

An Annotated Greek Lexicon to Heidegger’s “The Anaximander Fragment”

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This lexicon lists the Greek words used by Heidegger, in their order of appearance, in “The Anaximander Fragment.” Words that Heidegger himself translates immediately are not given, unless he gives them idiosyncratic translations. The goal of this lexicon is twofold: (1) to provide the standard English translations of these Greek words (taken largely from the standard Greek-English Lexicon, Liddell-Scott); and (2) to supply a few comments, where appropriate, about the word—either about Heidegger’s use of it, or about its appearances in early Greek and then subsequent ancient philosophy.

Φυσικῶν δόξαι	“The beliefs of the Physicists.” (<i>φυσικοί</i> is one name given by Aristotle to the early Greek philosophers; <i>δόξα</i> means belief or opinion.) This is the reputed title of a work by Theophrastus that collected Presocratic doctrines. We discussed this during our first meeting: Mansfeld claims that the book was instead called <i>Φυσικαὶ δόξαι</i> , meaning “Physical beliefs.” Heidegger translates this as “the opinions of those who speak of φύσει ὄντα,” where φύσει ὄντα means “beings in nature,” or “beings in growth.”
φύσει	“in nature,” “in that which grows,” the dative of φύσις. This term will later, by the Sophists, be contrasted with νόμος, meaning “custom,” “law,” or “convention.”
ὄντα	“beings,” the plural of ὄν, a participle of the Greek verb for “to be.”
ἥθος	“custom,” “character.” From this word we derive the English “ethics.”
λόγος	“word,” “saying,” “statement”; “speech,” “discourse,” “conversation,” “language”; “story,” “account”; “thought,” “reason”; “measure,” “proportion.” Heraclitus will bring this word to the forefront of Greek philosophy.
τέχνη	“by art,” “by craft,” “by skill,” “by science,” the dative of τέχνη. This term is later, by Aristotle especially, contrasted with φύσις.
ἔσχατον	“the last.” From this word we derive the English “eschatology,” where it is combined with λόγος, in the sense of “account” or “study.”
λέγεσθαι	“to speak”: the verb from which λόγος is derived.
ποιητικωτέροις ...ὀνόμασιν	“by poetic words.” The Greek word for “to make poetry” also means “to make,” more generally. Like Plato, Heidegger will exploit this etymological fact for philosophical purposes. ὄνομα is another Greek word for “word” or “name.” From it we get “onomato-poeia” (making names).
δίκη	“Justice,” “right.” By combining this word with θεός we get “theodicy,” the justice of god.
τίσις	“recompense,” “retribution,” “vengeance”
ἀδικία	“wrong-doing,” “injustice.” The <i>a</i> -prefix is privative, like ‘un-’ or ‘in-’ in English.
διδόναι δίκην	“to give recompense,” “to pay the penalty.” δίδοναι means “to give,” and is cognate with the Latin derivatives “donation,” and “dedicate.”

τὰ πολλά	“the many (things);” <i>οἱ πολλοί</i> , a favorite of aristocrats like Plato, means “the many (people).” Associations between political democracy and metaphysical plurality or between aristocracy and metaphysical unity are thus natural in Greek.
θεός	“god.” “Theo-logy” is thus an account of god.
ψυχή	“breath,” “life-breath,” “soul.” “Psycho-logy” is an account of the soul.
ζωή	“a living,” “one’s means of life,” “substance,” “life.” The Greek association between a living (economics), substance (metaphysics), and life (biology) makes more sense than it would in English.
τύχη	“good fortune,” “luck”; “fortune,” “chance”; “accident,” “misfortune.” This concept was deified in the Hellenistic period, which was beset with anxiety about arbitrary changes.
χάρις	“loveliness,” “outward grace”; “inward grace,” “kindness,” “goodwill,” “favor,” “thankfulness,” “thanks”; “a favor done”; “gratification,” “delight.” This later becomes a central Christian concept.
ἰδέα	“the look of a thing,” “form”; “kind,” “sort,” “nature.” Plato later exploits this visual derivative in his images of the Sun & Cave. It becomes one of his three main terms now translated as “Form.”
ἐνέργεια	“activity,” “energy.” This is an Aristotelian concept, crucial in his psychology and theology.
εἶναι	“To be.” The infinitive of the verb for which ὄν and ὄντα are participles. Alas, there is a whole book on this verb, by the Penn scholar, Charles H. Kahn.
ἔστιν	“[It] is.” The third-person, singular, present, indicative of εἶναι. Parmenides’ monism profits from the fact that in Greek there is no need to state the subject.
ἐποχή	“A withholding,” “suspension.” This was the intermediate goal of the Pyrrhonian Sceptics: a suspension of judgment. Husserl appropriates the term, and his use of it is often translated as “bracketing.” Heidegger mistakenly attributes the Greek term to the Stoics.
Λήθη	“forgetting,” “oblivion.” Heidegger has capitalized the concept because this was a divinity, Lethe, who appears in Plato’s Myth of Er (<i>Republic</i> 10) and elsewhere as the river of forgetfulness.
Ἀλήθεια	“truth,” “reality.” Heidegger emphasizes the role of the <i>a</i> -private, understanding truth as the absence of oblivion (or the absence of concealment, therefore unconcealment). Nowhere, to my knowledge, is truth deified as this capitalization suggests.
γένεσις	“origin,” “source,” “beginning”; “manner of birth,” “descent”; “production,” “generation.” Aristotle often uses this term (frequently translated as “coming-to-be”), and makes it part of the title of a famous treatise (commonly translated as “On Generation and Corruption”).
φθορά	“destruction,” “ruin,” “death”; “corruption,” “decay”; “seduction.” Aristotle pairs this Greek word with the former in his typical contrast: coming-to-be versus passing-away, or generation versus corruption.
κατὰ τὸ χρεών	“according to necessity (or fate, or need).”
κατὰ τὴν τοῦ	“according to the arrangement of time.” “Arrangement” here translates

χρόνου τάξιν	τάξις, from which we derive “tactics,” the way of arranging things.
τὰ πάντα	“all things.” In one of our first readings, Long characterized the concern of early Greek philosophers as “all things.”
ἔστιν, ἦν, ἔσται, εἶναι	“[it] is,” “[it] was,” “[it] will be,” “to be”
λέξις	“collection,” “gathering.” Heidegger exploits the fact that the Greek verb “to gather” and “to say” are homonyms.
λεγόμενον	“thing having been said”; or, “thing having been gathered”
εἶν, εἶντα	“being,” “beings.” As Heidegger notes, these are archaic forms of ὄν and ὄντα used by Homer and even Parmenides.
ἤδη, οἶδεν	“[he] knew,” “he knows.” Heidegger analyzes these forms, but neglects to mention that they are forms of the verb that also produces ἰδέα
μαντοσύνη	“mantic art”; μάντις, “seer” is indeed, as Heidegger claims, related to μαίνομαι “to rave.”
Μοῖρα	“part,” “portion”; “one’s portion,” “one’s lot,” “fate.” Distinct from τύχη insofar as μοῖρα is more fore-ordained, rather than arbitrary. More often than not, capitalization indicates the divinity of this goddess, one of the three “Fates.”
Ἔρις	“Strife.” Heraclitus makes strife a cosmic principle, and Empedocles makes it one of his two cosmic forces, along with “Love.”
Ἔν	“One.” Parmenides was the first to exalt unity in his severe monism. The One became important not just to later Eleatics but also to the Pythagoreans and Platonists. Plotinus is the most famous advocate of the One in ancient (and subsequent) philosophy.
ἀλλήλοισ	“to one another”: reflexive pronoun
χράω	“to furnish what is needful”; “to furnish the needful answer,” “to declare,” “to pronounce”
χράομαι	“to use”; “to experience”; “to be in need”: deponent of χράω
ἡ χεῖρ	“the hand.” Heidegger’s etymology with the two previous words is accurate.
ὑποκείμενον	“lying-under” (literally), but it is an Aristotelian technical term for matter as the subject of form.
οὐσία	“that which is one’s own,” “one’s property,” “substance” (all in the economic senses); “being,” “essence,” “nature” (in Plato); in discussions of Aristotle, the most common translation is “substance.” οὐσία is just the feminine participle of εἶναι, parallel to the neuter ὄν.
πέρας	“limit,” “boundary.” πέρας was important both to the Pythagoreans, Parmenides, and thus to every philosopher influenced by them (which is to say, nearly every ancient philosopher).
ἄπειρον	“unlimited,” “boundless,” “infinite.” ἄπειρον is derived from a cognate of the former word and an α–privative prefix. Simplicius’s phrase, ἀρχὴ τῶν ὄντων τὸ ἄπειρον, means: “the apeiron is the principle [or ruler] of beings.”
ἔργον	“work,” “action,” “task,” “deed,” “profit,” and, in Plato and Aristotle, “function”

