

# The Question

1. *The logical form.* If one utters the word “house,” writes it italicized or capitalized, or even sketches a house as children do, the meaning of these sounds, marks, and drawings is one and the same. It remains the same even if one says “*maison*,” or writes “*casa*.” There is something common to all this, a common *form* of word and thought enabling one to *signify* the house. The contents (vocal signs, written signs, alphabetic signs, drawings or hieroglyphs, and so on) change, but something in common makes them be signs of the same. This something in common is the “logical form.”

What constitutes the logical form is the major question in Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. The question is ultimately left unanswered, because one cannot *say* what the form of all possible contents is.<sup>1</sup> One cannot exhibit a *pure* form, a form completely void of a sensible content. Saying is a content which, to be able to signify something, must already be informed by that logical form one would like to see purely in itself, independently from the saying and from any possible content.

One cannot exhibit, one cannot see the logical form pure and in itself. Nevertheless, one can comprehend the meaning of such an expression. It confronts us as an objectively perceivable mental content. What is the *content* of such a logical form if considered purely in itself? We always think of the form of the content. Yet *is* not a “pure” form already itself a content? Does it not *have* the content of that “purity”? And what content does purity have as the form of all logical contents? What is, here, the content of the form?

2. *The logical science.* The logical form—yet what is “logic”? Logic is a branch of philosophy, like ethics and aesthetics. Its specificity as a discipline concerns the fields of true and false in relation to verbal enunciations and, more generally, in relation to knowledge. Discourse (*logos*) says: “The sky is overcast,” “The stone is hard.” The issue is to establish whether such assertions are correct: that is, whether they are true. Such an establishment constitutes the disciplinary, technical duty of *episteme logike*, the logical science.

Logic, ethics, and aesthetics concern the areas of “normative sciences”;<sup>2</sup> they deal with the problem of true (and false), with the problem of good (and evil), with the problem of the beautiful (and the ugly).

Where the problem emerges, however, the question disappears (as Heidegger remarks); the question has left. By reducing logic to its *problem*, one does not answer the *question* of what logic is. We occupy ourselves with truth and falsity. We declare the assertion true because it represents the situation correctly, since it is *true* that now the sky is overcast and that, in general, the stone is hard. We devise subtle criteria to establish that and how it is possible to say the false (since it is not true that the sky is always overcast, and so on). Yet in all this hustling, we have erased and silenced the question.

3. *Question and problem.* In a lecture course he gave in 1937–38, Heidegger asserted that the word “question” designates those questions that are no longer asked as questions. As soon as philosophy becomes a discipline, that is, a set of disciplinary problems, it ceases to be that *fundamental question* that it was in its origin and in its profundity. Problems cover up questions, and provoke a misunderstanding of the essence of questioning.

Such a misunderstanding happened to philosophy very early, if it is true, as Heidegger claims, that the story went as follows: from questions one moved to their “fixation”; “frozen” questions were no longer asked as questions, since the case simply became that of finding the answer, maybe by transforming already available answers or by collecting and comparing handed-down opinions.<sup>3</sup> What is described here is ultimately the “dialectical” method, theorized and applied by Aristotle at the beginning of his “treatises.” In this way, problems replaced the fundamental questions of philosophy. They became problems of philosophical erudition, and thus definitely truncated the real questioning, rendering it infeasible or impossible.

By starting the “tradition” of philosophy, that is, its “history,” in the way it is still configured for us today, with its disciplinary areas and its problematic fields, Aristotle thus erased the philosophical *question*, the very act of its advent or “historical” event. We should ask ourselves, what is the philosophical tradition? As long as we do not ask, even the question of logic will have to remain unanswered.

4. *The time of truth.* “For a long time there has been logic as a discipline of scholastic philosophy, and in fact precisely since the beginning of Plato’s school, but indeed only since then.” Thus writes Heidegger.<sup>4</sup> This means that there was a time when truth had not yet reduced itself to the “unarguable” site of logic and its correct or incorrect assertions. There was a time when truth functioned as the fundamental question that is the act of birth of philosophy, of philosophical questioning.

This is precisely Wittgenstein’s reversed path. He begins with the “logical form of propositions” to go back to the logical form as inalienable and

insurmountable question. Thus, in the end, he could say, "I had to destroy logic to save the truth."

The same occurs to ethics and aesthetics, the other "branches" of philosophy. They revert to questions at the end of the *Tractatus*. And, generally, this is true of the "world" in its totality. What is true about the world, or what is the universe in truth? According to our very ancient disciplinary habits (only since Plato, though), we delegate the answer to cosmology, that is, to the cognitive discipline concerned with the universe, or to scientific cosmology (or even "experimental" cosmology, as one says now, definitely with little logical consistency and sense of ridiculousness):<sup>5</sup> a set of "correct" judgments on the world. Thereby, the question of the meaning of the "world" and its truth has already left.

5. *The logical truth.* Heidegger opposes truth to logic. Logic alters the essence of truth. Logic blinds us to such an extent that not even in its very name, where it is written more clearly, do we read such an essence any longer. We read *aletheia* and we think *veritas*, that is, *adaequatio intellectus et rei*.

The supremacy of logic peaks in the present age. The originary, simple, and essential question becomes uninteresting, and human beings ambiguously proceed into the epoch of the absolute lack of interrogation on things. Whatever one asks, on anything, one is immediately referred to some science, and to its problems. And people are astonished if one replies, "What does this matter? *This is not what I was asking.*"

There are no questions, but there is an unlimited multiplicity of problems; hence, the disquieting impression of something unspeakably complex, unconquerable, and fatiguing. Heidegger, however, does not agree: the complexity of research and technical problems of application is in truth "easy," since "progress from one thing to another is always a relaxation."<sup>6</sup> Conversely, the most "difficult" thing is the meditation on what is simple, on the simple question referring to the manifestation of being,

for the multiple admits and favors dispersion, and all dispersion, as a counter-reaction to the unification of man in his constant flight from itself—that is, from his relation to Being itself—confirms and thereby alleviates and releases the heavy burden of existence.<sup>7</sup>

Yet, according to Heidegger, precisely the blinding domination of what "alleviates and releases the heavy burden of existence" and of its multiple, ever new, and ever rising problems necessitates care for the question of things, and memory of the originary questioning of philosophy.

6. *The beyond-logic.* Heidegger opposes truth to logic and sides with the truth, that is, with the truth of being. Undoubtedly, he has his reasons; however, I do not side with him and for him. Were I to do so, I would never arrive at an understanding of what logic is. I gladly accept the distinction between question

and problem. One has to overcome logic as a fixed discipline and branch of the philosophical encyclopedia; one has to overcome its complex mathematico-formal problems (which does not imply ignoring them), if one wishes to step back genealogically to the roots of *logos*, regardless of what in the end the relation between these alleged roots and the current logical discipline looks like.

The point, however, is that the genealogical question does not concern the truth at all, whether *veritas* of judgment or *aletheia* of being. The question concerns the content of the form. It is on the basis of this relation that the question of *logos* and logic arises. As an eminently formal discipline, logic studies the form of discourse or *logos*, that is, the logical form. And (even if this may seem at first paradoxical), I ask precisely, what is the content of this form?

The question of the truth disappears entirely. Why does it disappear? Is it good or bad that it does? I leave the question unanswered. By inquiring into the roots of logic beginning with truth, though, is it not evident that Heidegger takes logic and its question, its “problem,” for granted? He *thinks* he is opposing logic by asking about truth as its presupposition. Yet, the presupposition (truth) is nevertheless provided by logic. Therefore, the question still thinks logically what is beyond logic—that is, it does not think any beyond.

7. *The form.* I ask the question under the aspect, or from the perspective, of the relation between form and content. Specifically, I address the form not as it is usually thought of, that is, as form of a content, but rather as that which can or could be the very content of its being purely form, or “pure” form. The genealogical question concerns *that* which could be or constitute such “purity.” But what is “form”?

Aristotle distinguishes between form (*morphe*) and matter (*hule*). If thought of as *ousia* (essence, substance, way of being of a being), that is, as *eidos* (aspect, shape, configuration, look), form acquires a structural valence. What is the form of the house? One could answer (with Aristotle) that it is the structure, or the configuration of its bricks (of its “matter”). The configuration is such that, in their structure as a whole, they can function as shelter for humans, animals, and things.

The form is the “idea” of the house, that is, its project and design. And as such, it is also cause: that which we project to produce, the goal or end toward which we aim when we structure the bricks in this way and not otherwise.

One could object that this is true only for artifacts. Yet, the form of natural entities too is such not in itself, but only in relation to our intelligent habits or conduct (that is, in relation to the “mind”). The form is always an intelligent relation with the thing. The form of a natural thing is implied in its meaning (to satisfy one’s thirst, to provide one with shelter, to strike, to hit, and so on); that is, it is inserted in a *practice* and is seen in light of and on the basis of the practice concerning it, even when this is the simple practice of looking around and observing.

The form is cause (in the quadruple Aristotelian sense), and, insofar as it is cause, the form is idea—that which makes what is (the house) be in the way, that is, in the aspect, in which it is.

8. *The visible and the invisible.* Can one detach the form of the house from the house? Can one hold its pure form in front of oneself? Can one contemplate it independently from its bricks, its tiles, its beams, its architraves? One could say that the form gives itself to be seen, yet only in its content, or in the disposition of the content; it gives itself to be seen precisely as the *form of the content*, the form of a determined content. Is it really true, though, that one can “see” the form, be it *in* the content?

The fundamental Platonic question of, and distinction between, sensible look and suprasensible, or intelligible, look is rooted in this issue. Positing such a distinction, and on its ground inventing and constructing the “intelligible look” is, literally, the beginning of philosophical *episteme*—that is, generally, of science or logical science and its peculiar *logos*. Therefore, the entire “history of the West” is comprised in the cone of light of the invention of the idea.<sup>8</sup>

In its core, the extraordinary invention of the idea means that the sensible object (the house in flesh and bones, or in lime and bricks) is seen with the eyes, whereas the intelligible object (the form of the house, its design or intelligent end) is seen with the “mind.” How the mind operates (and, therefore, what it is) remains a big *problem*. This is the specific object of logic, the philosophical discipline that must clarify how the mind sees, understands, and reasons—for example, whether, albeit in its own way, it intuits (the form) even though its perceiving is of a different nature than sensible perception; or whether any intuition is precluded to it, as, for example, Kant or Peirce claim, for analogous and yet different reasons.

9. *Mind and discourse.* One should beware being caught by these *logical* problems. One should stop one’s questioning at the level of the form, of the form of *logos* because it is here that the form gestures to us and shows itself first of all. What is the form of the house? It is that configuration of bricks that allows them to function as shelter for humans, animals, and things. The form of the house is therefore *here*, in *this* discourse (*logos*); that is, as Plato says, it is in defining discourse, in *logos tes ousias*. The form of the house is contained precisely and first of all in the defining discourse that says: “to function as shelter for humans, animals, and things.” Because of this [definition], one can say that squirrels “have a house” in the tree, and one can invent other analogous expressions.

The mind is thus discourse insofar as discourse itself is the (nonsensible) *logical image* of the house on the basis of which, starting from the problems of logic, Wittgenstein resurrects the original questions. “The house is white, but the roof is red,” says discourse. Yet how can these purely graphic or acoustic signs, their peculiar syntactical connection, their succession in time or their location in space, *signify* the house, that is, provide an *image* of it? In what can these things *resemble* each other? What can the signs of discourse have in common with the thing they say? How could they *signify* without having something in common, without discourse (the mind) and thing (the house) having a “common nature”?

Looking at the form of discourse, on one side, and at the sensible form of the house on the other, one wonders what they might ever have in common, so that the one is the image of the other and signifies it. The problem has no exit, unless the question arises: what is the content of the form?

10. *Constitutive paradoxes.* Human beings have studied the form of discourse for a long time: its grammar and its syntax, the set of rules of denotative and communicative applications, the semantic rules, and finally, the rules of use, or pragmatic rules. Yet, the content of all these forms raises neither problems nor questions.

At most, the content is handed over to inquiries made by specific disciplines such as phonology, the study of writing systems, various semiotics, and so on. Instead of bringing us closer to the simple and originary question of the content of the form, however, with their characteristic and often very complicated abstractive problems these compartmentalized and empirical analyses take us far away from the question and cover it up, precisely because they appear to be busying themselves with the content and thereby transform it into a problem.

Neither do they realize, nor do they problematize the paradox on which they peacefully rest; that is, in their semiological and linguistic inquiries, in their study of phonic and graphic “matters” of language, they already use and put to use the very form (the logical form) and the very content of the form that is meanwhile the object of their analyses. This paradox is indeed constitutive of the question. Every time a science is asked a genuine question (for example, when cosmology is asked *what “universe” means*), then it realizes that the question *cannot* become the problem of that science. It cannot become the problem without the very science’s collapse, that is, without the science’s becoming itself the problem, and, even before, without becoming itself the question.

11. *The double mind.* The mind (the *nous*, as Parmenides already claims) is a non-sensible, intelligible, intelligent seeing. At the same time, the mind is discourse (*logos*). This duplicity of *logos* and *nous*, these two souls (noetic and dianoetic) of logic have never been composed or clarified completely from the perspective of their genesis. They continue to sustain the vacuous debate between “intuitive” and “reasoning” individuals.

In a logical sense, mental discourse is definition (*logos tes ousias*). It is a discourse referring to what is, that is, referring to the being or essence of a being. The mind “intuits” being because it possesses its definition (the essential discourse). In this sense, or through this means, being and mind have something in common: *einai te kai noein tauton* [being and knowing are the same]. What they have in common is something double: a suprasensible “ideal” form and a discursive “syntactic” structure.

In the *Sophist*, when he wishes to explain logical definitions, Plato refers precisely to syntacticity or *schematicity*. Like the grammarian, who knows which letters should and should not be linked to form a word, and like the musician,

who knows which sounds should and should not be joined to form a harmony, the dialectician, that is, the philosopher, in his logical awareness knows which *ideas* should and should not combine in order to achieve the definition, the *logotes ousias*. Logical competence is a classification of the elements and their connections. These elements are similar to the letters of the alphabet. Or *are* they the letters of the alphabet? What kind of unthought lies at the bottom of the philosophers' examples? The *reader* should open his or her eyes.

12. *Hermes' altar*. The mind, discourse, the logical mind and its definitions—one takes these *things* as obvious, “evident facts” that have always inhabited the earth and human minds. One does not realize the enormous Platonic construction of the “soul” (the logical or philosophical, that is, epistemic, soul).<sup>9</sup> Its intelligent light veils and blinds us to the point that inverting the order of elements comes spontaneously to us. On the basis of Plato’s (forgotten, and therefore unnoticed) gesture, one thinks that the mind is the *cause* of discourse; one does not realize that, on the contrary, the mind *emerges in* discourse, in a certain mode or kind of discourse, and that it does not exist at all “before.”

One must penetrate the Platonic light, and go through its enchanting circle.<sup>10</sup> An aid can come, for example, from the great and forgotten Creuzer. In Homer’s language, and in the Homeric individual, there is no mind and, least of all, the logical mind. There are speech, heart, and breath, and Creuzer exemplarily shows the meaning of these connections.<sup>11</sup>

Additionally, the very “discoursing” of language is something that has been constructed and achieved; it is an event in the “history” of speech, not something ordinary. The ancient Greeks were clearly aware of this. In the god Hermes they honored the inventor of the alphabet and discursive speech (one should not overlook the acumen of this very essential connection). Thus, in archaic temples, they celebrated him with an altar as exemplarily simple as meaningful—a pile of stones laid one on top of the other to symbolize precisely the phonetic writing of the alphabet. Each stone is a letter; each stone is a step in the discursive construction of the expression.<sup>12</sup>

13. *The clothing and the way*. Original language is *figurative*, Creuzer says. It offers “images of sense,” and it offers itself in them. It is more writing than discourse, as it were. At this layer of expression (which still lies at the grounds of words; unnoticed jewel, *cosmos* whose splendor Creuzer’s philology uncovers) there is no distinction between speech [*parola*] and writing. One does not yet differentiate between symbols devoted to hearing (*symbola phonetika*) and those destined to vision (*aphona*), says Creuzer. Here, words show and display, somewhat as does hieroglyphic writing, which is simultaneously sign, drawing, and sound.

This primordial language is ostensive, is an intuitive pointing toward [*mostrazione*]; that is, it is an act of indication. Its displaying is a covering with an image of sense. Therefore, this speech is *endeictic*—it is an *endeixis*, a term that also means “clothing,” or “that which covers.”

This originary language is followed by discursive speech, or *diexodos*, that is, flowing discourse (that flows through time), narrative speech (*muthos*). Literally, *diexodos* means “straight way” or “exit.”<sup>13</sup> Thus, it means the direction, the end, the goal, the arrival point of a project, the aim of a thought that reflects with the aim of. . . . From the originary spatial sense of the way (which the term *diexodos* first signifies in an ostensive [*mostrativo*], indicative, or endecitic manner), one moves to the temporal sense of the “discursive exhibition through concepts”; that is, to the logical-defining sense of the “deduction that generates conviction.” In other words: first, the minister-educator of humanity indicates, shows and lets appear the God who has been evoked in the sacral and cultural images that are at one with speeches and names, exciting presences and visions; then, he narrates, tells, argues, defines, and *demonstrates*.

14. *Discursive separateness*. Creuzer mentions a curious passage from Plotinus. In it, it is said that Egyptian priests knowingly chose hieroglyphic writing rather than phonetic writing because the latter generates considerations and judgments “according to a discursive separateness.” This story is fictional, since the ancient Egyptians were in truth unaware of phonemes and alphabet, and they could not make the choice Plotinus attributes to them. Nevertheless, it is a very meaningful story, which shows that, after all, the Greeks were not completely unaware of the essential connections tying the practice of writing to the nature of the message, and to the nature of the mind that formulates and receives it.

Alphabetic writing is an indifferent means, or “intermediary.” The eye overcomes phonetic signs, does not dwell and concentrate on them (it *must not* do so, if it wishes to read “fluently”). The eye *uses* alphabetic writing, this exemplary “technical means,” by keeping it at a distance, away from the focus of attention. From here comes the peculiar “position” of the reader (the “discursive separateness”), and the connected function of *being subject* of and for this practice.

Conversely, in hieroglyphic writing and reading, identification and fusion with the figures are required. Here, to read amounts to contemplating the drawing “pathically” [*pativamente*] and “aesthetically”; that is, to interpreting it by sojourning in a participatory manner in its “image of sense,” by being not outside but inside it, not far away but near. In this sense, the hieroglyph is a piece of “clothing,” an indicative-iconic sign (as Peirce would say) that veils and unveils at the same time. It is impossible not to recall with how much problematic acumen in the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein too uses the examples of the hieroglyph and the piece of clothing in his search for the logical form of spoken and written language.<sup>14</sup>

15. *The jokes in the Cratylus*. The passage through the written sign (from the hieroglyph to the alphabet) has its analogue in the resounding body of the word, or spoken sign. For this passage, we have the exceptional testimony and document, so often misunderstood and neglected, of Plato’s *Cratylus*. In it, names or originary words are said to be imitations (*mimesis*) of things; even better, more properly and concretely, they are imitations of actions concerning things.<sup>15</sup> Thus,



originary words are literally “images of sense”; they imitate and portray in the voice, through appropriate (mimetic) sounds, the action they designate.<sup>16</sup> It is true that this originary naturalness of language (whose phonically iconic signs are thus not at all conventional or arbitrary) has gotten lost, and has dispersed itself in the seemingly conventional multiplicity of languages. Nevertheless, the originary link between sound and image has not completely disappeared. It is true that when in Greek I say *reo*, in Italian I say instead *fluisco* and *fluire* [in English I say *I flow* and *to flow*]. Yet the conventional indifference between the “r” sounds and the “fl” sounds rests ultimately on the fact that, in a different and yet analogous, that is, not conventional but rather natural manner, these letters portray the action they designate. Thus, *fluire* is a vicarious image of *reo*; it is a similar and resembling, only apparently conventional alternative. Never could it happen that the sound *fl* might be replaced with the sound *pt* (evident sign of impediment, arrest, stop, and obstruction), and that language could say that water *ptows*.

Already in the *Cratylus* (which, since its irony is undoubtedly profound, does not at all raise questions and examples simply as jokes, as some have thought), we have the *passage to logic*. With a grandiosely revolutionary gesture, which overthrows and subverts an entire and very ancient universe of meaning, the dialectician, that is, the philosopher, takes no interest in the sensuous body of words, which he abandons and relegates to an immemorial past. Rather, he takes interest in the soul of the word, that is, in its logical meaning, that is, in the definition concerning the *ousia*, the essence of the signified thing. Therefore, the *Cratylus* is only one step away from the *Theaetetus* and the *Sophist*, for which it is the direct premise and introduction.

According to the *Cratylus*, the definition does not imitate sensuously (artistically, aesthetically). Rather, it establishes a *true* (logical, scientific) relation between word and thing.<sup>17</sup> It shows being through dialectic saying (*dialegesthai*), that is, through *logos tes ousias* which is the very *logos* of truth.

One can see here very clearly the place from which Heidegger asks his question (that concerns precisely the truth or the truth of being). It is a place where everything has already been decided and has happened, and therefore a place that is unfit for a real genealogical understanding of logic. The definition abandons the disclosive “is” in favor of a copulative “is” that aims at establishing the logical connections between being and non-being. Yet, it is not by looking at “being” and its “truth” that understanding such a passage is possible. By opposing *aletheia* to *mimesis*, Plato makes a deeper and more complex gesture than what can be measured by an *aletheia* understood à la Heidegger, even if Heidegger’s *aletheia* is a necessary beginning and premise for such a measurement and understanding.

16. *The ages of the mind*. A first or simply more ancient practice of *logos* is emotional and participatory. At this level, no properly logical mind is shown. One could talk of a sensual-gestural mind (although the term “mind” is not appropriate here, if one considers the abstract and, precisely, logical use we normally make of it). The primary task of the sensual mind is to name, to arouse names,

that is, to denote in a direct manner by indicating the thing and cutting it out, as it were, through gesture and name, or through the gesture that names. This evocative and indicative mind enacts a language that designs the world in its things in such a way that sound and writing are still intimately intertwined and plastic. This mind that knows how to name and distinguish does not know yet how to narrate properly.

Next is a discursive mind of a fabulative kind. It is a mind that tells stories and legends, but whose linguistic practice is still unaware of letters and writing. This mind does not know how to either read or write, even if its names portray and draw, and thus, in this more general sense, they write the things of the world. Such a mind puts to work its own acted consistency in language. It is a consistency that is linked to the illustrative becoming-narration of gestures and, more in general, to narrative practice. Vico would say that from the language productive of the gods' names one has moved to the heroes' language, which narrates their epic enterprises in the time of imagination.

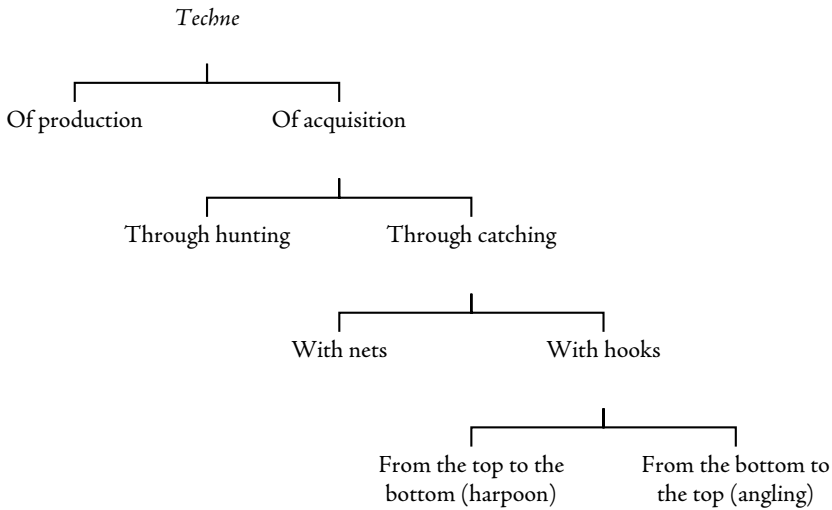
Finally, from this narrating *epos* (where the narrator is the *Vistor*, the witness that tells the vision inspired to him by the goddesses of memory, of mythical oral memory), one moves to logical-dialectical *logos*, to discourse guided by logical image, which is one with the definition, the defining discourse. Yet how does this move happen? This is the issue.

17. *From the odos of wisdom to the methodos of logic.* In such a move, various components interact. For example, there is the ascent of *logos* to a suprasensible (circular, panoramic) vision. Parmenides names such a vision with the word *noos*. We are confronted with the advent of a discourse that overcomes the *pathos* of participatory, endeictic, naming and fabulatory speech.

The ascent represents a new *odos*, a new way of wisdom. It specifies itself more properly as a particular discursive way, as a well-defined *diexodos*, that is, as a method (*methodos*) of speech. It is characterized by peculiar signs (*semata*, Parmenides says) consisting in the formal non-contradictoriness of assertions and utterances. Initially, this contradictoriness is thought of as the concrete parting of the ways, a pair of paths one of which "says that it is," the other "that it is not."

The partition is schematized as a simple crossing of lines, drawn on an ideal writing board. The crossing appears then as an inverted "y" ( $\lambda$ ). The contradiction, perceived as a parting of ways, translates into a scheme of writing whose procedure is "analytical," that is, "critical" and "dichotomous."

In other words: the speech that analyzes and judges (*krinein*) is not [the same as] the speech that names, evokes, narrates, or accompanies the action ("Off to the ships, Achaeans!" or "Off to the ships, philosophers!" as Nietzsche says). This analytical speech aims at forming a logical image or *mimesis* of things. The image is, more precisely, a *diagram* (as Peirce would say), a crossing of lines within a graph (within a "leaf-world," Peirce, again, would say); and this *is*, literally, the definition. For example, this is the prototypical definition pertaining to angling as it is advanced in Plato's *Sophist*:



At the end of such an analytical procedure, we find the figures (*schemata*) of syllogism.

18. *Heracles' parting of the ways*. Prodicus, the sophist, tells the famous myth of Heracles at the parting of the ways. When at the threshold of adulthood, the young Heracles finds himself faced with the choice between two paths, that of virtue (*arete*) and that of depravation (*kakia*), depicted as two women of opposite qualities and different languages and aspects. The first path leads to good harmony (*cosmos*) and the correct use of social techniques; the second leads to vice, corruption, and the merely utilitarian, egotistical, and therefore disastrous use of the tools and products of civilization.<sup>18</sup>

The Greeks ascribed to Heracles also the invention of writing and the alphabet, which at the time ended with the letter "Y." Hence, the image of the parting of the ways, which schematically comprised within itself also the image of the tree of life, one of the oldest symbols present in numerous civilizations.<sup>19</sup>

With this intertwining of references, Prodicus clearly shows that he understands what is at stake in writing and the alphabet. They lead human beings to the parting of the ways where the very meaning of their lives, and more particularly of their civilization and social cohabitation, is at stake. As eminently human techniques, writing and alphabet venture the definitive exit of human beings from the circle of naturalness; thereby, they venture the opposite alternatives of a superior meaning of humanity or its complete destruction. For this, a peculiar *sophia* is required: that is, the formation of a dialectical mind capable of discriminating true from false good, the good from the opposite path. For this, *philo-sophia* is required. It is not a negligible detail that an ancient tradition

indicates Prodicus as one of Socrates' teachers. By arguing ironically, and by defining maieutically, Socrates simply inverts Heracles' "Y."

19. *The leap.* The practice of language does not comprise within itself the definition, the defining practice, as an unavoidable necessity. This latter practice has in the former an ideal condition of possibility; however, its enactment does not happen by itself because of an intrinsic and "natural" evolution of *logos*. Numerous civilizations have ignored the defining practice and dialectical games of analytical *logos*; this has not prevented many of them from achieving high and sublime realizations.

Intertwined with action, pathic speech does not bother about contradiction, for example. Such a speech focuses only on *meaning*, which is intimately connected to *pathos* and *pathemata* ("passions," yet deprived of our psychological connotations). The god that is evoked (for example, Dionysus) can be both male and female, adult and child, meek and ferocious, having the sense of death and life, of chastity and orgy, of clouding and knowledge, and so on.

Precisely because of this, the question concealed by logic cannot be searched starting with truth. Heidegger claims that truth as *aletheia* must be understood as the originary disclosedness or unconcealedness of a being (and in truth, by naming a being and the being of a being as he does, Heidegger already says too much, and says it badly, since he clearly presupposes a typical *logical content* without questioning it; he presupposes *being in general*, that is a product, or, even better, the product of the defining practice of *logos*). Yet, Heidegger continues, logic translates the originary disclosedness into truth understood as "correctness" (*orthotes*) of judgment and enunciation. This assumes judgment as the place of truth and as an essential image of the thing. This is correct. But *how* does such a leap happen?<sup>20</sup>

20. *That and how.* Evidently something does not work. Between phenomenon (manifestation) and truth of enunciation there is a big leap of meaning, a heterogeneity of terms and contexts. It is not enough to remark that *aletheia* (disclosiveness) is not *veritas* (correctness as correspondence between *logos* and the disclosed being). One must then show *how* this difference determines itself; that is, what, differing, subtends to it. What is the similar *odos* within which the differing of the logical *methodos* determines itself? Between *aletheia* and *veritas* there is a hidden and deep continuity, which supports the passage from one to the other. Yet there is also a deep abyss that cannot be crossed on the edge of simple "truth."

The point is: how can discourse (*logos*) assume the meaning of logical enunciation, or function of logical image? If one says: "Off to the ships, Achaeans!" this has nothing to do with truth at all. The linguistic gesture identifies units of meaning ("off," "ships," and so on) and inserts practical, indicative, and orientating functions (like a stretched out arm or forefinger). Today one would speak of "illocutory" objectualities, for example. Even if one says "The ship is in the

harbor," the meaning of this sentence is descriptive-denotative, or even narrative; it has nothing to do with truth.

In saying this, one could lie—one objects. This is true, but even the act of lying is a determined linguistic practice that has its pragmatic meaning within itself, a meaning that does not need the logic of truth to institute itself. Calchas could very well have tricked Agamemnon while remaining unaware of syllogisms and metaphysical assumptions on a "true being."

The general or universal question of truth emerges only when one asserts the *problem* of the Socratic-Platonic definition: what is ship, what is harbor, what is being? Thus, the "leap" is something occurring to *logos* and in *logos*. What lies behind the *problem* of logic is not the truth (disclosive or assertive). Rather, it is the emergence of the universality or purity that govern the formal character of enunciation (the "logical form" of the discursive image). Or better, it is not properly the form (which is the arrival point); rather, it is the *content* of the form, that is, that which logic employs (problematically), but which, by employing, it suppresses from its understanding, from its *question*.

21. *The recovered question*. Is writing, perhaps, the content of the form that logic elides and forgets? Is it the "scheme," that is, writing as *schematismus latens* [hidden schematism]? It is a fact that logic has evolved toward a more and more peculiar system of writing without ever "thinking" or worrying about the "weight" of writing itself. Conversely, it has flattered itself thinking of proceeding on the uncontaminated path of "pure" thought, of the "purification of *logos*" (purification from the "errors" of language).

Let us suppose that to discover how discourse becomes "logical," that is, to discover the content of the logical form, one decided to analyze, in speech, sound, voice, pathic-expressive materiality of accent, tone, and rhythm. In so doing, one would take a wrong path that does not lead to the goal. It is the path that, initially, Socrates takes up in the *Cratylus*, and on which he exercises his "irony" ultimately to set it aside and oppose it with the path, or method, of logical definition. This path has to do with the *pathic* (and, in this sense, disclosive) character of speech. From here, however, there is no passage to the logical definition, which conversely has to do with *schemata* (diagrams) and *elements*.

Schematization (it would be better to say "stylization"<sup>21</sup>), through which one proceeds toward an "elementary" and analytical thinking, is the characteristic feature of a practice connected with the introduction of the alphabet and alphabetic writing. Is the alphabet, then, the content of the logical form? Is this the secret that Heracles and Hermes hide within themselves? One should withhold the answer, and be content with having found the question.