perceive this unstated luminosity, which is directly present as the silence of Plato. The spoken voice of the dialogues occurs always within the cave (if not always in the language of the cave). We may emerge from this cave at any instant that we hear the silent accompanying voice of Plato.

Unlike the unsaid, the silence is directly present. Though we are inhabitants of the cave, the light outside persists. Likewise, despite the language of the dialogue, the silence

51 1958.
52 This will be addressed more completely in Chapter 2.
54 “Heidegger’s Interpretation of Plato,” 57.
55 Ibid.
remains. In order to get out of the cave that is the spoken word of the dialogue, in order to understand the dialogue, we must get to Plato’s silence.

What exactly is this silence? What are its contents and parameters? According to Rosen, we become aware of the distinction between Being and beings. Because Heidegger is not attuned to Plato’s silence, he is not able to see this Platonic distinction between “the light and what is uncovered or illuminated.” Being is the light that allows beings to be uncovered. Because Plato saw this distinction, he purposely did not attempt to “temporalize, objectify, or rationalize Being itself” by putting it in speech. Heidegger, in Rosen’s view, moves too quickly to the “voice of Being.” By moving too quickly, he misses the primary point: Being can only put into words by “the infinitely subtle echoes in Becoming.” Being can be accessed, but speech can only get you to the gate of Being. In order to enter, we need to be attuned to the silence.

Heidegger missing this point may be due to a key difference between Heidegger’s thought and that of Plato. For Heidegger, it is Time that allows for Being to illuminate beings. For a lack of a better word, Time is the “space” in which this illumination occurs. The relationship between Time, Being, and beings in Plato is slightly different. Rosen notes, “Being is the horizon of openness within which Time occurs as the intermittently illuminated twilight of man’s existence.” Whereas Time is Heidegger’s “space,” Being is Plato’s.

56 Ibid., 56.
57 Ibid.
58 Ibid., 57.
59 Ibid.
60 Ibid., 56.
Whether or not Rosen’s critiques of Heidegger’s ontology are justified, and I think some of them are ill-founded, is another question that cannot be addressed here. Though Rosen’s concern with “silence” will be addressed later, especially in the third chapter, on the so-called “Theory of the Forms,” here it is enough to say that one of Rosen’s “methods” of reading Plato, that of examining Plato’s “silence,” is complementary and can inform Heidegger’s preoccupation with the “unsaid” along with Strauss’ interest in reading Plato “between the lines.” These three conceptions are not exclusive. One could examine both the unsaid, the hidden presuppositions that are not explicitly present in the text, but are still accessed via that text, and also Plato’s silence, which involves what Plato intentionally does not temporalize in writing because of the futility of such an endeavor. The “unsaid” and the “silence” of Plato can also be examined while still reading “between the lines.” As we will see, reading between the lines is especially helpful when there are political and ethical implications to a text.
CHAPTER II

DRAMATIC CONTEXT

It is Rosen’s contention that Heidegger lacks of attunement to Plato’s silence is related to Rosen’s assessment that Heidegger lacks serious attention to Socratic irony and the dialogue form. This leads to what Rosen calls a “conventional” interpretation of Plato. Though unorthodox, Heidegger’s interpretation is overly serious. This is found particularly in Heidegger’s discussion of Platonic Ideas. Rosen writes, “In Heidegger’s treatment, the Platonic Idea becomes more radically an epistemological concept than in the work of the most ordinary analysts.” Instead of examining the dialogues as dialogues, Heidegger construes Socratic irony for “technical propositions” as if he were analyzing Carnap as opposed to Plato. Rosen goes so far as to compare Heidegger to Carnap. In a similar way as Carnap treats Heidegger’s work on the nothing, Heidegger treats Socratic irony. The language of the dialogue gets turned into a math. Rosen admits that Heidegger occasionally does refer to dramatic context. However, according to Rosen, he does so only to serve his own narrow purposes.

Is this the case? Does Heidegger ignore Socratic irony and downplay the dramatic format? Is he overly serious and never playful? I think Rosen overplays his hand here. It is my contention that Heidegger is more “attuned” to Plato’s thought than Rosen gives

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1 Ibid., 57.
2 Ibid.
3 Ibid.
him credit for. However, I do agree that Heidegger does occasionally miss important components of the dramatic context. My endeavor in this chapter will be to address this question: to what extent does Heidegger adequately address the dramatic context of the allegory of the cave? If he does not do so adequately, what insights into the allegory does Heidegger miss?

In the introduction of the 1931-32 lecture course, *The Essence of Truth*, which became the basis of the essay “Plato’s Doctrine of Truth,” Heidegger explains,

> In the following interpretation, we deliberately leave unconsidered the precise placement of this allegory within the dialogue. To begin with we leave aside all discussion concerning the dialogue as a whole. What is crucial about the allegory is that it can stand entirely on its own, so we can consider it by itself without in any way minimizing its content or meaning.¹

I agree with Heidegger that an interpretation of the allegory can exist without reference to anything else in the dialogue, or any of Plato’s other works for that matter. However, the question is, can a *quality* interpretation come from such a reading? I do not believe it can. In fact, I think Heidegger’s own hermeneutics belies his notion here. When discussing the “doctrine” of Plato, Heidegger says we must look at each dialogue in its interrelationship with every other. Why are we led in a different direction here? The answer is not clear, but I think this is a mistake for Heidegger to make this assertion. I will, however, say this is one of Heidegger’s more honest moments. For, while Heidegger says we must examine all of a thinker’s works, he tends to focus on a singular moment in a text without any reference to any other section. I think the above quotation about the allegory standing

¹ *The Essence of Truth*, 12.
alone speaks to his actual way reading other thinkers, Plato in particular, as opposed to the way of reading he, typically, endorses.

Heidegger’s lack of attunement to the drama of the text may be partly explained by his contempt for such a style of writing. In *Being and Time* he tells us that Platonic dialectic “has been a genuine philosophical embarrassment.”² Though he is there primarily concerned with Platonic dialectic’s attempts to subordinate being to propositional thinking, I think this attitude toward the dialogue is a further example of Heidegger creating an “opposition” between him and the text³ that keeps him from appreciating certain nuances.

Returning to allegory, I disagree with Heidegger that the allegory can stand alone as an object of interpretation. I think it is fairly clear, in the words of Jaeger, that the first sentence of the seventh book, the beginning of the allegory of the cave, “points in two directions, forwards and backwards.”⁴ It points forward to the ensuing allegory of the cave and backward to the image of the sun and the simile of the divided line. I think Jaeger is correct in stating that “The image of the sun and the image of the cave (which, as we have pointed out, are linked into a unity by the simile of the divided line) are one single metaphorical expression of the nature of paideia.”⁵ Thus *paideia*, which Heidegger admits is the primary concern of the allegory of the cave, cannot be fully understood, in terms of Plato’s articulation, without reference back to the immediately prior image of the

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³ Discussed in Chapter 1.
⁴ Jaeger, 294.
⁵ Ibid.
sun and simile of the divided line. The character Socrates hints at this point when he tells Glaucon,

this image as a whole must be connected with what was said before. Liken the domain revealed through sight to the prison home, and the light of the fire in it to the sun’s power; and, in applying the going up and the seeing of what’s above to the soul’s journey up to the intelligible place, you’ll not mistake my expectation, since you desire to hear it. A god doubtless knows if it happens to be true. At all events, this is the way the phenomena look to me: in the knowable the last thing to be seen, and that with considerable effort, is the idea of the good.6

Thus the allegory of the cave does not much deal with paideia as a concept. That is the purpose of the image and the simile. The purpose of the allegory of cave, it seems, is the relationship between humanity and paideia. The previous allegory and simile set up the nature of paideia, what it is and what its contents are, and the allegory of the cave deals with how one liberates oneself and others from everyday understanding and turns oneself toward the idea of the good and allows it to unconceal itself before him.

Before the image of the sun, Socrates tells Adeimantus that the idea of the good is “the greatest study and that it’s by availing oneself of it along with just things and the rest that they become useful and beneficial.”7 The idea of the good is the greatest study, in particular for the philosopher-king. Heidegger states that knowledge, the highest form of knowledge that is, is of the idea of the good. However, this is not evident in the allegory of the cave. This is to be found in the image of the sun and of the divided line.

An account of the idea of the good, Socrates tells Glaucon, cannot be given. This is for two reasons. One, Socrates says he is incapable of giving such an account. Two,

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6 Republic, 517a-c.
7 Republic, 505a.
Glaucon would not be able to understand the account of the *idea tou agathou*. Socrates does, however, give him an account of the sun, which is an offspring and image of the good. In this way, the sun is to the physical world what the good is in the intelligible world. The sun allows all visible things to be visible and is also responsible for their very existence. Thus, we can assume this to mean that the *idea tou agathou* is the source of everything in the intelligible world and is the source of them being “seen.”

We then come to the divided line which further explains this relationship. The *cosmos* is first split into two halves: the visible (*to horaton*) and the intelligible (*to noeton*). Those two are then split again. Existing with each of these areas of possible knowledge are the types of knowing that allow one to know that portion of the *cosmos*. At the lowest level of the visible there are images (*eikones*) and imagination (*eikasia*). Above that are physical objects and the trust and faith in those physical objects (*pistis*). Crossing over to the intelligible world, the lower level is composed of mathematical objects (*ta mathematica*) and theoretical thought (*dianoia*). Finally, at the top of the whole image of the divided line are the ideas (*eide*) which are known via intellection (*noesis*). And, of course, the form that is above and beyond all forms is the *idea tou agathou*. Though the ideas, including the idea of the good, will be discussed more fully later, it is important to note that the discussion of the idea of the good, which figures prominently in Heidegger’s discussion of the allegory of the cave, can only be understood in reference to the previous images Socrates provides.

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8 This formulation of the divided line, minus the discussion of *pistis*, was assisted by Allan Bloom’s interpretative essay, found in his already reference translation of the *Republic*, 464n39.
As I hope to show below, Heidegger’s lack of serious insight into the dialogue format also causes or coincides with his lack of appreciation of the ethical and political dimensions of the allegory. He closely follows, as Rosen notes, the metaphysical aspects of the allegory, but completely misses the political dimensions which can only be accessed through an analysis of the dramatic context. As we noted, Heidegger explicitly states that he is only interested in certain aspects of the allegory. He acknowledges that his interpretation leaves out much of what Plato intended. However, the purpose of this thesis is to note what Heidegger can and cannot teach us about the allegory. Furthermore, in other works Heidegger explicitly states that the political, ethical, and moral features of the allegory, and of the Republic in general, have been misinterpreted. This argument proceeds in two stages. First, in Nietzsche Heidegger writes,

> If we are to grasp Plato’s teaching concerning art as “political,” we should understand that word solely in accordance with the concept of the essence of the polis that emerges from the dialogue itself. That is all the more necessary as this tremendous dialogue in its entire structure and movement aims to show that the sustaining ground and determining essence of all political Being consists in nothing less than the “theoretical,” that is, in essential knowledge of dikaiosyne.

This first step is to connect polis with dikaiosyne. All politics becomes essentially theoretical and therefore connected to dikaiosyne, justice. With politics linked to theoretical justice, Heidegger’s second step is to define justice as a metaphysical concept as opposed to a moral or legal concept. He writes, “This Greek word is translated as “justice,” but that misses the proper sense, inasmuch as justice is transposed straightaway into the moral or even merely “legal” realm. But dikaiosyne is a metaphysical concept, not originally one of

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Therefore, focus on the polis and dike in the Republic is not a political issue, according to Heidegger, it is a metaphysical discussion. More specifically, dike is primarily about Being. Heidegger tells us, “Knowledge of dike, of the articulating laws of the Being of beings, is philosophy.” For Heidegger, it seems then, the talk of the city is just a grand metaphor for a discussion of Being. There is no interest in the laws of the city, but in the laws of the Being of beings. Taken further, that is the essence of Platonic philosophy. Heidegger argues that the move from a metaphysical understanding of dike, justice, to a political understanding occurred because of Plato, but it was not in Plato. That is, it was the later commentators and interpreters of Plato that made dike and polis political and moral concepts, not Plato.

This metaphysical understanding of dike and polis is carried over into Heidegger’s interpretation of the idea tou agathou. For instance, in his lecture course “The Essence of Truth,” Heidegger argues that the idea of the good has no moral meaning, but instead the good means what is suitable for some particular thing. We see this theme again in the Introduction to Metaphysics. Heidegger writes, “the ‘good’ does not mean the morally proper but the valiant, which accomplishes and can accomplish what is appropriate.” Thus we see a clear theme in Heidegger’s work of not only missing the political and ethical implications of the allegory, but also of explicitly rejecting that there are such political and ethical implications.

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10 Ibid., 165-166.
11 Ibid., 166.
12 Ibid.
Contra Heidegger, I think it is fairly clear, as other commentators such as Strauss and Bloom have emphasized, the allegory of the cave has a clearly ethical and political ring to it. This is in part due to the ethical nature of the idea of the good. As mentioned, the forms will be discussed more completely later. But, I think those such as Jaeger are correct in arguing that the *idea tou agathou* is not only a metaphysical entity. It is certainly correct to say, in keeping with Heidegger, that the good is a metaphysical concept for Plato. However, like much of Plato’s thought, it is difficult if not impossible (or at least a mistake) to separate metaphysics from ethics and politics. Metaphysics, ethics, and politics are all intertwined in Plato’s thought, particularly in the *Republic*. That is part of its aesthetic and intellectual beauty (or ugliness for some, possibly for Heidegger as well). Jaeger notes, “The Idea of Good which gives meaning and value to Plato’s whole world of ideas is the natural aim of all endeavor. To know it, we must make our character and conduct resemble it.”14 We must remember that the topic of discussion in the allegory is the education, *paideia*, of philosopher-kings. The philosopher-kings do not come to know the good simply to know it. They come to know the *idea tou agathou* also to be able to guide their own behavior and to lead the city-state. That is, in fact, why they are chosen to become philosopher-kings. They are chosen not only because of their ability to understand the good, but for their ability to conduct themselves in accordance with it.

We see several more political references in the allegory. They who make it out of the cave must be forced to come back down to the depths of mere illusion in order to take

14 Jaeger, 288.
others with them back to the light of the idea of the good. Socrates tells his interlocutor, “our job as founders… is to compel the best natures to go to the study which we were saying before is the greatest, to see the good and to go up that ascent; and, when they have gone up and seen sufficiently, not to permit them what is now permitted.”

It is implied that what is now permitted is that the liberated are allowed to stay in the glow of the good, and are not made to come back down to the world of images. This is a clear reference to the philosopher-king. The philosopher-king is not one that desires to rule. Plato suggests that those that wish to rule, those that want to return to the cave (if they ever left at all), are those that want to rule for their own benefit. It is only those that must be forced to rule that are capable of the job. The natural inclination of those that have “seen” the good is to never leave, to never go back to the cave. However, we live in a community. We have responsibilities. While Glaucon questions Socrates here by asking if it is an injustice to the liberated to be forced to descend back into the cave, Socrates responds,

My friend, you have again forgotten… that it’s not the concern of law that any one class in the city fare exceptionally well, but it contrives to bring this about in the city as a whole, harmonizing the citizens by persuasion and compulsion, making them share with one another the benefit that each is able to bring to the common-wealth. And it produces such men in the city not in order to let them turn whichever way each wants, but in order that it may use them in binding the city together.

Thus, as I mentioned above, paideia has a political component which Heidegger misses. Paideia is not simply a turning to face a metaphysical idea of the good. Paideia in the complete and final sense involves not only a turning to see the idea tou agathou, it is also

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15 Republic, 519c-d.
16 Ibid., 519e-520a.
a turning back to the cave. Even if the philosopher-king must be compelled to re-enter the
cave, she does have to re-enter the cave in order to see and live in accordance with the
idea of the good. As the above quote seems to indicate, political obligations appear to
override many personal obligations for Plato. Of course, we do not want to completely
separate politics and ethics. This would be to make that same mistake that I am imputing
on Heidegger for attempting to make the good a fundamentally metaphysical entity.
However, we do well to note that the community is in many ways a greater concern than
the personal and, dare I say, selfish, concerns of the individual. In reaction to Glaucon’s
argument that forcing the liberated individual back to the cave is an injustice, Socrates
reminds Glaucon of the focus of the dialogue—that of justice—dike. Dike’s primary
concern is the city, not the individual. And the primary concern of the just city is of the
overall harmony of its different constituent parts, not an individual man. In order to
promote or preserve that harmony, “compulsion” of an individual may be needed and will
be therefore justified.

This discussion indicates another. Not only is the city prior to the individual, in
terms of justice at least, it is also responsible for the individual. That is, the individual
owes something to the city, especially if it is a relatively just one. This brings to mind the
discussion found in the Crito. There Crito attempts to convince Socrates to escape his
sentence of being put to death. Socrates’ friends, possibly including Plato, were willing
and able to use their wealth to aid in Socrates’ escape. Though Socrates also gives other
reasons, he clearly states he has a duty to the city of Athens, the city that allowed him to
be the gadfly philosopher (redundancy?) for so long.
Socrates, in talking to Crito, takes the “laws” as his mouthpiece when he explains that the city has reared you (Socrates), educated you, and “given you and all your fellow citizens a share in all the good things at our disposal.” And further, the laws would tell the hypothetically escaping Socrates that,

> on attaining to manhood and seeing for himself the political organization of the state and us its laws, is permitted, if he is not satisfied with us, to take his property and go away wherever he likes… On the other hand, if any one of you stands his ground when he can see how we administer justice and the rest of our public organization, we hold that by so doing he has in fact undertaken to do anything that we tell him.

Socrates did not have to stay in Athens. He could have chosen to leave the city and to no longer be obligated to obey its laws. However, Socrates never traveled abroad. It is noted that the only time he left Athens was for military expedition. Socrates, in effect, chose Athens and in so doing, obligated himself to the laws of the land.

The real injustice Socrates would be committing in fleeing Athens and escaping his sentence would be his offense to the city. By using his friends’ wealth to escape he would be, in a sense, invalidating the laws of the city. Socrates asks Crito, “Do you imagine that a city can continue to exist and not be turned upside down, if the legal judgments which are pronounced in it have no force but are nullified and destroyed by private persons?” A city with laws that do not bind is not a city. By disregarding his city’s laws, even if they are applied to him unjustly, does not mean he can justly disobey. It is certainly questionable to what extent Plato held this position. Socrates gave several

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18 Ibid., 51d-e.
19 Ibid., 52b.
20 Ibid., 50b.
other reasons for not escaping, citing his age, his chances of happiness outside of Athens, and his children’s future to name but a few. Regardless, the purpose of this discussion is to show that the city, particularly a relatively just one such as Athens, obliges its citizens, even when those obligations happen to override personal wishes.

Strauss seems to be correct in his claim that the *Republic*, at least in part, is a working out of the tension between philosopher and society. This seems to apply especially to the allegory of the cave. The allegory is not only about *paideia* and political obligation, but it also, in a related discussion, is speaking to the relationship between the philosopher and her city. The tension between the two is obvious. Plato and many other ancient thinkers recognized a gulf between the many and the few lovers of wisdom. In fact, the many were often hostile to the philosophers and their way of life. The *Apology* is an obvious example of this view. The many felt threatened by the philosopher and sentenced Socrates to death (partly with Socrates’ encouragement). In the end, a rational defense of his way of life was not enough to save him. Thus the *Apology* can be seen as a city’s reaction to philosophy. Socrates was not only defending himself, but also his activity in general. And the city spoke, not in favor of philosophy, but in sentencing it to death. This may in part account for Plato’s less than ardent defense of Athenian democracy.

It may be objected that Plato, based on certain points within the *Republic*, holds that the many *can* indeed be converted to philosophy. In Book VI, Socrates appears to defend the many.21 His interlocutor claims that the many will not readily commit to

21 *Republic*, 598b-c.
philosophy but Socrates is not so quick to agree with this conclusion. Socrates notes that he has befriended Thrasymachus, a Sophist, and converted him to philosophy. The argument goes that if Thrasymachus can be converted to philosophy, or at least be convinced of its acceptability, the rest of a city can also be appeased. However, I think Strauss is correct when he writes that Socrates’ “success with the many however is not genuine since they are not present or since the many whom he tames are not the many in deed but only the many in speech.” If we remember, the Republic is an attempt at finding justice in the “city in speech,” not necessarily one that does, or even can, exist not only in speech also in actuality. As we noted a short time ago, Socrates had his stage to defend philosophy to the many. Outside the city in speech, in front of the city “in deed,” Socrates failed in his attempt to defend his activity.

It is thus suggested that the philosopher is not capable of successfully addressing the many. Socrates’ adherence to rational discourse keeps him from appealing to the average citizen. It takes a Sophist, a Thrasymachus, to tame “the many in deed.”

Socrates was only capable of angering the many, not satisfying them. It is here that Strauss raises the following question: “why did not the philosophers of old, to say nothing of Socrates himself, succeed in persuading the multitude, directly or through such intermediaries as Thrasymachus, of the supremacy of philosophy and the philosophers and thus bring about the rule of the philosophers and therewith the salvation and the happiness of their cities?” Said in more contemporary parlance, where is the

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23 Ibid.
24 Ibid.
philosopher’s public relations firm? Could they not convince the many of the worth of philosophy? Strauss finds a problem here. Even if the philosopher could convince the many of their supreme ability to rule, the philosopher does not wish to rule. This is the point of connection to the allegory of the cave. The self-liberated individual wishes to remain in the light of the idea of the good, not to return to the cave and release other prisoners. The cave, the realm of shadows, is not as attractive, or even comparable, to the realm of the forms, the realm where things are, after the necessary adjustment, experienced as themselves and not seen merely as they appear in the shadows. Thus, it seems it may be more difficult to convince the philosopher to rule than it would be for the philosopher to convince the many that he should rule.

I think there is a further problem that Strauss does not address. Perhaps it is overly obvious, but Thrasymachus, the Sophist, the philosopher’s intermediary, his public relations firm if you will, is not the philosopher himself. The many, in being assuaged by the words of the Sophist, are not being convinced of philosophy, but of mere sophistry. Furthermore, this distinction is a difficult one to make. This appears to be one of the primary lessons of the *Sophist*. Besides the ontological study that Heidegger knows all too well, there seems to be the hidden argument, *hidden in the dramatic context*, that the philosopher is easily mistaken for the Sophist and *vice versa*.

Within a speech, Socrates gives us some insight into the nature of the real philosopher. He remarks that the philosopher “is hardly easier to discern than the god.” The philosophers also appear, owing to the world’s blindness, to wear all sorts of shapes. To some they seem of no account, to others above all worth; now they wear
the guise of statesmen, now of Sophists, and sometimes they may give the impression of simply being mad."²⁵

Before we get to the full meaning of this passage, we must first examine the different descriptions of the Sophists, the “sixth Sophist” in particular. The method they are using to describe the Sophist in his many forms is that of dividing and subdividing. At each division throughout we see the subject broken up into two parts. The first division is that of art. Art is divided into productive and acquisitive.²⁶ From there, most of the discussion is focused on dividing and subdividing the acquisitive arts in order to find descriptions of the Sophist. However, when we get to the sixth attempt to describe the Sophist, we are given an art, that of discriminating, which is neither productive nor acquisitive. As mentioned above, everything up until this point has been divided into two parts. This is our first hint that Plato is doing something out of the ordinary with this description.

Next, discrimination is split into purification and another category for which “There is no name.”²⁷ Purification is then broken down into purification of bodies and purification of the soul. We are then led down the path of the purification of the soul. And because “purification was to leave the good and to cast out whatever is bad,” we are given two kinds of evil of the soul: disease and ignorance.²⁸

Of ignorance the Stranger finds two kinds: handicraft and education. Education is deemed to be what rids of us ignorance. Finally, education can either be “rough” or

²⁶ Ibid., 219a-c.
²⁷ Ibid., 226d.
²⁸ Ibid., 228d.
“smooth.” But because admonition (rough) “does little good”, we are left with the smooth: cross-examination.\(^{29}\)

If this description sounds familiar, it is because the Stranger has just described Socrates himself. The cross-examiner uses the dialectic process to deliver others “from great prejudices and harsh notions” so that his student can “be purged of his prejudices first and made to think that he knows only what he knows, and no more.”\(^{30}\) This is Socrates’ goal: to cross-examine others in order to show that their beliefs are full of contradictions. This is done so his students see that they really know very little, if anything at all.

The Stranger and Theaetetus do not fully comprehend that they have just described Socrates, though they are hesitant to call what they just described a Sophist, for Theaetetus says, “That is certainly the best and wisest state of mind.”\(^{31}\) The Stranger later responds, “Well, what name shall we give to the practitioners of this art? For my part I shrink from calling them Sophists… For fear of ascribing to them too high a function.”\(^{32}\) The Stranger’s fears are justified, he is ascribing them too high a function, the function of the philosopher Socrates. That is why Plato sets this description apart from the others; he is not describing the Sophist, he is describing the philosopher and the philosopher’s method while using that very same method.

The next piece of evidence for this being the philosopher is found a few lines down. Theaetetus responds to the Stranger’s hesitance in ascribing the Sophists such a

\(^{29}\) Ibid., 229e-230b.
\(^{30}\) Ibid., 230b-d.
\(^{31}\) Ibid., 230d.
\(^{32}\) Ibid., 230e-231a.
high function by saying, “yet your description has some resemblance to that type [the Sophist]”. The Stranger replies,

So has the dog to the wolf – the fiercest of animals to the tamest. But a cautious man should above all be on his guard against resemblences; they are a very slippery sort of thing. However, be it so, for should they ever set up an adequate defense of their confines, the boundary in dispute will be of no small importance.33

Indeed, that boundary is of no small importance. However, the people of Athens were not able to distinguish that boundary and for that, as we learn in the Apology, Socrates will die.

Going back to Socrates’ speech at the beginning of the dialogue, we are warned by Socrates of resemblences. The philosopher may “wear the guise of statesman, now of Sophists, and sometimes they may give the impression of simply being mad.”34 Socrates gives the impression of being mad and will come to face the ultimate punishment for it. The statesman will be discussed in Plato’s next dialogue of the same name. Finally, and most important to our discussion here, the philosopher is in the guise of our sixth Sophist. Perhaps this is why there is a dialogue called the Sophist, another the Statesman, but not one called the Philosopher. Plato’s definition of the philosopher is already present, though hidden “between the lines,” in the Sophist.

I argue that Plato is showing how difficult it is to distinguish between the philosopher and the Sophist, and by extension, how difficult the art of discriminating (philosophy) is in general. The Stranger tells us how difficult this process is when he says,

33 Ibid., 231a.
34 Ibid., 216c-d.
The Sophist takes refuge in the darkness of not-being, where he is at home and has the knack of feeling his way, and it is the darkness of the place that makes him so hard to perceive… Whereas the philosopher, whose thoughts constantly dwell upon the nature of reality, is difficult to see because his region is so bright, for the eye of the vulgar soul cannot endure to keep its gaze fixed on the divine.\(^{35}\)

It is so difficult to distinguish the Sophist and the philosopher that neither the Stranger nor Theaetetus can make the connection that the “sixth Sophist” is actually the philosopher.

Why could Plato not clearly and explicitly tell us that the two, the philosopher and the Sophist, are so difficult to tell apart? If it is true that Plato is trying to get this message across in the *Sophist*, why does he hide that fact within the dramatic context? We cannot be sure but I will attempt an answer. It would be much less effective for Plato to make this point if Socrates was his obvious hero, as he almost always is. With Socrates in his usual position, the reader could understand easily, at least superficially, that Plato believes the art of discrimination to be difficult. However, by making it difficult for the reader to figure out what and who the philosopher is, Plato is making his point more forceful. In this process, you as the reader must do some distinguishing yourself and in making these connections, you feel the weight of his argument. Furthermore, Plato cannot have his revered teacher fail to make these connections. Plato needs someone else (the Stranger) to struggle and ultimately fail (at least when it comes to making this particular distinction).

\(^{35}\) Ibid., 254a-b.
This ability to distinguish between real and fake philosophers was important to Plato, for the Athenians killed Socrates because they could not accurately make that distinction. This becomes clearer when we examine how the *Sophist* begins. The *Sophist* opens as a continuation of a conversation begun the day before. This conversation is the dialogue of the *Theaetetus*. We see Socrates mentioning something at the very end of the *Theaetetus* that appears out of place. He says, “Now I must go to the portico of the King-Archon to meet the indictment which Meletus has drawn up against me.” Why does Plato choose to end the dialogue this way? Why not end the dialogue with Socrates and Theodorus agreeing to meet the following day? It is clear that Plato did not blithely include the statement for it would have been easier to omit it. It does not fit in as a natural continuation of the narrative and it therefore has special meaning. We know from the *Apology* that the charges from Meletus are the ones that will eventually lead to Socrates’ death. So, it seems Plato has pragmatic reasons for including this passage at the end of the *Theaetetus*. He wants to show us that the consequences of not making correct distinctions can be tragic.

Why make this reference to the *Sophist*? As this chapter hopes to suggest, we need context in order to understand the allegory of the cave. It may be objected that we cannot assume that Plato’s positions in the *Republic* are his position in the *Sophist*. However, this assumes we take the so-called development thesis which holds that Plato’s positions substantially changed or “developed” throughout his life. Later I will briefly address the development thesis but for now it will have to suffice to note that I do not

36 Ibid., 210d.
accept the development thesis. Furthermore, even if we accept this interpretation, it must also be noted that the *Sophist*, most evidence suggests, was not written much after the *Republic*. By most that accept the development thesis, the *Republic* is considered a middle-late dialogue and the *Sophist* is considered a late dialogue. The largest difference development theorists find between the two is in the so-called “theory of forms” which will be discussed in depth in the next chapter and ultimately rejected as a substantive “theory.” But we should not expect, even from development theorists, a fundamental change regarding Plato’s views on the definition of the philosopher and her role in and relationship to her community.

The above discussion, which concludes with the philosopher being difficult to define in speech and distinguish in real life, also gives credence to Strauss’ position. The philosopher being difficult to distinguish from the Sophist makes it more difficult for the average citizen to recognize the superior ability of the philosopher to rule. But, of course, as Strauss notes, even if the citizens recognize the superiority of philosopher, the philosopher would not wish to rule on her own. The city and its everyday affairs become equable to the cave. As Strauss writes, the philosophers “know that the life not dedicated to philosophy and therefore even political life at its best is like life in a cave, so much so that the city can be identified with the Cave.”[^37] Like the cave, which is the realm of shadows and opinions, so is that of the city. The best citizens, those ardent defenders of their community, are the ones most hostile to philosophy. Because philosophy has an affinity for reason and a need to search out for a knowledge that exists beyond opinion, or

[^37]: *The City and Man*, 125.
at least the recognition that opinion is not knowledge, the philosopher has a tendency to disrupt the status quo. By questioning the thoughts of others, they undermine the legitimacy of the city’s leaders. In so doing, they incite the fiercest defenders of the community and put themselves in a precarious position.

The *Republic* seems to attempt to find a “city in speech” in which the philosopher can live at peace within a city. Speaking more specifically about the allegory of the cave, the allegory appears to show that despite the city’s hostility to philosophy, the philosopher has real obligations to her city. The recognition of this depends upon a thorough examination of the dramatic context of the *Republic* and other dialogues as well.

It seems Heidegger not recognizing the political and ethical implications of the allegory of the cave is partly due to a lack of what Rosen calls a “lack of attunement” to Socratic irony and the dialogue format in which Plato wrote. Heidegger gives us a highly analytic and unorthodox read of Plato’s allegory of the cave. However, by not giving due attention to the dialogue format, Heidegger misses essential components. It is true that Heidegger admits to not giving a complete explanation of the allegory but it is also true that his treatment of the allegory, even when necessary, ignores key dramatic nuance. Rosen seems to be right, at times, that Heidegger handles Platonic passages as if they were Carnapian syllogisms with very clear premises that lead to conclusions that are clearly positions of Plato. However, it seems Plato attempts to protect himself from such treatment by writing in dialogue format.

Why Plato does this is, of course, is not immediately clear and up for speculation. A possible explanation, following Strauss, is that Plato wrote dialogues in order to avoid
persecution and prosecution; the kind of prosecution that eventually led to the death of his hero Socrates. This explanation could be combined with another interpretation that said Plato wrote an esoteric text for the public and had an exoteric teaching for those in his academy. Another explanation is that Plato wrote dialogues in order to avoid the kind of treatment that Heidegger commonly offered in his interpretations. By writing in dialogues, perhaps Plato envisaged his students engaging in a more critical examination of his texts. Plato’s actual positions, if we even can access them, are buried beneath much context. As we read in the *Sophist*, we had to engage in philosophical activity in order to see who the philosopher was. If I were to venture an interpretation, I would speculate that more than one of these explanations are correct. It is certainly conceivable that Plato worried about political persecution. It is also certain that Plato wished for his students to engage in critical thinking. It just so happens that his style of writing both protects him from negative repercussions, at least more so than treatise writing, and requires of its readers a more careful examination than a treatise often does in order to come to a full understanding.
CHAPTER III

PLATO’S FORMS

In his works *The Essence of Truth* and “Plato’s Doctrine of Truth,” Heidegger shows he is aware of the importance of the *ideas* in Plato’s allegory of the cave. As we saw in his discussion of *aletheia*, the change in the conception of truth begins with the increased emphasis Plato places on the *ideas over aletheia*. Truth, then, becomes concerned with “correct vision” of the forms rather than wrestling beings from concealment.

Despite Heidegger recognizing the important role the forms play in the allegory, he never gives us a clear account of them. The closest he gets is describing them as having a “*double character*”\(^1\) as the “*most unhidden and the most beingful.*”\(^2\) Though Heidegger does not give his own thorough account of the forms, his discussion of them shows an interest in wrestling our understanding of the forms from the dogmatism and lack of serious interaction that is common among many commentators.\(^3\)

Though Heidegger does not take this line of thinking farther, that will be the goal of this chapter. I think Heidegger is right to question the “ideology”\(^4\) of most discussions of the forms. In this way, the forms seem to have been over-interpreted. Instead of

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\(^1\) *The Essence of Truth*, 51.
\(^2\) Ibid.
\(^3\) Ibid., 36.
\(^4\) Ibid.
critically engaging the actual texts in which they are discussed, most discussions of the forms rely upon later commentators. Thus, it seems scholarship of the forms is “dead,” meaning we no longer authentically engage the ideas but uncritically accept certain interpretations.

More specifically, I am referring to interpretations of the forms that characterize them in terms of the “theory of the forms” or the “doctrine of the Ideas.” Eventually I will argue, following the scholarship of those such as Rosen, Francisco Gonzalez, Drew Hyland and Kenneth Sayre, that any discussion of a “theory” or “doctrine” of the forms does not seem to be in keeping with the various discussions of the forms in the dialogues in which they are broached. Instead of there being a “theory” or “doctrine,” I will suggest that it is perhaps better to discuss Plato’s forms in terms of a teaching that remains an open dialectic. This discussion relies upon the discussion of the last chapter. An understanding of the allegory requires an understanding of the forms which cannot be understood only by looking to the allegory. The other dialogues need to be referenced. If we do not accept there to be a theory of forms, as Gonzalez points out, this raises another, perhaps more important question, “why did Plato not develop a theory of Forms?” These questions are important because, as I hope to later show, they bear upon any interpretation of the allegory of the cave.

5 “Plato’s Dialectic of Forms,” 32.
Those such as Gonzalez agree that there are some general commonalities among the way the forms are characterized. Gonzalez lists these commonalities using beauty and equality as examples,

We learn (1) that in addition to the beautiful or equal objects we perceive through our senses, for example, there exist beauty itself and equality itself… (2) that it is through some relation to beauty itself or equality itself that sensible objects are beautiful or equal… and (3) that beauty itself and equality itself differ from equal or beautiful sensible objects in being imperceptible… and unchanging.6

The question becomes, do these three commonalities compose a theory? That of course depends upon our account of a theory. But by most standards of what makes up a theory, the above 3 characteristics do not seem to add up to one. In general, a theory must be an explanatory system, must be “provable,” and be internally consistent.7 In the dialogues Plato appears to be arguing that the forms exist and that there are a few necessary conclusions that derive from their existence. This does not seem to satisfy the above minimum requirements for a theory.

In particular, I would like to examine the question of “internal consistency.” If we are to call Plato’s opinion regarding the forms a substantial “theory,” the ways in which the forms are discussed must be coherent. One of the problems, however, with viewing Plato’s forms as a theory of Forms is that there are obvious differences in the way the forms are discussed in the dialogues. Some have taken this to mean that there was a

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6 Ibid.
“development” in Plato’s thought regarding the forms. The reasoning goes that the “early” dialogues did not present a theory of forms but were later developed. This development is shown in the “middle” and “late” dialogues.

However, as Gonzalez argues, this explanation is not satisfactory. The development theory cannot explain the clear differences in the way the forms are discussed within some of the dialogues. One such example is found in the Symposium, where there is a discussion about what kind of entity a form is. More specifically, are the forms things that possess properties (such as “idea tou agathou”)? Or are they the properties themselves (“the beautiful itself (auto)?” Gonzalez captures this difference in the Symposium when he writes,

the lover of who has completed the ascent of love, loving beautiful things correctly and in the right order, is described as catching sight of “something wonderfully beautiful in its nature”… Shortly thereafter, however, when Diotima repeats the main stages of the ascent, she describes it as culminating with a knowledge of “just what it is to be beautiful”.

In the first occurrence beauty is the ideal instance of the property beauty. In the second instance, just a few pages later, beauty is talked of as beauty itself. How can we account for the difference? It seems impossible for forms to be both a subject that possesses properties and the property itself. Also, since the two characterizations occur within pages of each other in the same dialogue, any development explanation would seem impossible or, in the very least, improbable.

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9 Ibid., 36.
Another example of such different depictions of the forms concerns the relationship between forms and non-forms. Earlier we mentioned that one of the commonalities among the depictions of the forms is that they are distinct from the particulars that are dependent upon them. However, there is little evidence for them being completely separable from the particulars. As Rosen notes, there is evidence for the forms not being conditioned by the non-forms that relate to them but no evidence for the forms being completely ontologically separate.\(^{10}\) Here the *Parmenides* is often cited as evidence of this claim, but even if we accept that *choris* in the *Parmenides* means “independently existing” (which those such as Gail Fine argue against\(^ {11}\)), we have to wonder why the only dialogue in which it is mentioned is the same dialogue in which the forms are critiqued. If we remember, one of Parmenides’ more trenchant critiques is the separability of forms and the logical conclusions of the forms being separate from non-forms.

These different characterizations of the forms within individual dialogues do not appear to occur as often in the *Republic*. This is particularly the case when discussing the relationship between forms and non-forms. Throughout the dialogue the relationship is repeatedly described as one of “imitation.” However, there is a viable explanation for this consistency. The relationship between original and image is such a critical distinction for the dramatic narrative of the dialogue. We see this in the allegory, for instance, where the

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\(^{10}\) “Is Metaphysics Possible?”

prisoners look at the images on the wall of the cave and take them for the original. This type of imagery is key to not only the allegory but also the rest of the dialogue.

Furthermore, this consistency in the case of the Republic only adds to the present argument. Gonzalez notes, “What we see here is Plato describing the form-particular relation in whatever terms best suit the use to which the relation is being put in each dialogue.” 12 It is not that Plato is attempting to give some empirically accurate account of the relationship between the forms and particulars. It is also not that he is trying to deceive his readers. It seems Plato is, in each situation, trying to give an account of the forms that best serves the teaching of that particular occasion. In the case of the Republic, this meant discussing the form/non-form relationship using the imagery of original and image. Some of the other accounts, as we have noticed, are contradictory. The differences there, it seems to me, can also be explained by different situations requiring different accounts.

Hyland makes a similar point. He finds what he calls an “existential” teaching in the dialogues. He writes that “philosophy, as a human experience, is always situational. It always arises out of specific situations, and especially, specific encounters with particular individuals who believe different things, have different experiences of the world, have different problems and aspirations, and have very different intellectual abilities.” 13 Though there may be import to a more universal question, and there always is with Plato, philosophical questions always begin in a situation with issues that are context-dependent. This may help explain why the Platonic corpus is composed of dialogues rather than

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12. “Plato’s Dialectic of Forms,” 42.
13. Against a Platonic “Theory” of Forms,” 266.
treatises. Plato understood the situated beginning of philosophic questions and began his
texts with such situations. Socrates always begins his questioning, as Hyland notes, with
“what the interlocutors can agree on.” Socrates begins with agreements of specific,
usually unimportant people in terms of the history of philosophy, and continues from
there. He does not start with some general theory given by Heraclitus or Parmenides, nor
does he start with a theory of his own (much to the frustration of his interlocutors).

It is for this reason that the context, as we discussed in detail previously, becomes
so crucially important. The agreements with which Socrates begins his questioning have
their basis in the very real human situations of his interlocutors. Thus, in any
interpretation of a dialogue, we must examine context and come to terms with the details
of the interlocutors. For instance, what is their approximate age? What is there
relationship to each other and to Socrates? Are they wealthy or poor? Powerful or
ineffectual? Educated or naïve? Are they intelligent? All of these details and more
become important. For instance, according to Mitchell Miller, the difference in
intelligence of the characters in each respective dialogue goes a long way in explaining
the differences between the discussions of the forms in the Parmenides versus those in
the Republic. There is a difference in intelligence, a large and important one, between
the dramatis personae of the Parmenides: young Socrates, Parmenides, Zeno and that of
the Republic: Glaucon and Adeimantus. Furthermore, and Miller does not discuss this,
what is the importance of Plato using his own brothers in the Republic? These questions,

14 Ibid.
16 However, I think Miller overplays his hand here. While I believe he is correct to point out the
differences between young Socrates, Parmenides, Zeno and Adeimantus and Glaucon, I think he
underestimates the intelligence of the Republic interlocutors, especially Glaucon.
which are important, seem to be swept under the rug by those that think Plato to have a theory of Forms.

Hyland gives an intriguing interpretation of the *Phaedo* to support this position. The backdrop of the *Phaedo* is that it is the day that Socrates will die. Even then, he wishes to have a philosophical dialogue. However, those present are crying. No one outside of Socrates is in the mindset for such a discussion. Hyland tells us that “They are crying because they are about to lose Socrates, whom they love and respect. How can Socrates get them to stop crying about his death? By convincing them that he will not really die. How can he do that? By appealing to what they believe anyway.”

Most of those present are Pythagoreans. By being Pythagoreans they believe in, among other things, a fundamental split between body and soul and the immortality of the soul through reincarnation. Socrates begins, like always, with a point of agreement. Most are Pythagoreans and a Pythagorean doctrine is what is appealed to. Apollodorus, who is not a Pythagorean, remains crying throughout the dialogue. His strong emotions are not affected by the recital of Pythagorean doctrines. However, everyone else’s emotions seemed to have calmed and they are now ready to engage in dialogue.

It is not that Socrates admits to believing in Pythagorean doctrines just to appease his company. Hyland writes that “It is worth noting yet again that in this dialogue more than any other, Socrates regularly laughs: that in discussing the so-called proofs for the immortality of the soul he refers to them not as ‘proofs,’ (*tekmeria*) but only as

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17 “‘Against a Platonic ‘Theory’ of Forms,’” 268.
‘convincing reassurances,’” and things to be ‘hoped for.’”¹⁸ This is to say, while Socrates is concerned with the particular needs of his interlocutors, we should be careful of taking this to mean that Plato is a relativist regarding the forms.

There is still a glaring question. Why would Plato do this? Why would he explain the forms in contradictory ways in different situations, even within the same dialogue? I think there are two related points that can together explain this conclusion. One, and this is a recurring theme throughout this project, Plato appears to be much more concerned with teachings than theories or doctrines. Plato wrote in dialogues that featured not himself but his teacher Socrates. As we alluded to earlier, there is an important distinction to be made between writing dialogues, dramatic conversations which feature, at times, true philosophical conversation, and treatise-writing, which usually seeks to argue for certain conclusions. Thus Plato, at times, seems to be more interested in stimulating critical thinking than in sponsoring any particular theory.

There is a second possible explanation that does not exclude the first. Plato not clearly and singularly explaining the forms and their relationship to each other and non-forms may also be explained by the inability to explicate the nature of the forms. In other words, perhaps it is not possible for language to capture the essence of forms. Gonzalez sums this position when he writes,

If the dialogues contain no theory of Forms, then, this is not because Plato wished to keep the theory secret or wished to save it for oral communication with his initiates, but because the forms cannot be expressed in words (written or oral) as the objects of other studies can.

¹⁸ Ibid.
Instead, we are told, the forms can be known only by living with them in constant dialogue.\(^{19}\)

The evidence for such an interpretation is in the *Seventh Letter* and in the *Parmenides*. The *Seventh Letter* discusses Plato’s attempt to develop Dionyæius, the tyrant of Syracuse, into a philosopher king. Despite having high hopes, Plato was disappointed to find that Dionyæius did not have such a temperament. Dionyæius believed himself to already have philosophical knowledge. We can see why Plato did not think Dionyæius to have the proper temperament. Though his teacher and hero Socrates claimed to know nothing, Dionyæius claimed to know all, at least of the important matters.\(^{20}\) Further, Plato specifies that all who write about these important matters do not know them. Plato claims that he never wrote or will ever write about these subjects.\(^{21}\)

These greatest matters and subjects seem to either be the forms themselves or include the forms within their bounds. Though forms are not explicitly mentioned here, there are constant references to the “thing itself,” “the greatest things,” and “the highest and first things.”\(^{22}\) When discussing the “thing itself,” it is characterized as the object of philosophical knowledge. The thing itself is not the same as the sensible entities that rely upon the thing itself for their existence. Also, the thing itself is immutable unlike the morphing sensible objects.\(^{23}\) Finally, the thing itself is characterized as the being of the sensible objects and is the “what-it-is” (*to ti*).\(^{24}\) With these characterizations in mind, it

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\(^{19}\) “Plato’s Dialectic of Forms,” 49.


\(^{21}\) 341c.

\(^{22}\) 341b-344d

\(^{23}\) 342a-c.

\(^{24}\) 343a-c.
seems clear that Plato is referring to the forms in this discussion of the greatest things, the objects of philosophical knowledge.

This is perhaps an instance where we need to follow Strauss and “read between the lines.” It does not seem plausible for Plato to not be aware of the contradictory characterizations that exist just lines apart from one another. Here I also think Rosen’s account of Plato’s “silence” is relevant. Perhaps it is not possible to put into words what kinds of entities the forms are. In the *Seventh Letter* Plato tells us of five constituent parts of philosophical knowledge. The first three compose the instrumental parts which are needed in order to realize philosophical knowledge. They are: *onoma* (the name of a thing), *logos* (the account), and *eidolon* (the image). The fourth part is *episteme* (knowledge). Finally, the fifth is the object of the knowledge. The object of knowledge, which is the thing itself, is what we have connected to the form.

As Gonzalez has noted, we must be careful to not assume that once we have each of the three instrumental parts (the name, the account, and the image) of the thing, that we have knowledge of the thing itself (the form). As Gonzalez writes, “This, however, is precisely what Plato proceeds to deny: while names, accounts, and images, are *necessary* means for attaining knowledge of the true being or essence of a thing, they are not *sufficient* means.”\(^{25}\) That is, while we need the means, they are not enough.

The means are not enough because of the problems inherent to language. The problem with language, for Plato, is that, while it can express what a thing is, it also must

\(^{25}\) “Plato’s Dialectic of Forms,” 49.
express “how the thing is qualified.”

Plato writes, “given that the being of an object and its quality are two different things and that what the soul seeks to know is not the quality, but the being, each of the four offers the soul what it does not seek, so that what is said or shown by each is easily refuted by the senses.”

Thus, language may say too much. It cannot only give a thing in itself, what “the soul seeks to know,” but must also give the qualities which are accidental to the thing itself. Let us take a look at an example. If we are to look at the good, the good itself, the idea tou agathou, we can say, “that act was good,” or, “John is a good man.” However, we are not speaking about the good itself, but are using it as a quality. That is, we are using it as a predicate of another subject. It may be objected that we can also use the good as a subject. So, instead of talking about another subject, such as John, we can also speak about the good. But this is the exact point Plato is making. When we use the good as a subject, we must qualify it with a predicate. For instance, if we said "The good is just," we would be asserting something else, just, of the good. It could also be objected that we can say "The good is good." However, here we are using "good" in two different senses. In the subject we are using good as the good itself, but, in the predicate, we are using good as a property, not as the good itself. Even if we were, when we said "The good is good," making an equality statement (good = good), we would only be naming good, not actually expressing the essence, the form, of the good. Thus, because of the inherent weaknesses of language, we cannot express the forms. This is because we can only assert a subject or a predicate and not actually express what either the subject or the predicate is in itself.

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26 Ibid., 50.
27 Seventh Letter, 343b-c.
Here we see a difference, according to Gonzalez, between Plato and Aristotle as it regards the forms. The forms, at least in the way Plato writes of them, do not fit into his categories (genus, species, subjects, etc.). And because Aristotle thought that language could accurately express reality, the fact that the forms, as described by Plato, do not fit into his language scheme meant that the forms cannot exist. However, as Hyland argues, it is not clear that even Aristotle thought Plato to have a “theory” of forms. He writes, “we can note the irony that Aristotle refers to Plato’s view as a ‘theory of Forms,’ but only if one reads certain English translations.” In the most popular translation of Aristotle’s Metaphysics, W.D. Ross translates the famous phrase of Book M at 1078b, “ten kata ten idean doxan,” as the “Plato’s Ideal theory.” Other common translations such as those by Gregory Vlastos and Richard Hope give us similar translations. However the word that is translated “theory” or “doctrine” is doxa. And as Hyland notes, this is not a common translation of doxa. In fact, the Liddell and Scott Greek-English Lexicon does not have a single listing for doxa as either “theory” or “doctrine.” Thus Hyland seems to be accurate in translating the phrase as “the opinion concerning the forms.” Though we should not take Aristotle’s explanation as sufficient reason to think there to be no theory of Forms in Plato’s corpus, this careful look at Aristotle’s text does give us evidence of such a lack of a theory.

33 “Against a Platonic ‘Theory’ of Forms,” 259.
Returning to the *Seventh Letter*, if we are to accept the previous discussion, we come to the conclusion that forms are neither subjects nor predicates. It may be objected that this interpretation of the forms relies upon an epistle that has not been confirmed as being written by Plato. It is true that there is a controversy regarding the authorship of the *Seventh Letter*. However, it is generally considered by most scholars to have been written by Plato.\(^{34}\) Yet, because of the controversy regarding the authorship, I believe it necessary to look elsewhere to find points of agreement with the arguments of the *Seventh Letter*. Let us turn, then, to the *Parmenides*.

A traditional interpretation of the *Parmenides* is that the theory of Forms, particularly the theory of Forms found in the "middle" dialogues, is criticized. What is to be found is Plato distancing himself from his earlier views on the Forms. There are several problems with this interpretation. Even if we accept that Plato ever had a theory of Forms, which I clearly do not, there is also the fact it is not a single theory of Forms that is criticized in the *Parmenides*. Multiple accounts of the Forms are questioned. But more importantly, as Gonzalez\(^ {35}\) has pointed out, this interpretation does not take into serious consideration the dramatic context. More specifically, we need to look at the dramatic chronology. As Gonzalez notes\(^ {36}\), Socrates is younger in the *Parmenides* than he was in the so-called "middle" dialogues. Gonzalez writes, “this interpretation would have Plato depicting Socrates as naively taking for granted in his old age a theory to which serious objections were made in his youth and without the slightest effort on his part to

\(^{35}\) "Plato’s Dialectic of Forms," 56.
\(^{36}\) "Plato’s Dialectic of Forms," 56.
answer these objections or revise his theory.”³⁷ If we take the dramatic context seriously, it would not make much sense for Plato to depict this series of events in this way. Plato does not depict Socrates as younger in the Parmenides for no reason. It seems, then, that Plato is not criticizing a theory of the Forms from the middle period. It seems more plausible that Plato is critiquing any attempt to create a theory of Forms. Though I will not go so far as to say this is all Plato is doing in the Parmenides, this interpretation of this particular aspect of the dialogue seems to be more congruous with the dramatic context, especially in light of the Seventh Letter.

Furthermore, as Gonzalez has illustrated, “it is at the very least very difficult to find anywhere in Plato’s dialogues any solutions to the difficulties expounded in the Parmenides.”³⁸ In most cases, they are not addressed elsewhere. Even further, there is little if any evidence for later descriptions of the forms to have dealt with these problems. Additionally, as Parmenides tells the young Socrates, there are many more problems with the articulations of the forms which are not addressed in the dialogue. Parmenides says, these difficulties and many more besides are inevitable involved in the forms, if these characters of things really exist and one is going to distinguish each form as a thing just by itself. The result is that the hearer is perplexed and inclined either to question their existence, or to contend that, if they do exist, they must certainly be unknowable by our human nature.³⁹

³⁷ Ibid.
³⁸ Ibid., 60.
Parmenides is explaining to Socrates the inherent problems associated with any portrayal of the forms. However, we must note that Parmenides does not deny their existence. He very quickly says that it takes a gifted man to be able to realize their existence,

"Only a man of exceptional gifts will be able to see that a form, or essence just by itself, does exist in each case, and it will require someone still more remarkable to discover it and to instruct another who has thoroughly examined all these difficulties."  

Since it is difficult to even realize the forms’ existence, it is all the more difficult to teach someone of their existence to someone who is aware of all of the concomitant problems. And as Gonzalez notes, “There is no hint here that he will be able to solve the difficulties either for himself or for the person he teaches.” It is perhaps important to note here that the difficulties have more to do with the explaining the forms’ existence, which of course must occur in language, not with their actual metaphysical existence. This is the point being made; the so-called problems with the forms are not with the forms themselves but have to do with any attempt to characterize them in language.

This interpretation suggests that it is, and this is perhaps the greater teaching of the Parmenides, more important to engage in dialectic activity about the forms than it is to devise some theory about them. This is what Parmenides does with Socrates and it is what an older Socrates will do with his own interlocutors.

More questions arise from this controversial analysis of Plato’s forms. One in particular becomes important to our discussion here: if the forms cannot be characterized via language, and if they do indeed exist, how do we come to know them? Here is where

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40 Ibid., 135a-b.
41 "Plato’s Dialectic of Forms,” 60.
we have to qualify our earlier discussion about the weaknesses of language. It seems that though language keeps us from expressing the forms, language is nevertheless necessary in order to know them. As we found in our interpretation of the *Seventh Letter*, dialectic cannot express the forms because the dialectic assumes that the forms exist. And this is true in many of the dialogues. Most of the Platonic corpus uses the forms as assumptions. As Gonzalez argues, “The suggestion that lies near at hand, then, is that the forms can be known only as indirectly manifested through the very process of dialectic that presupposes them. They are in this case intuited, but only discursively.”\(^{42}\) It may seem that these two concepts, intuition and discursiveness, cannot exist together. However, with a little examination we can see that here they can exist side-by-side. In one sense the forms are not discursive, which is what we have been discussing up until now. They cannot be expressed in propositions. However, they are known discursively in the sense that they cannot be intuited without the process of dialectic, which of course occurs within the bounds of language. Plato articulates this in the *Seventh Letter* when he writes,

> Hardly after practicing detailed comparisons of names and definitions and visual and other sense perceptions, after scrutinizing them in benevolent disputation by the use of question and answer without jealousy, at last in a flash understanding of each blazes up, and the mind, as it exerts all its powers to the limit of human capacity, is flooded with light.\(^{43}\)

As we can see, it is not that there is suddenly, without reason, an epiphany that gives us knowledge of the forms. There may be an epiphany, a sudden “flash understanding,” but this is the result of rational thinking that takes place in a dialectic. Even then, even when

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\(^{42}\) Ibid., 63.

\(^{43}\) *Seventh Letter*, 344b.
using the process of dialectic, we are still met with qualifications. This passage begins with the word “hardly” (mogis), and ends with the phrase “limit of human capacity.” While dialectic is a necessary condition for knowledge of the forms, it is not sufficient. Engaging in dialectic does not guarantee knowledge of the highest things but it is through that process that the possibility of knowledge occurs. Said in Heideggerian parlance, dialectic is the space in which the forms may be unconcealed. Even in this moment of unconcealment, there is still concealment. This seems to be what is meant by the phrase “the limit of human capacity.” It is not that all is shown. There are very real limits beyond which even the process of dialectic cannot show.

In this way, while logos cannot express the forms, it can, in rare flashes, point beyond itself to the forms. As Gonzalez argues, and I think he is right, “We should therefore speak of a ‘dialectic,’ as opposed to a ‘theory’ of forms.”44 It is only within, and not because of, dialectic that the forms can be known. This can help explain why many of the dialogues, especially those featuring the forms, end negatively. By negatively it is meant that no agreement or positive conclusion is reached about the forms. Only in an honest dialogue, one which is not competitive, where what is sought after is the truth and not to show one is more intelligent or right, can the forms be known.

If we are correct in this interpretation, where did Plato’s “theory of Forms” come from? If it did not come from Plato or, as we conjectured above, even Aristotle, when did such thinking arise? Because Aristotle does not seem to hold Plato to having a theory, it does not seem to come from classical Greek. Instead, the beginnings of such an

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44 “Plato’s Dialectic of Forms,” 63.
interpretation seem to come from the era of the neo-Platonists. According to Hyland, the Greek term *theoria* began to mean what we mean by theory within the neo-Platonism corpus.\(^{45}\) And even though it is “hard to say,”\(^{46}\) this process seems to be completed by the nineteenth century when the use of concepts such as “theory” become common.

Even if “theory” is anachronistic and does not apply to the way the Greeks thought of the forms, it may be objected that it may not be incorrect to apply our current concepts of “theory” and “doctrine” to Plato’s forms if our current definitions do apply to what Plato was doing. While this is true, as the above discussions imply, our current usages of theory do not seem to pertain to Plato’s intent.

If this interpretation does justice to Plato’s thinking, it changes what is commonly thought of as Platonism. Much of what is thought of as Platonism is the so-called “theory of the forms” or the “doctrine of the ideas.” If indeed Plato did not have something sufficient enough to be called a theory, it is, as Gonzalez notes, “Plato not only was not a Platonist but also had good reason not to be one.”\(^{47}\) Plato clearly saw the problems with creating a theory of the forms and he gave us a way of knowing the forms that dealt with the problems of characterizing them as a theory or a doctrine.

\(^{45}\) “Against a Platonic ‘Theory’ of Forms,” 260.
\(^{46}\) Ibid.
\(^{47}\) “Plato’s Dialectic of Forms,” 64.
CONCLUSION

I would now like to, a la Heidegger in “Plato’s Doctrine of Truth” and The Essence of Truth, spend time working through Plato’s allegory of the cave. However, unlike Heidegger, I will not begin by stating that the allegory can stand on its own as an object of interpretation. As we previously noted, the allegory is a looking forward and a looking backward. Socrates tells us as much.¹

After separating the allegory from the rest of the dialogue, Heidegger argues that the allegory is about paideia. He is half right. A better answer seems to be that the allegory is primarily concerned not with paideia on its own but with its relationship to humanity. The more general study of paideia is found “backward,” in the image of the sun and the simile of the divided line. Heidegger’s translation of the allegory in “Plato’s Doctrine of Truth” ends at 517a.² In the very next line Socrates tells Glaucon that “this image as a whole must be connected with what was said before.”³ The reference is to the image of the sun and divided line. Together, these images, similes, metaphors, and allegories give us a better picture of paideia and its relationship to humanity. Paideia, as was discussed above, is a radical transformation of the soul away from lower forms of understanding, the lack of education, and toward a higher form of understanding.

¹ Republic, 517a-c.
² “Plato’s Doctrine of Truth,” 162.
³ Republic, 517a-b.
For Plato, as we learn immediately prior to the giving of the image of the sun, the *idea tou agathou*, whose realization is the ultimate goal of *paideia* and which figures prominently in the allegory of the cave, is discussed more completely in the image of the sun and in the simile of the divided line. Perhaps more aptly stated, it is there that it is suggested that the idea of the good cannot be explained directly.\(^1\) It is suggested that it can only be explained via metaphor, such as the one given by Socrates. Plato’s protagonist tells his interlocutors that the *idea tou agathou* is like the sun, whose light allows all others to be seen. Likewise, the good is the cause of knowledge and truth.\(^2\) Knowledge and truth are like the good, but, as Socrates tells Glaucon, “to believe that either of them is the good is not right.”\(^3\) The good is in fact “beyond being.”\(^4\) None of these characterizations of the *idea tou agathou*, if we can even call them characterizations, are found in the allegory but must inform our interpretation.

With this as a background we are given yet another image which is the culmination of the previous metaphors. We are previously shown what *paideia* is and its ultimate goal—the realization of the idea of the good. As Bloom suggests, “The divided line described the soul’s progress from its lowest level of cognition, imagination, to trust, thought, and finally intellection, its highest level. But now Socrates makes clear that this is not a simple movement depending only on talent and effort.”\(^5\) Earlier we noted that the subject of the allegory of the cave is that of *paideia’s* relationship to humanity, but we need to clarify what this means. It is not that the ascent through and up the divided line is

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\(^1\) Ibid., 505a.
\(^2\) Ibid., 508e.
\(^3\) Ibid., 509e.
\(^4\) Ibid., 509b.
\(^5\) *Republic*, “Interpretive Essay,” 403.
somehow not related to our education. It certainly is. But it is in the allegory that we see, despite being given to us via an allegory, the very real difficulties humanity is faced with in the ascent to the higher forms of understanding.

In the cave there are prisoners chained in their positions. They are surrounded by darkness. More specifically, the prisoners are in the absence of light, in the absence of the light of the good which allows for knowledge and truth to exist. There is some light in the cave, but it is artificial light created by those that are keeping the prisoners imprisoned. As a result of this artificial light, all they see are shadows. These shadows are the absence of light. Thus the images the prisoners see are not a result of the light but of darkness.

Eventually one of the prisoners escapes the cave and is exposed to the light of the sun which, as we know from the image of the sun, is an allusion to the idea of the good. There the freed prisoner is able to attain knowledge and truth now that the prisoner is exposed to the light of the good. However, the first experience of the good is so blinding, uncomfortable, and disconcerting that knowledge is not yet attained. Though the prisoner is now exposed to the real things that were seen as mere shadows in the cave, the prisoner cannot yet see the real things until he becomes accustomed.

Here we have another pointing backward to the previous images. Socrates says, “At first he’d most easily make out the shadows; and after that the phantoms of the human beings and the other things in water; and, later, the things themselves.” The freed prisoner, even after exiting the cave, must move up the levels of “knowledge” until

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6 Republic, 516a.
finally coming to know the things themselves. All of this is possible because of the idea of the good that exists “beyond being.”

During this process of becoming accustomed to the light of the good, the prisoner “would be distressed and annoyed” at no longer being in the comfort of the cave. Until fully seeing the things themselves, the ex-prisoner yearns for the cave. A radical turning of the soul does not happen easily and others must compel the prisoners to leave. This is the project of those like Socrates. Socrates’ students do not take the first steps to the outside of the cave on their own, nor do they do so with kind encouragement from Socrates. Socrates’ questions are penetrating. They do not ask or suggest that you question your comforting beliefs, they force you to do so; they give you no other choice.

Because the prisoners are so entrenched in the cave, and the movement to the outside so unsettling, those liberated few that help others exit the cave would not be treated kindly. Socrates asks Glaucon, “if they were somehow able to get their hands on and kill the man who attempts to release and lead up, wouldn’t they kill him?” This seems to be a clear reference to Socrates, a figure who, in attempting to lift others out of the cave, was killed by the very individuals, the citizens of Athens, whom Socrates was trying to lead out of the cave. The citizens of Athens were finally able to “get their hands on” Socrates.

When those in the cave do “get their hands on” the liberated, it is not easy for those who have become accustomed to the light outside of the cave to defend themselves. Socrates says,

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7 Ibid., 515e.
8 Ibid., 517a.
And what about this? Do you suppose it is anything surprising... if a man, come from acts of divine contemplation to the human evils, is graceless and looks quite ridiculous when—with his sight still dim and before he has gotten sufficiently accustomed to the surrounding darkness—he is compelled in courts or elsewhere to contest about the shadows of the just of the representations of which they are the shadows, and to dispute about the way these things are understood by men who have never seen justice itself?⁹

In an eerie reference to Socrates’ fate, Plato’s story has recognized that attempts by the liberated to adequately defend themselves are not likely to succeed because the descent back into the cave is as difficult of a transition as the ascent. In other words, the philosopher finds it difficult to speak the polloi. It is like a mechanic trying to explain to the glassy eyed and confused car owner why their car will not start. But instead of talking about the inner-workings of a starter motor, the philosopher is questioning the most ardently held and therefore most poorly understood beliefs. Persecution and prosecution were all too real possibilities for the philosopher.

Also important is the fact that the liberated do not bring light to the cave, but bring people, forcefully, to light along with them. This fact leads Bloom to an interesting conclusion, “The Enlightenment, taken literally, believed that the light could be brought into the cave and the shadows dispelled; men, that view, could live in perfect light. This Socrates denies; the philosopher does not bring light to the cave, he escapes into the light and can lead a few to it; he is a guide, not a torchbearer.”¹⁰ Bloom finds an elitism in the allegory and I think he is right to. Even if there was a way to get light into the cave, there would still be distortion and shadows. For Plato, it is not a matter of bringing light to

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⁹ Ibid., 517d-e.
others. As a philosopher, you can only force a few to the light. This in part explains the elitism of the “city in speech,” governed by the philosopher-kings; only a few are able to escape.

We are reminded of Strauss’ claim that the Republic is an attempt to found a “city in speech” that allows for the philosopher to live in the city safely and harmoniously. The return to the cave is a dangerous endeavor. The safety of the philosopher is more certain if they are the city’s leaders. Because the denizens are already susceptible to images, the citizens are easily convinced of “noble lies” that ensure the philosophers’ power.

This issue, of course, assumes that the liberated return to the cave. Not only does Plato recognize that it is dangerous for the philosopher to return to the cave, he also understands that the philosopher may not want to return. Why leave the light of the good for the shadows of the cave? This is what Socrates is referring to when he tells Glaucon, “the men who get to that point aren’t willing to mind the business of human beings, but rather that their souls are always eager to spend their time above.”11 Indeed, the liberated do not return willingly; they must be forced. This is for the same reason that the philosopher-kings do not wish to rule. Ruling is always a re-entrance into the cave.

Though we are told that the liberated are forced back into the cave, we are not told exactly how this happens. It may be that the philosophers are physically forced by others to return; but who would force them? Other philosophers? Because we have linked the cave to the city, perhaps it is the case that, as was suggested above, we have real ties to our communities. Perhaps it is not necessarily the physical forcing back into the cave. I

11 Republic, 517c-d.
am suggesting that there are other forms that compel. Philosophers love and desire wisdom, but they are also citizens. In the *Crito* we are told of Socrates’ love for his Athens. Socrates is not an isolated individual without a city, clan, or family. Even the philosopher keeps one foot in the cave. Perhaps it is our love of our cities, our fellow citizens, and our families which pull us back into the cave. As such, it may be inner desires rather than an external force. Familial ties and, perhaps more important, the sense of justice of the philosopher is what ultimately lures one back into the cave and, analogously, forces one to rule the “city in speech.”

We are reminded of Socrates in the *Phaedo* when he gives a speech about the immortality of the soul before drinking the hemlock. Plato is absent, suggesting Plato is not necessarily endorsing the views Socrates is about to endorse, but there are Pythagoreans in the room. By telling the Pythagoreans about the immortality of the soul, something the Pythagoreans believe in anyway, his companions are pacified and stop crying. Only Apollodorus, the lone non-Pythagorean, continues to cry.

**ALETHEIA**

In the previous chapters, we have discussed various salient themes and concepts found in the allegory of the cave, including Plato’s “theory” of the forms and the allegory’s political and ethical implications. Within these discussions I have spilled much ink criticizing Heidegger’s interpretation of Plato on these issues. Heidegger at times seems to lack the necessary hermeneutic sophistication to satisfactorily address the dramatic context of Plato’s dialogues, for instance. However, in the first chapter I argued for the importance of making an interpretation relevant to the issues of the interpreter’s
time. This was addressed in light of Gadamer’s metaphor of the “fusion of horizons.” In agreement with Gadamer, the most valuable and honest interpretations are aware of the interpreter’s finite “horizon” but seek to expand this horizon through an examination of another, in this case the allegory of the cave. This view is a rejection of both what Gadamer call “Romantic hermeneutics,” whereby the interpreter attempts to get outside of his own shoes and into those of another, and a sort of radical historicism which would posit that we are limited to our own horizon and cannot extend beyond it. In this way, it is a rejection of and a mediation of the two positions.

The interpreter’s project, then, is to fuse the horizon of himself and of the text of concern. Part of this project is thus to take the text in hand and, once again, make it powerful. By powerful I mean it is necessary to take the text and not merely review the author’s positions and arguments and view them as simply in the past. It is also not enough to see and show how the text influenced later thought. For instance, it is not enough to find the places where Plato’s thought influences those after him. The ultimate goal of the interpreter is to make the text, those that are worthwhile at least, “alive.” It is my contention that Heidegger does succeed in this endeavor. More specifically, he succeeds in this endeavor through his examination of aletheia. We can argue about whether and to what extent Heidegger was correct in his treatment of Plato’s aletheia, but it is certainly true that he took a text, the Republic, and enlivened that text by showing how the Greek understanding of truth could help us re-think and deepen our own understanding of truth.
Let us briefly turn to Heidegger’s treatment of Plato’s *aletheia*. According to the essay “Plato’s Doctrine of Truth,” in Plato’s thought, particularly in the allegory of the cave, there exists the unsaid moment where there is a “change in what determines the essence of truth.”¹² This is supposedly seen when we become aware of the relationship between “education,” the explicit subject of the allegory, and “truth.” Education, *paideia*, is a constant battle against the lack of education. Similarly, the unhidden must be “torn away from a hiddenness.”¹³ With the 123rd Heraclitus fragment in mind, “nature loves to hide,” Heidegger tells us that “Originally for the Greeks hiddenness, as an act of self-hiding, permeated the essence of being and thus also determined being in their presentness and accessibility (‘truth’).”¹⁴ What distinguishes the Greek understanding of “truth” from the Latin *veritas*, English truth, and German *Wahrheit* is the alpha-privative. *Aletheia*, translated “literally” as the absence of concealment.

However, Heidegger does not just rely upon this “literal” translation. He also plays with the metaphors of sight that Plato uses in the allegory. Heidegger translates *eidos* and *idea* to “visible forms.”¹⁵ Outside the cave is where beings show themselves as they are. Also, they are not merely “showing” themselves but are actually presenting themselves. Those liberated from the cave turn to face the beings themselves, not just the correct images of them. Furthermore, the “visible forms” “shine.”¹⁶ That is, the visible forms allow themselves to be seen and in so doing, are what makes “seeing” possible.

From here, Heidegger goes on to describe how this experience of *aletheia* begins to

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¹³ Ibid., 171.  
¹⁴ Ibid.  
¹⁵ Ibid., 164.  
¹⁶ Ibid., 174.
change within Plato’s thinking to our modern sense of truth as correctness. However, our purpose here is merely to discuss the conception of *aletheia* that Heidegger finds within the allegory of the cave.

As mentioned, *aletheia* does not become only a concept of the past for Heidegger. Unconcealment becomes a crucial concept to Heidegger’s philosophical project in general. The first indications of Heidegger dealing with truth as unconcealment come from his studies on Plato. Though we commonly translate *aletheia* as “truth,” or “Wahrheit” in German, Heidegger became interested in a “literal” translation as “unconcealment” (“Unverborgenheit”). Initially, Heidegger thought that the early Greeks experienced truth as unconcealment. However, as Mark Wrathall notes, “Heidegger eventually came to believe that the Greeks themselves had failed to grasp what was essential to the notion of unconcealment, what he had initially had thought was hinted at in their word *aletheia*.”

Though he later came to believe that the Greeks, of Plato’s generation and forward at least, did not fully experience truth as unconcealment, it is nevertheless important to note that Heidegger’s interest in *aletheia* appears to have originally stemmed from his reading and interpretation of early Greek texts. Also, as Wrathall states, though Heidegger eventually saw himself as conceiving unconcealment in an original way, it was still grounded in what Heidegger thought was the “original understanding of unconcealment.”

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18 Ibid.
Furthermore, Heidegger’s conception of unconcealment remained largely the same as the *aletheia* that he originally imputed upon Plato. Wrathall, in an interesting and illuminating discussion, argues that there are five important points on which Heidegger agrees with Plato:

1. “There are different modes of unhiddenness.”
2. “There are higher and lower forms of unhiddenness.”
3. “They everyday mode of unhiddenness is a lower form.”
4. “In our everyday comportment to the world, we are blinded to that in virtue to which a higher disclosure of the world and our essence could take place.”
5. “For the higher disclosure of the world, we need to become oriented to something other than everyday beings with which we are involved.”\(^{19}\)

Heidegger arguing for higher and lower forms of unhiddenness is found in his phenomenology of perception. When we see things, for instance, we do not see mere objects that are value free. For Heidegger, this does not make sense. Our seeing things “value free” is derivative of seeing things that have meaning and significance to us for whatever reason. When we see a book, we do not see a cardboard based cover wrapped in a glossy synthetic material with ink symbols on it. We see something that we read for an undergraduate sociology course, a course that we did not enjoy but the book sits on the shelf nonetheless. In the earlier lecture *The Essence of Truth*, Heidegger reads Plato as holding a similar view. Though the tone of the essay “Plato’s Doctrine of Truth” changes and does not seem as charitable, we see Heidegger reading Plato as someone nearing phenomenology in the early lecture course.

There are also important distinctions between Heidegger’s unconcealment and Plato’s *aletheia*. Wrathall notes two. Though Heidegger agrees that there are higher and

\(^{19}\) Ibid., 83.
lower forms of understanding, Heidegger does not think this understanding consists of a knowledge of the forms. This is the first distinction. In the earlier example of looking at a book, it is not necessary, for Heidegger, for us to be always conscious of these experiences of sitting in a stuffy classroom with 300 other students when looking at the book. However, these experiences are certainly present in the background. Heidegger does not find this to be the case with the forms. Heidegger interprets knowledge of the forms to be, in some sense, a prior understanding that allows for later apprehension of objects. In Plato this prior understanding is conceptual, though, and this is where Heidegger separates himself from him.

The second point of distinction between Heidegger and Plato involves the opposite of aletheia, hiddenness: “given the importance and the priority of hiddenness in Plato’s account, it is essential that the allegory of the cave be followed up by an analysis of the nature of the hiddenness that prevails in the cave, and constantly threatens the understanding that we win through philosophy.”\(^{20}\) Paideia involves the constant fight against the absence of education—education understood as the turning of the soul toward higher forms of understanding. Analogously, aletheia must also be understood in conjunction with its opposite, hiddenness. According to Heidegger, if Plato had understood this relationship, it would have been present in the allegory of the cave. This is why the second half of the lecture course is devoted to a study of the Theaetetus. It is there that Heidegger finds further evidence of the beginnings of the change in the experience of truth. It is not the intention of this project to carefully examine and evaluate

\(^{20}\) Ibid., 84.
Heidegger’s analysis of the *Theaetetus*. However, a short discussion is due, even if excessively terse.

According to Heidegger, if Plato understood truth as unconcealment primordially, then Plato would have discussed the opposite of unconcealment as being hiddenness— *lathe*. *Aletheia* is an alpha-privative and its opposite is easy to find and discern. The problem is, Plato, in the *Theaetetus*, refers to the opposite of truth as *pseudos*, which is translated into “distortion.” This relates back to the importance of the correctness of vision. Instead of beings becoming presenting themselves and being torn away from hiddenness, the individual becomes responsible to see correctly and avoid distorted vision.

There is an important shift of importance here. In unconcealment there is emphasis on both the being presenting itself and the individual allowing or wresting the being from concealment. As Wrathall writes, the experiences of unconcealment and hiddenness have “as much to do with the things as with us.”21 Plato here begins to shift the emphasis to the individual. No longer is the emphasis on the being presenting itself, rather the impetus is upon the individual seeking a correct image of the thing. Even with these two distinctions, which are important ones, we can see that Heidegger’s conception of unconcealment was certainly influenced to a large extent by the *aletheia* that Heidegger attributed to Plato.

With these points of influence and divergence in mind, we can attempt to fashion a Heideggerian allegory of the cave. Most of the components remain other than the ultimate unconcealment consisting of Platonic forms and the absence of unconcealment

21 Ibid.
being inherently tied to concealment. Speaking first of the Platonic forms, Heidegger disagreed that a conceptual grasping of things is what enables being and perception. In the Republic, the idea tou agathou is what shines and allows for all other things to be unconcealed. According to Heidegger, having knowledge of the highest Platonic idea was necessarily conceptual. Heidegger thought there was a more primordial, pre-conceptual knowledge that enabled being and perception. However, Heidegger, in his early lectures at least, expressed a profound respect for Plato’s idea tou agathou: “what this empowerment is and how it occurs has not been answered to the present day; indeed the question is no longer even asked in the original Platonic sense.”22 Though Heidegger ultimately separated himself from Plato’s answer, he nevertheless tried to recapture and enliven this original question as to what it is that must be present in order to enable both being and perception.

The light that allows for beings to be unconcealed would thus be pre-cognitive. Speaking to the relationship between unconcealment and hiddenness, Heidegger would insist upon a steering away from a correct vision and a “genuine historical return”23 to the original experience of aletheia that figured an inherently dependent relationship between unhiddenness and concealment.

In Plato’s cave, the prisoners are released and forced out of the cave by someone else; someone who forces paideia on the prisoners. Someone else, someone already liberated, must help the prisoner begin that radical transformation of the soul. For Heidegger, it is not someone who liberates. Rather, it is an experience—the experience of

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22 The Essence of Truth, 111.
23 Ibid., 7.
the “nothing” that enables this radical transformation. An experience of the nothing that allows for higher forms of understanding could constitute whole volumes. For our purposes, a quick passing over will have to do. What allows us access to the nothing is not thinking; it is experienced. What leads us prisoners to the nothing is dread. Dread is not fear of something, dread does not have an object. It is a calm which, according to Heidegger, causes Dasein to suspend “what is.” In this experience, the nothing pushes back. In this pushing back, there is the opportunity for the revelation of Being.

Speaking of Being, it must also be pointed out that the light outside of the cave is not the idea tou agathou for Heidegger. Instead it is Being. Through the experience of the nothing, we are given access to what it means “to be.” Rather than the highest form of understanding being the idea of the good which envelops metaphysics and ethics (though Heidegger thinks it primarily a metaphysical concept), the highest form of understanding for Heidegger is ontological.

As we are beginning to see, Heidegger’s interest in aletheia was not an idle digression stemming from an interest in “truth.” As he tells us during his Heraclitus Seminar, given late in his career, the opposite is true: “Aleitheia as unconcealment occupied me all along, but ‘truth’ slipped itself in between.” That is, the supposed change from “truth” as unconcealment to truth as correctness that began in the work of Plato was not as important to Heidegger as unconcealment itself. This is why those such as Wrathall think Heidegger rarely discussed truth (Wahrheit) later in his career. Instead,

25 Wrathall, 11.
Heidegger increasingly wrote about unconcealment (*Unverborgenheit*) and *aletheia*.\(^{26}\) As Wrathall writes, “The terminological shift from talk of truth to unconcealment is a result of his recognition of the misleadingness of using the word truth to name unconcealment.”\(^{27}\) Because the concept of unconcealment was more important to Heidegger than the transition and degeneration from one kind of “truth” to another, Heidegger decided to stop referring to unconcealment as “truth as unconcealment” or merely “truth,” and discuss it as a distinct concept. Though this can be seen as just a terminological shift to avoid confusion, it is also true that Heidegger’s true interest was in *aletheia* rather than truth.

Heidegger’s unflagging attentiveness to unconcealment became the basis for much of his work in other areas. Wrathall tells us that “Heidegger’s view of truth forms the basis both for his critique of the metaphysical tradition of philosophy, and for his own constructive account of ontology and the nature of human being.”\(^{28}\) Though I will not go so far as to argue that Heidegger’s critique of Western metaphysics, his ontology, and his view of human nature all fundamentally stem from his work on *aletheia*, it is certainly the case that unconcealment and the later focus on truth as correctness are strongly related to these other aspects of Heidegger’s thought.

The primary purpose of this project was not to judge Heidegger’s reading and re-readings of Plato’s text. It was to study the allegory of the cave in light of Heidegger’s illuminating and challenging interpretations. His publications and lecture courses on the

\(^{26}\) Ibid., 12.
\(^{27}\) Ibid.
\(^{28}\) Ibid.
allegory of the cave allow us a way into the text and within his interpretations we are
given important points of possible conversation.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


