



The Essence of Truth: On Plato's Cave Allegory and Theaetetus (Athlone Contemporary European Thinkers)

By Martin Heidegger, Ted Sadler

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One of Heidegger's most important works, this text gives a thorough explanation of what is arguably the most fundamental and abiding theme of his philosophy, namely the difference between truth as the "unhiddenness of beings" and truth as the "correctness of propositions". For Heidegger, it was by neglecting the former primordial concept of truth in favour of the latter derivative concept that Western philosophy, beginning with Plato himself, took off on its "metaphysical" course towards the bankruptcy of the present day. This book consists of a lecture course delivered by Heidegger at the University of Freiburg in 1931-32. The first part is a detailed analysis of Plato's "Allegory of the Cave" in "The Republic", while the second part gives an exegesis and interpretation of a central section of Plato's "Theaetetus". As always with Heidegger's writings on the Greeks, the point of his interpretative method is to bring to light the original meaning of philosophical concepts, especially to free up these concepts to their intrinsic power.

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Editorial Review

From Library Journal

Over the past decade, an abundant number of Heidegger's writings have been translated into English. Key among them are the lectures he delivered both prior to and following the writing of his magnum opus, *Being and Time*, which allow us as never before to chart Heidegger's philosophical development. Here are two new additions to the series. *The Essence of Human Freedom*, which derives from a set of lectures Heidegger delivered in 1930 at Freiburg, focuses on human freedom as the leading question of philosophy. Heidegger contends that this emphasis on freedom enables us to understand philosophy as a "going-after-the-whole" that is at the same time a "going-to-our-roots." In other words, we must search for the essence of human freedom in the constant presence of being-in-the-world that precedes and grounds philosophical thinking. Heidegger plunders Kant's understandings of freedom and Aristotle's theories of metaphysics to establish his own theory that the understanding of human freedom provides the starting point for philosophy (metaphysics). One year later, Heidegger turned his gaze on the essence of truth. In a lecture course delivered at Freiburg in 1931-32, he engaged in a close philosophical reading of Plato's "Allegory of the Cave" and a section from Plato's *Theaetetus*. In Plato's allegory, men are shackled and can only see the shadows cast on the cave's wall by a fire. These shadows are their reality. But when one of them escapes into the sunlight, he sees that the shadows are not reality but illusion. For Heidegger, this man-who in Plato's story becomes the model for a philosopher-has had the truth revealed to him. Truth cannot be possessed merely as correct propositions, as Heidegger argues that the history of philosophy has taught. Rather, he contends, "the question of the essence of truth as unhiddenness is the question of the history of human essence." A shorter essay that derives from this lecture can be found in both *Basic Writings* and in *Existence and Being*. These new volumes reveal Heidegger's consummate exegetical and hermeneutical skills, but given their technical philosophical jargon, they are recommended only for academic or large public libraries.

Henry L. Carrigan Jr., Lancaster, PA
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Review

"It would be difficult to overestimate the importance of these lecture courses for an understanding of the development of Heidegger's thinking; yet in the very act of illuminating this development, they also throw new light on many of the most fundamental ideas figuring in 'Being and Time' itself. This book will be essential reading for anyone looking for the argumentation behind Heidegger's unique conception of human existence."--Ian Lyne, University of Durham

Language Notes

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