Seminar in Heidegger and Classical Thought
Platon *Sophistes* lectures 1924/25 (GA19)
Introduction for October 2026

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May I begin by welcoming you to this, the seventh annual series of the Seminar in Heidegger and Classical Thought. Close readers will have spotted a slight alteration to our name, which we think more accurately reflects how we have already been operating for some time, and reflects the seriousness of the work we have been doing. The change in name does not indicate any change in orientation.

We will meet weekly, during what we in the UK mostly call "term-time" and North Americans call "semester", with breaks for Christmas and Easter. My apologies to those, especially outside the North American context, whose annual cycles are even more divergent from Britain's. My apologies also that there is a hiatus next week – we keep these to an absolute minimum but this one was unavoidable. Aaron will send out notices when summer and winter or "daylight savings" time in the UK changes: in an international group of this kind, that can cause problems.

It was always our intention that this group would form an, albeit virtual, community of scholarship. This we have achieved beyond any of our original hopes: with the appearance earlier this year of the edited collection *Heidegger and Parmenides* we have been able to publish some of the results of its work already.[1] I want to say a very warm "welcome back" to many of you who have become friends to this series over the years. I want to extend no less a welcome to those of you who are here for the first time: thank you for making your way here.

We begin each of these series with an introductory session like today's, to familiarise ourselves, perhaps all over again, with the aims of this group and to raise, but certainly not to settle, the questions that the coming weeks will put before us. This year we begin a two year task, of working through the transcript of Heidegger's lectures of the Winter Semester 1924/25 published as *Platon:* Sophistes, "Plato's Sophist", volume 19 of the Heidegger *Collected Edition* or *Gesamtausgabe* (currently projected to contain 105 divisions in 107 physical

[1] Laurence Hemming and Aaron Turner (eds.), *Heidegger and Parmenides* (London: Bloomsbury, 2026).

volumes).[2] A few of you who have been here right from the beginning will know that this is a return: we began with this text in 2019 in the days before lockdowns, and when this group met in person at a room in Senate House in the University of London.

I originally proposed this volume because I was asked to suggest an example of where Heidegger undertakes a full-scale exegesis of a major text from antiquity. Although the reading of the *Sophist* breaks off towards the end (significantly, where Plato discusses the divine), it remains the largest and most detailed of all Heidegger's engagements, especially with Plato. For classicists especially, it becomes possible in detail to see how Heidegger reads Plato's Greek: there is a very great deal of Greek in the text. This is an extremely difficult text to read, even in translation. A significant amount the Greek cited is left untranslated in either the German or English versions: turning to standard translations often doesn't bring clarity, for reasons I will discuss.

The difficulties represented by this volume is one of the reasons for its relative neglect, compared with other Heidegger texts. The German text first became available in 1992: and English translation appeared in 1997. A corrected second edition appeared in 2018, and the *corrigenda* are available for download on the website of the publisher, Klostermann: ten corrections are listed, of which one is a duplicate. As far as I can tell the volume is not really really in print any more. Although listed as purchasable by Klostermann, it is not available in any of the usual places: those of you who have need of your own copy will probably have to find it second hand.

We will work from the 1992 German text (incorporating the corrections), from a parallel German / English text, circulated in advance each week. May I please remind you that this is copyright material and is circulated in discreet units for study purposes only – it should not be retained. There is no expectation on participants in this seminar to have either Greek or German, nor is there an expectation that you be competent either as a philosopher, or a classical philologist: this is, however a fully academic group, and we ask you to understand that.

If you are unused to Greek, please at least learn the Greek alphabet – there are some excellent resources online for doing so. If you don't you are going to struggle. We have included a variety of online sources to help you – by all means use them.[3] May I suggest that if you don't have Greek, use AI to interrogate and translate the untranslated material.

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[2] Martin Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe* (105 vols.), edited by Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann. Frankfurt a. M.: Klostermann, 1976–) = (GA*nn*); *Platon: Sophistes* (GA19), edited by Ingeborg Schüßler (2018 [1992]). Translated by Richard Rojcewicz and André Schuwer, as *Plato's Sophist.* Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press, 1997.

[3] https://www.heideggerandclassicalthought.com/resources

Heidegger's knowledge of the Greek he cited was precise and exacting, and often appealed to senses in the Greek outside what standard and conventional translations can provide: both *OpenAI* and *Anthropic* are excellent translators and analysers of ancient Greek, and they often draw attention to the nuances Heidegger is exploiting and why they are important. AI, used well, can show you how the Greek actually works, and will often draw your attention to the issues it is referencing: this is *essential* to seeing how Heidegger works with these citations.

We will be using Richard Rojcewicz's and André Schuwer's translation of the original transcript. Rojcewicz and Schuwer are excellent and experienced translators of Heidegger, and we are lucky to have a translation of the quality they has produced. A translation is *always* inadequate for scholarly purposes, for the simple reason that it needs to provide an average path into the text. This seminar will work beyond the average level. Even the finest translator cannot rely on his or her audience to see into all the nuance with the translated result: failings of translation are often no failing of the translator. We will at times find ourselves querying the translation: we do this from a position of greatest respect. May I therefore again suggest, if your German is not the best, again *use* AI, and the vast panoply of external resources available and easy to find online, to try to work out what is happening in the German. Even the most minimal effort will be hugely rewarded.

And please don't fall for the lazy excuses often given by scholars struggling with Heidegger's work. Heidegger is accused of introducing neologisms into the German language: in fact he did this far more rarely than is claimed, at least in his lectures and work published during his lifetime (his *Nachlaß* material can be a different matter). It has even been suggested that Heidegger's Greek was poor: this is simply wrong, it was excellent. It has been said that Heidegger proposes questionable etymologies (the most famous is that the word ἀλήθεια was not "in fact" an alpha-privative construction: it is, and the only *one* person who ever made this claim – in 1954 – withdrew it within a decade). This is itself a very questionable claim, and it is often easy to show that Heidegger is meticulous, and quite cautious, in his etymological claims: but he goes *beyond* etymologies, and often what he says is informed by how terms appear and manifest themselves in antiquity, but Heidegger does this with extraordinary dexterity.

Heidegger must be credited with a remarkable sense of the German language – easily on a par with Eckhart's and Nietzsche's, if not quite at the stylistic level of Goethe – and he also has a formidable sense of humour. Be prepared to question yourself first, rather than him, if you do not at first see any of this at work.

Let me say a few words about how this seminar group has worked in the past, and what our hopes are for the future. The watchword of this group, which those who have been here before I hope will agree, has always been *generosity*: of debate and exchange. We sometimes disagree, sometimes (although rarely) quite sharply, but we have always done so in intellectual friendship to the text, and to each other.

Let me be very clear: this seminar has no "line", no "required" position on Heidegger, even if individuals within it, not least myself, at times most certainly do hold very strong views: which can change and often have: above all, we are, each of us, here to learn. Whatever your understanding of Heidegger or its level, it is welcome here, although you may find yourself encouraged to offer evidence and support for what you want to argue. Above all, however, we stick to the text. Let me repeat that: as best we can, and *always*, we stick to the text *at hand*. Our work, I would suggest, is first and foremost to find a way *in* to *this* text before us. May I gently discourage you from those lines of argument that begin "didn't he once say . . ." followed by a half-remembered, perhaps quite out of context, quotation. This is a poor way to proceed: work from what you have in the hand. Please ask questions, not of me, but of the group more generally: we have always maintained there are *no* stupid questions: if you have a question, however great or small, please don't leave the seminar with the question unasked. *Questions* of every kind are welcome, even if the answers sometimes withhold themselves. Periods of silence are also entirely acceptable: there is nothing wrong with pausing to *think*.

If you can have your camera on, we encourage you to do so, but if you can't, for whatever reason, we don't mind. On the other hand, please do mute your microphone unless you are actually speaking: we will mute unmuted microphones. We don't particularly use the hand system to invite contributions – get yourself into the conversation, but please don't push *too* hard. Message the chair directly if you are being ignored: the chair – always Aaron or me – has the final say. We use, and actively encourage use of, a Slack group for exchanges in between sessions, and the discussion there is often lively. Please email Aaron if you need details about how to join it.

Some years ago Glenn Most wrote that Heidegger "never interprets at length a whole text of Greek poetry or philosophy from beginning to end".[4] Most has been a friend to this group, and is one of the *Knapp Foundation*'s academic advisors, and I have been able to discuss this claim with him personally. Already in 2002, when what he said reached publication, it was difficult to defend, but still understandable, given how much of the *Gesamtausgabe* was

[4] Glenn Most, 'Heidegger's Greeks', in *Arion* (Third Series), vol. 10, (2002), pp. 88.

yet to appear or be translated by that date. The publication of the *Sophist* lectures was one of the earliest full-scale discussions of a text, but not the first: the 1931/32 lecture course on Plato's *Theaetetus*, also containing a reading of Plato's cave allegory had appeared in 1988.[5] Since then much more has appeared, including Heidegger's seminars on Plato's *Parmenides* (1930/31), the *Phaedrus* (1932) in 2012,[6] and the multiple considerations of the cave allegory between 2010 and 2020.[7] Much of this material is yet to be translated. Nearly the whole of Heidegger's commentary on Plato was until then known only from his publication in 1942 of *Plato's Doctrine of Truth*,[8] for which no English translation existed until 1962.[9]

The apparent central contention of this 1942 essay, that Plato was the inauguration of the transformation of the essence of truth (*Wahrheit*) from disclosure (ἀλήθεια) to correctness,[10] namely the correctness (ὀρθότης) of the gaze was referred to by Paul Friedländer and others as a "historical construction", which Heidegger later modified as untenable in its 1942 form, accepting, as Walter Bröcker had shown in an essay of 1958, that Melissos had used the word ὀρθότης of what is at the same time ἀληθής long in advance of anything Plato would later say.[11]

What is not glimpsed in the character of this particular controversy is Heidegger's unswerving determination to throw into question the essential connections that Plato makes between being (τὸ ὄν), ἀλήθεια (which we will leave untranslated for now), and apprehension as ἰδεῖν (the aorist infinitive of the verb ὁράω, to see, to look) in its relation to the Greek word

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[5] Martin Heidegger, *Vom Wesen der Wahrheit: zu Platons Höhlengleichnis und Theätet*, edited by Hermann Mörchen (1997 [1988]) (GA34). Translated by Ted Sadler as *Martin Heidegger: The Essence of Truth*. London: Athlone (Continuum), 2002.

[6] Martin Heidegger, *Seminare: Platon – Aristoteles – Augustinus*, edited by Mark Machalski (2012) (GA83).

[7] See Martin Heidegger: *Sein und Wahrheit: 1. Die Grundfrage der Philosophie*, *2. Vom Wesen der Wahrheit*, edited by Hartmut Tietjen, 2001 (GA36/37); the 'Ἀλήθεια und Höhlengleichnis' material from 1931 in *Vorträge*, edited by Günther Neumann (2016) (GA80.1), pp. 457–486; and 'Platons Lehre von der Wahrheit. Eine Auslegung des Höhlengleichnisses (Politeia VII) (29 April 1941', in *Vorträge*, edited by Günther Neumann (2020) (GA80.2), pp. 817–847. There is a preliminary outline of the shape that the analysis of the allegory of the cave would take already in the Plato discussions of *Die Grundbegriffe der antiken Philosophie* (GA22), edited by Franz-Karl Blust (1993), translated by Richard Rojcewicz as *Basic Concepts of Ancient Philosophy* (Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press, 2007).

[8] This was initially published in a collection edited by Ernesto Grassi with Walter F. Otto and Karl Reinhardt (eds.), *Geistige Überlieferung: das zweite Jahrbuch* (Berlin: Helmut Küpper, 1942)pp. 96–124, republished in 1947 and 1949, and then included in the collection *Wegmarken* from 1967. See 'Platons Lehre von der Wahrheit (1931/32, 1940)', in *Wegmarken*, edited by Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann (1996 [1967]) (GA9). Translated into English in several versions, but esp. by Thomas Sheehan and William McNeill as 'Plato's Doctrine of Truth (1931/32, 1940)' in William McNeill (ed.), *Pathmarks* (New York NY: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 155–182.

[9] See 'Plato's Doctrine of Truth' translated by John Barlow in William Barrett and Henry D. Aiken (eds.), *Philosophy in the Twentieth Century*, vol. 3 (New York: Random House), pp. 173–192.

[10] *See* Martin Heidegger, 'Platons Lehre von der Wahrheit (1931/32, 1940)' (GA9), pp. 230–232.

[11] Heidegger did this during a seminar conducted by Bröcker. A full discussion of the issues at work here are contained in my essay 'Heidegger's Parmenides', in Laurence Hemming and Aaron Turner (eds.), *Heidegger and Parmenides*, pp. 22–28.

ἰδέα (the substantive form, the noun, the "seeable thing") as such. These essential connections are already *centrally* in question in the text we are about to set off in considering.

Aaron has already circulated Ingeborg Schüßler's *Nachwort der Herausgeberin* or *Editor's Afterword* to the volume, which contains much important information about the transcript, the sources from which it was compiled, and its history. I would draw your attention only to one thing: with the exception of the later discovery of Hans Jonas's additional notes on the "Aristotle" section of the lecture series, Schüßler received both the copy of Heidegger's own handwritten script for the lectures and a typewritten version of Michael Moser's extensive record from Heidegger's own hand, in 1975, the year before his death. In other words, Heidegger was well aware, and almost certainly curated to a good degree, the contents of both. Copies of the typewritten material were passed around (they exist for many of his lecture courses, often corrected by him personally) – Jacob Klein, just for one, almost certainly a copy (it is possible he was present for these lectures). This practice of making transcripts was, and to some extent still is, a not uncommon practice in many European university contexts.

What *is* a lecture transcript of this kind, and how are we to read it? Transcripts of lectures of significant thinkers continue to turn up in various contexts: some of Hegel's, previously unknown, turned up from an attic only a few years ago. Can we say transcripts like this are the *ipsissima verba* of the thinkers concerned? How do they differ from the meticulously curated text of an author's published works? There is no final answer to this question: but then, as anyone who has dealt with a determined editor or copy-editor, there is often not even a final answer to the status of a published work. You will find various comments from Heidegger commentators about the status of the *Gesamtausgabe* (Theodore Kisiel has published one of the more irascible of these):[12] almost every thinker of note leaves behind a problematic archive (Nietzsche's, left unprotected in the hands of his sister, would be a case in point), and "critical editions" can be as destructive as less "scientific" ones. The Hegel scholar J. N. Findlay, for instance, expressed cautious doubt about the "labours of source-disentanglement" that formed the basis of the *Akademie* critical edition of Hegel's work.[13] The problems with Hegel's archive, and disambiguating the strands of interpretation introduced to the so-called *Freundschaft* edition of Hegel with the worthiest of intentions, are notorious.

[12] Theodore Kisiel, 'Heidegger's Gesamtausgabe: An International Scandal of Scholarship', in *Philosophy Today*, vol. 39 (1995), pp. 3–15.
[13] J. N. Findlay, 'Foreword' to *Hegel's Philosophy of Nature*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), p. vii.

Hartmut Buchner reports a conversation with Heidegger which is worth repeating in full:

> When I spoke with Heidegger, in the context of the publication of lecture courses in the old *Freundesausgabe* of Hegel's works and the lack of clarity surrounding the issue of lecture transcripts, their publication, and their compilation, he said: "You know what I have said in *On the Way to Language* and elsewhere about lecture transcripts, namely, that they are murky sources. I stand by that, and I only hope that I do not one day suffer the same fate as Hegel".[14]

What are we to make of this "murky source" we are about to spend two years studying? Schüßler reminds us that the *Sophist* lectures "have as their sustaining basic theme the relation of truth (ἀλήθεια) and being (ὄν)".[15] Too rarely this relation, which runs like a thread all the way through *Sein und Zeit*, has been overlooked in favour of the *Seinsfrage*, the question of being. However this relation, which in fact names the *presencing* of what is present, is what allows what it means for *being* to be a question to emerge at all. Too much of the commentary, where it even exists, on these lectures and the place from which they stem has focused on the character or supposed "accuracy" or dependability or whatever you want to call it, of Heidegger's reading of Plato.[16] You can decide on that for yourselves, as we tackle with Heidegger the Greek of Plato's dialogue *the Sophist*. What Heidegger is interested in is the extent to which, and how, Plato lets us into this relation between ἀλήθεια and ὄν, namely the coming into presence (from out of concealment) of what is present. For the consideration of

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[14] Hartmut Buchner, 'Fragmentarisches', in Günther Neske (ed.), *Erinnerung an Martin Heidegger* (Pfullingen: Neske Verlag, 1977), pp. 50–51. "Als ich mit Heidegger anläßlich der Vorlesungsveröffentlichungen in der alten Freundesausgabe der Hegel-Werke und ihrer Undurchsichtigkeit über das Problem von Nachschriften, ihrer Veröffentlichung und Kompilation sprach, sagte er: 'Sie wissen doch, was ich in 'Unterwegs zur Sprache' und auch sonst zuweilen über Vorlesungsnachschriften gesagt habe, daß sie nämlich trübe Quellen sind. Dabei bleibe ich, und ich hoffe nur, daß es mir nicht einmal ähnlich ergeht wie Hegel'."

[15] Ingeborg Schüßler 'Nachwort der Herausgeberin', in Martin Heidegger, *Platon: Sophistes* (GA19), p. 664. "Die 'Sophistes' Vorlesung hat zu ihrem alles tragenden Grundthema das Verhältnis von Wahrheit (ἀλήθεια) und Sein (ὄν).

[16] Several studies "decide" for Plato over Heidegger, without really ever bringing themselves into relation with *how* Heidegger understands Plato. Perhaps foremost among these is Stanley Rosen's *The Question of Being: A Reversal of Heidegger* (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 1993); but so too does Francisco Gonzalez in his *A Question of Dialogue: Plato and Heidegger* (University Park PA: Pennsylvania University Press, 2009). Even Antoine Pageau-St. Hilaire, in his *Heidegger and German Platonism: The Shadows of Marburg* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2026), concludes that the post-Marburg thinkers he engages with (Leo Strauss, Hans-Georg Gadamer and Gerhard Krüger) (p. 271) "show a deeper understanding of Platonic philosophy than Heidegger, but also provide convincing critiques of Heidegger." This begs the question of whether a contest in expounding "Platonic philosophy" (whatever that is supposed to be, since not even Plato named such a thing) was at any time ever Heidegger's stated goal? Pageau announces (p. 61) with some clarity his reasons for setting Strauss, Gadamer and Krüger against Heidegger, and then adds "there are in Heidegger's critique of Plato problems and limits" which are addressed in the thinkers who are themselves "not limited to Heidegger's reading of Plato". What he does not do is examine with sufficient clarity what Heidegger's promise to his students in the 1920s "of an *origin*al access to the thought of Plato and Aristotle" really means, either at the time, or later (in relation to the discussion in Heidegger of *der Anfang*, or show how Plato is *also* drawing on that origin – which is already a contention even in the *Sophist* lectures themselves.

the relationship between ἀλήθεια and ὄν did not *begin* either formally or thematically with Plato, but above all with Parmenides. The extent to which Heidegger's understanding of Parmenides is already present in these lectures, and indeed in *Sein und Zeit*, has all too rarely been examined with the necessary clarity.[17]

We will see Heidegger emphasise, not once, but several times, Parmenides great "discovery" (*Fund*, Heidegger calls it) (GA19:444), "das Sein gegenüber dem Seienden zu sehen" (GA19:439) "of seeing being over against what (already) is". This *gegenüber*, "opposed to", "over-against", "in distinction to", even "with respect to", must be understood through the verbal infinitive *sehen*, *seeing*. It is the *seeing* that itself *is itself the bringing into* unconcealment (ἀλήθεια) *being* (εἶναι, ἔμμεναι, ἐστίν, ὄν) in relation to what is present (ὄν, ἐόν).[18] Seeing, apprehending, bringing into unconcealment, ἀλήθεια, is nothing other than νοεῖν, "thinking", the unifying activity of the soul.[19] This was, Heidegger says in the *Sophist* lectures, at this stage "unclear in itself", *sich selbst unklar*: thus *murky*, as a step, the *first* step (taken by Parmenides above all), to seeing what is an "apparently trivial saying" (*scheinbar trivialen Satz*): *das Seiende ist*. We could translate it in numerous ways, and people have. Rojcewicz and Schuwer say: "that beings are". This is *exactly not* what *das Seiende ist* says, since the number of both the noun (*das Seiende*) and the verb (*ist*) is in each case *singular*, not *plural*. *Das Seiende ist* says: *being itself is*. Moreover we will see, but not until nearly the very end of the lecture course, that Heidegger does *not* credit Plato with this insight, but allows it to rest where it belongs, at the very inception,[20] and as what Parmenides *sees*.

What then is murky in these lecture transcripts? For unless we see the murkiness emerging from out of *being* itself, from out of the *history* of what is here to be thought, we will not understand what is at issue here. What was the issue, which Heidegger himself well understood, with lecture transcripts and the *Freundschaft* edition of Hegel, that brings itself back before us, here? The problematic texts above all were indeed the ones on which Findlay commented, namely the *Encyclopaedia* volumes, the *Rechtsphilosophie* and so forth. Yet these

[17] Daniel Dahlstrom was one of the few earlier commentators to draw attention to this, and even then only tentatively. *See* his 'Heidegger's Initial Interpretation of Parmenides: an Excursus in the 1922 Lectures on Aristotelian Texts', in *The Review of Metaphysics*, vol. 70 (2017), pp. 507–527 (republished in *Heidegger and Parmenides*, pp. 45–60). Theodore Kisiel touches on Parmenides in several places, but most commonly in relation to Aristotle, in his *The Genesis of Being and Time*, preferring to name Parmenides at the inception of the "hedonism" of "the long history of the Western 'metaphysics of presence'" (p. 299). Only once does he see what is really at issue (at p. 307), and then he ascribes the credit to Plato and not to Parmenides himself.

[18] Parmenides at times uses the archaic forms ἔμμεναι, ἐόν, for εἶναι, ὄν.

[19] Nothing less than Parmenides DK 28 B3 is named here: τὸ γὰρ αὐτό νοεῖν ἐστὶν τε καὶ εἶναι.

[20] That what Parmenides has to say *is* the inception of Western thought, but also that being itself always is *inceptual*.

were the texts from which Hegel himself *taught*. He wrote the texts from which he himself taught. We might think that the murkiness emerges from whether or not the texts were sufficiently clearly Hegel's own word. But they were. Hegel did not just teach by announcing the text, which the students bought editions of, and in any case had open before them. He read each paragraph, and then expounded its meaning.

The *friends* were the editors of the editions of the ten years after his death, who were Hegel's most esteemed pupils and associates, among them Ludwig Michelet, Eduard Gans, Ludwig Boumann, his own son Karl, and several others. What they did was to add material taken from student transcripts, not even from when these lectures were given, but from other occasions (the texts of which in some cases took more than a century after Hegel's death to reach a public audience) so-called *Zusätze* or "Additions" which expounded Hegel's original word.[21] Despite fierce academic disputes led by numerous commentators, almost every word of the additions was also a word Hegel had himself been recorded as at one time having spoken. What then did the *friends* think they were doing? The aim of the *Freundschaft* edition was surely to recreate the sheer excitement and energy of the lecture-hall, in the pages of the written text. To reopen, not just Hegel's words, but *what became present* for those receiving them. The question is one of *presence*, namely, of *being* itself. The question at issue is not one of "accuracy" or "certainty" or "trustworthiness" of the text (ὀρθος λόγος, ὀρθότης), but of *understanding*, and so νοεῖν. The *friends* wanted Hegel and the understanding he brought with him to presence yet again *now*, as it had *then*. As Heidegger himself recognised, the device for doing this introduced not clarity, but confusion: murkiness.

How then must *we* proceed? A primary motive for bringing together this group as a seminar in Heidegger and Classical Thought has been the contention, shared by my colleague Aaron Turner, that an adequate understanding of Heidegger's thought can be attained only by recognising two matters. The first is Heidegger's relationship and indebtedness to the sources of antiquity, and the extent to which he himself was immersed in the powerful engagement with antiquity that came to fruition in many of the Germanic centres of learning in the nineteenth and earlier years of the twentieth century. This is a long and complex history, but to have a sense of it is essential, if Heidegger is to be better understood. The second is to understand the wider *philosophical,* as well as *philological*, context in those Germanic centres of learning. To grapple with these questions is also to grapple with the murkiness Heidegger and I have named. For just as with Hegel, so with Heidegger, what we have is indeed a record,

[21] Much of the material was taken from lectures given during Hegel's *Jena* period.

including at Heidegger's own hand, of what he had actually *said*. What a word says, and what it means, however, are often different things. Never mind authorial intention: Foucault's and Derrida's concerns with what or who is an author merely the late and distorted echoes of a far more important question: what did Heidegger (what even did Hegel, but that is not our concern today) think the students would *hear* in what he said? And what will we ourselves *hear* of what they *heard* then? You will see that the question has to do, not with subjectivity, nor with the unity or possibilities of subversion of the text, but with *presence*, namely how and in what ways will *how* Plato addresses us, *how* Heidegger addresses us, come to presence, in the handling of the relationship of ἀλήθεια and ὄν? How will we *ourselves* enter in to *das Sehen des Seins gegenüber das Seiende*, in respect of what is brought before us? What presences here for us in respect of our considerations?

The history of the study of Plato, and Plato's emergence into modernity is quite different from that of Aristotle's – a central contention of the *Sophist* lectures themselves. Metaphysics, if it can unashamedly be traced back to Aristotle and his interpreters, is a tradition in consequence of not Plato, but Neoplatonism. Neoplatonism, for all its title bears Plato's name, is itself *also* an Aristotelian affair. If Aristotle arrived in the Germanic centres of learning through Mediaeval scholasticism, through the debates of the Arab (Islamic and Jewish) thinkers with the Christian interpreters of the Latin West, a Plato unburdened by Neoplatonism makes an altogether more hesitant and quieter journey by a different route. If the works of Aristotle entered the Latin tongue as early as the twelfth century, Plato had to wait until Ficino and the Italian *Renaissance* to speak the Latin language of the schools. Plato emerged directly into German, especially through Schleiermacher's translations, from his preserved Greek texts. Schleiermacher, like Heidegger, was a master of the German tongue, and, more importantly, was a most perspicacious intellect. Neologisms, and the mind-bending variety of uses of the German participle *seiend*, and its substantive form *das Seiend* (**not** *das Seiende*) attributed to Heidegger are in fact Schleiermacher's uses (*das Seiendsein* is almost undoubtedly one of these inventions). It is Schleiermacher who draws attention to the way that being (εἶναι) as one (ἕν) is not merely to be understood in Plato as the "generally" one, but indicates in each case a determinacy (*ein Bestimmtes*),[22] and so is *finite*.

German philosophy and classical philology throughout the nineteenth century was therefore underway to rediscovering a Plato *behind* Neoplatonism and behind the metaphysics

[22] This was also understood by Natorp. See Alan Kim, *Plato in Germany: Kant – Natorp – Heidegger* (Sankt Augustin: Academia, 2010), p. 109 and n. 69.

of the Middle Ages and the Early Modern period. It is in this context, which we do not have time to elaborate at greater length, that Heidegger began these lectures in Marburg.

The emphasis on Plato's *Ideenlehre* or "doctrine of the ideas" emerged in the later nineteenth century. In 1866 Hermann Cohen published his *The Platonic Doctrine of Ideas Developed Psychologically*, but he then moved away from a psychological to a more formal account of the doctrine of the ideas, and in 1878 published *Plato's Doctrine of Ideas and Mathematics*.[23] It is sometimes missed that the 1885, second and substantially revised, edition of Cohen's principal work on Kant, *Kant's Theory of Experience* (first published in 1871) added significant considerations of both Plato and Aristotle.[24] Marburg became, not only the centre of neo-Kantianism (with Ernst Cassirer's close association with the movement from the distance of Hamburg), but the centre of a specific, and new, interpretation of Plato. In 1903 Natorp published his with his own monumental *Platos Ideenlehre*, further revised in 1921 with a substantial new final section (the main body was not revised).[25] The English translation of Natorp's *Ideenlehre* concludes with an important essay by André Laks (first published in French) tracing the relation between Cohen's and Natorp's interpretation of Plato.[26]

The philologist and notable Plato scholar Paul Friedländer arrived in Marburg in 1920, publishing the first volume of his substantial work on Plato in 1928. It was this work, in its revised form in 1954, that attacked Heidegger's etymology of the word ἀλήθεια, an attack he withdrew in the third and final edition of 1964.[27]

There have been a number of notable large-scale studies of the Marburg school, some drawing attention to Heidegger's place (or otherwise) within it. Most notable among these are Karl-Heinz Lembeck's study of Cohen, published as a *Habilitation* in Würzburg in 1994.[28]

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[23] Hermann Cohen: 'Die platonische Ideenlehre psychologisch entwickelt', in *Zeitschrift für Völkerpsychologie und Sprachlehre*, vol. 4 (1866), pp. 403–464; *Platons Ideenlehre und die Mathematik*. Marburg: Marburg University, 1878.

[24] Hermann Cohen, *Kants Theorie der Erfahrung* (Berlin: Dummler, 1885 [1871]).

[25] Paul Natorp, *Platos Ideenlehre : eine Einführung in den Idealismus* (Darmstadt : Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1961 [1903, 1921]). Translated as *Plato's Theory of Ideas: An Introduction to Idealism* (International Plato Studies), by Vasilis Politis and John Connolly and edited by Vasilis Politis (Sankt Augustin: Academia Verlag, 2004).

[26] André Laks, 'Platon entre Cohen et Natorp: Aspects de l'interprétation néokantienne des idées platoniciennes', in *Cahiers de philosophie politique et juridique*, No. 26 (1994), pp. 15–53. Translated by Alan Kim as 'Plato between Cohen and Natorp: Aspects of the neo-Kantian Interpretation of the Platonic Ideas', in *Plato's Theory of Ideas*, pp. 453–478.

[27] Paul Friedländer, *Platon: Seinswahrheit und Lebenswirklichkeit* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1928). Second German edition, 1954; 3rd edition, 1964. Translated by Hans Meyerhoff as *Plato: An Introduction* (2nd edition) (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1958): 3rd edition 1969.

[28] Karl-Heinz Lembeck, *Platon in Marburg. Platonrezeption und Philosophie-Geschichtsphilosophie bei Cohen und Natorp* (Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann, 1994).

Jürgen Stolzenberg has written a wider study of Cohen, Natorp and the early Heidegger,[29] and more recently Julien Servois published a further major study of Natorp.[30] In 2010 Alan Kim, now teaching at the Stonybrook campus of the State University of New York, published his vast and detailed study *Plato in Germany*, and most recently Antoine Pageau-St. Hilaire, who was for a while part of this group, published his *Heidegger and German Platonism*.[31] Antoine's work is particularly strong in drawing attention to the connection between Heidegger's reading of Aristotle and the Marburg school (and to reminding us of Leo Strauss's generosity in assessing Heidegger's formidable command of Aristotle's thought). Not least, he reminds us that what was at issue, at least to some extent, was the question of whether Heidegger would succeed Natorp at Marburg.[32]

Nevertheless, these large-scale studies all suffer from the vastness of their subject, and from what one reviewer (in this case of Alan Kim's study) calls "the trees obstructing the view of the forest". The reviewer identifies a problem each of these studies suffers from, of how to evaluate "the importance of Natorp for Heidegger", and finds that in each case there is something of a reduction, namely to "the broader story of 'Plato in Germany'." [33]

It is with this in mind that I wish to draw my remarks to a close. Before doing that, I want to note that the broader story of Plato in Germany is no trivial matter. One of Natorp's most important publications was his 1918 two-volume *Deutscher Weltberuf*, or *Germany's World-Calling*.[34] Heidegger knew of this text, because Husserl wrote warmly of it to him in September 1918.[35] There is no time to consider this here, but Aaron Turner has been investigating in considerable depth the question of how German self-identity was tied up and into the emergence of a specifically *German* philosophical tradition from the aftermath of the

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[29] Jürgen Stolzenberg, *Ursprung und System. Probleme der Begründung systematischer Philosophie im Werk Hermann Cohens, Paul Natorps und beim frühen Martin Heidegger* (Göttingen: De Gruyter Brill, 1995).
[30] Julien Servois, *Paul Natorp et la théorie platonicienne des Idées* (Villeneuve d'Ascq: Presses Universitaires du Septentrion, 2004).
[31] Alan Kim, *Plato in Germany: Kant – Natorp – Heidegger* (International Plato Studies) (Sankt Augustin: Academia, 2010); Antoine Pageau-St. Hilaire, *Heidegger and German Platonism: The Shadows of Marburg* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2026).
[32] Natorp was instrumental in this, encouraging Heidegger to produce the so-called *Natorp Bericht* or "Natorp Report" as preparatory to a book to be authored by Heidegger (never in fact written) on Aristotle. *See* 'Phänomenologische Interpretationen zu Aristoteles (Anzeige der hermeneutischen Situation) 1922', in *Phänomenologische Interpretationen ausgewählter Abhandlungen des Aristoteles zur Ontologie und Logik*, edited by Günther Neumann (2005), pp. 343–399. First published in the *Dilthey Jahrbuch* in 1989.
[33] Catherine H. Zuckert, 'Review of Plato in Germany: Kant – Natorp – Heidegger', in *Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews*, August 2010. https://ndpr.nd.edu/reviews/plato-in-germany-kant-natorp-heidegger/ Accessed 13-10-2026.
[34] Paul Natorp, *Deutscher Weltberuf* (2 vols.) (Jena : Eugen Diederichs, 1918).
[35] Edmund Husserl, letter to Martin Heidegger of 10th September 2018, reported in 'Der Briefwechsel zwischen Martin Heidegger und Edmund Husserl', in 'Heidegger und Husserl', *Heidegger Jahrbuch* vol. 6 (2012) (Freiburg i. Br. / Munich, Karl Alber Verlag), p. 18 (n. 39).

Thirty Year war and its aftermath. Heidegger's, Natorp's, even Husserl's (to name but a few) Germanic nationalism is a historical and philosophically driven affair which has little to do with the events leading up to and following 1933. The limitation of some of the literature in this area is in its failure to understand the question of German *destiny* in the phrase "Plato in Germany". About this we unfortunately able to say no more at this stage, given the time constraints upon us.

From what I have said here, we can catch a glimpse of the historical place from out of which these lectures speak. Those participating in the lectures would most certainly have been familiar with Cohen's and Natorp's central works: with the *Ideenlehre* and the second edition of *Kant's Theory of Experience*. Above all else, Heidegger himself would have been conscious of what it meant to enter into a dialogue over Plato at Marburg. In the coming months we must not lose sight of any of this.

The *Sophist* lectures open with a commemoration of Natorp, who had died only a short time before the lecture course commenced. When we begin to read the text itself, we will open with the words of Heidegger's commemoration. What is extraordinary about this encomium is the extent to which in it Heidegger draws our attention to the figure of Aristotle. This is little discussed in the wider commentary on Natorp's *Ideenlehre*, despite that two chapters of his *Ideenlehre* are dedicated to Aristotle.

How are the Platonic ideas to be understood? What is the meaning of what Aristotle himself calls the "idea of ideas" (a phrase unknown from what remains to us of Plato's own words), namely the "idea of the good" (ἰδέα τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ)? Friedländer especially, but he is not alone, interpreted the understanding of the ideas given in the *Phaedrus* as different to what is said in the *Republic*. The *Phaedrus* speaks of the ὑπερουράνιος τόπος, which holds within it "the colourless, shapeless, intangible truly existing substance" (ἡ ἀχρώματός τε καὶ ἀσχημάτιστος καὶ ἀναφὴς οὐσία ὄντως οὖσα) visible only to νοῦς.[36] Plotinus and the Middle Platonists especially read this place "beyond the heavens" literally, as naming a region, In the *Republic*, Plato speaks of ὁ νοητὸς τόπος the *intelligible* place,[37] which is distinguished from ὁ ὁρατὸς τόπος, the place of visibility. Like Parmenides, Plato offers no formal explication of what formally he means in his use of the word τόπος. Cohen and Natorp in particular opposed any Neoplatonic "region" for the ideas, understanding the ideas as *laws* of thinking – Natorp

[36] Pl. *Phaed*. 247 c–d.
[37] Pl. *Res. Pub.* 508 b–c; 517 b.

argues that Plato's doctrine of recollection is his uncovering of the *a priori*, in line with the neo-Kantian interpretation of knowledge as transcendental method.

Nowhere in the *Sophist* does Heidegger deal with this directly. In a later discussion of Plato, but one still from his time in Marburg, Heidegger also explicitly rejects that that the ideas reside in some region "beyond the heavens", but he describes this as an *ontological* problem in Plato, namely that "being (*Sein*) is above beyond all present being (*Seiende*)". This is because "the question concerning being transcends itself. *Ontological problem turns itself over! Metontological*; θεολογική; being as a whole." Heidegger immediately proceeds "ἰδέα ἀγαθοῦ" with a reference to the *Sophist* (242 c ff).[38]

It is hear that I want to conclude, for here is the point of greatest murkiness (Heidegger later says "what lies here is obscure"). The latter books of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* express what are seen as the strongest criticisms of Plato, and yet they contain numerous matters unknown from the dialogues. Aristotle and Plato are often said, therefore, to lie in sharpest opposition to each other. Yet in order to understand this opposition, it becomes necessary to posit Plato's the existence of his "unwritten doctrines", to explain away the ferocity of Aristotle's criticism, or, still more obscurely (as Natorp had done with Aristotle's *Metaphysics* K) to doubt the authorship of some parts of the *Metaphysics* altogether. Heidegger proceeds in an entirely opposite way: he implies that even when Plato and Aristotle are in opposition, they are in opposition over and within *the same*.

The principal obscurities in Plato concern the relation of the ἀγαθόν to λόγος; and next, of the relation of number to the distinction between the visible and the intelligible (a question still unresolved even to this day); and then, above all, the meaning of τόπος in relation to being (*seiend*), namely ὄν. Thus by leading us into an understanding of Aristotle's elucidation of them, namely the *speaking* of what is disclosed, or ἀλήθευειν, of the abstracted character of number over against the *yet more abstracted* of "seeing as a whole" (θεολογική, *das Seiende im Ganzen*), namely θεωρεῖν, and τόπος, "place" itself, we are led *into* the most highly determinate thinking of Plato in his *Sophist.*

Underlying all this is Parmenides, above all in his third fragment: τὸ γὰρ αὐτό νοεῖν έστιν, τε καὶ εἶναι. For the same is for thinking (seeing), as is for being.

[38] Martin Heidegger, *Die Grundbegriffe der antiken Philosophie* (GA22), p. 106. Sein Ist Hinaus Über Alles Seiende. [. . .] Die Frage nach dem Sein transzendiert sich selbst. Ontologisches Problem schlägt um! Metontologisch; θεολογική; das Seiende im Ganzen, ἰδέα ἀγαθοῦ." The full description of the problematic is given in the Appendix, with an excerpt from the "Mörchen transcript" of the lecture course, §42, p. 261 f.