Introduction

Phenomenology and Greek philosophy have been framed largely in terms of the discussion of the relationship between the metaphysics of Plato and Aristotle and the method and most basic phenomenon uncovered in Husserl and Heidegger's phenomenological research. The terms of this discussion were originally set by Heidegger in the 1920s and remain in effect today. Heidegger's framing of the discussion involves the following suppositions: 1) the most fundamental philosophical question for Greek metaphysics and phenomenology is the question of the meaning of Being; 2) Aristotle's metaphysics has hermeneutical priority over Plato's, for reasons of intrinsic philosophical clarity; 3) Husserl's phenomenological concept of intentionality and the related concept of categorial intuition amount to a rediscovery of what was sought in ontologies of Plato and Aristotle and is therefore a suitable guiding clue for interpreting those ontologies on the basis of their original, phenomenological intention; and 4) the ontologies of Plato and Aristotle and Husserl's concepts of intentionality and categorial intuition privilege the cognition of beings over their radical disclosure, and they do so because the meaning of Being that governs that cognition, namely, its being present to speech (λόγος), is a derivative phenomenon.

The discussion to follow first will present and critically assess the major suppositions behind Heidegger's formulation of the relationship between Plato and Aristotle and phenomenology (Part I). Next, it will present Husserl's account of the historical importance of the Socratic response to sophistical skepticism for the origin of philosophy, and the systematic importance of that response for the transcendental phenomenological problem of the transcendence of the world (Part II). Finally, Jacob Klein's phenomenological interpretation of Plato's theory of eidetic numbers, as a theory of the possibility of the most basic structures of philosophical intelligibility, will be presented together with a discussion of its implications for Heidegger's framing of the terms of the discussion of Greek philosophy and phenomenology.

Part I: Heidegger

Heidegger credits Husserl's phenomenological discovery of categorial intuition with breaking through to what is truly objective in entities in a manner that “arrives at the form of research sought by ancient ontology” (Heidegger 1979, 1985, 72/98). For Heidegger, “[t]here is no
ontology alongside a phenomenology. Rather, scientific ontology is nothing but phenomenology” (ibid.). Moreover, Heidegger credits Husserl’s account of pure categorial intuition, ideation, with discovering the original meaning of the a priori, a discovery that “stands in connection with or is actually identical to the discovery of the concept of Being in Parmenides or Plato” (75/102). According to Heidegger, Husserl’s “thesis that everything categorial ultimately rests upon sense intuition is but a restatement of the Aristotelian proposition: οὐδέποτε νοεῖ ἀνεῡ φαντάσματ ὡς ἁγγή: ‘the soul can intend nothing, grasp nothing objective in its objectivity, if beforehand something as such has not been shown to it’” (69/94).1 Equally significant is Heidegger’s also crediting Husserl, with “his concept of intentionality” (Heidegger 1992/1997, 598/413–14), as being the first to discover again Plato’s “fundamental insight into λόγος … that λόγος is λόγος τινός [speech about something]” (ibid.).

Finally, and most significantly, Heidegger claims that Plato “does not yet possess a real understanding of the structure and concept of the γένος [Kind]” (524/362), while Aristotle does. Thus “Plato uses γένος [Kind] and εἶδος [Form] promiscuously” (ibid.) and thereby does not achieve Aristotle’s level and clarity of understanding of γένος (Kind), as something that “refers to an entity in its Being, thus that which an entity, as this entity, always already was” (ibid.). Plato’s “term for entities in their Being is εἶδος [Form]” (ibid.) according to Heidegger, which “in its structural sense is not oriented toward the provenance of entities, toward the structure lying in them themselves, but instead concerns the way the Being of entities may be grasped” (ibid.). Hence, Heidegger maintains that “[t]he εἶδος [Form] is relative to pure perceiving, νοεῖν; it is what is sighted in pure perceiving” (ibid.). As such, Heidegger concludes that “[ε]ἶδος [Form], as a concept pertaining to the givenness of entities, basically says nothing about the Being of these entities, beyond expressing the one directive that entities are to be grasped primarily in their outward look, i.e., in their presence, and specifically in their presence to a straightforward looking upon them” (ibid., 363/524).

Heidegger’s interpretation of the act of ideation in Husserl’s phenomenology characterizes what is at stake therein as categorial acts that give their object, understood as the “species” (Heidegger 1979/1985, 91/66)—the latter merely being the Latin translation of “εἴδος [Form], the outward appearance of something” (ibid.). Heidegger’s interpretation appeals both to Husserl’s account of the “founded” (ibid., 91/67) character of ideation, its necessary givenness on the basis of a “manifold” (ibid.) of individual perceptual acts, and its abstractive character, in the precise sense that “the founding objectivity is not taken up into the content of what is intended in ideation” (ibid.). Heidegger therefore holds that, for Husserl, ideating abstraction involves “comparative considerations” (ibid.) such that “[t]hat toward which I see in comparing, with respect to the comparable, can in its own right be isolated in its pure state of affairs, and therewith I acquire the idea” (ibid.).

Heidegger’s claims about the relationship of Husserl’s discovery of categorial intuition to the ontology of Aristotle and Plato, together with his critique of both the general limits of this ontology and those specifically tied to Plato’s account of the εἶδος (Form), however, cannot withstand critical scrutiny. Moreover, it really is not the case that Husserl’s thesis about categorial intuition “is but a restatement” of a statement of Aristotle’s about the impossibility of the soul thinking without the showing to it beforehand of something. When they are compared, two very obvious inconsistencies emerge in Husserl’s account of categorial intuition and Aristotle’s account of νόσις (intellation).

The impossibility of harmonizing Husserl’s and Aristotle’s accounts of εἴδη (forms)

For Aristotle, the εἴδος (Form) cognized by the direct activity of thought (νοῦς) is emphatically not a one over many, nothing apart from the things that share in them, but a common
thing. Thus, despite its being shared in (μέθεξειν) by many individuals, the conclusion Aristotle draws from this is that the soul knows the εἶδος by becoming the same as it, in the precise sense that the potency (δύναμις) of νοῦς (the direct activity of thought) to become an εἶδος (Form) of εἴδη (Forms) (ibid., 65/48) is actualized, and νοῦς (the direct activity of thought), literally, becomes one with the being-at-work (ἐνέργεια) of the εἶδος (Form) acting on it. This unity of the εἶδος (Form) and νοῦς (the direct activity of thought) in knowledge (ἐπιστήμη) composes the common thing (κιονόν) proper to the manner of being of the εἶδος (Form) for Aristotle. Thus, in the most radical contrast possible to Husserl’s account of categorial ideation, for Aristotle the apprehension of the unity of the εἶδος (Form) excludes—in principle—that unity’s relation to a multiplicity.

In addition, for Aristotle, abstraction has nothing to do with the soul’s knowledge of an εἶδος (Form), which is again in marked contrast to Husserl’s account of ideating abstraction. And, while it could be argued that Husserl’s account of ideating abstraction is akin to the one context where Aristotle talks of abstraction, namely, mathematical abstraction, Aristotle presents his account of the abstracted manner of being of mathematical objects in the context of his pointed critique of the Platonic account of their one over many manner of being. This makes it impossible to harmonize Husserl’s account of precisely this mode of being proper to the εἶδος (Form) and Aristotle’s account of the abstracted manner of being of mathematical objects. Moreover, Husserl’s account of the pure categorial intuition involved in the grasping of the εἶδος (Form) both characterizes the intuiting regard as a mode of seeing and the grasped εἶδος (Form) as something that appears to this regard and is therefore something seen. For Aristotle, however, strictly speaking the cognized εἶδος (Form) is not even an appearance. What appear for him are φάνασματα (images), and it is through their appearances that νοῦς (the direct activity of thinking)—admittedly, somehow, since Aristotle’s texts are none too clear on this point—cognizes the indivisible and uncombined intelligible things, the εἴδη (Forms). Once cognized, as mentioned, the unity of νοῦς (the direct activity of thinking) and εἶδος (Form) can hardly be said to appear, as the thinking and what is thought—νοήσεως νόησις—are one and the same.

Heidegger’s claim about the harmonious nature of the relationship between Husserl’s categorial intuition and Aristotle’s ontology is therefore problematic. What, then, about his claim that situates Husserl’s concept of intentionality within the rediscovery of Plato’s insight into the λόγος τινός (speech about something)? Husserl’s concept of intentionality emerges from his initial psychological investigations of symbolic presentations in Philosophy of Arithmetic, that is, of cognitive presentations in mathematics that do not intuitively present their object but only indirectly, if at all, refer to it. Precisely Husserl’s attempt to come to terms with the descriptive psychological status of the “symbolic” character of (what he then called) a “symbolic presentation” (later calling it a “symbolic representation”) is behind his formulation of the concept of an “empty intention,” which is arguably the most important aspect of his phenomenological account of intentionality.

Heidegger’s interpretation of these matters characterizes the concept of intentionality that grows out of Husserl’s concerns mentioned here as involving “the interrelation of the modes of presentation manifested in a distinct sequence of levels ranging from mere empty intending (signitive acts) to originally giving perception (intuitive acts in the narrowest sense)” (ibid., 65/48). Heidegger goes on to characterize empty intending as “being unfilled in its meaning; what is presumed in it is there in the how of its non-fulfillment” (ibid.). Addressing the functional interrelation between the modes of intentional presentation, Heidegger stresses that the intentional relation between the unfulfilled intention and the fulfilling intention “is always predelininated in their intentionality” (ibid., 66/49) and that “the fulfillment itself is of an intentional character” (ibid.).
The question before us is whether Heidegger's claim that Husserl's concept of intentionality amounts to a rediscovery of Plato's insight into the λόγος τινός (speech about something) is a claim that can withstand critical scrutiny. Both Plato's Socrates (Phdo, 99E ff.) and the Eleatic Stranger (Soph, 260C) characterize λόγος (speech) as a kind of image (εἰδώλον) with an ἀρχή (beginning) and τέλος (end) that are inseparable from intelligible beings (νοντά), from εἴδη (Forms). And the Stranger's account of λόγος (speech) makes it patent that the γένος (Kind) (Soph, 260A) proper to the being of λόγος (speech) is such that it is impossible for it to be and not to be about something (Soph, 262E). Hence the λόγος τινός (speech about something) Heidegger characterizes as Plato's great insight. For Husserl's concept of intentionality to amount to a rediscovery of Plato's insight, the relation between the image and original characteristic of λόγος (speech) and εἴδη (Forms) would have to exhibit intentionality's main structural features summarized by Heidegger. Not only, then, would λόγος (speech) have to exhibit the direction toward an object that is the most intrinsic aspect of Husserl's concept of intentionality, but the character of this directedness would also have to exhibit the functional interrelation between empty and fulfilled meaning intentions.

**Husserl’s concept of intentionality cannot be viewed (per Heidegger) as the rediscovery of Plato’s insight into λόγος τινός (speech about something)**

To be sure, if by “intentionality” all that is meant is the intentional relation in the sense of its being about something, then Husserl’s concept and Plato’s λόγος τινός (speech about something) are in accord. However, if something more than this is meant, if the character of Husserl’s empty intention, its predelineation in the how of the emptiness of its meaning of the conditions for its fulfillment, is meant, then such an accord becomes very problematic.

To begin with, both Plato’s Socrates as well as his Stranger understand λόγος’ (speech’s) manner of being as a kind of image. For Plato, then, the images (εἰδώλα) of things that reflect the εἴδη (Forms) are somehow inseparable from what the Stranger refers to as the γένος (Kind) proper to λόγος (speech). Indeed, because of this, these images are likewise inseparable from these things’ appearances as being what they are. Moreover, because their reflection in λογοί (speeches) is inseparable from the very appearances of the εἴδη (Forms), Socrates (Phdo, 99E–100A) distinguishes the image–original relationship characteristic of λόγος’ (speech’s) function to reflect εἴδη (Forms) from the natural image–original relationship characteristic of perception. Whereas the relationship between image and original in perception makes it possible to bypass the original’s reflected image and to therefore apprehend it directly in a perceptual apprehension, in the case of λόγος (speech) the original—the εἶδος (Form)—cannot be apprehended in any other manner than through its images reflected by λόγος (speech).

The Stranger’s account of λόγος (speech) (Soph, 260C) as a kind of image presupposes the Socratic account, adding to it the distinction between images whose appearance function as likenesses (εἰκόνες) and those whose images only seem like something but are really not and are therefore apparitions (φαντάσματα). In addition, and this is decisive for assessing Heidegger’s claim about the relationship between λόγος (speech) in Plato and Husserl’s concept of intentionality, the Stranger’s account maintains that once falsehood has been shown to mix with λόγος (speech), the very distinction between likeness and apparition cannot be established exclusively at the level of λόγος (speech). That is, the criterion for distinguishing true and false λογοί (speeches) cannot be established on the basis of an exclusive appeal to the way things look to λόγος (speech), to how they appear through its images. But, rather, the criterion for this distinction must be sought dialectically, through λόγος (speech) and therefore beyond its images in a manner that confronts the manner of appearing of the originals of these images: the
εἴδη (Forms) in community with themselves, and, especially, the manner of appearance of the greatest γένη (Kinds) (Being, Motion, Rest, Same, and Other) responsible for any multiplicity of beings—sensible or intelligible—whatever.

The question on the table, then, is whether for Plato λόγος (speech), in the sense of its functioning as an image that refers to something more original that it’s like but is not, is appropriately characterized along the lines of Husserl’s empty intention; that is, as a signitive or otherwise non-intuitively given representation of a meaning that predetermines the conditions for its fulfillment in the thing or object signified or otherwise meant (vermeint) and therefore intended by its empty meaning intention. The answer to this question would certainly have to be “no,” if Husserl’s phenomenological characterization of an image were attributed to Plato’s account of its being. The reason for this is that Husserl’s account of the phenomenon of image leaves no doubt that its essence is intuitive, not signitive or empty.

For Husserl, then, the phenomenon of image is characterized by the structural distinction between the imaged object and the image, a distinction that he maintains is immediately and therefore intuitively evident. This structural distinction, in turn, is established by the essential distinction Husserl draws between the image proper and the sensible basis required for an image to appear at all as such. Thus, the sensible basis for the appearance of the image is structurally distinct from the image itself, as the image is what appears when the sensible basis is looked at. This, in turn, guarantees that the subject of the image, that which appears through the image’s sensible basis, is structurally distinguishable from the image itself. For Husserl, therefore, the image is directly presented in what he calls “image-consciousness” (Husserl 2005, 21), and the imaged object is represented mediate, and therefore indirectly, through the medium of its perceptual basis. The image for Husserl is therefore not a sign that signifies or otherwise refers to the imaged object, but the intuitively given—albeit indirect—appearance of this very object.

For Plato, in contrast, the being of an image is characterized by its manner of not being what it appears to be, not by the structural distinction between image and its original (i.e., the “subject” [ibid., 23] in Husserl’s idiom). Of the two possible modes of an image’s not being, likeness and apparition, only likeness, properly speaking, can be characterized as being structurally distinct from its original. This is the case because the not being of an apparition is characterized precisely by the inability of the soul to which it appears to distinguish between image and original. This distinction, therefore, is manifestly not something that is given with the appearance per se of an image, as it is for Husserl, but, rather, it is something that can only be made subsequently to the dialectical inquiry into the truth of the appearance of that which appears. Moreover, Plato’s characterization of λόγος (speech) as a kind of image is no more merely signitive (and therefore an empty intention) than the image is in Husserl’s phenomenological account. For in the Stranger’s account (Soph, 262A ff.) of the interweaving (συμπλοκή) and therefore community (κοινωνία) of verbs and names and therefore the whole that is irreducible to the functioning of the latter as vocal marks (σημεῖον), λόγος (speech) is likewise in community with Being—and it is so in a manner that is responsible for the manifestation of Being’s very appearance as Being.

Plato’s account of the εἴδη (forms) is guided by neither λόγος (speech) nor the meaning of Being as presence

Notwithstanding the fact that Plato’s understanding of the being of an image and therefore account of the being of λόγος (speech) cannot be legitimately tied to Husserl’s concept of empty intention, it nevertheless might seem to confirm Heidegger’s ontological criticism of Plato and indeed Aristotle and therefore Greek ontology in general. Namely, that for Plato as
for Aristotle, the questioning of entities with regard to their Being is guided by λόγος (speech). According to Heidegger,

the explication of a given theme—even if only the sheer something in general [Etwas überhaupt]—speech is the guiding thread. This eruption of λόγος [speech], of the logical in this rigorously Greek sense, in the question of ὄν [Being], is motivated by the fact that ὄν [Being], the Being of entities, is primarily interpreted as presence, and λόγος [speech] is the primary way in which one makes something present, namely that which is under discussion.

(Heidegger 1992/1997, 225/155)

Precisely this understanding of Being is what Heidegger maintains is intrinsic to the natural meaning of the phenomenon of intentionality and, therefore, to Husserl’s formulation of its phenomenal structure. For the understanding of Being here to function as the basis for a criticism of both Greek ontology and Husserl’s phenomenology, Heidegger must presuppose two things. One, not only that such an understanding of Being is intrinsically deficient, but also, two, that so long as it is unquestionably assumed to present the true meaning of Being, both the meaning of Being that it presumes, as well as the meaning of Being as such, will remain unquestioned. Before addressing whether Heidegger’s presuppositions are warranted, the question has to be asked and answered whether Heidegger’s claim that the εἶδος (Form) for Plato is relative to pure perceiving (νοεῖν), that it is what is seen when the multiplicity of entities are reduced to one look in common, is Plato’s definitive word on the εἶδος (Form).

We need look no further than the Stranger and Theaetetus’ account of the community of εἴδη (Forms) in the Sophist (Soph, 255A–256E) to see the limits of the account of the εἶδος (Form) that Heidegger attributes to Plato. The two most salient distinctions of their account are sufficient to render untenable Heidegger’s claims about both the role of λόγος (speech) as the guiding clue for the explication of any given theme in Plato and the meaning of Being operative in Plato’s ontology being limited to what is sighted by νοεῖν (pure seeing) as present in the εἶδος (Form).

Regarding the first, it is precisely λόγος′ (speech’s) character of being about something, and, therefore, being about one thing (Soph, 237D), that is responsible for it being an unsuitable guide for the account of the manner of being of the εἴδη (Forms) or γένη (Kinds) in their community with one another. Specifically, the one presupposed by λόγος is a homogenous unit (the kind used in counting) and therefore is unsuitable for accounting for the unity of the five greatest γένη (Kinds) in their community, as the latter is characterized above all by the necessary opposition of the heterogenous units of γένη (Kinds) composing it. The appearances of the latter in a philosophical dialogue therefore in no way represent the fulfillment of homogeneous unity of meaning intentions, signitive or otherwise, predelineated in λόγος (speech). On the contrary, it is only with the dialectical abandonment of λόγος′ (speech’s) most basic presupposition—about the homogenous unity necessary for speech to be meaningful—that the most original γένη (Kinds) appear. They appear in community with one another notwithstanding their lack of common qualities. Their paradoxical appearance, which mixes the opposites of Motion and Rest in the appearance of Being, and the Same and Other in the appearance of Being’s sources, explodes once and for all what can now be recognized as the Heideggerian myth not only of Plato’s philosophy being limited by a prior understanding of the meaning of Being as presence, but also of it being fundamentally driven by an ontology.

For if by “ontology” is understood, with Heidegger, an investigation that supposes that the most fundamental philosophical question or problem is that of the meaning of Being of entities,
Plato’s account of the greatest γένη (Kinds) can be seen to be guided by the supposition of a more fundamental philosophical problem than that of the question of Being. Rather than being concerned or being guided by the presupposition that the meaning of Being is the presence responsible for entities being present, the most fundamental problem in Plato’s thought concerns the origin of the unity that is inseparable from the appearance of all multiplicities, including motion. That this problem can be reduced to neither the question of Being, nor to that of its basic meaning as presence, is apparent from both Socrates’ presentation of the idea of the Good in terms of a multiplicity of images and the Stranger and Theaetetus’ account of the γένος (Kind) proper to Being together with its ἀρχαί (beginnings). The multiplicity of images Socrates presents of the idea of the Good rules out its determination in terms of any one of them or all of them being present to the seeing that guides νόησις (intellection). Moreover, the γένος (Kind) proper to Being, as the unstable whole that encompasses the γένη (Kinds) proper to Motion and Rest, is no more capable of being present than the γένη (Kinds) the Same and the Other that, beyond Being, are responsible for the mixing of the opposites that compose Being. That is, the most encompassing opposites of the Same and the Other neither appear as present to νόησις (intellection), nor is the meaning of their appearance determined by Being.

**Part II: Husserl**

Husserl’s phenomenological engagement with Greek philosophy is driven by his account of what can be characterized as his account of the interrelated double origin of philosophy (see Majolino 2017, 2018). This account provides an important pre-modern historical context for Husserl’s understanding of the philosophical motive behind his transcendental philosophy. Husserl articulates these origins in terms of 1) the pre-Socratic cosmologies and 2) the sophistical skeptical challenges to the rational cogency of those cosmologies, together with Socrates’ critically rational response to those challenges, especially to those of Protagoras and Gorgias. Husserl includes in 2) Plato’s theoretical extension of Socrates’ rational method that, together with Aristotle’s philosophical extension of Plato’s theoretical philosophy, expands the historical horizon of the transcendental motive behind Husserl’s phenomenology beyond that of modern philosophy, especially the philosophies of Descartes and Hume.

**Sophistical skepticism and the origin of rational philosophy**

In Husserl’s view, sophistical skepticism is extremely important for understanding both the origins of rational philosophy and the role those origins play in his transcendental phenomenology. In Husserl’s telling, sophistical skepticism had as its target philosophy’s first origin the collective theoretical thematization of the cosmos—and the attitude that is behind that thematization—by the men traditionally called the pre-Socratics. In Husserl’s view, however, the term pre-Socratic is, in effect, a misnomer for characterizing philosophy prior to Socratic philosophy, given that philosophy’s origin in the critique of sophistical skepticism. Socrates’ response to the threat to rationality posed by the Sophists’ attacks on both the theories of the cosmologists and the latent rationality driving the theoretical attitude behind those theories is thus what is crucial for Husserl’s understanding of Socrates’ originality as a philosopher.

Husserl’s account of the Sophists’ attack on philosophy’s first origin is as follows. On the one hand, the possibility of an objectively valid truth is challenged (Protagoras). On the other hand, and more radically, the actual existence of transcendent being as such, of external objectivities, in principle accessible to knowledge, is challenged (Gorgias) (Hua XXV, 137). For Husserl, Socrates’ response (see De Santis 2019) to this twin attack was to institute a philosophy based
on critical self-reflection and the Delphic injunction to “know thyself.” In the process, Husserl attributes to Socrates the thematization of the fundamental contradiction between unclear opinion and evidence, which leads him to develop a method whose fundamental meaning is a clarifying self-reflection accomplished in apodictic evidence, which, in turn, implicitly discovers the intuition of essences. The latter is discovered insofar as the scope of the evidence presented by Socrates’ method exceeds that which has its basis in the subject’s reflection on contingent opinions, thereby achieving general and exemplary value.

The salient character of Socrates’ method, according to Husserl, is a critique of reason (ibid.). As such, it represents a response to the problems posed to reason per se by the Sophists’ attack. This response involves both concept clarification—in the Socratic method’s movement from empty word intentions to their meanings—and the bringing to evidence of the objects meant in these intentions on the noematic side of intuition. The latter, then, is what raises to prominence the essential characteristics of the exemplars that fulfill the noematic intuition. Husserl’s account of Socrates’ anticipatory critique of reason focuses on its exclusively practical nature.

Plato’s theoretical extension of Socrates’ practical method

Husserl’s account of philosophy’s second origin supplements Socrates’ practical method with an account of Plato’s theoretical extension of that method. Included in this account is the crucial distinction that Husserl draws between Plato’s philosophical doctrines and the way of Platonic philosophy. The doctrines include, on Husserl’s telling, the separation thesis of intuitive forms, participation, and recollection. The Platonic way, in turn, is characterized by Husserl as its drive, intention to be fulfilled, which is to say, its teleological idea to be followed. This way boils down to Plato’s great achievement of instituting the idea of a philosophical science, embodied by an “‘infinite academy’” (Majolino 2018, 178), as it were, in which Plato’s way, and not his doctrines, define Platonic philosophy for Husserl. Thus, not only is there no need to return to Plato to further Plato’s philosophy, but, also, there is substantial room to criticize his thought while still remaining Platonic. On the one hand, Aristotle is presented by Husserl as thoroughly Platonic in this sense, despite his criticisms of aspects of Plato’s doctrines or even the doctrines themselves. On the other hand, there’s room for Husserl to criticize Plato while still remaining Platonic. Specifically, Husserl criticizes Plato’s failure to appreciate the positive aspect of the Sophists’ skeptical attacks on reason, and Plato’s consequent inability to see the radical problem of reason that they thematized; the problem, namely, of the conscious constitution—in accordance with the rational structure of the subjectivity of consciousness—of transcendent objects. Thus, in Husserl’s view, despite Plato’s restoration of the objectivity of knowledge in the wake of the Sophists’ critical onslaught, his philosophy remains powerless to deal with the problem of transcendence. And it does so, because Plato failed to see that implicit in the Sophists’ attacks is the transcendental problem of the correlation between consciousness and the transcendent world.

Part III: Klein

Jacob Klein (Klein 1969) effectively challenges both of the presuppositions behind Heidegger’s phenomenological interpretation of Plato and Aristotle; namely, (1) that Husserl’s notion of categorial intentionality is capable of providing the hermeneutical key for interpreting Plato and Aristotle’s philosophy, and (2) that Aristotle’s account of the mode of being of the Kinds (γένη) and Forms (αὐτά) is both clearer and philosophically superior to Plato’s.

Klein takes issue with the suitability of Husserl’s concept of intentionality as an appropriate guiding clue for interpreting Greek philosophy generally and Plato’s thought in particular. The
problem with Husserl’s concept in this regard is twofold. On the one hand, the empty intention’s rule-governed predelineation of the objective conditions for its fulfillment brings with it the semantic presupposition of the *Etwas überhaupt* (something in general), the formalized mathematical object that is formal ontology’s proper subject matter. This presupposition is rooted in the symbolic mathematics that is the *sine qua non* for the modern project of a *mathesis universalis*. Because both this presupposition and its mathematical basis are characteristic of a conceptuality—symbolic mathematics—whose historical inception cannot have occurred before the 16th century, the extent to which they are inseparable from Husserl’s concept of intentionality is precisely the extent to which this concept is an unsuitable guiding clue for interpreting Greek philosophy in general. On the other hand, Husserl’s concept of intentionality, as it functions in his account of categorial intuition, presupposes the Aristotelian logic of predication, and with that a whole-part structure grounded in individual objects conceived of as ontologically independent. Because the whole-part structure of Plato’s logic is grounded in an ontology whose basis is a multitude of objects, that is, a multiplicity of objects foundationally inseparable from one another, each one of which is accordingly not independent of the others, categorial intentionality is conceptually blind to both Plato’s logic and the ontology underlying it.

The first problem with Heidegger’s hermeneutical employment of Husserl’s concept of intentionality thus concerns the modern philosophical presuppositions that are sedimented in it. These presuppositions are a problem for Klein because the notion of an intuitively empty, rule-governed conceptual reference, which is determinative of the “consciousness of” constitutive of intentional directedness, as well as the notion of a formal, materially indeterminate intentional object, are foreign to the philosophy of Plato and Aristotle. The second problem concerns the logical structure of the Aristotelian predication behind Husserl’s concept of categorial intentionality, which cannot but privilege Aristotle’s logic over Plato’s dialectical method. These historical and systematic presuppositions behind Heidegger’s interpretation of Plato and Aristotle are addressed in Klein’s interpretation of their philosophies. Klein does so in a manner that endeavors to neutralize them, by striving to interpret the formality proper to Plato and Aristotle’s accounts of the Kinds (γένη) and Forms (εἴδη) from its own conceptual level in each of their philosophies, rather than from the conceptual level of the formality constitutive of modern philosophy and mathematics.

To accomplish this, Klein adopts a twofold strategy. First, he rejects the argument behind Heidegger’s privileging of Aristotle’s philosophy over Plato’s, that it is clearer and more scientific, and maintains instead that Aristotle’s thought is most appropriately presented as emerging from out of its Platonic context. Second, rather than employ categorial intentionality as the guiding clue to interpret both Aristotle and Plato, and therewith—like Heidegger—to privilege in his interpretation of their thought the whole-part structure of predicative λόγος (speech), Klein employs as his guiding thread the whole-part structure of what Husserl called in his first work the “authentic” or “proper” (eigentlich) structure of number (Hua XII/2003, ch. 1), in order to interpret both the concept and being of number in Plato and Aristotle.

**The non-predicative whole-part structure of Husserl’s authentic (eigentlich) number as guiding clue for Klein’s interpretation of ancient Greek ἀριθμός (number)**

Number (*Anzahl*) in its proper sense for Husserl is not characterized by the association of a concept with a sign or by a sense-perceptible numeral, but by the immediate and “collective” unification of a concrete multitude—that composes its parts—by the number in question, which composes its whole. This mode of unification is such that the numerical unity that encompasses...
those parts as their whole is something that nevertheless cannot be predicated of each of the parts individually. For instance, the whole of the unity of the number two, which encompasses and therefore collectively unifies each one of the items belonging to the (smallest) multitude that compose its parts, cannot be predicated of either of these parts taken singly. Only when both are taken together can these parts be said to belong to the whole of the number that unifies them. Precisely this state of affairs, then, is behind this whole-part structure exceeding the limits of the intelligibility that is made possible by the whole-part structure of predicative λόγος (speech). For, in accordance with whole-part structure of predication, the part is a part of the whole in the sense that the whole can be predicated of it, e.g., the horse is an animal, the dog is an animal. This state of affairs is unlike the relation of the parts of a number to its structural whole, about which it cannot be said, for instance, that “one is a two,” or that “one is a three.” Moreover, from the perspective of predicative λόγος (speech), when the “being one” of the structural unity of the numerical whole that collectively encompasses the multitude of its parts is stressed, it cannot but seem to predicate mistakenly unity to something that by definition is more than one, namely the multitude that belongs most properly to number.

The non-predicative whole-part structure characteristic of Husserl’s account of the proper structure of number, which is to say with both Husserl and Klein, the structure of non-symbolic numbers, is exhibited according to Klein by the concept and being of number (ἀριθμός) in ancient Greek arithmetic and logistic. Klein’s interpretation of ancient Greek philosophy hinges on precisely this structure (Klein 1969, ch. 6), which he argues presents the key to interpreting Plato’s philosophy, Aristotle’s critical response to that philosophy, as well as the fundamental difference in concept formation in ancient Greek and early modern philosophy. Methodologically, the latter point is the crucial one, because so long as the modern, symbolic concept of number (Zahl) guides any interpretation of ancient Greek philosophy, let alone any interpretation with phenomenological aspirations, not just the problematic behind the meaning of mathematical unity and multiplicity in ancient Greek mathematics will remain inaccessible, but likewise also the problematic behind the meaning of the unity and multiplicity of being in ancient Greek philosophy. Once these problematics come into view, the entire axis not only of Plato’s philosophy but of Aristotle’s critical departure from it shifts from the standard view. Regarding the former, the real locus of the participation (μέθεξις) problem turns out to be accounting for the one and the many structure exhibited by the community of forms (κοινωνία τῶν εἰδῶν), the structure of which the participation of many sensible beings in the unity of a single form is but a derivative reflection (ibid., 99). With respect to the latter, the real target of Aristotle’s critique of the Platonic separation (χωρισμός) thesis emerges to be not the one form’s putative separation from the many sensible beings but the irreducibility of the common (κοινόν) unity of the Kinds (γένη) and Forms (εἴδη) to the Kinds and Forms that they encompass and therefore with which they are in community (ibid., ch. 8).

Crucial to Klein’s interpretation are the portions of Aristotle’s Metaphysics (Books Alpha, Mu, and Nu) that zero in on the whole-part structure of number behind Plato’s account of the common unity responsible for the unity of a multitude that is constitutive of the participation problem. On Klein’s view, the zeal with which Aristotle criticizes what he reports is the Platonic thesis that the forms are in some sense numbers signals both the importance of the whole-part structure of number in Plato’s philosophy and Aristotle’s rejection of it as a suitable account of the mode of being proper to the Forms (ibid., 91–92).

Klein’s account of the important structural difference between the unity intrinsic to the parts of a mathematical number and those of an eidetic number is the focal point of his interpretation of Plato (ibid.). This difference plays a crucial role in Klein’s interpretation of λόγος (speech) in Plato’s philosophy, or, better, his interpretation of the philosophical significance of the appearance
Phenomenology and Greek philosophy

of λόγος (speech) in Plato’s dialogues. And this interpretation, in turn, has profound implications for his interpretation of the relationship between the philosophy of Plato and Aristotle in general as well as for the assessment of the philosophical significance of Aristotle’s critical departure from Plato. Klein’s interpretation of the difference between the unity of the parts of eidetic and mathematical numbers, that is, of the difference between an eidetic and a mathematical monad (μονάς), focuses on Aristotle’s report that the unity of eidetic monads is incomparable (ἄσύμβλητοι) (Aristotle, Met. M, 1080a 20; Klein 1969, 89), in the sense that the intrinsic intelligibility of each Form as a singular unit is unique to that Form, and thus cannot be compared with other Forms. The unity of each singular mathematical monad, in contrast, is reported by Aristotle to be identical with that of any other, such that any mathematical monad is homogeneous—which is to say, comparable—with any other.

The peculiar phenomenological character of the collective unity characteristic of the whole of the Greek ἀριθμός (number) that Klein uncovered manifests the structure that both λόγος (speech) and the community of Forms have in common. This focus is what is behind his argument for number’s paradigmatic function in Plato (Klein 1969, 92). For Klein, however, despite the commonality of this aspect of the arithmos-structure to λόγος (speech) and the community of Kinds, that is, despite the irreducibility of the unity of the whole in relation to its parts, the difference between the parts of eidetic and mathematical numbers is also significant for interpreting Plato’s philosophy. Klein’s interpretation maintains that the difference between the units in eidetic and mathematical numbers accounts for both the eidetic number’s foundational function in relation to mathematical numbers and λόγος (speech’s) limited ability to give an account of eidetic unity, that is, of the unity proper to the community of Forms (κοινωνία τῶν εἴδων) (ibid., 93–95).

Regarding the mathematically foundational role of eidetic numbers, or more precisely, of the ten eidetic numbers Plato reportedly limited them to according to Aristotle, Klein (again following Aristotle’s reports about Plato) maintains that for Plato, “[o]nly because there are eide which belong together, whose community in each case forms a ‘kinship’ which must, due to the ‘arithmetical’ tie [i.e., the whole-part structure proper to ἀριθμός (number)] among its ‘members’ as eidetic numbers, be designated as the six or the ten, can there be arbitrarily many numbers, such as hexads or decads, in the realm of ‘pure’ units as well as in the realm of sensibles” (ibid., 92). Regarding λόγος’s (speech’s) limited ability to account for the eidetic unity of the forms in community, Klein maintains that for Plato there is a tight connection between the units of mathematical numbers and the limits of what λόγος (speech) can make intelligible in the following sense: inseparable from the signifying power of λόγος (speech) is the being one, two, or many of that which it discloses (Soph, 237 D). That is, behind the capacity of λόγος (speech) to disclose what it discloses and to give an account of that disclosure, is the following supposition: that the homogeneity of the unity of the referent to which it refers is inseparable from its disclosing power, such that more than one referent can be distinguished and therefore counted (ibid., 85). Because it is the non-homogeneous unity proper to the incomparably singular forms that are united in their eidetic kinship that is responsible for both mathematical numbers and for the Kinds (γένη) and Forms (ἐίδη) that render intelligible the unlimited multitude of things in the sensible world, the beinghood (οὐσία) of λόγος (speech) is intrinsically limited in its capacity to render an account “with complete clarity” (Soph, 217 A–B, cf. 254 B) of their intelligibility. This is the case because of the fundamental presupposition that lies behind the capacity of λόγος (speech) to give an account of anything, namely, that it signifies the unity of what it discloses as a something that is comparable (homogeneous) with the unity of the other things it discloses. This presupposition, however, precludes precisely what is the case in the intelligibility of unities that belong to the Kinds (γένη) and Forms (ἐίδη), to wit, their incomparability. To cite
Klein’s primary example, in the *Sophist*, the Kinds of Being, Motion, and Rest, when counted by λόγος (speech), appear to signify—each one—a separate Kind, while all together they appear to signify three Kinds. Yet, because the unity of each is not comparable with the others, it turns out that the Being as a Kind does not count as a third Kind, apart from Motion and Rest, but rather it (Being) can only appear to thought precisely as Motion and Rest, both together (Klein 1969, 87). (While distinguished members of the phenomenological tradition Oskar Becker, Jan Patočka, and Hans Georg Gadamer appreciated early on the significance of Klein’s interpretation of Plato for phenomenology, until recently both Klein’s work and its phenomenological significance have not been recognized in phenomenological discourse.)

Notes

1 See *On the Soul*, 431a16f. A more standard translation runs: “the soul never thinks without an appearance of things.”

2 Oskar Becker, whose article “The Theory of Odd and Even in the Ninth Book of Euclid’s *Elements*” appeared in the same volume of the journal that Klein’s two articles composing his “Die griechische Logistik und die Entstehung der Algebra” appeared in, refers therein to Klein’s article as “a very important work” (Becker 1934, 545).

3 Jan Patočka writes: “Klein’s work is an attempt to clearly interpret the Platonic doctrine of ideal numbers. While the interpretation is not complete, nevertheless in the main points it does so well in clarifying the issues that it is possible to say that any further research must seriously take this interpretation into account. If we compare the many obfuscities in a book like Brunschvig’s *Etapes de philosophie mathematique* about the character of ideas-numbers, we see how poorly justified such statements are like the claim that Platonic dialogues literally do not provide any information concerning this doctrine. (In this respect, Klein’s thorough and deep interpretation of the dialogue *Sophist* is completely new and provides startling evidence of the philosophical wealth of this dialogue). The theory of ideas numbers is precisely not a mathematical theory, but rather an ontological, philosophical interpretation of the possibility of something such as διάνοια [thinking]” (Patočka 1934, 232/307).

4 Gadamer reports in 1968 that “J. Klein in his investigations concerning ‘Greek Logistic and the Origin of Algebra’ (Gadamer 1985, 133/129) … had pointed my own research in new directions at the time I was with him in Marburg.” Gadamer identifies the source of these directions with “the thesis which I have been advocating for more than 30 years now … that from very early on in the dialogues there are references to what in a word might be called the arithmos structure of the logos,” and he maintains, “this idea was first elaborated by J. Klein.” By the “arithmos structure of the logos” Gadamer understands the whole-part structure of number in the proper sense, whereby the unity of λόγος as a whole makes manifest an intelligibility that exceeds the multitude of words that compose its parts.


References


