

Heidegger on Correspondence and Correctness

Taylor Carman

Does Heidegger accept or reject the correspondence theory—or, if it's not exactly a "theory," then the correspondence *conception*—of truth? Casual readers often simply assume he rejects it, but this is not obvious. Indeed, Hubert Dreyfus and Mark Wrathall have recently, though in different ways, argued that Heidegger embraces the correspondence theory. Dreyfus does so by equating the problem of truth with the problem of realism, so that the case for correspondence is simply the case for realism, at least with respect to entities posited by the natural sciences.¹ Wrathall does so by identifying correspondence (*Übereinstimmung*) with correctness (*Richtigkeit*), as Heidegger himself frequently does, and then maintaining that Heidegger has no objection to the notion of truth as correctness.² I agree that Heidegger accepts the notion of truth as correctness. I want to argue, however, that correspondence is not the same as correctness, that the distinction between them is philosophically significant, and that Heidegger recognizes both the distinction and its significance—sometimes explicitly, but more often implicitly in the way he conceives and criticizes the metaphysical tradition from Plato to Nietzsche.

First, a point of clarification. The notion of truth as correspondence is often conflated with a related but distinct issue, namely realism. Some philosophers reject realism because they think it presupposes a correspondence conception of truth, which they find either empty or incoherent.³ Others reject the correspondence conception of truth because they think it requires realism about the entities on the object side of the correspondence relation.⁴ But these are two separate, if connected, issues. The crude intuition that propositions (or beliefs or sentences or whatever) are true in virtue of the way the world is seems compelling precisely—but *only*—where we *already* have a notion of the world itself *being* a certain way, independent of the way we understand it, a notion of the world, as Bernard Williams says, "as it is anyway." The idea of a kind of external anchor in reality, it seems to me, is what

breathes life into the metaphor of correspondence, so that the order of intelligibility is the reverse of what it might seem: it's not that realism presupposes the correspondence theory of truth, but that the image of correspondence thrives on an assumption of realism, that is, some notion of the way the world really is, independent of our way of understanding it. Without realism, the notion of correspondence may have nothing going for it, but neither is it clear that the notion of correspondence *adds* anything to the realism on which it thrives. If we are to retain the correspondence conception of truth, our reason for doing so cannot simply be that we are realists about the entities to which we suppose our truths correspond.

What then does Heidegger say about truth? To make a long story short, §44 of *Being and Time* advances (at least) four distinct claims:

- (1) that the traditional concept of truth as correspondence *presupposes* the phenomenon of uncovering (*Entdecken*);
- (2) that the truth of an assertion just *is* its uncovering an entity "in itself" (*an ihm selbst*);
- (3) that the being-uncovering of assertions is possible only on the basis of Dasein's disclosedness or being-in-the-world; and
- (4) that truth is *not* correspondence in the sense of a resemblance or alignment (*Angleichung*) of one entity with another.

Heidegger never says the notion of correspondence is meaningless or incoherent. The worst he says about it in *Being and Time* is that it's "very general and empty,"⁵ but of course even very general and empty notions can be coherent—abstract but benign, useless but harmless. At the beginning of his 1931-1932 lectures, *The Essence of Truth*, he seems to go further by insisting that, although we ordinarily take it for granted as "self-evident," the notion of truth as correspondence is in fact "utterly obscure," "ambiguous," "unintelligible."⁶

Does that settle the matter? Well, not quite. When Heidegger says the received view of truth is "unintelligible," what he means is not that it's demonstrably incoherent, but simply that we have no understanding of it:

Something is "intelligible" to us if we understand [*verstehen*] it, i.e. can set ourselves before [*vor-stehen*] the thing, have its measure, survey and comprehend it in its basic structure. Is what we have just called "self-evident" (truth as correspondence and correctness . . .) really *intelligible to us*? (WW 2–3)

The answer is *no*. But again, this doesn't prove anything; it merely shows that we don't know what we're talking about when we say truth is correspondence. Heidegger says the notion of truth as correspondence is "*unverständlich*," but he also says in the same pages that it's

merely “*unverstanden*,” which can simply mean *misunderstood*. Could it be that all Heidegger wants to assert is that we do not yet have a proper understanding of the kind of correspondence that constitutes propositional truth? Could we come to understand it properly, and so embrace the traditional received notion, or at least a version of it?

Mark Wrathall has recently argued along these lines in what I think is the best brief discussion of Heidegger’s account of truth. In support of his reading Wrathall quotes the following remarks from the beginning of *The Essence of Truth*. What makes an assertion true?

This, that in *what* it says, it corresponds to the things [*Sachen*] and states of affairs [*Sachverhalten*] *about which* it says something. The being-true of the assertion thus means such correspondence. What then *is* truth? Truth is *correspondence*. Such correspondence obtains because the assertion is directed to [*richtet sich nach*] that *about which* it says something. Truth is *correctness* [*Richtigkeit*]. Truth is thus *correspondence, grounded in correctness, of the assertion with the thing*. (WW 2)

So far, so good. But Wrathall quotes this passage as if it represents Heidegger’s own considered view, whereas in fact Heidegger is here merely articulating what he takes to be our common preconception concerning truth, something we ordinarily take for granted as self-evident. He is not endorsing the concept of correspondence; indeed, as we have seen, he immediately goes on to say that this concept is obscure, ambiguous, and unintelligible. He is merely setting up the discussion, just as he does in *Being and Time* when he writes, “The analysis sets out from [*geht aus von*] the traditional concept of truth and attempts to lay bare its ontological foundations” (SZ 214). To “set out from” a received view is not to embrace it, but simply to take it as given, as received, in order to ask how it manages to be intelligible at all, *if* it does.

On Wrathall’s reading, by contrast, when Heidegger complains that the notion of correspondence is obscure, ambiguous, and unintelligible, all he is really denying is its *self-evidentness*, its *obviousness*. The idea of correspondence is not nonsense; it has merely been misunderstood. More precisely, it is, as Heidegger himself says, “ambiguous.”

Wrathall is certainly right to insist that Heidegger neither doubts nor denies that the truth of perceptions, beliefs, and assertions consists in their *correctness*. He is wrong, I think, in assuming that for Heidegger correctness is the same as *correspondence*. Heidegger admittedly often lumps the two together, but not always. When he does distinguish them, moreover, it becomes clear that correctness is the more primordial phenomenon, both historically and conceptually. Disentangling them, I want to suggest, promises to bring into sharper focus not only Heidegger’s

philosophical commitments concerning truth, but also the critical stance he takes up against the metaphysical tradition.

Heidegger advances two distinct claims, I believe, though he often runs them together. They are the first two of the four I distinguished above, namely:

- (1) that the traditional *concept* of truth as correspondence presupposes the phenomenon of uncovering; and
- (2) that the truth of an assertion just *is* its uncovering an entity “in itself” (*an ihm selbst*).

What (2) says, more precisely, is that the *correctness* of an assertion consists in its uncovering an entity in itself. What (1) says is that the *concept* of correspondence, the image of two adjacent things either resembling each other or fitting together like the pieces of a puzzle, is made possible by the being-uncovering of assertions and the disclosedness of Dasein. Uncovering “explains” the concept of correspondence not by justifying or validating it, then, but by showing how it was ever possible for us to have such a concept. Whereas uncovering *constitutes* correctness, it merely *motivates the idea* of correspondence. And of course we can have the one without the other. Indeed, how could it be otherwise? How could we do without the concept of correctness? And how does the image of agreement or correspondence shed any further light on that concept?

Granted, Heidegger often seems simply to equate correctness and correspondence.⁷ You might have noticed that in the passage from *The Essence of Truth* I quoted above Heidegger asks, “Is what we have just called ‘self-evident’ (truth as correspondence *and correctness . . .*) really intelligible to us?” (WW 3; emphasis mod.). That seems to suggest that correctness is no more intelligible to us than correspondence; that what goes for one, goes for the other.

You also might have noticed, however, that in the next passage I quoted, from the previous page, Heidegger says, “Truth is thus correspondence, *grounded in correctness*, of the assertion with the thing” (WW 2; emphasis mod.). Moreover, the entire remainder of the lecture course is devoted to a scrupulously detailed examination of Plato’s *Republic* and *Theaetetus*, texts in which, Heidegger supposes, the word ἀλήθεια itself ceased to mean unconcealment and came to mean correctness (ὀρθότης). Heidegger was wrong about that putative semantic shift in the Greek language, but he was probably right that theoretical correctness as such first became metaphysically paradigmatic and unconditionally important in Plato, in contrast to the Homeric and Presocratic tradition. “Ever since,” Heidegger writes, “there is a striving for ‘truth’ in the sense of the correctness of the gaze and its orientation.

Ever since, in all fundamental orientations toward entities, what becomes decisive is achieving a correct view of the ideas.”⁸ Moreover, as Heidegger says here and elsewhere, only in Aristotle do we find the first version of what would become the standard account of truth as correspondence (ὁμοίωσις), or, as Heidegger puts it, a kind of resemblance or alignment (*Angleichung*) (SZ 214) between experience and, as Aristotle says, “those things of which our experiences are the images (ὁμοιώματα).”⁹

What Heidegger describes in the lectures, then, is not the origin of the correspondence theory of truth, but the far more significant dawning of the idea that the essence of truth is not unconcealment but correctness. Again, Heidegger was wrong that the word ἀλήθεια itself acquired a new meaning in Plato, a meaning he thinks it didn’t have for the Presocratics. He was arguably right, however, that Platonic philosophy represents a radical shift in our understanding of the essence of truth. For Plato, as for the subsequent tradition, including our own current scientific-technological culture, truth is correctness, nothing more or less. What is correctness?

Rightness or correctness (*Richtigkeit*) is arguably the most basic concept of truth explicit in ordinary understanding, and probably always has been. Knowledge has a “direction” (*Richtung*); it is “directed” (*gerichtet*) straight at its object. “True” in this sense means *right*, which, like the German *recht*, originally meant, according to the *OED*, “Straight; not bent, curved, or crooked in any way”; “Direct, going straight towards its destination.” In Old English “wrong” occurred only as a noun meaning an injustice, but in Middle English the adjective meant “Having a crooked or curved course, form, or direction; twisted or bent in shape or contour; wry”; “Marked by deviation; deflected”; “Mis-shapen; deformed.” Hence the verb “to true,” which means “to place, adjust, or shape accurately; to give the precise required form or position to; to make accurately or perfectly straight, level, round, smooth, sharp, etc. as required.”

This understanding of truth as rightness over and against wrongness, straight and direct as opposed to crooked and deviant, is obviously not the same as the concept of agreement or correspondence. It is also evidently a much older notion. As Paul Friedländer observed, *pace* Heidegger, Homer already understood truth as correctness and always used ἀληθείη and ἀληθής in connection with “verbs of assertion,” the object of which was not the unhidden, as Heidegger would have it, but—if such terms were negative at all, which Friedländer doubts—something more like “that which is not-crooked,” in contrast to “everything that disturbs, distorts, slants.”¹⁰ In any case, Heidegger is right that Plato makes the image of direction or rectitude explicit and canonical in

the theory of forms. Thus, in the cave analogy Socrates says, of the prisoner released from his bonds and now no longer captivated by the shadows but looking into the light, that “because he is a bit closer to the things that are and is turned toward things that are more—he sees more correctly (ὀρθότερον).”¹¹ In the same spirit, Socrates says in *Theaetetus* that in false judgment, “like a bad archer, one shoots wide of the mark and misses.”¹²

The priority of rectitude to correspondence becomes clear, too, when we consider how naturally at home the former is in the expression of normative as well as factual truths. For while it remains a fruitless conundrum what in the world normative truths could be said to correspond to, we seem to have no trouble at all understanding wrongness as a kind of deviation, crookedness, or deformity.

The historical claim Heidegger is entitled to, then, is not that the meaning of the word ἀλήθεια changed in the fourth or fifth century BCE, but that the ideal of theoretical correctness acquired centrality and prestige, a new intellectual and cultural authority it evidently lacked in the pre-Classical period. What interests Heidegger is not the history of the correspondence theory of truth (which is, after all, a pretty dreary affair), but a far more momentous event, namely the emergence of the scientific-theoretical understanding of truth as correctness.

What difference does that difference make? Perhaps the most important point, though this is only implicit in Heidegger’s discussion, is that the logic of unconcealment differs crucially from the logic of correctness, for unconcealment is a gradual phenomenon, a matter of degree, whereas correctness is bimodal, all or nothing. Things and situations can be more or less revealed, open to view and uncovered. A perception, a belief, or a proposition, by contrast, is either correct or it isn’t. There is something wrong about saying a belief or an assertion is “kind of” or “almost” correct. If it is not correct, it is simply incorrect. Newtonian physics is not *almost* or approximately true. Or rather, being almost or approximately true is not a way of being true at all, but a way of being false. This is not just a matter of arbitrary precision or fastidiousness. Rather, the point is that the very idea of correctness brings with it a bimodal logic that makes the demand for precision intelligible, whether or not we insist on it in practice. Nor is the bimodality of correctness limited to propositional truth (*Satzwahrheit*). What Heidegger calls “material truth” (*Sachwahrheit*) exhibits the same logic of excluded middle. Is this a *real* diamond? Is she a *true* friend? It would be a kind of joke to answer such questions by saying, “Sort of.” Of course, we often help ourselves, however awkwardly, to the idea that a belief may be “roughly” true, or that a cultural artifact may be “more or less” authentic. This suggests that we often rely tacitly on a notion of truth

as unconcealment, even as the logic of our ordinary concept of truth strains against the idea that things—either propositions or entities—can be “roughly” or “more or less” true.

This point comes out most clearly in *The Essence of Truth* in Heidegger’s reading of the cave analogy in book VII of *Republic*. Some light is cast on the wall of the cave, more shines in the fire itself, and still more in broad daylight. The difference between the interior and the exterior of the cave is thus not the difference between incorrect and correct, but between obscurity and light, less and more brightly illuminated. On Heidegger’s reading, that is, it is not just the prisoners but Plato himself who regards the shadows on the wall as “the true,” or as Heidegger has it, “the unconcealed” (τὸ ἀληθές) (WW 24). What Socrates actually says is that “the prisoners would in every way believe that the true [τὸ ἀληθές] is nothing other than the shadows of those artifacts.”¹³ On Heidegger’s reading, the prisoners are wrong to “believe that the true is *nothing other than* the shadows,” but they are not wrong to regard the shadows as “the true.” For if ἀλήθεια means unconcealed, then the shadows are indeed ἀληθές—though of course, as we readers know, not to the same degree or as clearly as objects outside the cave. This reading of the text may be dubious, but it is crucial to Heidegger’s argument. On his account, what the prisoners see is τὸ ἀληθές, since it is unconcealed to them. Indeed, for Heidegger’s Plato,

from childhood on, man is already and in his nature set before the unconcealed. . . . Even in this strange situation in the cave, man is . . . directed to what is *before* him: τὸ ἀληθές. It belongs to being human—and this is in the analogy already from the beginning—to stand in the unconcealed, or as we say, in the true, in truth. Being human means, however unusual the situation may be, not only but among other things, comports oneself to the unconcealed. (WW 25)

What matters to Heidegger’s account of unconcealment is thus the phenomenological standpoint of the prisoners themselves, not what we readers know about the objective wrongness or their view of things. Indeed, Heidegger worries that calling what the prisoners see “shadows” already misdescribes what is unconcealed to them in its unconcealment:

The prisoners indeed *see* the shadows, but not as shadows of something. When we say the shadows are for them the unconcealed, that is ambiguous, and we have already at bottom said *too much*. We, who already survey the entire situation, refer to what they have before them as shadows. . . . [I]t lies in the essence of their existence that precisely *this* unconcealed, which they have before them, *suffices*—so much so, that they don’t even know *that* it suffices. They are given over to that which *immediately* confronts them. (WW 26)

This suggests that the position of the prisoners is so impoverished, so “immediate,” that they do not even apprehend what is unconcealed *as* unconcealed. This is not to say that the shadows are *not* unconcealed to them, but that the contrast between concealment and unconcealment is itself concealed from them, so that unconcealment as such remains concealed from them.¹⁴

In any case, for Heidegger, unconcealment is as definitive of false beliefs and appearances as it is of the true and right manifestations of things as they are, of what shows itself “in itself.” Hence Ernst Tugendhat’s charge that Heidegger’s theory fails to distinguish correct from incorrect. Tugendhat was not wrong about this, and indeed Heidegger eventually conceded the point.¹⁵ The objection misses the mark, however, precisely because it assumes that Heidegger’s account is meant to be a theory of truth, that is, a theory of correctness. Wrathall sees that this is mistaken and insists that, in Heidegger, “unconcealment is not to be taken as a (re)definition of propositional truth.”¹⁶ But Wrathall goes on to say that for Heidegger, “An assertion most genuinely succeeds if it brings a state of affairs into unconcealment for thought.” That sounds an awful lot like an analysis of correctness, and moreover it seems to imply that failed assertions (which I assume means *false* assertions) fail by failing to bring things into unconcealment. But that is evidently not Heidegger’s view.

It might be tempting to suppose that both true and false assertions uncover, but to different degrees—false assertions less, true assertions more. In this spirit, one might think, in *The Essence of Truth* Heidegger distinguishes between obscurity and opacity. Darkness can fail to make things visible, he says, precisely because what it is *is* insufficient light. A brick wall, by contrast, blocks vision, but since it is not the sort of thing that can make visible, neither can it be said to fail to do so. As Heidegger says, “Only that which is capable of affording can deny” (WW 56). Just by being in the business of uncovering, then, perhaps even false beliefs do at least a little bit of what true beliefs do more of, namely uncover entities.

But there are two reasons this cannot be right: one textual, the other systematic. The textual reason is Heidegger’s fascinating—and, I think, compelling—suggestion that false belief uncovers not less but *differently* than true belief. Immediately following the remark I just quoted, he says, “The dark denies visibility because it can also afford vision: in the dark we see the stars” (WW 56). Indeed, it is precisely the darkness of the cave that allows the prisoners to see the shadows on the wall; too much light would wash them out, just as daylight washes out the stars. What exactly do darkness and light stand for in this metaphor, which Heidegger here extends well beyond Plato’s text? It is hard to say

exactly, but they cannot simply be synonymous with concealment and unconcealment, since the point is precisely that daylight conceals the stars while the dark of night uncovers them. False belief is like darkness, then, inasmuch as it obstructs and denies the clearest, most correct view of things. And yet, like the darkness of the cave, it also brings things into unconcealment—not just *less than* true belief, but in its own way.

Which brings me to the systematic reason it cannot be right to say simply that false beliefs or assertions uncover less than true ones do. Recall that Heidegger worries that to call the shadows in the cave “shadows” is to misdescribe the position of the prisoners, who do not, indeed *cannot*, see them *as* mere shadows. They *are* mere shadows, but they do not show themselves to the prisoners as such. Similarly, although it is obvious to us, and to the prisoner who escapes, that those in the cave can see less and less well than those in daylight, it is wrong to say that they *merely* see less and less well. Rather, they see something different, and they see differently. This is not to relativize the two points of view. Cave vision is inferior to vision in daylight, even if that fact only becomes obvious in daylight. The point is rather that cave vision as such, like false belief and assertion, in spite of its objective inferiority, affords those who have it genuine access to the world. Cave vision is a kind of vision, after all, and as such presents itself to its owners not as degraded or inferior, but as transparent and revealing. This is why in *Being and Time* Heidegger defines mere “seeming” (*Scheinen*) as “what is [*Seiendes*] showing itself as what it is not in itself” (SZ 28). Someone who *has* a false belief, or is committed to a false assertion, that is, understands and experiences the world *through* it, by means of it, in its light. This is consistent with those of us who know better recognizing how the attitude or utterance fails to uncover things as they really are—that is, as *we* know them to be, thanks to *our* beliefs, which we cannot regard as false, so long as they remain ours.

Simply put, mere degree or intensity of uncovering cannot serve as a criterion of correctness for the simple reason that uncovering is a phenomenological notion and correctness is not. Uncovering is something in principle manifest from the first-person point of view. The being-uncovering of my attitudes or utterances cannot be held hostage to a third-person standpoint unavailable to me, as the rightness of my actions and the correctness of my assertions can be. My actions can always turn out to have been wrong, and my assertions false, regardless of how they struck me when I performed them; rightness as such has no phenomenological criteria. As Wittgenstein says, “An inner experience cannot show me that I *know* something.”¹⁷ He could have dropped the word “inner” and said simply that no experience at all, no

phenomenon, can show me that I know something, for truth (correctness) is not a function of the way things show up for me, but whether the way they show up for me is the way they *are*. Attitudes and utterances, by contrast, cannot wholly fail to uncover entities while seeming to do so from the first-person perspective, for *having* beliefs and being *committed* to assertions are precisely ways of encountering entities. They are, as Heidegger says, modes of being-in-the-world.

Finally, consider Heidegger's reading of Descartes and Nietzsche, two other major figures in his account of the dawning and holding sway of the metaphysical conception of truth and its occlusion and concealment of truth as unconcealment. In his Nietzsche lectures of 1940 Heidegger advances a critique of Descartes that differs markedly from the anti-Cartesianism of *Being and Time*, though the two are not inconsistent. Both can be stated by saying that Descartes regarded us as "subjects," but this can mean several different things. According to *Being and Time*, Descartes' error lay in conceiving of human beings as occurrent (*vorhanden*) entities, that is, as *substances*, albeit thinking as opposed to extended substances. Call this the metaphysical critique, for what is wrong with Descartes' thought from the point of view of fundamental ontology is not that it is metaphysical, but that it is metaphysically *wrong*.

According to the Nietzsche lectures of 1940, by contrast, what is wrong with Descartes' conception of us as subjects has virtually nothing to do with his positive account of substance and accident, or mind and body. Indeed, what is wrong with Descartes' thinking for the later Heidegger is not that it is *incorrect*, but that it *covers up*. What does it cover up? In a word (or two), *being, unconcealment*—which is to say, *truth*. By focusing on the ways in which we can be subjects—that is, organizers, schematizers, in short *masters* of the objects we deal with—Descartes loses sight of the ways in which we are given over to the world disclosed to us unconsciously, involuntarily, and nonrationally. Put more simply, what is wrong with Descartes' thinking is not *what* he thinks, that is, what he thinks is true, but *how* he thinks; more specifically, the way in which his fundamental conception of truth as certainty (*Gewißheit*) systematically covers up the more primordial phenomenon of truth as unconcealment.¹⁸

Unlike the metaphysical critique of Cartesianism in *Being and Time*, then, the more radical critique in the Nietzsche lectures aims not at Descartes' substantialism or dualism or mentalism, but at his underlying conception of knowledge and thinking in terms of correct procedure or method. The smoking gun in the Cartesian arsenal is neither the substantiality of the ego nor the incorrigibility of first-person knowledge, but the aspiration to mastery of the world by correct procedural

means. Heidegger therefore zeroes in on the passage in *Discourse on Method* in which Descartes declares that with proper scientific knowledge we can “make ourselves, as it were, masters and keepers of nature [*maîtres et possesseurs de la nature*].”¹⁹ All this, it seems to me, has very little to do with truth as agreement or correspondence and very much to do with truth as rightness or correctness. As usual, Heidegger dutifully cites the Latin formula, *veritas est adaequatio intellectus et rei*, but then goes on to say,

this familiar “definition” of truth varies depending on how the entity with which knowledge is supposed to agree is understood, but also depending on how knowledge, which is supposed to stand in agreement with the entity, is conceived. . . . “Method” is now the name for the securing, conquering proceeding against entities, in order to capture them as objects for the subject.²⁰

What is crucial, then, is not the image of agreement or correspondence between subjects and objects as such, but the underlying conception of the subject directly, correctly, methodically setting its sights on entities, fixing them, marking them, and in the end—and precisely for the sake of—manipulating and exploiting them.

But if the traditional definition of truth as *adaequatio* “varies depending on how the entity with which knowledge is supposed to agree is understood,” as Heidegger says, can it vary so much that, as Wrathall suggests, it might actually be vindicated, given a proper understanding of entities and the world? I think not, in part because of the way Heidegger reads Nietzsche in the Nietzsche lectures. The shift from a metaphysical to a practical or procedural critique of metaphysics helps make sense of his otherwise bizarre-sounding claim that Nietzsche belongs to the same modern metaphysical tradition and framework as Descartes, in spite of Nietzsche’s near total rejection—indeed renunciation and denunciation—of the core doctrinal content of Cartesian thought.

What makes Nietzsche’s thinking metaphysical, and moreover of a piece with Descartes’, is likewise his conception of us as subjects. Nietzsche says everything he can, in part following Hume, against Descartes’ substantialist account of the self, yet his underlying interpretation of us as organizers, schematizers, and masters of the world lands him squarely in the tradition of modern subjectivism, along with Descartes, Kant, and Hegel. To make a very long story very short, according to Heidegger, Nietzsche pushes the logic of modern epistemology to an unstable skeptical extreme by denying the very possibility of truth, for truths (so called) fixate and permanentize, while the actual world forges on in constant chaos and flux. Beliefs are consequently

doomed to falsehood, which is to say they draw us away from the world itself, whose essence is will to power. And yet, by forging ahead—“living” and “bodying forth” (*leben und leiben*), as Heidegger says²¹—with an understanding of ourselves as will to power, we can avoid some of the more egregious delusions of morality, religion, science, and metaphysics, and attain a kind of “harmony” with the actual, that is, with chaos. Such noncognitive harmony with chaos is not what Nietzsche himself calls “truth,” except perhaps implicitly when he refers to received (so-called) truths as mere, though perhaps inescapable, “untruths.” Heidegger concedes that harmony with chaos is not a “copying-describing correspondence” (*abbildend-nachschreibende Übereinstimmung*) with things, nonetheless he insists it is Nietzsche’s version of the metaphysical conception of truth, namely truth as correspondence (ὁμοίωσις).²² It is, after all, a kind of *rightness* about entities as a whole. More precisely, it is what Nietzsche calls “justice” (*Gerechtigkeit*)—not the factual rightness of description or representation, but the practical or procedural rightness proper to legislating or commanding. It is, in short, the rightness of *willing*.

Even *this* notion of “correspondence” is metaphysical, according to Heidegger. Yet this “harmony with chaos”—the fundamental impulse of art as opposed to knowledge—has virtually nothing in common with the traditional conception of agreement or correspondence with stable objects, facts, or states of affairs. It is metaphysical, for Heidegger, because, like Descartes’ notion of *certainty*, procedurally secured by proper method, it rests on a conception of the subject as the underlying spontaneous organizing source of intelligibility. And again, as with Descartes, what *matters* about all this, indeed what makes it metaphysical in the pejorative sense, is its emphasis on aiming, fixing, rectitude, direction—*not* copying, resembling, reflecting, depicting, mirroring, or matching. Here as elsewhere, then, the metaphysical conception of truth, on Heidegger’s account, is *correctness*, not *correspondence*.

NOTES

1. Hubert Dreyfus, “How Heidegger Defends the Possibility of a Correspondence Theory of Truth with Respect to the Entities of Natural Science,” in *The Practice Turn in Contemporary Theory*, ed. Theodore R. Schatzki, Karin Knorr Cetina, and Eike von Savigny (New York: Routledge, 2001).
2. Mark Wrathall, “Unconcealment,” in *A Companion to Heidegger*, ed. Hubert Dreyfus and Mark Wrathall (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005).

3. See, e.g., Hilary Putnam, "Two Philosophical Perspectives," chap. 3 of *Reason, Truth and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).
4. See, e.g., Richard Rorty, "The World Well Lost," chap. 1 of *Consequences of Pragmatism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982).
5. Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 7th ed. (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1993), p. 215; henceforth SZ, followed by page number. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.
6. Martin Heidegger, *Vom Wesen der Wahrheit: Zu Platons Höhlengleichnis und Theätet*, vol. 34 of *Gesamtausgabe* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1988), pp. 3-4, 6; henceforth WW, followed by page number.
7. See, e.g., *Grundfragen der Philosophie: Ausgewählte "Probleme" der "Logik,"* vol. 45 of *Gesamtausgabe*, p. 16.
8. Martin Heidegger, "Platons Lehre von der Wahrheit," in *Wegmarken* (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1967), p. 140; "Plato's Doctrine of Truth," in *Pathmarks*, ed. William McNeill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 179.
9. Aristotle, *De Interpretatione*, trans. E.M. Edghill, in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon (New York: Random House, 1941), 16a6.
10. Paul Friedländer, *Plato: An Introduction*, trans. H. Meyerhoff (New York: Harper, Bollingen, 1958), p. 223. Friedländer willingly adds "or conceals" because his point is that ἀλήθεια was not semantically secondary to or parasitic on concealment. My point is just the evident archaic emphasis on truth as direction or rectitude. I am not suggesting that the image of straightness was primary or exclusive; in Greek, apparently, as in English, ethical and legal notions of honesty and reliability were at least as fundamental. Of course, such ethical concepts are themselves also deeply bound up with images of straightness and direction.
11. Plato, *Republic*, trans. G.M.A. Grube and C.D.C. Reeve (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1992), 515d.
12. Plato, *Theaetetus*, trans. John McDowell (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), 194a.
13. Plato, *Republic*, 515c; trans. mod.
14. These remarks approximate what Heidegger says elsewhere about the "world poverty" of animals; cf. *Die Grundbegriffe der Metaphysik: Welt-Endlichkeit-Einsamkeit*, vols. 29-30 of *Gesamtausgabe*; *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude*, trans. William McNeill and Nicholas Walker (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995).
15. In the 1964 essay "The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking," Heidegger writes, "In any case, one thing is clear: the question of ἀλήθεια, of unconcealment as such, is not the question of truth. For this reason, it was inadequate and hence misleading to call ἀλήθεια in the sense of lighting or clearing [*Lichtung*] 'truth'. . . . The natural concept of

truth does not mean unconcealment, not even in the philosophy of the Greeks" (*Zur Sache des Denkens* [Tübingen: Niemayer, 2000], p. 77; *On Time and Being*, trans. Joan Stambaugh [New York: Harper & Row, 1972], p. 70).

16. Wrathall, "Unconcealment," pp. 340-1. Wrathall (rightly) criticizes Tugendhat's approach in "Heidegger and Truth as Correspondence," *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 7:1 (1999), p. 69.
17. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, ed. G.E.M. Anscombe and G.H. von Wright (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), §569.
18. Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, vol. 2 (Stuttgart: Verlag Günther Neske, 1961), p. 131.
19. René Descartes, *Discours de la méthode*, vol. 6 of *Œuvres de Descartes*, ed. Charles Adam and Paul Tannery (Paris: J. Vrin, 1996), p. 62; quoted in Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, vol. 2, pp. 167-8.
20. *Ibid.*, pp. 150-1.
21. Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, vol. 1, pp. 506-13.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 559.