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The Essence of Truth (aletheia) and the Western Tradition in the Thought of Heidegger and Patocka[1]

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The analysis of what truth means is one of the most important moments in Heidegger's thought. It plays an important role in understanding Heidegger's rethinking of the philosophical tradition, and (as the terms are often synonymous for him) the history of metaphysics or the history of Being.[2] Among Heidegger's writings, three deal directly with the problem of truth: *Sein und Zeit* (*Being and Time*,

1 References to Heidegger's *Being and Time* in the body of my paper will be indicated by BT, followed by the page numbers from the English translation by J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson (New York: Harper and Row, 1962). Likewise all references to both Patocka's *Negative Platonism* and *Plato and Europe* will be indicated by NP and PE, respectively, followed by the page numbers in the original Czech. *Negativni platonismus* in *Pece o dusi*, vol. I, ed. by I. Chvatik and P. Kouba (Praha: OIKOYMENH, 1996) & *Platon a Evropa* (1973) in *Pece o dusi*, Vol 4., ed. I. Chvatik and P. Rezek, (Praha: Archivni soubor, 1979).

2 Cf. Martin Heidegger, "Das Ende der Philosophie und die Aufgabe des Denkens" in *Zur Sache des Denkens* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer 1976), p. 61. [Hereafter SD]

1927),[3] *Platons Lehre von der Wahrheit* (*Plato's Doctrine of Truth*, 1942)[4], and *Vom Wesen der Wahrheit* (*On the Essence of Truth*, the lecture given in 1930, published in 1943).[5] These two later works revise the earlier concept of truth, but they do not deny the account given in *Being and Time*. Rather, they penetrate this early concept more deeply.[6]

In this essay, I first try to sketch out Heidegger's path[7] concerning the question of truth and consider some possible criticism of it. Second, I focus our attention on Heidegger's rethinking of the metaphysical tradition which, according to Heidegger, has reached its end. In this context we will examine the thinking of Jan Patocka. I think Patocka is one of the most interesting, even if little-known and misunderstood, readers of Heidegger's texts. My hope here is to show, first, how we can understand Heidegger's ideas better through the writings of Patocka and, second, that by considering Patocka's appropriation of Heidegger, which emphasizes the need to think with and even beyond Heidegger, we can avoid becoming mere 'Heideggerians.'

First, we must ask whether Heidegger is developing a 'theory of truth.' Theories of truth, such as the 'correspondence', 'coherence', or 'pragmatic', can be taken as the theoretical attempts to formulate the criteria which one uses to determine the truth (or falsehood) of a proposition. In general, we can say that most traditional 'theories' have asked *under what conditions* something is true or false. Pragmatists,

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3 Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* (1927[1]) in *Gesamtausgabe*, Band 2, ed. Vittorio Klostermann, (Frankfurt am Mein, 1977). [Hereafter SZ]

4 Martin Heidegger, Platons Lehre von der Wahrheit. Mit einem Brief über den »Humanismus« (Bern: Francke Verlag, 1954). [Hereafter PLW]

5 Martin Heidegger, *Vom Wesen der Wahrheit*, in *Wegmarken*, ed. Vittorio Klosterman (Frankfurt am Main: V. Klostermann, 1978), pp. 175-199. [Hereafter WW].

6 Walter Biemel in his excellent introduction to the philosophical biography of Heidegger has connected the idea of truth (*aletheia*) as the central concept (or as the metaphor) with all of the other basic concepts discussed in Heidegger's corpus. Cf. Biemel, W., *Martin Heidegger* (Rembek bei Hamburg: Rowohll Verlag, 1998).

7 With this German term *Wege* (paths), Heidegger distinguishes his own position from the modern tradition of 'methodical' or 'systematical' knowledge, and he also tries to return to the 'primordial' Greek status of *episteme.* With this term he does not mean judgements as answers which help us to understand ourselves better, but rather questions without definite statesments. But it is possible also to say the reverse: 'the question is the path to the answers.' Cf. the introduction to Heidegger's lecture *Was ist das - die Philosophie?* (Neske: Pfullingen, 1956.) We see here what Heidegger means by this statement above.

for example, would argue that something is true when it is practically useful. Of course, we could say from the pragmatic point of view that the theory of what is true also implies an answer to the question: what is the *nature* ('the essence') of the truth. It is possible to argue that truth not only occurs when there is practicableness or usefulness but that usefulness is just the *meaning* of truth.[8]

Now, Heidegger maintains that none of these theories (i.e. truth as correspondence, coherence, pragmatic, etc.) has clarified what truth itself *is*. Paragraph 44. of *Sein und Zeit* begins with words like *Untersuchung* (investigation) or *ursprüngliche Phänomen der Wahrheit* (primordial, original phenomenon of truth, etc.). This is no accident. Heidegger is seeking after the 'original essence' of truth by way of a radical 'de-construction' (*Abbau*)[9] of traditional metaphysical concepts (or theories) and, therefore, he does not want to formulate any alternative 'new theory' or 'criterion' of truth. He resists the traditional temptation and asks about the condition under which truth *manifests* itself to our knowledge. (Let's note that Heidegger is indeed speaking just about the *correspondence* but his argumentation also applies to other modern theories.)

For Heidegger the Western tradition has forgotten the sense of Being and also the sense of truth which belongs to the core-sense of Being. He believes that the very possibility of the question 'what does it mean to be?' has been closed off by the tradition itself and, specifically, by its various accounts of 'reality.' Because the sense of Being has not been clarified, and the sense of truth depends on the sense of Be-

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8 To be more precise we must say that there is nothing like a unified 'pragmatic theory of truth.' It is possible to distinguishe minimally the 'consensus theory' of C. S. Peirce from the 'instrumentalist theory' associated with W. James and J. Dewey (and also from neo-pragmatic theories of truths, etc.). But we can demonstrate our concept of the 'pragmatic theory of truth', and recall that William James, for example, identifies truth with beliefs that are *useful* over the long run and all things considered. Cf. *Pragmatism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975), p. 106: "'The true', to put it very briefly, is only the expedient in the way of our thinking, just as 'the right' is only the expedient in the way of our behaving. Expedient in almost any fashion; and expedient in the long run and on the whole of course; for what meets expediently all the experience in sight will not necessarily meet all farther experiences equally satisfactorily".

9 We should translate the German phrase *kritischer Abbau* into English as 'critical dismantle' or 'de-costruction.' Heidegger says that the old ontology must be built up new again from the ground. We have to find again the 'basic experience' of Greek philosophy from which the tradition has 'fallen away' (*Verfallen der Philosophie*). See *Die Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie* (1927) in *Gesamtausgabe*, Band 24, ed. by F.-W. von Hermann (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1975), pp. 31-32.

ing, the sense of truth has likewise not been clarified. Through his destructive retrieve, he wishes to disclose (re-find) an original experience of truth that has become lost. What does this mean?

Let us now start to speak about truth together with Heidegger, 'the last Aristotelian', which is the title Hans-Georg Gadamer bestows on him. What does it mean to say that the original essence of truth was forgotten by the tradition itself? Furthermore, how is it possible to recover it when we are so far-removed from the Greeks? Indeed, how can we make this recovery without thinking of the Greek tradition 'traditionally' and hence missing its archaic *pathos*? Heidegger believes that even though we are entrenched in the tradition we can nonetheless look for its basis, as we have already indicated, by way of 'deconstruction' (*Destruktion der Ontologie = Abbau).* We need to examine our traditional understanding of truth and exhibit the no longer recognized conditions which make it possible, i.e. what it presupposes, and with which our traditional understanding of truth has lost contact.

Heidegger says that from the beginning *truth* is already connected with *Being*. In other words, truth was for the Greeks a feature of ontological inquiry. We can see this connection already in the oldest 'definition' of the term 'truth' attributed to Plato and Aristotle.[10] Truth never meant 'correspondence' (or 'representation') for them in the sense of the modern Cartesian idea concerning the relation between *subjectum* (a knower) and *objectum* (what is known by a knower). According to that view, the subject *determines* what truth is: if there is no proposition there is no truth, or at least there is no truth without presupposing a *subject* who is capable of making propositions. For the moderns, therefore, truth is guided by a regulative idea of self-certainty. Since Heidegger is trying to gain an insight into the nature of truth *as the Greeks understood it*, he emphasizes that we must not confuse truth with knowledge. For the Greeks *truth* was an ontological question; for the contemporary thinkers truth is an epistemological question. Truth is not primarily an epistemological question because the question of knowledge already presupposes a certain understanding of what truth *is*.

If we analyze and 'deconstruct' the modern concept of truth as certainty, we see that it can be traced back to the definition of truth as correspondence first formal-

10 Heidegger starts his account of the tradition concerning the question of truth with Aristotle's writings. Cf. Aristottle, *Met.* 1025b 3, 1026a 31, 1060b 32, 1064b 15 etc. 'First' (theoretical) philosophy is *episteme tes aletheias* (knowledge of the truth), and knowledge of *on he on* (being as being), etc.

ized by Aristotle which locates truth in *judgment* (*Aussage, Urteil).*[11] At the same time, though, we find a deep mistake. Heidegger contends that this supposed Aristotelian heritage is rooted in a misunderstanding of Aristotle. It rests not on Aristotle's account of truth but rather on Aquinas' (or Isaac Israel's) interpretation of Aristotle's account of truth as 'correspondence' (*Adequatio intellectus et rei).* Even Kant, Heidegger maintains, accepted the view that truth is a characteristic of judgment in which there is a correspondence between the *knower* and the *known*. Thus, already in St. Thomas' appropriation of Aristotle we can find the beginning of modern 'epistemological theory' (of truth) which misrepresents the thinking of the classical Greeks.

The Greeks did not believe that knowledge consists in a judgment of what is really true. Heidegger explains that this notion is alien to the Greek spiritual world. Thus, we must attempt to understand what Aristotle means when he claims that 'judgment is true' in a way that is faithful to his thinking. Truth for Aristotle above all means the disclosure of *Being to us by itself* . Only after Being has disclosed itself can it then possibly be presented in true judgment which refers to what is disclosed.

Heidegger's reading of Aristotle follows the critical post-Cartesian tradition ushered in by Franz Brentano and Edmund Husserl. According to Brentano, the sense of the truth has its source not in judgment but rather in Being. For Husserl as well the primary meaning of truth lies in the truth of the entity (*Seiendes*). Although Husserl's notion of epistemological certainty resembles that of Kant, Husserl is also critical of the Kantian epistemological position (cf. Aristotelian background in Husserlian concept of 'intentionality'). Truth must be understood as a type of self-manifestation or givenness. Still, truth does not mean givenness as such but rather the *possibility* of a superior mode of givenness. So self-givenness does not imply for Husserl any relation to transcendental being-in-itself (as Heidegger charged against Husserl). For Husserl, self-givenness or 'evidence' is something that is immanent within experience. Of course, Heidegger does not want to follow Husserl's desire to formulate any kind of 'transcendental subjectivity' in an effort to find a 'last island of certainty' (to use Patocka's phrase) of human knowledge. Heidegger's questioning of the traditional concept of truth , set in motion by Husserl's phenomenol-

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11 Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Questiones Disputationes de Veritate*, 1.1: *veritas adequatio intellectus et rei est*. We could translate it as follows: truth is the correspondence of the mind with the thing.

ogy[12], thus proceeds by way of a strongly ontologizing interpretation of key texts of Aristotle (such as *De Interpretatione* I, *Metaphysics* Theta, and *Nicomachean Ethics* Zeta).

In order to gain a better understanding of Heidegger's position, we must consider how his concept of truth is articulated through his fundamental ontology of *Dasein*.[13] His treatment of truth found in *Being and Time*, follows immediately upon the existential analysis of Dasein, and so the essence of truth is investigated from the perspective of Dasein's Being. Heidegger's account of truth therefore emerges from an inquiry into what it means 'to be', an inquiry that gets started with his radical question: How can we clarify the sense of Being independently of any dogmatic assumptions of what Being is? The introductory question of the work (*die Frage nach dem Sein*) is the question which can be investigated only by *human* being or what he calls Dasein. Unlike all other beings Dasein is occupied with its own existence and the sense of its own Being. Da-sein is literally the 'Da', or place, where 'Sein' is disclosed. Heidegger says (BT, 32): "Understanding of Being is itself a definite characteristic of Dasein's Being. Dasein is ontically distinctive in that it is ontological." This means that Dasein is not simply self-consciousness, but mainly and fundamentally is conscious of itself or conscious of itself as Being (-in-the-world). Being-in-the-world is a fundamental characteristic of Dasein and co-original with this openness to its own Being is an openness to other beings as well as the Being of other beings.

This dis-closedness of Being to Dasein is, according to Heidegger, what truth means in the most primordial sense. Truth in its original (*essential*) sense, therefore,

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12 Cf. the sixth of Husserl's *Logische Untersuchungen* for distinction between propositional and intuitional truth.

13 Cf. *SZ*, p. 10. "Being which we ourselves in each case are and which includes inquiry among the possibilities of its Being, we formulate terminologically as *Dasein*". This means that Dasein is not a '*subjectum*' or '*homo sapiens*' etc. Concerning the ontological difference of Dasein, Heidegger distinguishes between beings, entites (*Seienden*), and the Being (*Sein*) of entities - i.e., between empirically existing things (as actuality) and their essence (as potentionality). This accords with the Aristotelian idea of the meanings of *ousia*. So for Heidegger Dasein is that kind of existence that is always involved in an understanding of its Being. Dasein is therefore not Being. As Heidegger indicates Dasein is rather 'there being' (he often hyphenates the word *Da-Sein* = there-being), the openness to Being characteristic of human existence. (Dasein is no longer 'an existence' which belongs to all things, i.e. natural or cultural, as it was in the old German philosophy which had translated the Latin *existentia* into German by the word Dasein.)

refers not to an *object* but to *Dasein*. Only by an object's being *uncovered* can anyone then say that this object is true. Truth is an *Existential* of Dasein. This means, then, that truth as such does not exist independent of Dasein. There is truth only insofar as Dasein 'is' and only so long as Dasein 'is' (BT, 269) For Dasein is 'in truth', says Heidegger. It does not mean that Dasein has to be (always) in truth. Dasein can also be in un-truth (as an inauthentic mode of the existence). Dasein can fail to uncover entities (including itself). Still, only because Dasein is already in the truth can Dasein fail to uncover entities.

This has led Heidegger to say that there is no truth without Dasein. There would be no truth because what makes truth possible is the world's disclosedness and being open to a world is a basic characteristic of Dasein. In other words, Dasein is only open to a world because in its essential constitution Dasein is 'worldly.' As Heidegger says, "only with Dasein's disclosedness is the most primordial phenomenon of truth attained." (BT, 261) Heidegger is not saying that Dasein *determines* what is the truth (as the 'subject' of modern epistemology does), but rather since Dasein is the site of disclosedness, truth can exist only as a mode of Dasein's Being. Therefore, it is not any new attempt to formulate a subjectivistic or relativistic theory of truth. All truths are 'relative' only *in* Dasein's *Being* (but not *to* Dasein)![14] The central idea here is that truth considered as disclosedness would not be possible without Dasein because then there would be no Dasein to do the uncovering of entities within-the-world. "For in such a case truth as disclosedness, uncovering, and uncoveredness, cannot be." (BT, 269) We might say that Dasein is the necessary though not the sufficient condition of truth. For Heidegger truth is something that *happens*, and so it is an *event of being* (*Ereignis*) which is only *revealed* to us. Therefore we cannot *see* truth; truth is just *shown* to us by itself. He says "What is demonstrated is not an agreement of knowledge with its object, still less an agreement between contents of consciousness among themselves. What is to be demonstrated is solely the Being-uncovered (*Entdeckt-sein*) of the entity itself - that entity in the how of its uncovering." (BT, 260)[15]

Of course, we might ask: Is it possible to say that Heidegger's analysis of truth is 'true'? However, such a question is misplaced. The question itself assumes as abso-

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14 Cf. BT, p. 270 for the argument against the 'subjectivism of Dasein.'

15 Cf. *Being and Time*, p. 261. "Thus truth has by no means the structure of an agreement between knowing and the object in a sense of a likening of one entity (the subject) to another (to object)".

lute the correspondence theory of truth, or at least some understanding of truth in general. But Heidegger is inquirying into the sense of truth which allows this very question to be asked in the first place. He is not concerned with any particular true or false claims. His inquiry works, rather, at a formal level which seeks after the foundation of truth, i.e., the conditions which make possible anything like 'true' or 'false' judgment-claims. We must understand that Heidegger is not conducting an empirical inquiry. The question of Being and Truth is not one more fact about real things. Heidegger is asking about the *essence* of Being and Truth. Furthermore, he is not raising the Platonic question concerning the essence of the Being or Truth of any one particular thing; e.g. what is it (*ti esti)*?[16] Rather, he is concerned with clarifying the Being and Truth of anything whatsoever insofar as it is. We might say that Heidegger doubles the Platonic question: What is the essence of the Being and Truth of the Being and Truth of any such particular being. This doubling of the Platonic question is, at the same time, a deepening of it since the Platonic question already presupposes it. Or, as Heidegger explains in the *Contributions to Philosophy,* "The essence of truth grounds the necessity of the *why* and therewith of questioning". [17]

Heidegger's project is concerned with a single (Aristotelian) question: What is the Being of beings (*Was ist das Sein des Seienden?*). Heidegger believes that this search for the Being of beings first really began with Parmenides and Heraclitus, and then was continued by Plato and Aristotle. The original names given to the Being of beings by early thinkers included *phusis* and *aletheia*. *Phusis*, usually translated as 'nature' (*Natur*), does not signify 'natural' processes of becoming (*Werden*), but rather the event in which beings in general come to *presence*. The *presencing* (*Anwesen*) of an entity (*Seiende*) is the first level of existence which opens to us the way to understanding the *essence* (*Wesen*) of *Being* (*Sein*).[18] *Aletheia*, usually translated as 'truth' (*Wahrheit*), similarly refers to an *unconcealedness*. Heidegger calls

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16 Cf. The introductory passage of the lecture *Was is das- die Philosophie?,* Neske, Pfullingen, 1956, for the interpretation of the Greek words *ti* and *estin*.

17 Heidegger, M., *Beiträge zur* Philosophie *(Vom Ereignis)* in *Gesamtausgabe*, Vol. 65, ed. F.-W. von Hermann (Frankfurt am Main: V. Klostermann), p. 353.

18 Heidegger also translates/interprets the fragment 123 (Diels-Krranz) of Heraclitus (*phusis kruptesthai filei*) as follows: "being (*phusis*) loves (a) self-concealing". Heidegger's own interpretation of this is that "being essentially comes to be as *phusis*, as self-revealing, as what is of itself overt, but to this there belongs a self-concealing". Cf. *The Principle of Reason* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), p. 64-65.

attention to the etymology of the Greek word *a-letheia.* According to Heidegger, this term contains an alpha-privative, which the modern term 'truth' erases. For the early Ancient thinkers (Heidegger often says that Parmenides and Heraclitus were the 'thinkers' rather than the 'philosophers') *Being* is that which enables the *disclosure* of beings. Following from our analyses above, this means that Being is truth in its original sense. The Essence of truth itself is *disclosure* (*Erschlossenheit*).[19] And so, *aletheia* is still '*unhiddenness*' (*Unverborgenheit*) in its primordial sense as given originally in early Greek thought.[20]

But these early (and primordial) thoughts of Heraclitus and Parmenides would soon undergo a transformation in Plato and Aristotle. This 'turning point', Heidegger argues, marked the real beginning of Western metaphysics. With the rise of Socrates' polemic with Sophists, and mainly with the rise of Platonic dialectics, the focus on Being as un-concealment was lost.[21] Heidegger analyzes Plato's 'simile of the cave' given in Book VII. of the *Republic*, and tries to show that a decline, which sets the stage for modern thinking, already takes place here. The process of degeneration began with the Platonic idea of truth as 'correctness of perception' (*orthotes*) which supplants the Presocratic notion of truth as 'disclosedness of being' (*aletheia*).[22] Heidegger's analysis, which reconstructs this transformation, centers on what he calls Plato's ambiguous attitude towards Being. When Being becomes an *Idea* situated in an eminent position, then truth which should have been understood as the un-hiddenness of Being becomes the correct perspective of a superior being. Truth becomes the correspondence between thought and the idea.[23] Correspondingly, the place of truth shifts from the original unhiddenness of Being to the correct statement of man.

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19 Cf SZ, §§ 28, 29, 31, 34, 40, 44, 68 for analysis of *Erschlossenheit* and its connection with Dasein.

20 In the beginning of chapter 44. of *Being and Time* (BT, p. 263 ff.) Heidegger centers the word *aletheia* around the other Greek terms such as *logos* (the common being of all things), *apophansis* (to show forth), *apophainesthai* (unhiddenness of things), *phainomena* (bringing to light) etc.

21 CF. SD, pg. 74 ff.

22 Cf. PLW, pg. 41 ff.

23 For the 'first discussion' of the problem in the history of metaphysics see 'the third man argument' as a possible criticism of Plato's positive concept of 'the Ideas' in Aristotle (*Met.* A 9, 990b 17; Z 13, 1039a 2; M 4, 1079a 13). What is very interesting is that Heidegger disregards these early polemics concerning this same problem.

In later works, especially in *On the essence of truth*, Heidegger underlines a 'hierarchy' of three levels of truth. We can roughly summarize this hierarchy, which Heidegger appropriates from the *Nicomachean Ethics*, as follows.

1. The lowest level of truth is *propositional* truth. Here truth is taken to be the correspondence (*adequatio*) or agreement between a proposition, and thus the intellect, and a thing. Truth is *logos apophantikos*: The predicative assertion in its two forms of *kataphasis* and *apophasis* (affirmation and denial).

2. The next highest level of truth is the *ontic*. Propositional truth itself presupposes that beings show themselves to us. 'How something shows itself' is a more primordial characteristic of truth than the simple criterion of correspondence. In other words, the being-true of the assertion is a derivative mode of the primordial happening of truth on which it is grounded. This is also the first level of unconcealedness. Dasein first finds beings as unconcealed before the question of correspondence can emerge. Heidegger appropriates from Book 6 of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* the different ways beings can be uncovered by Dasein. The human *psuche* (Dasein) can be uncovering in the five ways being-in-truth: *techne*, *episteme*, *phronesis*, *sophia*, and *nous*.

3. The last level of truth is the *ontological*. This refers not to the unconcealedness of particular beings, but rather the Being of these beings. It refers to the event of openness itself which makes possible Da-sein's own openness to beings and the openness of beings themselves. Here Heidegger re-appropriates Aristotle's notion of *to on hos alethes* (Being as truth).

I think that one of the strongest criticisms raised against Heidegger's concept of truth as *a-letheia* is the philological one first articulated by Heidegger's student, Paul Friedländer, which he develops in the context of his writings on Plato.[24] Friedländer's main objection concerns Heidegger's etymological analysis and, specifically, the alpha-privative Heidegger attributes to the Greek term *a-letheia.* He argues that Heidegger's etymological interpretation has no foundation in Greek literature. Thus, he rejects Heidegger's translation of *aletheia* as *un-hiddenness*. The only place in Ancient Greek literature where *aletheia* was understood *un-hiddenness* was in Hesiod's *Theogony*, it is not exclusively understood in this way.[25] Here it also

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24 Paul Friedländer, *Plato.* An *Introduction*, translated by H. Meyerhoff (New York: Harper 1964). [Original title: *Platon. Seinswahrheit und Lebenswirklichkeit*, Band 1 (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1964).]

25 Hesiod, *Theogony* 233.

means the 'correctness of perception' which Heidegger attributes to the period of the decline of Greek thought.[26] To bolster his argument, Friedländer also demonstrates that two other words which share the same semantic form as *aletheia*, namely *atrekeia* and *akribeia*, mean 'accuracy', 'correctness', or 'truth.' Thus, Heidegger's claim that *aletheia* is etymologically *a-letheia* (an alpha-privative as the negation of *lethe* = conceal) is at best questionable, and most probably misleading. He further shows that the term *aletheia* does not just have a univocal meaning as Heidegger contends. In addition to the ontological sense of this term we also find an existential and epistemological sense, and we find these other senses in Parmenides as well as Plato.[27] All of these points of criticism work together to undermine, Friedländer thinks, Heidegger's claim that Plato's simile of the cave constitutes a 'turning point' in the Greek idea of truth; or, in his own words, "The Greek concept of truth did not undergo the change from the unhiddenness of being to the correctness of perception".[28]

Friedländer's criticism that Heidegger unjustifiably reduces the original meaning of *aletheia* among the Greeks exclusively to unhiddenness is compelling. Yet, we must also point out that in his later writings Heidegger seems to acknowledge, most likely in response to Friedländer, that historically or etymologically it can be demonstrated that, among the Ancient Greeks (which *includes* Parmenides), the term *aletheia* was originally experienced as correctness of perception. In his 1964 lecture entitled 'The End of Philosophy', Heidegger writes: "In the scope of this question we must acknowledge the fact that *aletheia*, unconcealment in the sense of the opening of presence, was originally only experienced as *orthotes*, as the correctness of representations and statements. But then the assertion about the essential transformation of truth, that is, from unconcealment to correctness, is also untenable".[29] Still, even though Heidegger concedes the fact that the Greeks understood *aletheia* as correctness, he nevertheless insists that this fact does not entirely undercut his position. [30] This *historical* fact does not imply that *aletheia* as correctness is onto-

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26 Ibid, 223.

27 Friedländer deals with Parmenides' doctrine of the One on pg. 224: "The three aspects of the Greek concept of *aletheia* are here indissolubly united in one knot".

28 Ibid, pg. 229.

29 SD, pg. 78.

30 Cf. Heidegger's note on the p. 77 (SD) for the validity of the translation of the word *aletheia* in *Sein und Zeit*.

logically prior to unconcealment. It only means that man has historically thought of what he has encountered in the open before thinking about the open itself.[31] The concept of opening represents for Heidegger the most fundamental pre-ontological phenomenon. Unconcealment is opening or clearing while truth in all its forms is an event that takes place within the clearing. Without the opening there would be no free space for the event of truth to take place.[32]

Of course, this Heideggerian apology assumes a non-traditional meaning of 'history', one which, we might say, is even 'ahistorical' from the point of view of descriptive history. But Heidegger does not wish to interpret 'historical facts.' Rather, he is trying to re-think the tradition from the contemporary position. His position concerning the understanding of history is, therefore, hermeneutical. This means that he is less concerned with actual 'historical events', and more concerned with the event of our interpretation of history. We can see how this understanding of history applies to his rethinking of the Nietzschean metaphor that the whole of the history of metaphysics is but the history of Platonism.[33] It does not mean that Plato was the greatest philosopher and we are simply the followers of his past legacy. It means, instead, that our questions and our thinking are still Platonic, and so we continue to see the history of philosophy as Platonists. This Platonic 'past' is our 'present.' In recognizing ourselves as Platonists, we must though at the same time move beyond Plato and clarify the basis of Plato's questioning. We must, in other words, understand Plato better than he understood himself.

Now we leave Heidegger, though not the questions Heidegger raises, and focus our attention on Jan Patocka. Patocka, a Czech philosopher and one of Husserl's last students, attempts to reconcile his teacher's concept of *Lebenswelt* with Heidegger's Fundamental Ontology. Incidentally, Patocka was one of the first thinkers, i.e. before Merleau-Ponty and other phenomenologists, to develop further Husserl's

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31 Cf. also Heidegger's response to the criticism of Friedländer in the lecture called "Hegel und die Griechen" (1958) in Heidegger, M., *Wegmarken* (Frankfurt am Main: V. Klostermann, 1978), pp. 437-8.

32 SD, pg. 77.

33 SD, pg. 63.

concept of the *Lebenswelt* with consummate skill.[34] Patocka attempts to re-read Heidegger's ontology into Husserl's account of the Western tradition which finds itself in a profound crisis.

Patocka, like Heidegger, rejects Husserl's concept of transcendental subjectivity, specifically by explicating the many paradoxes which emerge from it.[35] Moreover, we can say that his examination of the concept of truth is very similar to Heidegger's. However, his interpretation of the Western tradition is far more historically 'accurate' than Heidegger's. A result of this difference is that he formulates some new ideas even though they correspond to the same problems. This does not mean, of course, that Patocka is an historian or an historicist in the tradition of Zeller, Windelband, Burnet etc. Instead, this means merely that Patocka analyses the historical texts in a way that is more consistent with the actual historical unfolding of events and so does not, like Heidegger, interpret history 'ontologically.'

Among Patocka's writings we can find two that deal directly, or at least focus more than his other works upon, the problem of truth: *Negative Platonism*, which is an unfinished manuscript written in the middle of 50's,[36] as well as the series of lectures entitled *Plato and Europe* given in the beginning of 70's.[37] In both texts, Patocka starts his account by argueing that the entire history of metaphysics centers around the problem of truth, and that most of the problems which apparently do not concern the problem of truth are, in fact, deeply connected to it (NP, p. 306-307, 447). He tries to find what is a common in the idea of truth in Western meta-

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34 Jan Patocka, *Die natürliche Welt als philosophisches Problem*, translated by E. Melville and R. Melville, ed. K. Nellen and J. Nemec (Stuttgart : Klett-Gotta, 1990), pp. 23-179.[Original title: *Prirozeny svet jako filosoficky problem*].

35 Cf. Jan Patocka, "Der Subjektivismus der Husserlischen und die Möglichkeit einer *asubjektiven* Phänomenologie" in *Philosoophische Perpektiven*, Jahrbuch, Vol. 2., ed. R. Berlinger and E. Fink (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klosterman, 1970), pp. 317-334. Also see Jan Patocka, "Der Subjektivismus der Husserlischen und die Forderung einer asubjektiven Phänomenologie" in *Sbornik praci filosoficke fakulty brnenske university*, No. 14-15 (Brno: Brno University Press, 1971), pp. 11-26.

36 Cf. also *Problem pravdy z hlediska negativniho platonismu* [*The Problem of Truth from the Perspective of Negative Platonism*, uncompleted manuscript from the middle of 50] in *Pece o dusi*, Vol. 1, ed. I. Chvatik and P. Kouba, (Praha: OIKOYMENH, 1996), pp. 447-480.

37 This lecture course was translated into French by E. Abrams, in *Platon et l'Europe*, (Lagrasse 1983), pp. 9-236. These lectures were important in the development of his later and famous work entitled *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History* (1975, translated by Erazim Kohak (Chicago: Open Court ,1996).

physics and, like Heidegger, returns to the Presocratics as the pre-founders of that tradition who understand truth as *uncoveredness* and shows how there is a movement towards an understanding truth as correspondence.[38] However, in this context he maintains that we must interpret Socrates' role in our tradition differently from Heidegger.[39]

For Patocka Socrates belongs to the Presocratics rather than to the 'metaphysical' tradition that originates with Plato and Aristotle. In so doing, he places a special emphasis on how *praxis* is both thought and unthought in this later metaphysical thinking. The tradition of the Presocratics, which includes Socrates, does not, according to Patocka, separate the problem of *noein* from the problem of *praxein*. This archaic tradition reveals that speaking (*logos)* cannot be separated from acting (*ergon)*. Whether Socrates is a literary myth or an historical person (Patocka personally continues to favor the second possibility), it seems certain that in Plato's representation of Socrates we find a special 'active, anthropologically oriented version of proto-knowledge' (lets say, of Pre-Platonics). Plato is the creator of metaphysics with his concept of *idea* (NP, 309 ff.). But the real entrance into metaphysics was achieved through the formulation of logic in Aristotle. Plato still remains rooted in the pre-metaphysical soil of the Presocratics and seeks to capture this in the figure of Socrates. Patocka writes that "Thanks to his (Plato's) towering philosophical and

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38 The Czech term 'odhalenost' could possibly be translated into English as 'bareness', which is very similar to Heidegger's 'Entdecktheit.' But it is formulated without the negative prefix as it is rendered in English as *un*-coveredness. Cf. NP, p. 307, 447 ff.

39 I would like to thank my collegue Alexander Di Pippo who has kindly reminded me that Heidegger has also interpreted Socrates as 'the purest thinker of the West.' Cf.. "What calls for thinking?" in *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings*, ed. David Farrell Krell (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 382. Of course, this might lead us to believe that Heidegger's Socrates stays on the border between metaphysics and pre-metaphysical thinking, and so he belongs rather to the Pre-Platonic tradition. But I think, as we see above, that Heidegger's view of Socrates differs in crucial respects from Patocka's because Heidegger focuses on Socrates in the context of a discussion of thinking and he neglects the issue of acting which is the focus of Patocka's account. Cf. Martin Heidegger, *Was heisst Denken?*, (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1971), pp. 52, 56, 112. Here Heidegger connects the origin of thinking as the possibility of radical questioning with the development of the triad: Socrates, Plato, Aristotle. But the question of acting in the triad is neglected in Heidegger's account, instead he emphasizes Socrates' question of *ti estin.* [cf. also *Was ist das - die Philosophie?* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1956), p. 16.] I think that this problem of *praxis* is not only very interesting, but whose consequences are also very important to work out in the context of contemporary philosophical questions.

literary genius, he managed to create a figure whose symbolic *signum* vastly exceeds every historical reality, a figure, that with every reason, became a symbol of philosophy as such. Only a contracted, lifeless interpretation in the tradition of Aristotelean logic (and that means metaphysics) could present this figure as a prototype of a deadening intellectualism that transforms vital questions into ones of logical consistency and into an art of correct definitions." (NP, p. 308) This account reminds us also of Heidegger's analysis of *logos apophantikos*. But Patocka accentuates the role of *praxis* in these old polemics which Heidegger overlooks. When he interprets the ancient concept of *bios theoretikos,* he emphasizes the noun *bios* (as a human condition) rather than the adjective *theoretikos* (as a divine knowledge) in this couple.

Yet, the Socrates of both early Plato and Patocka is not merely a moral thinker, 'striving for a harmony of a human interior.' Socrates is not a *moralist*. Socrates is rather a *philosopher* and therefore possesses a knowledge of a special kind. His knowledge is characterized as the knowing of unknowing or learned ignorance. His knowledge assumes the form of a question. Socrates is a great *questioner*. Only as a great questioner is he the grand participant in dialectical discussions whom Plato describes. So he is not bounded to anything finite in heaven or on earth (NP, p. 308): "Socrates sovereignty is based on an absolute *freedom*, he is constantly freeing himself of all the bonds of nature, of tradition, of others' schemata as well as of his own, of all physical and spiritual possessions." With the help of his trivial schema—a *dia-logos* which constantly gravitates towards the question *ti estin*, what is it?—Socrates unvails one of the fundamental contradictions of being human. On the one hand, the human being has a relation to the whole which is expressed in the question *ti estin*, i.e. 'what is this in itself ' (*to pragma auto* in later Plato). On the other hand, the human being is unable to express this relation to the whole given its finitude. Socrates represents this 'in-between', says Patocka, because "he formulates his new truth - since the problem of truth is at stake - only indirectly, in the form of question, in a form of a skeptical analysis, of a negation of all finite assertions." (NP, p. 309) In contrast, the tradition following Socrates, while it originates from the same questioning, nonetheless attempts to advance a positive answer to the Socratic (or 'Pre-Socratic') question.[40]

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[40] Plato and Democritus are considered by Patocka to be the founders of two different metaphysical positions concerning the nature of reality: the *immanent* (Democritus) and *transcendent* (Plato). Cf. Jan Patocka, "Demokrit a Platon jako zakladatele metafyziky" ["Democritus

Now, we can see that Patocka's concept of *negative Platonism* is both a *criticism* of the philosophical tradition which redirects the response to Socratic questioning as well as an *attempt* to interpret this metaphysical tradition differently from the way in which the tradition, i.e. our tradition, understands itself. Thus, the meaning of negative Platonism is expressed by Patocka as follows. The philosophy of negative Platonism is *pure* because it knows only the One - and that One it does not communicate directly as an objective knowledge at hand in the world, something to which we can always point, to which we can always refer. But it is, however, always rich because it preserves for humans one of their essential possibilities: philosophy purified of metaphysical (positive) claims. Patocka claims that "It preserves for humans the possibility of trusting in a truth that is not relative and mundane, even though it cannot be formulated positively, in terms of contents." (NP, 335-336)

Patocka responds to Heidegger's question concerning the essence of truth by showing that perhaps *uncoveredness* alone is not the essence of truth, but also *praxis* belongs to its essence (NP, 450). The essence of truth must not derive only from the structure of Being but also take into account the Socratic problem of human *acting*. Thus, Patocka's analysis of truth calls attention to something Heidegger's own analysis does not and, therefore, supplements Heidegger's account. For a thinker like Heidegger any problem is 'essentially' ontological, and so any other problems, i.e. epistemological, ethical etc., are secondary.[41]

Patocka also interprets the contemporary interpretation of truth as correspondence from a different perspective. The modern voluntarism of thinkers such as

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and Plato as the founders of metaphysics"] in *Pece o dusi*, Vol 4., ed. I. Chvatik and P. Rezek (Praha: Archivni soubor, 1979), pp. 285-299. Also see the French translation by E. Abrams in *Platon et l'Europe*, (Lagrasse: Verdier, 1983), pp. 265-280.

41 Cf. Heidegger's *Brief über den »Humanismus»* in *Wegmarken* (Frankfurt am Main: V. Klostermann, 1978), pp. 311-2, 357 ff. Heidegger analyses here the *theorial praxis* problem whose approach is very similar to Aristotle's for whom *theoria* must surpass *praxis* (357-8): "But now in what relation does the thinking of being (*Denken des Seins*) stand to theoretical and practical behavior? It exceeds all contemplation because it cares for the light (*Licht*) in which a seeing, as *theoria*, can first live and move. Thinking attends to the clearing (*Lichtung*) of being in that it puts its saying of being into language as the home of ek-sistence. Thus thinking is a deed (*so ist das Denken ein Tun*). But a deed that also surpasses (*übertrifft*) all *praxis*. Thinking towers above action (*Handeln*) and production, not through the grandeur of its achievement and not as a consequence of its effect, but through the humbleness of its inconsequential accomplishment. For thinking in its saying merely brings the unspoken word of being to language".

Nietzsche and Kierkegaard take as their starting point a critical stance towards the concept of truth as the logical structure of correspondence. Through this critical engagement they demonstrate how certain paradoxes arise from it. The theory of truth as correspondence maintains that the truth must be separated from untruth. However, according to the voluntarists this theory of truth cannot be absolutized because there are cases in which we cannot think the true without implying the untrue. Illusions of the imagination which are purely perspectival serve as a counter-example. (NP, 451) The imagination does not conform to this logical structure of correspondence, but rather is rooted in our own *voluntas*, and this kind of criticism implies, for Patocka, that a theory of truth must take into account *praxis*. Therefore, *praxis* must be integrated into a *criterion* of truth. The problem of modern theories of truth as correspondence is that it neglects the role of human freedom. Contrary to the original meaning of truth as *uncoveredness*, the theory of truth as correspondence makes truth merely a thing amongst other things (NP, 452). So understood, the problem of truth as such is lost as a problem for Patocka. "Since the truth in its basic nature is not an adequation of intellect and thing , but rather an inadequation of freedom, truth must be understood as a motion which does not terminate as a static accomplishment. Fixing Truth into truths is always merely an approximation which serves a regional task or function, and we must leave this approximation when it no longer serves this function." (NP, 459). Thus, truth as freedom assures us that objectivity is never final or never achieves completion for us.

In his later writings, Patocka elaborates on this relation between truth as uncoveredness and freedom. He connects the problem of truth with the problem of *responsibility*. He locates the basis of this relation in the Socratic words *tes psuches epimeleisiai* (the care of the soul). (PE, 230) Patocka interprets the words of Socrates found in Plato's *Apology* as: The desire to achieve oneness or internal harmony with thyself (PE, 230). This desire for belonging to the whole, to the totality of the 'world order', defines the human condition and the tradition has sought after this 'total order' from its early beginning and continues on this path today.

The care of the soul describes the situation in which we already find ourselves. (PE, 9) For Patocka this care of the soul is grounded ontologically in our human *freedom* (*he psuches*), and the *care of freedom* (*tes psuches epimeleisiai*) is thus its ontological expression. (PE, 20-21). Our understanding of the human being, which is based on Plato's account of the soul, furnishes us with the most primordial sense of truth: As living in the truth. So Greek ontology is not merely a speculative position

towards a superior reality. It is, rather, the life-structure of the human being itself. (PE, 43).

Finally, we can say together with Patocka that the authentic basis of the contemporary European tradition is expressed first by Plato and then repeated later by phenomenology. Phenomenology tries to show that the soul is not a *res cogitans*, but rather *existence*.[42] In other words, their own definition of philosophy, still valid today, reaffirms what Socrates and Plato first expressed: *philosophy is an existence of the human being in the truth* (PE, 217). Of course, Patocka's interpretation of Plato deviates from that of the tradition. Yet, his negative (re-interpreting) of Plato, i.e. his 'Negative Platonism' which help us to understand better both contemporary Europe and ourselves.

[42] This is the main idea of the Patocka's article "Vom Ursprung und Sinn des Unsterblichkeitsgedankens bei Platon" in *Denken und Umdenken. Zu Werk und Wirkung von Werner Heisenberg* (München - Zürich: Piper, 1977), pp. 102-115.