ON THE BEGINNING OF PHILOSOPHY:

HEIDEGGER'S CONVERSATION WITH PLATO AND ARISTOTLE

AN ABSTRACT

SUBMITTED ON THE 30TH DAY OF JUNE OF 2015

TO THE DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

OF THE SCHOOL OF LIBERAL ARTS

OF TULANE UNIVERSITY

FOR THE DEGREE

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MASTERS

BY

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An Abstract

This thesis considers how Martin Heidegger treats “wonder” (thaumazein) in Plato and Aristotle versus how it appears to be treated by them. The introduction outlines how the problem of wonder arises when Heidegger mentions particular instances from Plato’s *Theaetetus* and Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* as the basis for his claim that philosophy originates in wonder. In chapter one, I analyze each of the twenty-four occurrences of wonder in Plato’s *Theaetetus*, beginning with a preliminary discussion of Heidegger’s delimitation of wonder from the wondrous. In chapter two, I examine the relation between philosophy and wonder in chapters one and two of Book Alpha of Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*. In chapter three, I begin by considering Heidegger’s later lecture, *What is that—Philosophy?*, before turning to his earlier writing, *The Need and Necessity of the First Beginning and the Need and Necessity of an Other Way to Question and to Begin*. I end by reflecting on Heidegger’s account of pre-Socratic versus Socratic philosophy in these writings and consider how Leo Strauss seems to provide an alternative to Heidegger’s analysis. Finally, in the conclusion, I discuss the relation between wonder and Eros in Plato and Aristotle.
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Dedication

To all those who have awakened in me the desire to know, whether through words or looks.

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I wish to give special consideration to M.E. for piloting my interest in the human soul over the course of many years, and caring for my own.
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<td>BB</td>
<td>“<em>Theaetetus</em> Commentary” in <em>The Being of the Beautiful</em>, S. Benardete</td>
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<td>CM</td>
<td><em>The City and Man</em>, L. Strauss</td>
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<td>HSPP</td>
<td><em>Heidegger, Strauss and the Premises of Philosophy: On Original Forgetting</em>, R. Velkley</td>
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<td>K</td>
<td><em>Plato’s Trilogy</em>, J. Klein</td>
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<td>LL</td>
<td>“The Ladder of Love” in Plato’s <em>Symposium</em>, A. Bloom</td>
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<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>“The Need and Necessity of the First Beginning and the Need and Necessity of an Other Way to Question and to Begin” in <em>Basic Questions of Philosophy</em>, M. Heidegger</td>
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<tr>
<td>NRH</td>
<td><em>Natural Right and History</em>, L. Strauss</td>
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<td>PPL</td>
<td><em>The Phaedo: A Platonic Labyrinth</em>, R. Burger</td>
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<td>PT</td>
<td>“Plato’s <em>Theaetetus</em>” in <em>The Argument of the Action</em>, S. Benardete</td>
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<td>SP</td>
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<td>W</td>
<td><em>What is that—Philosophy?</em>, M. Heidegger</td>
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For this is an experience which is characteristic of a philosopher, this wonder: this is where philosophy begins and nowhere else.

—Plato, *Theaetetus*

For by way of wondering, people both now and at first began to philosophize.

—Aristotle, *Metaphysics*
**Introduction: The Problem of Wonder**

Ancient philosophy is commonly said to begin in wonder, while modern philosophy is said to begin in doubt. Martin Heidegger affirms these beginnings in his 1955 lecture *What is that—Philosophy?* Heidegger speaks of philosophy as a mood in which the question of Being is asked (W, 34). He continues by speaking of other moods, or beginnings, like that of Descartes, before ultimately saying that “wonder” (*thaumazein*) “rules philosophy through and through” (W, 33), and is therefore the fundamental mood of the philosophic tradition. To support this claim, Heidegger quotes passages from Plato’s *Theaetetus* and Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* that seem to say wonder is the beginning of philosophy. In his 1936 writing, *The Need and Necessity of the First Beginning and the Need and Necessity of an Other Way to Question and to Begin*, Heidegger quotes the same passages from Plato and Aristotle, while discerning further between “wonder” (*Erstaunen*) and the “wondrous” (*Erstaunliche*): the extraordinary type that originates philosophy and the ordinary type that occurs in everyday life. Having recapitulated these particular quotations from the *Theaetetus* and *Metaphysics*, respectively, Heidegger seems to view these writings as preeminent for understanding not only ‘what’ philosophy is, but how philosophizing may occur in the future. In the process, Heidegger provides “a way” to view the origin of philosophy in wonder (W, 3), and thus shows how the Socratic

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1 Heidegger says the philosophy of the early-Greeks begins in wonder (W, 17), whereas modern philosophy, beginning with Descartes, originates in doubt (W, 34).
beginning differs from that of both the early Greeks and his own conception of the need for a new beginning.²

The first in a series of dialogues that focus on the trial and death of Socrates, Plato’s *Theaetetus* asks the question, ‘What is knowledge?’ (145e9). No right answer is given, though several incorrect ones are (K, 145).³ The dialogue begins with a dramatic exchange between two characters, Euclides and Terpsion. This Platonic part of the dialogue is soon followed by a Euclidean part, a reading of Euclides’ written record of the conversation Socrates had just before his trial with the young mathematician Theaetetus. In the work as a whole “wonder” appears twenty-four times, but it drops out halfway through. It first appears in the second line, when Terpsion describes himself in a state of wonder that he sought but couldn’t discover Euclides in the marketplace (*Theaetetus* 142a2-3). Wonder, seeking, not discovering: already the opening drama points to a sequence of actions that characterize Socratic inquiry and the search for knowledge, beginning with wonder. Of the twenty-four occurrences of wonder in the text, Socrates speaks the central one(s), the first: wondering, he says, belongs to the philosopher, for there is no other beginning of philosophy (155d3).⁴ Can philosophy begin in wonder and nowhere else?

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² I treat Heidegger’s writings here separately, each as a whole, and together, inasmuch as they appear related and shed light on Heidegger’s conception of philosophy, while noting some differences. However, I leave open what changes may or may not occur in his thinking between the two periods. Some of these differences, such as the emphasis on language in the later work, may be clear enough to the reader, but a deconstruction of the two periods is not the focus of this writing.

³ See Martin Heidegger “An Interpretation of Plato’s *Theaetetus* with Regard to the Question of the Essence of Untruth” in *Being and Truth*, 179.

⁴ Seth Benardete recounts Strauss’ comment that based on his own experience, the center of an odd number of things in Plato turned out to be the most important (SP, 412). In my experience of the *Theaetetus*, this seems to hold true to the ‘center’ of the even number of mentions. Plato seems to suggest
In the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle seems to present a similar account, “for by way of wondering, people both now and at first began to philosophize” (982b13-14). But Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* and Plato’s *Theaetetus* each also appear to point toward what Heidegger calls ordinary types of wonder—amazement, admiration and astonishment (N, 136, 142-143)—which he differentiates from the “essence of wonder” (N, 143), *das* (“that”) which compels us to philosophize (W, 4). Heidegger, however, only mentions the occurrences of wonder in Plato and Aristotle that speak of the beginning of philosophy. This essay aims to show how Heidegger’s treatment of wonder rests on a particular reading of Plato and Aristotle, in which Heidegger overlooks the way in which Plato and Aristotle speak of the ordinary type of wonder—the wondrous. Ultimately, I conclude that Plato’s *Theaetetus* and Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* intend to cast doubt on their own promulgations of philosophy as originating in wonder, inasmuch as they internally correct for the notion that wonder begins philosophy, by indicating the relation between wonder (*thaumazein*) and the desire to know (*eros*). Plato and Aristotle, I think, provide a way of doubting Heidegger’s disinterring of the ancients and his futural project as well.

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that we put the two together, insofar as to answer the question of how philosophy begins, it seems two things must come together.
Chapter One: Wonder in Plato’s *Theaetetus*

A. Preliminary Remarks on Heidegger

i. How the Wondrous Provides Access to the Fundamental Problems

In *The Need and Necessity of the First Beginning and the Need and Necessity of an Other Way to Question and to Begin*, Heidegger spends much of his preliminary investigation into the essence of wonder by delimitating its mode of marveling from various other modes of marveling. He finds that these other modes masquerade under the name of wonder, but lack its extreme, and therefore disposing, nature. As noted, Heidegger describes this differential in experience as the wondrous and wonder. When the wondrous takes the mode of amazement (*Sichwundern*), admiration (*Bewundern*) or astonishment (*Staunen*), it fails to reach the ‘height’—the time-space—of what Heidegger suggests is the essence of wonder, which disposes into, and thus marks the beginning of, philosophy (N, 135).

“The wondrous is for us in the first place something that stands out and therefore is remarkable,” it appears synonymous with “the curious or the marvelous, something that arouses the desire for amazement,” in that the desire engages in a way that pulls the unusual apart from the usual and sets it against it (N, 136). This kind of wonder “form[s] a background” of “the known, the understandable, and the explicable,” insofar as the unusualness of the usual is lost in becoming known in a way that is “not further attended to” (N, 136-137). These lesser forms of marveling thus denote an “inability to explain and ignorance of the reason” (N, 137). If “amazement and marveling have various
degrees and levels” (N, 137), as Heidegger suggests, then these modes seem pivotal to understanding knowledge and the way techne transforms unconcealedness into correctness, whereby philosophy is ultimately said to be neither needed nor necessary owing to the primordial displacement of wonder in relation to Being as “absent and denied [to] us” (N, 158).

As a dialogue full of characters asking the question ‘what is knowledge,’ Plato’s *Theaetetus*, I think, offers a unique insight into the beginning of philosophy, insofar as its participating interlocutors speak of ‘wonder’ in a myriad of ways that seem to point to the heart of what it is to know, and ultimately reflect the study of politics as the source of openness to the whole.

**B. Plato’s Theaetetus**

**i. The Platonic Part of the Dialogue**

The Platonic part of the dialogue contains three occurrences of wonder (142a3, 142b9, 142c3). The dialogue presumably begins with a question in response to a question to which we’re not privy—“just now, Terpsion, or a long time ago from the country?” (142a), Euclides wants to know. As noted, Terpsion responds with an exclamation of wonder, or surprise, at not being able to find him in the marketplace. But why would Terpsion expect to find Euclides? Is it simply because he, Terpsion, is interested in finding him, and he is amazed when he is unable to find what he is looking for? If we follow Heidegger, the *Theaetetus* does “not begin with wonder but with the wondrous,” an unusual event “set off against a dominating determinate background of what is precisely familiar and ordinary” (N, 136-137). Terpsion’s expectation, then, might introduce the wondrous as the type of marveling to be anticipated in the rest of the
dialogue. Plato has ironically presented an ordinary conception of wonder with an allusion to the stages of Socratic questioning.

While Euclides is meeting up with Terpsion, we learn that Theaetetus is dying from an amalgam of wounds obtained in battle and an outbreak of dysentery in the army (142b1-2). Euclides says he eavesdropped and overheard others praising Theaetetus’ actions in battle. Terpsion suggests it would have been “far more surprising,” or more wondrous, if Theaetetus had not distinguished himself in battle (142b9). In his response, Euclides recalls “with amazement,” or wonder, Socrates’ admiration for Theaetetus’ nature and his prophetic remark that Theaetetus would become renowned if he reached maturity, as if Socrates couldn’t have had reasonable grounds for expecting something from Theaetetus (142c4). Socrates’ alleged “admiration” for Theaetetus requires us to distinguish, in this case, between the admirer and the admired (143c8). The admirer elevates himself above the admired, insofar as in his admiration, or act of admiring, the admirer thinks of himself as having grasped some knowledge of the admired that the admired does not himself have. That is, as Heidegger says, “admiration claims the right and capacity to perform the evaluation which resides in the admiration and to bestow it on the admired person” (N, 142). The suggestion is that “the admirer knows himself—perhaps not in the ability to accomplish things, though indeed in the power to judge them—equal to the one admired, if not even superior” (N, 142).

We may initially hesitate to accept Euclides’ account, wondering whether we ought to take his word for it that Socrates admired Theaetetus; it is possible, in fact, that we should recognize Euclides is ignorant of what Socrates was actually saying. Socrates wasn’t so much praising Theaetetus, or wondering at him, as he was affirming himself in
his “freedom over and against” Theaetetus (N, 142), all the while awaiting his execution, narrating the conversation to Euclides. Socrates seems to engage in dialogue with Theaetetus for reasons that may go ‘beyond the norm,’ insofar as Socrates’ knowledge of the indictment plays a part in his accepting Theaetetus as his primary interlocutor. To say it would be necessary for Theaetetus to “become renowned if he reached maturity” is not to say Theaetetus is “beautiful and good” (Theaetetus 143b6, 142d2-3). The Platonic part of the dialogue, then, provides us with the distinction between wonder and the wondrous within a Socratic line of inquiry: wonder, which is indicated by the repetition of thaumazein, maintains the unusualness of the usual and thereby creates a space for thinking between opinion and knowledge, whereas the wondrous, which is indicated by

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1 This isn’t the kind of freedom Theodorus wants, or believes he has, the leisure to philosophize, as he conceives of it, free from the demands of the city (173c), which is reflected in thought that is free of the “evils” of the city (176a), and therefore wholly free of the city itself (173e). Contra Theodorus, Socrates’ freedom, which acknowledges the “necessity that there always be something contrary to the good” (176a), entails fleeing from “here” (perhaps, knowledge of ignorance) to “there” (perhaps, knowledge as science) in “assimilation to a god as far as possible” (the pursuit of wisdom) (176a-b). This description of “assimilation to a god” occurs at the central line of the dialogue (176b). It bears a striking similarity to Aristotle’s account in the Metaphysics of the poetic interpretation of wisdom being prohibited for human beings, which carries with it a charge of “criminality for its attempted acquisition” (B, 406). Prometheus appears as the warning for man. This stands in contrast to the philosophic account, which doesn’t deny the unlikelihood of attaining wisdom, but encourages its pursuit, finding it to be the kind of knowledge “a god alone, or most of all” would have and its pursuit a designation of excellence (Metaphysics 983a8-10). Socrates tells Theaetetus “no god is ill-disposed to human beings,” shortly after suggesting he is a god (Theaetetus 151d, 150c). Notably, part of Theodorus’ account of freedom entails that “no judge and no observer supervises us as he does the poets to rebuke and rule” (173c, my emphasis). Socrates’ freedom over Theaetetus, and thus, we might say, over his teacher Theodorus, reflects the freedom of Socratic thought, which we might already have cause to doubt Theaetetus obtains. If, as Heidegger says, “all admiration, despite its retreating in the face of the admired, its self-deprecating recognition of the admired, also embodies a kind of self-affirmation,” then with his prophetic remark, Socrates has merely affirmed himself (N, 141).

2 If we presume Socrates is in control of the argument, the question of knowledge must arise for a particular reason. Namely, because Socrates is going on trial based upon the claims that he is impious and corrupts the youth (Apology 19b). If Socrates cannot give an account of false opinion, wherein he cannot account for knowledge, then his asking of philosophic questions seems to be in fatal conflict with the laws of Athens. We might say that the Theaetetus, then, is part of a ‘philosophic trial’ that corresponds to, and occurs prior to, the legal trial. Only in the final lines of the dialogue does Socrates lets his interlocutors in on what he has known all along—that he must go to the porch of the king to receive the indictment (Theaetetus 210d1-3). For further consideration of Socrates’ ‘philosophic trial’ see Jacob Howland The Paradox of Political Philosophy, 2.
the context of *thaumazein*, separates the usual from the unusual and thus gives no further thought to the unusualness—while advising us to distinguish between wonder as “amazement” and wonder as “admiration.” Plato’s short dialogue provokes us to consider how Euclides’ manner of translating obscures our reading of Socrates’ narration. The soul as wondering, whether in its bodily manifestations of sweat or blush, or in the silent thinking of the mind, which evidences Socrates’ understanding of his interlocutors, appears absent (BB, I.86). But Plato reveals the concealedness of the unconcealedness of the rest of the dialogue in what Euclides’ translation could not hide of the soul: the mentions of wonder. Plato’s part may only appear superfluous (BB, I.85).

**ii. The Euclidean Part of the Dialogue**

The Euclidean part of the dialogue begins with three mentions of wonder (144a3, 144b6, 144d3). Socrates first asks Theodorus whether there are any Athenian youth proficient in “geometry or something else of philosophy” worth him hearing of (143e). Theodorus says, “as a matter of fact,” that he’s never met anyone “whose nature is as wonderfully good” as his student Theaetetus’ (143e4, 144a3). Theodorus’ wonderful-assessment consists of two claims: Theaetetus is a good learner, and secondly, he is gentle yet manly beyond anyone else (144a4-6). Recalling the claim already made about Socrates’ admiration, which occurs earlier in the dialogue but later in time, Plato seems to suggest already that we doubt Theodorus’ claim to know. Theaetetus is said to be a good learner because he is like a ballasted ship, whereas most who are adept at learning are “more manic than manly” (144b3), and like unballasted ships, are swept along, in this case becoming poor learners. Theaetetus’ gentleness is tied to the way in which he learns, moving through his lessons “just as a stream of olive-oil flows without a sound” (144b5).
Theaetetus’ nature, as Theodorus sees it, seems to support the Heraclitean characterization of nature as such: a constant state of motion. Theodorus concludes: it is “a cause of wonder that someone of his age behaves in this way” (144b6).

That it is wonderful, or “astonishing,” how Theaetetus does his work seems to reveal more about Theodorus’ soul than his pupil’s. Unlike admiration, which reveals a certain arrogance in that the admirer knows something about himself and applies it to the other, astonishment, according to Heidegger, “includes a decisive suspension of position-taking,” it “is imbued with the awareness of being excluded from what exists in the awesome” (N, 143). Heidegger describes it as a retreat that falls short of genuine thinking, unworthy of the wonder that serves as the disposition of the philosopher. In other words, Theodorus is in awe when speaking of Theaetetus’ nature, for he casts himself as wholly other. So much so that it is only Theaetetus’ ugliness, his likeness to Socrates, that makes him feel comfortable “speak[ing] of him with intensity” (Theaetetus 143e7). If we put Theodorus’ expressions of wonder together, he claims that Theaetetus’ being wondrously good is a cause of wonder. And yet this “wondrously-good” seems to separate the prodigious Theaetetus only from what is ordinary—“quick-witted” youths who end up learning poorly (144a9-b5). Theodorus has, perhaps unwittingly, come close to a relevant formulation of wonder as the cause of philosophy, that may make us, wittingly, question how this account differs from Socrates’.

Is Theodorus claiming to be a philosopher? Or in light of his astonishment, is Theodorus suggesting Theaetetus may be a philosopher? Whether Theodorus sees wonder as the beginning of philosophy is unclear, since he remains silent even when

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Socrates makes the point (155d). However, that Theodorus’ awe separates him from
Theaetetus’ awesomeness is evident in Theodorus’ formulation, which suggests that the
wondrousness of Theaetetus’ nature is wondrous to Theodorus, who seems to have
mistaken wonder, as the wondrous, for the good. He is unknowingly confused by his
marveling at Theaetetus. Socrates, in any case, doesn’t appear particularly impressed by
Theodorus’ account—his reply, “you report well,” seems to ignore the account of soul
and speak strictly to his own question, whether Theodorus has met “anyone worth
speaking of” (144b7, 143e2-3). It seems Theaetetus will do.

Theodorus’ third mention of wonder, his last in the dialogue, concerns
Theaetetus’ “amazing liberality when it comes to money” (144d3). Theodorus had been
unable to answer Socrates’ genealogical question, but he was able to identify Theaetetus
in the middle of an odd number of youths approaching from a distance. Theodorus didn’t
think it worth remembering the name of Theaetetus’ father, but he could identify him by
his look. Recognizing him, too, Socrates says he looks just like his father Euphronius
from Sunium. Socrates reveals his knowledge about the situation of the family, but
ignorance of the youth’s name—“Theaetetus, Socrates” is the reply (144d). The
suggestion, it seems, is that we need to think about the significance of looks or names, as
a path toward knowledge. That Theodorus thinks Theaetetus resembles Socrates may
make us wonder if he thinks their natures are similar as well (143e8). Socrates, however,
only seems interested in the news of Theaetetus after hearing of his wonderful, or
amazing, generosity with money. His reply, “how grand a nobleman you speak of,”
(145d5) may call into question the motivations of Theodorus and himself—that is, both
have knowledge of Theaetetus’ estate, or lack thereof—but Socrates seems to point to
something else, namely, that Theaetetus, as a “thorough bred,” is part of the gentlemanly class. Is Socrates’ interest in speaking with Theaetetus based less on wealth and more on class? Class here denotes not simply wealth or genealogy, but someone who is “truly nurtured in freedom and leisure” (175e), inasmuch as he is “partially arrogant” owing to his dizzying preoccupation with education and “partially ignorant” owing to his unfamiliarity with political life (175b). Socrates will say that the philosopher, according to Theodorus, is one who knows how to throw a cloak over his right shoulder (175e).

iii. Socrates’ Initial Expressions of Wonder

Wonder reappears three more times in the voice of Socrates (150d5, 151a3, 151c6). In detailing his maieutic art, Socrates says that whoever has intercourse, or associates, with him at first appears foolish, but for whomever the god allows the intercourse to continue, they “make an amazing lot of progress” (150d5). Socrates seems to qualify his claim, however, by saying “it’s their own opinion and everyone else’s too” (150d5-6)—that is to say, it is not necessarily his opinion. Rather, whoever associates with Socrates thinks they make wondrous, or amazing, progress, while others seem to wonder at the one-associating as having grasped something beyond themselves—that is, their marveling leads to amazement at the other person.

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5 This awe at someone considered wise by “everyone else” seems to point to the problem of *techne* as knowledge (cf. Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* 981a30-31; 981b12), while bringing to light the penumbra of progress. The claim is further conditioned by Socrates under the notion of the “progress” itself being wondrous, or amazing. Heidegger speaks of amazement as that in which “a determinate individual object stands out as being unusual and distinguishes itself with regard to an equally determined sphere of what is experienced precisely as usual” (N, 144). Progress seems to suggest that what one is progressing in has a definite measure, that we can separate the unusualness of the amazing from the usualness of the ordinary and compare the two, but this isn’t characteristic of the essence, or opaqueness, of wonder. To recount Heidegger, such a conception of progress is “part of the rage to make explanation the measuring rod for the determination of the essence of thoughtful questioning” (N, 148). Heidegger’s view seems to culminate in a criticism of what he views as Platonism—*techne* as correctness—and thus would appear to conflict with the
Socrates suggests the youths who associate with him discover beautiful things within themselves and give birth to them (150d5-7)—that he isn’t responsible—only to state in the following sentence that “the god and I” are responsible (150d8). Those who failed to realize this, Socrates explains, thought he was no good and left him too early, thinking they didn’t need his maieutic art but could sustain the discovery on their own. Some, he says, came back “begging for my association and doing amazing things,” or, with wondrous eagerness (151a3). What, we may wonder, are the amazing things people do when begging for intercourse? Notably, it is not Socrates who is amazed. Rather, the things the wayward youths do, apparently desperate to resume their studies, are in themselves amazing—“they are ready to go to me on their knees.” If, as Heidegger says, amazement “is a certain inability to explain and ignorance of the reason” (N, 137), Socrates seems to imply they are stupid. The youths are admirers, they wonder at Socrates. In their admiring, they falsely attribute to themselves a birthright they owe to Socratic dialectics, which through the arrogance of their admiration, they only come to realize when they’re once again empty without Socrates there to inseminate them. It’s no wonder, then, that his daimonion comes and prevents him from associating with the Aristides’ of Athens (Theaetetus 151a1-4).

words Socrates speaks here, but Socrates puts the words, as opinions, in the mouth of the associate and the many.


7 The arrogance I attribute here seems to be related to the “partial arrogance” Socrates notes when speaking of “the philosopher” (175b), and which I attributed to Socrates’ initial interest in Theaetetus after hearing of his class (144d-145d), not merely as genealogy, but as a wealth that allows Theaetetus freedom (qua leisure) (175e). Arrogance seems to often be inherent in the nature of such young men, not accidentally, but owing to their “status,” which is part of what Socrates seems attracted to.

8 See Plato Theages, 130a-e. See also Debra Nails The People of Plato: A Prosography of Plato and other Socratics, 49: “Despite Aristides II’s having been a quick and able student, he explains to
Perhaps in anticipation of the surprising last paragraph of the dialogue—when Socrates raises the question of Theaetetus’ moderation based upon their findings (210c)—Socrates warns Theaetetus, his “wonderful fellow,” that when he exposes some people’s false opinions, they become so angry with him they literally want to bite him (151c6). They become angry like mothers who have given birth for the first time and have their offspring taken from them. In the desire for knowledge, it’s analogous to a pupil being forced to realize his toil has not been fruitful. He must either try again, enduring more labor pains, or become more moderate in what he thinks he knows (210c1-5). Turning his maieutic art toward Theaetetus, Socrates says “and whatever I ask be eager to answer in just the way you can” (151c1-2). The wondrous eagerness of those who returned, the “amazing things” they did, seem to reveal the nature of association, or intercourse, with Socrates. The difficulty, it appears, is that some want to attack him. Socrates, however, doesn’t seem to be helping the youth give birth, but making two into one, at least in the way he exhibits his practice with Theaetetus—Socrates inseminates them through his cross-questioning. “There is no science of midwifery” (PT, 300).

Socrates’ invocations of wonder hitherto all seem to point to midwifery as “a way of encouraging Theaetetus after the failure of his first answer” (PT, 300). But they also exhibit the misunderstanding of wonder by some who desire to know, and the danger for Socrates in pointing out the seemingly false opinions of others. Were it not for his awareness of the indictment, and apropos, the importance of the question of knowledge, would Socrates’ daimonion have already turned away him from Theaetetus?

Socrates that he lost his dialectical ability a little at a time after leaving Athens, concluding that Socrates’ mere presence had been what had enabled him to make progress.”
iv. Wonder in the Voice of Protagoras

Wonder comes up again in the dialogue through Socrates, but in the voice of Protagoras (154b6, 155c9, 155d3, 155d4). By this point, Socrates has linked three positions: Theatetus’ knowledge is perception (151d-e), Protagoras’ man is the measure of all things (152a), Heraclitus’ all things are in motion (152d-e). All are tied to Protagorean relativism. Protagoras seems to raise the problem, how can an object be perceived differently unless it has changed? “We’re being compelled somehow or other to say without qualms amazing and laughable things” (154b6). The problem of becoming, which appears to get us to say most wondrous, or amazing, things leads to the “small paradigm” of the dice, in which six dice, if compared to four are “more,” but if compared to twelve, “less,” without any in themselves changing—that is to say, without becoming. Is there anything that is itself by itself, with its own identity that persists through change, or are there are only new atomistic unions of subjects and predicates that replace previous ones over time? Becoming raises a problem that Theaetetus says makes him wonder.9

Theaetetus doesn’t hide his opinion about becoming (154d), even though it contradicts what he agreed to about number (BB, I.103). And Socrates correctly thinks that Theaetetus is experienced with these kinds of perplexities. Is it due to Theaetetus’ confession earlier that he is familiar with Socratic questions (Theaetetus 148e2), or does something else lead Socrates to guess correctly that Theaetetus has experienced wonder before? “Yes indeed, by the gods, Socrates, I wonder exceedingly as to why (what) in the world these things are, and sometimes in looking at them I truly get dizzy” (155c9-

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9 This problem plays an important role for Aristotle’s account of substance in the *Metaphysics*: if one denies that there is an identifiable subject, Socrates, that persists through the change from healthy to sick, there would be only one entity “healthy Socrates” replaced by another “sick Socrates” (983b7-19).
10). Benardete suggests Theaetetus’ wonder reveals he betrayed his “soul’s experiences,” the object of Theaetetus’ wonder, at least as Theaetetus sees it: when he answered the question of knowledge, he gave his answer from Protagoras’ book *Truth*, but his experience of wonder, which dwells “between opinion and knowledge,” contradicts his answer (BB, I.103). Has Socrates moderated Theaetetus into listening to his soul? Socrates has heard something of Theaetetus’ soul from Theodorus’ account. It is now, when Theaetetus wonders, that Socrates says Theodorus must not have made a bad guess. But is he serious? Theaetetus, the one originally introduced at the center of a group of young men walking together, brings us to the central occurrence(s) of wonder. Socrates says “this experience is very much a philosopher’s, that of wondering. For nothing else is the beginning (principle) of philosophy than this” (155d3-4).

Is the exceeding wonder of Theaetetus an ordinary mode of marveling, or is it what Heidegger calls “the basic disposition that begins primary thinking?” (N, 135, emphasis in original). That is to say, can a seemingly insignificant example, like the one Socrates offers of the dice, lead to the beginning of philosophy? Can any case of apparent self-contradiction elicit wonder, or just one that seems to put accepted premises into question? As Socrates remarks after the central occurrence of “wonder”: “and, seemingly, whoever’s genealogy it was, that Iris was the offspring of Thaumas (Wonder), it’s not a bad one” (*Theaetetus* 155d4). If, following Aristotle’s observations, philosophy is a series of movements in which one’s wonder crescendos when it contemplates the whole and the human finds himself ignorant, it’s unlikely a small paradigm will do. Socrates’ introduction of Thaumas, however, signifies more than Thaumas as *thaumazein*.  

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Iris, a disembodied set of colors, is what one “admires and wonders at” (BB, I.107). Wonder as admiration recalls Theodorus’ admiration (Theaetetus 144a5) and wonder (144b6) at Theaetetus’ nature, and Socrates’ apparent approval of the guess-work of Theodorus and Hesiod, for Socrates seems to now imply that Theaetetus’ nature is the source of Theaetetus’ wonder, much like Theodorus’ conjoined claim that Theaetetus’ wondrously-good nature was a cause of wonder. As Benardete suggests: “Theaetetus’ nature has experienced a pathos grounded in the nature of things. His nature is the nature of nature. Theaetetus is motion: Theodorus had likened him to the silent flowing of olive oil” (BB, I.107). Yet if motion is the source of everything, wonder as the unique source of philosophy, must have a special relation to motion.12

Hesiod’s genealogy reflects the non-erotic nature of Wonder. It is only the mating of Wonder with Electra that brings the coming to be of Iris—the apparition “between one’s own wonder and the source of wonder” (BB, I.107). The wonderful, then, which “induces in the wonderer its own cause” (BB, I.107), requires Eros. To ‘wonder,’ to see the opaque in the plain, we need the colors of opacity, the Rainbow. To see the opacity, we need desire, in Hesiod as Eros, and for human beings as the desire to know.

11 Hesiod’s genealogy in the Theogony shows Thaumas to have married Electra and given birth to Iris (Rainbow). Thaumas and Electra also gave birth to the Harpies (Ocyypete and Aello). Thaumas is said to be the son of Pontus (whom Earth generated without Eros) and Earth, while Electra is said to be the daughter of siblings Ocean (son of Earth and Sky, the latter have been erotically generated with Earth) and Tethys. In addition, Thaumas’ brother Nereus marries Electra’s sister Doris. Up to this point in the genealogy, the generation has a certain circularity to it, like Ocean himself—the flowing river that encircles Earth.

12 Aristotle observes that “there are some who think that very ancient thinkers, long before the present age, who gave the first accounts of the gods, had an opinion of this sort about nature. For they made Ocean and Tethys the parents of what comes into being, and made the oath of the gods be by water, called Styx by them; for what is oldest is most honored, and that by which one swears is the most honored thing. But whether this opinion about nature is something archaic and ancient might perhaps be unclear, but Thales at least is said to have spoken in this way about the first cause” (Metaphysics 983b28—984a4). Socrates’ later invocation in the dialogue of Thales as the pre-Socratic philosopher (Theaetetus 174a), in light of the Metaphysics, seems to provide a way for thinking of a connection between motion and wonder.
v. Theaetetus’s Expression of Wonder

A lone mention of wonder occurs between Socrates’ account of philosophy (155d) and the central interlude of the dialogue: Theaetetus finds Socrates’ account of motion wondrously rational (157d10). In other words, Theaetetus comes to wonder at himself, so to speak. Following his invocation of Hesiod, Socrates asks Theaetetus whether he understands the genealogy—in particular, what it means for Iris to be the daughter of Wonder—in light of what they’ve been saying about the Protagorean theses. Socrates offers a “myth” that shares the same originating principle (156c), or “beginning” (155d), as the account of philosophy just given: “there is nothing but motion” (156a4-6). The myth reveals motion to have two forms, each infinite in multitude but distinguished by power; one, a power to affect, and the other, a power to be affected. Through intercourse, or association, the two powers are said to produce pairs of twin-offspring infinite in multitude; one, that which perceives, and the other, that which is perceived.

Socrates completes the story, but Theaetetus doesn’t “have it in mind” how the myth and philosophy share the same beginning (156c5). Socrates drops the mythical and “round[s] it off” (156c8) by excluding being in an explication of mathematical physics. The “powers” of the myth become “speed and slowness” in motion (156c9). Being, or “to be” is abolished (157b1), since everything comes to be through intercourse with one another, the result of motion (157a2-3). As Benardete suggests, the twins must be identical twins, for in their relation we cannot discern what each is in itself and what both are together (BB, I.109). That is to say, since the offspring are in identical pairs, we cannot tell which does the perceiving and which is perceived—they are commensurable. Since the twins are identical, neither can be distinguished prior to their conjunction in
either of the powers, nor can one form enter another, while the infinite number of forms would constitute the whole. Since “everything is really motion” (Theaetetus 156a6), and the twins cannot be said to have aesthetic sources due to their commensurability (as identical twins), they must have what Benardete calls “non-aesthetic sources” (BB, I.109)—like the roots of Theaetetus’ surds.

Socrates has described mathematics, not nature. The “classes of motion” correspond to the “classes of number,” while the infinitely many powers to act and be acted upon correspond to the infinite series of numbers (BB, I.110). Given that “natural becoming has been replaced by mathematical metaphors” (BB, I.112), the explanation of the myth is fitting for Theaetetus. Theaetetus’ impulse to knowledge, we might say, is disembodied like Iris, the apparition of colors that descended from continuous motion. The mathematical figures of Theaetetus’ art leave behind becoming, and therefore nature. Like the disembodied colors, the figures, too, might be objects of wonder. The three positions that Socrates tied together appear to come together, in that the two motions of the myth, active and passive, are reflected in the theses of Protagoras and the Homeric-Heracliteans, which allow for knowledge to be perception: “Man is the measure of all things, for becoming is his own kind of image-making, and perception his commensuration with it” (BB, I.112).

Socrates had first spoken of Ocean as motion (Theaetetus 152e), and secondly, of the sun as “in motion” (153d), before arriving at the active and passive powers, or motions, and numbers in “the disguised form of” speed and slowness in motions (PT, 310). But “If one cancels the difference between water and fire,” as Benardete suggests, “Socrates seems to be appealing to an anti-entropic principle, to which we can assign,
following the *Phaedo* and the *Phaedrus*, the name ‘soul’” (PT, 309). Socrates, after all, had said “the good is motion both in terms of soul and in terms of body” (*Theaetetus* 153c4-5). In the Heraclitean principle of motion, then, Socrates ‘packs in’ and then “uncovers” the “indispensable ground he himself needs if soul is to be something nonderivative” (PT, 310). Part of this packing-in entails the way Socrates phrases the question, reforming Theaetetus’ answer “perception is knowledge,” with “knowledge, you say, perception?” (*Theatetus* 151e). The “is” mediates between knowledge and perception, but Socrates, in his reformulation, where the only mediation is “you say,” retains Theaetetus as the “bond” (PT, 309). Theaetetus is “the ‘man’ of Protagoras’ general formula” (PT, 309). Theodorus had said he wondered at Theaetetus’ nature, finding it resembled the motion of a stream of olive oil, but really, Socrates indicates, the motion of Theaetetus’ nature is his soul, which is self-moving. Theaetetus’ first answer, then, “seems to represent the soul’s answer,” but the soul “cannot possibly see that its answer contradicts itself in its very formulation, for it must be blind to the non-perceptibility of such an equation” (PT, 308).

In response to the conclusion of the account, Theaetetus says “I do not know, Socrates” (*Theaetetus* 157c4). Theaetetus uttered a similar expression following Socrates’ account of philosophy, when he knew his experience(s) of dizziness and was told that “wonder” had been its cause, but now he doesn’t even know his experience: “just when Theaetetus should have become transparent to himself he becomes opaque” (BB, I.112).

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13 The theses of Protagorean relativism and Homeric-Heraclitean motion “thus turn out to be a not bad copy of Socrates’ teaching in the *Phaedrus*, where soul as self-motion has its counterpart here no less than the Olympian gods” (PT, 309).
If wonder is the opaqueness of the plain, Theaetetus finds Socrates’ account of motion wondrously rational (*Theaetetus* 157d10), for he is ignorant of his soul.

**vi. Wonder in Socrates’ Critique of Protagoras**

Wonder occurs five times during Socrates’ critique of Protagoras, the most of any point in the dialogue (161b8, 161c3, 161c8, 162c3, 162c8). Socrates begins his criticism of the thesis by asking Theodorus whether he knows “what I wonder at (admire) in your comrade Protagoras?” (161b8). Socrates appears to be asserting himself in the very beginning of the exchange to a position equal to or superior to that of Protagoras, as Heidegger suggests of admiration. Unlike other types of wonder, admiration is an active power—the admirer does not simply marvel at what is awesome, suggesting a mere desire for amazement or a suspension of position taking out of awe, but instead takes a position.

When Theodorus suggests he does not know what Socrates admires, Socrates tells him: “I’ve been in a state of wonder at the beginning of his speech” (161c3), that man is the measure of all things. Specifically, Socrates wonders why Protagoras didn’t say “Dog-faced baboon” or “Pig” is the measure of all things—something with a “stranger” perception than a human being (161c4-6). How a pig perceives things, it seems, is true for the pig. Such is not the case of a human being. As Benardete suggests, “Men alone do not know what they know. The pig is not blind to its knowledge: men need to be enlightened” (BB, I.116). Socrates suggests his wonder is over a lost opportunity, for if Protagoras had chosen a stranger-perceiving animal, a “more out-of-the-way creature,”14 such as the pig, he could have “begun to speak to us in a magnificent and very

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contemptuous way” (*Theaetetus* 161c7-8). In this way, Protagoras could have made it clear that “though we admired him like a god for his wisdom, he is, after all, not at all better in point of intelligence than a tadpole, let alone than anyone else of human beings” (161c8-161d1). Here, to admire someone like a god for their wisdom seems to indicate astonishment, or awe, for when in awe, Heidegger suggests, one fails to take a position towards the unusual. Such appears the case of the divine. Notably, in the beginning of the dialogue, Socrates could have simply asked ‘what is knowledge,’ but instead he introduced wisdom and then came to the question of knowledge, with preliminary agreement that wisdom and knowledge were the same thing (145e). Now wisdom returns when we are falsely in awe at a god.

Socrates suggests that we’ve been admiring Protagoras like a god for his *sophia* (“wisdom”), and yet what he’s teaching is that his opinion is no better than a tadpole’s in *phronesis* (“practical intelligence”). Why, we may wonder, did Plato use these two words? That is to wonder, why are we admiring Protagoras (qua sophist) for his wisdom, when according to his own thesis, he can’t know anything about his own good, or the human good, better than anyone else? Knowledge, it seems, may be true or false independent of the soul, but it’s not clear that wisdom can. Does *phronesis* point to this? When the thesis is altered accordingly, and each is made the measure of his own wisdom (161e5), Protagoreanism is in danger, but so is Socratic philosophy—we cannot investigate others “appearances and opinions” if all are correct (161e8). In what may be the most powerful argument against Protagoras in the dialogue, Socrates suggests that what Protagoras does in deed contradicts what he says in speech. In other words, the
thesis of relativism—that man is the measure of all things—contradicts itself, for it purports to be a great insight but then purports there is no insight.

Thinking of our astonishment at Protagoras, Socrates asks Theaetetus, “aren’t you really surprised if so suddenly you’ll show up as in no way worse in point of wisdom than anyone whatsoever of human beings or maybe gods?” (162c3-5), or does Protagoras intend for the thesis to apply only to men, rather than gods? Theaetetus says that, “by Zeus” (162c7), he doesn’t think the thesis is meant to apply to gods, but that nevertheless he’s “very surprised” (162c8). The implication, it seems, is not simply that Theaetetus may be greater or equal in wisdom to a god, but rather that according to Protagoras human beings cannot know whether the gods exist at all, since all the human being has is his own perception, and we cannot perceive the gods. That Socrates seems to wonder whether or not Theaetetus would be surprised, or find it amazing, if he were, in fact, equal to a god in terms of wisdom, may point to his doubt of Theaetetus’ alleged moderation. Theaetetus, Benardete says, cannot distinguish between “primary hearing” and “hearsay” (BB, I.117), since to believe in the gods would require accepting the measure of another as being wiser than oneself. Theaetetus swears by a god, but seems to deny the existence of the gods. When searching for the truth, we need a standard—the wisdom of the gods—to hold up to show that we haven’t reached it. Socrates does this, but Protagoras does the opposite. Protagorean relativism, then, requires getting rid of every standard of truth. Theaetetus ‘wonders’ very much, for a moment ago he was persuaded, but now he’s dizzy again.
vii. The Re-examination of Knowledge as Perception

When he returns to reconsider Theaetetus’ claim that knowledge is perception, Socrates mentions “wonder” twice (165d2, 165e1). Theaetetus appears ready to give up his claim, but Socrates has only gotten him to do so with sophistic arguments: they come to an agreement through “the contentious way of contradiction” (164c8), when seeing is knowing and not-seeing and recollecting means you don’t know really know, but remember (164b-c). Or when seeing a cloak with one eye and not the other means you see and don’t see, and therefore know and don’t know (165b). Theaetetus calculates, on these sophistic grounds, that the result of these arguments is “contrary to what I just laid down” (165d1)—knowledge is seemingly not perception. As Benardete suggests of Protagoras’ denial of the principle of non-contradiction, “the other, if not wholly other, must elude him” (BB, I.119).

Socrates at this point calls Theaetetus “wondrous one” (Theaetetus 165d2), for the root of Theaetetus’ claim—Protagorean relativism—“encapsulates the pre-Socratic failure to understand soul” (BB, I.126). Protagoras’ thesis is written in his book with parentheticals, leaving it unable to be spoken, “as it is written, by anyone” (BB, I.125). Benardete notes that in its written form, it is in the indicative mode, but when read aloud it is in the imperative, “for it commands the reader to replace ‘man’ with ‘I’”, and the “speaker’s own conviction prior to its utterance determines its truth or falsity” (BB, I.125). Hence why Socrates, playfully and seriously, suggests Protagoras should have chosen a being other than the human, such as a pig, for his thesis, for then it would have remained in the indicative mode, and the sentence wouldn’t necessarily contradict itself and thus be invalid in itself, owing to its telling the speaker whatever he believes is true.
Notably, Plato does not examine the Protagorean thesis in his dialogue the _Protagoras_, which represents the living Sophist in conversation with Socrates. He has Socrates confront that thesis in the _Theaetetus_, after the man has died. Yet as long as the thesis is merely a written statement, its self-contradictory character lies dormant. Once Socrates resurrects Protagoras, however, for the sake of his argument, the self-contradiction reoccurs “as soon as it returns to life in its being spoken” (BB, I.126). Socrates brings Protagoras back to life immediately following Theaetetus’ answer that knowledge is perception by speaking his thesis (_Theaetetus_ 152a). The pre-Socratic failure to understand soul, then, is evidenced in the Protagorean thesis, since in its “ignorance of soul” it becomes self-contradictory when it purports its own wisdom while implying that each of us can “think of ourselves as the wise man on the spot” (BB, I.126). It obfuscates the relation been the human being and wisdom, and thus philosophy, by presuming to know what the human being is, while exemplifying the pre-Socratics “inability to account for themselves” (BB, I.126). Upon Socrates’ recounting of the thesis, we might recall, Theaetetus affirmed, but seemingly overlooked, Socrates’ inclusion at the end of his account of the question that “you and I (are) human being?” (_Theaetetus_ 152a10). Theaetetus not only presumed to know what a human being is, as further accounted for in his likeness to the theoretical philosopher (174b), but he seemed to have overlooked Socrates’ claim to have been a god (150c-d). Socrates had used the same designation, ‘wondrous one,’ to refer to Theaetetus when recounting how some of his pupils want to harm him after he exposes their opinions as false (151c). Perhaps, then, he already recognized something of Theaetetus’ soul in his account of the youths, which
resurfaces here in a discussion of soul (165d2). Is this, we may wonder, why a particularly pre-Socratic account of philosophy occurs in the dialogue hitherto?

Socrates continues by characterizing ‘to know’ with adverbs—“sharply” and “bluntly,” “close” and “far,” “intensely” and “slightly”—that literally only apply to perception (165d). If speaking metaphorically, knowledge may be characterized this way, but using the “refutative attack” (165e1), Socrates doesn’t allow for language that goes beyond the perceptual realm. In his second mention of ‘wonder,’ Socrates tells Theaetetus that the sophist, asking further questions about knowledge as perception, “would not let up before in amazement at his much prayed-for wisdom you had been hobbled by him” (165e1). That is to say, the sophist, in his contentious way, refutes until the interlocutor is “struck with wonder at his wisdom.”\(^{15}\) The “ransom” demanded afterward (165e4) appears to be the practice of Protagoras himself.\(^{16}\) Protagoras (qua sophist) seeks, if we follow Heidegger, a base form of wonder—he wants human beings to marvel at his awesomeness and then charge a price for their ‘desire for amazement’ through his sophistic explanation. But Socrates, too, seems to have behaved like a sophist: by arguing badly, he has gotten Theaetetus to give up on his claim. Were it not for Euclides’ mode of translation, we might have learned, not surprisingly, that Theaetetus blushed like Thrasymachus.

\(^{15}\) Plato Theaetetus, trans. M.J. Levett,.

\(^{16}\) See Plato Protagoras, 328b-c: “Whenever someone studies with me, he pays me the money I charge if he wants to; but if he doesn’t want to he goes into a temple, swears how much he asserts the teachings to be worth, and puts down that much.” See also Plato Theaetetus, trans. M.J. Levett, 33, ft. 18. Levett also cites this passage, likening the relation between Protagoras and a student to be “an agreement between captor and captive.”
viii. Conclusion of the First Half of the Dialogue

The last mention of wonder in the first half of the dialogue occurs in the central interlude (174e3). In what seems to be a digression from the question of knowledge, Socrates constructs a contrast between the pre-Socratic theoretical philosopher and the practical man. He gives an account of ‘the philosopher’s ignorance,’ but this philosopher seems to be ignorant of all the activities Socrates knows of without having Socrates’ knowledge of ignorance—that is, “he doesn’t even know that he does not know all these things” (173e1-2). This philosopher “at the top” (173c8), Socrates tells us, may live in the city, but his head is in the clouds. He “flies” around gazing at the stars and geometricizing (173e9-174a2). Given his need for leisure, the theoretical philosopher needs the city, but it’s only accidental that he lives in any particular city. When Theodorus asks for an explanation, Socrates introduces Thales as the philosopher par excellence.

Like Thales, whose thought was so concerned with the stars, rather than the things at his feet, that he fell into a well and was laughed at by a slave, “all those who engage in philosophy” are said to be comic in this way (174a5-174b1). Socrates extends this philosopher’s ignorance “almost to the point of not knowing whether he is a human being” (174b3). The Thales-philosopher, as we might call him, isn’t concerned with being a human being, but knowing “what (a) human being is” (174b4-5). That is, he isn’t concerned with his soul, but with the ‘essence’ of man and how that essence is different from the essence of other things. The theoretical philosopher is “truly” “unaware” (174b1-2)—he fails to see his neighbor. It is, then, no surprise that he fails to understand political life. When his head is “low” enough, and he overhears another speak of “wondrous wealth” (174e3), he doesn’t find it an amazing quantity, for he isn’t impressed
by the things produced in society. Since he is accustomed to contemplating, or wondering at, the whole, he doesn’t find wonderful what convention holds to be a great amount. Nor, due to his wonder, does he understand the difference between “a tyrant or a king,” but thinks of him, in any case, as no different than a “herdsman,” for he understands political life as a matter of ruling over a herd (174d4-174e1).

The central interlude seems like it might provide, for the first time in the dialogue, an account of how the theoretical, or pre-Socratic, philosopher experiences wonder, rather than a lower form of marveling, and begins to philosophize. Particularly since Socrates appears to tell Theodorus what he wants to hear for much of the discussion of the Thales-philosopher. But this philosopher is explicitly said to not wonder at the “wondrous wealth.” Here, wonder only ‘negatively’ determines the philosopher. This account of Thales exemplifies, however, the experience of Theaetetus’ wealth by Theodorus versus Socrates earlier in the dialogue, which now seems indicative of their relation to wonder and thereby philosophy. As one who admires the freedom of the (theoretical) philosopher, but also bears an allegiance to Protagoras (qua sophist), Theodorus finds Theaetetus’ wealth wondrous inasmuch as it belies the leisure to study knowledge (mathematics) without concern of the city. Socrates, however, doesn’t find Theaetetus’ spending wondrous, but is interested inasmuch as it is indicative of leisure, though with the caveat that Theaetetus’ liberality suggests an ignorance of value. Ironically, Theaetetus should recognize the “amazing quantity” he has, which Socrates says the theoretical philosopher does not, but he instead he is “wonderfully open-handed

17 Cf. Plato Statesman, 267e-268d.
about money” (144d3).\textsuperscript{18} Having lost much of his inheritance already, the implication seems to be that he spends it foolishly (144d2). Theaetetus’ ignorance of political matters, then, is revealed to Socrates through Theodorus’ wonder. Theaetetus had been flying, but he hadn’t experienced wonder as indicative of the beginning of pre-Socratic philosophy, and as evidenced in his marveling at Theaetetus, neither had Theodorus. Notably, wonder occurs twice more in the dialogue, despite it only being half over.

\textit{ix. The Second Half of the Dialogue}

Wonder is mentioned only once between the central interlude and the end of the dialogue (193d3). It occurs following Theaetetus’ second definition of knowledge: if knowledge cannot be opining, since it would then include false opinion, it must be true opinion (187a-c). Before examining Theaetetus’ second answer, Socrates confesses that he has never been able to explain false opinion (187d-189e). To address the problem, he constructs an image of the soul as a wax block (191c-195b). Seventeen cases are given, fourteen in which false opinion is said to be impossible, and three in which false opinion is said to be possible. The final case is described as one in which it is possible to believe one knows and one perceives two things, but the one is confused with the other. This brings Theaetetus to exclaim: “The experience of opinion—how amazingly you speak of it” (193d3).

Socrates gives two analogies for the mistaken recognition they are considering: “It is like people putting their shoes on the wrong feet, or like what happens when we look at things in mirrors, when left and right change places” (193c6-9).\textsuperscript{19} This, he says, is

\textsuperscript{18} Plato \textit{Theaetetus}, trans. M.J. Levett.

\textsuperscript{19} Plato \textit{Theaetetus}, trans. M.J. Levett.
when other-opining (heterodoxia) and false opinion result. The first example could be an allusion to Aeschylus’ Choephoroi, when Electra realizes Orestes has returned by recognizing his footprint—“the heels and the imprints of the tendons agree in proportion with my own tracks” (205-210). That is, she appears to place her foot in his footprint, and that brings about the recognition. Socrates, however, seems to say something similar to Euripides’ Electra, when after the suggestion of an old man that she step into the print, Electra replies, quite sensibly, that “the foot of brother and sister would not be the same in size” (536-537). Here, the old man makes the mistake, but he also provides the recognition afterward, for he recalls his impression of “the mark of the fall” upon seeing a scar on the stranger’s brow, now recognized as Orestes (Electra 570-575). The suggestion by both Euripides and Socrates seems to be that when we perceive, we try to identify the perception in our mind, and we can only identify something we have perceived before. As she had never seen Orestes’ footprint before, Electra could not identify it by sight (assuming she could even if she had) and given the difference in size, she had no way of measuring (if such a measurement is possible). The old man, on the other hand, despite his seemingly ridiculous initial suggestion of the footprint, recognizes Orestes, for having known Orestes before, he assigns the currently perceived scar to the memory of him as a child.

The first example of possible false opinion, as Jacob Klein remarks, involves a failure in matching sight and imprint; the second example, involving mirrors, is instead an affection of sight that causes matching to fail utterly (K, 125-126).20 Theaetetus says

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20 See Plato Sophist, 266c. See also Plato Timaeus, 46a-c. In the Timaeus, the “image-making of mirrors” causes sights “contrary to the habit of collision,” due to the contact of “contrary parts of the vision with contrary parts of the reflected object,” making rights appear as lefts and lefts as rights (46a2-b4).
Socrates’ speech is wondrous, which Klein equates with saying Theaetetus “is deeply impressed” (K, 126). But why does Theaetetus marvel at Socrates’ account here? It seems only fitting that Theaetetus would find the first example in Socrates’ account wondrous, the opinion of the footsteps, if it suggests the old man in Euripides’ Electra affirmed Theaetetus’ first answer, that knowledge is perception, by seeing Orestes’ scar, which would only add to the wonder, since this claim to knowledge seems to have already been refuted by Socrates. But the old man did so by involving memory, which the wax block cannot account for, since it may only allow for “perfect recognition” of matching what is already known with what is perceived and “precludes thereby the possibility of putting two and two together” (BB, I.160). In this case, the old man puts ‘two and two together’—young Orestes and adult Orestes—in order to provide the recognition. To that point, Orestes remarks that the old man walks around him, staring at him hard as if “finding in me a likeness to some other,” putting the likeness together (Electra 559). Without the putting together of Orestes’ growth, the recognition would be as nonsensical as the suggestion in Aeschylus’ Choephoroi, which similarly calls for a measurement, but without it having been perceived before

The image-making of mirrors presents a reality that is distorted, insofar as the images produced are contrary to habit, owing to rights becoming lefts and lefts becoming rights. False opinion now occurs in a way in which there isn’t simply an error in matching, but reality itself is falsely presented. Benardete finds this example, which Socrates casually delivers, to be the “strongest argument” against Theaetetus’ “equation of knowledge and perception” (BB, I.162). The talk of images presents a way in which seeing isn’t believing, when perception doesn’t yield ‘knowledge,’ but instead “reveal[s]”
and “conceal[s]” simultaneously (BB, I.162). Theaetetus finds the way Socrates speaks of false opinion amazing, for he selfishly interprets what ought be a council of despair—“the fact that we are all very much in the dark” (BB, I.162)—as an explanation for his ‘wondrous nature.’ Theodorus’ assessment of Theaetetus’ ‘ballastment’ was, then, completely off base. “Theodorus is wholly mistaken about Theaetetus’ soul: it is not moderation itself, but in the most exalted state a soul can be in” (BB, I.161). His attempt, then, to exhibit Socrates’ knowledge of soul in assessing Theaetetus has failed miserably (PT, 300).

Theaetetus hasn’t so much been ‘wondering’ as dissociating from himself, inasmuch as he’s been flying in the dark, “high” on his mind (BB, I.161). His experiences of wonder, then, as mentioned in the example of the dice (Theaetetus 155c9), Socrates’ account of motion (157d10), and the critique of Protagoras (162c8), have merely been cases of self-contradiction. Benardete suggests Theaetetus would have given a more accurate answer to Socrates’ question, though equally contradictory, if he’d said that “knowledge is intellection” (BB, I.161). For Theaetetus, he suggests, has (falsely) exhibited the “contact of the soul with the beings without mediation or the need of thinking” (BB, I.161). Theaetetus reveals his true nature in what is only one of two occurrences of wonder in the second half of the dialogue.

x. Conclusion of the Dialogue

Wonder returns in the final lines of the dialogue in the voice of Socrates (210c5). Originally, Socrates asks if “we” are still pregnant, and then refers to “our” maieutic art (210b). But he then asks Theaetetus if he is still pregnant—that is, if he has any more answers—and when he says no, he and Socrates agree that Socrates’ maieutic art has
been exhausted. Socrates says that if Theaetetus tries to become pregnant in the future “with different things,” and is successful, their conversation will have played a part in Theaetetus being “full of better things” (210c1-3). If, however, Theaetetus cannot become pregnant, the suggestion seems to be that he will be more moderate in knowing what he doesn’t know—he might know his ignorance. The suggestion seems to be that Theaetetus will, then, be more like Socrates, for in the dialogue’s final mention of wonder, Socrates tells Theaetetus, “I don’t know anything at all which everyone else does, all those who are and have been great and amazing men” (210c5). As Klein observes, “Theaetetus’ answers, which Socrates elicits by his art of midwifery, express as it were, the fathers of Theaetetus’ thoughts” (K, 145). But if this is so, Socrates hasn’t merely elicited them, but given them that role.

Following Theaetetus’ first answer—his claim that knowledge is perception—Socrates elaborated on it by introducing “Protagoras’ ‘Man is the Measure’ and Heraclitean motion” (PT, 306), the latter of which alluded to the genealogy of Thaumas, through a Homeric reference to Ocean and Tethys (Theaetetus 152e). But Homer has Hera speak these lines in an effort to deceive Zeus of her actual purpose. If these thoughts are the fathers of the offspring of the orphan Theaetetus, it seems Socrates’ maieutics has deceptively persuaded their adoption. With his negative remark, Socrates positively separates himself from the wondrous men, but who are they? It’s not clear that the “great and amazing men” refer to the Protagorean and Homeric-Heraclitean thinkers, or even that they’re ‘pre-Socratics,’ inasmuch as they claim to know what Socrates does not, while not knowing what he does. Socrates, we might recall, had twice referred to Theaetetus as “wondrous one,” or amazing fellow (151c6, 165d2). In the final mention of
wonder, then, Socrates seems to convey to Theaetetus that what separates himself from the wondrous ones, like Theaetetus and those before him, is knowing what it means to know. Socrates knows his ignorance. He ‘knows nothing,’ although unlike the account of ‘philosophic ignorance’ given in the central interlude, Socrates knows all the things the theoretical philosophers appear not to know (173c-e). He knows the plainly human.

Theodorus had suggested Socrates’ desire for a logos was “on the model of Antaeus,” who compelled those passing by to wrestle with him, before killing them in the exercise (169b3). Socrates replies that is an “excellent semblance” of his “disease,” but places himself in the vulnerable position of receiving, not giving, the thrashing (169b6-7). He says, perhaps with the indictment in mind, that, a beating notwithstanding, he “will not stand aside and withdraw—to that extent a dreadful love of exercise in these matters has slipped into me” (169b9-169c2). The only mention of eros in the dialogue is presented as a sickly, dying one—like Socrates. Theodorus, who it seems Socrates has been wanting to speak with throughout the dialogue, finally succumbs as if to his fate (169c). In the conversation between the two, Socrates introduces the theoretical versus political philosopher. He describes all the things the theoretical man doesn’t know, which he himself does. Theodorus, it seems, was needed to bring this out. In the announcement of his disease, Socrates seems to hint at what the Theaetetus will set in motion—the seven dialogues surrounding his death. Through a series of indwelling contradictions, the Theaetetus provokes us to reflect on wonder as the disposition for philosophy, in that what distinguishes a ‘pre-Socratic’ account of philosophy from a Socratic one, is the turning away from divine things to human things—from wonder as the disembodied
impulse to knowledge, to _eros_, that “backbone” of the human soul reflected in the communion of man with man (LL, 174).
Chapter Two: Philosphic Wonder in Chapters One and Two of Book Alpha of Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*

The *Metaphysics* begins by telling us that the desire to know is a characteristic common to the nature of all human beings (980a21). What is supposed to be a science that questions being as such begins with the striving of a particular kind of being toward knowledge. Its beginning, then, puts the question of the desire for knowledge in place of the question of knowledge. Aristotle appears to be asking us to wonder if what we are in our desire to know suggests something about not only our being, but being as such. Wisdom, we are told, is the most wondered at, or admired, of all the kinds of knowledge. As an inquiry into the causes and sources of being, metaphysics “has special concern for the being of the soul as wondering” (V, 1). In his discussion of wisdom in chapters one and two of Book Alpha, Aristotle speaks of wonder in connection with, first, the “admiration for wisdom,” and subsequently, “the origin of philosophy” (981b13, 982b14; B, 404). The activity of the philosopher reveals that he loves wisdom (*Metaphysics* 982b19). In his love for wisdom, the philosopher goes beyond wonder and comes to know his ignorance (982b21).

Benardete describes the desire to know as “an indiscriminate greediness to transform the opaque into the plain (information); but wonder is the recognition of the opaque in the plain. The wonderful is that which shows the hiddenness of the unhidden” (B, 404). Velkley describes two aspects of wonder: a “selfless condition related to the desire to know” (V, 6), and secondly, “a certain kind of conscious neediness (*aporia*)”
If wonder is really tied to the desire to know, it appears that it can only be greedy, and not selfless. However, wonder reveals the ‘need to know,’ but unlike the desire to know, wonder is selfless and only “looks like the natural desire to know” (B, 404). Aristotle observes that “the one” who first discovered any art (techne) beyond the common perceptions was admired, literally, “wondered at by people” (Metaphysics 981b13-14). This wonder by others, Aristotle argues, was directed not toward the usefulness of the discovery, but toward the discoverer himself as being wiser and distinguished from themselves. His knowledge put others in a state of perplexity. And after more arts had been discovered, Aristotle asserts, the one who discovered arts directed “toward a way of living” was always considered wiser than the one who discovered useful things (981b18).

Aristotle observes that “we think that knowing and understanding are present in art more than experience,” and so we hold those “possessors of arts” to be wiser than those with experience, and worth being wondered at (981b25-27). Experience is “familiarity with things that are particular,” while art requires familiarity with “those that are universal” (981a16-17). Experience and art are the same in action, but the ‘sawbones’ is ignorant of the cause of his treatment, while the specialized surgeon knows the cause of the thing he does (981a28-31).¹ And yet, someone with experience may be apt to treat ‘Socrates’ based upon a judgment of benefit, while an artisan—someone with a “reasoned account” who is familiar with the universal—who does not have experience, may be “ignorant” of the particular treatment and unable to restore Socrates (981a21-23).

¹ During the American civil war, a battlefield surgeon with no medical training was often referred to as a “sawbones,” due to the “rough” technique he utilized in amputation (proximity of appendage to rest of body) and his methods of sanitation (splashing instruments in water). Although the “sawbones” came to be of comparable proficiency in practice to the medical school graduate, the name persisted.
The architectonic has both experience (familiarity with particulars) and art (familiarity with universals), but Aristotle seems to be pulling them apart, with Socrates in the middle (981a8, 981a20). We may wonder, why? Benardete suggests that “Aristotle exaggerates their separability in order to bring out the luxury of the knowledge in the arts” (B, 399). Experience leads to arts, but the one who discovers an art is thought to be wiser because he has knowledge of cause (*Metaphysics* 981a4). The contemplative arts, the “kinds of knowledge directed at neither pleasure nor necessity” but rooted in leisure (981b22), are said to be wiser than the productive ones (982a1-2). It’s clear why the necessary arts—by definition those being directed toward use—are less esteemed given the ‘beautifulness’ of education, but we may wonder why pleasure is eliminated. But insofar as pleasure, or ‘recreation,’ is a respite that makes it possible to go back to work, it is ‘unfree’ as of necessity.²

Having placed Socrates in the middle of his observations on the arts (981a21-23), Aristotle points us toward Socrates’ own inquiry. Aristotle seems to say that since all humans “stretch themselves out toward knowing,” when development allows, they stretch most toward the least useful of arts, and wonder at the one who has this kind of knowledge (980a21). As Benardete says, not only is wisdom attributed to an art in proportion to its rationality, but the more useless an art is “the wiser its practitioners were

² In the *Republic*, the question of justice leads Socrates to offer Glaucon and Adeimantus the ‘city of pigs,’ where people live together for the satisfaction of needs. Glaucon, however, finds this idyllic city unfit for human beings, he wants pleasures—tables and relishes (*Republic* 372d8-10). Glaucon doesn’t fully understand what he’s asking for, but it’s clear that Socrates will not be happy in the city of pigs, where there can be no philosophy. Glaucon lacks knowledge, but his own desire reflects, not only, his esteem for unnecessary ‘pleasure-arts’ directed toward a way of living, but also, the significance he places on the desire to know, in that what he really desires is not ‘necessary satisfaction,’ but the perfection of less useful arts that reflect this desire. In other words, “we are not necessarily grateful to Prometheus” (B, 399). Consistent in his esteem for knowledge, Glaucon questions whether the city in speech is just, when the guardians’ knowledge does not translate into material wealth.
thought to be” (B, 400). When all the arts of pleasure and necessity “had been built up” in the city \((Metaphysics 981b21)\), it was possible for certain people to live a life of leisure, and thus discover arts not concerned with pleasant things or necessary things. The Egyptian priests, who were allowed to live in leisure out of their devotion to god, were the first to do so in discovering mathematics. Aristotle ends chapter one of book Alpha by telling us that the purpose of his beginning in the \textit{Metaphysics} lies in the assumption made by “all people” that “what is called wisdom is concerned with first causes and origins” \((981b29-30)\). Having raised the question of contemplation versus production, however, the final sentence appears to find that wisdom may only be “concerned with certain sources and causes” \((982a3)\).

Wisdom is understood, on the one hand, as “knowledge of cause,” on the other, as “an impractical pursuit” (B, 400). With respect to the former, we may recall Aristotle’s observations on experience and art. Benardete calls experience “the cognitive counterpart to moral virtue” (B, 400). When Aristotle observes that “we think that knowing and understanding are present in art more than in experience” \((Metaphysics 981a4-5)\), he may be arguing that “philosophy acknowledges the claims of both art and experience” (V, 4). That is to say, to attain the universal, one must be a particular being—namely, Socrates. As Aristotle says from the beginning of the argument, “knowledge and art result from experience, for experience makes art” \((Metaphysics 981a3-4)\). On the other hand, mathematics, which was discovered by the Egyptian priests out of leisure, reflects the ‘impractical’ nature of the pursuit of wisdom, as does poetry, or so this argument claims (B, 400). Mathematics is teachable and anyone may learn it, but poetry is thought to be unteachable and require inspiration (B, 400). Unlike the other productive arts, neither
mathematics nor poetry has knowledge of their cause without demonstration, and both require leisure, “the political equivalent to the free play of the senses” (B, 401). What can be communicated as an art, but remains incommunicable through experience (V, 4), can offer the “what,” but not the “why and the cause” (*Metaphysics* 981a30-31), yet *techne* is supposed to be based on knowledge of the why and the cause. Knowledge came to be developed from the discoveries of the productive arts, which made possible the leisure that “refined and articulated” the arts in the political community, but the productive arts no longer fit with such refined curiosity, despite their being necessary both in themselves and for the other arts (B, 401). The arts, it seems, indicate “a certain lack of alignment” in relation to the knower and the nature of his knowledge, which the ‘impractical’ pursuit of wisdom reveals (V, 7).

Halfway through the second chapter, Aristotle remarks that the activity of the first philosophers makes it clear that wisdom is not concerned with production, but contemplation (*Metaphysics* 981b13, 982b12). Philosophy “must be a contemplation of the first sources and causes, since also the good, or that for the sake of which, is one of the causes” (982b10-11). The activity of philosophy—now and then—is rooted in wonder. “By way of wondering,” philosophers first responded to the perplexing things that were nearest them, ultimately coming to impasses about the perplexing things furthest from them, such as the cosmos (982b13). Philosophy, then, appears to be a series of movements that results in impasses concerning cosmology—“the coming into being of the whole” (982b17). That is to say, the philosopher is one whose wonder culminates in the impassable—having wondered at the greatest things, he finds himself to be ignorant (982b18). Aristotle seems to be offering a particularly ‘pre-Socratic’ account of
philosophy, in that he describes wisdom as not only knowledge of cause (982a3), but “knowledge of the causes that originate things” (983a26-27). As Michael Davis suggests, the philosopher’s inquiry requires him to provide a “causal account of the causes prior to knowing that the causes are” (D, 54). Aristotle speaks of the first philosophers as ‘mumbling,’ (Metaphysics 993a15), but perhaps the conscious neediness of ‘wonder’ always involves some ‘mumbling,’ in that giving such an account rests more on experience than knowledge (D, 60).

Aristotle provides an account of philosophy as the movement from knowledge of ignorance to knowledge as science, though he conditions this claim: “so if it was by fleeing ignorance that they philosophized, it is clear that by means of knowing they were in pursuit of knowing, and not for the sake of some kind of use” (Metaphysics 982b20-22). Having come to know (eidenai) his ignorance, the philosopher is said to flee from ignorance in pursuit of scientific knowing (epistasthai) (982b21). In fleeing ignorance and pursuing science, the philosopher appears to overcome wonder by scientific knowing. What, then, happens to philosophizing? Aristotle began chapter two by describing the six “accepted opinions” of the wise man, considering of “what sort of causes and what sort of sources wisdom is the knowledge” (982a6-7). These opinions, however, only seemed to “preserve the truth: that no known science can satisfy all that opinion demands of wisdom” (B, 402). Wisdom, it seems, may not be a knowledge of first sources and causes, though it may still be “concerned with certain sources and

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3 Socrates, too, puts forth such an account in the Theaetetus, in that not only knowledge—which has been equivocated with wisdom (145e)—of cause is sought, but knowledge of causes that originate things (152e): Socrates suggests motion (155c). The battle of the Heracliteans and Parmenides, too, is pivotal.
causes” (*Metaphysics* 982a2). The philosopher flees toward, not into, scientific knowledge.

Following the discussion of wonder in *Metaphysics* Alpha, Aristotle goes on to offer an account of pre-Socratic philosophy in which his search for a fifth cause “is tantamount to an admission that he cannot provide that there are only four causes” (B, 403). What may have seemed to be a “digression in wonder,” which led astray from discussing knowledge of cause, was really an articulation of the perplexity of wonder (D, 51). That is, the pre-Socratics “themselves are the efficient causes” of the matter they suggest, and Anaxagoras comes closest in positing an “unknown efficient cause”—mind—as final cause (D, 60). As Davis suggests, “knowledge of ignorance, is the sign that the movement of thought at least is governed by final cause. The true is governed by the good” (D, 60). The wonderful, we might say, shows the philosopher that nature loves to hide. As Benardete says, “the wonderful is that which shows the hiddenness of the unknown” (B, 404). Since “wisdom cannot contain any potentially knowable elements,” it appears there is only partial knowledge, or potentially knowable parts of wisdom, available to the philosopher (B, 403, my emphasis).

Wisdom, if it were possible, “bring[s] together contemplative knowing for its own sake and causal knowing of the good” (V, 6). Wisdom, as self-knowledge, unites the “contemplative and the ratiocinative”—that is, “knowledge that reveals the natural desire to know,” and knowledge of cause for its own sake (B, 397). However, this highest level of knowing—in wisdom—is already present in wonder (B, 404).  

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⁴ Aristotle seems to lay out his argument strangely, but tactfully, as he observes: wonder at, i.e. admiration of, the ‘wise man’ (the discoverer of arts beyond necessity) (981b12), the accepted opinions of what wisdom is (982a7-19), the wonder of the first philosophers (982b12), human wisdom (that is,
on wisdom, which end up being both essentially true and contradictory—like “the Platonic view that wisdom is the proper union of the playful and the serious,” or “the beautiful and the good” (B, 403)—, reveal the difficulty of accounting for philosophic wisdom. As Velkley suggests, Aristotle gives us reason to doubt any claims to possess wisdom in the accepted opinions and the philosopher’s knowledge of ignorance. Since philosophy is only accidentally, not causally, related to political life, philosophy is “homelessness without nostalgia” (B, 405). Wonder, as the effect of the good, is the cause of philosophy.

knowledge of ignorance) (982b18), poetic wonder (982b19-20), philosophy in history (982b20-25), the freedom of wisdom (982b25-29), opinions on human potential for wisdom (982b29-983a2) and wisdom as divine (983a4-11). Benardete points to Aristotle’s invocation of poetic wonder as a means of introducing philosophy as originating in wonder, after he’s given the opinions on wisdom, and before he sets out to differentiate the true opinions of wisdom from false ones (B, 405).
Chapter Three: Martin Heidegger on Wonder

i. The Question: Was ist das, die Philosophie?

“The aim of our question is to enter into philosophy, to dwell in it, to conduct ourselves according to its mode, that is, to ‘philosophize’” (W, 4). Accordingly, Martin Heidegger asks the question not Was ist die Philosophie? (“What is philosophy”), but “Was ist das, die Philosophie?” (“What is that—philosophy?”) (4, my emphasis). The formulation of the question introduces it as a subject that must first be asked from a distance.1 It is redolent of “a motion of pointing and distancing” that speaks about philosophy,2 and so “maintain[s] a position above, and that means outside of, philosophy” (4). To get “into” philosophy (4), Heidegger says, a “clearly directed” way must be found that “guarantee[s] that we are moving within philosophy and not outside and round about it” (6, 4). The way into philosophy is said to be “the way of our conversations,” which must concern us and touch us “in our very nature” (4), while neither reducing the way to “feelings” (the irrational) nor “reason” (the rational) (4, 5).3

1 The Wilde and Kluback translation is simply titled What is Philosophy?, and thus obscures the significance of Heidegger’s formulation of the question.

2 Martin Heidegger What is that—Philosophy? trans. by Eva Brann, 2, ft. 2.

3 Heidegger says philosophy must ‘touch us’ in an extraordinary way that goes beyond “what people ordinarily call affects and feelings” (6). Though “everyone considers” philosophy to be a “rational attitude,” to declare it the “administratix of ratio” is to have “hurried ahead” of the question by giving an answer, insofar as philosophy antecedes and determines ratio (5). To determine philosophy in this way would also overlook the sense in which it appears to involve an emotional disposition, since even reason is “confidence” in the logico-mathematical perspicuity of its principles and rules,” despite the “coldness of [its] calculation” and supposed “free[dom]” from passion (36-37, my emphasis).
To ask the question of what philosophy is, then, a “higher [level of] care” is required (6). But Heidegger indicates that although the question is of a theme that is “wide” and “indeterminate” (3), “the way” on which he will proceed, although not determined, “lies immediately before us” (6). The way is not philosophy, per se, but the Greek word *philosophia*. Philosophy, as *philosophia*, is “a way on along which we are [already] underway” (7). By carefully denuding the Greek word, it seems an entrance into philosophy might be re-opened that moves beyond simply recapitulating historical knowledge of Greek thinkers and instead allows for philosophizing in the present.

Heidegger suggests the word *philosophia* must be heard not as a “worn-out title,” but rather, as a word that was pronounced, or vocalized, to us (*uns…ausgesprochen*) before (7). It is, then, “before us” and in front of us (7). In other words, *philosophia* is our past and our present. As Heidegger says, *philosophia* appears on “the birth certificate of our world history,” but we might also say that it appears on “the birth certificate of the contemporary world historical epoch,” in that *philosophia* engages us in a conversation with a historical tradition (9). Since the word “first laid claim to the Greeks, and to them alone, in order to unfold itself” (8), *philosophia* is of a tradition that is “unique in kind” and “univocal” in its meaning (9). That is to say, there is a Greek *philosophia* and a historical *philosophia*, the former of which determines the latter, and the tradition of which distinctly “makes accessible to us the direction of a way on which we ask” the question (9). The historical understanding alone, Heidegger makes clear, does not free us from the Greek understanding. Nor may we simply return to the age of the Greeks, as the significance of the tradition for Heidegger’s question and his conception of the need for another beginning indicate. While science may be touted as “the force which is to
determine the course of history” (9), and Heidegger tentatively refers to the present epoch as the “atomic age” (8), there could be no sciences “if philosophy had not gone before and in advance” (9). Since *philosophia*, rather than science, has, in actuality, determined the course of history, the question can only be asked “if we involve ourselves in a conversation with the thinking of the Greeks” (9).

Engaging in the thinking of the Greeks requires an explication not of the ideas of the Greeks, but of the way in which for the Greeks thinking “is in the service of speech” (37). The words of Greek speech provide access to a “distinctive domain” wherewith “what is said in it is in a remarkable way simultaneously what the saying names” (13, 14). That is, “Greek speech, and it alone, is *logos*” (14). Heidegger disinters the Greek *logos* by beginning with its *legein*, “its immediate laying down” (14), to show how unlike this speech is from the “European languages with which we are acquainted” (13-14). By indicating the word and the thing “before us” that the word names, the *legein* transcends “mere verbal meaning” and shows Greek speech to be “no mere language” (13-14). It is in this sense that philosophy is ‘vocalized’ to us (7). An investigation into the word *philosophia*, its origin and usage by the Greeks, is said to provide a way for dwelling in philosophy.

### ii. Philosophos versus Philosophy

Heidegger distinguishes between the word *philosophia* and its antecedent *philosophos* (14). *Philosophos* is an adjective purported to have originated from Heraclitus that means “loving the wise [things]” (14). Heidegger likens this to other adjectives like *philarguros* (“loving silver”) and *philotimos* (“loving honor), finding, “this signifies that for

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4 Heidegger is able to begin by saying *philosophia* is “immediately” before us, owing to his having recognized the *legein* of *logos*. (6).
Heraclitus there is as yet no *philosophia*” (14). Loving the wise things does not mean there is love of wisdom. *Philosophia*, as a noun, entails a distinct topic, the love of wisdom, which is separate from an adjective that denotes one who only loves ‘the wise.’ With that in mind, Heidegger turns to the phrase *aner philosophos*. An *aner philosophos*, he says, “is not a ‘philosophical’ man” (15). A philosophical man would pertain to philosophy, and since there is yet no *philosophia*, an *aner philosophos* must be something else: “he who loves the wise things” (*hos philei to sophon*) (15). “To love” (*philein*), “in Heraclitus’ sense,” is “to speak as the *Logos* speaks” (*homolegein*), or “to speak in accordance with the *Logos*” (15). This speaking is “in accord with the *sophon*” (15). The determining character of loving thought, “in the Heraclitean sense,” is this *harmonia* (“accord”) between speaking and the wise things (16).

The *aner philosophos* loves the wise things, but what are the wise things? What does *sophon* say for Heraclitus? In accord with *logos*, “*to sophon* says this: *Hen Panta*, ‘All (is) One’” (16). *Hen* (“one”) is the *Panta* (“whole”). *Hen* isn’t simply the unit one; it is “the unique, the all-uniting”—it is “Being” (*das Sein*) (16). Heidegger accounts for *panta as panta ta onta*: “the whole” as “the totality of beings” (*das Seiende*) (16). So, the wise things say the whole is all-uniting.5 In other words, since “it is in Being that all beings are united,” the wise things say, “all that is, is in Being…Being *is* beings” (*Das Sein ist das Seiende*) (16, emphasis in original). Thus, *hen* is *panta*, wherewith “is” intermediates between Being and beings. Heidegger refers to this intermediating as a

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5As the Brann translation suggests, Heidegger’s play on *fugen* and *die Fuge* suggests that *harmonia* has a nature not of simply agreement, but submission (*sich beide einander fügen*: submissively fit each other) and force (*sie zueinander verfügt sind*: ordered and fitted to each other). To say that the whole is harmonious, then, is to suggest that Being gathers beings, or that all beings are gathered in Being, inasmuch as this accord entails a “fitting.” See Martin Heidegger *What is that—Philosophy?*, trans. Eva Brann, 15, ft. 21.
collecting: “Being collects beings in so far as they are what is in being. Being is the collection—*Logos*” (16-17). Recollecting the above, the “distinctive domain” *logos* allows access to in its laying-down is thought about the whole, or Being (13). But *logos* isn’t just a laying-down, it’s a picking-up—a collection (*Versammlung*). It is in these opposing movements of *logos* that “wonder” (*Erstaunen*) is said to first occur.

### iii. Wonder

And yet, just this, that beings remain collected in Being, that in the shining-forth of Being beings show up—it was that which first struck the Greeks with wonder, them first and them alone. Beings in Being—that became for the Greeks what is the most wonderful. (17)

The man who loves the wise things loves how in the appearance of Being beings appear, and, at this, he first wonders. This is how his love begins. He loves the beings in Being—the totality of beings in the whole. For him, this is what is most wonderful. But Heidegger says this is no longer the case today: “For no one *needs to care* about the fact that beings belong in Being” (17, my emphasis). This “care” recalls the higher level of care Heidegger said is ‘needed’—*Es bedarf einer höheren Sorgfalt* (“it needs a higher care”)—to begin the conversation (6). What is presently needed seems to have some affinity with what “sounds trivial to our ear” (17). The need to begin the present conversation and the need of the Greek beginning appear to lack some kinship in “the history of the Greek descent of philosophy” (9). Heidegger encourages us to wonder: what is this need of the early Greeks, and what is needed now? For “if this question arises out of a dire need and is not to remain a mere sham-question for the purpose of making conversation, philosophy as philosophy must have become questionable” (13). Having shown the need of this question for the Greeks, and “gained an insight into philosophy”

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6 Martin Heidegger *What is that—Philosophy?*, trans. Eva Brann, 17, ft. 24.
by the Greek beginning, the question of the essence of philosophy remains (13).

Heidegger accounts for wonder before he accounts for *philosophia*, and after introducing the *aner philosophos*, the man who loves the wise things. This seems to imply that wonder reveals what the *sophon* ‘means,’ or what this man loves, but it doesn’t show what philosophy (qua *philosophia*) is. It would seem, then, that philosophy does not begin in wonder.

**iv. Philosophia**

Philosophy, Heidegger says, comes to be from the rescuing of the *sophon* from sophistry. For after Heraclitus and Parmenides, the sophists arise, offering knowledge in exchange for pay. The sophists claimed to know by offering “an explanation for everything, an explanation that everyone could understand right away” (18). As the name *sophistes* (“pursuer of wisdom”) suggests, the sophist’s *logos* is no longer in accord with the *sophon* as indicated by means of their pursuit, i.e., their very nature. And rather than loving ‘the wise,’ the sophist loves to win an argument, insofar as he uses rhetoric to explain anything and everything, for a price. Even if it means making a weaker speech appear stronger by his arguing ‘badly.’ He thus poses a great threat to wonder, since his claim to knowledge exhibits a desire to explain things, rather than heed *logos*, which the earlier Greek thinkers are said to be in harmony with. I quote Heidegger’s account of the beginning of *philosophia* in full below:

The rescue of what is most wonderful, beings in Being, happened because a few set off on the way in the direction of this which is most wonderful, that is, the *sophon*. Thus they became such as strove for the *sophon* and who, through their own striving, awakened and kept awake among others the longing for the *sophon*. “Loving the *sophon*,” that accord with the *sophon* previously mentioned, that *harmonia*, thus became an *orexis*, a striving after the *sophon*. The *sophon*—the beings in Being—now becomes the object of a particular search. Because the *philein* is no longer an original accord with the *sophon* but
rather a particular striving after the *sophon, philein to sophon* becomes “philosophia.” Its striving is determined by Eros. (18)

Loving the *sophon* becomes an erotic striving after the *sophon in philosophia*. As a desire for the *sophon*, it is an indeterminate searching for wisdom. The search for wisdom, for the *Hen Panta*, “now becomes a question: What is that which is in being insofar as it is? Only now does thinking become ‘philosophy’” (18). In other words, Eros is indicative of a particular type of questioning that separates Being and being, as evident in what Heidegger implies is the disharmony of the Socratics, whereas wonder holds the essence of Being as the fundamental question, as shown in the harmony of the pre-Socratics. Since thinking only now becomes philosophy in Eros, the striking claim is made that Heraclitus and Parmenides “were not yet ‘philosophers’” (18). Contrary to diminishing these thinkers, Heidegger seems to elevate them in that the emergence of *philosophia* indicates a loss of the original accord, thereby revealing the earlier thinkers to be “greater thinkers” (18). The startling claim is, ultimately, not the occlusion of Heraclitus and Parmenides, but the diminishment of Greek thought beginning with Socrates, and so philosophy itself. Philosophy, as such, begins with Socratic philosophy.

The Socratic way is “a way along which we are underway” (26), but Heidegger suggests it is redolent of decline, inasmuch as “the step toward ‘philosophy,’ prepared for by the Sophists, was first carried out by Socrates and Plato” (19). These thinkers rescued

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7 Heidegger says *Deren Streben wird durch den Eros bestimmt* (“Their pursuit is determined by Eros”) (17). Eva Brann suggests that Heidegger’s use of the definite article “invokes the god and his particular passion.” Plato’s only mention of the word in the *Theaetetus* is of *eros*, not Eros, but since Hesiod’s genealogy seems to be essential to the dialogue and determines Eros’ relation to Wonder (Thaumas), I continue with “Eros,” leaving open the possibility of the divine. In doing so, I also follow Allan Bloom’s suggestion (LL, 56, ft. 3). See Martin Heidegger *What is that—Philosophy?*, trans. Eva Brann, 17, ft. 27.

8 See Martin Heidegger *What is Philosophy*, trans. and intro. by Wilde and Kluback, 11-12.
the “wondrousness of what is wonderful” away from the sophists, but Heidegger suggests the harmony between the *sophon* and *logos* is already lost, which he finds philosophy may only seek to recover (18). According to Heidegger, philosophy is therefore a sign of forgetting, of which the pursuit of the *sophon* by sophistry is a precursor. The wonder that disposed the early Greeks is lost since Being is forgotten, or no longer disposing. Philosophy, as it begins with Socrates, retrieves the “wondrousness” of beings in Being, but not the wonder. Heidegger displays an understanding of Socratic philosophy as the beginning of philosophy, insofar as its striving is determined by Eros, which involves wonder, but only as the wondrous, and therein different from the wonder of the early Greeks.

**v. The Question of Being**

Heidegger relates this movement from sophistry to philosophy, and thereby excludes the early Greeks, with Aristotle’s remark in the *Metaphysics* that human beings have always been concerned with the question of Being: “And, indeed, that which has been searched after of old and also now and ever, and ever left in doubt is: What is being?” (1028b; W,19). “Philosophy searches for what beings are insofar as they are” (W,19). As Eva Brann notes, Heidegger characterizes this movement as *Schritt* (“step”) rather than *Fortschritt* (“progress”). Heidegger suggests that the searching of philosophy continuously “fails to find access” to Being (19). He finds that Aristotle’s addendum to the question of being, “What is that which is in being?,” which Heidegger translates as “What is the Beingness of beings?” (*toto esti tis he ousia*), means that the “Being of

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9 Whether the sophists arise because disharmony had already occurred, or the *sophon* “forgotten”, seems unclear in this writing. Nevertheless, we might find that the actions of sophistry indicate as much.

10 Martin Heidegger *What is that Philosophy?*, trans. Eva Brann, 19, ft. 28.
beings rests on Beingness” (19-20). Heidegger quotes from the *Metaphysics*, this time noting how Aristotle “delimits the nature of philosophy” when he says that philosophy is “theoretical knowledge of first causes and sources” (982b9-10; W, 20).

The word *episteme* derives from the participle *epistamenos* [one who knows how]. That is what a human being is called when he is competent and adroit in something (competence in the sense of *apparitenance* [aptitude]). Philosophy is *episteme tis*, a kind of competence, namely, *theoretike*, which is capable of *theorein* [speculating], that is, capable of looking out for something and of taking and holding in its view what it is on the lookout for. Philosophy, therefore, is *episteme theoretike* [speculative knowledge]. But what is it that it holds in view? Aristotle says what it is when he names the *protai archai kai aitiai*. People translate this as “the first grounds and causes,” namely, of beings. *The first grounds and causes thus constitute the Being of beings.* (W, 20-21, emphasis in original)

Notably absent is the rest of Aristotle’s account of contemplation as being concerned with first causes and sources, “…since also the good, or that for the sake of which, is one of the causes” (*Metaphysics* 982b10-11). “In Heidegger’s view the highest themes of the metaphysical tradition—the Good, or the ideas, or *nous*—remain on the plane of the beings, or of *das Seiende*” (HSPP, 127). Accordingly, “good” (*gutem*) is only mentioned once in the lecture, with a different connotation (W, 38). It appears in the final paragraphs, when Heidegger says “one might require with good justification that our conversation should restrict itself to the question concerning philosophy” (38). Instead, since philosophy is interpreted as “a correspondence that casts in speech the spoken appeal of the Being of beings”—the first grounds and causes—poetry becomes part of the conversation (39). Given the absence of the good as cause, Heidegger seems to miss the way that, if, being entails thinking in a way that poses questions and expects answers, “then for the being who most of all desires to know, being is good” (D, 63). The “goodness of being,” then, would be “manifest in the nature of philosophy,” whose questioning is characterized by the desire to know (D, 63-64). But Heidegger speaks of the ‘spoken appeal’ of Being as evident in both “thinking and poetry” in a way that seeks
to uncover the Greek beginning free of Aristotle’s interpretation (W, 39). Heidegger continues:

After two-and-a-half millennia it would seem to be about time to follow out in thought what the Being of beings has to do with such matters as “ground” and “cause.” In what sense is Being thought such that the likes of “ground” and “cause” are suitable for setting their stamp on and taking over the being-in-Being of beings? But now let us attend to something else. The sentence of Aristotle quoted above tells us whither that which since Plato has been called “philosophy” is underway. The sentence gives us information about what that is — philosophy. Philosophy is a kind of competence that qualifies one to hold beings in view, namely with a view to what they are insofar as they are what is in being. The question which is to give our conversation its fruitful unrest and movement and is to show the conversation the direction of its way, the question, “What is philosophy?,” has already been answered by Aristotle. Therefore our conversation is no longer necessary. It is at an end before it has begun. (21, emphasis in original)

This is the “form of questioning which Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle developed” (10) and which persists now, in that a more precise meaning of being is sought and an “interpretation is given of what the ‘what’ means” (10).11 Plato, according to Heidegger, interprets being (ousia) as “idea (idea),” an interpretation that determines the course of not only philosophy, but history (10-11).12 In the history of philosophy particular thinkers are said to have given different interpretations of the “what,” but all correspond to the form of questioning formulated by philosophia—philosophy beginning with Socrates and Plato and carried on by Aristotle (10). These interpretations of the what, which Heidegger suggests are moods of attunement to Being, are said to constitute the essence of philosophy. Heidegger, then, is able to say that philosophia is ‘determined’ by Eros, while still finding that it is not the origin of philosophy, inasmuch as Eros is merely the

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11 Asking “what the what means” is Socratic, insofar as “it is that form of questioning which Socrates, Plato and Aristotle developed” (10). But, inasmuch as “the quiddity is determined differently in different epochs of philosophy” (10), we might say it’s only ‘Socratic’ insofar as to ask ‘what the what means’ is to correspond with philosophia, which Heidegger says begins with the Socratics.

12 Heidegger twice says Plato determines ousia as idea (10, 20), while once mentioning that Aristotle determines ousia as energeia (20), although the word energeia appears three times in that discussion. Heidegger says it is “not yet necessary to discuss more exactly” what Aristotle means by the word and he doesn’t mention it again (20).
first of many moods in the philosophic tradition, all of which are said to pursue the
accord of the fundamental mood—wonder. Philosophy is, therefore, a “fate-ful
questioning” in that it is a historical way of questioning developed by these thinkers (12).
But since the ‘what’ of philosophy is now sought, Heidegger suggests philosophy itself
must have become questionable and, by that account, Plato’s interpretation of ousia as
idea. The circularity of philosophic questioning is curiously evident.

vi. The Need to Converse with the Philosophers

Heidegger seems to suggest that erudition in the history of philosophy, in terms of
“collecting the available definitions” as an effort to resolve philosophy into a general
formula, reveals “how people have represented philosophy in the course of history,” but
it provides neither an answer to the question nor an entry into philosophy (23). To
philosophize seems to require following the nature of philosophy in thought, not thinking
about philosophy as a collection of historical information, i.e., as a subject to be mastered
in the world-historical encyclopedia by knowing the “opinions of philosophers” (25).13

When is the answer to the question, “What is that—philosophy?,” a philosophizing one?
When are we philosophizing? Evidently only when we enter into a conversation with the
philosophers. This implies that we talk through with them what they are talking about.
This talking-through-with-one-another of that which, as one and the same, ever and
again, peculiarly concerns the philosophers, is speaking, legein, in the sense of
dialegesthai, speaking as dialogue. (24)

To philosophize is to correspond with the thoughts of other philosophers by following
what they lay-down (legein) and conversing with them (dialegesthai). To converse
involves picking-up what the philosophers are putting-down; it entails an engagement in
thinking “with” their thoughts (24). Here, conversation (qua dialogue) imitates Greek

13 Brann points to Heidegger’s use of nach-denken ("after-thinking") in place of the more common
occurrence of nachdenken in conjunction with über ("to think about"). See Martin Heidegger What is
that—Philosophy?, trans. Eva Brann, 23, ft. 32.
speech in acting like *logos* in its original laying-down and picking-up—its collection. *Logos*, after all, is said to be the collection of Being (17). Dialogue, then, as a way of collecting what was laid-down to the philosophers in their encounter with Being, and subsequently engaging in a *legein* of our own, is said to engage us in a fundamental exchange with Being. Dialogue, Heidegger suggests, is the way into philosophy.\(^\text{14}\)

At this stage, it is unclear precisely how such a correspondence might be attained. How does one purport an answer that corresponds with the Being of beings? But Heidegger’s turn away from the world-historical encyclopedia is not a simply derisive look at history. The account of *logos* earlier in the lecture—the Greek *logos* and its tradition—already points to what Heidegger calls for now: “an appropriation and transformation of what the tradition has delivered” (27). Heidegger ascribes this appropriation the title of “destruction” (*Destruktion*) (27). Destruction is an “opening [of] our ear” that heeds the “spoken appeal” of the Being of beings and allows for the attainment of correspondence (27). Perhaps with Aristotle’s beginning in the *Metaphysics* in mind, that “all human beings by nature stretch themselves out toward knowing” (980a21-22), Heidegger acknowledges a “hesitation” in recognizing the need for destruction (W, 28). That is, don’t we human beings “by reason of our nature” engage in a correspondence with the Being of beings (28)? Heidegger affirms Aristotle’s beginning—“so it is in truth”—while perhaps offering an interpretation: “For, although

\[^{14}\text{Heidegger says “Our speaking must cor-respond to that which addresses the philosophers” (25). Since “the answer [to the question] can only be a philosophizing response,” the “re-sponse” (as a response to the philosophers response to Being) can only be a response that “philosophizes in itself” (24). That is to say, if the philosophers “tell what beings are insofar as they are” through being “addressed by the Being of beings,” then “our conversation with philosophers must also be addressed by the Being of beings” (25). An answer to the question of ‘What is that, Philosophy?,’ entails a ‘re-sponse’ to the question that philosophizes insofar as it ‘cor-responds’ to the Being of beings by engaging in a dialogue with the thought of philosophers who, as such, were themselves in correspondence with the Being of beings.\]
we do remain always and everywhere in correspondence to the Being of beings, we nevertheless rarely attend to the *spoken appeal of Being*” (28, my emphasis). The need of the spoken appeal is evidenced in its disposing man to expressly adopt “a self-unfolding attitude” that “properly correspond[s] to the concerns of that philosophy which is on the way toward the Being of beings” (28). By speaking of the spoken appeal as needed, and consolidating, Heidegger seems to speak of philosophy as a disposition.

This correspondence to the Being of beings is philosophy; but it is philosophy only if and when the correspondence is expressly realized, so that it unfolds itself and consolidates this unfolding. This correspondence occurs in different ways, depending on how the spoken appeal of Being speaks, depending on whether it is heard or unheard, and depending on whether what is heard is told or is passed over in silence. (28-29)

Heidegger thus says proper correspondence is a disposition that is “tuned” (*gestimmtes*) by the spoken appeal of Being (29).

*Philosophia* is the expressly realized correspondence which speaks insofar as it attends to the spoken appeal of the Being of beings. The correspondence listens to the voice of the spoken appeal. What announces itself appealingly to us as the voice of Being at-tunes our correspondence. “Correspondence” then means: being at-tuned, *être disposé*, namely by the Being of beings. (29)

To correspond is thus to be encountered by the Being of beings, to make a clearing, or space, for beings and therein be placed in relation to Being. Correspondence is a tuning, or disposition, in that beings (qua beings) attune speaking by heeding the spoken appeal of the Being of beings in such a way whereby the “telling of correspondence” attunes itself to Being (30). Correspondence is, then, “in a tuning” insofar as this tuning to the Being of beings gives it its “at-tunement” or determinacy (*Bestimmtheit*) (30). Heidegger finds that “correspondence is *essentially* in a mood” (*Stimmung*) (30, my emphasis). In its several meanings, *Stimmung* expresses the way in

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15 Here, Brann illuminates “*auseinander-gesetzt* (en-countered)” and “*gelichtet* (en-lightened; from a verb used for making space that lets in the light, such as a clearing in a forest; see *Being and Time*, p. 133).” See Martin Heidegger *What is that—Philosophy?*, trans. Evan Brann, 30, ft. 46.
which correspondence is a mood, or a musical mode, or a musical tuning, but also that it is an emotional disposition. Recalling Heidegger’s earlier remark that philosophy is something that “concerns us” inasmuch as it “touches us” (4), mood now becomes clear as the emotional attunement, or disposition, that he says characterizes philosophy.16

“Above all,” Heidegger says, “the reference to the essential tuning of correspondence is not a modern invention” (31). The Greek thinkers, here identified as Plato and Aristotle, noted that philosophy is a disposition.17 Heidegger finds this to mean that these thinkers recognized “the fact that philosophy and philosophizing belong to that dimension of human beings which we call mood (in the sense of tuning and attunement)” (31). These quotations, below, are of Heidegger’s own translation:

Plato says (Theaetetus, 155d): “For surely this pathos especially belongs to the philosopher—wondering. For there is no other ruling whence of philosophy than this”… Aristotle says the same (Metaphysics, A 2, 982b12): “For through wondering human beings have now and from the first gained entrance to the ruling issue of philosophizing” (to that whence philosophizing goes forth and which thoroughly determines the going of philosophizing). (31-32)

Wonder, what the early Greeks experienced in the appearance of the Being of beings, is said to ‘rule’ philosophy. That is, wonder (qua disposition) marks the beginning of philosophy and the ongoing character of philosophizing: “Wonder supports and rules philosophy through and through” (32). Heidegger says it would be an error—“very un-Greek”—not to take Plato and Aristotle as meaning that wonder continues to be the arche

16 Heidegger seems to leave open whether the multiple Stimmungen in the history of philosophy are accidentally or properly grounded in the spoken appeal of Being. Some appear to reflect how ‘Being speaks,’ while others seemingly don’t insofar as what was said either wasn’t heard by the philosopher or was heard but wasn’t expressed by him. Heidegger doesn’t elaborate on how or why this might happen, but in either case, what was expressed by Being went unheeded (28-29).

17 Heidegger does not mention Socrates here, despite having invoked his name alongside Plato and Aristotle in other instances, and despite the quote from the Theaetetus, which follows, being spoken by Socrates. In light of the earlier mentions of Plato and Aristotle, which do include Socrates, I find his absence here curious.
of philosophy (32). Heidegger suggests philosophy is a series of moods that are attuned by thinking that corresponds to Being, which ask “in a new way the traditional question,” and “begin a new time for philosophy” (34). He speaks of other moods or beginnings at times in the lecture, even telling us that the arche of modern philosophy is the “mood of confidence in the absolute certainty of a cognition” (35), and so presumably distinct from the arche of ancient philosophy. But here he seems to say that wonder is the fundamental and ongoing mood (32), and suggests that the telos of modern philosophy is a mood that lies in the early Greek beginning (35, 37-38). This telos seems to entail acknowledging wonder as the fundamental and pervasive mood (38). In light of this, Eros might be said to ‘determine’ philosophy, as philosophia, but it isn’t said to be the beginning, insofar as wonder is the originating mood of which Eros is a ‘rescue.’

The way “our conversation can offer opportunities further in thought” appears to be by acknowledging that the entire philosophic tradition, as philosophia, begins with Socrates, but the Socratic mood of Eros is only one of many moods of thinking attuned by Being, which originally disclosed itself to an earlier epoch of Greek thought (29). But Heidegger also says “there is no way to make perspicuous the claim that the several philosophies and the epochs of philosophy emerge from one another in the sense in which a dialectic process has necessity” (22-23, my emphasis). That is, the philosophic tradition itself, or at least parts of it, might not be necessary. His account of destruction, and the

18 Though Heidegger ascribes other moods, or ‘beginnings,’ to philosophy, like those in Hegel or Nietzsche (35-36), he finds that all of these have a “kinship in sameness” (22). He notes the telos (“end”) of a mood may vary, raising the additional question of how a mood might be fulfilled, or if other moods arise out of need (or perhaps accidentally) to fulfill the mood previously in question (34-35). Heidegger mentions doubt (Zweifel) and despair (Verzweiflung) as other possible moods (36), or beginnings, in addition to wonder and Eros, but seems to raise the question whether all these other moods don’t concern the telos of an original mood— it seems, wonder—which the new attunement aims for in a different way (35).
correspondence with Being that acknowledges wonder as not only the fundamental mood of thought, but the mood that ‘rules’ the rest, seems to show the roots of the ancient tradition. In this showing, Heidegger seeks to make clear the original ground of Heraclitus and Parmenides in wonder, not as one that may be returned to, but as one that might illuminate a new and yet primordial ground, and thus a new beginning.

vii. Wonder as Disposition

In his earlier work The Need and the Necessity of the First Beginning and the Need and the Necessity of an Other Way to Question and to Begin, Heidegger asks whether the origin of philosophy is a disposition (N, 135). Wonder is ultimately said to be what “disposes and determines” man wherewith he attains a disposition that originates philosophy (135). A historical reflection on the “essence of wonder” as the beginning of philosophy is to show that “its necessity springs forth out of a need” and this “need compels in the mode of a disposition” (143, 138).

Heidegger begins by speaking of “the distress of not knowing the way out or the way in” (132). This distress gives rise to a “need” that “makes needful the highest form of necessity” (131). Namely, the need “of primordial thinking” (134). In considering the need of the necessity of the beginning, Heidegger says “only the most profound understanding of the essence of need will suffice” (132).19 The distress that provides this need is said to be a ‘not knowing’ that, in its inability to find the way out or the way in, “first opens up” an “untrodden and ungrounded” space (132). Not knowing evidences the

19 Although need as such is negative and indicates an absence, Heidegger finds that as a “no” it may also point to an abundance that offers a surplus beyond the “yes,” i.e., the positive that acknowledges what is present and at hand—beings (131-132). Hence the distress “has an excess which raises it above every lack” and seems to have a relation to non-being that the “yes” cannot offer (139).
‘need to know,’ which compels man into a space wherein an opening is first provided for thinking.

This space (time-space)—if we may so speak of it here—is that “between” where it has not yet been determined what being is or what non-being is, though where by the same token a total confusion and undifferentiation of beings and non-beings does not sweep everything away either, letting one thing wander into another. This distress, as such a not knowing the way out of or into this self-opening “between,” is a mode of “Being,” in which man arrives or perhaps is thrown and for the first time experiences—but does not explicitly consider—that which we are calling the “in the midst” of beings. (132)

The distress “explodes beings” by opening up the between—“the whole” of beings (139)—wherein “the ‘in the midst’ of beings” is first encountered (132). Since “it is a whole that is undifferentiated, there is nothing to which a way might lead to a standpoint inside, nor is there anything outside to which an exit would be possible” (139). Neither an out nor an in is possible, so the thought of man “oscillates” back and forth, searching, in the midst (139). Heidegger refers to this as the “whence and whither” of the initial experience of the whole, i.e., Being (138). But the oscillation of man’s thinking, rather than indicating a lack, makes evident the “extraordinary sense” in which in his not knowing—that is, in his feeling the need to know—he searches and thereby is placed “into the decision of the most decisive relations to beings and non-beings” (139). In this relation beings “as a whole can be determined in their beingness” (134). This decision “bestow[s] on him the foundation of a new essence” (139), inasmuch as the need to know, emanating from the distress, shows the “need of primordial thinking” (134). This need is said to compel man into the “basic” disposition, inasmuch as it is the “essential disposition” (134).

Having accounted for the need of the first beginning as distress, Heidegger quotes, without translation, the same lines from Plato’s Theaetetus and Aristotle’s Metaphysics that say wonder is the beginning of philosophy, as he does in What is that—
Philosophy? In doing so, he introduces *thaumazein* as the aforementioned distress, and asks: “to what extent” is what disposes man into the basic disposition, and is the origin of philosophy, “this wonder?” (N, 135, my emphasis). In other words, what is the nature of the wonder that reveals the need to know, and consequentially, what is the nature of other types of wonder that do not? Heidegger suggests that “common representation[s]” of *thaumazein*, as not wonder, but the wondrous, not only fail to account for the need to know, but lead to a “weak and pitiful determination of [its] origin” that fails to show how wonder as the “origin of philosophy, indicates precisely the inexplicability of philosophy, in the sense that here in general to explain and the will to explain are mistakes” (135-136). He finds that an even more deplorable type, which is, perhaps, not so much a type as it is simply a misunderstanding, is that wonder which is said to occur psychologically:

This characterization of the origin of philosophy out of marveling—as it is also called—is often quoted and readily cited in order to account for the origin of philosophy psychologically and in that way to deprive philosophy precisely of the wondrous. All psychology intrudes in this way to disenchant and dispossess. But what is at issue here is only to raise philosophy—or any other essentially creative power—up into its inexplicability and to preserve it there, and only there, as a possible acquisition against all trivialization. To say philosophy originates in wonder means philosophy is wondrous in its essence and becomes more wondrous the more it becomes what it is. (141)

At several points in the writing, Heidegger dissuades the reader from interpreting wonder psychologically as “lived experience” (140). A psychological rendering seems to suggest that wonder is a human capacity through which man transports himself “into this or that disposition” (134). The distinction between man (qua self-disposing) and wonder (qua disposing) is clarified in these terms: were it man who disposed himself through his

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20 Here, Heidegger includes Aristotle’s remark that “Philosophy is theoretical knowledge of first causes and sources” immediately after the two mentions of wonder in Plato and Aristotle. All three quotations, then, appear paramount to understanding Heidegger’s understanding of philosophy, although Aristotle’s conception of philosophy as theoretical is not further attended to here directly. In *What is that—Philosophy?*, as noted above, Heidegger presents his account of philosophy differently. There, Aristotle’s remark that philosophy is concerned with contemplation precedes Heidegger’s mention of Plato and Aristotle as saying philosophy originates in wonder by twelve pages (W, 20, 32).
own capacity, man would compel himself into “already determined relations” (134); but wonder brings about undetermined relations. The ‘not knowing’ of wonder, evidenced in the need to know, becomes nonsense if the beingness of beings is already determined. To interpret wonder psychologically is to lose everything (140), given that the disposition which arises from the distress isn’t a psychological experience, but an “appropriating event” of Being (133). “It is the disposition that displaces us” (140). That is to say, ‘it has us,’ we do not ‘have it.’

Nevertheless, acknowledging the manner of the disposing, as an attempt to explain, is said to provide no greater access, and the implication seems to be that this acknowledgement stays in the realm of psychology (141). For wonder “transports us in such a way that it co-founds the time-space of the transporting itself” (134). Wonder is “the basic disposition compelling us into the necessity of primordial thinking” (143). And yet Heidegger says there is a constant danger of making usual the unusual need, necessity and disposition that constitutes the essence of wonder (138). Heidegger distinguishes the wondrous from wonder as an ordinary type of marveling that only becomes extraordinary in philosophy. The essence of philosophy is in the wondrous, but only inasmuch as in its becoming extremely wondrous, it achieves the disposition of wonder. Thus what separates wonder from the wondrous, and the extraordinary nature of philosophy from ordinary thought, Heidegger suggests, is the extremity of the wondrousness of wonder. Psychology, as ‘lived experience,’ appears to miss this distinction entirely. By considering the “everyday understanding” of wonder compared with its Greek beginning (138), Heidegger seeks to unveil the “inner multiplicity of the disposition in question” (136). Thirteen points on wonder are enumerated alphabetically, the first ten of which
account for essence of wonder as that which is said to have disposed the early Greeks into the basic disposition—the disposition of philosophy.

In wonder, the “most usual”—what is so usual that it is not otherwise attended to—itself becomes the most unusual (144, a). “Everything,” in wonder, “becomes the most unusual” (144, b, emphasis in original). That is, it isn’t that some particular thing is determined and is thus unusual by comparison, but “that it is what it is,” that everything and anything is what it is, now appears unusual (144, b). Heidegger says “this implies” that for “the most extreme wonder”—that is to say, that wonder which is said to dispose us into philosophy—no way out of the unusualness may be found (144, b-c). In other words, what makes it extreme, and therein of the essence of wonder, is that it can no longer “explain the unusualness of the usual” (144, c). Thus it cannot “dispel its unusualness and turn it into something ordinary” (144, c). Since only “beings as beings,” beings as undetermined relations, are encountered, wonder encounters nothing that could offer it an escape (145, c). This step, whereby wonder extends “into the most extreme unusualness,” appears to be what first demarcates wonder from the wondrous (145, c). Subsequently, Heidegger notes that wonder “knows no way into the unusualness of what is most usual” (145, d), for “it cannot penetrate into and dissolve the unusual, for that would simply destroy the unusualness” (150).21 Feeling the need to know, but knowing no way into beings as beings, it is “cast back wholly on itself,” oscillating “in the midst of the usual in everything,” which now appears unusual (145, d).

Not knowing the way out or the way in, wonder dwells in the “between” (145, e). That is, “wonder dwells in a between, between the most usual, beings, and their

21 This latter form of destruction is also part of what may characterize the wondrous.
unusualness, their ‘is’” (145, e). But it also opens this space, while “constantly occupy[ing] it,” wherein it “brings forth the showing of what is most usual in its unusualness” (145, e, my emphasis). As Heidegger elaborates, “the most usual as such first steps forth in its unusualness when the latter shines in wonder” (150). Thus it “shows what is most wondrous: beings as beings” (146, f). This showing is what Heidegger calls the “moment of eruption”: the moment when the most usual becomes the most unusual, the opening up of “the whole as whole, the whole as beings, beings as a whole, that they are and what they are, beings as beings, ens qua ens” (146, f). That is, wonder erupts beings, inasmuch as beings are wondered at, simultaneously, for their usualness and unusualness. Heidegger seems to speak of the moment of eruption as, also, the moment of displacement: for by wondering at both the usualness and unusualness of beings, man “himself is transformed into one who” must “hold fast to beings as beings in pure acknowledgment” (150). In the erupting, then, wonder disposes, or moves, man by taking him “out of the confusing irresolvability of the usual and the unusual [and] into the first resolution of his essence” (146, g).

The resolution is said to consist of three steps: the “foothold” the eruption provides in opening up the between; how it disposes, in that the foothold is a position from which man may obtain a “productive seeing” of the eruption’s “inscrutable

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22 Heidegger goes on to recapitulate the first ten points (a-j) on wonder in eleven sentences. The only separate, non-linear sentence is this one: “The must usual as such first steps forth in its unusualness when the latter shines in wonder” (150). It is, quintessentially, what separates the essence of wonder from the merely wondrous.

23 Here, “as” (qua) is the “between” that wonder separates out (146, f). Heidegger speaks of the “between” here as the “open[ing] of a free space hardly surmised and heeded, in which beings come into play as such, namely as the beings they are, in the play of their Being” (146, f, my emphasis). The playfulness of the Beingness of beings seems to recall Heraclitus’ remark, “Lifetime is a child playing, moving pieces in a backgammon game; kingly power (or: the kingdom) is in the hands of a child” (Heraclitus On Nature, Fragment 52).
disclosure;” that in the seeing man experience and sustain “unconcealedness as the primordial essence of beings” (146, g). Heidegger speaks of each of these three steps as “must[s]” for there to be ‘extreme wonder’: man must understand his place in the midst of beings—his relation to the whole; man must recognize something fruitful in this disclosure of the whole; man must carry on “unconcealedness” as what comes forth in the disclosure (146, g). Heidegger says, “above all,” that for “primordial Greek thinking” unconcealedness (aletheia) is “the essence of Being itself” (146, g).

In unconcealedness, beings as beings, i.e. as open presences, approach man and displace him into the open of unconcealedness and thus place him into the essence of one who perceives and gathers in the open and thereby first experiences the hidden and closed as such. (146-147, g)

Having been disposed by wonder into the disclosure of unconcealedness, primordial thinking may begin, inasmuch as this “all decisive beginning” marks the basic disposition (150). “Basic” thinking is said to be the beginning of history, inasmuch as from this ground “word, work, and deed” have the basis from which the historical emerges (147, h). The displacement by wonder into unconcealedness is said to be “beyond explanation,” inasmuch as an appeal could only be made to what has already been disclosed through the encounter with beings “as unconcealed” (147, h). This, it seems, is part of the mistake made in attempting to interpret wonder psychologically, for Heidegger suggests explanation presumes the cause is “man’s will” or “beings” that operate “on man,” rather than Being itself, which, through wonder, establishes “beings” in the “one of their Being” (147, h). Since it places man in “the midst of beings as such and as a whole and [he] finds himself caught up in them” (147, h), wonder brings about primordial thinking. Heidegger thus accounts for what wonder is—that is, how philosophy is a disposition—inasmuch as his analysis is a “retrospective sketch” of how
wonder displaces man into the first beginning (147, i). Owing to the enigmatic nature of wonder, which is as elusive “as the [unexplainable] beginning toward which it compels,” the indeterminacy of primordiality yields this purview of a preliminary offering that shows man as the “primordial perceiver of beings as such” and wonder as what compels into unconcealedness and thus begins a particular type of thinking (148, i). Hitherto Heidegger speaks much of wonder as the need, but little of the necessity of the beginning.

The necessity, it seems, is in the carrying out of questioning “that asks what the most usual itself might be, such that it can reveal itself as what is most unusual” (148, j). “Thoughtful questioning,” Heidegger synonymizes, requires “tolerating and sustaining” the unexplainable in a disposition that “seeks to perceive only that which the unconcealed reveals in its unconcealedness: namely, presence, constancy, self-installation in a form, self-limitation in a look,” even while “being overwhelmed by the pressure of what reveals itself” (148-149, j). In other words, sustained questioning of “what beings as such are” such that it strictly follows “beings in their unusualness,” i.e., “in their unconcealedness” (150-151). Heidegger asks: what is meant by “this carrying out as a sustaining of the basic disposition?” (151, my emphasis). That is, how does the carrying out sustain wonder?  

The “carrying out” of necessity is said to be “suffering,” inasmuch as it is “beyond activity and passivity as commonly understood” (151, k, my emphasis). The

24 Having recapitulated the first ten points on wonder prior to giving the remaining three, Heidegger distinguishes wonder from what he calls the “desire for explanation” (N,150). Heidegger makes no mention of sophistry in this writing, but he seems to spell out what this ‘desire’ is in the later work, noted above, for explanation is said to be the activity of the sophists, who explain everything ‘away’ in a way that is easy to understand. Sophistry might experience some level of wonder or wondrousness, although Heidegger makes no mention of it, insofar as it might encounter the unusualness of the usual and provide an easily accessible answer to it. But if it does, it destroys wonder by finding a way out and making the unusual understood in a way that ‘betrays’ wonder itself.
carrying out isn’t a yearning on the part of the human for explanation, but an “acceptance” by the human of Being as transforming him through pathos into he who “grasp[s] beings as such and as a whole” (151, k). “Wonder is pathos,” wherein pathos is “an access of feeling” but also “connected with paschein, to suffer, submit” (W, 33). We may recall that the harmonia between logos and to sophon, the accord in which Heidegger in the later writing says wonder occurs, too, is said to involve submission.25 Only by thinking of pathos as a disposing (tuning) in which the human suffers and submits to Being, does Heidegger suggest wonder may be characterized (W, 33),26 inasmuch as what is to be grasped “constrains the one who is grasping” to the basic disposition (N, 153, l). “Wonder, as pathos, is the arche of philosophy,” but Heidegger says arche (“from whence”) “becomes what the verb archein says: that which rules” (W, 32). Wonder rules philosophy in that it submits to beings with respect to Being, wherein it is then “captivated” by the beings and granted correspondence with Being (W, 33). Correspondence, that which is to be grasped, thus transforms the human and allows for “the pure acknowledgement of unconcealedness of beings” to unfold (N, 153, l).

The one who is grasping and perceiving must accord with what is to be grasped so that the latter, beings themselves, are indeed grasped, though in such a way that thereby they are precisely related to their own essence, in order to hold sway in themselves and thus to pervade man as well. Beings, which the Greeks call ousia, must stand in aletheia. Here we again touch what is most concealed: that the grasping is a suffering. (153, l)

Heidegger finds this pathos of the basic position in Heraclitus and Parmenides, who he says were in accord with ousia. That is, these early Greek thinkers release ousia and yet

25 See Martin Heidegger What is that—Philosophy?, trans. Eva Brann, 15, ft. 21.

26 In What is that, Philosophy?, Heidegger uses the verb austragen, “to carry a child to term.” This brings to mind the image in the Theaetetus of Socrates’ maieutic art, wherein the youth are described as being pregnant with ideas, and Socrates as midwife assists in finding out whether they’re truly pregnant or birthing wind-eggs. Whether this wordplay is intentional on Heidegger’s part is unclear to me.
grasp it (154, l). They withdraw and hold-in (W, 33). Heidegger thus declares the “basic attitude,” or disposition, that preserves and defines “the wondrous, the beingness of beings,” to be techne: “know-how in processes against beings (and in the encounter with beings), i.e., against ousia” (N, 154). Techne grasps beings “in their outward look” while caring “for beings themselves to let them grow” (155).

Techne is a mode of proceeding against ousia, though not yet in order to overpower it or exploit it, and above all not in order to turn use and calculation into principles, but, on the contrary, to retain the holding sway of ousia in unconcealedness. (155)

But as that which carries out “the necessity and need of wonder” by implementing knowledge into principles, or arts, therein claiming to know the why and cause of things, techne threatens wonder itself (155). It transforms “unconcealedness into correctness” (155, m). Heidegger says the beginning is “necessarily lost” inasmuch as “the sustaining of the beginning position in the sense of techne leads to a falling away from the beginning” (156, m). This loss of unconcealedness is said to occur through “arbitrariness (the unbridling positing of goals),” which loses the distress of the primordial need in wonder—that is, the need to know—by offering an exit from beings in the establishment of objects that represent them (156, m). We might say that techne closes the between, and thus removes man from being-in-the-midst of beings, by transforming what is grasped as unconcealed into what is grasped as “ideas,” or correct thinking (156).

viii. Comparative Remarks on the Pre-Socratics and the Socratics

Once truth becomes correctness, Heidegger finds philosophy lacks “the most original need and necessity of the beginning” (157). But he says this only elevates the “greatness”

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27 Heidegger likens the disposing of wonder as a withdrawal and a holding-in: “we hold ourselves in” and “step back, as it were, from what which is in being” (W, 33).

28 This seems to be Heidegger’s understanding of philosophy as it begins in Socrates and Plato.
of the beginning in the early Greeks (156), like his elevation of Heraclitus and Parmenides as being “greater” thinkers than Socrates, Plato and Aristotle (W, 18). Absent in the earlier writing is the ‘rescue’ Socrates and Plato are said to undertake by striving after what is wonderful owing, it seems, to the claim to techne initially made by sophistry. That is, no mention is made of the wondrous in Socratic philosophy, nor of its beginning having to do with Eros, or the desire to know. The only ‘desire’ Heidegger speaks of is the ‘desire for amazement’ as the wondrous and the ‘desire for explanation’ of the wondrous as a threat to wonder, the latter of which reappears in the later work in his discussion of sophistry. Also absent is Heidegger’s later implication that philosophy, as philosophia, begins with Socrates and Plato, whereas in the earlier work they seem to represent its end rather than its beginning. Of note, however, is Heidegger’s similar reference to Heraclitus and Parmenides not as philosophers, but as “the two greatest and renowned thinkers of the early Greek period” (N, 153). Heidegger’s distinctions between the pre-Socratics and Socratics are therefore consistent, while his later thought discerns pre-Socratic thought not as philosophy, per se, but as a historical achievement in thinking that viewed a fundamental accord between Being and being. The account of the transformation of techne into correctness, then, is perhaps another way of Heidegger saying that the loss of the harmony between logos and the sophon for the early Greeks is evidenced, though not caused, by the “Plato[nic]” treatment of techne as “knowledge pure and simple” (N, 154-155).

Plato’s ideas, then, represent a loss of the disposing need of wonder, though Heidegger suggests the cause is owing to the nature of Being itself. According to Heidegger, this loss is carried on throughout the philosophic tradition in the treatment of
the essence of truth as correctness. As Velkley finds, “Heidegger purported to uncover a thought that the entire tradition had neglected, and he alleged he was thinking beyond or, as he put it, behind the tradition” (HSPP, 127). Modern philosophy is treated as an “extension of the ‘forgetting’ of the Greeks” first evident in Socratic philosophy, while the “‘forgetting of being’ is not a mistake to be set aside but a tendency of thought inseparable from openness to beings” (HSPP, 126-127). Since philosophy remains “only in the form of curiosity,” i.e., the wondrous, it lacks “the most original need and necessity of the beginning” (N, 157). That is to say, the “modes of marveling” place what is unusual (Being) against a “determinate sphere of the usual” (beings), and then abandon beings by giving them no further thought with respect to their Beingness (N, 149).

Heidegger suggests that we erringly treat wonder as lived experience, overlooking the beings-in-Being, which for the early Greeks was the most wondrous. To that point, Heidegger’s analysis, his destruction, shows the fundamental premises of the philosophic tradition and the nature of the early Greek beginning. But Heidegger overlooks the way in which wonder, as the wondrous, provides access to Being (Sein) through beings (Seiende). His account of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle mis-renders their position with regard to the whole. Socrates doesn’t disregard wonder and the question of Being, as Heidegger seems to suggest, but rather turns away from a study of “natural things” to the human things based upon an understanding of the human things as being central to the “understanding of all things” (HSPP, 70). This understanding, reflected in the writings of Leo Strauss, shows that “Socrates identified the science of the whole with the understanding of what each of the beings is, that is, he understood being such that ‘to be’ is ‘to be a part’” (HSPP, 70; cf. NRH, 122). ‘To be,’ then, is to ‘be part of the whole.’ But
the causes and sources of the whole from which beings arise, which Heidegger calls the Being of beings, “may not be accessible to human thought” since the whole, as such, is “beyond being” (HSPP, 70; cf. NRH, 122). Socratic philosophy thus finds that there is only partial knowledge of the whole—knowledge of its parts—and that knowledge must therefore remain in the realm of opinion owing to knowledge of ignorance, as human wisdom, falling short of perfect knowledge, i.e. wisdom (cf. CM, 20; HSPP 70). Socrates suggests he knows his ignorance, which is tantamount to saying that he has knowledge of the inaccessibility of the whole. But as Velkley notes, this does not make clear why leaving the “elusiveness of the whole” should lead to Socrates’ turn to beings, or why this position might be preferable (HSPP, 71).

The “prephilosophic opinions” about the good, the beautiful, the just, and the noble (HSPP, 72-73), Heidegger finds as merely a delimitation of what is sought that obscures what is needed (W, 10)—an ‘essential disposition’ and way of thinking that provides access to the whole. But Strauss realized, as Velkley notes, that Socrates saw that the prephilosophic opinions formed the core of “moral-political life,” i.e., being part of the polis, and that a “dialectical ascent” from these opinions provided access to the fundamental problems (HSPP, 72). Socrates’ investigation of these opinions showed the hiddenness of the unhidden, “what is presupposed, behind what is revealed” (HSPP, 73). Since “all prephilosophic opinions are implicitly opinions about the whole, about what is primary within it and what structures or governs it,” Socrates’ way of inquiry provides access to the fundamental problems of political life (HSPP, 73). The relation between the city and man, the nexus of the problems, thus shows the “problem of the whole” in
knowledge of ignorance while being the source of access to the whole (HSPP, 73; cf. CM, 21).

It necessarily follows that Heidegger mistakes modern philosophy as merely a continuation of the Socratic mood that is tuned differently, for Heidegger finds the present epoch to be the “epoch of the highest abandonment of beings by Being” and thus “the age of the total questionlessness of Being” (N, 160). But “In his disinterment of the roots of philosophy, Heidegger neglected that analysis by starting with the question of Being and only with that question” (HSPP, 130). His destruction of the philosophic tradition, then, is incomplete. As Velkley finds of Strauss, “Strauss’ philosophical-historical inquiries can be seen as a continuation of Heidegger’s *Destruktion* that includes Heidegger in its critique, through uncovering the hidden roots of the modern historical consciousness whose validity Heidegger presupposes” (HSPP, 115). In *What is that—Philosophy?*, the determination of philosophy as various moods of thinking that are attuned to Being, then, doesn’t so much appear evidence of an understanding, as it is of Heidegger’s oversight of the philosophic tradition. A fundamental mood is initially presumed to prevail and wonder is found to be the mood that rules philosophy ‘through and through’ by heeding the spoken appeal of Being. Similarly, in the earlier work, the

29 This might strike us as particularly strange given Heidegger’s suggestion that dialogue is the key to philosophy (W, 24). He appears to recognize, in his account of the picking-up and putting-down of *logos*, that “the middle voice *dialegethai* contains within it the active, *dialegein*. The communication among men involves the articulation of things” (SP, 408). But Heidegger’s conversation hurries “past Plato to Parmenides and Heraclitus, bypassing Socrates” (SP, 414). “Strauss’ deconstruction of philosophy is thus not Heidegger’s” (SP, 414), for while both understood the double sense of *dialegethai* and *dialegein*, Heidegger failed to realize this applied to the Platonic dialectic.

30 Philosophy is “the correspondence, expressly adopted and self-unfolding, which corresponds to the spoken appeal of the Being of beings” (W, 37). Or, more precisely, it is in a mode of correspondence through the laying-down (*legein*) of Greek speech (*logos*) that is attuned “to the voice of the Being of beings” (W, 37).
need of the new beginning is said to be an “event of Being”: the sustaining of wonder in *techne* necessarily leads to the need of the new beginning, in which the original grounding of unconcealedness as correctness is transformed into an understanding of unconcealedness as the “openness of beings” to Being through destruction (N, 162). Heidegger’s conversation with Plato and Aristotle appears to serve as part of the “counterthrust” Heidegger sees as necessary for the “leap into another knowledge” (N, 159, 162), in which the essence of truth as openness shows “openness as [the] clearing of the self-concealment of Being,” and man, perhaps, as the “custodian of the openness of Being” (N, 163). But Strauss shows, as Velkley notes, that Socrates offers “philosophic access to the character of Being” through the “study of politics,” in that “the study of politics is the study that most reveals the nature of the soul,” while, “at the same time, it allows one to see how the soul is the adumbration of the whole” (HSPP, 75). Politics is, then, the “clue to cosmic difference” (HSPP, 75), in that the problem of cosmology as “the heart of the articulation of human openness” is evidenced in the tension between “philosophic inquiry and authoritative custom” (HSPP, 73). We may say, then, that “In its original form political philosophy broadly understood is the core of philosophy or rather ‘the first philosophy’” (CM, 20). It seems fitting, though perhaps unwittingly so, that in his later work, Heidegger says *philosophia* begins with Socrates and Plato.

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31 Heidegger speaks of the question of philosophy as “wide” and indeterminate (W, 3) and his historical reflection on wonder as a transformative “leap” (N, 162). These mentions appears reminiscent of Lessing and / or Kierkegaard’s discussion of the “broad ditch” that concerns “the leap” from one class of truths to another. See G.E. Lessing “On the Proof of the Spirit and of Power” in *Philosophical and Theological Writings*, 87. See also Soren Kierkegaard *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, 85.
Conclusion: Wonder and Eros in Plato and Aristotle

Both Plato and Aristotle say philosophy begins in wonder, but each seems to mean that it also suggests our natural desire to know. Wonder occurs in Plato’s *Theaetetus* in a myriad of ways that discern between a pre-Socratic and a Socratic account of philosophy. Of the twenty-four occurrences of wonder in the dialogue, the central two mentions tell us two things: wonder is the beginning of philosophy and Rainbow is the offspring of Wonder (155d3, 155d4). Since there is no singular, central occurrence, Plato seems to suggest that we must put the two together.\(^1\) The first appears indicative of an account of philosophy prior to Socrates, the second seems to correct that, by means of Socrates’ use of Hesiod’s cosmogony: Hesiod’s identification of Rainbow as the offspring of wonder “wasn’t a bad guess” (155d1). In Hesiod’s story, Eros does not mate with Wonder; Wonder couples with Electra. And Wonder is generated through Eros by Pontus (Sea) and Earth, who are among the primordial gods spontaneously generated without Eros. Hesiod’s genealogy thus conveys Eros, which could take the form of the desire to know, as giving rise to wonder and that which inspires wonder (the rainbow).

But a ‘rainbow’ is a reflection, refraction and dispersion of the sun’s rays through water. It is, then, an effect of the sun, which in the *Republic* and *Phaedo*, Plato suggests is

\(^1\) It seems worth noting that were it not for Plato’s three mentions of wonder in his part of the dialogue, the central occurrence as narrated by Socrates would be the instance where Theaetetus wonders at Socrates’ account of motion, whereby Theaetetus reveals he is ignorant of his soul. This moment in the dialogue seems to raise the question of Theodorus’ knowledge of Theaetetus’ soul, directing us back to the question of Socrates’ initial engagement with the young mathematician.
an image of the Good (507a-509c; 99d-100b). Aristotle, as noted, speaks of philosophy as “contemplation of the first causes and sources” and says that “by way of wondering, people both now and at first began to philosophize” (982b10; 982b13-14). But philosophy is concerned with first causes and sources “since also the good, or that for the sake of which, is one of the causes” (982b10-11, my emphasis). Since the union of the contemplative and the ratiocinative in wisdom is already present in wonder, as Benardete finds, wonder itself shows the natural desire to know and the Good as one of its causes, without such self-knowledge, or wisdom, being necessary (B, 404). Wonder is that “on account of which” human beings first began to philosophize (B, 404). Plato and Aristotle each say that the first philosophers, those prior to Socrates, partook in contemplating the first causes and sources of the cosmos, and wondered at its perplexities, but seem to suggest that perhaps the pre-Socratic self-understanding of philosophy doesn’t reflect adequately on eros, as the desire to know, in its orientation to one’s own good. Hence why, in their wonder, feeling the need to know, they gave causal accounts of the whole.

Aristotle seems to speak similarly of the poets, who are said to experience (some type of) wonder and, too, come to an impasse. In chapter two of Book Alpha, ‘poetic’ wonder and ‘philosophic’ wonder pose alternative accounts of wisdom. The poets deem wisdom unfit for human obtainment owing to the gods being jealous beings (982b29-983a2), whereas Aristotle suggests that wisdom is unlikely owing to the slavish character of human nature, but nevertheless encourages us to strive for it. In finding that “all extraordinary people would be ill-fated” Aristotle appears to reveal something about the stories of the poets, who decree that human nature is ‘justly’ limited to the ordinary (983a2). The poets allow for extraordinary striving, but think of it as criminal, risking the
jealousy of the gods. Even still, the poets are not ordinary, inasmuch as “the ordinary desire to know is turned away from the perplexity of the soul, since it delights only in what can be made transparent” (V, 6), whereas the stories of poetry, rather than making things plain, make them even more opaque. The poets leave natural wonder and make wonders of their own: the stories of mythology. But poiesis—their enigmatic solution—does not “exceed the natural wonders of experience and thought” (V, 6). Having left natural wonder, the poets do not possess the erotic desire to know the “why” of a beautiful perplexity, but instead create “that[s]” out of political need (B, 404; cf. *Metaphysics* 1074b1-8). The poet is unable to know his ignorance, given, among other things, his discontent with the separation between “the being of the highest beings and their being as cause,” as shown in his making gods as efficient causes (B, 406). How is it that Socrates is able to tolerate this separation?

Heidegger speaks of the carrying out of wonder as a submission to Being in which primordial thinking occurs, but his appeal to the early Greeks seems to show their inability to sustain what is said to be the highest level of questioning. Socrates, however, offers a “new approach to the understanding of all things” (NRH, 122). In his discussion of the *Symposium*, Allen Bloom notes the manner in which Socrates’ approach sustains the separation between Being and being in its questioning.

Socrates’ statement that he only knows he knows nothing could be interpreted to mean that philosophy is impossible and that it is not worth going on. But Socrates interprets it in the opposite direction: knowledge of ignorance means that one’s life must be dedicated to finding out the things that it is most important for man to know. If Eros, put most generally, is longing, then the philosopher who pursues the knowledge he does not have could be considered erotic. He longs for knowledge. If the need to know is what is most characteristically human, then such philosophical Eros would be the privileged form of Eros. Moreover, it is generally agreed that Eros is connected with pleasure, a very powerful pleasure, and this would account for the philosopher’s continuing in his uncompleted quest, which might appear to be very bleak without such accompanying pleasure. (LL, 56)
By indicating the significance of Eros, Bloom points to the dyspareunia of the wonderers that came before Socrates. Bloom also points to the dreadfulness of Eros, an image Socrates presents in the *Theaetetus* when speaking of *eros* as his “disease” (169c1). It’s unclear quite how Bloom conceives of the ‘need to know’ as being part of our nature, versus the desire to know, but in either case, he points to a desire to know specific to, or more extremely manifested in, Socrates. A yearning that begins Socrates’ quest to live a life worth living: a life examined. But since the whole is unknowable, wisdom beyond his grasp, Socrates must tolerate thrashings by “thousands of Heracleses and Theseuses” without turning away from investigating “the way the beings show up in speeches” as “human opinions” (*Theaetetus* 169b7-8; PPL, 2). Wonder alone as the beginning expresses, for Plato and Aristotle, a pre-Socratic understanding of philosophy. But as Socrates proposes through Hesiod, Wonder is the progeny of Eros—it is generated with or through the desire to know. Only that understanding leads to the beginning of Socratic philosophy.
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