

The End of Science and the Beginning of Wisdom

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The End of Science and the Beginning of Wisdom¹

0. Abstract

Already at the (Greek) beginning, science raised pretensions to absoluteness. Today it is high time to push back these arrogations to power to make room for something else. The key to this fundamental reorientation in thinking is the question concerning movement and the intimately associated question concerning time itself. This happens as a step back from science to wisdom, as a step that goes along with a deepening of the conception of time from one-eyed, linear time that is merely counted off movement, to three-eyed, three-dimensional time that first enables movement at all in its truth. Hermeneutic ontology thus becomes hermeneutic chronophasis, i.e. the hermeneutic ‘saying of movement from time’.

1. The question concerning kinaesis in the Greek beginnings of philosophy

ἔστιν οὖν δὴ κατ' ἐμὴν δόξαν
πρῶτον διαιρετέον τάδε· τί τὸ ὄν
ἀεί, γένεσιν δὲ οὐκ ἔχον, καὶ τί
τὸ γιγνόμενον μὲν ἀεί, ὄν δὲ
οὐδέποτε;

At first, in my opinion, the following
must be distinguished: What is that
which is always being and has no

¹ Many thanks to Astrid Nettling for invaluable critical comments. Paper presented to the staff seminar in the Department of Philosophy & Gender Studies at the University of Tasmania at the invitation of its head, Prof. Dirk Baltzly, and at the suggestion of Distinguished Prof. Jeff Malpas, on 26 August 2016.

genesis, and what is that which is
always becoming, but never being?

Platon *Timaios* 27d-28a

The title is challenging, provoking, but not intended polemically. Here it is a matter, finally after two-and-a-half millennia, of assigning to science its proper and deserved place, since it has long since transgressed its fitting limits and raised pretensions to absoluteness — and it has done so without precise philosophical objections having been raised against this arrogation to hegemony practised by science.

Western science (ἐπιστήμη) grew out of Greek thinking about movement/change (κίνησις) as such. This was the beginning of philosophy from the sixth to the fourth century B.C.E. The movement that stood at the focus of philosophical thinking as exemplary and paradigmatic was the *regular, cyclical locomotion* (φορά, κίνησις κατὰ τόπον) of the fixed stars in the heavens. Because of their reliable regularity, this celestial motion could be predicted and even precalculated and even became that movement from which time itself was counted. For, the regular recurrence of the fixed stars every year, the regular recurrence of the moon every month, the regular recurrence of the sun every day became natural measures of time. Thus time became *counted* off from regular, cyclical, physical motions. Clock-time in the broadest sense was born. Plato even says in *Timaios* (38b-c), that time arose with the moving planets in the heavens. And Aristotle took the next step by casting time as “the number of movement with regard to before and after” (ἀριθμὸς κινήσεως κατὰ τὸ πρότερον καὶ ὕστερον, *Phys.* IV xi 219b2; vgl. auch *De Caelo* I ix. 279a15). This hermeneutic casting of time has remained valid to the present day — even in the most advanced mathematized quantum physics and relativity theory —, even though today’s chronometers (clocks) read off time from much faster, regular, periodic movements such as the vibrations of the molecules in a crystal.

Decisive for science is the regularity of the movement/change. Otherwise science would have no foothold, since it would not be able to grasp, that is, predict and govern, movement/change. Thus, as a

consequence, in his *Metaphysics* Aristotle makes the distinction between movement καθ' αὐτό and movement κατὰ τὸ συμβεβηκός, that is, between movement which is according to itself, and contingent movement that offers no handle in order to knowingly dominate and govern it. Contingent movement therefore is excluded from science. This exclusion Aristotle performs explicitly in his *Metaphysics* (*Met. Epsilon ii-iii*²).

Hence science orients itself exclusively toward movements which somehow or other can be brought under the control of a knowing, foreseeing, precalculating knowledge. This goes so far that in modern mathematized science it suffices that the observed movement/change has a certain regularity that can be grasped quantitatively in a statistical way as a probability. This suffices already in order, at least, to predict trends. Thus movement/change remains precalculable to an extent, which is what science is essentially concerned with, for otherwise, it would not be science.

The foreseeability of movement/change is based on the Aristotelean metaphysical, or ontological, cast of being of movement as such: a force (δύναμις) works on a material (ὕλη), lacking in form (στέρησις), and is at work (ἐν-έργ-εια) in order finally (ἐν-τελ-έχεια) to bring it into the foreseen, envisaged form (εἶδος). In the Modern Age starting in the 17th century, this ontology of movement was in no way discarded during the course of a supposed leave-taking from Aristotle, as modern scientists would have us believe, but merely mathematized, primarily through Newton and Leibniz with the infinitesimal calculus, that is, the counting of infinitely small magnitudes. Even the transition to relativity theory and quantum physics in mathematized physics with Einstein et al. changed nothing in this efficient-causal ontology of movement, even though the ostensible experimental 'discovery' of so-called 'indeterminacy' in the motions of subatomic entities such as electrons has unsettled the firm scientific belief in efficient linear causality. Movement and change, however, continue to be precalculable within certain limits,

² Cf. Eldred M. *Entstündigung: Philosophische Aufsätze* CreateSpace, North Charleston SC 2015 Chap. II.iv.

and the so-called ‘evolution’ of a dynamic quantum state is supposed to continue to be fully determinable by means of partial differential equations.

This precalculability, in turn, presupposes linear, one-dimensional, time, in the meantime mathematized as a real variable, *t*. To the present day, mathematized physics is regarded as the leading, fundamental science which, in principle at least, is supposed to be able to explain all movements/changes, from chemical reactions through to the most complicated biomolecular life processes. This is the way things are according to scientific belief that believes itself today well-armed, reinforced and entrenched behind impregnable defences against all upheavals.

2. The Greek determination of the transcendent metaphysical as the akinaeton

The venerable distinction between being and becoming is expressed authoritatively in Plato’s *Timaios*. There (27d-28a), becoming is cast as kinaeton, that is, that which can move, whereas being itself is determined merely negatively as that which cannot move, the akinaeton. Thus, in Greek philosophy, being itself remains without its own positive determination of essence, but merely negatively demarcated over against becoming and that which can move and change.

Also the major part of Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* deals with physically movable beings (τὸ κινούμενον) as such; it is primarily an ontology of what is physically movable, changeable, containing in Book Theta the Aristotelean ontology of movement, that is, what is physical is experienced and thought by the Greeks as what is movable. Aristotle’s *Physics* is therefore just as metaphysical, that is, ontological, as the major part of his *Metaphysics* itself. Only the final books of the *Metaphysics* deal with that which goes beyond the physical, that is, with the meta-physical in the traditionally understood sense which is expressly cast as the akinaeton in Book Lambda. As is well known, the transcendent meta-physical is identified above all with the divine. The final books of Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* therefore constitute to the present

day the fundament of philosophical, Christian theology which, for its part, represents a truncated, distorting adoption and absorption of Aristotelean philosophy itself.

This philosophical theology is necessarily an essentially *negative* theology because it is cast as an ἐπιστήμη θεολογική, that is, as a theological science, of the a-kinaeton as such and thus must be satisfied with negative determinations such as that which is unchangeable and forever, non-corporeal, non-spatial, timeless and eternal. Metaphysical theology is transcendent in the sense that it deals with what is beyond movement and change.

In particular it should be noted here that this philosophical theology, too, is dependent upon a positive determination of the essence of time, because what is timeless only has a meaning when time itself as such is positively grasped and conceptualized. I will come back to this point.

3. Life as self-movement

Greek thinking casts even life itself from kinaesis. Whereas the physical in general is cast in its being as κινούμενον, that is, as that which can move, life is determined as that which can move, change *itself*. Life has a governing principle (ἀρχή) of its own movement/change within itself. Whereas, for instance, a stone can be moved/changed, say, through weathering, a plant can move/change itself (κίνησις καθ' αὐτό), say, by growing or withering or turning toward the sun.

The principle of self-movement as the mode of being of what is living is called in Greek ψυχή, psyche. All living beings are experienced by the Greeks as ἔμψυχον, i.e. as in the 'psyche', 'ensouled', and accordingly thought philosophically. This determination of the essence of life itself as ensouled self-movement contradicts fundamentally modern science which in its essence banks on efficient causality which somehow is supposed to be able to bridge the ontological gulf between that which can move and that which can move itself. Modern science must deny life as its own mode of being (and not a being!) because otherwise it would be restricted in its *absolute claim to power* to govern and control any kind of movement/change through

efficient causality. The cause-effect relationship depends essentially on beings being cast ontologically physically as that which can be moved (κινούμενον) and precisely not as physical beings that can move themselves. Thus modern science as a whole is basically hostile not only to the metaphysically transcendent divine, but also to self-moving living beings which, of course, by no means excludes that individual scientists, but not *as* scientists, may be thoroughly religious believers without any problem, especially since they already blindly believe in the scientific method.

4. Human being itself as a special kind of self-movement

Among the living beings that move themselves there are also human beings, who are ontologically distinguished by a special kind of psychic self-movement. The human psyche, namely, is also mental. The *mind* (νοῦς) is able to gather beings as such into a look, to bring beings into the contours of a stand, thus *understanding* them, and also *articulating* and *expressing* this understanding in *language*. Hence the human being is experienced by the Greeks as the living being that has the logos, i.e. as τὸ ζῶον λόγον ἔχον, whereby this logos is conceived not only as mind, reason, but also as language. The reason-endowed mind can guide the self-movement of human beings. Human beings move themselves throughout their lives also under the guidance of their own rationally understanding mind.

But not only this. The mind has the capacity to bend back upon itself, that is, to reflect upon itself, and thus to understand its own understanding of the physical world in its movement and changeability. In this way understanding *in itself* of the world becomes a reflected understanding in *and* for itself of the world, i.e. the implicit self-understanding becomes explicit and thus hermeneutically ontological. Humankind is thus capable of philosophical thinking. Mostly, however, a human being does not get so far, striving first and foremost toward that which he or she desires, and this desire is per se limitless, being mostly limited only by other, opposing, desiring self-movements. A human being is driven by the desiring part of the psyche, thus falling far short

of the pretension that his or her own life-movements should be guided by the reason-endowed mind. The thematization of this struggle between the reason-endowed and the desiring parts of the psyche is as old as philosophy itself.

5. The refractory character of contingent kinaesis

I have already said that movement κατὰ τὸ συμβεβηκός, that is, contingent movement, was excluded, and had to be excluded, by Aristotle from contemplation and investigation, and thus also from the claim to domination and dominion by science. Contingent movement is refractory because it does not offer any foothold for causality which in Aristotle was nevertheless still a fourfold causality. Contingent movement has neither a foreseen, guiding sight (form, εἶδος) nor a τέλος with which it is completed, nor a specifiable, effective mover (κινουῦν), even though it can have a material (ὑλη). In particular, for contingent movement/change no αἴτιος, i.e. no cause, no ground can be specified that could be 'accused' (ἀτιμάσθαι). In the case of contingent movement, all causal explanatory attempts fail. It is not effected, not caused, but simply occurs.

Despite all strivings and attempts to govern and control, most movements/changes cannot be dominated. A lot happens contingently precisely because most forces are in an *interplay*³ with each other. At the latest when human freedom comes into play, the self-movement of life itself becomes essentially a game, an interplay, because the life-movements of each individual human have an origin or beginning, an ἀρχή of its own self-movement that is not determined in advance, that is, it is *free*. This interplay is a plural game with other human beings who likewise bear within themselves the governing beginning of their own self-movement. This interplay among many players is a *play of forces* in which each human being sets his or her own vital forces to work for a particular purpose, a determinant aim. Whether, however, this purpose is fulfilled or this aim achieved is subject to the many accidents and

³ Cf. Eldred M. *Social Ontology Ontos/deGruyter*, Frankfurt/Berlin 2008; 2nd expanded edition 2011, Ch. 5 vi), available at www.arte-fact.org

vicissitudes of the play of forces itself that is played out through the interplay among many forces and counter-forces in often completely surprising strategies and moves.

In relation to human beings, the play of forces can suitably be called also a *power-play*, especially because it is not merely physical forces that come into play in the interplay of human life-movements, but also always *games of estimation and valuation* which are played among human beings. In their dealings with each other, human beings estimate and esteem each other with regard to their abilities, capacities, wealth, social status, etc. whereby the players more often than not also misestimate. The game of mutual estimation comprises modes of play such as valuing, treasuring, assessing, estimating, sizing up, appraising, appreciating, depreciating, over-estimating, under-estimating, valuing highly, undervaluing, misestimating. The outcome of an estimating interplay among human beings, even between just two human beings, remains always and essentially uncertain, unforeseeable, incalculable, undeterminable as well as often surprising.

This infinitely complex interplay of forces and powers of human life-movement withdraws from any dominion and control by any kind of science, even if it be the science of so-called chaos theory. Since life itself is essentially characterized by self-movement, and living beings also play a complex game of forces of infinitely diverse life-movements with each other, it can also be doubted whether today's science, despite all its calculating efforts, will ever be able to knowingly govern and control it. Science does not want to accept this failure and coming-to-grief on contingent movement, decisively denying its own essential limitation. *Nonetheless, an essential limit to the scientific will to effective power over movement and change makes itself apparent here.* Wisdom would consist in letting go of this absolute claim to power, by stepping back from it and renouncing it.

6. The beginning of wisdom through opening time

Thinking has always been outdone by opining and believing, and has been pushed to one side as being strenuous, laborious, complicated and cumbersome. In the modern age, science, with its infinite will to

effective power over movement and change, comes on top of that. Under no circumstances does it want to be held up by any sort of considerations regarding the essential nature of movement or time. Blinded by its own pretensions to power, and amply rewarded for its successes, it must deny the mode of being of contingency altogether.⁴ It has long since expelled philosophical thinking from its own domain and is no longer able to think hermeneutically and ontologically. It knows nothing of its own modern hermeneutic cast that casts *as* what beings as a whole show themselves, namely, *as* mathematizable along the lines of efficient causality.⁵ It believes that it could shore up its own foundations in a circular fashion by means of scientific experiment, without ever gaining a view of the hermeneutic, ontological character of its own scientific method. Thus, for instance, recent neuroscience wants to prove experimentally that there can be no such thing as free, human will. To do this, neuroscience must unquestioningly presuppose without further ado that the mind can be identified with the brain. But is it thus identifiable?

As I have already outlined, the absolute belief of science in efficient causality goes together with a certain conception of time itself which had to be cast as one-eyed, one-dimensional, linear and thus ultimately even as mathematized. Moreover I noted that being itself was understood essentially in a negative way from movement which, in turn, served as a basis from which linear time could be counted. Hence, this linear time is derived from movement which, however, in turn is subjugated to the scientific will to power of governing and controlling movement through efficient-causal explanations, that is, scientific theories. This conception of efficient causality depends essentially upon the one-dimensional linearity of time itself, for the cause is temporally earlier, governing the temporally later effect. In this way movement and change can be scientifically predicted and precalculated.

There is, however, an overlooked, but decisive circularity in the famous Aristotelean determination of the essence of time as “the number

⁴ Cf. e.g. Einstein’s postulating “hidden variables” as a way of reconciling apparent quantum indeterminacy with efficient causality.

⁵ Cf. Eldred M. *The Digital Cast of Being Ontos*/deGruyter, Frankfurt/Berlin 2009; 2nd expanded edition 2011, available at www.artefact.org

of movement with regard to before and after”, because precisely this “before and after” is itself already a temporal determination. Hence the determination of the essence of time itself already presupposes a pre-understanding of time. This latter time is more *originary* than, that is, prior to, consecutively counted, linear time.⁶ Originary time cannot be counted and ordered linearly but, on the contrary, represents the implicitly presupposed, and therefore hitherto unthought, openness enabling movement and change at all. Movement and change, namely, essentially presuppose the before and the after as well as the present. In order to see movement itself in a philosophical, ontological way, you must already have seen prior to that these *three dimensions of originary time* itself ‘simultaneously’. Note that ‘simultaneity’ itself takes on a new meaning. As not linearly ordered, the three dimensions of originary time are free dimensions, independent of each other, enabling multiple degrees of freedom.

7 Hermeneutic chronophasis

If, then, being itself was implicitly understood philosophically only negatively from becoming and movement, and movement, in turn, takes place within the three-dimensionality of before, after and present, and can only be seen thus, then *time itself becomes a three-dimensional clearing prior to movement*. This *time-clearing* is not a space, for it is *prespatial*, it has no where; just as it must be kept firmly in mind that not all movement, such as the movement of the thinking mind, is spatial. Movement as movement of that which can move and that which can move itself is always already implicitly seen as embedded in this temporal three-dimensionality, whereby the before and after must be understood as kinds of absence, and the present itself as presence. Movement itself thus becomes a richly diverse play of presencing and absencing in the three-dimensional time-clearing which, in turn, can also be seen, that is, understood, by the *temporally three-eyed, three-dimensional vision of the human mind*. In this precise sense, the mind

⁶ Cf. Eldred, M. *A Question of Time: An alternative cast of mind* CreateSpace, North Charleston SC 2015 Ch. 2.6.

can be identified with time, that is, with the three-dimensional time-clearing; they are the same. This insight justifies giving the German word 'Zeitgeist', long since adopted in English, a new meaning as the *belonging-together of Zeit (time) and Geist (mind)*. As human beings we inhabit the openness of *timemind*. Without this temporally *three-eyed*, three-dimensional mental vision, human beings would not be able to see movement and change *as such at all*. This 'primal state' is fundamentally overlooked and skipped over today everywhere. Modern science must even unconditionally assert that a moving being can only be observed at the point of time, that is, in the now-instant, when it can deliver experimental data. If, however, that were the case, then it would be absolutely impossible to see anything at all in movement! (Cf. Zenon's paradox.)

Seen from this viewing-point, therefore, the ontological is an inadequate designation for the deep philosophical dimension which philosophical thinkers had in view from the beginning, a view which among today's philosophers has become increasingly lost to sight. Being itself must today be seen and conceived as the play of presencing and absencing in the temporal clearing, and explicitly hermeneutically cast *as such*, for the ontological dimension is, properly speaking, the 3D temporal dimensionality, the dimensionality of presence and absence themselves which clears and opens up movement and the world in the first, ordinary place. We human beings have always already seen and well-understood this 3D-time, but thought nothing of it. Hence philosophy only makes plain what we already understand; it says nothing new.

Furthermore, since the logos itself has long since already been taken into service for governing movement, it would be appropriate if, following a proposal made by the late Heidegger, phenomenology were renamed "phenomenophasis",⁷ the 'saying of the phenomena'. The deepest phenomenon which we humans have hitherto gained a view of is

⁷ *Auszüge zur Phänomenologie aus dem Manuskript 'Vermächtnis der Seinsfrage' (1973-75) II 125 Jahresgabe der Martin Heidegger Gesellschaft 2011/12.*

time itself or, more precisely, the time-clearing which lies deeper than movement and also deeper than, that is, prior to being, no matter whether it is conceived as that which is unchangeable and forever or as the hermeneutic cast of being of an historical age. Since, however, chronology means simply ordering occurrences in the consecutive flow of linear time, ontology hitherto as the logos of the being of beings within an historical age must become *chronophasis*, the ‘saying of time’ (from φάσκει, ‘to say’) and, more particularly, it must become *hermeneutic chronophasis*, the ‘hermeneutic saying of time’. Hermeneutic-chronophatic phenomenology is accordingly determined as the hermeneutic saying of the phenomena that show themselves from the time-clearing.

Chronophatically, that is, seen from the time-clearing, movement as the temporal play of absencing and presencing of that which moves cannot be governed, but it can be said. Wanting to govern and control anyway reveals a restricted, one-eyed, power-obsessed gaze. Nevertheless, the historical movement in the time-clearing of an age calls for interpretation in order to *say as* what this historical movement shows itself. This is the hermeneutic-chronophatic task for wise thinking. The beginning of wisdom therefore consists in stepping back from the absolute, totalitarian claim to domination made by science in its holding-onto one-dimensional, linear time in order to grant the mind an explicitly three-eyed view of the ungovernable temporal play of the movement of presencing and absencing.