

Khôralogical Connections From Being to Event in Heidegger and Whitehead

Given the immensity of its scope, intensity of its imagination, and profundity of its insight, it isn't surprising that Plato's *Timaeus* has captured the creative imagination of generations of thinkers in a wide variety of contexts. *Timaeus* is a poignant and provocative reflection on the fundamental features of the universe; and not merely its essential elements, but also the primordial origins of being and becoming as such. Indeed, its seemingly limitless concern is only matched by the elusiveness of its most enigmatic and evocative idea: *khôra*. What is the significance of this deeply mysterious something—this puzzling *non-thing* that is somehow receptive to and reflective of every specifiable thing? Why did Timaeus feel the need to introduce a 'third kind' into his fundamental schema, a third element in addition to that which always is, but has no becoming—namely, being—, and that which comes to be and passes away, but never really is—namely, becoming? The purpose of this essay will be to draw upon this mediating manifold as a potentially illuminating space in which Martin Heidegger and Alfred North Whitehead simultaneously converge into and diverge from one another.

While Heidegger and Whitehead both acknowledged their indebtedness to, dependence on, and appreciation for individuals like Plato and Aristotle, they also leveled an incisive critique against the entire tradition that emerged out of the ancient Athenian milieu. And, even though their philosophical inclinations, conceptual frameworks, and experimental methodologies radically differ, they both located the source of and solution to the weaknesses they identified in that same setting. In other words, they each sought a kind of new beginning for philosophy. However, if Heidegger's deconstruction of Western thought led him to explore paths that might lead to non-metaphysical modes of thought, then Whitehead's critical reflections led him to experiment with the possibility of novel forms of metaphysical speculation. Of particular interest here, however, is that both thinkers found inspiration in Plato's enigmatic notion of *khôra*. And, it is in relation to that idea, or what I

here refer to as their *khôralogical* forms of thinking, that I want to offer a critical comparison between Heidegger's movement away from the being of beings and toward a confrontation with being itself, and Whitehead's movement away from the being of beings and toward an affirmation of becoming. While Heidegger's brief consideration of *khôra* may help illuminate what he refers to as the fundamental 'thing' or 'matter for thought'—being in terms of *Ereignis* or event of appropriation—, Whitehead's reflection on *khôra* offers a substantive contribution to his understanding of the unifying factor in the manifold of becoming—creativity or category of the ultimate. The central thrust of this essay will thus be to explore whether there are any *khôralogical* connections to be made between *Ereignis* and creativity, and the extent to which those potential points of contact might be mutually enriching. Although both thinkers call us to consider several profound insights, and display intriguing and unexpected moments of resonance, the tentative thesis to be developed is that Whitehead's 'width of view' provides an engagement with and elucidation of being in terms of event that is more compelling.