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A Phenomenological Interpretation of Religion via Pre-Socratic Thinking

Introduction:

What is religion? What does the concept of religion mean? Today, the word 'religion' appears everywhere; a seemingly all pervasive notion associated with a vast array of phenomena, including: war, terrorism, politics, science fiction, morality, and of course, with delusion and irrationality. However, what religion is, or what it means, remains a highly contested matter. It will be the aim of this paper to offer an interpretation of the meaning of the concept of religion by using just one of many philosophical ways of approaching religion, namely; phenomenology as ontology.

The paper will focus upon the remaining fragments of three Pre-Socratic philosophers; Anaximander, Heraclitus, and Parmenides, seeking in these fragments the basic conceptual subject matter for an interpretation of the meaning of religion. I will argue that these fragments reveal that the meaning of religion is a relation between being-human and what gets called the arche (or ground of being). Further, I will argue that this relation can be conceptually determined as a quest for ground: the ground of the human sense of being and of grounding thinking, meaning, truth, and purpose…

Ultimately, I will argue in this paper that there are two essential characteristics of the meaning of religion as this relation to ground(ing). First, insofar as religion belongs to humans in our being; the meaning of religion may be characterized as the directed-ness of being-human towards meaning and purpose. Additionally, as with all relationships, the relationship that constitutes religion has a 'towards which' – or – if you will, a being that is related to. Thus, the second essential characteristic of religion will be disclosed as the arche; that which is the ground of being and as such, that which is otherwise than being.

Phenomenology as Ontology:

So, what do I mean by phenomenology as ontology? I suppose first, that a phenomenology as ontology will be a way of doing philosophy loosely based upon Martin Heidegger's formulation of phenomenology in such works as: *Ontology – The*

Hermeneutics of Facticity, The Basic Problems of Phenomenology, and *Being and Time*. I say 'loosely based' insofar as I don't consider myself an orthodox Heideggerian, and moreover, I would argue that there are major flaws in Heidegger's conception of religion.

Let me then outline what I mean by a phenomenology as ontology in more depth. I think that the genius of Heidegger's phenomenology is marked by two interrelated realizations: first, that philosophy necessarily begins with the question of being, and therein, that philosophy has no hope of thinking about being properly unless we first address the question of how humans, in our being, are able to grasp the meaning of being. These two interrelated realizations, I think, are most clearly expressed in the introduction to *Being and Time*, where Heidegger states: *'Inquiry itself is the behaviour of a questioner, and therefore of an entity, and as such has its own character of being'*.[1]

These interrelated realizations, I would argue, are the foundation of phenomenology as ontology; providing phenomenology with two foundational tasks to fulfil. The first task will be to provide an ontological analysis of the being of humans; therein showing how it is possible for humans to grasp being, and equally, showing how it is possible for humans to misunderstand or misinterpret being[2]. The second task facing phenomenology will be to show how the being of an entity shows itself[3]. This second task gives rise to the concept of phenomenon upon which phenomenology rests – that is: the formal conception of the being of an entity as it shows itself. At this point, however, the two tasks of phenomenology merge together – for the only way to analyze the being of humans is on the basis of already, in advance, determining the meaning of phenomenon[4].

If we think about it, the meaning of phenomenon has already been implicitly predetermined in Heidegger's two realizations in relation to being. The first was that philosophy is all about thinking being[5]. Thus, it follows that the concept of phenomenon will refer to the being of an entity.[6] Accordingly, the task of phenomenology is to work out how humans, in our being, grasp the being of entities. It follows from this that the concept of phenomenon will signify the way in which humans are able to grasp being. Thus, in both, the concept of phenomenon will be

conceived of as the way in which humans grasp being in such a way that the being of an entity shows itself. In other words, phenomenon signifies how grasping being 'belongs-to' the being of humans[7].

Here, the phenomenon can be said to 'belong-to' the being of humans in two primary ways: the human intuition of the being of an entity and accordingly, the way in which humans interpret or misinterpret being. This is why, ultimately, phenomenology as ontology is a hermeneutical method; a way of doing philosophy that prioritizes the problem of interpreting being as the truth of being or the misinterpretation of being.

When we turn to the concept of religion as phenomenon it follows that a phenomenological interpretation of religion will constitute the meaning of religion via three primary questions. The first question will be: to which entity in its being does religion belong to? In this respect, the initial answer will be: it is the human being to whom the phenomenon of religion belongs to and as such, we can constitute the meaning of religion as 'belonging-to' the being of humans. The second question follows as a consequence of the first: what then are the characteristics of being human that grounds religion as a phenomenon? The final question flows from the second: what can we say about the meaning of religion insofar as it belongs-to the being of humans in a positive way? These are the questions through which I will interpret the fragments of Anaximander, Heraclitus, and Parmenides…

The Pre-Socratic Fragments:

To get to the heart of what is indicated about the meaning of religion in the Pre-Socratics, it will be necessary to first figure out what they thought about being and the place of the concept of being in their thinking. What we will find in the fragments, I would argue, is that being is characterized as a concept that underlies all thinking about the truth of entities. However, the concept of being as such, is itself grounded upon the concept of the *arche* or first principle. Simply put, for Anaximander, Heraclitus, and Parmenides being and human thinking about entities are the same; being is thinking the truth of entities. However, thinking in and of itself, they argue, is founded upon that which is otherwise than being. This distinction, I will argue, tells us what these pre-Socratic philosophers thought about the being of humans, and therein, provides indications of the meaning of religion.

I will begin with the first fragment of Anaximander, which reads:
'The apeiron is the principle of existing things; further, the source from which existing things derive their existence is also that to which they return at their destruction, according to necessity; for they give justice and make reparation to one another for their injustice, according to the arrangement of time'[8]

What then do these fragments tell us? This, of course, rests upon the contentious question of what Anaximander meant by the *apeiron*. I would argue that the notion of *apeiron* may be characterized as a formal title for *arche*. In this respect, the *apeiron* certainly signifies the philosophical notion of *arche*, but additionally, does so in its own way wherein the term *apeiron* has priority over the term *arche*. In other words, the *apeiron* signifies *arche*, not in reference to being, but rather in the sense implicit to the word '*a*-peiron'.

Etymologically, *apeiron* means literally 'lack of bounds'. A conceptually consistent interpretation of this term, based upon its use in the fragments, reveals the meaning of the apeiron to be something like absence of bounded-ness, absence of physical properties, and further, absence of any physical qualities that can be thought. In this sense, the apeiron is given an interpretation consistent with its use in the fragments as a name for the *arche*, wherein *arche* signifies the absence of physical characteristics or knowable attributes in relation to the physical world.

This general view of the *apeiron* is evidenced in the attributes Anaximander gives to it elsewhere in the fragments. Initially, the *apeiron* is given the attribute of 'surrounding'. It is not consistent, then, to posit that there is some stuff that surrounds the physical; for in being physical the *apeiron* could no longer surround. Rather, the attribute of surrounding has the character of binding or holding together as something other than the physical that determines the physical. As such, surrounding belongs 'to some other indeterminable *physis*'[9].

The use of this phrase: 'some other *apeiron physis*' reveals precisely the problem Anaximander faces in what is sought and the way it is thought. For, the dilemma revealed therein is of how to discuss a non-physical conception of the *arche* without

utilizing physically loaded terminology. This task is in one sense impossible, for the very term *a-peiron* itself points to the non-physical via the physical. The absence, or negation, of the physical is conceived of in *apeiron* as that which lacks boundaries. The physical therein, is posited essentially as that with boundaries or that which is bound.

An attribute associated with the *apeiron* through justice is steering. Herein, a careful analysis of the fragments reveals in justice a notion of that which stands outside of the spatio-temporal order of things. Fragment one discusses the activities of things as just or unjust from which, by necessity, gets played out in time and according to the measure of time[10]. However, justice and injustice are not determined by the things involved or by the measure of time. Rather, time is the realm through which things are subjected to justice in its effects or its judgments. Thus, time and *physis* in their unity is the realm of the effects of justice and is a realm wherein justice steers.

For, Anaximander justice does not belong to the thing in its being nor the spatio-temporal realm. It follows that the correlation of *arche* and justice reveals itself somehow in the relation of the proper and becoming/destruction. Becoming and destruction, herein, are subservient to the *arche*. The *arche* forms a process of effect within time as the ground of becoming and destruction. As such, justice indicates something about the apeiron in the idea of the proper, referring somehow to the significance of things in their presence and absence.

As steering, the *apeiron* is also associated with the attribute of the divine. This attribution of the divine is reinforced in fragments two and three. In this, the notion of the *apeiron* is given a number of divine characteristics: everlasting, ageless, immortal and indestructible. Again, these characteristics that attribute divinity to the *apeiron* are achieved through the rebuttal of the physical, or in opposition to the spatio-temporal realm.

In fragment two, the *apeiron* is given attributes signifying non-temporality. Herein, the eternal (αει) is only coherent when interpreted as signifying the negation of time. Likewise, to be ageless signifies not having an age: the absence of temporal existence.

In fragment three, the apeiron is characterized as non-physical; of not ceasing and thus of never becoming. In the same way, the indestructibility of the *apeiron* only holds conceptual coherence where it signifies a never having become, for everything that is physical becomes towards destruction, by necessity within time.

In the fragments, we can see that Anaximander provides an argument in which being and the *arche* (as the *apeiron*) are conceived of as radically different. For Anaximander, the meaning of being is the truth of *physis*, or, the truth of existent entities in the world. Being, as such, is constituted as that which is bound or limited. In contrast, the arche is constituted through the special features of the *apeiron*; the un-bounded ground of the world and the entities within it. The *apeiron*, as such, is given both a negative and positive characterization. Negatively, the *apeiron* is the always-absent ground of all that is. Accordingly, the positive character of the *apeiron* is revealed as justice and purpose; the significance of entities in their relations of becoming and destruction.

When we turn to the fragments of Heraclitus we find a radical distinction between the *arche* and being. Here, Heraclitus provides justification for this distinction via the discussion of being as becoming and the distinction between the ordered and merely physical universe.

In Heraclitus' fragments, that which could be called being is becoming. Various fragments discuss becoming as a process of change either in relation to the mutual becoming of opposites[11] or in relation to the idea of the constant flux of the constitution of entities.[12] As such, the notion of becoming refers to both the unity of opposites and the idea of change in general. However, a closer perusal of the fragments discloses becoming as a secondary phenomenon to the *arche*.

In fragment one, becoming is clearly formulated as secondary to the logos, for, the becoming of entities is subservient to the logos. Likewise, Heraclitus posits the logos as the *arche*: 'for all things become in accordance with the logos'.[13] In this respect, Heraclitus is providing a distinction between the logos as *arche* and becoming as that which constitutes entities and as the formal ground of entities. Thus, for Heraclitus the notion of the *arche* is the logos.

An example of the distinction between *arche* and being is provided via comparison of fragments 30 and 124. In fragment thirty, Heraclitus states that: 'this ordered cosmos, which is the same for all, was not created by any one of the gods or of mankind, but it was ever and is and shall be ever-living fire…'[14] The traditional interpretation of this fragment is, generally, that it signifies an identity of the physical as a unified whole in elemental fire. In other words, fire is the basic constituent of the physical cosmos. However, the cosmos as merely physical is also characterized by Heraclitus in fragment 124. Here, Heraclitus states: 'the fairest cosmos is but a dust-heap piled up at random.'[15] So, the distinction posited is between a merely physical cosmos and a cosmos ordered and common to all.

Fragment 124 is Heraclitus' description of the cosmos as merely physical. Further, this fragment pertains to the conceptualization of reality as merely physical and the result of thinking of reality as the unity of that which constitutes entities. In other words, I would argue, fragment 124 is Heraclitus' view of the result and point of origin of thinking about reality with regard to the merely physical, and further, any thinking that prioritizes the question of that which constitutes entities in their presence, i.e., being.

Fragment 30 in comparison reveals Heraclitus' view of the proper notion of cosmos. Herein, the physical and becoming (being) is characterized implicitly as secondary to 'order'. The phrase 'ordered cosmos' signifies the priority of that which orders and that which is common to all. As such, fragment 30 conceptualizes the cosmos in relation to that which orders it: the logos. Thus, the statement 'this ordered cosmos… was ever and is and shall be ever-living fire'[16] does not refer to the physical constitution of the cosmos, but rather, names that which orders the cosmos: the logos is named '*Pyr aei-zoon*'.

It is clear, at this point, that the fragments of Heraclitus posit a distinction between the concepts of being (as becoming) and the arche (as the logos). The arche, as such, is the primary phenomenon sought by Heraclitus, and is viewed as the proper task of thinking. The question remains, then, of what general task Heraclitus takes up in

seeking to characterize the arche as logos and Pyr aei-zoon? In other words, how does Heraclitus generally characterize the arche?

In the first instance, 'Pyr aei zoon' implicitly signifies the idea of the divine but also has the explicit signification of Zeus. The notion of 'Pyr aei-zoon', as such, can be discussed in relation to the general notion of the divine, mythical thinking about the divine, and the identity of Zeus.

The general notion of the divine derived from the term Pyr aei-zoon contains three characteristics; Pyr, aei, and zoon. In this, Pyr could signify fire, ether or soul. Insofar as Pyr as fire is a determinate element, the signification of fire cannot be construed as primary in this case. For, fragment 30 is not an argument pertaining to the elemental constitution of the physical realm, but rather, refers to Pyr as the arche of the ordered cosmos. Likewise, Pyr as ether cannot be the primary sense in this case, insofar as it pertains to the physical and not to the arche. Equally, both fire and ether are shown to lack primacy in this expression 'Pyr aei-zoon' insofar as neither can be properly conceived of as ever living. Fire as an element is constantly transformed and subject to becoming and destruction. This is also the case for ether as physical; for everything physical is subject to becoming and destruction. This leaves the third sense of Pyr; of soul or thinking. This makes a great deal of sense insofar as soul/intelligence and Pyr are associated with the divine potentiality of humans and the divine in general.

The term 'eternal' is also in Greek thought associated with the general notion of the divine, in this case, referring to the non-spatio-temporal character of the divine. I would argue, moreover, that 'eternal' means always-absence (non-presence) rather than always-presence as in Aristotle. This follows Heraclitus' argument in fragment one that thinking about that which constitutes things and how they are made is an improper path of thought. If it is improper to distinguish between things on the basis of their constitution as present, it is also improper to characterize the divine and *arche* with regard to *physis* or in relation to being. Thus, it is not possible for 'aei' to signify always-present, but rather, 'eternal' must signify an always-absence: an otherwise than being.

The term ‘zoon’ signifies life. In this, life is no mere existence or actuality. Life, in this sense, cannot be construed as some quantifiable living, e.g., living for 50 years. Rather, the signification of life is one of quality: of what sort of living, or, of what characterizes the living as a life. As such, the living immediately refers to ‘*aei*’ as a way of living: a character of living that is always-absence. Thus, the general notion of the divine is formulated as an always-absent living, or, a way of life that is never actualized in physis (becoming-destruction).

Bringing the phrase ‘*Pyr aei-zoon*’ together as a unity reveals its meaning as a way of living soul/thinking that is otherwise than physis, and is never actualized in physis as an entity. In this, the general notion of the divine shows itself as a way of living with the attributes of soul/intelligence and always-absence. The general notion of the divine, as such, also indicates something about Heraclitus’ notion of arche, namely: that the arche is an always-absent intelligent/purposive life. Not an entity, but rather, a way of living.

The phrase ‘Pyr aei-zoon’ is also connected to the divinity Zeus. Here, Pyr is associated with Zeus. So also is zoon of which the name Zeus (Ζωος) is a derivative. Further, Zeus is the highest Greek divinity and thus the divinity closest to the general notion of the divine; Zeus in many respects exemplifies the idea of the divine. In fragment 32, Heraclitus states, ‘that which alone is wise is one; it is willing and unwilling to be called by the name of Zeus.’[17] In this respect, then, the name of Zeus represents many attributes of the general notion of the divine, such as: *Pyr*, lightning, life and wisdom. Thus, the name of Zeus indicates what the notion of the divine properly signifies. However, the name Zeus is also a name of a divinity, that is, a name of an entity that is present in the physical realm and within time. Equally, then, the notion of the divine is also not Zeus, i.e., not an entity, nor a Greek divinity in a theological and mythological sense. As such, the association of Zeus with ‘*Pyr aei zoon*’ is both a positive and privative one. The association is positive insofar as Zeus indicates something about the notion of the divine, and privative in the sense that Zeus is an entity thought of as present in the physical realm.

The next theme pertaining to Heraclitus' notion of arche is logos. Herein, the arche is disclosed as wisdom, or, the ground of thinking. Initially, Heraclitus posits the logos as the central theme in a comparison between humans and the divine. In this, a distinction is made between human logos as faulty and fallible[18], while the divine is logos itself.[19] Thus, Heraclitus utilizes the term logos in a derogatory sense in fragment 87, stating: 'A foolish man is apt to be in a flutter at every logos.'[20] In comparison, the logos as divine is generally translated as 'law'.[21] Thus, translation issues aside, the use of logos in association with the divine shows itself as a proper or necessary steering.

Another meaning of the logos for Heraclitus is its association with understanding and wisdom. Again, a comparison is made between the divine and human logos. Thus, in fragment 78 Heraclitus states: 'Humans in our being have no power of understanding; but the divine does.'[22] Further, in fragment 32 the divine is characterized as the only wise one, while fragments 28, 35, 56, 70 and 83 exemplify Heraclitus' argument that wisdom is an unusual state of human existence. Thus, in fragment 83 Heraclitus pronounces: 'The wisest human will appear an ape in relation to the divine.'[23]

Heraclitus also discusses the logos in itself. Here, there are three primary attributes of the logos to be drawn out for examination. First, Heraclitus utilizes the term logos to signify that which orders, as in fragments one and two. 'The logos is as here explained… all things come into being in accordance with this logos' and 'therefore one must follow that which is common to all… the logos is universal…'[24] Herein, the logos signifies the arche of physis, and further, the ethical arche of human existence. The logos, as such, turns back to the notion of divine justice, this time in the sense of a communication or understanding of divine justice. In this way, the logos signifies the communication of the divine through divine law and the potentiality of the divine law to be understood by humans.

Additionally, the logos also signifies proper thinking. Initially, the logos signifies truth: to understand the true purpose which steers. Thus, in fragment 50, Heraclitus appeals to the logos as independent of human thinking: 'When you have listened not to me but to the logos, it is wise to agree that all things are one'. This one-ness or common-to-all is the disclosure of physis in its ordering (truth), and moreover, the

awareness of the purpose of this ordering (meaning). Therefore, the logos signifies a proper thinking that discloses the truth of physis, the purpose of physis, and the purpose that directs everything.

The final and primary sense of logos given by Heraclitus is as the divine itself. Herein, the logos is constituted as the communication of the divine, or, the way the divine shows itself as the one, the common, and as that purpose that steers physis. As such, the essential character of the logos is the divine: 'the lord whose oracle is at Delphi neither speaks nor conceals, but indicates.'[25] Equally, this reveals the notion of logos as arche; that for Heraclitus, the ground – its truth and proper meaning – is always initially hidden from humans (always absent) and is only ever uncovered by the difficult human pursuit of it and the way in which the divine communicates to humans via indications. In this respect, the love physis has for hiding[26] refers to the always-absent ground that orders physis rather than that which constitutes physis and that which allows differentiation between things (being).

Thus, in general, the meaning of the divine in Heraclitus' thinking shows itself as the naming of the arche and further, through naming, the provision of positive attributes of the arche. In this, calling the arche 'the divine' provides three positive indications of the meaning of arche: 1. The arche is truth as it shows itself, or, the significance and coherence of physis as it can be grasped. 2. The arche is ethos: the ground of the proper of human existence. 3. The arche is the proper itself, or, the grasping and showing itself of the arche as purpose and meaning.

In interpreting Parmenides' fragments I will focus upon the two potential ways of truth given by the goddess. The question to be addressed is that of the assumed primacy of the first way of truth, i.e., being in relation to the arche. I will argue, moreover, that it is the second way of truth (non-being) that indicates the notion of arche properly in Parmenides thinking.

Paying close attention to the goddess' address to Parmenides about the ways of truth will provide an entrance into the notion of not-being. Initially, in fragment one, the goddess states that Parmenides will inquire into everything: 'both the motionless heart of well-rounded truth, and also the opinions of mortals, in which there is no true

reliability.'[27] Following this, in fragment two, the goddess tells Parmenides that there are only two potential truthful ways of inquiry: either being (it is) and not-being (it is not). The first, the path of being, is given the qualities of credibility and of following truth. The second, of not-being, is a path not to be explored; unrecognizable and inexpressible. Two points arise here. First, that the path of not-being is a way of truth as one of the two truthful ways of inquiry. Alternatively, the second path is denied insofar as it is not recognizable or expressible for humans.

The sense of this denial of pursuing not-being is, in fragment three, revealed via the identity of being and thinking: 'for it is the same thing to think and to be'.[28] In this, the identity of thinking and being is founded upon the identity of a thing in its being. Thus, the idea of being that is proposed here is that being is existential; referring to an entity in its presence and being is that which presents an entity is its being. As such, wherever thinking thinks being, it thinks an entity as present, or, in its presence. If not-being is then pursued via this way of thinking, not-being is necessarily impossible, for it is by definition not-present.

Fragment four reinforces this idea of thinking being as thinking presence, for the present physical absence of a thing does not signify not-being or always-absence insofar as the entity thought in its being is thought in relation to its constitution (presence), or, what it is when it is present. Here, in fragment four, then, there are also two characteristics of being: being is the always-presence of an entity and, moreover, being is the unity of reality as presented and re-presentable. Thus, to think being is to present and re-present the presence of an entity in its being.

Fragment six brings this initial conceptualization of being to its conclusion, and also returns to the notion of not-being. In this, the notion of being is posited as that which is possible: 'one should say and think that being is; for to be is possible.'[29] The essence of being, as such, is the possible; the actual or potential presence of entities in thinking being. In the second case, being as being-thought is restricted to that which is possible; always-presence and the re-presentable. Accordingly, the goddess debars Parmenides from thinking not-being, insofar as it is impossible. As impossible, not-being can be characterized in two ways: as always-absent and impossible to think in relation to presence.

In general then, the idea of being is revealed in the goddess' statements to refer to the idea of always-presence. Equally, then, the idea of being is restricted to the being of an entity. That is, being signifies the characteristics of an entity as thought that are always-present, founded upon the actuality of the entity as present at some point in time or space. Further, being signifies a universal rule of thinking; that truthful thinking about an entity, thinks the entity in its being – its constitution as always-present. Finally, the idea of being also signifies the idea of a unified reality, determined and determinable as a whole solely in relation to its characteristics of always-presence.

In comparison, or in explicit relation to being, not-being is necessarily impossible. Two themes are worthy of note here. First, not-being is only impossible in relation to being and to a thinking that thinks the being of entities. It follows then that not-being is impossible to think with regard to always-presence insofar as it is the irreconcilable other to presence as always-absence. Does this mean that not-being must necessarily be relegated to illusion or falsity? I would assert, rather, that in restricting being to the idea of always-presence the goddess/Parmenides leaves open a path to not-being as the idea of the arche of being-itself.

This path to not-being originates in fragment seven wherein the goddess states: 'For this can never predominate, that that which is not, exists.' So, this statement indicates two attributes of not-being: 1. that which is not cannot be thought of as an entity with being, and 2. that which is not cannot be thought of as present insofar as it is always-absent. At this point, we are left with a question, namely: given the initial description of not-being as a path of truth what can we say about not-being in a positive sense?

Initially, Parmenides denies that being, as presence, springs from not-being. Here, the denial refers explicitly to the notion of temporal creation or becoming. Thus, in the first instance, being cannot be thought of as originating from not-being in a spatio-temporal sense. However, the next sentence provides a positive notion of not-being in relation to being: 'nor will the force of truth ever admit that anything should come into being, beside being itself, out of not-being.'[30] So, Parmenides' goddess affirms that being-itself (being-in-general) originates in not-being. Herein, the positive

characterization of not-being is revealed as the arche of being-itself. Thus, Parmenides has opened a way into thinking non-being as the arche of being-itself, or, the always-absent ground of being.

Furthermore, this statement provides the crucial distinction between the ways of truth revealed by the goddess. Herein, the way of the truth of being signifies the truth of entities in theirpresence and the knowable structure of the universe as always-present. The second way of truth, as such, is disclosed as the truth of the arche; the question of the ground of being itself as the characteristics of 'that which is not'. Thus, even though these characteristics of not-being cannot be grasped in relation to the presence of entities nor their physical absence, not-being can be thought with regard to the arche. The goddess, then, implicitly reveals the arche as not-being via three themes: justice, logos, and the divine.

The first way that not-being shows itself is via justice. In fragment 7,8, immediately following the previous statement, Parmenides goddess states: 'so far as (not-being) is concerned, justice has never released (being) in its fetters and set it free… but holds it fast'. Here, the arche is given the attribute of justice: of binding being as being. Again, later in this fragment the goddess states: 'but it is motionless in the limits of mighty bonds… for powerful necessity holds (being) in the bonds of a limit…'[31] Thus, the arche shown in justice is something other than being that binds being.

Not-being also shows itself as the arche of logos or truth. Initially, it would seem that the logos is being, especially in light of the goddess' revelation that being and thinking are the same. However, this statement cannot be taken literally to limit truth to thinking being, nor, that being is the ground of truth. For, the identity of thinking and being is only true in relation to thinking being and thinking the being of an entity. Further, this identity of thinking and being is implicitly revealed as a characteristic of human thinking in its potential for truth. This is evidenced throughout the fragments insofar as the goddess consistently refers this rule to 'you' (the human thinker Parmenides).

In this respect the communication of the goddess to Parmenides (the human 'you') also reveals a distinction between the logos proper to philosophy, in thinking about being, and the logos of truth belonging to the goddess: the ground of truth. This

distinction, I would argue, is one between the human capacity for philosophical truth and the ground of truth as belonging to the goddess. For Parmenides, the goddess is the truth insofar as she communicates the truth, but also is the ground of truth as the one who reveals the truth. Moreover, the goddess reveals herself explicitly as otherwise than the truth of being as the one who binds Parmenides thinking of being to its truth: 'come, I will tell you – and you must accept my logos when you have heard it – the ways of inquiry which alone are to be thought…'[32] Later, in fragment two, the goddess states: 'this I tell you is a path that cannot be explored (by you); for you could neither recognize that which is not, nor express it.' I would argue, here, that the goddess is binding Parmenides to the proper way of thinking being for humans rather than stating its absolute truth.

This brings us to the third way of characterizing the arche as not-being, i.e., as the divine. Initially, this is evidenced insofar as the divine is intrinsically identified with both justice and truth. Justice, here, is personified in *Dike* and its sub-agents. Likewise, Parmenides goddess is *Aletheia*, the goddess truth. Furthermore, in the fragments the divine is disclosed as not-being, or arche, explicitly as divine law. This divine law that binds being must necessarily signify the otherwise than being, for being cannot bind itself. As such, the goddess' revelation of divine law as otherwise than being is also the self-revelation of the divine in general as otherwise than being; as the always-absent arche of being.

I have argued that Parmenides poem discloses a radical differentiation between being and what gets called not-being. Parmenides carefully distances being and not-being, keeping them in their radical difference. Parmenides, furthermore, is in agreement with the previous pre-Socratic thinkers and can be seen to develop this thinking to its logical conclusion. Thus, the distinction between being and the arche that arises in the pre-Socratic quest for arche shows itself in Parmenides as a stark and un-bridgeable gap between the concept of being and not-being.

A phenomenological interpretation of the fragments:

Whether it gets called the apeiron, logos, or 'that which is not', the Pre-Socratic thinkers addressed all take as their ultimate problem the question of the arche. Anaximander, Heraclitus and Parmenides, each priorities the question of arche in such

a way that the philosophical notion of being is characterized as a secondary phenomenon. In each case, being is only considered after, or within the context of, a characterization of the arche.

In this quest for the arche a radical difference emerges between arche and being. Each of these thinkers, in their own way, characterize being as essentially a presence that is bound and steered by the arche. Accordingly, the arche is characterized as an always-absence; a non-physical ground, or, the otherwise than being. The arche the pre-Socratics found, as such, is impossible to grasp initially except through the negation of presence, or, by disclosing the otherwise than being as an always-absence.

Nonetheless, all three are in agreement as to how this ground shows itself to humans, namely; through the concepts of binding, steering and purpose. Binding, herein, signifies the delimitation of being in its actualization or activities. Likewise, steering shows how the arche shows itself as the significance and coherence within physis as it can be understood. Finally, then, the arche is disclosed as purpose itself. This purpose in itself, as such, is the essential character of the arche as it can be thought and as it shows itself.

The ways in which the arche shows itself are intrinsically linked to what it is to be human, and especially to the three aspects of human thinking disclosed in pre-Socratic thought. If we take Parmenides' poem as a point of origin, we find three implicit characterizations of human thinking.

The realm of *doxa* is described as the way of human thinking that prioritizes how physis appears to the senses. This thinking views opposites as real or actual and measures the truth of things according to their appearance and seeming disappearance. The goddess reveals to Parmenides that the essence of this way of thinking is a two-headedness; thinking that being and not-being are the same and not the same.[33] Thus, the essence of this way of thinking is not simply the prioritization of physical appearances, but further, thinking that prioritizes the physical and thus seeks an abstract unifying ground of the physical.

Heraclitus also discusses this way of thinking via appearances, and thinking founded upon the prioritization of the physical. Herein, Heraclitus provides scathing attacks upon thinking via appearances, and further, links this to the prioritization of the physical and the question of the constitution of entities in their presence (being).

The second way of thinking disclosed by Parmenides is that of the truth of being. This way of thinking is the first revealed by the goddess, but is secondary in terms of priority. This second way of thinking, in Parmenides, is the proper way of thinking being in relation to entities and the purely abstract idea of the being in general. In Heraclitus, this second way of thinking is utilized in relation to a differing focus, the intelligibility of physis as an activity of being, but nonetheless addresses being, in its truth, in its coherence and significance for human thought. Thus, both Parmenides and Heraclitus constitute this second way of thinking as the truth of being for humans, or, the way in which humans, in our being, understand being.

The third and final way of thinking in Parmenides poem refers to not-being. This way of thinking can be called the truth of the arche and is characterized as entirely otherwise than human. Equally, in Heraclitus this way of the truth of arche is described as entirely otherwise than human and shows itself only via indications[34].

These three potential ways of thinking, as such, indicates two primary potentialities of being-human. The first of these can be called everydayness, or, the thinking that prioritizes appearances and thus the physical. Here, everydayness as a way of being-human will result in two ways of thinking about physis. The first is thinking that the real is determinable by what appears to be physically present to us. The second is metaphysical thinking: the thinking of being as the presence of entities, and further, thinking of being as the unifying ground of everything. In this respect, a semblance of the truth of being is thought via everydayness, but it is a semblance marked by a failure to grasp the arche.

Thus, the first potentiality of being-human is essentially the actualization or praxis of human existence (being-human). This potentiality of being-human is, for the most part, the way humans are in our being. In this way, the first potentiality of being-human is both improper in relation to the arche, and yet at the same time, is the truth

of being-human. The truth of being, of being-human, is thus presence, or, a way of being that presents entities in their being. At the same time, the truth of being is also entirely improper, for as Parmenides' goddess indicates; it is impossible for human beings to grasp that which is not present.

There is however, a second potentiality for being-human, namely; the potentiality to seek the arche or to recognize the otherwise than being. Parmenides poem exemplifies the first dimension of this potentiality of being-human. For, the truth standing-under being is revealed as the arche, indicated via divine communication. Likewise, this potentiality of being-human is characterized by Heraclitus as the quest to grasp the arche; the purpose that steers all things. The truth of the arche is only disclosed via the way the arche shows itself to humans as the revelation of indications. Further, Heraclitus also posits this potentiality as an actuality of human existence: 'ethos for being-human is our daemonion' – the divine voice presented in thinking the arche.

The construction of the notion of being-human in the Pre-Socratics shown here in its twofold potentiality thus revolves around the unity and difference between being and the ground of being. The unity of being and arche signifies nothing more or less than the truth of being-human insofar as humans present being as that which is. The human understanding of being and being-human produces an inauthentic unity of being and thinking wherein thinking is subsumed under presence and therein becomes a kind of thinking that is determined by presence.

However, the proper disclosed in pre-Socratic thought is proper thinking itself, or, thinking the arche. Herein, the arche is disclosed as the proper, or, thinking the otherwise than being which is, essentially, thinking that has no relation to being whatsoever. The problem of attempting to communicate the essence of thinking is insurmountable for humans (in our being), for we cannot think without thinking being. Nonetheless, the arche as it is disclosed in pre-Socratic thought is essentially pointing towards the otherwise than being as pure thinking that shows itself as the truth, ethos, and ultimately, as the arche (the proper). This potentiality for humans, in our being, to grasp or to be gifted with the understanding of the otherwise than being, and further, to be directed by this ground in our living, is precisely what is sought in pre-Socratic thinking.

The Meaning of Religion:

The thinking of Anaximander, Heraclitus and Parmenides has disclosed indications of the meaning of Religion in a phenomenological sense. Here, the essence of the meaning of Religion shows itself as the relation between humans (in our being) and the arche. I would like to suggest, in conclusion, that there are two ways of determining the meaning of religion as a relationship with the arche. In the first instance, we can determine the meaning of religion as it is expressed in a variety of ways through human existence, or, insofar as human thinking relates to the arche through the activities of living. Alternatively, it is also possible to determine the meaning of religion in its basic character of 'belonging-to' the being of humans, or, inasmuch as we can determine religion as a phenomenon of being-human.

In the first case, the meaning of Religion is construed via the possibilities of how humans can think the arche as that which is related to. In this respect, there are at least three possible ways of constituting the arche as that which is related to in religion. These three possibilities are as follows: 1) the arche is constituted as an entity accessible to experience, 2) the arche is constituted as being or the truth of being itself, and 3) the arche is constituted as not-being.

The first expression of religion is what Parmenides called the realm of *doxa* where humans seek the ground of being through appearances and sensory experience. The ground of being is conceived of as an entity or entities within physis; as entities with the character of being. Here, as Heraclitus shows, the meaning of Religion is a relating to the arche as present: 'they talk to these statues as if one were to hold conversation with houses, in their ignorance…'[35] Thus, the meaning of Religion indicated shows itself initially via thinking the ground of being as an entity within being.

The second expression of religion is what might be called meta-physical thinking, or, thinking that arrives at the determination of the arche only after already providing a determination of physis and the truth of being. The danger of this expression of religion is that the concept of the arche may be reduced to nothing more than an explanation of physis as the truth of being and the unity of being as a whole.

Therefore, the second expression of religion indicated shows itself as the determination of the ground of being as being-itself.

The third expression of religion can be called the quest for the ground of being. However, inasmuch as Anaximander, Heraclitus, and Parmenides determine being as being-thought, the primary sense of the arche will refer somehow to the ground of human thinking. In this way, religion can be expressed as a relation to the ground of being-human as the entity that thinks, and in thinking acts, and in acting lives. This third expression of religion can be unpacked in two further ways. We can say first, that this expression of religion begins with a denial or negation of the possibility of accessing the ground of being through the physical, or even the abstract notion of being as the unified ground of the physical. Alternatively, this relationship is expressed insofar as human thinking first searches for the ground of thinking. Here, religion is expressed in a positive sense as a quest for the truth, meaning, and purpose that is the ground of thinking, and yet, is otherwise than being.

This third expression of religion discloses what we might call the proper meaning of religion, and at the same time, indicates how (and in what sense) religion belongs to the being of humans. The phenomenon of religion, as such, belongs-to humans in our being insofar as we are capable of directing our selves towards the ground of our thinking, and therein, of constituting our lives in relation to arche as the truth, as meaning, and as purpose. We could say then, that religion is founded upon the being of humans insofar as we necessarily seek and actualize in our living both meaning and purpose through a relationship with the ground of our being.

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[1] Heidegger, Martin., *Being and Time*, Macquarrie & Robinson (trans.), New York: Harper & Row, 1962, p.24
[2] Heidegger, Martin., *Ontology – The Hermeneutics of Facticity*, van Buren (trans.), Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999, pp.65-67
[3] Heidegger, Martin., *Being and Time*, pp.54-55 (H31)
[4] Ibid.
[5] Ibid., p.24 (H5)
[6] Ibid., p.29 (H9)
[7] Ibid., p.63 (H39)
[8] Anaximander, Fragment 1. Freeman, Kathleen., *Ancilla to the Pre-Socratic Philosophers*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996, p.19 (All future references to Pre-Socratic fragments, unless otherwise specified, will be derived from this text)

[9] Kirk, Raven, and Schofield, *The Presocratic Philosophers*, 2nd Ed., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983, pp.106-107. From Simplicius: '*He says that it is neither water nor any other of the so-called elements, but some other apeiron nature…*'
[10] Anaximander, Fragment 1
[11] Heraclitus, Fragment 88 for example
[12] Heraclitus, Fragments 91, 49a
[13] Heraclitus, Fragment 1
[14] Heraclitus, Fragment 30
[15] Heraclitus, Fragment 124
[16] Heraclitus, Fragment 30
[17] Heraclitus, Fragment 32
[18] Heraclitus, Fragments 2, 87
[19] Heraclitus, Fragments 45, 50, 93, 114
[20] Heraclitus, Fragment 87
[21] Heraclitus, Fragments 1, 114
[22] Heraclitus, Fragment 78
[23] Heraclitus, Fragment 83
[24] Heraclitus, Fragments 1, 2
[25] Heraclitus, Fragment 93
[26] Heraclitus, Fragment 123
[27] Fragment: 1
[28] Fragment: 3
[29] Fragment: 6
[30] Fragment: 7,8
[31] Fragment: 7,8
[32] Fragment: 2
[33] Fragment: 6
[34] Fragment: 93. *'The lord whose oracle is that at Delphi neither speaks nor conceals, but indicates'*
[35] Fragment: 5