

On the Essence and Concept of Φύσις in Aristotle's Physics B, I

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[309] The Romans translated φύσις by the word *natura*. *Natura* comes from *nasci*, “to be born, to originate . . .” as in the Greek root γεν-. *Natura* means “that which lets something originate from itself.”

Since those times “nature” has become the fundamental word that designates essential relations that Western historical humanity has to beings, both to itself and to beings other than itself. This fact is shown by a rough list of dichotomies that have become prevalent: nature and grace (i.e., super-nature), nature and art, nature and history, nature and spirit. But we likewise speak of the “nature” of spirit, the “nature” of history, and the “nature” of the human being. By this last phrase we mean not just one’s body or even the species “human,” but one’s whole essence. Therefore generally when we speak of the “nature of things,” we mean *what* things are in their “possibility” and *how* they are, regardless of whether and to what degree they “actually” are.

In Christian thought, the human being’s “natural state” means what is bestowed upon humans in creation and turned over to their freedom. Left to itself, *this* “nature,” through the passions, brings about the total destruction of the human being. For this reason “nature” must be *suppressed*. It is in a certain sense what should not be.

In another interpretation, it is precisely the unleashing of the drives and passions that is natural for human beings. According to Nietzsche, *homo naturae* is someone who makes the “body” the key to the interpretation of the world and who thus secures a new and harmonious relation to the “sensible” in general, to the “elements” (fire, water, earth, light), to the passions and drives and whatever is conditioned by them. And at the same time, in virtue of this new relation these people bring “the elemental” into their power [310] and by this power make themselves capable of the mastery of the world in the sense of a systematic world-domination.

And finally “nature” becomes the word for what is not only above everything “elemental” and everything human, but even above the gods. Thus Hölderlin says in the hymn, “As when on feast day . . .” (third verse):

Now breaks the day! I yearned for it and saw it come.
And my word for what I saw shall be the Holy.
For nature herself, more ancient than the ages
And above the gods of East and West,
Has awakened with the clang of a warrior’s arms.
And from aether on high to abyss below
By unswerving law as once from frightful Chaos born,
She feels herself again renewed,
The Inspirer, the All-creating.

(Here “nature” becomes the name for what is *above* the gods and “more ancient than the ages” in which beings always come to be. “Nature” becomes the word for “being”: being is prior to all beings, for they owe what they are to being. And the gods likewise: to the degree that they *are*, and however they are, they too all stand *under* “being.”)

Here beings as a whole are not misinterpreted “naturalistically” and reduced to “nature” in the sense of matter endowed with force, nor is this whole “mystically” obscured and dissolved into indeterminacy.

Whatever range has been attributed to the word “nature” in the various ages of Western history, in each case the word contains an interpretation of beings as a whole, even when “nature” seems to be meant as only one term in a dichotomy. In all such dichotomies, “nature” is not just one of two equal terms but “essentially” holds the position of priority, inasmuch as the other terms are always and primarily differentiated by contrast with – and therefore are determined by – *nature*. (For example, when “nature” is taken in a one-sided and superficial manner as “stuff,” “matter,” element, or the unformed, [311] then “spirit” is taken correspondingly as the “non-material,” the “spiritual,” the “creative,” or that which gives form.)

[But the perspective within which the distinction itself is made is “being.”]³

Therefore in our thinking, even the distinction between nature and history must be pushed back into the underlying area that sustains the dichotomy, the area where nature and history *are*. Even if we disregard or leave open the question about whether and how “history” rests upon “nature,” even if we understand history in terms of human “subjectivity” and conceive of history as “spirit” and therefore let nature be determined by spirit, even then we are in essence *still* and *already* thinking about the

subiectum, the ὑποχείμενον, and therefore about φύσις. The impossibility of getting around φύσις is shown in *that* name which we use to designate the kind of knowledge that, up until now, Westerners have had about beings as a whole. The systematic articulation of the truth at any given time “about” beings as a whole is called “metaphysics.” It makes no difference whether or not this metaphysics is given expression in propositions, whether or not the expressions are formed into an explicit system. Metaphysics is that knowledge wherein Western historical humanity preserves the truth of its relations to beings as a whole and the truth about those beings themselves. In a quite essential sense, meta-physics is “physics,” i.e., knowledge of φύσις (ἐπιστήμη φυσική).

At first blush our question about the essence and concept of φύσις might seem to be simply an inquiry, out of curiosity, into the origin of past and present interpretations of “nature.” But if we consider that this fundamental word of Western metaphysics harbors within itself decisions about the truth of beings; if we recall that today the truth about beings as a whole has become entirely questionable; moreover, if we suspect that the essence of truth therefore remains thoroughly in dispute; and finally if we know that all this is grounded in the history of the interpretations of the essence of φύσις, then we stand outside the [312] merely historical interests that philosophy might have in the “history of a concept.” Then we experience, although from afar, the nearness of future decisions.

[For the world is shifting out of joint – if indeed it ever was *in* joint – and the question arises whether modern humanity’s planning, even if it be worldwide, can ever bring about the ordering of world.]

The first coherent and thoughtful discussion (“first” because of its way of questioning) of the essence of φύσις comes down to us from the time when Greek philosophy reached its fulfillment. It stems from Aristotle and is preserved in his φυσικὴ ἀκρόασις (Lectures given – or better, “Lectures heard” – on φύσις).

Aristotle’s Physics is the hidden, and therefore never adequately studied, foundational book of Western philosophy.

Probably the eight books of the *Physics* were not projected as a unity and did not come into existence all at once. Such questions have no importance here. In general it makes little sense to say that the *Physics* precedes the *Metaphysics*, because metaphysics is just as much “physics” as physics is “metaphysics.” For reasons based on the work itself, as well as on historical grounds, we can take it that around 347 B.C. (Plato’s death) the second book

was already composed. (Cf. also Jaeger, *Aristotle: Fundamentals of the History of His Development*, p. 296, originally published in 1923. For all its erudition, this book has the single fault of thinking through Aristotle's philosophy in the modern Scholastic neo-Kantian manner that is entirely *foreign to Greek thought*. Much of Jaeger's *Entstehungsgeschichte der Metaphysik des Aristoteles*, 1912, is more accurate because less concerned with "content.")

But even so, this first thoughtful and unified conceptualization of φύσις is already the last echo of the original (and thus supreme) thoughtful projection of the essence of φύσις that we still have preserved for us in the fragments of Anaximander, Heraclitus, and Parmenides.

[313] In Book Two, chapter one, of the eight books of the *Physics* (*Physics* B, 1, 192 b8–193 b2), Aristotle gives the interpretation of φύσις that sustains and guides all succeeding interpretations of the essence of "nature." Here too are hidden the roots of that later determination of the essence of *nature* wherein it is distinguished from spirit and determined through the "spirit." In saying this we mean to intimate that the differentiation of "nature and spirit" is simply *foreign to the Greeks*.

Before we follow the individual steps of Aristotle's determination of the essence of φύσις, let us look at *two sentences* that Aristotle pronounces in the first and introductory book (A):

ἥμιν δὲ οὐποχείσθω τὰ φύσει ἡ πάντα ἡ ἔνια χινούμενα εἶναι δῆλον δὲ ἐξ τῆς ἐπαγωγῆς.

"But from the outset it should be (a settled issue) for us that those beings that are by φύσις, whether all of them or some of them [those not in rest], are moving beings (i.e., determined by movedness). But this is evident from an immediate 'leading toward' (that leads *toward* these beings and *over* and beyond them to their 'being')."

(A, 2, 185 a12ff.)

Here Aristotle explicitly emphasizes what he perceives to be decisive for the projection of the essence of φύσις, namely, κίνησις, the state of movedness. And therefore the key issue in the question about "physics" becomes one of defining the essence of movement. For us today it is merely a truism to say that the processes of nature are processes of movement – in fact, it is a tautology. We have no inkling of the importance of Aristotle's sentences just cited, nor of his interpretation of φύσις, unless we know that it was through and for Aristotle that what we take for a truism first entered the formative essential insight of Western humanity. Certainly the Greeks before Aristotle had already experienced the fact that sky and sea, plants and animals are in movement, and certainly thinkers before him had already

attempted to say what movement was. But it was Aristotle who first [314] attained – and thus, first created – that level of questioning where (movement is not considered as something merely given along with other things, but rather where) *being-moved* is explicitly questioned and understood as the fundamental mode of being. (But this means that defining the essence of being is impossible without an essential insight into movedness as such. Of course this is not at all to say that being is understood “as movement” [or as rest], for such thinking would be *foreign to the Greeks* and, in fact, absolutely unphilosophical [inasmuch as movedness is not “nothing,” and only being, in essence, rules over the nothing and over beings and over their modes].)

According to Aristotle, the fact that all beings from φύσις are in motion or at rest is evident: δῆλον ἐξ τῆς ἐπαγωγῆς. We usually translate the word ἐπαγωγή as “induction” and, taken literally, the translation is almost adequate. But with regard to the issue, i.e., as an interpretation, it is totally erroneous. Ἐπαγωγή does not mean running through individual facts and series of facts in order to conclude something common and “general” from their similar properties. Ἐπαγωγή means “leading toward” what comes into view insofar as we have previously looked *away*, over and *beyond* individual beings. At what? At being. For example, only if we already have treeness in view can we identify individual trees. Ἐπαγωγή is seeing and making visible what already stands in view – for example, treeness. Ἐπαγωγή is “constituting” in the double sense of, first, bringing something up into view and then likewise establishing what has been seen. Ἐπαγωγή is what immediately becomes suspect to those caught up in scientific thinking and mostly remains foreign to them. These people see in it an inadmissible *petitio principii*, i.e., an “offense” against “empirical thinking,” whereas the *petere principium*, the reaching out to the supporting ground, is the only move philosophy makes. It is the “offensive” that breaks open the territory within whose borders a science can first settle down.

[315] If we directly experience and intend φύσει-beings, we already have in view both the “moved” and its movedness. But what stands in view here is not yet “constituted” as what it is and how it is present.

Therefore the question about φύσις must inquire into the movedness of these beings and try to see what φύσις is in relation to this movedness. But first, in order to establish clearly the direction of our inquiry, we must delineate, within the whole of beings, the region that we can say comprises beings that *are* because they are determined by φύσις, namely, τὰ φύσει ὄντα.

Physics B, 1 begins with this delineation. (In the following pages we give a “translation” that is divided into *appropriate* sections. Since this

"translation" is already the *interpretation* proper, only an explanation of the "translation" is called for. This is certainly not a "trans-lation" in the sense of a "carrying over" of the Greek words into the *proper force and weight of our language*. It is not intended to *replace* the Greek but only to place us *into* the Greek and in so doing to disappear in it. This is why it lacks all the character and fullness that come from the depths of our own language, and why it is neither pleasing nor "polished.")³

I. "Of beings (as a whole) some are from φύσις, whereas others are by other 'causes.' By φύσις, as we say, are animals as well as their members (parts), likewise plants and the simple elements of bodies, like earth and fire and water and air." (192 b8-11)

The other beings, which are not yet expressly mentioned, *are* by other "causes," but the first group, the ones "named," are by φύσις. Thus from the outset φύσις is taken as cause (*αἴτιον* – *αἴτια*) in the sense of the "origin" ["*Ur-sache*"]. The word and concept "cause" makes us think almost automatically of "causality" [*Kausalität*], that is, the manner and mode in which one thing "acts on" another. *Αἴτιον*, for which Aristotle will soon introduce a more precise definition, means in the present context: that which is responsible for the fact that a being is *what* it is. This [316] responsibility does not have the character of causation in the sense of a "causally" efficient actualizing. Thus, for example, spatiality belongs to the very character of materiality, but space does not efficiently cause matter. Cause as the origin [*Ur-sache*] must be understood here literally as the originary [*Ur-tümliche*], that which constitutes the thingness of a thing. "Causality" is only a derivative way of being an origin.

By simply mentioning animals, plants, earth, fire, water, and air, Aristotle points to the region in which the question about φύσις has to be lodged.

II. "But all the aforementioned appear as different from whatever has *not* composed itself by φύσις into a stand and a stability." (192 b12-13)

Συνεστῶτα is here used for ὄντα (cf. 193 a36, τοῖς φύσει συνισταμένοις). From this we infer what "being" meant for the Greeks. They address beings as the "stable" [das "Ständige"]. "The stable" means two things. On the one hand, it means whatever, of and by itself, stands on its own, that which stands "there"; and at the same time "the stable" means the enduring, the lasting. We would certainly not be thinking like the Greeks if we were to conceive of the stable as what "stands over against" in the sense of the objective. Something "standing over against" [Gegenstand] is the

"translation" of the word "object." But beings can be experienced as objects only where human beings have become subjects, those who experience their fundamental relation to beings as the objectification – understood as mastery – of what is encountered. For the Greeks, human beings are never subjects, and therefore non-human beings can never have the character of objects (things that stand-over-against). Φύσις is what is responsible for the fact that the stable has a unique kind of standing-on-its-own. Φύσις is more clearly delineated in the following sentence:

III. "Indeed each of these beings [that are *what* they are and *how* they are from φύσις] has in itself the originating ordering (ἀρχή) of its movedness and its standing still (rest), where movedness and rest are meant sometimes with regard to place, [317] sometimes with regard to growth and diminution, other times with regard to alteration (change)." (192 b13–15)

Here in place of αἴτιον and αἴτια we find explicitly the word ἀρχή. The Greeks ordinarily hear two meanings in this word. On the one hand ἀρχή means that from which something has its origin and beginning; on the other hand it means that which, *as* this origin and beginning, likewise keeps rein over, i.e., restrains and therefore dominates, something else that emerges from it. Ἀρχή means, at one and the same time, beginning and control. On a broader and therefore lower scale we can say: origin and ordering. In order to express the unity that oscillates between the two, we can translate ἀρχή as originating ordering and as ordering origin. The unity of these two is *essential*. And this concept of ἀρχή gives a more definite content to the word αἴτιον (cause) used above. (Probably the *concept* ἀρχή is not an "archaic" concept, but one that later was read back into the origins of Greek philosophy, first by Aristotle and then subsequently by the "doxographers.")

Φύσις is ἀρχή, i.e., the origin and ordering of movedness and rest, specifically in a moving being that has this ἀρχή in itself. We do not say "in its self" because we want to indicate that a being of this kind does not have the ἀρχή "for itself" by explicitly *knowing* it, insofar as it does not "possess" "itself" as a self at all. Plants and animals are *in* movedness even when they stand still and rest. Rest is a kind of movement; only that which is able to move can rest. It is absurd to speak of the number 3 as "resting." Because plants and animals are *in* movement regardless of whether they rest or move, for this reason not only are they *in movement*; they *are* in movedness. This means: they are not, in the first instance, beings for themselves and among others, beings that then occasionally happen to slip into states of movement. Rather, they *are* beings only insofar as they have their essential

abode and ontological footing in movedness. However, their being-moved is *such* [318] that the ἀρχή, the origin and ordering of their movedness, rules from within those beings themselves.

Here where Aristotle defines φύσις as ἀρχή κινήσεως, he does not fail to point out various kinds of movement: growth and diminution, alteration and change of place (locomotion). These kinds are merely enumerated, i.e., they are not differentiated according to any explicit respect, nor grounded in any such differentiation (cf. *Physics* E 1, 224 b35–225 b9). In fact, this mere enumeration is not even complete. In fact, the kind of movement that is *not* mentioned is precisely the one that will be crucial for determining the essence of φύσις. Nevertheless, mentioning various kinds of movement at this point has its own significance. It indicates that Aristotle understands κίνησις, movedness, in a very *broad* sense – but not “broad” in the sense of “extended,” “approximate,” and superficial, but rather in the sense of the essential and of a grounding fullness.

Today, with the predominance of the mechanistic thinking of the modern natural sciences, we are inclined both to hold that the basic form of movement is movedness in the sense of motion from one position in space to another; and then to “explain” everything that is moved in terms of it. That kind of movedness – κίνησις χατὰ τόπον, movedness in terms of place or location – is for Aristotle only *one* kind of movedness among others, but it in no way counts as *movement pure and simple*.

What is more, we should note that in a certain sense what Aristotle means by “change of place” is something different from the modern conception of the change of location of some mass in space. Τόπος is the ποῦ, the place where a specific body belongs. What is fiery belongs above, what is earthly belongs below. The places themselves – above, below (heaven, earth) – are special: by way of them are determined distances and relations, i.e., what we call “space,” something for which the Greeks had neither a word nor a concept. For us today space is not determined by way of [319] place; rather, all places, as constellations of points, are determined by infinite space that is everywhere homogeneous and nowhere distinctive. When movedness is taken as change of place, there is a corresponding kind of rest, namely, remaining in the same place. But something that continues to occupy the same place and thus is *not* moved in the sense of change of place, can nonetheless be in a process of movedness. For example, a plant that is rooted “in place” grows (increases) or withers (decreases) [αὔξησις – φθίσις]. And conversely, something that moves insofar as it changes its place can still “rest” by remaining as it was constituted. The running fox is at rest in that it keeps the same color; this is the rest of nonalteration, rest

without ἀλλοίωσις. Or something can be moved in the sense of withering and yet at the same time be moved in still another way, namely, by being altered: on the withering tree the leaves dry up, the green becomes yellow. The tree that is moved in this twofold sense of φθίσις and ἀλλοίωσις is simultaneously *at rest* insofar as it is the tree that *stands* there.

If we perceive all these overlapping “appearances” as types of movedness, we gain an insight into their fundamental character, which Aristotle fixes in the word and the concept μεταβολή. Every instance of movedness is a change from something (*ἐκ τινος*) into something (*εἰς τι*). When we speak of a change in the weather or a change of mood, what we have in mind is an “alteration.” We also speak of “exchange points” where commercial goods change hands in business transactions. But the essential core of what the Greeks meant in thinking μεταβολή is attained only by observing that in a change [*Umschlag*]⁴ something heretofore hidden and absent comes into appearance. (In German: “*Aus-schlag*” [the breaking out of, e.g., a blossom] and “*Durchschlag*” [breaking through so as to appear on the other side].)

(We of today must do two things: first, free ourselves from the notion that movement is *primarily* change of place; and second, learn to see how for the Greeks movement as a mode of *being* has the character of emerging into presencing.)

[320] Φύσις is ἀρχὴ κινήσεως, origin and ordering of change, such that each thing that changes has this ordering within itself. At the very beginning of the chapter, φύσει-beings were contrasted with other beings, but the second group were not expressly named and characterized. There now follows an explicit and definite, and yet curiously narrow, delineation:

IV. “However, a couch (bedstead) and a robe and any other kind (of such things) that there is *insofar as* it is cited and grasped according to a given way of addressing it (e.g., as a robe) and inasmuch as it comes from a productive know-how, (such a thing) has *absolutely no* impulse to change arising from itself. However, *insofar as* it also pertains to such things (in a given instance) to be made of stone or of earth or of a mixture of the two, they *do have* in themselves an impulse to change, but they have it only to this extent.” (192 b16–20)

Here, such beings as “plants,” animals, earth, and air are now contrasted with beings such as bedsteads, robes, shields, wagons, ships, and houses. The first group are “growing things” [“*Gewächse*”] in the same broad sense that we employ when we speak of a “field under growth.” The second group are “artifacts” (*ποιητήμενα*), in German, *Gemächte*, although this last term must be stripped of any derogatory connotations. The contrast achieves its

purpose – to further highlight the proper essence of φύσει ὅντα and φύσις – only if it stays within the parameters of the guiding perspective, that of an inquiry into moving beings and their movedness and into the ἀρχή of that movedness.

But are bedsteads and garments, shields and houses moving things? Indeed they are, but usually we encounter them in the kind of movement that typifies things at rest and therefore is hard to perceive. Their “rest” has the character of having-been-completed, having-been-produced, and, on the basis of *these* determinations, as standing “there” and lying present before us. Today we easily overlook this special kind of rest and so too the movedness that corresponds to it, or at least [321] we do not take it essentially enough as the proper and distinguishing characteristic of the being of these beings. And why? Because under the spell of our modern way of being, we are addicted to thinking of beings as *objects* and allowing the being of beings to be exhausted in the objectivity of the object. But for Aristotle, the issue here is to show that artifacts *are what* they are and *how* they are precisely in the movedness of production and thus in the rest of having-been-produced. Above all he wants to show that this movedness has another ἀρχή and that beings that are moved in this other way are related to their ἀρχή in a different manner. (There is no reason to read ἀρχή in place of ὁρμή in this text, as Simplicius does, for ὁρμή, “impulse,” illustrates well the essence of ἀρχή.)

The ἀρχή of artifacts is τέχνη. Τέχνη does not mean “technique” in the sense of methods and acts of production, nor does it mean “art” in the wider sense of an ability to produce something. Rather, τέχνη is a form of knowledge; it means: know-how in, i.e., familiarity with, what grounds every act of making and producing. It means knowing what the production of, e.g., a bedstead, must come to, where it must achieve its end and be completed. In Greek, this “end” is called τέλος. That whereat an act of producing “ceases” is the table as finished – but finished precisely as table, as what a table is and how a table looks. The εἶδος must stand in view beforehand, and this antecedently envisioned appearance, εἶδος προαιρετόν, is the end, τέλος, that about which τέχνη has its know-how. Only for this reason does τέχνη also come to be defined as the kind and manner of procedure that we call “technique.” But again, the essence of τέχνη is not movement in the sense of the activity of manipulating things; rather, it is know-how in dealing with things. And τέλος does not mean “goal” or “purpose,” but “end” in the sense of the finite perfectedness that determines the essence of something; only for this reason can it be taken

as a goal and posited as a purpose. However, the τέλος, the antecedently envisioned appearance of the bedstead, is what is known by the person with the know-how, and it exists in *that person*. Only in this way is it the origin of the idea of the thing and the ordering of its manufacture. [322] The είδος in itself is not the ἀρχή of the artifact. Rather, the είδος προαιρετόν, i.e., the προαιρεσις, i.e., the τέχνη, is the ἀρχή of the artifact.

In the case of artifacts, therefore, the ἀρχή of their movedness – and thus of the rest that characterizes their being-completed and being-made – is *not* in the artifacts themselves but in something else, in the ἀρχιτέχτων, the one who controls the τέχνη, as ἀρχή. This would seem to complete the contrast of artifacts with φύσει ὄντα, for these latter are called φύσει ὄντα precisely because they have the ἀρχή of their movedness *not* in another being but in the beings that they themselves are (to the degree that they are these beings). But according to Aristotle's explanation, the difference between artifacts and growing things is not at all so simple. Even the structure of the section we are considering gives a hint: ή μὲν – ή δέ: "insofar as artifacts are seen in this way . . . insofar as they are seen in another way . . ." We can consider the ποιούμενα from two perspectives. In the *first perspective* we consider the produced thing insofar as it is cited and grasped according to a given way of addressing it: χατηγορία.

Here we run across a use of χατηγορία that goes back *prior* to its establishment as a philosophical "term." It was Aristotle, in fact, who established the term, but he did so on the basis of the common usage that is operative in the present text. We translate χατηγορία as the "addressing" of something [*Ansprechung*], but even then we hardly capture the full meaning in the Greek. Κατὰ-ἀγορεύειν means: to accuse someone to his face in the ἀγορά, the public court, of being "the very one who . . ." From this comes the broader meaning: to address something as this or that, so that, in and through our addressing it, the addressed thing is put forth into the public view, into the open, as manifest. Κατηγορία is the naming of what something is: house, tree, sky, sea, hard, red, healthy. On the other hand, "category" as a philosophical "term" means a *special* kind of addressing. We are able to address a present thing as a house or a tree only insofar as we have already beforehand, and without words, addressed what we encounter – i.e., have brought it into our open field of "vision" – as something standing-on-its-own, a thing. Likewise, [323] we can address a garment as "red" only if from the outset and without words it has already been addressed in terms of something like quality. Standing-on-its-own ("substance") and quality ("of-what-sort-ness") and the like constitute the

being (beingness) of beings. Therefore the “categories” are special ways of addressing things – *χατηγορίαι* in an emphatic sense – for they sustain all our habitual and everyday ways of addressing things; they underlie those everyday statements, which in turn get developed into assertions, “judgments.” *Conversely*, only for this reason can one discover the “categories” by using the assertion, the *λόγος*, as a clue. This is why Kant has to “derive” the table of categories from the table of *judgments*. Thus, knowledge of categories as determinations of the being of beings – what people call metaphysics – is, in an essential sense, knowledge of *λόγος* – i.e., “logic.” Therefore, metaphysics receives this name at the stage where it comes to the *full* (as full as is possible for it) *consciousness of itself*, in *Hegel*. [The *Science of Logic* is absolute knowledge of the knowable as something known or represented. (In modern philosophy, the state of being represented is beingness or being.)]

In the text we are considering, *χατηγορία* is used in a *preterminological* sense. Inasmuch as we consider something produced – e.g., a bedstead – within the horizon opened up by the everyday way of addressing and naming, we take such a being according to its appearance as something of use. In this capacity it does *not* have the *ἀρχή κινήσεως* in itself. But we can consider it from a *second perspective*: we can take this very same being, the bedstead, as something made out of wood, hence as a piece of wood. As wood, it is part of a tree trunk, a growing thing. This tree has the *ἀρχή κινήσεως* in itself. The bedstead, on the other hand, is not wood as such, but merely wooden, made *out of* wood. Only what is something other than wood can be wooden. This is why we never call a tree trunk wooden, but we do say a person's bearing is “wooden,” and in German one can say an apple is “wooden.” What the bedstead is when taken according to the *χατηγορία*, namely, a usable thing that looks thus and so, has no absolutely necessary relation to wood. It could [324] just as well be made out of stone or steel. Its woodenness is *συμβεβήκός*, that is to say: in reference to what the bed “really” and properly is, woodenness *appears only incidentally*. Insofar – but *only* insofar – as it is just wood, a bedstead certainly does have the *ἀρχή κινήσεως* in itself, for wood is the what-has-grown of a growing thing.

On the basis of this contrast between artifacts and growing things Aristotle can summarize what he has said up to now and thus establish an initial outline of the essence of *φύσις*:

V. “Accordingly, *φύσις* is something like origin and ordering and therefore originary [source] of the self-moving and resting of something in which it antecedently (*ὑπό*)

exercises originating and ordering power ($\alphaρχή$) primarily in itself and from itself and toward itself and thus *never* in such a way that the $\alphaρχή$, would appear (in the being) only incidentally." (192 b20-23)

Here, simply and almost severely, Aristotle sketches the essential outline: φύσις is not just the origin and ordering of the movedness of a moving being, but also belongs to this moving being itself in such a way that this being, in itself and from itself and toward itself, orders its own movedness. Hence the $\alphaρχή$ is not like the starting point of a push, which pushes the thing away and leaves it to itself. Rather, something determined by φύσις not only stays with itself in its movedness but precisely goes back into itself even as it unfolds in accordance with the movedness (the change).

We can illustrate the kind of essence that is meant here by the example of "growing things" in the narrower sense ("plants"). While the "plant" sprouts, emerges, and expands into the open, it simultaneously goes back into its roots, insofar as it plants them firmly in the closed ground and thus takes its stand. The act of self-unfolding emergence is inherently a going-back-into-itself. This kind of becoming present is φύσις. But it must not be thought of as a kind of built-in "motor" that drives something, nor as an "organizer" on hand somewhere, directing the thing. [325] Nonetheless, we might be tempted to fall back on the notion that φύσει-determined beings could be a kind that *make themselves*. So easily and spontaneously does this idea suggest itself that it has become normative for the interpretation of living nature in particular, as is shown by the fact that ever since modern thinking became dominant, a living being has been understood as an "organism." No doubt a good deal of time has yet to pass before we learn to see that the idea of "organism" and of the "organic" is a purely modern, mechanistic-technological concept, according to which "growing things" are interpreted as artifacts that make themselves. Even the word and concept "plant" takes what grows as something "planted," something sown and cultivated. And it is part of the essential illogicality of language that in German we nonetheless speak of greenhouses as *Gewächshäusern* (houses for what grows) instead of as *Pflanzenhäusern* (houses for what has been planted).

In the case of every artifact, however, the origin of the making is "outside" the thing made. Viewed from the perspective of the artifact, the $\alphaρχή$, always and only appears as something "in addition." In order to avoid misunderstanding φύσις as a kind of *self-producing* and the φύσει ὄντα merely as a special kind of artifact, Aristotle clarifies the $\chi\alpha\iota$ αὐτό by adding $\chi\alpha\iota$ μὲν, $\chi\alpha\tau\alpha$ συμβεβηκός. The $\chi\alpha\iota$ here has the meaning of "and that is to say..."

This phrase seeks to ward off an error, and Aristotle explains its meaning by an example:

VI. "But I add the phrase 'not like something appearing in addition' because someone, entirely of and by himself, might become the (originating and ordering) source of 'health' for himself, and could at the same time be a doctor. He has the medical know-how *in himself*, but not insofar as he regains his health. Rather in this case, being a doctor and regaining health happen to have come together in one and the same person. But for this very reason the two also remain separated from each other, each on its own." (192 b23-27)

Aristotle, a doctor's son, likes to use examples drawn from medical "πρᾶξις," and he does so in other contexts as well. [326] Here he gives us the case of a doctor who treats himself and thereby regains his health. Two kinds of movedness are interwoven here in a peculiar way: *λάτρευσις*, the practicing of medicine as a *τέχνη*, and *ὑγίασις*, the regaining of health as "*φύσις*." In the present case, that of a doctor who treats himself, both movements are found in one and the same being, in this specific person. The same holds for the respective *ἀρχή* of each of the two "movements." The "doctor" has the *ἀρχή* of regaining his health *ἐν ξεντῷ, in himself*, but not *χαθ' αὐτόν*, not according to himself, not insofar as he is a *doctor*. The origin and ordering of regaining health is not being a doctor but being human, and this only insofar as the human being is a *ζῶον*, a living being that lives only inasmuch as it "*is a body*" ["*leibt*"]. As even we say, a healthy "nature," capable of resistance, is the real origin and ordering of regaining health. Without this *ἀρχή*, all medical practice is in vain. But on the other hand, the doctor has the *ἀρχή* of practicing medicine in himself: being a doctor is the origin and ordering of the treatment. But this *ἀρχή*, namely, this know-how and *antecedent view* (*τέχνη*) of what health is and what pertains to keeping and regaining it (the *εἰδος τῆς ὑγιείας*) – this *ἀρχή* is not in the human being qua human but is something in addition, attained by someone only through studying and learning. Consequently, in relation to regaining health, *τέχνη* itself is always merely something that can appear in addition. Doctors and the practice of medicine do not grow the way trees do. Of course, we do speak of a "born" doctor, by which we mean that a person brings with him or her the talent for recognizing diseases and treating the sick. But these talents are never, in the manner of *φύσις*, the *ἀρχή* for being a doctor, inasmuch as they do not unfold *from out of themselves* toward the end of being a doctor.

Nonetheless, at this point the following objection could be raised. Say two doctors suffer from the same disease under the same conditions, and each one treats herself. However, between the two cases of illness there

lies a period of [327] five hundred years, during which the “progress” of modern medicine has taken place. The doctor of today has at her disposal a “better” technique, and she regains her health, whereas the one who lived earlier dies of her disease. So apparently the *ἀρχή* of the cure of today’s doctor is *precisely* the *τέχνη*. However, there is something further to consider here. For one thing, the fact of not dying, in the sense of prolonging one’s life, is not yet necessarily the recovery of health. The fact that people live longer today is no proof that they are healthier; one might even conclude the contrary. But even supposing that the modern doctor, beneficiary of the progress of medicine, not only escapes death for a while but also recovers her health, even then the art of medicine has only better supported and guided φύσις. *Τέχνη* can merely cooperate with φύσις, can more or less expedite the cure; but as *τέχνη*, it can never replace φύσις and in its stead become the *ἀρχή* of *health* as such. This could happen only if life as such were to become a “technically” producible artifact. However, at that very moment there would also no longer be such a thing as health, any more than there would be birth and death. Sometimes it seems as if modern humanity is rushing headlong toward this goal of *producing itself technologically*. If humanity achieves this, it will have exploded itself, i.e., its *essence qua subjectivity*, into thin air, into a region where the absolutely meaningless is valued as the one and only “meaning” and where preserving this value appears as the human “domination” of the globe. “Subjectivity” is not overcome in this way but merely “tranquilized” in the “eternal progress” of a Chinese-like “*constancy*” [“Konstanz”]. This is the most extreme nonessence [*Unwesen*] in relation to φύσις-οὐσία.

Aristotle also uses this example, in which two different kinds of movedness interweave, as an occasion for determining more clearly the mode and manner in which the ποιούμενα (artifacts) stand in relation to their *ἀρχή*:

VII. “And the same holds for everything else that belongs among things made. That is to say, none of them has in itself the origin and ordering of its being-made. [328] Rather, some have their *ἀρχή* in another being and thus have it from the outside, such as, for example, a house and anything else made by hand. Others, however, do indeed have the *ἀρχή* in themselves, but not inasmuch as they are themselves. To this latter group belong all things that can be ‘causes’ for themselves in an incidental way.” (192 b27-32)

A house has the origin and ordering of its being a house, i.e., something constructed, in the constructor’s prior intention to build, which is given concrete form in the architect’s blueprint. This blueprint – in Greek terms, the house’s *appearance as envisioned beforehand* or, literally, the *iδέα* – orders

each step of the actual constructing and governs the choice and use of materials. Even when the house “is standing,” it stands on the foundation that has been *laid* for it; however, it never stands *from out of* itself, but always as a mere *construction*. As long as it stands there – in Greek terms, as long as it stands forth into the open and unhidden – the *house*, due to its way of standing, can never place itself back into its ἀρχή. It will never take root in the earth but will always remain merely placed on the earth, built upon it.

But let us take an example: What if someone were to hit himself in the eye and injure the eye by a clumsy movement of his own hand? Certainly both the injury and the movement of the hand are ἐν ταύτῳ, “in” the same being. However, they do not belong together but have simply happened together, come together συμβεβηκός, incidentally. Therefore, in determining the essence of the φύσει δύντα, it is not enough merely to say they have the ἀρχή of their movedness in themselves. Rather, we are required to add this special determination: in themselves, specifically inasmuch as they are themselves and are in and with [*bei*] themselves.

[This word “specifically” does not restrict matters but requires us to look into the vast expanse of the unfathomable essence of a mode of being that is denied to all τέχνη because τέχνη renounces any claim to knowing and grounding *truth* as such.]

Aristotle concludes the first stage of his characterization of the essence of φύσις by what seems to be merely a superficial [329] clarification of the meaning of the concepts and expressions that gather around the essence and the concept and the word φύσις:

VIII. “Φύσις, therefore, is what has been said. Everything that possesses this kind of origin and ordering ‘has’ φύσις. And all these things *are* (have being) of the type called beingness. Φύσις is, in each case, such as lies present of and by itself, and is always *in* a thing that lies present in this way (constituting its lying-present). In accordance with φύσις, however, are these things as well as everything that belongs to these things in themselves, of and by themselves, as, e.g., it belongs to fire to be borne upward. In point of fact this (being borne upward) is not φύσις, nor does it possess φύσις, but it certainly is from φύσις and in accordance with φύσις. So now it has been settled what φύσις is, as well as what is meant by ‘from φύσις,’ and ‘in accordance with φύσις.’” (192 b32–193 a2)

It may strike the reader that even at this point we continue to leave the basic word φύσις untranslated. We do not call it *natura* or “nature” because these names are too ambiguous and overburdened and, in general, because they get their validity as names for φύσις only by means of a peculiarly oriented interpretation of φύσις. In fact, we do not even have a word that

would be appropriate for naming and thinking the essence of φύσις as we have explained it thus far. (We are tempted to say “emergence” [*Aufgang*], but without intermediate steps we cannot give this word the fullness and definiteness it requires.) However, the chief reason for continuing to use the untranslated and perhaps untranslatable word φύσις lies in the fact that everything said up to this point toward the clarification of its essence is only prologue. In fact, up until now we do not even know what kind of reflection and inquiry is already at work when we ask about φύσις as we have been doing. And these things Aristotle tells us only now in the passage we have just read, a text that establishes with extreme succinctness the horizon within which the discussion moves, both the preceding part and especially what is to follow.

The decisive sentence reads: *καὶ ἔστι πάντα ταῦτα οὐσία*, “and all these – namely, φύσει-beings – have being of the type called *beingness*.” This expression “beingness,” [330] which hardly strikes the ear as elegant, is the only adequate translation for οὐσία. Granted, even “beingness” says *very little*, in fact, almost nothing, but this is precisely its advantage. We avoid the usual and familiar “translations” (i.e., interpretations) of οὐσία as “substance” and “essence.” Φύσις is οὐσία, beingness – that which characterizes a being as such; in a word: being. The word οὐσία was not originally a philosophical “term” any more than was the word χατηγορία, which we have already explained. The word οὐσία was first coined as a technical “term” by Aristotle. This coining consists in the fact that Aristotle thoughtfully draws out of the content of the word a crucial element and then holds on to it firmly and clearly. Nonetheless, at the time of Aristotle and even later, the word still retained its ordinary meaning, whereby it signified house and home, holdings, financial means; we might also say “present assets,” “property,” *what lies present*. We must think in terms of this meaning if we want to get at the naming power of οὐσία as a basic philosophical word. And then right away we also see how simple and obvious is the explanation Aristotle provides for the word οὐσία in the text above: *ὑποχείμενον γάρ τι καὶ ἐν ὑποχείμενῳ ἔστιν τὸ φύσις ἀεί*, “for in each case φύσις is like a lying-present and ‘in’ a lying-present.” One might object that our translation here is “wrong.” Aristotle’s sentence does *not* say *ὑποχεισθαι γάρ τι*, a “lying-present” [*Vorliegen*] but rather “something that lies present” [*ein Vorliegendes*]. But here we must pay strict attention to what the sentence is supposed to explain: namely, to what extent φύσις is οὐσία and thus has the character of beingness (being). This requires of us (as is so often the case with the philosophical use of the Greek language, but too little noticed by later thinkers) that we understand the participle *ὑποχείμενον* in a way

analogous to our understanding of τὸ ὅν. Τὸ ὅν can mean *a being*, i.e., this particular being itself; but it can also mean that which *is*, that which has being. Analogously ὑποχείμενον can mean “that which lies present,” but it can also mean “something distinguished by lying-present,” and so it can mean the very lying-present itself. [331] (The unusually rich and manifold forms of the participle in the Greek language – the truly philosophical language – are no mere accident, but their meaning has hardly yet been recognized.)

In accordance with the explanation of οὐσία by way of ὑποχείμενον, the beingness of beings means for the Greeks the same as to lie present “there,” i.e., “in front of...” In this connection let us recall that toward the beginning of this chapter, at 192 b13 (and later at 193 a36), instead of τὰ ὄντα Aristotle says συνεστῶτα (the stable: that which has taken a stand). Accordingly, “being” means the same as “standing on its own.” But “to stand” is quite the opposite of “to lie.” Yes, that is true if we take each of them separately. But if we take “to stand” and “to lie” in terms of what they share in common, then each manifests itself precisely through its opposite. Only what stands can fall and thus lie; and only what lies can be put upright and thus stand. The Greeks understand “being” sometimes as “to stand on its own” (*ὑπόστασις, substantia*) and sometimes as “lying present” (*ὑποχείμενον, subjectum*), but both have equal weight, for in both cases the Greeks have one and the same thing in view: being-present of and by itself, presencing. The decisive principle that guides Aristotle’s interpretation of φύσις declares that φύσις must be understood as οὐσία, as a kind and mode of presencing.

Now, it has already been established through ἐπαγωγή that φύσει ὄντα are κινούμενα, that is to say: φύσει-beings are beings in the state of movedness. Accordingly, it is now a question of understanding movedness as a manner and mode of being, i.e., of presencing. Only when this is accomplished can we understand φύσις in its essence as the *origin and ordering of the movedness of what moves from out of itself and toward itself.*⁵ Thus it is clear in principle that the question about the φύσις of the φύσει ὄντα is not a search for ontic properties to be found *in* beings of this sort, but rather an inquiry into the being of those beings, from which being it gets determined antecedently in what way beings of this kind of being can have properties at all.

[332] The next section, which forms the transition to a new attempt at determining the essence of φύσις, shows how decisively Aristotle’s explanation of φύσις heretofore has, in the meanwhile, broadened explicitly into a principled reflection, and it shows how necessary this reflection is for the task confronting us:

IX. "But it is ridiculous to want to prove *that* φύσις is, because this (being as φύσις) appears of and by itself, insofar as [not 'that'] beings of this type show up everywhere among beings. But to demonstrate something that appears of and by itself (and above all) to prove something that refuses to appear – these are the actions of someone who cannot distinguish (from one another) something that of and by itself is familiar to all knowledge from something that of and by itself is not. But that such a thing can happen (i.e., such an inability to make the distinction) is not outside the realm of possibility: Someone born blind might try, through a sequence of reflections, to acquire some knowledge about colors. Of necessity in this case, such people arrive at an assertion about the nominal meanings of the words for colors, but by these means they never perceive the least thing about colors themselves." (193 a3–9)

"But it is ridiculous to try to prove *that* φύσις is." But why? Should we not take seriously some such procedure? Without a prior proof *that* something like φύσις "is," all explanations about φύσις remain pointless. So let us attempt such a proof. But in *that* case we have to suppose that φύσις is *not*, or at least that it is not yet proven in its being and as being. Therefore, in the course of our demonstration we may not permit ourselves to appeal *to it*. But if we take this restriction seriously, how could we ever find or point to something like φύσει ὄντα, growing things – animals, for example – the very things by means of which the being of φύσις is supposed to be proven? Such a procedure is impossible because it must already appeal to the being of φύσις, [333] and precisely for that reason this kind of proof is always superfluous. Already by its first step it attests of and by itself that its project is unnecessary. In fact, the whole undertaking is ridiculous. The being of φύσις and φύσις as being remain unprovable because φύσις does not need a proof, for wherever a φύσει-being stands in the open, φύσις has already shown itself and stands in view.

Regarding those who demand and attempt such a proof, one can at best draw their attention to the fact that they do not see *the very thing* that they already see, that they have no eye for what already stands in view for them. To be sure, *this* eye – which is not just for what one sees but for what one already has in view when one sees what one sees – this eye does not belong to everyone. This eye has the ability to differentiate what appears of and by itself and comes into the open according to its own essence, from what does not appear of and by itself. What appears antecedently – as φύσις does in the φύσει ὄντα, as history does in all historical occurrences, as art does in all artworks, as "life" does in all living things – what already stands in view is seen with the greatest difficulty, is grasped very seldomly, is almost always falsified into a mere addendum, and for these reasons simply overlooked. Of course, not everyone needs to explicitly hold in view what is already seen

in all experience, but only those who make a claim to deciding, or even to asking, about nature, history, art, human beings, or beings as a whole. Certainly not every one of us who through action or thinking dwells in these regions of beings needs to consider explicitly what is already seen. But of course neither may we overlook it or toss it off as insignificant, as something merely "abstract" – that is, if we really want to stand where we stand.

What appears in advance, the current *being* of a being, is not something abstracted from beings later on, something depleted and thinned out, finally no more than a vapor, [334] nor is it something that becomes accessible only when we who are thinking "reflect" on ourselves. On the contrary, the way to what is already seen but not yet understood, much less conceptualized, is the leading-toward that we already mentioned, namely, ἐπαγωγή. This is what lets us see ahead into the distance, into what we ourselves are not and least of all could ever be, into something far off that nevertheless is most near, nearer than everything that lies in our hand or resounds in our ear or lies before our eyes. In order *not* to overlook what is nearest yet likewise farthest, we must stand above the obvious and the "factual." Differentiating between what appears of and by itself from what does not appear of and by itself is a *xplvētū* in the genuinely Greek sense: separating out what is *superior* from what is inferior. Through this "critical" ability for differentiating, which is always decision, the human being is lifted out of mere captivation by what presses upon and preoccupies him or her and is placed out beyond it, into the relation to being. In the real sense of the word, one becomes ek-sistent, one ek-sists instead of merely "living" and snatching at "reality" in the so-called "concern for real life," where "reality" is only a refuge in the long-standing flight from being. According to Aristotle, those who cannot make such a distinction live like people blind from birth who work at making colors accessible to themselves by reasoning about the names they have heard them called. They choose a way that can never bring them to their goal, because the only road leading there is "seeing," and that is precisely what is denied to the blind. Just as there are people blind to colors, so there are people *blind to φύσις*. And if we recall that *φύσις* has been defined as only one kind of *ωντιά* (beingness), then those blind to *φύσις* are merely one type of people blind to being. Presumably those blind to being far outnumber those blind to color, and what is more, the power of their blindness is even stronger and more obstinate, for they are less obvious and mostly go unrecognized. As a consequence they even pass for the only ones who really see. [335] But obviously our relation to that which, of and by itself, appears in advance and eludes all plans for proof

must be hard to hold on to in its originality and truth. Otherwise Aristotle would not need to explicitly remind us of it nor attack this blindness to being. And our relation to being is hard to hold on to because it seems to be made easy for us by our common comportment toward beings – so easy, in fact, that our relation to being looks as if it could be supplanted by this comportment and be nothing else *but* this comportment.

Aristotle's remarks on the desire to prove that φύσις "shows up" play a special role within the whole of his exposition, and we immediately see this role from the following passage:

X. "But for some (thinkers) φύσις, and so too the beingness of beings from φύσις, appears to be whatever is already and primarily present in any given thing, but in itself lacking all form. In this view the φύσις of the bedstead is the wood, the φύσις of the statue is the bronze. According to Antiphon's explanation, this is shown in the following way: If one buries a bedstead in the earth and if the decay goes so far that a sprout comes up, then what is generated (from this sprout) is not a bedstead but wood. Consequently something that has been brought about in accordance with rules and know-how [e.g., the bedstead made out of wood] is certainly something there, but only insofar as it has appeared incidentally. But its beingness lies in that (the φύσις) which abides through it all, holding itself together throughout everything it 'undergoes.' Furthermore, if any one of these [wood, bronze] has already undergone the same process [of having been brought into a form] with respect to yet another – as have bronze and gold with respect to water, or bones and wood with respect to earth, or similarly anything else among all other beings – then it is precisely the latter (water, earth) that are φύσις and that therefore are the beingness of the former (as beings)." (193 a9–21)

[336] From a superficial point of view, it now seems Aristotle moves from clarifying the correct attitude for determining the essence of φύσις as a manner of being *over to* characterizing the opinion of other thinkers with regard to φύσις. But his purpose here is not *just* to mention other views for the sake of some sort of scholarly completeness. Nor does he intend simply to reject those other views in order to fashion a contrasting background for his own interpretation. Rather, Aristotle's intention is to explain Antiphon's interpretation of φύσις in the light of his own formulation of the question, and so to put Antiphon's interpretation, for the first time, on the *only* path that can lead to an adequate determination of the essence of φύσις as Aristotle envisions it. Up to now we know only this much: φύσις is οὐσία, the being of some beings, specifically of those beings that have been seen antecedently to have the character of κινούμενα, beings that are in movement. Even more clearly: φύσις is the origin and ordering (*ἀρχή*) of the movedness of something that moves of itself.

If φύσις is οὐσία, a manner of being, then the correct determination of the essence of φύσις depends, first, on an adequately original grasp of the essence of οὐσία and, second, on a corresponding interpretation of what it is that we encounter, in the light of a given conception of being, as a φύσει-being. Now, the Greeks understand οὐσία as stable presencing. They give no reasons for this interpretation of being any more than they question the ground of its truth. For in the first beginning of thought, the fact that the being of beings is grasped at all is more essential than the question of its ground.

But how does the Sophist Antiphon, who comes from the Eleatic school, interpret φύσις in the light of being, conceived as stable presencing? He says: *only* earth, water, air, and fire truly *are* in accordance with φύσις. With this, however, there occurs a decision of the greatest import: what always seems to be *more* than mere (pure) earth – e.g., the wood “formed” out of the earth and even more so [337] the bedstead fashioned from the wood – all this “more” is in fact *less* being, because this “more” has the character of articulating, impressing, fitting, and forming, in short, the character of ῥυθμός. Things of this sort change, are unstable, are without stability. From wood one can just as well make a table and a shield and a ship; what is more, the wood itself is only something formed out of the earth. The earth is what truly perdures throughout, whereas the changes of ῥυθμός happen to it only now and again. What properly is, is τὸ ἀρρύθμιστον πρῶτον, the primarily and intrinsically *unformed*, which remains stably present throughout the changes of shape and form that it undergoes. From Antiphon’s theses it is clear that bedsteads, statues, robes, and gowns *are* only inasmuch as they are wood, iron, and the like, i.e., only inasmuch as they consist of something more stable. The most stable, however, are earth, water, fire, and air – the “elements.” But if the “elemental” is what most is, then this interpretation of φύσις – as the primary formless that *sustains* everything that is formed – implies that a decision has likewise been made about the interpretation of every “being,” and that φύσις, as conceived here, is equated with *being pure and simple*. But this means the essence of οὐσία as stable presencing is given a fixed and very specific direction. According to *this* definition of its essence, all things, whether growing things or artifacts, never truly are – and yet they are not nothing; hence they are non-being, not fully sufficing for beingness. In contrast with these non-beings, only the “elemental” qualifies as the essence of being.

The following section gives an insight into the importance of the interpretation of φύσις currently under discussion, i.e., as the πρῶτον ἀρρύθμιστον καὶ ἐξιτόν (the primarily and intrinsically unformed):

XI. "Therefore different people say that either fire, or earth, or air, or water, or some of these ('elements'), or all of them, are φύσις proper and thus are the being of beings as a whole. For whatever each of these people [338] has taken antecedently (ὑπό) to be such as lies present in this way, whether it be one or many, that he declares to be beingness as such, whereas all the rest are modifications or states of what properly is or that into which a being is divided (and thus dissolved into relations); and each of these (that in each case constitute φύσις) therefore remains the same, staying with itself (i.e., there does *not* accrue to them any change by which they might go out of themselves), whereas other beings come to be and pass away 'without limit.' " (193 221-28)

Here Aristotle summarizes the distinction between φύσις as the "elemental," taken as the only proper beings (the πρῶτον ἀρρύθμιστον καθ' αὐτό), and non-beings (πάθη, ξείς, διαθέσεις, ρυθμός) by once again introducing the opinions of other teachers and by making clear reference to Democritus. [From the viewpoint of the history of being, the basis of "materialism" as a metaphysical stance becomes apparent here.]

But more important is the last sentence of the section, where Aristotle thinks out and defines this distinction even more precisely by formulating it in terms of the contrast between ἀΐδιον and γινόμενον ἀπειράχις. We usually think of this contrast as one between the "eternal" and the "temporal." On those terms, the primarily-present unformed is the "eternal," whereas all ρυθμός, as change, is the "temporal." Nothing could be clearer than this distinction; yet one does not consider that this understanding of the distinction between eternity and temporality erroneously reads back into the Greek interpretation of "beings" notions that are merely "Hellenistic" and "Christian" and, in general, "modern." The "eternal" is taken as what endures without limit, with neither beginning nor end, whereas the "temporal" is limited duration. The viewpoint guiding this distinction is based on duration. Certainly the Greeks are acquainted *also* with this distinction regarding beings, but they always think the difference on the basis of their understanding of being. And this is quite distorted by the "Christian" distinction. [339] Already just from the Greek words for these concepts it is clear that the opposition of ἀΐδιον and γινόμενον ἀπειράχις cannot refer to what endlessly endures as opposed to what is limited, for in the text the so-called temporal means *limitless* coming-to-be and passing away. What is opposed to the ἀΐδιον, the "eternal" as supposedly "limitless," is *also* something *limitless*: ἀπειρον (cf. πέρας). Now, how is all this supposed to hit upon *the decisive contrast* in terms of which "being" proper is determined? The so-called eternal is in Greek ἀΐδιον – ἀείδιον; and ἀεί means not just "all the time" and "incessant." Rather, first of all it means "at

any given time." Ὁ ἀεὶ βασιλεὺς = the one who is ruler *at the time* – not the "eternal" ruler. With the word *ἀεὶ* what one has in view is the notion of "staying for a while," specifically in the sense of presencing. The *ἀίδιον* is something present of and by itself without other assistance, and *for this reason* perhaps something constantly present. Here we are thinking not with regard to "duration" but with regard to presencing. This is the clue for correctly interpreting the opposing concept, γινόμενον ἀπειράχις. In Greek thought, what comes to be and passes away is what is sometimes present, sometimes absent – without limit. But πέρας in Greek philosophy is not "limit" in the sense of the outer boundary, the point where something ends. The limit is always what limits, defines, gives footing and stability, that by which and in which something begins and is. Whatever becomes present and absent without limit has *of and by itself* no presencing, and it devolves into instability. The distinction between beings proper and non-beings does not consist in the fact that beings proper perdure without restriction whereas non-beings always have their duration broken off. With regard to duration both could be either restricted or unrestricted. The decisive factor is rather that beings proper are present of and by themselves and for this reason are encountered as what is always already present – ὑποχείμενον πρῶτον. Non-beings, on the other hand, are sometimes present, sometimes absent, because they are present *only* on the basis of something already present; that is, *along with* it they make their appearance or [340] remain absent. Beings (in the sense of the "elemental") are "always 'there,'" non-beings are "always gone" – where "there" and "gone" are understood on the basis of presencing and not with regard to mere "duration." The later distinction between *aeternitas* and *sempiternitas* would come closest to the Greek distinction we have just clarified. *Aeternitas* is the *nunc stans*, *sempiternitas* is the *nunc fluens*. But even here the original essence of being, as the Greeks experienced it, has already vanished. The distinction refers not to the mode of mere duration but only to that of change. What "stays" is the *unchanging*, what flows is the "fleeting," the changing. But both are equally understood in terms of something continuing without interruption.

For the Greeks, however, "being" means: *presencing into the unbidden*. What is decisive is not the duration and extent of the presencing but rather whether the presencing is dispensed into the unhidden and simple, and thus withdrawn into the hidden and inexhausted, or whether presencing is distorted (*ψεῦδος*) into a mere "looks like," into "*mere appearance*," instead of being maintained in *undistortedness* (*ἀ-τρέχεια*). Only by seeing the opposition of unhiddenness and seeming can we adequately know what the essence of *ousia* is for the Greeks. Such knowledge is the condition for

understanding *at all* Aristotle's interpretation of φύσις; in particular it determines whether we can follow the progression of the new approach, which now follows, toward the conclusive determination of the essence of φύσις.

Before attempting this, we must recall, in its simple coherence, what we have seen up to this point.

According to ἐπαγωγή, φύσει-beings are in the state of movedness. But φύσις itself is the ἀρχή, the origin and ordering, of movedness. From this we may readily conclude that the character of φύσις as origin and ordering will be adequately determined only when we achieve an essential insight into that *for which* φύσις is the origin and *over which* it is the ordering power: χίνησις.

[341] Aristotle lets us see this connection with perfect clarity at the beginning of Book III of the *Physics*, in the first three chapters of which he gives the crucial interpretation of the essence of χίνησις:

Ἐπειδὴ τὸ φύσις μὲν ἔστιν ἀρχὴ χινήσεως καὶ μεταβολῆς, τὸ δὲ μέθοδος ἡμῖν περὶ φύσεώς ἔστι, δειτοῦ λανθάνειν τι ἔστι χινησις· ἀναγκαῖον γὰρ ἀγνοουμένης αὐτῆς ἀγνοεῖσθαι καὶ τὴν φύσιν. (200 b1 2–15)

"But now because φύσις is the origin and ordering of movedness, and thus of the change that breaks forth, and because our procedure inquires into φύσις (μέθοδος: the step-by-step inquiry that pursues the subject matter, not our later 'method' in the sense of a certain kind and manner of μέθοδος), in no way must we allow what χίνησις is (in its essence) to remain in hiddenness; for if it (χίνησις) were to remain unfamiliar, φύσις too would necessarily remain in unfamiliarity." [Compare the expression γνώριμον at B, I, 193 a6, *supra*, where it was a question of blindness with regard to being and essence.]

But in the present context the point is merely to sketch out the basic outline of the essence of φύσις. Then, in section XV to follow (193 b7), the essence of the χίνησις proper to φύσις is finally grasped, but it is not properly developed. Rather, there it is only differentiated from the other realm of beings, the movedness and the rest of "artifacts."

Φύσις is the origin and ordering of the movedness (χίνησις) of a moving being (χινούμενον), and more precisely it is so καὶ αὐτὸ καὶ μὲν κατὰ συμβεβηκός. A φύσει-being, in itself, from itself, and unto itself, is such an origin and ordering of the movedness of the moving being it is: moved of and by itself and never incidentally. Thus the characteristic of standing of and by itself must be accorded in a special way to φύσει-beings. A φύσει-being is οὐσία, beingness, in the sense of the German *Liegenschaften*, something lying present of and by itself. And for this reason, some thinkers are overwhelmed and deceived by what merely seems to be the case (δοκεῖ),⁶ namely, that in general the essence of φύσις consists simply in being the

unformed that is primally present, [342] the πρῶτον ἀρρένθμιστον, and, as such, in ruling (ὑπάρχον) normatively over the being of everything that in some other way still “is.” Aristotle does not formally reject this way of conceiving φύσις. But the word δοκεῖ hints at such a rejection. We would do well to consider right now why the interpretation of φύσις as put forth by Antiphon must necessarily remain inadequate:

(1) Antiphon’s doctrine does not consider the fact that φύσις-beings are *in* movedness, that is to say, that movedness co-constitutes the being of these beings. On the contrary, according to his understanding of φύσις, all character of movement, all alteration and changing circumstantiality (φύλαμός) devolves into something only incidentally attaching to beings. Movement is unstable and therefore a non-being.

(2) Beingness is indeed conceived as stability, but one-sidedly in favor of the always-already-underlying. Thus,

(3) The other moment of the essence of οὐσία is omitted: *presencing*, which is the decisive factor in the Greek concept of being. We try to bring out in a word what is most proper to it by saying “presencing” [*Anwesung*] instead of “presentness” [*Anwesenheit*]. What we mean here is not mere presence [*Vorhandenheit*], and certainly not something that is exhausted merely in stability; rather: *presencing*, in the sense of coming forth into the unhidden, placing itself into the open. One does not get at the meaning of presencing by referring to mere duration.

(4) But the interpretation of φύσις given by Antiphon and the others understands the being of the φύσει ὄντα via a reference to “beings” (the “elemental”). This procedure of explaining being through beings instead of “understanding” beings from being results in the aforementioned misunderstanding of the character of φύσις and the one-sided interpretation of οὐσία. Accordingly, because Antiphon’s doctrine in no way reaches the proper area for thinking about being, [343] Aristotle obviously must reject this conception of φύσις as he makes the transition to his own proper interpretation of φύσις. We read:

XII. “Consequently, in one way φύσις is spoken of *as follows*: it is what primarily and antecedently underlies each single thing as ‘the order-able’ for beings that have in themselves the origin and ordering of movedness and thus of change. But in the other way, [φύσις is addressed] as the placing into the form, i.e., as the appearance, (namely, that) which shows itself for our addressing it.” (193 a28–31)

We read and are astonished, for the sentence begins with οὖν, “consequently.” The transition expresses no rejection of the aforementioned doctrine. On the contrary, the doctrine is obviously taken over, albeit with

the stricture that in it we find only εἰς τρόπος, *one way of understanding* the essence of φύσις, namely, as ὕλη ("matter"). "Ἐτερος τρόπος, the other way, which Aristotle develops in the following sections, conceives of φύσις as μορφή ("form"). In this distinction between ὕλη and μορφή (matter and form) we quite easily recognize the distinction that we previously discussed: πρῶτον ἀρρύθμιστον, that which is primarily unstructured, and ρυθμός, structure. But Aristotle does not simply replace Antiphon's distinction with that of ὕλη and μορφή. Antiphon considered ρυθμός (structure) only as something unstable that happens to attach itself incidentally to what alone is stable, to what is unstructured (matter); but for Aristotle, according to the thesis we have just read, μορφή too has the distinction of determining the essence of φύσις. Both interpretations of φύσις are given equal rank, and this offers the possibility of constructing a double concept of φύσις. But in line with this, the first task incumbent upon us is to show that μορφή is the proper characteristic of the essence of φύσις.

This is the way it seems at first glance, but in fact everything shapes up quite differently. The ὕλη–μορφή distinction is not simply another formula for ἀρρύθμιστον–ρυθμός. Rather, it lifts the question of φύσις onto an entirely new level where precisely the unasked question about the κινησις-character of [344] φύσις gets answered, and where φύσις for the first time is adequately conceived as οὐσία, a kind of presencing. This likewise implies that, despite appearances to the contrary, the aforementioned theory of Antiphon is rejected with the sharpest kind of refutation. We can see all this with sufficient clarity only if we understand the now emerging distinction between ὕλη–μορφή in an Aristotelian – i.e., Greek – sense and do not lose this understanding again right away. We are constantly on the verge of losing it because the distinction between "matter" and "form" is a common road that Western thinking has traveled for centuries now. The distinction between content and form passes for the most obvious of all things obvious. Therefore, why should not the Greeks, too, have already thought according to this "schema"? "Ὕλη–μορφή was translated by the Romans as *materia* and *forma*. With the interpretation implied in this translation the distinction was carried over into the Middle Ages and modern times. Kant understands it as the distinction between "matter" and "form," which he explains as the distinction between the "determinable" and its "determination." (Cf. *The Critique of Pure Reason*, "The Amphiboly of Concepts of Reflection," A266, B322.) With this we reach the point furthest removed from Aristotle's Greek distinction.

"Ὕλη, in the ordinary sense means "forest," "thicket," the "woods" in which the hunter hunts. But it likewise means the woods that yield wood

as construction material. From this, *ὑλή*, comes to mean material for any and every kind of building and "production." By having recourse to the "original" meaning of words (as one likes to do) we are supposed to have demonstrated that *ὑλή* means the same as "material." Yes, except that on closer inspection it is only that the crucial *question* now obtrudes for the first time. If *ὑλή* means "material" *for* "production," then the determination of the essence of this so-called material depends on the interpretation of "production." But surely *μορφή* does not mean "production." Rather, it means "shape," and the shape is precisely the "form" into which the "material" is brought by imprinting and molding, i.e., by the act of "forming."

[345] Yes, except that fortunately Aristotle himself tells us how he thinks *μορφή*, and he does so in the very sentence that introduces this concept that is so crucial for his φύσις-interpretation: ἢ μορφὴ καὶ τὸ εἶδος τὸ χατὰ τὸν λόγον: "μορφή, and this means τὸ εἶδος that is in accordance with the λόγος." *Μορφή* must be understood from *εἶδος*, and *εἶδος* must be understood in relation to *λόγος*. But *εἶδος* (which Plato also expressed as *ἰδέα*) and *λόγος* name concepts that, under the titles "idea" and "*ratio*" (reason), indicate fundamental positions taken by Western humanity that are just as equivocal and just as removed from the Greek origin as are "matter" and "form." Nonetheless we must try to reach the original. *Εἶδος* means the appearance of a thing and of a being in general, but "appearance" in the sense of the aspect, the "looks," the view, *ἰδέα*, that it offers and can offer only because the being has been put forth into this appearance and, standing in it, is present of and by itself – in a word, *is*. *ἴδεα* is "the seen," but not in the sense that it becomes such only through our seeing. Rather, *ἴδεα* is what something visible offers to our seeing; it is what offers a view; it is the *sightable*. But Plato, overwhelmed as it were by the essence of *εἶδος*, understood it in turn as something independently present and therefore as something common (*χοινόν*) to the individual "beings" that "stand in such an appearance." In this way individuals, as subordinate to the *ἴδεα* as that which properly is, were displaced into the role of non-beings.

As against this, Aristotle demands that we see that the individual beings in any given instance (this house here and that mountain there) are not at all non-beings, but indeed beings insofar as they put themselves forth into the appearance of house and mountain and so first place this appearance into presencing. In other words, *εἶδος* is genuinely understood as *εἶδος* only when it appears within the horizon of one's immediate addressing of a being, *εἶδος τὸ χατὰ τὸν λόγον*. In each case the statement immediately addresses a this and a that as this and that, i.e., as having such and such an appearance. The clue by which we can understand *εἶδος* and so also *μορφή*,

[346] is λόγος. Therefore, in interpreting the ensuing determination of the essence of μορφή, as εἶδος, we must watch whether and to what extent Aristotle himself follows this clue. In anticipation we can say: μορφή is "appearance," more precisely, the act of standing in and placing itself into the appearance; in general, μορφή means: placing into the appearance. Therefore, in what follows when we speak simply of "appearance," we always have in mind the appearance as (and insofar as) it puts *itself* forth into a given thing that is "there for a while" (for example, the "appearance" "table" that puts *itself* forth into this table here). We call an individual thing *das Jeweilige*, "that which is there for a while," because as an individual thing it "stays for a while" in its appearance and preserves the "while" (the presencing) of this appearance, and, by preserving the appearance, stands forth in it and out of it – which means that it "*is*" in the Greek sense of the word.

By translating μορφή as placing into the appearance, we mean to express initially two things that are of equal importance to the sense of the Greek term but that are thoroughly lacking in our word "form." First, placing into the appearance is a mode of presencing, οὐσία. Μορφή is not an *ontic* property present in matter, but a way of *being*. Second, "placing into the appearance" is movedness, χίνησις, which "moment" is radically lacking in the concept of form.

But this reference to the Greek way of understanding the meaning of μορφή in no way constitutes a demonstration of what Aristotle has undertaken to show, namely, that φύσις itself, according to a second way of addressing it, is μορφή. This demonstration, which takes up the rest of the chapter, goes through various stages in such a way that each stage lifts the task of the demonstration one level higher. The demonstration begins in this way:

XIII. "Just as we (loosely) call by the name τέχνη those things produced according to such a know-how, as well as whatever belongs to those kinds of beings, so too we (loosely) designate as φύσις whatever is according to φύσις and hence belongs to beings of this kind. But on the other hand, just as we would [347] never say that something behaves (and is present) in accordance with τέχνη, or that τέχνη is there, when something is a bedstead merely in terms of appropriateness (διυνάμει) but in fact does not at all have the appearance of the bedstead, so neither would we proceed that way in addressing something that has composed itself into a stand by way of φύσις. For whatever is flesh and bone only in terms of appropriateness does not have the φύσις that appertains to it until it achieves the appearance that we refer to in addressing the thing and that we delineate when we say *what* flesh or bone is; nor is (something that is merely appropriate) already a being from φύσις." (193 a31–b3)

How are these sentences supposed to prove that μορφή goes to make up the essence of φύσις? Nothing is said about μορφή at all. On the contrary, Aristotle begins the demonstration in a wholly extrinsic way with a reference to a way of speaking, one that in fact we still use. For example, we may say of a painting by van Gogh, "This is art," or, when we see a bird of prey circling above the forest, "That is nature." In such "language use" we take a being that, properly considered, is something by virtue of and on the basis of art, and we call this very thing itself "art." For after all, the painting is not art but a work of art, and the bird of prey is not nature but a natural being. Yet this manner of speaking manifests something essential. When do we say so emphatically, "This is art"? Not just when some piece of canvas hangs there smeared with dabs of color, not even when we have just any old "painting" there in front of us, but only when a being that we encounter steps forth preeminently into the appearance of a work of art, only when a being is insofar as it places itself into such an appearance. And the same holds when we say, "That is nature" – φύσις. Therefore, this way of speaking attests to the fact that we find what is φύσις-like only where we come upon a *placing into the appearance*; i.e., only where there is μορφή. Thus μορφή constitutes the essence of φύσις, or at least co-constitutes it.

[348] Yet the demonstration that such is the case is supported only by our way of speaking. And Aristotle gives here a splendid, if questionable, example befitting a philosophy based simply on "linguistic usage." This is what someone today might say if he or she were ignorant of what λόγος and λέγειν mean in Greek. However, to find the direction our thinking must take in order to grasp the essence of λόγος, we need only recall the Greek definition of the essence of the human being as ζῶον λόγον ἔχον. We can – in fact, we must – translate ἀνθρωπός – ζῶον λόγον ἔχον as: "the human being is the living entity to whom *the word* belongs." Instead of "word" we can even say "language," provided we think the nature of language adequately and originally, namely, from the essence of λόγος correctly understood. The determination of the essence of the human being that became common through the "definitions" *homo: animal rationale* and "the human being: the rational animal," does not mean that the human being "has" the "faculty of speech" as one property among others, but rather that the distinguishing characteristic of the essence of the human being consists in the fact that one has, and holds oneself in, λόγος.

What does λόγος mean? In the language of Greek mathematics the word "λόγος" means the same as "relation" and "proportion." Or we say "analogy," taken as "correspondence," and by this we mean a definite kind of relation, a relation of relations; but with the word "correspondence"

we do not think of language and speech. Linguistic usage in mathematics, and partially in philosophy, holds on to something of the original meaning of λόγος. Λόγος belongs to λέγειν, which means and is the same as the German word *lesen*, “to collect” or “to gather” (as in “to gather grapes or grain at the harvest”). But still, nothing is yet gained by establishing that λέγειν means “to collect.” Despite correct reference to root meanings, one can still misconstrue the *genuine* content of the Greek word and understand the concept of λόγος incorrectly by adhering to the meaning that has been prevalent up until now.

[349] “To collect,” to gather, means: to bring various dispersed things together into a unity, and at the same time to bring this unity *forth* and hand it *over* (παρά). Into what? Into the unhidden of presencing [παρουσία = οὐσία (ἀπουσία)]. Λέγειν means to bring together into a unity and to bring forth this unity as gathered, i.e., above all as present; thus it means the same as to reveal what was formerly hidden, to let it be manifest in its presencing. Thus according to Aristotle the essence of an assertion is ἀπόφανσις: letting be seen, from the being itself, what and how the being is. He also calls this τὸ δηλοῦν, the act of revealing. In so doing, Aristotle is not giving a special “theory” of λόγος, but only preserves what the Greeks always recognized as the essence of λέγειν. Fragment 93 of Heraclitus shows this magnificently: ὁ ἄναξ, οὗ τὸ μαντεῖόν ἐστι τὸ ἐν Δελφοῖς, οὔτε λέγει οὔτε χρύπτει ἀλλὰ σημαίνει. The philologists (e.g., Diels, Snell) translate: “The lord whose oracle is at Delphi says nothing, does not speak and does not conceal, but gives a sign.” This translation deprives Heraclitus’s saying of its basic content and its authentic Heraclitean tension and resistance. Οὔτε λέγει οὔτε χρύπτει: here the word λέγειν is opposed to χρύπτει, “to conceal,” and for this reason we must translate it as “to unconceal,” i.e., to reveal. The oracle does not directly *unconceal* nor does it simply conceal, but it points out. This means: it unconceals while it conceals, and it conceals while it unconceals. [For how this λέγειν is related to λόγος and for what λόγος means to Heraclitus, cf. fragments 1 and 2 and others.]

In the Greek definition of the essence of the human being, λέγειν and λόγος mean the relation on the basis of which what is present gathers itself for the first time as such around and for human beings. And only because human beings *are* insofar as they relate to beings as beings, unconcealing and concealing them, can they and must they have the “word,” i.e., speak of the being of beings. But the words that language uses are only fragments that have precipitated out of the word, [350] and from them humans can never find their way to beings or find the path back to them, unless it be on the basis of λέγειν. Of itself λέγειν has nothing to do with saying and with

language. Nonetheless, if the Greeks conceive of saying as λέγειν, then this implies an interpretation of the essence of word and of saying so unique that no later "philosophy of language" can ever begin to imagine its as yet unplumbed depths. Only when language has been debased to a means of commerce and organization, as is the case with us, does thought rooted in language appear to be a mere "philosophy of words," no longer adequate to the "pressing realities of life." This judgment is simply an admission that we ourselves no longer have the power to trust that the word is the essential foundation of all relations to beings as such.

But why do we lose ourselves in this wide-ranging digression into an explanation of the essence of λόγος when our question is about the essence of φύσις? Answer: in order to make clear that when Aristotle appeals to λέγεσθαι he is not relying extraneously on some "linguistic usage" but is thinking out of the original and fundamental relation to beings. Thus this seemingly superficial beginning to the demonstration regains its proper import: if beings having in themselves the origin and ordering of their movedness are experienced by means of λέγειν, then as a result μορφή itself and not just ὕλη (not to mention ἀρρύθμιστον) unveils itself as the φύσις-character of these beings. To be sure, Aristotle does not show this directly but rather in a way that clarifies the concept opposed to μορφή, a concept that has gone unexplained until now: ὕλη. We do not say, "That is φύσις" when there are only flesh and bones lying around. They are to a living entity what wood is to a bedstead: mere "matter." Then does ὕλη mean "matter"? But let us ask again: What does "matter" mean? Does it mean just "raw material"? No, Aristotle characterizes ὕλη as τὸ δυνάμει. Δύναμις means the capacity, or better, the appropriateness for . . . The wood present in the workshop [351] is in a state of appropriateness for a "table." But it is not just any wood that has the character of appropriateness for a table; rather, only this wood, selected and cut to order. But the selection and the cut, i.e., the very character of appropriateness, is decided in terms of the "production" of "what is to be produced." But "to produce" means, both in Greek and in the original sense of the German *Herstellen*, to place something, as finished and as looking thus and so, forth, into presencing. "Τάχις is the appropriate orderable, that which, like flesh and bones, belongs to a being that has in itself the origin and ordering of its movedness. But only in being placed into the appearance is a being *what* and *how* it is in any given case. Thus Aristotle can conclude:

XIV. "For this reason (then), φύσις would be, in another way, the placing into the appearance in the case of those beings that have in themselves the origin and

ordering of their movedness. Of course, the placing and the appearance do not stand off by themselves; rather, it is only in a given being that they can be pointed out by addressing them. However, *that which* takes its stand from these (i.e., from the order-able and from the placing) is certainly not φύσις itself, although it is a φύσει-being – such as, for example, a human being.” (193 b3–6)

These sentences do not simply recapitulate the already proven thesis, namely, that φύσις can be spoken of in *two ways*. Much more important is the emphasis given to the crucial thought that φύσις, spoken of in two ways, is not a being but a manner of *being*. Therefore, Aristotle again presses home the point: the appearance and the placing into the appearance must not be taken Platonically as standing apart unto themselves, but as the being [*Sein*] in which an individual being stands at any given moment – for example, this person here. To be sure, this individual being is *from οὐλη* and μορφή, but precisely for this reason it is a being and *not a way of being* – not φύσις, as are μορφή and οὐλη in their inherent togetherness. In other words, it now becomes clear to what extent Aristotle’s [352] distinction between οὐλη and μορφή is not simply another formula for Antiphon’s distinction between ἀρρύθμιστον and ρυθμός. These latter terms are intended to define φύσις, but they only designate beings – the stable as distinct from the unstable. They do not grasp, much less conceptualize, φύσις as being, i.e., as what makes up the stability or standing-on-its-own of φύσει ζντα. Such being can be understood only if we use λόγος as our clue. But addressing things shows that the appearance and the placedness into the appearance are primary, and from them what we call οὐλη is then determined as the orderable. But with that, yet another issue already gets decided, but one that prompts the next step in the demonstration that φύσις is μορφή. Although οὐλη and μορφή both constitute the essence of φύσις, they do not carry equal weight. Μορφή has *priority*. With that we are saying that the *course* of the demonstration as carried out so far now lifts the *task* of the demonstration one level higher. And Aristotle loses no time in saying so:

XV. “What is more, this (namely, μορφή as the placing into the appearance) is φύσις *to a greater degree* than the orderable is. For each individual thing is addressed [as properly being] when it ‘is’ in the mode of having-itself-in-its-end rather than when it is (only) in the state of appropriateness for . . .” (193 b6–8)

Why is it that μορφή is φύσις not only on a par with οὐλη, but “*to a greater degree*”? Because we speak of something as properly in being only *when* it is in the mode of ἐντελέχεια. Accordingly, μορφή must somehow have the intrinsic character of ἐντελέχεια. To what degree this is true, Aristotle does

not explain here. Neither does he explain what ἐντελέχεια means. This term, coined by Aristotle himself, is the fundamental word of his thinking, and it embodies that knowledge of being that brings Greek philosophy to its fulfillment. “Ἐντελέχεια” comprises the basic concept of Western metaphysics in whose changes of meaning we can best estimate, and indeed must see, the distance between Greek thought in the beginning [353] and the metaphysics that followed. But at first it is not clear why Aristotle introduces ἐντελέχεια here in order to ground the fact that and the degree to which μορφή is μᾶλλον φύσις. Only one thing do we see clearly: Aristotle again appeals to λέγειν, to the addressing of things, in order to show where the proper being of a being can be glimpsed. But we can clear up the initially obscure *grounding* of the proof by clearing up beforehand *what is to be grounded*. What is the meaning of the new claim that overrides the previously equal status of ὅλη and μορφή by maintaining that μορφή is φύσις *to a greater degree*? Earlier we came upon the crucial guiding principle: φύσις is οὐσία, a kind of beingness or presencing. Therefore, the proposition to be grounded maintains that μορφή fulfills what beingness is more than ὅλη does. Earlier still it was established that φύσει ὄντα are χινούμενα: their being is movedness.

We now have to grasp movedness as οὐσία; i.e., we must say what movedness *is*. Only in this way do we clarify what φύσις is as ἀρχή, χινήσεως, and only from the *thus* clarified essence of φύσις will we see why μορφή more fulfills what οὐσία is and therefore why it is φύσις to a greater degree.

What is movedness, taken as the being – i.e., the presencing – of a moving being? Aristotle gives the answer in *Physics* Γ 1–3. It would be presumptuous to try to capture in a few sentences an essential insight into Aristotle's interpretation of movedness, the most difficult thing Western metaphysics has had to ponder in the course of its history. Still we must try to do so, at least to a degree that will allow us to follow the demonstration of the μορφή-character of φύσις. The reason for the difficulty in Aristotle's definition of the essence [of movedness] lies in the strange simplicity of the essential insight. It is a simplicity we seldom achieve because even now we hardly have an inkling of the Greek concept of being, and likewise, in reflecting on the Greek experience of movedness, we forget what is decisive, namely, that the Greeks conceive of movedness in terms of rest. [354] At this point we must distinguish between movedness and movement, as well as between rest and repose. Movedness means the essence from which both movement and rest are determined. Rest is then the “cessation” (*παύεσθαι*, *Metaphysics* Θ 6, 1048 b26) of movement. The lack of movement can be calculated as its limit-case (= 0). But in fact even rest, which we thus take to

be a derivative of movement, also has movedness as its essence. The purest manifestation of the essence of movedness is to be found where rest does not mean the breaking off and cessation of movement, but rather where movedness is gathered up into *standing still*, and where this ingathering, far from excluding movedness, includes and for the first time discloses it. For example: ὅρᾳ ἄμα καὶ ἐώραχε (*Metaphysics* Θ 6, 1048 b23): “Someone sees, and in seeing he or she has also at the same time (precisely) already seen.” The movement of seeing and inspecting what is around one is properly the *highest* state of movedness only in the *repose* of (simple) seeing, gathered into itself. Such seeing is the *τέλος*, the end where the movement of seeing first *gathers itself up* and essentially is movedness. (“End” is not the result of stopping the movement, but is the beginning of movedness as the ingathering and storing up of movement.) Thus the movedness of a movement consists above all in the fact that the movement of a moving being gathers itself into its end, *τέλος*, and as so gathered within its end, “has” itself: ἐν τέλει ἔχει, ἐντελέχεια, having-itself-in-its-end. Instead of the word *ἐντελέχεια*, which he himself coined, Aristotle also uses the word *ἐνέργεια*. Here, in place of *τέλος*, there stands *ἔργον*, the “work” in the sense of what is to be produced and what has been produced. In Greek thought *ἐνέργεια* means “standing in the work,” where “work” means that which stands fully in its “end.” But in turn the “fully ended or fulfilled” [*das Vollendete*] does not mean “the concluded,” any more than *τέλος* means “conclusion.” Rather, in Greek thought *τέλος* and *ἔργον* are defined by *εἰδος*; they name the manner and mode in which something stands “finally and finitely” [“*endlich*”] in its appearance.

From *movedness*, understood as *ἐντελέχεια*, we must now try to understand the movement of what moves as one manner [355] of being, namely, that of a *κινούμενον*. Relying on an example can make the direction of our essential insight more secure. And following Aristotle's approach we choose our example from the field of “production,” the “making” of an artifact. Take a case of generation: a table coming into existence. Here we obviously find movements. But Aristotle does not mean the “movements” performed by the carpenter in handling the tools and the wood. Rather, in the generation of the table, Aristotle is thinking precisely of the *movement of what is being generated itself and as such*. *Κίνησις* is *μεταβολή*, the change of something into something, such that in the change the very act of change itself breaks out into the open, i.e., comes into appearance along with the changing thing. The orderable wood in the workshop changes into a table. What sort of being does this change have? The thing that changes is the wood lying present here, not just any wood but *this* wood that is appropriate.

But “appropriate for” means: tailored to the appearance of a table, hence for that wherein the generating of the table – the movement – comes to its *end*. The change of the appropriate wood into a table consists in the fact that the very appropriateness of what is appropriated emerges more fully into view and reaches its fulfillment in the appearance of a table and thus comes to stand in the table that has been produced, placed *forth*, i.e., into the unhidden. In the rest that goes with this standing (of what has attained its stand), the emerging appropriateness (*δύναμις*) of the appropriate (*δυνάμει*) gathers itself up and “has” itself (*ἔχει*) as in its end (*τέλος*). Therefore Aristotle says (*Physics* I 1, 201 b4f.): ἢ τοῦ διυνατοῦ ἢ διυνατὸν ἐντελέχεια φανερὸν ὅτι κίνησις ἔστιν: “The having-itself-in-its-end of what is appropriate as something appropriate (i.e., in its appropriateness) is clearly (the essence of) movedness.”

But generation is *this* kind of generation – i.e., *κίνησις* in the narrower sense of movement as opposed to rest – *only* insofar as that which is appropriate has *not yet* brought its appropriateness to its end, and so is ἀ-τελές – that is, only insofar as the standing-in-the-work is not yet within its end. Accordingly Aristotle says (*Physics*, Γ 2, 201 b3 if.), ἢ τε κίνησις ἐνέργεια μέν τις εναι δοχεῖ, ἀτελής δέ: “Movement does appear as [356] something like standing-in-the-work, but as not yet having come into its end.”

But therefore having-itself-within-its-end (*ἐντελέχεια*) is the essence of movedness (that is, it is *the being* of a moving being), because this repose most perfectly fulfills what *οὐσία* is: the intrinsically stable presencing in the appearance. Aristotle says this in his own way in a sentence we take from the treatise that deals explicitly with *ἐντελέχεια* (*Metaphysics* Θ 8, 1049 b5): φανερὸν ὅτι πρότερον ἐνέργεια διυνάμεως ἔστιν: “Manifestly standing-in-the-work is prior to appropriateness for . . .” In this sentence Aristotle’s thinking and *pari passu* Greek thinking, reaches its peak. But if we translate it in the usual way, it reads: “Clearly actuality is prior to potentiality.” Ἐνέργεια, standing-in-the-work in the sense of presencing into the appearance, was translated by the Romans as *actus*, and so with one blow the Greek world was toppled. From *actus*, *agere* (to effect) came *actualitas*, “actuality.” *Δύναμις* became *potentia*, the ability and potential that something has. Thus the assertion, “Clearly actuality is prior to potentiality” seems to be evidently in error, for the contrary is more plausible. Surely in order for something to be “actual” and to be able to be “actual,” it must first be possible. Thus, potentiality is prior to actuality. But if we reason this way, we are not thinking either with Aristotle or with the Greeks in general. Certainly *δύναμις* also means “ability” and it can be used as the word for “power,” but when Aristotle employs *δύναμις* as the opposite concept to *ἐντελέχεια*

and ἐνέργεια, he uses the word (as he did analogously with χατηγορία and οὐσία) as a thoughtful name for an essential basic concept in which beingness, οὐσία, is thought. We already translated δύναμις as appropriateness and being appropriate for . . . , but even here the danger persists that we will not think consistently enough in the Greek manner and will shrink from the hard work of getting clear about the meaning of appropriateness for . . . as that manner of emergence which, while still holding itself back and within itself, comes forth into the appearance [357] wherein such appropriateness is fulfilled. Δύναμις is a mode of presencing. But Aristotle says, ἐνέργεια (ἐντελέχεια) is πρότερον, “prior” to δύναμις, “prior,” namely, with regard to οὐσία (cf. *Metaphysics* Θ 8, 1049 b 10, 11). Ἐνέργεια more originally fulfills what pure presencing is insofar as it means a having-itself-in-the-work-and-within-the-end that has left behind the entire “not yet” of appropriateness for . . . , or better, has precisely brought it *forth along with it* into the realization of the finite, fulfilled [*voll-“endetem”*] appearance. The basic thesis Aristotle has put forth concerning the hierarchy of ἐντελέχεια and δύναμις can be expressed briefly as follows: ἐντελέχεια is οὐσία “to a greater degree” than δύναμις is. Ἐνέργεια fulfills the essence of intrinsically stable presencing more essentially than δύναμις does.

In *Physics* B, 1, 193 b6–8 Aristotle says, “What is more, this (namely, μορφή) is φύσις to a greater degree than ὅλη is. For each individual is addressed [as properly being] when it ‘is’ in the manner of having-itself-within-its-end rather than when it is (only) in appropriateness for” It is still unclear to what degree the second sentence can serve to ground the claim that μορφή is not just another τρόπος set on a par with ὅλη, but rather is φύσις to a greater degree than ὅλη is. Μορφή is the placing into the appearance; i.e., it is κίνησις itself, the changing of the appropriate as a breaking out of its appropriateness. But the essence of κίνησις is ἐντελέχεια, which for its part fulfills what οὐσία is to a greater degree and more originally than δύναμις does. The determination of the essence of φύσις is ruled by the guiding principle that φύσις is a kind of οὐσία. Therefore, because μορφή is, in essence, ἐντελέχεια, and thus is οὐσία to a greater degree, then likewise μορφή intrinsically is μᾶλλον φύσις. The placing into the appearance more fulfills what φύσις is: the being of the κινούμενον χαλ· κιντό.

Therefore, now more than ever we need a correct insight into the kind of priority that μορφή has over ὅλη, because along with the priority of μορφή, the essence proper to μορφή is still more clearly revealed. And this means the task of grasping φύσις as μορφή has inevitably moved up to a new level. Therefore, as we take the step into that next level, we must

have clearly [358] in view what we saw at the previous level. Μορφή is φύσις “to a greater degree,” but not because it supposedly is “form” that has subordinate to it a “matter” that it molds. Rather, as the placing into the appearance, μορφή surpasses the orderable (Ὄλη) insofar as μορφή is the presencing of the appropriateness of that which is appropriate, and consequently, in terms of presencing, is more original. But that granted, what now is the perspective within which the essence of μορφή is still more clearly revealed? The following sentence establishes that perspective:

XVI. “Moreover, a human being is generated from a human being, but not a bedstead from a bedstead.” (193 b8–9)

Is this sentence anything more than an empty truism? Yes, it certainly is. Even the transitional word ἔτι, “moreover,” indicates the relation to what went before and at the same time points to an “advance.” Ἐτι γίνεται: we should translate it more strongly: “Moreover, in the area we are talking about, what is at stake is generation (γένεσις), and generation is different in the cases of human beings and of bedsteads, i.e., of φύσει ὄντα (growing things) and of ποιούμενα (artifacts).” (Here where we are dealing with γένεσις, the human being is taken as only a ζῶον, a “living being.”) In other words, μορφή as placing into the appearance is *only now explicitly* grasped as γένεσις. But γένεσις is *that kind* of movedness Aristotle omitted when he listed the types of movement in his introductory characterization of κίνησις as μεταβολή, because to *it* he reserved the task of distinguishing the essence of φύσις as μορφή.

Two kinds of generation are contrasted with each other. And from the way the two are sharply distinguished we have a good opportunity to discern the essence of generation. For the crucial characteristic of μορφή as movedness – namely, ἐντελέχεια – was certainly brought to our attention with regard to the generation of a table. But at the same time we have unwittingly carried over what was said about the generation of an artifact into the question of the μορφή that pertains to φύσις. But is not φύσις then *misunderstood* as some sort of self-making artifact? Or is this [359] not a misunderstanding at all but the only possible interpretation of φύσις, namely, as a kind of τέχνη? That almost seems to be the case, because modern metaphysics, in the impressive terms of, for example, Kant, conceives of “nature” as a “technique” such that this “technique” that constitutes the essence of nature provides the metaphysical *ground* for the possibility, or even the necessity, of subjecting and mastering nature through machine technology. Be that as it may, Aristotle’s seemingly all-too-obvious statement about the

difference between the generation of a human being and the generation of a table forces us into some crucial reflections in which we will have to clarify what role is assigned to the contrast of growing things with artifacts that has been operative from the very beginning of the chapter and has run through the whole explanation.

When Aristotle time and again characterizes growing things by way of analogy with artifacts, does this mean he already understands the φύσει ῥντα as self-making artifacts? No, quite the contrary, he conceives of φύσις as self-production. But is not "production" the same as "making"? It is for us so long as we wander thoughtlessly among worn-out ideas instead of holding on to what was already pointed out. But what if we should find our way back to the realm of being as understood by the Greeks? Then we see that making, ποίησις, is *one* kind of production, whereas "growing" (the going back into itself and emerging out of itself), φύσις, is *another*. Here "to produce" cannot mean "to make" but rather: to place something into the unhiddenness of its appearance; to let something become present; presencing. From this notion of production the essence of generation [*Ent-stehen*] and of its various kinds may be determined. Instead of "generation" we should have to say "derivation" [*Ent-stellung*], which is not to be taken in its usual sense but rather as meaning: to derive from one appearance that appearance into which something produced (in any given instance) is placed and thus *is*. Now there are different kinds of such "derivation." Something generated (say, a table) can be derived from one appearance (the appearance of "table") and placed forth into the same kind of appearance without the first appearance, from which [360] the table is derived, itself performing the placing into the appearance. The first appearance (*εἶδος*), "table," remains only a παράδειγμα, something that certainly shows up in the production but does *nothing more* than that and therefore requires something else that can first place the orderable wood, as something appropriate for appearing as a table, *into* that appearance. In those cases where the appearance merely shows up, and in showing up only guides a know-how in the producing of it and plays an accompanying role rather than actually *performing* the production – there production is a *making*.

This way of showing up is certainly one kind of presencing, but it is not the only kind. It is also possible that an appearance – without showing up specifically as a παράδειγμα, namely, in and for a τέχνη – can directly present itself as what takes over the placing into itself. The appearance places itself forth. Here we have the placing of an appearance. And in thus placing itself forth it places itself into itself; i.e., it *itself* produces something with its kind of appearance. This is μορφή as φύσις. And we can easily see that a ζῷον (an

animal) does not "make" itself and its kind, because its appearance is not and never can be merely a measure or paradigm *according to which* something is produced from something orderable. Rather, such appearance is that which comes to presence [*das An-wesende*] itself, the self-placing appearance that alone in each case orders up the orderable and places it as appropriate into appropriateness. In γένεσις as self-placing, production is entirely the presencing of the appearance itself without the importation of outside help – whereas such outside help is what characterizes all "making." Whatever produces itself, i.e., places itself into its appearance, needs no fabrication. If it did, this would mean an animal could not reproduce itself without mastering the science of its own zoology. All this indicates that μορφή – not just more than ὅλη, but in fact alone and completely – is φύσις. And this is exactly what the supposed truism above would have us understand. But as soon as it becomes clear that φύσις is γένεσις in this sense, its state of movedness requires a definition, one that in every respect identifies its uniqueness. Therefore a further step is necessary [361]:

XVII. "Furthermore, φύσις, which is addressed as γένεσις – i.e., as deriving-and-placing-something so that it stands *forth* – is (nothing less than) being-on-the-way toward φύσις. (And this), of course, not as the practice of medicine is said to be the way not toward the art of medicine but toward health. For whereas the practice of medicine necessarily comes from the art of medicine, it is not directed toward this art (as its end). But φύσις is not related to φύσις in this way (namely, as medicine is to health). Rather, whatever is a being from and in the manner of φύσις goes from something toward something insofar as this being is determined by φύσις (in the movedness of this going). But 'toward what' does it go forth in the manner of φύσις? Not toward that 'from which' (it is derived in any given instance) but rather toward that as which it is generated in each instance." (193 b12–18)

Characterized as γένεσις in the previous section, φύσις is now understood as determined by ὁδός. We immediately translate ὁδός with "way," and we think of this as a stretch lying between the starting point and the goal. But the "way-ness" of a way must be looked for in another perspective. A way *leads* through an area; it opens itself up and opens up the area. A way is therefore the same as the process of passage from something to something else. It is way as *being-on-the-way*.

If we are to determine the γένεσις-character of φύσις more exactly, we have to clarify the movedness of this kind of movement. The movedness of movement is ἐνέργεια ἀτελής, the standing-in-the-work that has not yet come into its end. But according to what we said earlier, ἔργον, work, means neither making nor the artifact made, but that which is to be produced, brought into presencing. In itself, ἐνέργεια ἀτελής is already a

being-on-the-way that, as such and as a process, places forth what is to be produced. The being-on-the-way in φύσις is μορφή (self-placing). Now, the previous section pointed out that *from* which μορφή as self-placing is on the way: the appearance of the φύσει ὅν is what *places itself* in the self-placing. But what is yet to be determined is the “whereunto” of the process, or better, the meaning of ὁδός that results from the determination of the “whereunto.”

[362] Φύσις is ὁδός ἐκ φύσεως εἰς φύσιν, the being-on-the-way of a self-placing thing toward itself as what is to be produced, and this in such a way that the self-placing is itself wholly of a kind with the self-placing thing to be produced. What could be more obvious than the opinion that φύσις is therefore a kind of self-making, hence a τέχνη, the only difference being that the end of this making has the character of φύσις? And we do know of such a τέχνη. Ἰατρική, the art of medicine, has its τέλος as ὑγίεια, a φύσις-like condition. Ἰατρική is ὁδός εἰς φύσιν. But just when the road seems open to an analogy between φύσις and Ἰατρική, the basic difference between the two ways of generating a φύσει ὅν comes to light. Ἰατρική, as ὁδός εἰς φύσιν, is a being-on-the-way *toward* something that precisely is *not* Ἰατρική, not the art of medicine itself, i.e., not a τέχνη. Ἰατρική would have to be ὁδός εἰς Ἰατρική in order to be at all analogous to φύσις. But if it were, it would no longer be Ἰατρική, because practicing medicine has as its end the state of health and this alone. Even if a doctor practices medicine in order to attain a higher degree of the τέχνη, he or she does so only in order all the more to reach the τέλος of restoring health – provided, of course, that we are talking about a real doctor and not a medical “entrepreneur” or “time-server.”

The renewed attempt to clarify the essence of φύσις by way of an analogy with τέχνη fails precisely here *from every conceivable point of view*. This means: we must understand the essence of φύσις entirely from out of itself, and we should not detract from the astonishing fact of φύσις as ὁδός φύσεως εἰς φύσιν by overhasty analogies and explanations.

But even when we give up pressing the analogy to τέχνη, one last tempting “explanation” now urges itself upon us. As φύσεως ὁδός εἰς φύσιν, is not φύσις a constant circling back upon itself? However, this is precisely what is not the case. As *on the way* to φύσις, φύσις does not fall back on whatever it comes forth from. [363] As *on the way* to φύσις, φύσις does not fall back into what it comes from, precisely because the essence of generation is the self-placing into the appearance. If such placing lets the self-placing appearance be present, and if the appearance is, in each case, present only in an individual “this” which has such an appearance, then to this extent,

that *into which* the generation places the appearance surely must in each instance be something other than that “from which” it is generated.

Certainly φύσεως ὁδὸς εἰς φύσιν is a mode of coming forth into presencing, in which the “from which,” the “to which,” and the “how” of the presencing remain the same. Φύσις is a “going” in the sense of a going-forth toward a going-forth, and in this sense it is indeed a going *back* into itself; i.e., the *self* to which it returns remains a going-forth. The merely spatial image of a circle is essentially inadequate because this going-forth that goes back into itself precisely lets something go forth from which and to which the going-forth is in each instance on the way.

This essence of φύσις as χίνησις is fulfilled only by the kind of movedness that μορφή is. Therefore the decisive sentence, the one toward which this whole treatment of the essence of φύσις has been moving, says succinctly:

XVIII. “And so this, the self-placing into the appearance, is φύσις.” (193 b18)

In the self-placing, as the ἐνέργεια ἀτελῆς characteristic of γένεσις, only the εἶδος, the appearance, is present as the “whence,” the “whereunto,” and the “how” of this being-on-the-way. So μορφή is not only φύσις “to a greater degree” than ὅλη is, and still less can it be put *merely on a par* with ὅλη such that the definition of the essence of φύσις would leave us with two τρόποι of equal weight, and Antiphon’s doctrine would be entitled to equal authority next to Aristotle’s. Antiphon’s doctrine now gets its stiffest rejection with the sentence, “Μορφή, and it alone, fulfills the essence of φύσις.” But in the transition to his own interpretation (193 a28: ἔνα μὲν οὖν τρόπον οὐτας ἡ φύσις λέγεται),⁷ Aristotle did, after all, take over the doctrine of Antiphon. How can this fact be reconciled with the sentence we have just reached, which allows *one and only one* τρόπος? To understand this, we must know the extent to which [364] Aristotle’s acceptance of Antiphon’s doctrine nevertheless constitutes the sharpest rejection of it. The most drastic way to reject a proposition is not to dismiss it brusquely as disproven and merely brush it aside, but on the contrary to take it over and work it *into* an essential and grounded connection with one’s own argument – i.e., to take it over and work it in as the non-essence that necessarily belongs to the essence. For if it is possible at all to have two τρόποι in the interpretation of φύσις with regard to μορφή and ὅλη, with the result that ὅλη can be mistakenly interpreted as something formless that is stably at hand, then the reason must lie in the essence of φύσις, and that now means: in μορφή itself. Aristotle refers to this reason in the following passage, where his interpretation of φύσις reaches its conclusion:

XIX. "However, the self-placing into the appearance – and therefore φύσις as well – is spoken of *in two ways*, for 'privation' too is something like appearance." (193 b18–20)

The reason why φύσις can be looked at from two viewpoints and spoken of in two ways consists in the fact that μορφή, in itself – and consequently the essence of φύσις as well – is *twofold*. The sentence asserting the twofold essence of φύσις is grounded in the remark following it: "for 'privation' too is something like appearance."

As a word, a concept, and an "issue," στέρησις is introduced in this chapter just as brusquely as was ἐντελέχεια before it, probably because it has as decisive a significance in Aristotle's thought as does ἐντελέχεια. (On στέρησις, cf. *Physics* A, 7 and 8, although there, too, it is not explained.)

To interpret this last section of Aristotle's reading of φύσις, we must answer four questions:

- (1) What does στέρησις mean?
- (2) How is στέρησις related to μορφή, such that στέρησις can help clarify the twofoldness of μορφή? [365]
- (3) In what sense, then, is the essence of φύσις twofold?
- (4) What consequence does the twofoldness of φύσις have for the final determination of its essence?

Re (1) What does στέρησις mean? Literally translated, στέρησις means "privation," but this does not get us very far. On the contrary, this meaning of the word can even bar the way to understanding the issue if, as always in such cases, we lack a prior familiarity with, and a knowledge of, the realm in which the word arises as a name for the issue at stake. The realm is shown us by the claim that στέρησις, too, is something like εἰδος. But we know that the εἰδος, specifically the εἰδος χατὰ τὸν λόγον, characterizes μορφή, which in turn fulfills the essence of φύσις as οὐσία τοῦ κινούμενον χαθί αὐτό, i.e., of φύσις as χίνησις. The essence of χίνησις is ἐντελέχεια. This is enough to let us know that we can adequately understand the essence of στέρησις only within the area of, and on the basis of, the Greek interpretation of *being*.

The Romans translated στέρησις as *privatio*. This word is taken as a kind of *negatio*. But negation can be understood as a form of denial, of "saying no." Thus στέρησις belongs within the realm of "saying" and "addressing" – χαττυγορία in the preterminological sense we noted earlier.

Even Aristotle seems to understand στέρησις as a kind of saying. As evidence of this we offer a text from the treatise Ηερὶ γενέσεως καὶ φθιορᾶς (A 3, 318 b16f.), a text that is, at one and the same time, appropriate for

clarifying the sentence we are discussing from the *Physics* while, in addition, offering us a concrete example of a στέρησις: τὸ μὲν θερμὸν χαττγορία τις καὶ εἰδος. ὃ δὲ ψυχρότερις στέρησις. “‘Warm’ is in a sense a way we can address things and therefore, properly speaking, an appearance; but ‘cold,’ on the other hand, is a στέρησις.” Here “warm” and “cold” are opposed to each other as χαττγορία τις versus στέρησις. But observe carefully that Aristotle says χαττγορία τις. “Warm” is a way of addressing things only in a certain sense – in fact, the word is written in quotation marks. Hence, saying something is “warm” is [366] an attribution, saying something *to* something; correspondingly, στέρησις is, in a certain sense, a denial, saying something *away from* something. But to what extent is “cold” a denial?

When we say, “The water is cold,” we attribute something *to* that being, yes, but in such a way that, in the very attribution, “warm” is *denied* of the water. But what is at stake in this distinction between warm and cold is not the distinction between attribution and denial; what is at stake, rather, is *that which is attributable or deniable* in accordance with its εἰδος. And therefore the chapter’s concluding sentence, which is supposed to ground the twofold essence of μορίη, and therefore of φύσις, by means of a reference to στέρησις, says: καὶ γὰρ ὃ στέρησις εἰδός πώς ἔστιν. “For privation, too, – i.e., what is denied or ‘said-away’ – is a kind of appearance.” In the coldness something appears and is present, something, therefore, that we “sense.” In this “sensed something” that is present, something else is likewise absent, indeed in such a way that we sense what is present in a special way precisely because of this absencing. In στέρησις, “privation,” it is a matter of “taking something *away*” by a kind of saying-it-away. Στέρησις certainly refers to an “away,” but always and above all it means something falls away, has gone away, remains away, becomes absent. If we bear in mind that οὐσία, beingness, means presencing, then we need no further long-winded explanations to establish where στέρησις as absencing belongs.

And yet right here we reach a danger point in our comprehension. We could make matters easy for ourselves by taking στέρησις (absencing) merely as the opposite of presencing. But στέρησις is *not* simply absentness [*Abwesenheit*]. Rather, as absencing, στέρησις is precisely στέρησις for presencing. What then is στέρησις? (Cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* Δ 22, 1022 b22ff.) When today, for example, we say, “My bicycle is gone!” we do not mean simply that it is somewhere else; we mean it is missing. When something is missing, the missing *thing* is gone, to be sure, but the *goneness* itself, the lack itself, is what irritates and upsets us, and the “lack” can do this only if the lack itself is “there,” i.e., only if the lack *is*, i.e., constitutes a manner of being. Στέρησις as absencing is not simply absentness; rather, [367] it

is a *presencing*, namely, that kind in which the *absencing* (but not the absent thing) is present. Στέρησις is είδος, but είδος πως, an appearance and presencing of sorts. Today we are all too inclined to reduce something like this presencing-by-absencing to a facile dialectical play of concepts rather than hold on to what is astonishing about it. For in στέρησις is hidden the essence of φύσις. To see this we must first answer the next question.

Re (2) How is στέρησις related to μορφή? The self-placing into the appearance is χίνησις, a change from something to something, a change that in itself is the “breaking out” of something. When wine becomes sour and turns to vinegar, it does not become nothing. When we say, “It has turned to vinegar,” we mean to indicate that it came to “nothing,” i.e., to what we had not expected. In the “vinegar” lies the nonappearance, the absencing, of the wine. Μορφή as γένεσις is ὁδός, the being-on-the-way of a “not yet” to a “no more.” The self-placing into the appearance always lets something be present in such a way that *in* the presencing an absencing simultaneously becomes present. While the blossom “buds forth” (ρύει), the leaves that prepared for the blossom now fall off. The fruit comes to light, while the blossom disappears. The self-placing into the appearance, the μορφή, has a στέρησις-character, and this now means: μορφή is διχῶς, *intrinsically twofold*, the presencing of an absencing. Consequently the third question already has its answer.

Re (3) In what sense is the essence of φύσις twofold? As φύσεως ὁδὸς εἰς φύσιν, φύσις is a kind of ἐνέργεια, a kind of οὐσία. Specifically it is production of itself, from out of itself, unto itself. Nonetheless, in essentially “being-on-the-way,” each being that is *pro*-duced or put *forth* (excluding artifacts) is also put *away*, as the blossom is put away by the fruit. But in this putting *away*, the self-placing into the appearance – φύσις – does not cease to be. On the contrary, the plant in the form of fruit goes back into its seed, which, according to its essence, is nothing else but a going-forth into the appearance, ὁδὸς φύσεως εἰς φύσιν. With its very coming-to-life every living thing already begins to die, and conversely, dying is but a [368] kind of living, because only a living being has the ability to die. Indeed, dying can be the highest “act” of living. Φύσις is the self-productive putting-away of itself, and therefore it possesses the unique quality of delivering over to itself that which *through it* is first transformed from something orderable (e.g., water, light, air) into something appropriate for it alone (for example, into nutrient and so into sap or bones). One can take this “appropriate” for itself as the orderable and consider this orderable as material, and therefore take φύσις as mere “change of material.” One can further reduce the material to what is most constantly present in it, and take this as the stable,

indeed as the most stable, and thus in a certain sense as that which most is – and then declare this to be φύσις. Looked at in this way, φύσις offers the dual possibility of being addressed in terms of matter and form. This dual way of addressing φύσις has its basis in the original twofold essence of φύσις. More precisely it is grounded in a misinterpretation of the δινάμει ὃν, one that changes the δινάμει ὃν from “the appropriate” to something merely orderable and on hand. The doctrine of Antiphon and of his successors, who have continued in an unbroken line down to today, seizes upon the most extreme non-essence of φύσις and inflates it into the real and only essence. In fact, such inflation remains the essence of all nonessence.

Re (4) What is the consequence of the twofoldness of φύσις for the final determination of its essence? Answer: the simplicity of this essence. If we keep the whole in mind, then we now have *two* conceptual determinations of the essence of φύσις. The one takes φύσις as ἀρχὴ χινήσεως τοῦ κινούμενον καθ' αὐτό, the origin and ordering of the movedness of what moves of and by itself. The other takes φύσις as μορφή, which means as γένεσις, which means κίνησις. If we think both determinations in their unity, then from the viewpoint of the first one, φύσις is nothing other than ἀρχὴ φύσεως, which is precisely what the second definition says: φύσις is φύσεως ὁδὸς εἰς φύσιν – φύσις is itself the origin and ordering of itself. From the viewpoint of the second definition, φύσις is the μορφὴ ἀρχῆς, the self-placing in which the origin places itself *into* the ordering process and [369] as that which orders the self-placing into the appearance. Μορφή is the essence of φύσις as ἀρχή, and ἀρχή is the essence of φύσις as μορφή, insofar as the uniqueness of μορφή consists in the fact that, in φύσις, the εἶδος, of and by itself and as such, brings itself into presencing. Unlike τέχνη, φύσις does not first require a supervening ποίησις that takes just something lying around (e.g., wood) and brings it into the appearance of “table.” Such a product is never, of and by itself, on-the-way and never can be on-the-way to a table.

Φύσις, on the other hand, is the presencing of the absencing of itself, one that is on-the-way from itself and unto itself. As such an absencing, φύσις remains a going-back-into-itself, but this going-back is only the going of a going-forth.

But here in the *Physics* Aristotle conceives of φύσις as the beingness (*οὐσία*) of a particular (and in itself limited) region of beings, things that grow as distinguished from things that are made. With regard to their kind of *being*, these beings stem precisely from φύσις, of which Aristotle therefore says: ἐν γάρ τι γένος τοῦ ὄντος ἡ φύσις, “Φύσις is *one* branch of being [among others] for (the many-branched tree of) beings.” Aristotle says this in a treatise that later, in the definitive ordering of his writings by the

Peripatetic school, was catalogued with those treatises that ever since have borne the name μετὰ τὰ φυσικά – which are writings that both do and do not belong to the φυσικά. The sentence we just read comes from chapter three of the treatise now called Book I (IV) of the *Metaphysics*, and the information it provides about φύσις is identical with the guiding principle put forth in *Physics*, Book B, chapter one, which we have just interpreted: φύσις is one kind of οὐσία. But this same treatise of the *Metaphysics*, in its first chapter, says exactly the opposite: οὐσία (the being of beings as such in totality) is φύσις τις, something like φύσις. But Aristotle is far from intending to say that the essence of being in general is, properly speaking, of the same kind as the φύσις which, a little later, he explicitly characterizes as only one branch of being [370] among others. Rather, this barely adequately expressed assertion that οὐσία is φύσις τις is an echo of the great beginning of Greek philosophy, the first beginning of Western philosophy. In this beginning being was thought as φύσις, such that the φύσις that Aristotle conceptualized can be only a late derivative of originary φύσις. And a much weaker, much harder-to-hear echo of the original φύσις that was projected as the being of beings, is still left for us when we speak of the “nature” of things, the nature of the “state,” and the “nature” of the human being, by which we do not mean the natural “foundations” (thought of as physical, chemical, or biological) but rather the pure and simple *being and essence* of those beings.

But how should we think φύσις in the way it was originally thought? Are there still traces of its projection in the fragments of the original thinkers? In fact there are, and not just traces, for everything they said that we can still understand speaks only of φύσις, provided we have the right ear for it. The indirect witness thereof is the nonessence that is the historiographical interpretation of original Greek thinking as a “philosophy of nature” in the sense of a “primitive” “chemistry,” an interpretation that has been prevalent for some time now. But let us leave this nonessence to its own ruin.

In conclusion let us give thought to the saying of a thinker from those beginnings, one who speaks directly of φύσις and who means by it (cf. Fragment 1) the being of beings as such as a whole. Fragment 123 of Heraclitus (taken from Porphyry) says: φύσις χρύπτεσθαι φίλει, “Being loves to hide itself.” What does this mean? It has been suggested, and still is suggested, that this fragment means being is difficult to get at and requires great efforts to be brought out of its hiding place and, as it were, purged of its self-hiding. But what is needed is precisely the opposite. Self-hiding belongs to the predilection [*Vor-liebe*] of being; i.e., it belongs to that wherein being has secured its essence. And the essence of being is to

unconceal itself, to emerge, to come out into the unhidden [371] – φύσις. Only what in its very essence *unconceals* and must unconceal itself, can love to conceal itself. Only what is unconcealing can be concealing. And therefore the χρύπτεσθαι of φύσις is not to be overcome, not to be stripped from φύσις. Rather, the task is the much more difficult one of allowing to φύσις, in all the purity of its essence, the χρύπτεσθαι that belongs to it.

Being is the self-concealing revealing, φύσις in the original sense. Self-revealing is a coming-forth into unhiddenness, and this means: first preserving unhiddenness as such by taking it back into its essence. Unhiddenness is called ἀλήθεια. Truth, as we translate this word, is of the origin, i.e., it is essentially not a characteristic of human knowing and asserting, and still less is it a mere value or an “idea” that human beings (although they really do not know why) are supposed to strive to realize. Rather, truth as self-revealing belongs to being itself. Φύσις is ἀλήθεια, unconcealing, and therefore χρύπτεσθαι φίλεī.

[Because φύσις in the sense of the *Physics* is one kind of οὐσία, and because οὐσία itself stems in its essence from φύσις as projected in the beginning, therefore ἀλήθεια belongs to being and therefore presencing into the open of the ἰδέα (Plato) and into the open of the εἶδος χατὰ τὸν λόγον (Aristotle) is revealed as *one* characteristic of οὐσία; therefore for Aristotle the essence of χίνησις becomes visible as ἐντελέχεια and ἐνέργεια.]