INTRODUCTION

In the *Theaetetus*, Socrates recounts the following anecdote about Thales, the first of the Greek philosophers:

> . . . a witty and attractive servant-girl is said to have mocked Thales for falling into a well while he was observing the stars and gazing upwards; declaring that he was eager to know the things in the sky, but that what was behind him and just by his feet escaped his notice (174a).[1]

Socrates goes on to say that a philosopher should always expect such mockery because philosophy pursues essential and universal knowledge at the expense of immediate things and will always seem foolish to people pursuing the ways of the world. That anecdote may be the first example of the "absent-minded intellectual" theme which has become quite familiar. Philosophy has traditionally defended that kind of absent-mindedness as a necessary by-product of its own mindfulness of abstract knowledge. One should not expect a philosopher to be completely immersed in everyday activities; the very nature of intellectual reflection requires a kind of detachment from, or suspension of, immediate engagement.

But there may be a degree of wisdom hidden in the servant-girl's mockery—not simply with respect to *how* a philosopher engages the world but more importantly with respect to *what* philosophy has produced, or how philosophy has *understood* the world. Since the practice of philosophy involves a detached analysis of fundamental issues behind the everyday commerce of life, questions can arise regarding problems of "distance," not simply the distance between intellectuals and people absorbed in everyday passions and practices, but also a problematic distance from lived experience reflected in philosophical systems themselves. In other words, one might ask whether the first type of distance can create an absent-mindedness not simply in philosophers as human beings but in the results of philosophy too, to the point where it falls into error about the world.

These questions have been the mark of what can loosely be called existential philosophy, which has walked a tightrope of ambiguity by pursuing philosophical inquiry while at the same time engaging in a critique of traditional philosophy, by calling abstract reason back to the

"lived world" and away from certain tendencies that have held philosophy at a distorting distance. Metaphysical and theological systems, and rationalist, empiricist, and positivist philosophies, all exhibit a kind of remoteness from everyday life because of certain traditional standards of truth. Those standards indicate that truth requires some kind of "correction" or resolution of immediate lived experience, affective concerns, passionate engagement, and emotional responses to the world. Such areas are judged to be a kind of chaos, confusion, or contingency, an obstacle to be overcome in the path toward truth, or at most they are deemed "subjective" occasions outside the realm of "objective" truth.

Existential philosophy has attempted to liberate thought from a kind of abstract, objective imperialism and from far too exclusive interpretations of truth. It aims to give thought to the concrete situations and challenges that claim human existence and that are not susceptible to rational or abstract formulas—matters of life and death, success and failure, limits and uncertainties, and the struggle to find meaning in a world that can block human aspirations.[2] Traditional philosophy has exhibited various strains of rational, empirical, and scientific assumptions and methods ever since its inception in ancient Greece. Abstract reason and scientific thinking are certainly important, but they tend to pass over other important forms of experience and understanding.

Friedrich Nietzsche and Martin Heidegger stand as the most profound and penetrating figures in existential thought, for at least two reasons. First, rather than simply rebeling against traditional philosophy or indulging in some kind of reactionary romanticism, they pursued an *internal* critique of philosophy to show how and why it developed an alienated stance and consequently ran astray in seeking answers to fundamental questions. Secondly, both Nietzsche and Heidegger recognized that such a critique demanded a *historical* analysis. If philosophy itself is problematic, then a return to its historical emergence in Greek culture would offer the most telling clues about its nature and its relation to other forms of culture *external* to philosophy. Both thinkers saw in Greek culture a rich atmosphere in which philosophy could be properly analyzed in terms of its own character and whatever important elements it may have laid aside.

In effect this amounts to saying that there were (and are) certain important elements of culture which traditional philosophy had overlooked, rejected, or pushed aside, and which should not have been so dismissed. In ancient Greece this distinction and conflict is clearly

seen in the contest between philosophy and myth, beginning around the sixth century B.C. when philosophers began to challenge traditional religious forms of understanding. Both Nietzsche and Heidegger recognized in Greek poetry and myth many important features which could be *defended* against philosophical criticism and which consequently would prepare a countercriticism of philosophy.

Therefore, comprehending the relation between myth and philosophy would be essential for a proper understanding of intellectual history and the nature of philosophy. In exploring this historical relationship my analysis assumes that myth in a general sense can be understood in the light of an existential critique of traditional philosophy. If existential thought has called philosophy to task for abandoning or misinterpreting certain important elements of culture, then perhaps prephilosophical culture (myth) can be understood as having presented those elements in an authentic manner. If something like rationalism or positivism can be called into question, then perhaps the cultural forms which Greek reason and science tried to displace can be defended in view of the questionable character of traditional philosophy. In other words, what is said to have been missing in philosophy may have been present in a certain way and to some degree in mythical culture.

One question in this study involves the extent to which Greek myth can be understood as a prephilosophical "mirror" of existential thought, and thus the extent to which the history of thought displays a certain symmetry, in that a modern critique of traditional philosophy may stem from preconceptual, mythical soil and thereby may involve an echo of something ancient. Accordingly, I am undertaking an analysis of myth which is animated by many of the assumptions of existential thought. Since I believe that the existential critique of traditional philosophy has merit and tells us something true, I aim to analyze myth in terms of its *truth* and its legitimate role in culture.

Of course we thus abandon a common meaning of the term "myth," namely, something false or fictional. That meaning is in fact a historical consequence of *philosophy*'s response to myth and is not indicative of its original meaning. We need to understand the ways in which myth is a form of truth. Therefore the reader must ignore the conventional meaning of the term and hear the word in a new way. We will also engage the term "primitive," which likewise should not connote a derogatory meaning or a sense of backwardness. Rather, the term should be taken to mean "primal," that is to say, something original and essential. Both the

mythical and the primitive will have to be understood in a positive light. Indeed, I have not said anything new here. Much work has been done in analyzing primitive experience and mythical culture in a serious and positive way, but I hope that my overview of Greek culture can add to this work by extending its scope, clarifying the important issues, and drawing out certain implications that may have been missed or underdeveloped.

In order to set the stage for an analysis of myth, I want to identify four themes from Heidegger's thought, each of which represents a radical challenge to traditional philosophical assumptions and which will be mirrored in certain ways in Greek mythical imagery. The first is the notion of being-in-the-world.

Being-in-the-world. In *Being and Time*,[3] Heidegger prepares his reflections on Being with an existential analysis of "world." The starting point of this analysis is the rejection of traditional ontologies which ground the being of the world in objective characteristics independent of human involvement. For Heidegger, Being is first given as meaning, disclosed in existential situations and moods. World is characterized as being-in-the-world, a unified configuration meant to express the correlation of human existence and its environment. The world is not first disclosed as objects merely present before us, but in the light of our existential involvement, our concern for the world and our place in it. The unified term for this involvement is "care," which itself emerges out of the primal mood of angst, or the concrete awareness of the possibility of death and nonbeing. The existential tension of life and death, being and nonbeing, and the subsequent concerns and projects into which we are thrust to withstand this tension of finitude constitute what is meant by "world."

The world therefore cannot be grounded in objective explanations because it is first disclosed in a nonobjective, existential context of relations stemming from primal care as a consequence of finitude. But this does not mean that the world is then grounded in "subjective" states. The notion of an isolated or interiorized subject would preclude real involvement, and subjectivistic accounts would not suit the ways in which the world *claims* us. For Heidegger our sense of self is disclosed only in and out of a world-situation. And when we care for and about the world, this is not an "internal" state separate from the world. We *dwell* in care and *are* in-the-world. One way of putting this is that the movement from angst to world-involvement is not a subjective "decision."

The finitude of Being. Care for the world is rooted in angst, which Heidegger explicates in terms of being-toward-death. Human awareness of death in the midst of life, of nonexistence in the midst of existence, is that which allows the meaning of the world and of Being to show itself. Angst reveals the Nothing, which, however, is not the same as sheer nothingness or the opposite of Being. Being and Nothing belong together. As the visibility of the moon is inseparable from the dark sky, the Being of beings is inseparable from the Nothing. Only out of the Nothing can it be shown that beings *are* (i.e., are *not* nothing). What follows from the Being–Nothing correlation is that human existence and Being itself are essentially finite in nature, because at a fundamental level beings are understood *as* beings only in relation to a negative limit. So the Being of beings is not itself a positive condition, but rather a process of emergence from nonbeing to being. For Heidegger it is this inseparable correlation of negative and positive, absence and presence, that so strains our object-oriented language and makes the issue of Being so elusive.

Unconcealment and truth. In connection with Being as the process of emergence, Heidegger distinguishes between ordinary truth and primordial truth, or representational and presentational truth.[4] In representational truth, a statement must correspond to a state of affairs. The statement "A tree stands in the field" is true if in fact the tree is in the field. All well and good. But Heidegger argues that before this correspondence takes effect, "something" must first be presented, come to be, or show itself as a phenomenon.[5] Indeed, a good deal must first show itself—the meaning of tree and field; their relation; the context of relations and meanings into which tree and field fit; statements; the relatedness of statements and states of affairs; a criterion of empirical verification; and primarily the meaning of Being itself. So before representational correspondence, before the operation of empirical verification, a primal presentation shows itself. Presentational truth refers to this primal showing or emergence, which Heidegger calls unconcealment, based on an etymological interpretation of the Greek word for truth, *alētheia* (literally, unhiddenness).[6] Such primordial truth is prior to *what* is disclosed by naming the *process* of disclosure itself, emergence out of concealment. That process as such cannot be disclosed, since any disclosure presupposes the process. The only thing prior to unconcealment is not some other condition or state of affairs, but, as the word suggests, concealment. Here something "negative"

shows a priority, which more than anything else is emblematic of Heidegger's challenge to traditional philosophy. When pursuing an "origin" at a fundamental level, thinking must acknowledge a mystery.

Granting. Although human existence is the entry point for the inquiry into Being, for Heidegger nothing in human nature can serve as a foundation for Being, any more than any other designation can. Even human self-discovery implies the prior process of unconcealment. In his later thought, Heidegger gives maximum focus to the extra-human features of Being. The process of disclosure is not something that comes "from" human thinking but rather "to" human thinking, as an arrival which Heidegger often expresses as a granting or a giving. Being itself is the process of arrival which simply "gives." Heidegger eventually subordinated even the term Being to the "it gives" which grants Being (playing on the German *es gibt Sein*).

> In the beginning of Western thinking, Being is thought, but not the "It gives" as such. The latter withdraws in favor of the gift which It gives. That gift is thought and conceptualized from then on exclusively as Being with regard to beings.[7]

Now the early correlation of Being and Nothing is described as a process of emergence involving a simultaneous arrival and withdrawal. But in addition, the language of giving or granting adds to the image of arrival all the attendant existential meanings that gather around a gift—significance, appropriateness, receptiveness, wonderment, gratitude, care.

There are some significant implications of Heidegger's thinking for our analysis. By refusing to trace Being to some fixed or describable "ground," Heidegger renounces the "foundational" character of western philosophy. Any proposed foundation of beings will have already been given in a prior process of unconcealment, which itself cannot be "founded." So no "explanation" of the world can claim to be fundamental, if explanation means a representational reduction to some state of affairs. What *is* fundamental is the *process* of unconcealment as such. Since the process of unconcealment itself has priority, however, then no one state of affairs or *product* of unconcealment can stand as a "measure" for something which shows itself in a different way. What is shown in the world are phenomena such as numbers, emotions, empirical facts, ideas, material states, moral values, art forms, religious beliefs, myths, and scientific explanations. An attempt to "explain" certain

basic phenomena in terms of others (i.e., reduce one to some other) would violate the priority of unconcealment. In other words, Heidegger's analysis permits the coexistence of different forms of unconcealment, different forms of truth—a kind of pluralism. Since primordial truth does not involve a standing ground or standard by which various forms of understanding can be "measured," then those forms are permitted a kind of internal autonomy and protection from external judgment.

In our age, science is said to present the facts The term "fact" has a meaningful use except when tending toward a metaphysical reduction, when "fact" tends to connote a fixed truth by which other forms of disclosure can be measured rather than that which is shown in accordance with the criteria and methodological assumptions of science. Within contemporary philosophy of science, many writers have argued that facts are theory-laden, that the way the world is shown is not independent of the method of approach. If there is no free-standing or purely objective reference point for scientific facts, then it is nothing wild to argue for the "incommensurability" of scientific and nonscientific forms of disclosure. Assumptions of uniformity, predictability, and objective verification cannot themselves be justified scientifically since they are the conditions for such justification. And if there is another form of disclosure for which these assumptions are inappropriate (e.g., myth), then as long as it is not pretending to be a scientific explanation, it cannot be judged "untrue" by science without begging the question of scientific requirements.

From a Heideggerian standpoint, how the objects of science come to *be* (i.e., become unconcealed) as scientific objects is a metascientific question If scientific reason cannot be its own object, then the positivistic tendency to view "science" as the proper account of "the world" is an argument with a smuggled premise. The full meaning of the world cannot and should not be an object for science, since science itself cannot be objectified as an ultimate reference point. According to Heidegger there always remains a preobjective meaning of the world which precedes, and makes possible, objectivity.

That which precedes objectivity at the most fundamental level is the primal process of unconcealment The priority of unconcealment limits the authority of any particular product of unconcealment. And, in general, the world as such cannot be explained, since it runs up against an ultimate limit of concealment For Heidegger, it is something like being-toward-death that permits the unconcealment of the world to

take place, since human awareness of the Nothing shows the Being of the world against the background of that negative limit. Consequently, human existence exhibits an essential "transcendence" of the world (of entities, facts) which allows by contrast the disclosure of the world.

In the light of this analysis, we can begin to approach the significance of myth as distinguished from objective explanations. Myths are meant to express, among other things, the limit of the world, the world as such. Creation stories speak to the element of "transcendence" limiting the world, unconcealment itself (i.e., how the world first comes to be). The nonobjective character of mythical imagery is no threat to its truth, since the issue at hand is essentially nonobjective. No objective reference *within* the world (e.g., matter, causal relations) can ever account for the world as such, since any such reference already presupposes the unconcealment of the world. A central point which will require elucidation in the ensuing chapters is as follows. A myth is not *meant* to be an explanation but rather a presentation of something which can *not* be explained (in the sense of an objective account). Certain irreducible *limits* to objective explanation will constitute the *truth* of mythical disclosure. Of course, myths are often taken by some to be a kind of explanation or establishment of facts, as in the case of religious fundamentalism; but such a viewpoint not only runs up against scientific criticism, it also undermines the very meaning of myth as a cultural phenomenon.

Science, too, is susceptible to its own brand of fundamentalism, but we must question the positivistic overpromotion of science and demotion of nonscientific, nonobjective thinking. Even scientists should wince when a "high priest" like Carl Sagan declares on television: "Science is applicable to everything; with it we vanquish the impossible." Although science is in principle incompatible with dogmatism, there is a tendency toward a methodological dogmatism. Science is not a reportorial account of "the facts." Facts are defined by scientific *methods*. But there are elements of the world that are unavailable to or resist scientific methods or rational explanations. In addition to the issue of primal unconcealment, I would include the phenomenon of culture.

A certain limit to explanation becomes evident when we consider the cultural aspects of human existence. By culture I mean those features which seem to distinguish us from other animals and express our *human* nature: art, religion, morality, technology, abstract thinking, language. I would suggest that the meaning of culture is incommensurable with something like empirical facts. In making this point, I am

sustaining a Heideggerian outlook. I am not referring to cultural institutions, specific beliefs, or products of culture, but rather to the background meaning of cultural phenomena. Religion and philosophy stem from a sense of a limit to the world, hence the wonder and questions about its origin or nature. Art goes beyond a brute encounter with things to create new images of things. Morality proposes a reformation or modification of unattended human behavior. Technology transforms physical nature. And abstract thinking, one consequence of which is science, involves looking beyond immediate experience.

The point to be made here aims behind the products of such phenomena to the *way* in which the world is engaged therein. It is evident that such cultural activities all presuppose a *transcendence* of the brute given, the simply "there," a transcendence of "empirical data." Accordingly, if questioning, creating, evaluating, and other such cultural phenomena involve a transcendence of empirical objective data, then accounting for the presence of culture by means of such data (e.g., as a special organization of material, environmental, or biological states) makes no sense. More generally speaking, culture cannot be accounted for since "giving an account" is a cultural phenomenon. The *way* culture discloses the world (and not just the products of culture) cannot be meaningfully expressed by or translated from empirical facts or objective explanations. The phenomenon of questioning, for example, which animates much cultural activity, is essentially inexplicable. There is something peculiar about the question "Why do we ask questions?" The query presupposes and cannot ever capture the phenomenon in question. Science runs up against similar circularities. Science as such is a cultural phenomenon which transcends the brute given. *Seeing the world as* an empirical set requiring experimental verification cannot itself be derived from empirical facts or experiments.

So, with respect to "entities," "facts," and "explanations," the phenomenon of culture displays a qualitative and inexplicable "leap." That leap is the clue to the phenomenological meaning (and truth) of *mythical* language. Just as there is a qualitative and incommensurable difference between the physics of sound and music, with respect to culture there is a differential leap shown in the world; and mythical words such as "soul," "spirit," and "god" are meant to *express* that difference. Mythical images which tell of mysterious origins should be seen to express something true about the world; the same holds for stories telling of the special character of human beings compared to other entities. (Religious objections to evolution should not be taken as an alternative

explanation or as a refutation of biological links with other animals but rather as an expression of the extrabiological aspects of a *cultural animal*.)

Myth can be seen as presenting a form of truth. So, just as much as we should resist the *rejection* of mythical and other nonobjective forms of disclosure, we should also resist the imperial "toleration" of these forms (as mere "edification," for example). We will see that rationality and science are not purely "objective," and that myth is not merely "subjective." Although neither side can claim exclusive possession of truth, both disclose important elements of the world. Truth is not always an explanation. Explanation is one way of comprehending things (tracing one thing to another thing, from a lesser known to a greater known). Truth as unconcealment allows a pluralistic embrace of various aspects of the world which are *shown* but which resist reduction to other things. Even prior to an explanatory reduction, the elements to be explained have to be unconcealed, and the notion of the reduction itself has to be unconcealed.

The transcendence shown in culture and certain inexplicable elements of thought usher in the phenomenon of myth Mythical notions such as "divine origin" present this inexplicable transcendence and express its phenomenological *meaning*. At such a point, neither science nor any other form of disclosure can do any better than myth, except perhaps by renouncing mythical imagery and simply acknowledging a limit to explanation. But that is not inconsistent with the phenomenological meaning of myth, and mythical or poetical formulations might still be possible, even desirable, since they can express something that the mere renunciation of explanation would miss, namely the existential meaning of certain inexplicable matters (i e., the claim they make on our lives). Moreover, the atmosphere of extrahuman (e.g., divine) imagery in myths can express the sense that such matters and meanings are not just *our* constructions.

In the end I want to say that certain fundamental aspects of culture and forms of understanding, *science included*, exhibit irreducible, unjustifiable, and yet indispensable notions, which, though perhaps different from traditional mythical presentations. nevertheless share the underlying existential meaning and unverifiability of myths. At this point I anticipate certain later conclusions First we must examine mythical disclosure and elucidate its complex meaning and structure.

Our historical study cannot go back in time to engage the actual experiences that generated the cultural forms we will be analyzing. For

the most part we can only engage the linguistic documents that have survived, but that is not a limitation so long as we attend to the importance of language as a cultural phenomenon. At this point I am borrowing one final Heideggerian assumption, namely the phenomenological priority of language.[8] For Heidegger, the disclosure of the world is accomplished essentially through language. Disclosure cannot be reduced to the human mind or to things in the world, since "mind" and "thing" are linguistic events. Consequently, when seeking the "essence" of something, we should attend to linguistic meaning and use rather than some ultimate reduction to "cause," "explanation," "entity," or "faculty," all of which beg the question of language. Language is an essential cultural phenomenon which, in fact, gathers the inexplicability of unconcealment. Any attempt to explain language must employ language (e.g., language as a label for "things" or as an expression of "ideas"). In effect, outside of language there is "nothing," or concealment. What could one *say* about a nonlinguistic foundation of language, or something "outside" of language? The world, therefore, is disclosed or unconcealed through language, a phenomenological point against which it would seem odd to *speak*.

The phenomenological priority of language has significant consequences, both for the specific questions of this study and for philosophy in general. If language establishes its own irreducible "authority," then a sense for linguistic pluralism will follow, since language mirrors and in fact executes the process of unconcealment (by not being traceable to "entities"). The coexistence of different linguistic presentations is in principle protected, so that mythical and scientific language, for example, need not be in competition. For instance, the notion of "soul" can be seen as a form of *language*, disclosing elements of human experience that physical language cannot. This need *not* mean that a soul is an "entity" separate from the "body." *Reification* on both ends, as opposed to phenomenological unconcealment, accounts for philosophical dilemmas like the mind-body problem (How are they joined? "Where" is the mind?). Reification, or the insistence that reality be grounded in "entities" or "objects," rather than the disclosure of different meanings through language, causes such problems.

Moreover, language differences are not simply "different ways of talking" but different ways in which the *world* is disclosed. If a materialist says that an idea is "really" a brain state or that mental language is simply another way of talking about neurological events, he is implying a phenomenologically impossible world. Even if one could translate

the "ideas" in this book into brain-state language (e.g., a description of my neural firings), such a translation would render the book meaningless. Brain surgery and intellectual discussions demand different linguistic contexts suitable for each, which are mutually untranslatable. In the same way I am suggesting a coexistence of mythical and rational language. There is a deep meaning in mythical language which expresses what cannot be expressed in rational or scientific language. If a myth presents the world through a story and not "the facts," and if, as I have argued, facts are not the end of the matter, then mythical language fits certain matters well. Such matters include, among other things, existential meaning, the lived world, and primal origins.

We aim to engage the often contentious relationship between myth and philosophy by returning to the Greek periods in which that relationship took shape. Our first step is to apprehend the mythical period which preceded the advent of philosophy. Only then can we properly understand the differences between myth and philosophy, the nature of their contest, and the relative status of each. Moreover, if language is the key to meaning, we must listen to the language of a mythical age to gather its meaning as opposed to interpretations through postmythical terminology. We will try to let myth show itself through its language. Obviously we have to *interpret* (we cannot simply recount the myths as such), but we must attempt to be faithful by at least screening out extramythical assumptions. Accordingly, we aim to show the autonomy and meaningfulness of a mythical age on its own terms, thereby undermining the prevalence of certain "progressive" interpretations of ancient history (i.e., the view that mythical culture was backward or even prerational).

> The historian of an epoch must therefore not regard it as a preparation for what is to come. How an epoch influenced the future, and how it was constituted and understood itself, are very different things [9]

Such an outlook will help us understand the movement from myth to philosophy *not* as a progression from ignorance to truth but as a series of *revolutions*, a cultural contest which was and still is an exchange between equally meaningful elements. Although we will work through the historical development from myth to philosophy, which demands our drawing *distinctions* between them, nevertheless we must guard against a strict *separation* of myth and philosophy. In other words, we will discover why it is wrong to say that myth has nothing in common with philosophy or that philosophy has nothing in common with myth

In order to give the reader adequate preparation for discerning the points I have mentioned, I will offer a two-part overview of the basic themes of this investigation, themes relating to the historical treatment and to the issue of pluralism. After a general discussion of mythical disclosure in the first chapter, the chapters on Greek myth and philosophy will develop in detail a number of key themes that will serve to shape the historical analysis.

1. Greek myth presents the world in terms of existential meaning. It presents the lived world, which is shown to be finite, temporal, variable, value-laden, affective, and uncertain. The sacred imagery in myth expresses these aspects of existence, and the form of disclosure will be seen as a process of unconcealment.

2. The path of philosophy turns away from the sacred imagery of myth toward empirical and conceptual models of thought. This entails a turn from the existential lived world toward abstract representations of the world. Now the world is measured according to principles of unity, universality, and constancy, and the mind aims for empirical and conceptual foundations which permit a kind of certainty. Thus disclosure of the world moves from a process of unconcealment toward a kind of foundationalism, where thought is reduced to a knowable, fixed form and structure.

3. In all the different periods of Greek thought, the way in which the world is understood is inseparable from the way in which the human self is understood. The world and human self each influence the shape and nature of the other.

4. In early Greek myth and poetry, the human self is shown to be noncentralized (not autonomous but subject to divine control), contextual (not internalized but imbedded in world situations and relations to other selves), receptive (not self-contained or self-knowing but passive in a process of disclosure from extraconscious origins), and pluralized (not a unity but a complex of distinct functions). Such a form of selfhood will be seen to mirror the form of the world in mythical disclosure.

5. The development from a mythical to a philosophical understanding of the world is matched and made possible by changing contours of selfhood, that is, in the direction of a unified, individuated, interiorized, active, self-conscious, reflective self. The key feature here is the detachment of the self from immediate immersion in the lived world.

These historical themes will help reveal another set of themes related to the notion of pluralism, such as the defense of myth against rational criticism and the subsequent call for a coexistence of different forms of understanding (e.g., myth, art, philosophy, and science). The historical emergence of philosophy in the context sketched above might be seen by some as a progressive development from ignorance to knowledge, from an inadequate to a more adequate picture of the world. Although the emergence of philosophy and science is important, assumptions about strict progress and the restriction of truth to rationality are problematic. The themes that will speak to this question and shape an argument for pluralism are as follows:

1. The critique of myth on the part of Greek philosophers is rigged, because it assumes that myth can be corrected by rational methods when, in fact, the essence of myth is something *different* from the aims of rationality and science. Mythical disclosure presents an intelligible picture of the lived world and the form of human involvement with the lived world, whereas rational models depart, in some sense, from that context. The key distinction here is that between existential form and abstract form, with a certain degree of incommensurability between the two.

2. The analysis of different forms of selfhood in the periods of Greek thought is important for a defense of pluralism, because one of the preconditions for a rational critique of myth has been, I think, the assumption of a "timeless" model for human selfhood (reflective self-consciousness) against which a mythical world does not make sense. But rational models of understanding depend upon a particular conception of selfhood which is not timeless but historical and situational. The detailed treatment of "world" and "self" in the different periods of Greek poetry and philosophy is a survey of evidence for the thesis that self-understanding and world-understanding are two sides of the same coin. If this thesis is correct, then a sensitivity to the historical and "relative" nature of this matter and an appreciation of the "sense" of a mythical self and world will undermine the dogmatic *reduction* of thought to rational models of understanding.

3. Attention to the human self as a factor in the form of the world will reveal many nonobjective features in the turn to philosophy. There are certain psychological aspects within the critique of myth. When Greek philosophers (especially Plato and Aristotle) criticized traditional myths in the light of rationality, at a certain level this was not so

much a refutation as it was an *evaluation*, an objection to the lived world exhibited in myth (its negativity and uncertainty) and a preference for order, constancy, and self-control. The connection between the advent of philosophy and certain moral and evaluative concerns will undermine the idea that the turn from myth to rationality was a purely "objective" matter.

4. Philosophical discoveries and the related contours of human selfhood will be seen growing *out of* mythical disclosure (especially the changing shape of the self in the periods of epic, lyric, and tragic poetry). Moreover, we will see that a mythical sense of self and world does not entirely disappear with the coming of philosophy. Mythical meanings remain a part of philosophy (more strongly in the pre-Socratics but to a significant degree later as well). The historical relationship between myth and rationality and the overlap factor will undermine a complete rejection of myth.

5. The foundationalist tendencies in philosophy will show shortcomings and an inability to escape the sense of uncertainty and existential meaning expressed in mythical disclosure. Rationality, at a certain level, will be shown to need the kinds of meanings (especially the idea of unconcealment and its implicit sense of mystery) for which myth is an appropriate (perhaps *the* appropriate) form of expression.

The importance of this historical study should not be underestimated. Seeing philosophy *itself* as a historical phenomenon (which is something different from the history of philosophy), realizing that philosophical assumptions had to come forth in the midst of nonphilosophical thinking, will serve two purposes. First, the notion that philosophy corrected the mistakes of myth is an assumption that depends on the near-mythical idea of an ahistorical truth. A historical perspective, on the other hand, would reveal the relationships between philosophy and its nonphilosophical antecedents. That might help bridge the gap between so-called rational inquiry and so-called nonrational or prerational disclosure. Secondly, with respect to perennial problems in philosophy (e.g., mind and body, freedom, goodness, and truth), a prerequisite for engaging such matters should be attention to the historical emergence of philosophy, to how and why these matters *became* problems. We may realize that one reason why such problems *remain* problems is the failure to include prephilosophical meanings against which Greek philosophy *rebelled*. That rebellion may

not always have been justified, and accordingly, certain clues to the so-
lution of philosophical problems might be at hand.[10]

   A historical/phenomenological/linguistic approach to myth and
philosophy, which avoids interpreting myth through postmythical de-
velopments, will show the continuing significance of this matter. That
is to say, it speaks to ever-present cultural issues. The notion that myth is
only a historical matter, that its day has passed, is, on the one hand, a
consequence of a philosophical bias concerning the "correction" of
myth, and, on the other hand, a distortion of cultural history since the
Greek period, wherein myth and rationality have continued their rela-
tionship. Historical periods are never really "exchanges" or movements
entirely "from" one set of ideas "to" another. At most, historical periods
reflect different *emphases* of ever-present elements of disclosure
which continue to show themselves in the different periods. The disci-
pline of history tends to veil this fact by creating "ages" with different
attributes (e.g., the age of religion, the age of reason, the age of science,
and the age of anxiety). I hope I can convince the reader in the pages to
come that the "history" of myth and philosophy in the Greek period has
always been, and always will be, reenacted in certain ways.