

## **Toward a New Interpretation of Plato**



**Giovanni Reale**

**Toward a New Interpretation of Plato**

Translated from the Tenth Edition and Edited by  
John R. Catan and Richard Davies

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To Dr. Joseph Gilbert



. . . my lips will open,  
With my good will, only to those who know.  
To those who do not, I shall nothing show. . . .  
Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*, 38f.

If someone can reduce Plato to a system, he will have performed a great service for humankind.

G. W. Leibniz, "Letter to Rémond"  
(*Die philos. Schriften* 3.637 Gerhardt)

Concerning these things [the greatest] I have not written and I never will. The knowledge of these things is not entirely communicable as other knowledges, but after much discussion about these things, and after a communality of living together, suddenly, like a flame which is lighted from a spark which springs forth, it is born in the soul and from itself is nourished. There is no danger of forgetting these things, once they have been impressed on the soul, since they are reduced to short statements.

Plato, *Seventh Letter*, 341C, 344E



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## Introduction to the English Edition

In only seven years, this book has gone through ten editions in Italy, having been revised and augmented at each stage, and, now, with the tenth edition, it has reached its final and definitive version. John Catan had already translated the fifth, 1987, edition, but I asked him to put off publishing an American edition until the definitive version of September 1991 was completed, so that he could work from it. He did wait, and came to Italy in May, June, and July of 1992 to add the new parts and to undertake a final revision in collaboration with Richard Davies.

A German translation of the sixth edition, the work of Ferdinand Schüning of Paderborn, was published in September, 1992. Thus, the American edition is more faithful to the final revision of the original text. The only things which have been excised are the Greek texts (interested readers will have no difficulty in finding the originals in Burnet's edition), which have been replaced with translations, although some of the key technical terms have been preserved. Also excised are the illustrative (but not indispensable) appendices about some aspects of ancient Greek art which, in my view, form the cultural background to Plato's theory of the First Principles.

The very gratifying reception which the book has so far enjoyed in Europe can be attributed to the simple fact that it proposes a change in the traditional Platonic interpretive paradigm, based on a new historical understanding.

To gain a proper historical understanding of Plato, the modern reader must leave behind the styles of thought which he treats as certain, because it is exactly those styles which determine his thinking that Plato most deeply challenges.

When I outlined the fundamental thesis of this book to a group of American scholars, an objection was raised: "As soon as we have something new to say, we immediately write it down and publish it; why couldn't Plato do the same?" If Plato says that he does not want to put certain things in writing, that means that he was employing irony, and that what he says should be understood in a spirit of playfulness and not literally. Unless, of course, one wants to believe that, after all, when Plato says that he has not written, and will not write, about certain

matters, he really didn't have anything to say about them, perhaps because he thought of the highest matters of which he did not wish to write as "ineffable."

The new interpretive paradigm for the understanding of Plato was first put forward by scholars at Tübingen. As I have taken it up and set it in the context of epistemological theory, it implies an abandonment of the characteristic presuppositions of modern man and the recovery, as a basis for historical understanding, of the categories operative in Plato, who lived in a period in which the *victory of the written over the spoken word* was bringing about a genuine and enduring cultural revolution.

The "self-testimonies" which Plato gives in the *Phaedrus* and the *Seventh Letter*, and which will form our focus in Chapter 3, cannot be understood unless we take proper account of the fact that Plato was trying to circumscribe exactly those tendencies which were abroad in the Greece of his day. For Plato, books cannot replace memory. They cannot create knowledge. And they cannot break away from their author and go about on their own. For him, a book only has a meaning if it is girt by speech and set amid spoken discussion.

Writing is a very beautiful "game," but for all that it is still a game. The philosopher puts his greatest seriousness and commitment into the business of oral teaching, writing on the souls of men rather than on rolls of paper. To understand Plato, we must grasp his cultural climate, for example, when he declares that the philosopher does not put "the things of greatest value" on paper, but instead writes them directly onto the soul of the student who is capable of receiving them.

The passage of the centuries has proved Plato wrong on this matter, for writing has conquered speech. Even as early as Aristotle, we find the view that everything should be written down.

Although Plato's convictions on this matter have been defeated and are in conflict with those of today, that does not in the least justify the scholar who wishes to interpret Plato by using his own presuppositions rather than those of Plato's day. Rather, we must try to recover the historical context in which those presuppositions have a role and can be understood. And this is no easy thing. As Schlegel said, "[T]he historian is a prophet looking backward," meaning that the past is no easier to understand than the future is to predict.

The new paradigm is therefore at bottom *historical*. And its underlying claim is as follows: Plato's written dialogues are not wholly self-sufficient but instead stand in need of their author, who offers the key which opens all the doors. During his life in the Academy, Plato in person could bring this "aid" to his writings. But we too, in our way, can do something similar to this. His best students wrote down what Plato's

Unwritten Doctrines were about; using that evidence, we can fill out the dialogues with what is lacking from them. Therefore, in reading Plato, we have to employ two distinct traditions: the *direct tradition* of his writings, and the *indirect tradition* of the Unwritten Doctrines which have been handed down to us by his followers.

In other words, at least the later Platonic dialogues presuppose the foundation of the Academy and the lessons which our philosopher gave in that school. In that sense, those who were acquainted with Plato's doctrines from the master's own lips could use the written dialogues as mnemonics to recall to memory what they had learned in face-to-face discussion.

In Chapter 2, we discuss some of the forerunners of this view. But here I would like to recall a passage of Nietzsche, which I have also cited in the fifth edition of *A History of Ancient Philosophy* and elsewhere, but which it does no harm to quote here again. In the 1870s, Nietzsche, while teaching courses on Plato at Basle, sought to undermine the basic thesis of Schleiermacher, on which the whole of modern Plato studies has rested, namely, that writing was the means adopted for the communication of the whole of Plato's thought, and was therefore entirely self-sufficient. Nietzsche writes: "[Schleiermacher's] whole hypothesis runs counter to the explanation to be found in the *Phaedrus* and is supported by a false interpretation of it. Indeed, Plato says that writing has meaning only for those who already know, that is, as a means for recalling things by memory. For that reason, the best writings ought to imitate the form of oral teaching: reflecting the way in which he who knows came to know. Writing ought to be a 'treasure-house of the memory' for the writer and for his philosophical companions. But, for Schleiermacher, writing is the second-best means for bringing those who do not know to knowledge. All writing, therefore, has the general aim of teaching and education. But, according to Plato, writing does not have these aims, but only that of recalling things to the memory of him who is already educated and in possession of knowledge. The explanation given in our passage of the *Phaedrus* presupposes the existence of the Academy, and the writings are the means for refreshing the memories of the members of the Academy" (in *Gesammelte Werke Musarion Ausgabe*, Munich, 4: 370).

It has taken a century for Nietzsche's perception to become accepted, though it was shared by L. Robin, H. Gomperz, J. Stenzel, and others; was first fully worked out by H. Krämer and K. Gaiser; and has been taken up with a new emphasis by me in conjunction with T. Szlezák. But this need occasion no surprise. Indeed, in the history of science we find many similar cases of antecedents and anticipations

which are too premature to change the predominant paradigm. Perhaps the best known example is that of Aristarchus who, in the Greece of the third century B.C.E., proposed a form of heliocentrism fully eighteen centuries before the Copernican Revolution. But, at that time, the Geocentric Hypothesis had far from exhausted its resources. Thus, in miniature, the paradigm which claims the self-sufficiency of Plato's writings had not, in Nietzsche's day, and at the beginning of the present century, exhausted its resources in such a way that the need for an alternative should be felt.

As regards method, my book's principal claim to being innovative resides in its application of Kuhn's epistemological theories to the interpretation of Plato and of ancient thought in general. I take it that these theories are the most advanced, coherent, and consistent thus far produced, and that they offer not only a format for setting the problem with which I deal, but also provide solutions to those problems.

As regards the philosophical content of the book, the novelties reside in the importance given to what Plato calls, using a significant image, the Second Voyage (the first stage being revealed in his writings, the second in the Unwritten Doctrines), and to the account given of the Demiurge, which I present as a motif of the highest speculative importance. For the first time, the major dialogues are given a systematic re-reading in the light of the Unwritten Doctrines and all the key notions, which were previously thought mysterious, and which can be explained with the Unwritten Doctrines, are pointed out.

The core of my interpretation can be summed up as follows. As we explain at length in Chapter 11, Plato offered his philosophical masterpiece, the *Republic*, and in particular the discussion of the Good in the central books, not as the payment of a debt, repaying, as we should say today, the principal, but only repaying the interest. Yet he also stated that he wanted to repay the principal completely. But it is clear that, starting with the interest to be paid, it is possible to work out the principal and to know how much it is. This is what I have sought to do throughout: from the "interest" which Plato has paid in the written dialogues, I have tried to work out the original "debt," which he has not repaid in writing, but which was repaid in full in his lessons in the Academy, in oral dialectic.

Obviously, I leave to the reader the job of reckoning whether the calculation of the principal from the interest has come out right. But, in any case, this is the method which seems to me to be called for today for rereading and understanding Plato in the light of the new interpretive paradigm.

I am very grateful to Professor John Catan for his long-standing

involvement in this project and for his willingness to come to Italy to work on it, and to Richard Davies for his revision of the final version and for the great help he has provided me.

I can only hope that this book should have in America and among English readers the success that it has had in Italy (where, since the days of Marsilio Ficino, Plato has always been greatly loved), at least insofar as the fruitfulness and stimulating novelty of the new paradigm allows me to hope.

Giovanni Reale



## Translator's Preface and Acknowledgments

I want to thank Professor Reale for his generous support during my stay in Italy in the summer of 1992; my "cousins" and friends Renato and Rosella Vanin; the staff and students of the Collegio Augustinianum, especially the director, Dr. Paolo Guietti, and the vice-director, Dr. Gianni Ferraris, as well as Roberto Bombacigno, and Ms. Pinuche, Mr. Daniele Clarizia, and Mr. Alberto Mereu for their many kindnesses during my summer in Italy.

I would also like to acknowledge Dr. Roberto Radice and the singular assistance of Dr. Richard Davies. Dr. Davies took on the onerous task of reworking my translation from its Italian-American style into more readable English. It was his idea to break up Reale's Preface to the tenth Italian edition into two parts, the second of which is now titled "Bibliographical Note on Research in the New Paradigm." Although he did a full reworking of the entire translation and rightly deserves credit as my co-translator, I had the ultimate responsibility for its final condition. For this reason, it was only right to include his name as co-translator on the title page, but if the translation is less than perfect, as I am sure it is, the responsibility is entirely mine since I have the ultimately responsibility for its present condition. The text of the translation is substantially identical to that of Reale's. We did eliminate summaries, tables, and two appendices, one to Chapter 10 and the other to Chapter 20, as well as the "Postface" of the Italian original and almost all of the Greek citations of Plato's dialogues—which were extensive—in order to get the book down to a reasonable size for publication in America. Ms. Susan Needham and David McGonagle of Catholic University Press, as well as the staff of Kachergis Book Design, especially Tanya Lane and Anne Theilgard, deserve praise for their patience in dealing with neophyte compositors. Finally, I owe a debt of gratitude to my wife, Melody, who slowed me down and spent untold hours over a computer screen checking and rechecking the work. I could not have done it without her love, support, and attention to detail.

I also want to thank the publishers, especially Vita e Pensiero, for permission to translated the Italian text, as well as the Bollingen Series of Random House for permission to use their translations of the dia-

logues of Plato. Every author is in debt to the scholars who have done the work of translating Plato into English.

One note about the “immobile Movent,” which may appear to some to be a tendentious translation, that is, κινῶν ἀκίνητον is usually rendered by “unmoved Mover” or “immobile Mover.” It seems to me that that charge can be laid at the door of the widely accepted “unmoved Movers” which surreptitiously introduces the notion of moving or even worse “efficient” causality into the realm of Aristotle’s final causality. I depend for the justification of my usage on the work of my teacher, Fr. Joseph Owens, C.Ss.R., in his justly celebrated work, *The Doctrine of Being in the Aristotelian Metaphysics* (Toronto, 1978 rev. ed.).

I wish to offer a final word of thanks to my friend and colleague Dr. Joseph Gilbert, to whom I have dedicated this volume. He has shown unflagging enthusiasm for philosophy and a love of Socrates which have been an inspiration to me over the many years we have been discussing Plato and the dialogues, as well as being a moral beacon in a academic milieu too easily influenced by budgetary necessities.

I share Reale’s enthusiasm for the new interpretive paradigm created by the Tübingen Plato School of Gaiser, Krämer, and now Szlezák. When their works are published, the American reader will have at his disposal the major works of the Tübingen Plato School as well as those of its most famous Italian exponent. In that way, no scholar can claim ignorance of the tenet of this new interpretation of Plato’s works because of unfamiliarity with the language of the originals.

John R. Catan



## Preface to the Italian Edition

This volume is the child of a long labor. I began working on Plato in the second half of the 1950s, while studying at Marburg the accounts of his thought which were being produced by the neo-Kantians. It was in the early 1960s that Professor Mario Untersteiner, whom I think of as one of my mentors in philology, directed me to Hans Krämer's *Arete bei Platon und Aristoteles* which had recently been published (Heidelberg, 1959). Untersteiner was convinced that all new discussions of Plato would have to take seriously Krämer's view. So he set aside the work he had on hand in the hope that, despite the fact that he was losing his sight, he would be able to produce a book on Plato's method. He entrusted to me the task of producing the works on which he was engaged. These were an updating of the volume of E. Zeller and R. Mondolfo, *La filosofia dei Greci nel suo sviluppo storico* I 3 (Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1967), which deals with Eleaticism, and an edition of Melissus's *Testimonianze e frammenti* (Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1970). Unfortunately, the progressive loss of his sight did not allow Untersteiner to write the book he dreamt of. In 1974 appeared the Italian translation of Harold Cherniss's *Lenigma dell'Accademia antica* (Florence: La Nuova Italia) [*The Riddle of the Early Academy* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1945)], putting forward exactly the opposite view to Krämer's. For that reason, I suggested to Krämer that he write something to match Cherniss's discussion. He took up the idea, and in 1982 the Center for Research in Metaphysics at the Catholic University in Milan published, as the first volume in its series, *Platone e i fondamenti della metafisica*.

This book is a summa of the results of the Tübingen School of Plato studies. The picture of Plato created by the Tübingen School is undoubtedly the most metaphysically oriented of the interpretations which have been presented in modern times. But Krämer's book is also innovative in bringing out comparisons between the new image of Plato and the thought of some of the great modern and contemporary philosophers, and in collecting the basic documents on Plato's Unwritten Doctrines. It was the process of translating and discussing the translation with Krämer which brought me to understand all the

features of his interpretation which had previously not been clear to me. However, while going over the documents in the indirect tradition, and trying to make them comprehensible to a modern reader, I became convinced that there was no way of finding a compromise between the views of Cherniss and those of Krämer.

It might be said that, on the one hand, my position was one which, for a number of reasons, was hardly likely to be shifted; on the other hand, I had taken on board the materials for a constructive dialogue with the Tübingen School.

What was decisive for me in working out how to deal with the methods and conclusions of the Tübingen School was the study of modern epistemology. In particular, a long-standing interest in Thomas Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (University of Chicago Press, 1962; 1970<sup>2</sup>) helped me to grasp the fact that the interpretation of Plato which is put forward by the Tübingen School falls outside the traditional paradigm, and is a wholly new and alternative paradigm.

It was thus an epistemological theory which allowed me to get on top of problems which had been baffling me for years. And it is for this reason that this book begins with an account of the main epistemological views of Kuhn, which will figure large in this work as a whole. It is hoped that this will help the reader to understand a set of concepts on which we shall continue to draw, and, more specifically, to understand why the new interpretative paradigm offers dynamic prescriptions for fertile lines of inquiry in a new era of Plato studies.

This volume also aims to provide evidence for something else: that the innovations of the Tübingen School, far from imprisoning Plato scholars in German metaphysics, and so in a purely theoretical paradigm (as a famous student of Plato once said), in fact opens up many new and very fruitful avenues which have nothing to do with German metaphysics. For what is at issue is a genuinely new historical-interpretative paradigm, complete with its own puzzles, to use Kuhn's terminology, of which we shall say more in due course. The reader who follows us through this volume will be able to judge the extent to which it is right to think of the Tübingen School's interpretation of Plato as an authentically new paradigm in relation to the interpretive tradition.

For the benefit of the reader who might wish to follow up not only the stages of the composition of this book, but also some of the correlative developments, we have included an account of its growth as a bibliographical note under a separate heading.

Giovanni Reale

## Bibliographical Note on Research in the New Paradigm

As I indicated in the Preface, this book is a contribution to an emerging paradigm in Plato studies. Although the present note concentrates its attention on the Italian scene, some account of the progress of the new movement and its participants may be of interest to the reader, and a better guide than the listing in the Bibliography.

A central thesis of the Tübingen School is that unless due attention is given to the Unwritten Doctrines, of which we have reports in the indirect tradition, Plato's writings will be fatally misunderstood. This thesis is not proprietary to the Tübingen School. Grote, in his *Plato and the Other Companions of Sokrates* (Aberdeen University Press, 1885, 4 vols, 1: 360–61) takes note of a view of this sort held by Tennemann (*Geschichte der Philosophie*, 2: 205, 215, 221ff.). A version of the view was fairly fully worked out by L. Robin in *La théorie platonicienne des Idées et des Nombres d'après Aristote* (Paris, 1908); see also J. Stenzel, *Zahl und Gestalt bei Platon und Aristoteles* (Leipzig-Berlin, 1924). In more recent times, J. N. Findlay recalls having arrived at a similar conviction in 1926–27 (*Plato: The Written and Unwritten Doctrines* [Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978], Preface, ix).

The modern phase of research based on this thesis was inaugurated by H. J. Krämer's *Arete bei Platon und Aristoteles*, which I mentioned in the Preface. In addition to his numerous publications in German, Krämer, in association with the Center for Research in Metaphysics at the Catholic University in Milan, issued two significant Italian publications: *Platone e i fondamenti della metafisica* (an American edition translated by J. R. Catan and entitled *Plato and the Foundations of Metaphysics* was published by State University of New York Press in 1990) and *La nuova immagine di Platone* (Naples: Bibliopolis, 1986). The former had considerable success and, despite a large print run, quickly sold out, making way for a second edition (1987) and a third (1989). The latter takes up the earlier book's central themes and puts them to further work. In addition, Krämer offered an updated version of an important discussion from 1966 on the *Republic*, and published an Italian version in 1989 entitled *Dialettica e definizione del Bene in Platone* in the same series as the Italian

edition of the present volume. Finally, he presented an essay called "Il paradigma romantico nell'interpretazione di Platone" in *Verso una nuova immagine di Platone*, edited by G. Reale (Naples: Suor Orsola Benincasa, 1991).

Of equal importance both for the new paradigm and for its dissemination in Italy was the late Konrad Gaiser, with whom I had a fruitful and constructive relationship. His *Platons ungeschriebene Lehre* (Stuttgart, 1963) contains a crop of discoveries at the highest level, and can be thought of as a reference point for subsequent developments. At my invitation, Gaiser composed a volume entitled *La metafisica della storia in Platone* (1988; 2d ed., 1991), which I translated and introduced. In this work, Gaiser deals with the material in the second part of his 1963 book, adapting it and bringing it up to date. An Italian translation of the first part of *Platons ungeschriebene Lehre* was also projected, but the author felt that it needed rewriting and revising. Unfortunately, his unexpected death in 1988 put an end to this idea. However, I translated and introduced one of his last works, *L'oro della sapienza*, which was published in 1990 in the same series as the present volume.

Gaiser had already published three articles and two books in Italy: "Il mosaico dei filosofi di Napoli: Una raffigurazione dell'Accademia di Platone," in *Studi filosofici* (1979); "La teoria dei principi di Platone," in *Elenchos* (1980) (now reprinted as an appendix to *La metafisica della storia in Platone*); "La biografia di Platone in filodemo," in *Cronache Ercolanesi* (1983); *Platone come scrittore filosofico* (Naples: Bibliopolis, 1984); and *Il paragone della caverna. Variazione da Platone a oggi* (Naples: Bibliopolis, 1985).

While I was putting the finishing touches to the second edition of the present volume, there appeared Thomas Szlezák's *Platon und die Schriftlichkeit der Philosophie. Interpretationen zu den frühen und mittleren Dialogen* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1985). Starting from the traditional paradigm, Szlezák exactly reverses it, so as to show that it is necessary to arrive at the same conclusions as the Tübingen School, that is, that Plato's writings cannot be taken on their own. This book was translated and introduced by me in 1988 for the Center for Research in Metaphysics, under the title *Platone e la scrittura della filosofia*, and was so successful that a new edition was called for in 1989. At my invitation and that of the publisher, Rusconi, Szlezák has also written a new book, *Come leggere Platone* (1991), which clarifies themes in the earlier work and adds new ideas. Szlezák's thought is recapitulated in two essays: "Struttura e finalità dei dialoghi platonici," in *Rivista di filosofia neoscolastica* (1989), and "Oralità e scrittura della filosofia," in *Verso una nuova immagine di Platone*.

I took the opportunity to bring about the printing of two works by well-known writers who were moving in the direction of the new paradigm, even if they did not go all the way. P. Merlan's *From Platonism to Neoplatonism* (The Hague, 1953) was published in E. Perioli's translation as *Dal Platonismo al Neoplatonismo* (1990), as was C. de Vogel's *Rethinking Plato and Platonism* under the title *Ripensando Platone e il Platonismo* (1990), in each case with an introduction by me describing their relation to the new paradigm.

Several other German scholars have also contributed to the publications of Vita e Pensiero. Michael Erler's *Der Sinn der Aporien in den Dialogen Platons* (Berlin and New York, 1987) appeared in 1991 as *Il senso delle aporie nei dialoghi di Platone*, translated by C. Mazzarelli and introduced by me. See also Erler's "I dialoghi aporetici di Platone alla luce del nuova paradigma ermeneutica," in *Verso una nuova immagine di Platone*. Again K. Albert's *Über Platons Begriff der Philosophie* (Sankt Augustin, 1989) was published in 1991 in the present series under the title *Sul concetto di filosofia di Platone*, translated by P. Traverso and introduced by me. See also Albert's "Sul concetto di filosofia nel Fedro di Platone," in *Rivista di filosofia neoscolastico* (1989).

Before moving on from the German proponents of the new paradigm, we may note some important collections of essays, including the volumes edited by H. G. Gadamer and W. Schadewaldt, *Idee und Zahl* (Heidelberg, 1968); K. Gaiser, *Das Platonbild* (Hildesheim, 1969); and J. Wippern, *Das Problem der Ungeschriebene Lehre Platons* (Darmstadt, 1972); and also Gaiser's bibliography in *Platons ungeschriebene Lehre*, supplemented in Wippern (ed.).

Non-German-speaking readers may welcome G. Watson's short but helpful book *Plato's Unwritten Teaching* (Dublin: Athlone Press, 1973 [actually 1975]). Less sympathetic accounts are to be found in W. D. Ross, *Plato's Theory of Ideas* (Oxford University Press, 1951, chap. 9ff.); H. Cherniss, *Aristotle's Criticism of Plato and the Academy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1944; 3d ed., New York, 1963, ix-xxii); and W. K. C. Guthrie's *History of Greek Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978, 6 vols, 5: 7); K. M. Sayre, *Plato's Later Ontology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), as well as a review by Sayre of *Plato and the Foundations of Metaphysics* by Krämer, in *Ancient Philosophy* 13 (1993): 167-84.

Outside Italy, the need for a rereading of Plato's dialogues has been accepted in France by A. Solignac and P. Aubenque, "Une nouvelle dimension du Platonisme. 'La doctrine non écrite'," *Archives de Philosophie* (1965); by J. Pepin, *La redécouverte de Platon Preuves* (1968); and most significantly, by M. D. Richard, *L'enseignement oral de Platon* (Paris:

Les Editions du Cerf, 1986). Also in Spain, my former student Patrizia Bonagura has followed this line of thought with great rigor in *Exterioridad y Interioridad* (Pamplona: Ediciones Universidad de Navarra, 1991).

I turn now to my own long-standing involvement with Plato and to the academic and publishing activities of which this book is a part.

As noted in the Preface, I was studying in Germany, at Marburg and Munich, while Krämer and Gaiser were putting together their first works. I was writing a book on Aristotle, and it was at this time that I learned both to understand and to use the important research tools produced by German philology for the study of ancient philosophy, sharply separating them from the so-called German metaphysics. It is impossible to appraise the new interpretation of Plato without a thorough knowledge of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, which is the key document in the elaboration of the new picture of Plato.

At the time, I was engaged on a study of Aristotle using the methods of internal criticism. For that reason, I was able to proceed independently from the conclusions of the Tübingen School. But many of the conclusions I reached about Aristotle's notion of first philosophy, on the grounds of an internal analysis, are remarkably well supported if one accepts the outlook of the Tübingen School. I published my findings in *Il concetto di filosofia prima e l'unità della metafisica* (Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 1961), translated in 1980 by J. R. Catan for State University of New York Press as *The Concept of First Philosophy and the Unity of the Metaphysics of Aristotle*; and in my translation and commentary on the *Metaphysics*, *La metafisica* (2 vols.; Naples: Loffredo, 1968; augmented and revised in 3 vols., 1993).

I have returned many times to Plato, preparing translations and commentaries of several dialogues which have successfully gone into many reprintings for La Scuola publishers: *Crito* (1961; 1984<sup>11</sup>), *Meno* (1962; 1985<sup>10</sup>), *Euthyphro* (1964; 1984<sup>6</sup>), *Gorgias* (1966; 1985<sup>7</sup>), *Protagoras* (1969; 1984<sup>5</sup>), and *Phaedo* (1970; 1986<sup>10</sup>). In 1991 Rusconi republished these translations, with my versions of five other dialogues (*Ibn*, *Apology*, *Symposium*, *Phaedrus*, and *Timaeus*) in a collection of the whole Platonic corpus, with the other dialogues translated by my coresearchers and students R. Radice, C. Mazzairelli, M. L. Gatti, M. T. Liminta, and M. Migliori.

Moreover, I prepared for the press a volume by Adolfo Levi, one of Italy's greatest scholars of Plato, who, because he was Jewish, was excluded by the Fascists from university teaching and so unable to publish his work. Rearranged by me, and with all the notes and references to Plato carefully checked, the posthumous *Il problema dell'errore nella metafisica e*

nella *gnoseologia di Platone* was published by Liviana Editrice, of Padua, in 1970; a second enlarged edition appeared in 1971. I also wrote the bibliographical chapter on Plato in *Questioni di storiografia filosofica*, edited by V. Mathieu (Brescia: Editrice La Scuola, 1974).

Finally, I dealt with Plato in the second volume of the *Storia della filosofia antica* (Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 1975; 1981<sup>4</sup>; 1984, reprint of the 4th ed.); the series is being translated by J. R. Catan for State University of New York Press (1985–94) under the titles: 1. *From the Origins to Socrates* (1987); 2. *Plato and Aristotle* (1991); 3. *The Systems of the Hellenistic Age* (1985); 4. *The Imperial Age* (1990); 5. *Lexicon, Bibliography, and Indices* (in press). But it was exactly the exposition of Plato's metaphysics which caused the greatest struggle, given the difficulty of providing a unified account of the matter. For the fifth edition (1987), I rewrote the part on Plato and have since had occasion to adjust it further. In addition, I contributed an article, "L'henologia nella *Repubblica* di Platone," to a volume edited by V. Melchiorre, *L'Uno e i Molti* (Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 1990).

In conclusion, I would like to draw attention to the writings of two Italian scholars who are pursuing in detail the line of thought which is outlined in the present book. Both M. Migliori's *Dialettica e Verità. Commentario filosofico al Parmenide di Platone* (1990) and G. Movia's *Apparenza, Essere e Verità. Commentario storico-filosofico al Sofista di Platone* (1991) have been published by the Center for Research in Metaphysics of the Catholic University in Milan, and together form the strongest proof of the fertility of the new paradigm. These two scholars also contributed pieces to the collection *Verso una nuova immagine di Platone*, which we have already mentioned. Migliori's article is called "Il *Parmenide* e le dottrine non scritte di Platone," and Movia's "Il *Sofista* e le dottrine non scritte di Platone." The collection presents the proceedings of an international conference organized by A. Villani under my academic direction and held at the Istituto Suor Orsola Benincasa, Naples, in October 1991. In addition to the essays by Erler, Krämer, Migliori, Movia, and Szlezák which we have already noted, W. Beierwaltes contributed "Il paradigma neoplatonico nell'interpretazione di Platone"; E. Berti contributed "Le dottrine non scritte di Platone *Intorno al Bene* nelle testimonianze di Aristotele"; and I contributed two pieces, "I tre paradigmi storici nell'interpretazione di Platone e i fondamenti del nuovo paradigma" and "Ruolo delle dottrine non scritte di Platone *Intorno al Bene* nella *Repubblica* e nel *Filebo*."

It is hoped that the foregoing gives some impression of the state of scholarship in continental Europe and of the progress which the new paradigm is making in revolutionizing Plato studies. The collaborative

efforts of the research program have aided me in the composition of the present volume, which aims to bring together as best it can the benefits of interpreting Plato in the light of the Unwritten Doctrines.

Giovanni Reale



## PART 1

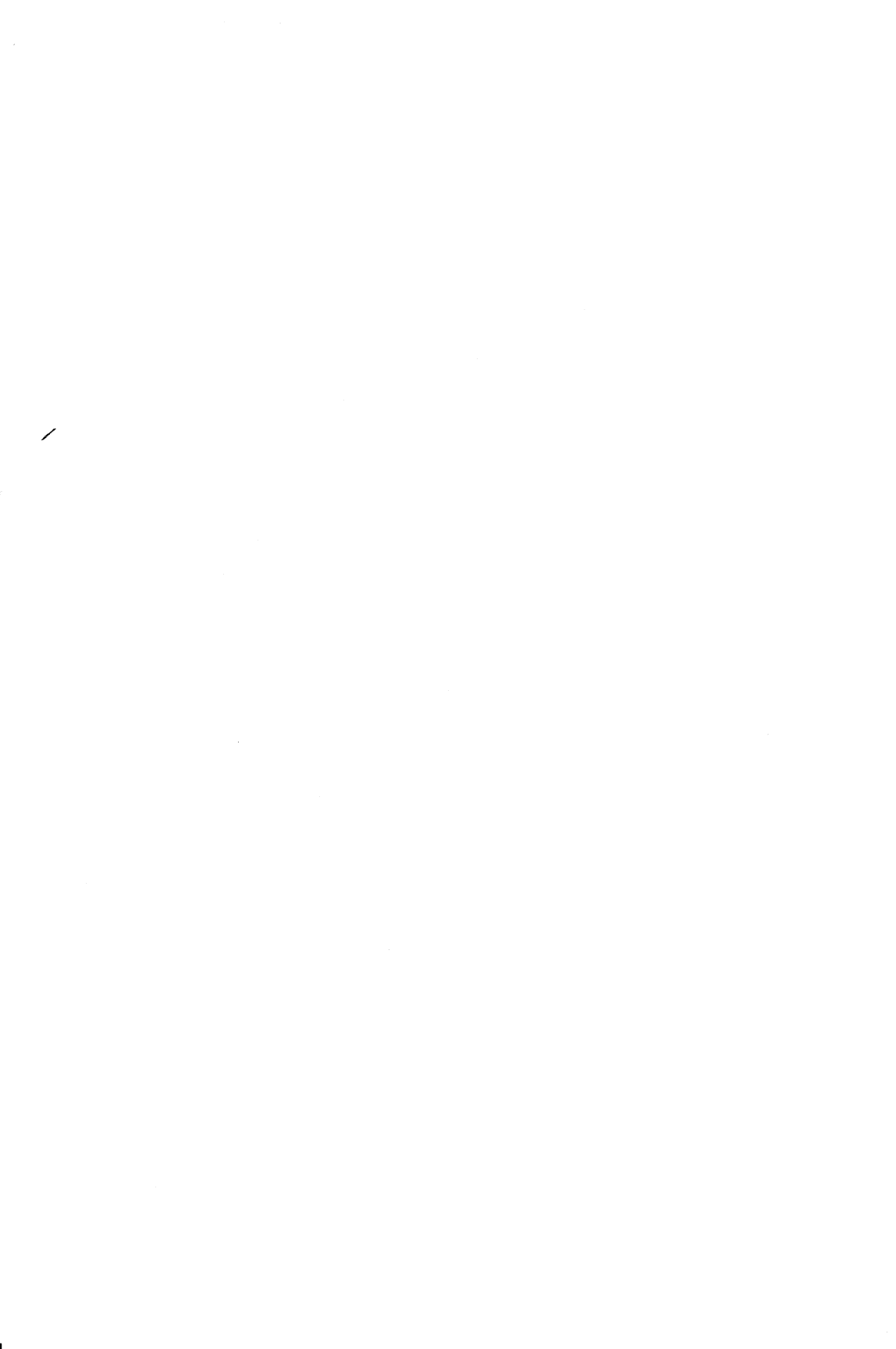
### Essential Methodological Groundwork

Each scientific revolution necessitated the community's rejection of one time-honored scientific theory in favor of another incompatible with it. Each produced a consequent shift in the problems available for scientific scrutiny and in the standards by which the profession determined what should count as an admissible problem or as a legitimate problem-solution.

T. S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 6

The indirect tradition offers a significant supplement for the construction of an overall picture of Plato. It reinforces the philosophical message, broadening the range of Plato's thought beyond what we find in his writings. . . . In this way, Plato gains as a philosopher without losing anything as a literary author.

H. Krämer, *Plato and the Foundations of Metaphysics*, 140



# 1 Kuhn's Epistemological Theory: The Meaning of Paradigms and the Nature of Scientific Revolutions

## I. AN INTRODUCTORY QUESTION IN THE STUDY OF PLATO AND THE HELPFULNESS OF KUHN'S EPISTEMOLOGY FOR ANSWERING IT

In order to understand Plato's philosophy in a new and fuller way, we must first elucidate some matters of a methodological nature. These matters take on great importance if we consider the conclusions reached by some recent investigations as well as the fact that Plato studies are going through an extremely critical and in many respects delicate phase. Here is the basic problem.

It is well known that we possess all of Plato's writings. This result clearly follows from the fact which scholars have long since settled, that all the works which the philosophical literature of antiquity expressly and reliably mentions as Platonic have come down to us. Nevertheless, we are not in a position to draw from this very important fact a conclusion which might seem perfectly obvious, at least at first glance, and that is that since we possess all the writings of Plato, we certainly know—on the basis of those writings—everything about what Plato thought.

The underlying reasons for our not being able to make this inference are as follows.

First, a basic reason why we cannot draw that conclusion is that it makes a very strong claim about Plato's writings. In fact Plato expressly says that he did not believe it was appropriate to express in writing everything he thought, especially "the things of the greatest value."<sup>1</sup> Consequently, Plato's writings contain much of his thought, but not all of it; and, in particular, they do not contain the essential fulcrum. He says so absolutely explicitly in some important passages of the *Phaedrus* and in the *Seventh Letter*, which must be considered authentic self-testimonies and which we will discuss more fully in due course.<sup>2</sup> Also, Plato's followers confirm this state of affairs in the clearest possible terms, even telling us that those things which Plato said but did not write were generally known as the ἄγραφα δόγματα, Unwritten Doctrines.<sup>3</sup>

1. Plato, *Phaedrus* 278D; *Seventh Letter* 341C.

2. See Chapter 3, pp. 51-74.

3. Aristotle, *Physics* Δ 2.209b15; see what we say further on pp. 28-29.

Connected to the first important reason is a second, in some sense a direct consequence of the first. This is the problematic form in which the writings are presented. It is well known that the Platonic writings were composed as dialogues, with Socrates generally as the main character (with the exception of the late dialogues). This in turn permits and encourages an ironic playfulness which is frequently quite ambiguous and complex, and sometimes, as is also well known, even obscure when taken on its own, or at least very difficult to accurately assess.<sup>4</sup>

However, no dialogue offers a general summary of Plato's written thought. The *Timaeus*, which more than any of the other writings seems to offer a vision of the whole of his thought, nevertheless considers its various topics from the cosmological perspective, and moreover is composed in a form which raises not a few difficulties of its own.<sup>5</sup>

This being so, it is easy to understand why, from the earliest times, there was a felt need for just such a summary of Plato. Actually, to understand the writings of Plato it is necessary to discern the outlines of the key doctrines which support them; it is necessary to have an overview of these doctrines' organic unity. The same problem which exercised the ancients has reasserted itself even more sharply in the modern period. The remark which Leibniz made about this, and which has recently been rightly emphasized,<sup>6</sup> is very illuminating and in our opinion makes a fine motto for those who undertake studies of Plato: "If someone can reduce Plato to a system, he will have performed a great service for mankind."<sup>7</sup>

But how is it possible "to reduce to a system" a thinker whose writings seem to make every effort not only not to be, but not even to appear, "systematic"?

This is the really profound "puzzle" which needs to be solved if we are to get inside Plato's thought and understand it fully.

At this point, we can see the need for two sorts of help. On the one hand, we need some methodological basis for approaching our central "puzzle," and hence for picking out the most satisfactory solution to it. On the other hand, we need some criteria to be able to take into account and to assess some recent discoveries in Plato studies which

4. The emblematic work in this regard is the *Parmenides*, as the history of its interpretations shows, which in the variety and categorical opposition which it presents demonstrates exactly what we have been saying; see Chapter 12, 221-35.

5. See what we say in Part 2, 93-188.

6. H. Krämer, *Platone e i fondamenti della metafisica. Saggio sulla teoria dei principi e sulle dottrine non scritte di Platone con una raccolta dei documenti fondamentali in edizione bilingue e bibliografia*, Introduction and translation by G. Reale (Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 1982), 136 and note 1. Or see the American edition, *Plato and the Foundations of Metaphysics*, trans. J. R. Catan (Albany: State University of New York, 1990), 65 and 243-44, note 1.

7. G. W. Leibniz, *Letter to Rémond*, in C. J. Gerhardt, *Die philosophischen Schriften von G. W. Leibniz* (Berlin, 1887; reprint, 1978), 3.637.

have overturned many long-standing beliefs. To meet these two needs it seems necessary, or at least helpful, to broach some epistemological problems. In particular, we shall pay attention to the diagnosis which Thomas Kuhn proposed for the understanding of closely similar situations in his *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, whose great insight has made it a classic in the space of just a few years.<sup>8</sup>

Kuhn's account will be immeasurably helpful in resolving a large number of problems. Despite differing in many ways from the sort of natural science with which Kuhn is chiefly concerned, Plato studies certainly do make up a science. In any case, the laws governing the change of scientific ideas which Kuhn has discovered fit our situation perfectly. So a summary presentation of Kuhn's epistemological views may be an ideal prelude which will ease the path we are to take.<sup>9</sup>

## II. A NEW PICTURE OF SCIENCE AND ITS DEVELOPMENT

The view of science which is generally assumed today (and which motivates the majority of scholars) is one according to which a science is made up of a unified body of theories, methods, and facts, typically presentable in the compact format of the textbook. This format represents the form and content of each discipline as knowledge arrived at gradually through the progress of science and so, in some sense, as a permanent gain. It considers the disciplines as knowledge acquired, in a sense inalterably fixed, having been achieved over time through the progress of science.

These clusters of theories, methods, and matters of fact are generally seen as built up by means of a unified and systematic process of augmentation made up of progressive and continuous additions. The history of a science, thus understood, is to be pieced together from the various stages set out in a narrative of successive additions over time. In this way, the history of a science picks out particular discoveries and their originators, as well as presenting the beliefs which, in various ways, misdirected or slowed down the development of the science, and which have to be recognized as errors and, as such, overcome. Kuhn writes: "Concerned

8. Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), hereinafter referred to as *Revolutions*. We refer throughout the notes to the page numbers of the second enlarged edition of the *International Encyclopedia of Unified Science* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), Vol. 2, no. 2.

9. Also see Kuhn's *The Copernican Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1957) and *The Essential Tension: Selected Studies in Scientific Tradition and Change* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977). On scientific revolutions see also *Scientific Revolutions*, ed. I. Hackingworth (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), which contains contributions by P. K. Feyerabend, I. Hacking, T. S. Kuhn, L. Laudan, K. R. Popper,

with scientific development, the historian then appears to have two main tasks. On the one hand, he must determine by what man and at what point in time each contemporary scientific fact, law, and theory was discovered or invented. On the other, he must describe and explain the congeries of error, myth, and superstition that have inhibited the more rapid accumulation of the constituents of the modern scientific text. Much research has been directed to these ends, and some still is."<sup>10</sup>

But does science actually progress by an incremental process, that is, by successive and convergent systematic accumulation of individual discoveries and inventions? Are the beliefs of the past which have been abandoned in the course of the evolution of the sciences only mere errors and superstitions or, when considered in context, are they any less scientific than what is believed today? Must the doctrines which have been abandoned, just because they have been abandoned, be counted as devoid of scientific value on principle?

Kuhn's response is unequivocal and truly novel: science does not develop by systematic additions and orderly accumulations, but rather along different lines of development, bringing on the singular events which are the real scientific revolutions. Thus, progress in science does not follow an incremental process, but can take place through revolutionary processes. The picture of science thus delineated is radically at odds with the conception which previously dominated our thinking. As a result, we are faced with questions having to do with what a revolution is if we are fully to grasp the new picture of the sciences. What exactly are scientific revolutions? And what is their basic structure? How do they come about? And, moreover, what attitudes does the scientific community adopt in the face of revolutions?

Kuhn's replies to these questions, from which the new image of science emerges, centers around six fundamental concepts:

1. The concept of the basic structure of any scientific discourse which is supported by its paradigms, which in turn furnish scientists with models for the formulation of questions and their solutions in different areas of inquiry;

2. The concept of normal science, understood as the routine phase of research, made up of systematic attempts to fit the various components accessory to a finished science into the pigeonholes supplied by the professional education undergone by the scientists, who take on board a particular paradigm, which, at a given time, is accepted by general consent of the scientists working in a given field;

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H. Putnam, and D. Shapere. On the thought of Kuhn, the volume by B. Barnes, *T. S. Kuhn and Social Science* (London: Macmillan Press, 1982) is interesting.

10. Kuhn, *Revolutions*, 2.

3. The concept of extraordinary science, understood as that point in its development in which confrontation of various anomalies and the impossibility of making them conform to the dominant paradigm produces a crisis in standing beliefs and foreshadows their being overturned;

4. The concept of scientific revolution, understood as a complex procession of the scientific community from theories early held to be basic to new theories which are incompatible with them, that is, the concept of scientific revolution as *paradigm shift*;

5. The notion that scientists accept new paradigms for reasons which are in some sense beyond logic, that is, as a result of a kind of conversion, "sustained by faith," in other words, by a pious expectation that the new paradigm will be capable of solving the problems which the old paradigms could not solve; and

6. The notion that scientific progress does not proceed toward some predetermined goal, but develops by the choices most in harmony with currently practiced techniques for the doing of science and for making progress.

We will now proceed to explain these six basic concepts, an understanding of which is essential for a grasp of the various applications we will make of them. In the course of this exposition we will quote numerous passages from Kuhn because, in our opinion, they contain ideas which are both very powerful and multifariously suggestive.

### III. PARADIGMS AND THEIR REGULATIVE AND DYNAMIC FUNCTIONS IN SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

A history of science carried out according to the most modern historiographic standards no longer attempts to find any permanent contributions which have been gradually achieved by incremental accumulation, as we pointed out above, but must attempt to "display the historical integrity of that science in its own time."<sup>11</sup>

In a study of Galileo, for example, the principal problem is not that of inquiring into the relations between his ideas and those of the science of our day; rather, it is one of bringing out the relations existing between Galileo's ideas and those of his community, that is, with those "of his teachers, contemporaries, and immediate successors in the sciences."<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, it is of basic importance to pick out specifically those elements which give these opinions "the maximum internal coherence and the closest possible fit to nature."<sup>13</sup> Contrary to what might

11. *Ibid.*, 3.

12. *Ibid.*

13. *Ibid.*

be thought and to what is often actually believed, such elements as those which give a science the coherence and solidity which it has at various times in its development are not methodological guidelines. These, in fact, can be shown to be insufficient "to dictate a unique substantive conclusion to many sorts of scientific questions."<sup>14</sup>

What sort of thing is an element on which the coherence and the solidity of science is based?

Fundamentally, it consists in a specific way of viewing the world and of applying scientific methods according to the program that it implies. Referring to the natural sciences, which offer the most salient and eloquent examples, Kuhn writes:

... [T]he early developmental stages of most science have been characterized by continual competition between a number of distinct views of nature, each partially derived from, and roughly compatible with, the dictates of scientific observation and method. What differentiated these various schools was not one or another failure of method—they were all scientific—but what we shall come to call their incommensurable ways of seeing the world and of practicing science in it. Observation and experience can and must drastically restrict the range of admissible scientific belief, else there would be no science. But they cannot alone determine a particular body of such belief.<sup>15</sup>

These basic conceptions and beliefs are those that characterize a scientific community. Consequently, they play a determining role in educating the young who join the community, and so they exert a strong influence on the formation of the scientific mentality. Such ideas, therefore, furnish the conceptual boxes into which the results of scientific research are put and without which the research could not advance.

Kuhn has chosen as a label for these essential elements the term "paradigm," on which we had better tarry, at least briefly, because it denotes the core of the new epistemology. This is, therefore, the point which has aroused the most vigorous discussion. Moreover it is, in our opinion, Kuhn's most original discovery. It is a notion which we accept and of which we shall make frequent use.<sup>16</sup>

Paradigms are those ideas and beliefs which make up the fixed points of a science at a given moment, and which, with the lapse of time, supply scientists in a given field with models for the formulation of problems and their solutions. Kuhn writes:

14. *Ibid.*, 4.

15. *Ibid.*

16. Kuhn's notion of "paradigm" has aroused the most vigorous discussions, but has rapidly found wide agreement and various applications. In this book we will use it in an *analogical* sense, but close to what Kuhn means by it when he applies it to the natural sciences. It is possible to do this, for the reconstruction of the thought of a philosopher on an historical and philological basis because that work has many analogies with scientific inquiries. Naturally, the notion of a paradigm is susceptible also of important exten-



By choosing it, I mean to suggest that some accepted examples of actual scientific practice—examples which include law, theory, application, and instrumentation together—provide models from which spring particular coherent traditions of scientific research. These are the traditions historians describe . . . as “Ptolemaic astronomy” (or “Copernican”), “Aristotelian” dynamics (or “Newtonian”), “corpuscular optics” (or “wave optics”), and so on. The study of paradigms, including many that are far more specialized than those named illustratively above, is what mainly prepares the student for membership in the particular scientific community in which he will later practice. Because he there joins men who learned the bases of their field from the same concrete models, his subsequent practice will seldom evoke overt disagreement over fundamentals. Men whose research is based on shared paradigms are committed to the same rules and standards of scientific practice. That commitment and the apparent consensus it produces are prerequisites for normal science, that is, for the genesis and continuation of a particular research tradition.<sup>17</sup>

In the past, the business of setting out the basic shape of the paradigms was carried out by classics, such as the *Physics* of Aristotle, the *Almagest* of Ptolemy, the *Principia* and *Opticks* of Newton, the *Electricity* of Franklin, and so on. Today, as we have noted above, this role is performed chiefly by textbooks which present the body of theory accepted as correct at the time they are written, together with applications, observations, and experiments considered illustrative of them.

The paradigm constitutes an authentic fundamental unit<sup>18</sup> in scientific research, because, as we have already pointed out, it is the standard against which problems are conceived as scientific problems and against which their development and solutions can be measured. Kuhn writes: “. . . [O]ne of the things a scientific community acquires with a paradigm is a criterion for choosing problems that . . . can be assumed to have solutions. To a great extent, these are the only problems that the community will admit as scientific or encourage its members to undertake. Other problems, including many that had previously been standard, are rejected as metaphysical, as the concern of another discipline, or sometimes as just too problematic to be worth the time.”<sup>19</sup>

The paradigm is a modeling activity,<sup>20</sup> prior to, and not merely the sum of, its parts, which are the various laws, rules, and theories which can be abstracted from or found in it. Scientists do not learn laws and rules in the abstract, but as a whole with the paradigm from which they then abstract them. Kuhn says:

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sions, speaking analogically of theoretical paradigms, into metaphysics, logic, ethics, aesthetics, and similar sciences. We will nevertheless use the term in its primary signification, which is illustrated in the following pages with very few exceptions.

17. *Ibid.*, 10–11.

18. *Ibid.*

19. *Ibid.*, 37.

20. *Ibid.*, 45.

Scientists work from models acquired through education and through subsequent exposure to the literature often without quite knowing or needing to know what characteristics have given these models the status of community paradigms. And because they do so, they need no full set of rules. The coherence displayed by the research tradition . . . may not imply even the existence of an underlying body of rules and assumptions that additional historical or philosophical investigation might uncover. That scientists do not usually ask or debate what makes a particular problem or solution legitimate tempts us to suppose that, at least intuitively, they know the answer. But it may only indicate that neither the question nor the answer is felt to be relevant to their research. Paradigms may be prior to, more binding, and more complete than any set of rules for research that could be unequivocally abstracted from them.<sup>21</sup>

Therefore, paradigms have a regulatory function in the sciences and are the true dynamic power which determines their development.<sup>22</sup>

#### IV. NORMAL SCIENCE AS A UNIFIED AGGREGATE FOR THE SOLUTION OF PUZZLES FOUND WITHIN A GIVEN PARADIGM

A paradigm is thus a model which animates the scientific community and encourages particular forms of scientific research which have their own coherence. The feature of the sort of research that is made possible and carried out through the acceptance of a paradigm (and hence of its regulative and dynamic role), Kuhn calls "normal science."

Normal science is the attempt to fulfill the promises and to resolve various problems which the scientific community recognizes as urgent in the light of the paradigm itself. Here is the account our author gives:

The success of a paradigm . . . is at the start largely a promise of success discoverable in selected and still incomplete examples. Normal science consists in the actualization of that promise, an actualization achieved by extending the knowledge of those facts that the paradigm displays as particularly revealing, by increasing the extent of the match between those facts and the paradigm's predictions, and by the further articulation of the paradigm itself. Few people . . . realize how much mop-up work of this sort a paradigm leaves to be done or quite how fascinating such work can prove in the execution. And these points need to be understood. Mopping-up operations are what engage most scientists throughout their careers. They constitute what I am here calling normal science. Closely examined, whether historically or in the contemporary laboratory, that enterprise seems an attempt to force nature into the preformed and relatively inflexible boxes that the paradigm supplies. No part of the aim of normal science is to call forth new sorts of phenomena; indeed those that will not fit the box are often not seen at all. Nor do scientists normally aim to invent new theories, and they are often intolerant of those invented by others. In-

21. *Ibid.*, 46.

22. *Ibid.*, 43-51.

stead, normal-scientific research is directed to the articulation of those phenomena and theories that the paradigm already supplies.<sup>23</sup>

Naturally, the area of research in which normal science moves is restricted, in that it develops wholly or for the most part within the limited area of the paradigm. Yet, in this way, the paradigm directs scientists to the detailed and deep investigation of the parts that it specifies, ". . . in a detail and depth that would otherwise be unimaginable."<sup>24</sup> So, "during the period when the paradigm is successful, the profession will have solved problems that its members could scarcely have imagined and would never have undertaken without commitment to the paradigm. And at least part of that achievement always proves to be permanent."<sup>25</sup>

As noted in the passage above, the factors that make up normal science, and that are structurally based upon its paradigm, are, basically, of *three kinds*, which we will now explain in greater detail.

Normal science tends to define which facts are to be taken as relevant, as Kuhn writes: "First is that class of facts that the paradigm has shown to be particularly revealing of the nature of things. By employing them in solving problems the paradigm has made them worth determining both with more precision and in a larger variety of situations."<sup>26</sup> Some scientists have acquired great reputations not from any novelty in their discoveries, but from the invention of highly specialized instruments, from the refined application of them in accurately determining previously known facts, and from using them to achieve greater precision.

Normal science involves systematic comparison of fact with theory, of the facts with the predictions drawn from the theory of the paradigm; this work often demands immense effort and ingenuity. "That attempt to demonstrate agreement [of the facts with the theory] is a second type of normal experimental work, and it is even more obviously dependent than the first upon a paradigm. The existence of the paradigm sets the problem to be solved; often the paradigm theory is implicated directly in the design of apparatus able to solve the problem."<sup>27</sup>

The third type of work typical of normal science consists in the effort to articulate the paradigm in order to overcome the ambiguities implicit in it, and to solve the problems to which the paradigm had previously merely called attention. "Often a paradigm," says Kuhn, "developed for one set of phenomena is ambiguous in its application to other closely

23. *Ibid.*, 23-24.

24. *Ibid.*, 24.

25. *Ibid.*, 24-25.

26. *Ibid.*, 25ff.

27. *Ibid.*, 27.

related ones. Then experiments are necessary to choose among the alternative ways of applying the paradigm to the new area of interest."<sup>28</sup> The aim of this kind of experiment is to present a new application of the paradigm within the field of inquiry or to increase the accuracy and precision of some known applications by clarification of the relevant logic. Moreover, such experiments are at the same time both more theoretical and more experimental than others; and those who perform them produce not only new information, but also consistency in the paradigm, by eliminating various implicit ambiguities. The phase of normal activity in many sciences is precisely of this type.

These general characteristics show quite clearly in what sense normal science does not aim at unforeseen novelties, but rather aims at obtaining and presenting in a new way what is already contemplated by the paradigm. The activity of normal science, says Kuhn, with a very illuminating image, consists in solving puzzles, insofar as the problems that it discusses and the way in which it solves them are precisely those that emerge from and are defined by the paradigm.

Our author explains as follows:

Puzzles are, in the entirely standard meaning here employed, that special category of problems that can serve to test ingenuity or skill in solution. Dictionary illustrations are "jigsaw puzzle" and "crossword puzzle," and it is characteristics that these share with the problems of normal science that we now need to isolate. One of them has just been mentioned. It is no criterion of goodness in a puzzle that its outcome be intrinsically interesting or important. On the contrary, the really pressing problems, e.g., a cure for cancer or the design of a lasting peace, are often not puzzles at all, largely because they may not have any solution. Consider the jigsaw puzzle whose pieces are selected at random from each of two different puzzle boxes. Since that problem is likely to defy (though it might not) even the most ingenious of men, it cannot serve as a test of skill in solution. In any usual sense it is not a puzzle at all. Though intrinsic value is not a criterion for a puzzle, the assured existence of a solution is.<sup>29</sup>

And again,

If it is to qualify as a puzzle, a problem must be characterized by more than an assured solution. There must also be rules that limit both the nature of acceptable solutions and the steps by which they are obtained. To solve a jigsaw puzzle is not, for example, merely "to make a picture." Either a child or a contemporary artist could do that by scattering selected pieces, as abstract shapes, upon some neutral ground. The picture thus produced might be far better, and would certainly be more original, than the one from which the puzzle had been made. Nevertheless, such a picture would not be a solution. To

28. *Ibid.*, 29.

29. *Ibid.*, 36-37 ff.

achieve that all the pieces must be used, their plain sides must be turned down, and they must be interlocked without forcing until no holes remain. Those are among the rules that govern jigsaw-puzzle solution.<sup>30</sup>

Such, then, is the nature of normal science.

Granting the above description, what happens when a normal science in certain circumstances produces research from which there arise extraordinary facts and problems that do not fit the paradigm and hence are not solvable by puzzle-solving activity? Let us see how Kuhn responds to this difficult question.

#### V. THE ARISING OF ANOMALIES, CRISIS IN THE RULING PARADIGM, AND EXTRAORDINARY SCIENCE

As we have seen, normal science is of its nature cumulative in that it is a puzzle-solving activity in the sense given. So far forth, it enhances the cognitive specificity of the phenomena it discusses and articulates preexisting theory. Therefore, it does not aim at novelties of fact or theory. However, even by proceeding according to the rules of a puzzle, normal scientific research uncovers new facts or new phenomena and gives birth to new theories.

The discovery of new facts and phenomena begins with the awareness of anomalies, with the recognition that they cannot be located within the confines of the puzzle, and hence fall outside considerations connected to the paradigm, which is the axis upon which normal science turns. The discovery of which we are speaking continues with the careful examination of the area of the anomaly and with the ascertaining of its implications. A crisis then arises, which lasts until an adequate restructuring of the paradigm itself is produced. Only in the perspective of the new paradigm can the anomalous phenomenon, which is a kind of counter-instance in the preceding paradigm, be considered a normal scientific phenomenon.

The anomaly, therefore, paves the way for the discovery of novelties. Kuhn concludes in this regard: "In science . . . novelty emerges only with difficulty, manifested by resistance, against a background provided by expectation. Initially, only the anticipated and usual are experienced even under circumstances where anomaly is later to be observed. Further acquaintance, however, does result in awareness of something wrong or does relate the effect to something that has gone wrong before. That awareness of anomaly opens a period in which conceptual

30. *Ibid.*, 38.

categories are adjusted until the initially anomalous has become the anticipated. At this point the discovery has been completed."<sup>31</sup>

Consequences similar to these, but of immense importance, derive from the invention of new theories produced to solve particular problems which emerge in the sphere of normal science. The emergence of these new theories is always preceded by a period of uncertainty and crisis. "As one might expect, that insecurity is generated by the persistent failure of the puzzles of normal science to come out as they should. Failure of existing rules is the prelude to a search for new ones."<sup>32</sup>

A new theory is always presented as a direct response to crisis,<sup>33</sup> which means that crises are "a necessary precondition for the emergence of novel theories."<sup>34</sup> Kuhn writes further: "All crises begin with the blurring of a paradigm and the consequent loosening of the rules for normal research. In this respect research during crisis very much resembles research during the pre-paradigm period, except that in the former the locus of difference is both smaller and more clearly defined. And all crises close with the emergence of a new candidate for paradigm and with the ensuing battle over its acceptance."<sup>35</sup>

This is the phase of "extraordinary" science in which the passage from the worn-out paradigm to a new paradigm, either partly or wholly incompatible with the preceding one, is prepared.

## VI. THE NATURE OF SCIENTIFIC REVOLUTIONS

Kuhn introduced the expression "scientific revolutions" to characterize, using an apt metaphor, the new image of science. As we saw above, science does not develop only by means of cumulative accretions which are limited to the phase of normal science, but also by means of episodes marked by the substitution of paradigms. As we have also seen, the new paradigm constitutes the true foundation supporting scientific discourse. The nature of scientific revolutions, therefore, consists in the change of paradigms and in the consequences that follow therefrom.

### *1. The Metaphor of Revolution*

Is the metaphor of revolution being correctly used to indicate the change of paradigms? Kuhn's response is quite clear. There are conspicuous analogies between scientific change and political developments in the course of which some essential moments are called revolutions.

31. *Ibid.*, 64.

32. *Ibid.*, 68.

33. *Ibid.*, 75.

34. *Ibid.*, 77.

35. *Ibid.*, 84.

Here are the two essential aspects of the analogies existing between political and scientific revolutions.

(a) First, "political revolutions are inaugurated by a growing sense, often restricted to a segment of the political community, that existing institutions have ceased adequately to meet the problems posed by an environment that they have in part created. In much the same way, scientific revolutions are inaugurated by a growing sense, again often restricted to a narrow subdivision of the scientific community, that an existing paradigm has ceased to function adequately in the exploration of an aspect of nature to which that paradigm itself had previously led the way. In both political and scientific development the sense of malfunction that can lead to crisis is prerequisite to revolution."<sup>36</sup>

(b) But there is a second level to the analogy. Political revolutions have as their aim that of "changing political institutions in ways that those institutions themselves prohibit."<sup>37</sup> The success of political revolutions implies "the partial relinquishment of one set of institutions in favor of another, and in the interim, society is not fully governed by institutions at all."<sup>38</sup> In the beginning, it is only a crisis that weakens the role of the political institutions; and the same happens with respect to the crisis that weakens the role of the paradigm. Then, because of the crisis, an increasing number of individuals are alienated from political life; and the same thing happens in the case of the crises within scientific paradigms. Furthermore, during a political crisis, some individuals focus on concrete proposals for the construction of a new constitutional framework which will organize society better, and they thereby bring about attempts by other groups to defend the old frameworks against the new. At this point it is no longer a purely political struggle. Simply because they acknowledge no suprainstitutional framework to judge the revolutionary differences of the institutions, they must resort to other techniques of persuasion, or even to force, and in general to extrapolitical and extrainstitutional factors.

The same thing occurs in sciences that are undergoing a crisis. To get out of the crisis, some scientists concentrate on ideas capable of imposing a new paradigm, while others become isolated in defense of the old paradigm. In particular, just as in the choice between incompatible political institutions, "the choice is not and cannot be determined merely by the valuative procedures characteristic of normal science, for these depend in part upon a particular paradigm, and that paradigm is at issue. . . . As in political revolutions, so in paradigm choice—there is no

36. *Ibid.*, 92ff.

37. *Ibid.*, 93.

38. *Ibid.*

standard higher than the assent of the relevant community."<sup>39</sup> Therefore, no less than political and social revolutions, scientific revolutions occur not only for logical reasons but also through the intervention of other components, and involve different techniques of persuasion.

But before considering this issue, we want to recall the other metaphors Kuhn used in order to clarify the essence of scientific revolutions.

### 2. *The Metaphor of Picking up the Other End of the Stick*

Referring to some reflections of Butterfield,<sup>40</sup> Kuhn says that the change of paradigms with its connected reorientation of the science is like "picking up the other end of the stick,"<sup>41</sup> insofar as it handles the same bundle of data as before, but locates them "in a new system of relations with one another by giving them a different framework."<sup>42</sup>

### 3. *The Metaphor of the Gestalt Switch*

Taking up an idea of N. R. Hanson,<sup>43</sup> Kuhn emphasizes the analogy of revolutionary changes of paradigms with the switch of Gestalt, that is, with the switching of the figure seen in certain shapes on paper, which are first seen by the observer as a particular shape or figure, and then as a totally different one. This interesting metaphor runs the risk of being misleading, especially because the subject of the Gestalt phenomena is free to switch back and forth between ways of seeing while the scientist has no such freedom. Notwithstanding this difficulty, because the notion of Gestalt switching is now so familiar it "is a useful elementary prototype for what occurs in a full-scale paradigm shift."<sup>44</sup>

### 4. *The Metaphor of the Inverting Lens*

Another metaphorical example given by Kuhn concerns the experiment of wearing eyeglasses with inverting lenses, that is, with lenses that turn their image upside down. Anyone wearing these eyeglasses at first sees the world upside down and is deeply disoriented and clearly in difficulty. But, after an intermediate phase marked by confused vision, he returns to seeing things as before, although they are presented to him upside down, and he therefore undergoes a genuine revolutionary visual transformation. Then, says Kuhn, a scientist "who embraces a new paradigm is like the man wearing inverting lenses. Confronting the same constellation of objects as before and knowing that he does so, he

39. *Ibid.*, 94ff.

40. H. Butterfield, *The Origins of Modern Science* (London, 1958).

41. Kuhn, *Revolutions*, 85.

42. *Ibid.*, 85.

43. N. R. Hanson, *Patterns of Discovery* (Cambridge, 1958).

44. Kuhn, *Revolutions*, 85.



nevertheless find them transformed through and through in many of their details."<sup>45</sup> And again: "Paradigms are not corrigible by normal science at all. Instead, as we have already seen, normal science ultimately leads only to the recognition of anomalies and to crises. And these are terminated, not by deliberation and interpretation, but by a relatively sudden and unstructured event like the Gestalt switch."<sup>46</sup>

#### VII. THE PROCESSES BY WHICH SCIENTIFIC REVOLUTIONS OCCUR AND PARADIGMS CHANGE

In the great majority of cases, a new paradigm arises through the intuition of an individual scientist, or of a few scientists. How, then, can the allegiance of other scientists and specialists to the new paradigm be brought about, since such an allegiance requires of them a complex Gestalt switch?

The response to this problem is very interesting, because it throws a lot of light on the psychology of the scientist.<sup>47</sup>

The acceptance by research workers of the new paradigm does not occur only for strictly rational reasons. This means that scientists are not completely impartial observers. The options facing researchers in scientific revolutions are largely conditioned by nonlogical and irrational factors. Great influence is exercised by particular kinds of cultural formation and education, aesthetic propensities or aversions, and other elements of this kind which characterize the researchers. In addition, much weight is given also to the reputation of the proponents of the new paradigm and the benefits already reaped by them. Even the nationality of the proponents takes on a certain importance.

In general, the shifting of the trust of specialists from a standing paradigm to a new one encounters remarkable resistance from conservative attitudes, which sociopsychological inquiries have shown to be quite rigid in scientists. Scientists generally have an aversion to novelty and cling strongly to the ideas which made up the fabric of their education. All this is quite understandable, since the alignment with a new model of research, with a new paradigm, has many disruptive effects on the psychology of the scientists, for reasons that restrict radical change in their mode of thinking, with easily imagined consequences. For this reason, then, new paradigms are accepted only with the changeover of succeeding generations who organize and conduct research.

45. *Ibid.*, 122.

46. *Ibid.*

47. The article of B. Barber to which Kuhn has referred is particularly interesting in this regard: "Resistance by Scientists to Scientific Discovery," in *Science* 134 (1961): 596-602.

The strongest argument the proponents of a new paradigm can advance in favor of its acceptance, Kuhn correctly points out, consists in emphasizing the possibility that it can solve the anomalies which caused the crisis for the preceding paradigm.

More generally, the choice among alternative forms of inquiry and the decision about what paradigm ought to be chosen to guide future research depends on a kind of "conversion" motivated by "faith" in the possibilities that such a paradigm offers for solving a greater number of problems. This is a trust supported by the fact that the old paradigm is not able to solve certain problems, as well as by the expectation that these problems can be solved by the new paradigm.

It is worthwhile to ponder carefully the following passages from Kuhn which, in our opinion, are very important for the purposes of understanding the tenets that we shall uphold in this volume:

The transfer of allegiance from paradigm to paradigm is a conversion experience that cannot be forced. Lifelong resistance, particularly from those whose productive careers have committed them to an older tradition of normal science, is not a violation of scientific standards, but an index to the nature of scientific research itself. The source of the resistance is the assurance that the older paradigm will ultimately solve all its problems, that nature can be shoved into the box the paradigm provides. Inevitably, at times of revolution, that assurance seems stubborn and pigheaded, as indeed it sometimes becomes. But it is also something more. That same assurance is what makes normal or puzzle-solving science possible. And it is only through normal science that the professional community of scientists succeeds, first, in exploiting the potential scope and precision of the older paradigm, and then in isolating the difficulty through the study of which a new paradigm may emerge.

Still, to say that resistance is inevitable and legitimate, that paradigm change cannot be justified by proof, is not to say that no arguments are relevant or that scientists cannot be persuaded to change their minds. Though a generation is sometimes required to effect the change, scientific communities have again and again been converted to new paradigms. Furthermore, these conversions occur not despite the fact that scientists are human but because they are. Though some scientists, particularly the older and more experienced ones, may resist indefinitely, most of them can be reached in one way or another. Conversions will occur a few at a time until, after the last holdout has died, the whole profession will again be practicing under a single, but now a different, paradigm. We must therefore ask how conversion is induced and how resisted.

What sort of answer to that question may we expect? Just because it is asked about techniques of persuasion, or about argument and counter-argument in a situation in which there can be no proof, our question is a new one, demanding a sort of study that has not previously been undertaken. . . . Individual scientists embrace a new paradigm for all sorts of reasons and usually for several at once. Some of these reasons . . . lie outside the apparent sphere of science entirely. Others must depend upon idiosyncrasies of autobiography and personality. Even the nationality or the prior reputation of the innovator and his teachers can sometimes play a significant role.

Probably the single most prevalent claim advanced by the proponents of a new paradigm is that they can solve the problems that have led the old one to a crisis. When it can legitimately be made, this claim is often the most effective one possible.

But paradigm debates are not really about relative problem-solving ability, though for good reasons they are usually couched in those terms. Instead, the issue is which paradigm should in the future guide research on problems many of which neither competitor can yet claim to resolve completely. A decision between alternative ways of practicing science is called for and, in the circumstances, that decision must be based less on past achievement than on future promise. The man who embraces a new paradigm at an early stage must often do so in defiance of the evidence provided by problem-solving. He must, that is, have faith that the new paradigm will succeed with the many large problems that confront it, knowing only that the older paradigm has failed with a few. A decision of that kind can only be made on faith.<sup>48</sup>

#### VIII. THE PROGRESS OF THE SCIENCES THROUGH REVOLUTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Kuhn quite properly concludes his study by examining the progress of the sciences through revolutions. He denies that a change of paradigm is the result of some predetermined and preestablished goal, and in particular he denies that such changes always achieve more of the truth, understood in the ontological sense. Kuhn thinks that scientific progress is a form of evolution wholly analogous to what Darwin described as typical of organisms, that is, without the support of any predetermined goal. Just as, according to Darwin, natural selection derives from the struggle of the organism for survival, so also, through a conflict which develops within scientific communities, there emerges what is the fittest and most appropriate way to practice future science.<sup>49</sup> We shall not go further into this matter, because it concerns the natural sciences. Furthermore, Kuhn's discussion of it is based on a series of metaphysical presuppositions which go beyond the purview of our theme and which raise much wider problems than we want to consider here.<sup>50</sup>

Setting aside this point, the principal tenets concerning the other themes which we analyzed are not only applicable within the area of our interests, but are in themselves very illuminating and clarificatory.<sup>51</sup>

48. Kuhn, *Revolutions*, 152-58.

49. *Ibid.*, 160-73.

50. The most outstanding presuppositions are the negation of teleology, but without adequate ontological proof, and the acceptance of the evolutionary theory of Darwin applied analogically to the process of the evolution of scientific ideas, also in this case without adequate evidence, obviously runs afoul of a metaphysical outline which carries Kuhn outside his area of expertise.

51. Cf. Postfazione, Italian edition, pp. 713ff.

The chapters which follow largely confirm our assertions and they will make perfectly clear the reasons why we have given over such a large amount of space to these methodological premises.<sup>52</sup>

#### IX. KUHN'S EPISTEMOLOGICAL CANONS APPLIED TO PLATONIC RESEARCH

Let us anticipate by applying Kuhn's epistemological doctrines to Plato studies, to clarify the following essential points:

1. On the basis of the theory of paradigms, understood as the foundations supporting scientific inquiries, it is possible to reconstruct in a new way and with a remarkable unity the centuries-long history of the interpretations of Plato.<sup>53</sup>

2. In particular, the wide range of research which began in the early nineteenth century and continues today is a rich and complex phase of normal science based on the paradigm created by Schleiermacher and premised on the almost absolute preeminence of the Platonic writings, with practically total minimization of the influence and significance of the Unwritten Doctrines transmitted through the indirect tradition.

3. The rather intricate and problematic developments which have occurred in this phase of normal science inspired by the Schleiermacher paradigm are greatly clarified if we consider the precise characteristics and the illuminating directives that Kuhn has shown belong to this phase of research, as we shall see in detail.<sup>54</sup>

4. At present, the Schleiermacher paradigm has become utterly blurred because of a set of anomalies which have emerged chiefly in our century, and which are located within it. Either the paradigm cannot fully explain the anomalies or it cannot explain them at all within its parameters. We allude chiefly to those further difficulties presently arising from the reemerging indirect tradition of Plato (which point to the Unwritten Doctrines) and to the various attempts to reassess the paradigm which have arisen with a view to trying to explain the anomalies and which have resulted precisely in a remarkable blurring of the paradigm itself.<sup>55</sup>

5. The new interpretation created by the Tübingen School aims at a total reconstruction of the understanding of Plato on the basis of the epistemological criterion examined above. It is a new paradigm intended as an alternative to the previous paradigm of Schleiermacher. The

52. We ask the reader to linger over this basic chapter because it alone provides the epistemological framework within whose limits our discussion is conducted.

53. Consult below, pp. 23-49.

54. Consult below, pp. 26ff.

55. Consult especially, pp. 10ff.

old paradigm, as we have already said, has become impotent and in many respects is well on its way to complete sterility.<sup>56</sup>

6. The reaction that the theses of the Tübingen School have aroused among scholars is not the reaction that a new interpretation normally arouses when it is located within the commonly held paradigm accepted by the scientific community, but it corresponds exactly to those very strong polemics and to those vigorous reactions which Kuhn has shown are normally aroused among scholars by a new paradigm when it is presented as an alternative or substitute for the preceding one.<sup>57</sup>

7. The paradigm of the Tübingen School offers the most significant guarantees that fruitful new paradigms can offer: it can solve exactly those anomalies which the preceding paradigm cannot.<sup>58</sup>

8. The phase which Platonic research has reached in our day is not that of normal science, but that of extraordinary science, with all the characteristics which Kuhn has shown to belong to it.<sup>59</sup>

9. In addition to the reasons mentioned above, the objections and the polemics which have been aroused by the theses of the Tübingen School must be, in large measure, also due to the epistemological non-comprehension of the fact that they present a new paradigm and not simply particular attempts to solve puzzles within the old paradigm. In other words, these theses are not reducible to an interpretation within the traditional paradigm, and hence refutable with the categories deriving from it. They are in a dimension which is radically different.<sup>60</sup>

10. To the extent that the theses of the Tübingen School present a new paradigm, they open up numerous possibilities for the solution of problems which have emerged and which continue to emerge in the interpretation of Plato, but which had become insoluble within the parameters of the old paradigm.<sup>61</sup>

In this volume, we fully accept this new paradigm, and hence we agree completely with the Tübingen School on numerous points. The differences which emerge (or which at least *may* emerge) do not concern the paradigm, but the rearrangement of some elements internal to the paradigm. Therefore, such differences as arise arise over matters about which a researcher must have freedom to restructure the various *puzzles*

56. Consult pp. 41ff.

57. Consult Chapter 3, passim, 51-74, pp. 47ff.

58. Consult above, pp. 12ff.

59. We will demonstrate this thesis in the course of the whole volume.

60. In particular, we will demonstrate in the course of the next three chapters in what measure the positions the School of Tübingen actually constitutes a new paradigm, and why it is not "unifiable" with the preceding interpretations, or able to be reinterpreted, or refutable in function of the old paradigm.

61. Consult in particular the Chapter 4, passim, 75-91.

which the paradigm throws up. Such matters are not few, especially when we are dealing with the scholarly reconstruction of a philosopher's thought. And if anyone agrees with us on this point he will understand clearly that, on the basis of Kuhn's epistemological view, the new paradigm of the Tübingen School offers bountiful results in advance of the current state of research for the best and most productive general perspective of the new inquiries on Plato.

## 2 The Paradigms That Have Been Dominant in Plato Studies

### I. THREE PARADIGMS FOR THE INTERPRETATION OF PLATO, IN ADDITION TO THAT USED AND APPROVED BY HIS FOLLOWERS WITHIN THE ACADEMY

The history of the interpretations of Plato is richer and more varied than any other involving a philosopher; and reconstructing it is rather problematic and very complicated.<sup>1</sup> But, as we hinted above, Kuhn's epistemological account, if appropriately applied and adapted to meet the needs of the history of philosophical thought, as distinct from the history of science, can significantly clarify and simplify matters.

With a view to clarifying the complex history of the interpretations of Plato in the light of the Kuhnian epistemology, our first step is the specification and determination of the basic models that the various phases of research on Platonic thought have generated and characterized, and that have conferred unity and coherence upon his works. In other words, it is necessary to discover what the paradigms are which have made up the foundations of research in its different phases, and which have regulated and directed the research itself.

Let us begin with an overview of Platonic studies today, which will help us to understand its differences from the interpretations of the past. Hans-Georg Gadamer has written in this regard: "The general problem of Platonic interpretation . . . today, arises from the obscure relationship existing between the dialogues and Plato's doctrines, as we know them

1. For a history of the interpretations of Plato, see H. von Stein, *Sieben Bücher zur Geschichte des Platonismus* (Göttingen, 1862-75; reprint, Frankfurt am Main, 1965); A. Levi, *Sulle interpretazione immanentistiche della filosofia di Platone* (Turin, n.d.); H. Leisegang, *Die Platon-deutung der Gegenwart* (Karlsruhe, 1929); M. F. Sciacca, *Platone* (Milan, 1945); E. M. Manasse, *Bücher über Platon. Werke in deutscher Sprache* (Tübingen, 1957), *Werke in englischer Sprache* (Tübingen, 1961), and *Werke in französischer Sprache* (Tübingen, 1976); E. Zeller and R. Mondolfo, *La filosofia dei Greci nel suo sviluppo storico*, Part 2, vols. 3.1 and 3.2, ed. M. Isnardi Parente (Florence, 1974); and E. N. Tigerstedt, *Interpreting Plato* (Uppsala, 1977). The general bibliography will be found up to 1925 in F. Ueberweg, gen. ed., *Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie*, vol. 1, *Die Philosophie des Altertums*, ed. K. Praechter (Leipzig, 1926). For later years, see W. Totok, *Handbuch der Geschichte der Philosophie* (Frankfurt am Main, 1964); H. Cherniss, "Plato 1950-1957," *Lustrum* 4, 5 (1959-60); and L. Brisson, "Platon 1958-1975," *Lustrum* 20 (1977), and "Platon 1975-1980," *Lustrum* 25 (1983).

only through an indirect tradition."<sup>2</sup> In other words, the most basic problem of Platonic interpretation today consists in the correct reconstruction of the relations between the doctrines we read in the writings of Plato and the Unwritten Doctrines which Plato wished to communicate exclusively through the medium of oral dialectic, but which we know about indirectly through the writings of his followers.

We shall discuss more fully in later chapters Plato's exact ideas about writing and orality, about their different significance for, and influence on, the doctrinal content, and about their different effectiveness of communication. We shall also see how to reconcile them. Here we preempt some of the elements necessary for setting up the problem in a preliminary way.

Let us recall the fact that the case of Plato is unique and unrepeatable, insofar as Plato is the only ancient author of whom we possess all the writings as well as an indirect doxographical tradition which discusses doctrines not contained in the writings, and that are marginal or parallel to those in the writings but concern the deepest problems in his philosophy. For this reason, the determination of the relation between Plato's written works and the Unwritten Doctrines is a matter of the highest importance.

This sets the scene in a preliminary way about how and how much to differentiate the two hermeneutic paradigms which now face each other. The first maintains (or at least for a long time has maintained) the self-sufficiency or autarchy of the writings, by eliminating or minimizing the significance of the Unwritten Doctrines. The second upholds the structural and essential correlation between the written works and the Unwritten Doctrines, and hence the necessity of making reference to the Unwritten Doctrines in order to understand the writings, as well as the consequent need to reread the entire *Corpus Platonicum* with this in mind so as to reconstruct an overall vision of Plato's thought.

The former paradigm was introduced at the beginning of the nineteenth century, especially under Schleiermacher's influence. This latter paradigm emerged into the light only in the second half of our century, in the late 1950s, and hence is hardly more than a quarter-century old.<sup>3</sup> We shall discuss later the slow progress of adjustments which by now has produced a very noticeable blurring of the original paradigm.

2. H.-G. Gadamer, *Idee und Wirklichkeit in Platons Timaios* (Heidelberg, 1974).

3. Krämer's first book, *Arete bei Platon und Aristoteles. Zum Wesen und zur Geschichte der platonischen Ontologie* (Heidelberg, 1967<sup>2</sup>), was published in 1959. Gaiser's principal work is *Platon Ungeschriebene Lehre. Studien zur systematischen und geschichtlichen Begründung der Wissenschaften in der Platonischen Schule*; it has an important Appendix: *Testimonia Platonica. Quellentexte zur Schule und mündlichen Lehre Platons* (Stuttgart, 1968<sup>2</sup>). See also in the Preface the *Bibliographical Note on Research in the New Paradigm*.



What paradigms predominated before the nineteenth century—from the beginning of Plato's Academy in the fourth century B.C.E. until modern times?

The response to this question is not difficult to make: for about a millennium and a half interpretations based on the Middle Platonic and Neoplatonic paradigms predominated. Beginning in the third century C.E., the Neoplatonic interpretive criterion prevailed, preceded by a remarkable Middle Platonic prelude which lasted from the end of the pagan period through the first two centuries of the Christian period, with various revivals, especially in the Middle Ages.

This paradigm centers, in its own way, on the Platonic writings with an exclusively speculative focus and with particular attention to allegory as a primary interpretive principle. The Unwritten Doctrines were taken into account by the Neoplatonists but, again, only as regards some of the claims they make, some of their systematic consequences, and some of their important speculative implications, as we shall discuss later. Indeed, it can be said that Neoplatonism would be unimaginable without the content and influence of Plato's Unwritten Doctrines.

During the Hellenistic period a form of skepticism prevailed in the Academy itself and the fundamental metaphysical insights of Platonism went into a sort of hibernation. Before the Middle- and Neoplatonist revival a paradigm was dominant, one which was instituted by the immediate followers of Plato, and whose roots were in the didactic activity of Plato himself.

This paradigm gives a clear preeminence to the Unwritten Doctrines with a heavy emphasis on the theoretical issues, as we shall see. The Tübingen School is in large measure re-creating this paradigm, because it expresses the point of view which was canonical in the fourth century B.C.E. Hence it is the paradigm underwritten by the great authority of Plato himself and instituted by his immediate followers and contemporaries, who were initiated into the teachings of the Academy. Nonetheless, there is a considerable difference in historicity and scholarliness, which gives to the Tübingen School's paradigm a higher status than the ancient version of the paradigm.

For present purposes, we must limit ourselves to giving examples of these paradigms,<sup>4</sup> with the exception of the Tübingen's School's paradigm, which we shall expound and fully discuss so that we may apply it appropriately.<sup>5</sup>

4. We have already emphasized in the Preface that we have chosen not to burden this volume with an excess of bibliographical baggage. The interested reader is directed to the works cited in note 1 above and to our essay on Plato studies in *Questioni di storiografia filosofica*, ed. V. Mathieu (Brescia: La Scuola, 1975), 1: 139-246.

5. See Chapters 3 and 4, passim, 51-74; 75-91.

## II. THE PARADIGM USED AND APPROVED BY THE IMMEDIATE FOLLOWERS OF PLATO IN THE EARLY ACADEMY

As we have already pointed out, the first paradigm for interpreting Plato arose among his immediate followers. Apart from Aristotle, Speusippus, and Xenocrates, the second and third scholarchs of the Academy, must have pride of place. This paradigm has its genesis not only in the writings, but in Plato's teaching and actual discussions. Consequently, it is the result of the direct impact of the teacher on his followers, and hence represents an indispensable point of reference.

Today this paradigm can readily be reconstructed because of the remarkable achievements of recent studies.<sup>6</sup> Evaluation and judgment about the correctness and the objectivity of this paradigm are objects of discussion because, as we shall see, the paradigm depends to a great extent on the crucial matter of the interpretation of Plato's Unwritten Doctrines and on their relations to the writings.<sup>7</sup> To help readers understand the paradigm of Plato's Academy, we will now outline some of its essential features; a fuller discussion will be offered later.

6. The old edition of the fragments of Speusippus, *De Speusippi Academici scriptis. Accedunt Fragmenta*, ed. P. Lang (Bonn, 1911), has been replaced by two new editions with commentary, and both are quite exceptional: M. Isnardi Parente, *Speusippo, Frammenti. Edizione, traduzione e commento* (Naples: Bibliopolis, 1980), and L. Tarán, *Speusippus of Athens: A Critical Study with a Collection of Related Texts and Commentary* (Leiden: Brill, 1981). The old edition of R. Heinze of the fragments of Xenocrates, *Xenokrates. Darstellung der Lehre und Sammlung der Fragmente* (Leipzig, 1892), has also been replaced by a modern edition by M. Isnardi Parente, *Senocrate-Ermodoro, Frammenti. Edizione, traduzione e commento* (Naples: Bibliopolis, 1982).

In addition, the best reconstruction of the whole thought of the ancient Academy has been published by H. Krämer, *Die Ältere Akademie*, in a new edition of Ueberweg, *Die Philosophie der Antike* (Basel and Stuttgart, 1983), 3: 1-174. Here the reader will also find a complete listing of the literature on the subject.

7. We may recall in particular M. Isnardi Parente, *Studi sull'Accademia platonica antica* (Florence, 1979), and the commentary on Speusippus and Xenocrates by the same author cited above. The interpretation of Isnardi Parente attempts to make as coherent as possible the traditional paradigm and defends a position like that of Cherniss, but in a more balanced fashion. Nevertheless, Isnardi Parente is firm on the claim "that Plato must continue to be interpreted on the basis of the doctrine of Ideas which is the foundation of the philosophy of the dialogues, and that the doctrine of the Principles is contained in the late Plato only as a beginning of an uncompleted rethinking or a deepening in an effort to go beyond himself to clarify further the ontological status of the sensible. The speculative effort of the Academy begins from here: the differentiation produced among the various Academic interpretations of Plato's thought, which together are hypotheses of a metaphysical interpretation of the real, turns essentially on whether or not the doctrine of the Ideas is capable of being supported once the research has been carried out on what are to count as the principles or if they are to be totally rejected" (*Speusippo*, 57). We are of the opposite opinion, as we will fully demonstrate; nevertheless, we judge the works of Isnardi Parente as an indispensable point of reference.

I. Aristotle's Position

Let us begin with Aristotle, with the sixth chapter of Book Alpha of the *Metaphysics*, where we find the most concise and instructive report of the matters in hand.<sup>8</sup> In this text, Aristotle executes three tasks: (a) he presents the theory of Ideas in general; (b) he illustrates and discusses the theory of the first Principles, from which the Ideas themselves, and consequently everything else, are derived; and (c) he sketches the hierarchical structure of the supersensible realities accepted by Plato.

(a) First, Aristotle says, Plato became familiar with the Heraclitean Cratylus, and then pondered on and subsequently took up the view that "all sensible things are in continuous flux and there is no scientific knowledge possible about them." Next, Plato accepted from Socrates the method of inquiring into the universal and seeking definitions. Socrates had applied this method only ethics, but Plato extended it to the whole of reality, arriving at the following conclusions: the objects of sense perception are in continuous change; hence they cannot be what definitions and universals are about; therefore, there must exist other entities to which the definitions refer. Plato called these entities "Ideas," and postulated that the plurality of sensible things which bear the same name as their corresponding Idea exist through participation in the Idea itself. With this move, Aristotle points out, Plato tried to revive the position of the Pythagoreans who had spoken of the imitation of numbers; but he merely changed the name, and did not explain (as the Pythagoreans had not explained either) what "participation" means.<sup>9</sup>

(b) The relation of participation between the Ideas and the corresponding sensible things implies that the Ideas or Forms are the causes of the sensibles. Nevertheless, the Ideas or Forms are not the primary and ultimate causes. Aristotle says that Plato maintained that there were constitutive elements of the Ideas themselves, and hence that there were Principles higher than those Ideas. These highest Principles are the One and the Dyad of the great-and-small, or the unlimited and indefinite Dyad. The role of the One is likened by Aristotle to form, and the function of the Dyad to matter. Consequently, the Ideas are produced from the One as formal cause and from the Dyad of the great-and-small as material cause; the Ideas, in their turn, are the formal cause of sensible things, and the Dyad of the great-and-small function once again (obviously on a different level) as the material cause.

8. We refer in this regard to our work *Aristotele, La Metafisica*, 2 vols. (Naples: Loffredo, 1968, 1978<sup>2</sup>; in 3 vols. 1993<sup>3</sup>), in which the reader can establish how far the new paradigm of the Tübingen School has brought about a major clarification not only in the interpretation of Plato but also in the interpretation of the relations between Plato and Aristotle.

9. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* A 6.987a32-b14.

Aristotle writes: “[I]t is clear that he [Plato] made use of only two causes, the formal and the material cause. In fact, the Ideas are formal causes of other things, and the One is formal cause of the Ideas. And it is evident what the underlying matter is, of which the Forms are predicated in the case of sensible things, and the One in the case of Forms, namely, that this is a Dyad, the great and the small.”<sup>10</sup>

Aristotle concludes his chapter by specifying the ethical value of the two supreme principles; to the One Plato attributed the cause of the good, and to the opposed principle of the Dyad that of evil.<sup>11</sup>

(c) In addition to the sensibles, according to this interpretive paradigm, there exists not only the sphere of the Ideas, but also the realm of the highest Principles, the One and the Dyad. But Aristotle goes on to tell us that Plato also admits an intermediate realm made up of the objects of mathematics which lies between the sensibles and the Ideas: “. . . [Plato] affirms that next to the sensibles and the Forms there are mathematical entities ‘intermediate’ between them, which exist and differ from sensibles, because they are immobile and eternal and they differ from the Forms because there are many alike while each Form is only one and individual.”<sup>12</sup>

Furthermore, Aristotle puts the Ideal numbers next to the Ideas, and he says that Plato considered them the cause and substance of other things.<sup>13</sup> In this, Aristotle explains, Plato is in agreement with the Pythagoreans, but he differs from them by placing numbers as separated from the sensibles, that is, as transcendent, just as he differed from the Pythagoreans by placing the mathematical entities as intermediates.<sup>14</sup>

In the passage which we are discussing, Aristotle gives us to understand that the Ideal numbers and the Ideas are not to be identified totally and absolutely; and he seems to speak of the Ideal numbers as the primary derivatives from the One and the Dyad.<sup>15</sup>

The hierarchy of supersensible realities is therefore the following, going from the highest to the lowest:

1. The Principles of the One and the Dyad of the great-and-small;
2. Ideal numbers;
3. Ideas or Forms;
4. Mathematical intermediate entities.

10. *Ibid.*, 988a9–14.

11. *Ibid.*, a14–17.

12. *Ibid.*, 987b14–18.

13. *Ibid.*, b24ff.

14. *Ibid.*, b27ff.

15. *Ibid.*, 987b29–988a10.

What immediately strikes the reader in considering this outline of Plato's thought as drawn by Aristotle is that more than two thirds of it does not coincide with what we read in the dialogues. The main motor of this interpretive paradigm is, therefore, not located *within* the writings, but *outside* them. Aristotle himself suggests that this is so in a parallel passage of great importance from the *Physics*, where speaks of Plato's Unwritten Doctrines (ἄγροφα δόγματα), from which he was also clearly deriving the claims in the text of the *Metaphysics* that we have presented here but which are not to be found in Plato's dialogues.<sup>16</sup>

Setting aside for the moment a fuller discussion of this matter, to which we shall return later,<sup>17</sup> let us see how, judging from the surviving fragments, Speusippus and Xenocrates, interpreted, discussed, and tried to rearrange and repropose Plato's philosophy in the early Academy within the paradigm we have sketched.

## 2. *The Position of Speusippus*

Speusippus worked exactly in accordance with this paradigm. As the nephew and successor of Plato, he tended to set aside the central theme of Plato's writings, that is, the theory of Ideas, in favor of the theme central to the Unwritten Doctrines, namely, the theory of the Principles, with all the consequences which flow from it. Among those consequences was a reinterpretation of the Principles and a reconfiguration of the hierarchical structure of supersensible realities.

In particular, Speusippus placed the Ideal realities (the universals, both the Ideas and the Ideal numbers) on a lower level, and below them the numbers and mathematical objects, which for Plato were, rather, intermediates in the sense we explained above. He maintained, nevertheless, the structure of the transcendence of these numbers and mathematical entities, treating them as the unifying structuring key to the sensible world.

This naturally required the reinterpretation of the Principles which instead of being called the One and the Dyad of the great-and-small, are now called the One and the Many, since Unity and Multiplicity are more easily understood as the generative principles of mathematical numbers. And the preeminence of the quantitative over the qualitative also required a different ethical evaluation of the Principles themselves. For Speusippus the One is not identified with the Good (nor is the opposite Principle identified with evil) because the good and the beautiful are manifested in what is derived from the Principle and hence in the conditioned.

16. Aristotle, *Physics* Δ 2.209b11-17.

17. Cf. Chapters 8 and 9, *passim*.

It thus led to a different conception of the hierarchy of realities, whose various levels (mathematical numbers and extension, soul, sensible objects) are not derived directly from the One and the Many, but from principles which play a similar role to theirs.<sup>18</sup>

### 3. *The Position of Xenocrates*

Xenocrates, too, operated with the same paradigm, but tried to bring the Academy back to a greater fidelity to Plato. He defended the theory of Ideas despite subordinating it to the theory of the Principles, which he presented as the foundation of Plato's thought.

Apart from some clarification of the second Principle and an emphasis on the connection between mathematical entities and Ideal numbers, Xenocrates consistently remained faithful to the hierarchical structure of supersensible realities which Aristotle attributed to Plato.<sup>19</sup>

### 4. *Summary Conclusions on the Interpretive Paradigm Used and Approved by the Academy*

The interpretive paradigm of Plato's followers is therefore clear: the thought of the founder of the Academy has its ultimate foundation in the theory of the Principles, which is not contained in the dialogues.

And this theory is considered more important than the theory of Ideas to such an extent that Plato's first successor, his nephew to boot, did not hesitate in rejecting the theory of Ideas to overcome a range of *aporias*, but depended entirely on the theory of the Principles, which was understood as the ultimate and essential teaching of Plato.<sup>20</sup>

In his account of this version of Plato's thought, Aristotle criticizes both the theory of Ideas and the theory of the Principles. But he devotes his main energies to the theory of the Principles and related matters; and, throughout the *Metaphysics*, we find him drawing equal inspiration from each to further his own interests.

Overall, the mathematical objects are of prime importance for all the thinkers in this paradigm. Even if, in Speusippus, they take the place of the Ideas, for the others they are—with slight variations—intermediates. And although he denies their independent substantiality, Aristotle makes use of them for his distinction among the theoretical sciences.<sup>21</sup>

Note that the hierarchical stepladder of supersensible realities is the subject matter of the famous Books M and N of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*.

18. *Speusippus*, frags. 48–88, ed. Isnardi Parente.

19. *Ibid.*, 92–122, ed. Isnardi Parente.

20. *Ibid.*, 73–80, ed. Isnardi Parente.

21. This point has been worked out fully and accurately by P. Merlan in his *From Platonism to Neo-Platonism* (The Hague, 1953).

The steps go from the lowest to the highest, that is, from discussion of the mathematical entities, passing through the discussion of Ideas, to finally reach questions related to the Ideal numbers and the highest Principles.<sup>22</sup> And the four levels are brought continuously into the foreground very usefully for the reconstruction both of what the greatest disciples of the Academy held to be the foundation of Plato's thought and of their own attitudes in relation to it.

This paradigm is very similar to the one that undergirds the thought of the Tübingen School, because the essential documents coming from Aristotle and the Academics require us to distinguish the two cases:

a. Plato's followers' interest is in the teachings of their master and is aimed at the construction of positive theory.

b. They gave overwhelming weight to the Unwritten Doctrines.

c. They did not have the historical dimension and viewpoint dependent on it, with all the methodological and scientific problems connected to it, which the Tübingen School has brought into the foreground.

d. Probably Plato's followers were moved to undervalue the dialogues or, at least, to twist them into accordance with the account given of the Unwritten Doctrines. We can see this, for example, in the information we have about their interpretation of the *Timaeus*, which (in an attenuated way) anticipates the allegorical interpretation instituted mainly by the Neoplatonists.<sup>23</sup>

### III. THE NEOPLATONIC PARADIGM AND ITS INFLUENCE DURING MORE THAN A MILLENIUM AND A HALF

As we have already hinted, the second interpretive paradigm arose in conjunction with the rebirth of Platonism and developed in various ways paralleling the development of Platonism itself. There are four phases that can be separated in this complex trajectory.

#### 1. *The Phase Ushered in by Middle Platonism*

The new paradigm was very roughly sketched by Middle Platonism, from the last decades of the pagan era, and especially in the course of the second century after Christ.<sup>24</sup>

22. See what we have stressed on this point in our commentary to *Metaphysics: G.* Reale, *La Metafisica*, 2: 347ff.

23. See Aristotle, *De caelo* A 10.279b32ff.; *Speusippus*, frags. 94 and 95, ed. Isnardi Parente; and *Xenocrates*, frags. 153–58, ed. Isnardi Parente.

24. Concerning Middle Platonism, see the Ganz bibliography which we cite in our *History of Ancient Philosophy*, Vol. 5: *Lexicon Indices Bibliography* (in press, State University of New York Press); and for the interpretation we give, see G. Reale, *History of Ancient Philosophy*, Vol. 4: *The Imperial Age* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), 207–34.

The most important formulation of this outline can be found in the *Didaskalikos* of Albinus, which was written around the middle of the second century C.E. and which presents a significant synthesis.<sup>25</sup>

The distinctive features of this paradigm can be specified as follows:

a. The predominance of interest in a totalizing theory.

b. The strong influence of the notion that the supersensible and divine realities are hierarchically structured and differentiated: the First Intellect (or First God), Second Intellect, Soul of the World (or Intellect of the World-Soul). The First Intellect awakens and draws to itself the World-Soul, thus generating the Second Intellect. The Platonic Ideas thus become the Thoughts of God Who Thinks Himself, and as such are the eternal paradigms of and standards for all things. The Platonic conception of the realm of Ideas is brought into line with the Aristotelian Divine Mind which thinks-itself; and the Platonic conception of the transcendent Ideas is defended at the same time as the Aristotelian notion of the immanent forms. The former are the primary intelligibles, as causes, the latter are secondary intelligibles as the effects of the former.

c. The identification of the First Intellect with the primary and highest reality explains why the One and the Dyad we find in Plato's Unwritten Doctrines are peripheral: they are the foundations of the parallel Neo-Pythagorean speculation; and the One will become the fundamental principle of all the Neoplatonists. The Middle Platonists do not speak so much about Principles, which explain the whole reality at all levels, as about those that explain the cosmos, and they reduce these to three fundamental ones: God, Ideas, and matter.

d. The goal of man is assimilation to God.

e. The basic Platonic text which Albinus used is the *Timaeus*, although he mentions several other dialogues. But what is useful for illustrating the general paradigm we are discussing is the fact that it tends to find in the Platonic dialogues theories which they do not express. Let us cite only one particularly telling case. Plato, writes Albinus, displayed, in the *Parmenides* and in other dialogues, the ten categories.<sup>26</sup> In other words, he thought that he could read into Plato a variety of later discoveries, such as Aristotelian doctrines in logic and metaphysics, not to mention some ideas of Stoic origin.

25. The *Didaskalikos* has been edited by F. Hermann, in *Platonis Dialogi* (Leipzig, 1880<sup>2</sup>), 6: 152–89, and by P. Louis, in *Albinus, Epitomé* (Paris, 1945).

26. Albinus, *Didaskalikos* 6.10. For the documentation of the theses summarized above, see our *History of Ancient Philosophy*, Vol. 4: *The Imperial Age*, at the pages mentioned at note 24 above.



2. *Formulation of the Neoplatonic Paradigm at Its Height, from Plotinus to Proclus*

With Plotinus the paradigm took on a more systematic and more theoretical significance. It was broadened in parallel with the development of Neoplatonism; in particular, it was extended by Iamblichus and especially by Proclus, with whom it reached its full culmination.

With Plotinus, the structure of reality, centering on the doctrine of the three hypostases (*One, Nous, Soul*) which proceed from each other in accordance with the triadic circular movement of permanence, procession, and conversion, becomes prominent. Later Neoplatonists merely developed the complexity of this structure, for they were convinced of finding it, in at least some measure, in the Platonic writings. In this regard, the following passage of Plotinus is very illuminating:

... also Plato taught his three grades: The Whole—he says (meaning what is first)—is about the King of All and the second is about the Second and the third is about the Third. But he further affirms that the cause has a Father, that cause which—he says it himself—is the Spirit; the creator, in fact, for him is the Spirit; It—he says—creates the soul in that vessel. And to the Father of the cause—which is then the Spirit—he gives the name of the Good, and that which is beyond the Spirit and beyond Being and in many places he calls being and Spirit (*Nous*), undoubtedly Idea. Whence it is that Plato is aware that from the Good the Spirit is derived (*Nous*) (Idea) and from Spirit (*Nous*) the Soul; and thus it is that our reasonings are not novel nor date from today, but have been around for a long time although not explicitly and our actual reasonings are presented only as interpretations of those ancients, with texts which guarantee that these doctrines are ancient and to be found in the writings of Plato himself.<sup>27</sup>

All the Neoplatonists share the same basic conviction, with different nuances, that they would find all the doctrines they professed in Plato's writings, when these are suitably interpreted.

Naturally, the Neoplatonists made considerable use of the Unwritten Doctrines, which had been spread by the early Academics and by Aristotle, and then taken over by the Neo-Pythagoreans. Without the Unwritten Doctrines, Neoplatonism would not have grown as it did. In particular, the doctrine of the One conceived as supreme Principle and identified with the Good, understood as the-beyond-being-and-thought, and the *henology* (theory of the One) which follows from it, is a radical reinterpretation and development of the great Platonic doctrine. Also, the indefinite Dyad was taken up again, but considered as itself proceeding from the One, as do all other realities. Moreover, Plotinus revived the doctrine that the Ideas are produced by the conjunction of

27. Plotinus, *Enneads* 5.1.8.

the One and the Dyad. Also, the theory of Ideal numbers was taken up and developed in various ways. Nevertheless, these doctrines were understood to have a close connection with the dialogues.<sup>28</sup>

The end of man, the Platonic assimilation to the divine, was explained as "*henosis*," that is, a unification, a reunification with the One.<sup>29</sup>

The *Timaeus* was a fundamental text. Proclus even considered it to be Plato's quintessential written work, worthy of being saved above all others. But the *Parmenides* was for many Neoplatonists the writing containing the framework of all metaphysics. Plotinus wrote: ". . . the Platonic *Parmenides* speaks with more critical accuracy [than does Parmenides own *Poem*] in distinguishing among the primordial One [the first hypostasis], which is most properly One; the second, which he calls One-Many [second hypostasis]; and the third, which is One-in-Many [third hypostasis]. In this way, he supports the doctrine of the three natures in just our sense."<sup>30</sup> If we read the parts we have of Proclus's imposing commentary on the *Parmenides*, then we can get a clear idea of how the Neoplatonists twist a Platonic text to draw from it their own doctrines.<sup>31</sup>

Iamblichus began the process of codifying an allegorical interpretation of the Platonic writings. According to him, a Platonic dialogue must be interpreted in terms of a single aim and goal. Not only the dialogue as a whole but also its prologue and its subsections had to be referred to this goal. According to Iamblichus, it is possible to read a Platonic dialogue on various levels: he conceived metaphysics, mathematics, physics, and ethics as closely linked together by the relation of model and image. Metaphysics was the model and mathematics its image; in its turn, mathematics was the model of which physics was the image, and ethics was taken to be closely connected to mathematics. On the basis of this schema, in which allegory figures large, it was possible, by passing from the image to the model, to interpret the dialogues on different levels without infringing the requirement that there be a principal aim. Thus, moving from a physical presentation to its mathematical model; and from the mathematical level, considered in its turn as image, it became possible to pass to the metaphysical model beyond it; or it became possible to pass from the part to the whole.<sup>32</sup>

28. See our *History*, 4: 341-43.

29. *Ibid.*, 386-92.

30. Plotinus, *Enneads* 5.1.8.

31. See Proclus, *Commentarium in Parmenidem*, ed. G. Stallbaum (Leipzig, 1889; reprint, Frankfurt am Main, 1976); also see *Platonis Parmenides usque ad finem primae hypothesis nec non Procli Commentarium in Parmenidem pars ultima ad huc inedita, interprete G. de Moerbeke*, ed. R. Klibansky and C. Labowsky (London, 1953).

32. On this issue, see K. Praechter, "Richtung und Schulen im Neuplatonismus," in *Genethliakon Carl Robert* (Berlin, 1910), 103-56, in particular 128ff. (now available in K.

### 3. Weakening of the Neoplatonic Paradigm during the Middle Ages

This paradigm was dominant during the Middle Ages, although in a somewhat weakened form: with significant theoretical simplifications, with features from Middle Platonism in the foreground, and with a very limited direct access to Plato's own texts.

This is quite understandable for various reasons.

The first Church Fathers drew on Middle Platonic sources; and the later Fathers drew on Neoplatonic sources, simplifying them in the desire to produce a compromise with Christian doctrine. But in its final phase at Alexandria, Neoplatonism in general had already begun to undergo a weakening in the direction of Middle Platonism.

In the West, the translation of the *Timaeus* by Chalcidius was a turning point, accompanied as it was by a commentary which in many respects returned to Middle Platonic positions. Likewise, Macrobius's *Commentary to Cicero's Dream of Scipio* was inspired by a simplified Neoplatonism (in addition to Plato, Macrobius cites Plotinus, but no Neoplatonists later than Porphyry).<sup>33</sup>

St. Augustine also drew ideas in agreement with Christian doctrine (and hence simplified) from the Neoplatonic texts which he read (he called them *libri Platoniorum*); and he understood Plato within the Neoplatonic paradigm. For Augustine, the pure and limpid message of Plato returned to life with Plotinus, who was so similar to the teacher as to lead one to believe that Plato had been reincarnated in Plotinus.<sup>34</sup>

The Middle Ages was not in direct contact with Platonic texts. For many centuries the *Timaeus*, in Chalcidius's incomplete translation,<sup>35</sup> was generally the only text read. Nor did things change much with the translations of the *Meno* and the *Phaedo* which Henry of Ghent made toward the beginning of the second half of the twelfth century.

It is to be noted that, even in Proclus's version of it, the Neoplatonic paradigm was subject to external influences, particularly the rearticulation in accordance with Christian doctrines offered by Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite in works that began to be translated into Latin from the ninth century. It was only toward the end of the thirteenth century that Proclus's own *Commentary to the Parmenides* was translated; and so

Praechter, *Kleine Schriften* [New York: Olms, 1973], 165–216); B. Dalsgaard Larsen, *Jamblique de Chalcis. Exégète et philosophe* (Aarhus, 1972); J. M. Dillon, *Iamblichii Chalcidensis in Platonis dialogos commentariorum fragmenta* (Leiden: Brill, 1973); and I. Hadot, *Le problème du néoplatonisme alexandrin: Hiéroclès et Simplicius* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1978).

33. See J. H. Waszink and P. J. Jensen, *Timaeus a Calcidio translatus commentarioque instructus* (Leiden: Brill, 1962, 1975<sup>2</sup>), and J. Willis, *Ambrosii Theodosii Macrobiani commentarii in Somnium Scipionis* (Leipzig, 1963, 1970<sup>2</sup>).

34. In the *Contra Academicos* 3.18.41.

35. *Timaeus* 17A–53C.

only from this time could some scholars have had an immediate, even if partial, contact with a reading of Plato according to the Neoplatonic paradigm in its most complex formulation.<sup>36</sup>

In general, therefore, the Middle- and Neoplatonic paradigm during the Middle Ages served as the indirect means for the reception of a Plato viewed exclusively as a metaphysician, with predictable effects, which modern scholars have been recognizing and recovering.

#### 4. *The Revival of the Neoplatonic Paradigm in the Modern Period*

In the modern period, the great revival of Platonic writings was promoted by the spiritual movement of humanism in Italy and by the Renaissance. All the dialogues were translated into Latin during the fourteenth century; but, once again, they were read according to a Neoplatonic interpretive paradigm, which was brought to prominence in Italy by Ficino and then spread throughout Europe. This state of affairs continued until the beginning of the nineteenth century, although the paradigm was dying of inanition, having exhausted its dynamic and regulative powers in the course of the seventeenth century.<sup>37</sup>

The issue which causes greatest astonishment is this: How is it that, despite immediate contact with Platonic texts, both in the original and translated, the Neoplatonists' paradigm, with its heavy theoretical incrustation, as well as the serious deformations it imposed on the dialogues, could continue to dominate Plato studies?

There are three principal reasons:

(a) When the Schools of Athens and Alexandria were closed, Byzantium collected and kept alive Hellenic tradition, albeit slavishly; in particular, it kept alive the Neoplatonic paradigm for the interpretation of Plato. It was Byzantine scholars who passed on to Italian humanism the Neoplatonic way of reading Plato and of understanding Platonism. And Byzantine scholars flocked to Italy in three successive waves: at the beginning of the fourteenth century men like Immanuel Crisolora were invited to Italy and founded the tradition of Greek studies; again in 1439 a massive influx of Byzantine scholars arrived for the Council of Ferrara-Florence, in which the reunification of the Orthodox and Catholic Churches was discussed; finally in 1453 a diaspora of Greek scholars was caused by the fall of Constantinople into the hands of the Turks. It

36. Proclus's significant influence on the Middle Ages was exercised through Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, who was an essential touchstone for the majority of the thinkers of that period, and through the *Liber de causis*, which is an extract from the Proclinean *Elements of Theology*, but falsely attributed to Aristotle.

37. Concerning this point, see E. N. Tigerstedt, *The Decline and Fall of the Neoplatonic Interpretation of Plato* (Helsinki, 1974), *passim*.

has been shown that the arrival in Italy of the Byzantine scholars in the last wave did not generate the rebirth of Greek studies, which already had very deep roots; nevertheless, it stimulated them anew, and, as in the case of Platonism, it greatly inspired them.

(b) Keep in mind that the humanistic tradition of Latin studies had achieved a high level of sophistication at least a century before the Greek one. Its concrete interests stamped themselves equally on textual philology and on the correct determination of chronology; whereas the Greek tradition, being subject to philosophical and theological interests, was less bound to the specifics and to textual accuracy, and was therefore less able to determine the philological and chronological accuracy of ancient works.

(c) Finally, Ficino's translation of Plato was completed in 1484, and was followed in 1492 by the translation of the *Enneads* of Plotinus and by other Neoplatonist works; these contributed hugely to the entrenchment of the Neoplatonic interpretive paradigm. For Ficino, Plotinus was the quintessential interpreter of Plato, as Plotinus himself had maintained that he was. Ficino emphasized, very pointedly, the following claim: in the *Enneads* it is "Plato himself who speaks in the person of Plotinus"; "Plato lived again in Plotinus"; the same spirit breathed in the same way in the "Platonic and Plotinian mouth."<sup>38</sup> And because Ficino's translation of Plato remained for a long time a reference point for cultured men, so did its interpretive paradigm.

This Neoplatonic paradigm began to lose its value during the eighteenth century. Not a few scholars leveled strong criticisms at it and tried to refute it.<sup>39</sup> But no alternative paradigm had yet been proposed. Even Brucker, who in his well-known *Historia critica philosophiae* attempted to do this very thing, succeeded only in confirming the Neoplatonic paradigm in the Middle Platonic version of Albinus, whose *Didaskalikos* he held to be the best arranged summary of Platonic philosophy. Thus,

38. In his "Introduction" (*Exortatio*) to his translation and commentary on the *Enneads*, Marsilio Ficino writes as follows: "First of all, I wish to draw your attention to the way that in the divine Plotinus, whom you are about to hear, it is Plato himself who is speaking in the person of Plotinus, as you will judge when you have heard him. For either the erstwhile Plato lived again in Plotinus—as the Pythagoreans tell us can easily happen—or, as no Platonist will deny, the Daemon that previously breathed in Plato later did so in Plotinus, so that it inspired in the same way both the Platonic and the Plotinian mouth. But whereas in Plato it suffused a more abundant spirit, in Plotinus it had the same nobility and, if we shall not say it was more noble, it was at least no less so, and was almost as profound." Ficino concludes: "But if the heavens are favorable and if we are successful in translating Plotinus' first book and in summarising its contents, then Plato himself would call on you to judge Plotinus in the following terms: 'This is my son in whom I am well pleased: hearken unto him.'" See Marsilii Ficini, *Opera Omnia* (Basel, 1557), 2: 1548.

39. See Tigerstedt, *Decline*, 38–63.

Brucker failed, in point of accuracy and scale, to produce the radical change of interpretation at which he aimed.<sup>40</sup>

#### IV. SCHLEIERMACHER'S PARADIGM, THE SETS OF PROBLEMS THAT DEVELOPED WITHIN IT, AND SOME FRAGMENTARY ANTICIPATIONS OF A FURTHER ALTERNATIVE PARADIGM

The new paradigm that was destined radically to replace the long-standing Neoplatonic paradigm was clearly formulated by F. D. Schleiermacher: it was established by the imposing translation of Plato's dialogues done to standards aimed at producing the most faithful possible reflection of the original. This labor of twenty-four years (1804–28)<sup>41</sup> included a programmatic general Introduction and individual introductions to the separate dialogues.<sup>42</sup> This remarkable undertaking presented a truly novel image of Plato, as scholars have since recognized. Schleiermacher's position becomes still clearer in the light of Kuhn's epistemological standards. It can be considered on two levels: on that of the formal structure of the paradigm which he proposed, and on that of the solution of "puzzles" within this paradigm. The formal structure of the new paradigm can be summarized in three points:

(a) In the Platonic dialogues that have come down to us, form and content are indissolubly mingled. So far forth, they are unrivaled expressions of philosophical communication. Therefore, to understand the method and the content of Platonic philosophy is to understand the Platonic dialogues.

(b) The Platonic dialogues have a doctrinal unity and express a precisely describable system presented according to a general plan of instruction which ascends through stages from an elementary level, pro-

40. Tigerstedt's view on this matter is mistaken in supposing that the contribution of Brucker was the "radical and final" rupture with a thousand-year-old tradition. See instead the detailed presentation of Brucker (with ample quotations of texts) made by M. Longo, in *Storia delle storie generali della filosofia*, gen. ed. G. Santinello, vol. 2: *Dall'età cartesiana a Brucker*, ed. F. Bottin, M. Longo, and G. Piaia (Brescia: Editrice La Scuola, 1979), esp. 556ff. Here are some of Longo's conclusions: "Notwithstanding the purpose of giving a picture of Plato different from that present in Neoplatonism, to which Brucker is sometimes close, because of the systematic preoccupation which directs his historiographic work in this respect and because of having accepted Albinus as a guide who, despite living before Ammonius and Plotinus, expressed very similar exigencies . . ." (p. 558). And a little before, Longo explains: "The text of the dialogues, which to Brucker seems privileged, in reality is inserted in the unitary vision offered by the work of Albinus" (ibid).

41. F. D. E. Schleiermacher, *Platons Werke* (Berlin, 1804–28, 1817,<sup>2</sup> 1855<sup>3</sup>).

42. The important general *Einleitung* has been reissued in the volume *Das Platonbild. Zehn Beiträge zum Platonverständnis herausgegeben von K. Gaiser* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1969), 1–32. In English the introductions have been published by Arno Press of New York in a reprint (1973) of the 1836 edition translated from the German by William

ceeding to an intermediate constructive level, to reach, finally, an explicitly systematic and constructive level. Therefore, to reconstruct the plan of each dialogue and the general plan that links the various dialogues is to reconstruct the system of Plato.

(c) Read this way, the dialogues have a value taken on their own and so are self-sufficient, in the sense that Plato's thought is to be found in them (this part of the Schleiermacher paradigm can be summed up in the slogan "*sola scriptura*"). Consequently, the indirect tradition loses all influence on the task of understanding Plato. Not only does the long and complex Neoplatonic tradition lose its significance, but also the indirect tradition which goes back to the immediate followers of Plato is treated as nugatory. As to the reports we have from Aristotle, which go beyond the dialogues and are the most important extant, Schleiermacher writes: "[Aristotle] never appeals to other sources . . . he appeals in every instance in the most unconstrained and simple way to the surviving works" [!].<sup>43</sup> And straightaway, trying to justify this obviously inadequate and incorrect statement, he adds: "and even when, as is now and then the case, other lost writings or perhaps oral lectures [!] are quoted, these quotations in no way contain any thing unheard of in the writings we possess, or completely different from them."<sup>44</sup>

Such are the key points of the paradigm which opened an epoch of research lasting more than a century and a half.

When we speak of the "Schleiermacher paradigm" we are referring to just these tenets, as distinct from the specific way in which Schleiermacher himself reconstructed the unity of Platonic thought, which he based on a monistic, immanentistic, Idealistic, and romantic conception. This particular account is an attempt to resolve a puzzle internal to the paradigm; it follows the paradigm, but must not be confused with it.

Schleiermacher's paradigm arises from basic tenets of romantic and Idealistic philosophy, in particular from some tenets of the Idealistic philosophy of identity in which the form of art is identified with the content, insofar as it reproduces the infinite in the finite by specifying it, as Krämer has shown and documented at length.<sup>45</sup> Nevertheless, despite these metaphysical presuppositions, the Schleiermacher paradigm

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Dobson entitled *Schleiermacher's Introductions to the Dialogues of Plato* (Cambridge and London, 1836), 1-47; the page references will be made to this edition.

43. Schleiermacher, *Einleitung*, ed. Gaiser, 9; Dobson translation, 12.

44. *Ibid.*

45. Krämer, *Platone*, 51-57; or see the American edition, 15-27. This chapter of Krämer's book, which carries the significant title "Schleiermacher's Premises Inspired by the Idealistic Philosophy of Identity," constitutes the most penetrating and well-documented interpretation of Schleiermacher's account of Plato and its philosophical roots.

has a wider message than the solution of puzzles proposed in terms internal to it. In all of the sciences, many prominent paradigms have metaphysical roots, so there is no call to linger over this matter.

Thus, the Schleiermacher paradigm initiated a phase of "normal science," to use Kuhn's terminology; and this phase of "normal science" is very significant because scholarly research on Plato, in this period, was carried on using the most sophisticated philological techniques and research tools. "Normal science," let us recall, is a complex of specialized research which is made possible by the acceptance of a single paradigm by a group of scientists. Yet a paradigm is not just an object to be reproduced, "it is an object for further articulation and specification under new and more stringent conditions."<sup>46</sup>

So three focal points are the center around which the various problems and attempts at their solutions in "normal science" rotate.<sup>47</sup>

1. *The First Class of Interpretive Problems Dealt with by the Traditional Paradigm*

In the Schleiermacher paradigm, and the phase of normal science inspired by it, the data that correspond to what in "normal science" is thought of as essential, because definitive of the subject of research, are the Platonic dialogues considered as self-sufficient and basic, insofar as the dialogues are taken to reveal the whole of the authentic thought of Plato. Consequently, Schleiermacherianism set out to broaden and deepen knowledge of the dialogues themselves, their significance, and their self-sufficiency, in the following basic ways:

- a. First, especially in the last century, Schleiermacherianism tried to test the authenticity of the Platonic writings.
- b. Second, it tried to establish the chronology of the dialogues.
- c. Third, it studied in depth the form and structure of the dialogues, arriving, especially in our century, at notable and subtle results.
- d. Finally, Schleiermacherianism tried to neutralize, in a variety of ways, all counter-instances to the paradigm, and in particular it tried to discount or eliminate the counter-instances offered above all by the indirect tradition by trying to interpret them as the result of misunderstandings and adaptations of Plato's followers.<sup>48</sup>

46. T. S. Kuhn, *Revolution*, 23.

47. See above, 10ff.

48. The most significant position from the epistemological viewpoint in the attempt to eliminate the counterevidence of the indirect tradition is that maintained with great ability and intelligence by H. Cherniss in *Aristotle's Criticism of Plato and the Academy* (Baltimore, 1944; New York, 1962<sup>2</sup>); also see *The Riddle of the Early Academy* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1945, 1962<sup>2</sup>).



2. *The Second Class of Interpretive Problems Taken up by the Traditional Paradigm*

The second class of problems of “normal science” is made up of the various attempts to wed, ever more subtly, the predictions of the paradigm with the data; in our case, these are the various attempts to discover, by analysis, the “unity” of the dialogues.

In the first place, such attempts were in large measure informed by the various theoretical systems of the scholars who discussed the Platonic texts and who, in various ways, surreptitiously added to the texts more than can be drawn from them. We might recall in particular the interpretations of Hegel and the Hegelians, the Neo-Kantians, the positivists, the existentialists, the problematicists, and many others of various inspirations, but all marked in the same way.

Again, giving up on the possibility of recovering anything unified in the dialogues, many scholars looked for an evolution in Plato’s thought, raising such a hypothesis to the level of an interpretive canon. The unity of Plato’s writings would be sought within the evolutionary trajectory of which those writings would be the trace; and some authors thought they had found a unitary picture of Plato in the theoretical development itself as expressed in the order of the dialogues.

Yet other scholars have sought the unity expressed by the dialogues not so much in the products themselves as in their author, Plato, and, in particular, in his political interests; again psychoanalytic and Freudian interpretations have not been lacking.

3. *The Third Class of Interpretive Problems Tackled by the Traditional Paradigm*

In the phase of normal science, the third class of problems is concerned with anomalies that arise from the application of the paradigm to facts which had not been at the center of inquiry. In our case, these are the various problems arising from the contact of the Schleiermacher paradigm with the indirect tradition, as well as various attempts to articulate the paradigm itself in a manner capable of subsuming the indirect tradition and thus seeking to preserve the greatest possible self-sufficiency for the dialogues.

Overall, it is within this class of problems that the most significant “anomalies” arise which have slowly contributed to blurring the paradigm and precipitating a crisis. As indicated in the Preface, the development of the present writer’s thought followed this path, so we may be excused for focusing on this issue in some detail.

In the first half of the nineteenth century, parallel with the rise and establishment of the Schleiermacher paradigm, some scholars called

attention to the "indirect tradition" and argued for taking it into account fully to understand Plato. In a review of Schleiermacher, a philologist of the standing of Boeckh pointed out the necessity of taking the Unwritten Doctrines into account, since Plato himself had explained his writings within the Academy. Boeckh expressly said: ". . . Plato put in his oral teachings the culmination of and the key to what he had not fully developed in his writings."<sup>49</sup> Likewise, Brandis accepted and commented on the evidence concerning the Unwritten Doctrines of Plato.<sup>50</sup> And such scholars as Trendelenburg<sup>51</sup> and Weisse<sup>52</sup> insisted on the necessity of taking account of this evidence. These were very visible interventions aimed at bringing out a very significant fact that does not fit into the Schleiermacher paradigm, which gave exclusive importance to the Platonic writings; consequently they exhibited, albeit tentatively, the necessity of spelling out the paradigm more clearly.

The first articulation of the paradigm, for all its modest scale, had considerable success. It was offered by Zeller who, with his *Greek Philosophy*, propagated what became the commonly accepted opinion. In Zeller's view, Plato's Unwritten Doctrines date to the end of Plato's life (contemporary with the composition of the *Laws*), and hence they are not of much use in understanding most of Plato's writings. In addition, the evidence for the Unwritten Doctrines is subject to misunderstanding and introduces variations which should not be regarded as authentic. In short, the Unwritten Doctrines are looked at askance as regards their theoretical and philosophical value not only because of their misunderstandings, but also because of their deriving from Plato's old age. Clearly, this is a very limited spelling out of the paradigm because it depends on a glib displacement of the counter-instance, or at least of the aspects capable of causing a crisis for the paradigm.<sup>53</sup>

At the beginning of the twentieth century some writers began to offer much more complex articulations of the paradigm. In 1908 L. Robin presented a book which became a classic, *La théorie platonicienne des Idées et des Nombres d'après Aristote*,<sup>54</sup> with an exhaustive systematic interpreta-

49. A. Boeckh, *Gesammelte kleinere Schriften* (Leipzig, 1872), 7: 1-38 (the review of Schleiermacher's translation was published in 1808).

50. C. A. Brandis, *De perditis Aristotelis libris de ideis et de bono* (Bonn, 1823).

51. F. A. Trendelenburg, *De Platonis de ideis et numeris doctrina ex Aristotele illustrata* (Leipzig, 1826).

52. C. H. Weisse, *De Platonis et Aristotelis in constituendis summis philosophiae principiis differentia* (Leipzig, 1828). Concerning the authors we have cited and the significance of their writings, see Krämer, *Plato and the Foundations of Metaphysics*, trans. J. Catan (Albany, 1990), 29-40.

53. Zeller, *Die Philosophie Griechen* (1963<sup>6</sup>), 2.1.484ff.; also see 572ff. and 951.

54. L. Robin, *La théorie platonicienne des Idées et des Nombres d'après Aristote* (Paris, 1908; Hildesheim, 1963).

tion of the testimony of Aristotle about his teacher's doctrines. Robin's proposal was to try to understand Plato by means of a systematic sifting of the indirect ancient tradition. The passage in which Robin presents his project is worth reading:

I have therefore come to believe that it would be possible to understand what Platonism was by asking the Greek thinkers about it, and having recourse to them alone. Undoubtedly, what they say includes a good deal of interpretation, since the critical originality of some and the constructiveness of others imply more or less significant input from their personal and independent reflection. But in this interpretation we do not have to fear the deformations which Cartesianism, Leibnizianism, or Kantianism, or the influence of scientific methods could inflict on us, in the interpretation of the ideas of a Greek of the fourth century B.C.E. By taking the ancients as our guides, we at least do not risk seeing Plato as the forerunner of modern philosophy. I have therefore attempted to go back to Platonic philosophy by studying it in Aristotle and the Peripatetics, in the Academy, and in the Neoplatonists.

The plan of the present work is (1) to expound Platonism . . . by these guides, that is, as they understand, accepted, or criticized it; (2) to try to discover what was added to it by their doctrinal or polemical aims, based on an internal study of the evidence they offer; (3) to evaluate their additions and criticisms so as to pick out what . . . was dictated by external conditions and what . . . was either in conflict with the Platonic doctrine which had been received or a sign of our witness's difficulties in freeing himself from the influences which he seeks to oppose; and, finally (4) to compare the upshot of the foregoing phases with Plato's writings themselves, and thus to put to work the interpretation supplied by the tradition of the Greek schools.<sup>55</sup>

It is evident that the full execution of this plan, if it were realized, would have led not merely to an articulation of the Schleiermacher paradigm, but to the formulation of a real alternative paradigm, denying the self-sufficiency of the dialogues. But Robin did not proceed much beyond his examination of Aristotle's testimony. Among Plato's writings he interpreted only the *Timaeus* systematically in the light of the Unwritten Doctrines, with excellent results.<sup>56</sup> But he stopped there. The time was not ripe for a revolution of this kind in Plato studies.

Julius Stenzel published two studies in 1917 and in 1924 which had considerable influence, bringing about a significant widening of the traditional paradigm.<sup>57</sup> In the 1924 book, Stenzel asserted that by ex-

55. L. Robin, *La théorie*, 4ff.

56. L. Robin, "Études sur la signification et la place de la philosophie physique dans la de Platon," in *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'Étranger* 43 (1918): 177-220; 370-415 (now also in L. Robin, *La pensée hellénique des origines à Epicure*, ed. P. M. Schuhl [Paris, 1942; 1967<sup>2</sup>], 231-336).

57. J. Stenzel, *Studien zur Entwicklung der platonischen Dialektik von Sokrates zu Aristoteles. Arete und Diaeresis* (Breslau, 1917; Leipzig, 1931<sup>2</sup>; Darmstadt, 1961<sup>3</sup>) [translated into English by D. J. Allan as *Plato's Method of Dialectic* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940)], and *Zahl und Gestalt bei Platon und Aristoteles* (Leipzig, 1924, 1933<sup>2</sup>; Darmstadt, 1959<sup>3</sup>).

plaining the relations between the last phase of Plato's philosophy and the parallel phase in Aristotle's evolution it can be understood how "the decisive development of Aristotle is necessary and easy."<sup>58</sup> Therefore, Stenzel pointed out, "the traditional image of Plato's evolution must be fundamentally enlarged and it must be drawn from the final period of his philosophizing."<sup>59</sup> From the writings of the two philosophers of that time, we need to go back to a precise source; we need, therefore, to bring up for discussion all the remnants of Plato's lecture *On the Good*, and so also the theory of the Principles of the One and the Dyad, and the question of the Ideas and Numbers and their connections with the Principles. The upshot of this articulation of the traditional paradigm was a rereading of Plato's dialectical dialogues in a new and fruitful perspective, of which the more attentive scholars have taken notice.<sup>60</sup>

And in 1949 P. Wilpert confirmed in another way the fertility of this trend by reconstructing two of Aristotle's juvenilia on the theory of Ideas. He brought to the fore the significant benefits of Plato's Unwritten Doctrines for interpreting these Aristotelian writings and his views were given a warm reception by scholars.<sup>61</sup>

A significant alteration of the traditional paradigm was brought about with the recognition by Wilamowitz Möllendorff of the authenticity of the *Seventh Letter* in his famous monograph on Plato in 1919.<sup>62</sup> He undertook to reread Plato in a political vein, taking into account all the complexity that politics had in the spiritual world of the Greeks. Jaeger

58. Stenzel, *Zahl und Gestalt*, v.

59. Ibid.

60. It is worth bearing in mind that Stenzel presents a very strong rearticulation of the traditional paradigm and introduces important innovations in the reinterpretation of Plato's dialectical dialogues. Nevertheless, his views were accepted without strong counter-arguments precisely because they maintained the correctness of the traditional paradigm, limiting the novelties to the dialectical dialogues of the late Plato.

61. P. Wilpert, *Zwei aristotelische Frühschriften über die Ideenlehre* (Regensburg, 1949). What we said in the previous note about Stenzel's position goes also for Wilpert's book. Given the importance of the indirect tradition and the recovery of some important theses of the Unwritten Doctrines of Plato, Wilpert ought to have roused even more polemical responses. Instead, careful scholars regarded his contributions with great respect because Wilpert points out that the doctrines arise from the late period of Plato; and hence his conclusions fit well into the traditional paradigm as an articulation of that very paradigm.

Among scholars who have contributed to an articulation of the traditional paradigm, three merit special mention: W. D. Ross, *Plato's Theory of Ideas* (Oxford, 1951, 1953<sup>2</sup>); P. Merlan, *From Platonism to Neoplatonism* (The Hague, 1953, 1968<sup>3</sup>; reprint 1975) and his numerous articles now collected in *Kleine philosophische Schriften* (Hildesheim and New York, 1976); and C. J. De Vogel, whose numerous works are collected in *Philosophia*, Part 1: *Studies in Greek Philosophy* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1970), 153–292; see also De Vogel's *Rethinking Plato and Platonism* (Leiden, 1985). These are works that provide very interesting results and must be read very attentively in the light of the new paradigm.

62. U. von Wilamowitz-Möllendorff, *Platon. Sein Leben und seine Werke* (Berlin 1919, 1959<sup>5</sup>).

wrote in 1944 in this regard that “. . . we must recognize as the true Plato the man who, in the *Seventh Letter*, speaks of his own spiritual development and the aims of his life, and whose attitude to his own philosophy is determined by his career; his entire philosophy is the expression of his life, and his life is his philosophy.”<sup>63</sup> Jaeger says that he had achieved a political understanding of Plato by himself on the basis of a painstaking analysis of the dialogues, but he admits that he found in the *Seventh Letter* the full confirmation of that interpretation, and so the great fertility of the way opened up by Wilamowitz.

But the *Seventh Letter* has some surprises in store, to which only the Tübingen School has done full justice. In it, Plato reveals the essence of the Unwritten Doctrines, and in addition he explains his reasons for not wanting to write them down. An understanding of the *Seventh Letter*, together with the coda of the *Phaedrus*, becomes a necessary starting point for the understanding of Plato’s writings. But we shall return to this idea in detail, since such a discovery brings about not just a rearticulation but a genuine revolution of the Schleiermacher paradigm.<sup>64</sup>

As frequently happens in the course of research, so also in the dominant Schleiermacher paradigm, the outlines of an alternative paradigm were discernible before the contributions of the Tübingen School; nevertheless, such contributions were sporadic because presented only as sketches.

K. F. Hermann did not write a second volume to his great work on Plato, published in 1839. Nevertheless, in the same year he gave a paper, published ten years later, in which he made use of the self-testimony of Plato. There he gave weight to the Unwritten Doctrines about the Principles (the whole of the theory of Ideas and their foundations), which are only fleetingly visible in Plato’s writings and mostly in relation to problems with the sensible world.<sup>65</sup> In particular, the dialogues of the last period were illuminated by the explicit theorizing of the Unwritten Doctrines. Hermann did not further develop any of these views, which were not, therefore, taken up for discussion by Zeller.<sup>66</sup>

An even more explicit outline, unfortunately compressed into a very few pages, was presented by H. Gomperz to an International Congress

63. W. Jaeger, *Paideia. Die Formung des griechischen Menschen* (Berlin 194<sup>2</sup>), 2: 138 [English translation by Gilbert Highet, *Paideia: The Ideals of Greek Culture: In Search of the Divine Centre* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1957), 83].

64. See Chapter 3, 62–69, below.

65. K. F. Hermann, “Ueber Plato’s schriftstellerische Motive,” in *Gesammelte Abhandlungen und Beiträge zur classischen Literatur und Altertumskunde* (Göttingen, 1849), 281–305; now also to be found in the volume of Gaiser cited above, *Das Platonbild*, 33–57 and note 42; see also Hermann, *Geschichte und System der Platonischen Philosophie* (Heidelberg, 1839).

66. See E. Zeller, *Die Philosophie der Griechen*, 2.1.484ff., note 3.

held at London in 1931.<sup>67</sup> Gomperz recognized that what is said in the *Seventh Letter* refers to the lectures *On the Good*, which presented “the philosophical system of Plato” as consisting in the deduction from the principles of the One and the Dyad, of Numbers, and of Ideas and all realities. Gomperz drew these conclusions: “The philosophical system of Plato is not expressly developed in the dialogues, but is found only, at least from the *Republic* onwards, behind them. This system is a deductive system, and a dualistic system because it refers ‘all things’ to two original factors essentially different from each other.”<sup>68</sup>

Finally, Findlay’s *Plato: The Written and Unwritten Doctrines* must be mentioned. This volume was published in 1974, after the Tübingen School had presented the new paradigm in a complete and systematic way; nevertheless, it had been in the process of gestation for a long time, since the 1920s, which is a telling fact. Often, new paradigms are fostered by more than one researcher, even if their definitive formulation comes from someone who knows how to present what is novel in them, as well as what adds to the dominant theories, revolutionizing them. Findlay picks out the new paradigm, in the following passage:

My first and most fundamental conviction is that the Platonic Dialogues are not, taken by themselves, the sort of works in which anyone’s views on any matter could be clearly set forth: they point beyond themselves, and without going beyond them they are not to be understood. Plato’s deepest insights are of course present in them, but, like the Sea-God Glaucus, these insights require to be freed from a vast incrustation of barnacles and manneristic reflexes, as well as from a vast number of deliberate literary, historical, polemical, and other disguises. The historical sequence of the Dialogues, painstakingly arrived at by stylistic investigations, is also no clear document of the development of Plato’s thought. It rather documents, on the view to which I came, Plato’s ever-changing willingness to divulge parts of a long-held, profound program, unclear as regards both goal and method, to which he felt ever varying attitudes of confidence and criticism, of impassioned defense and despairing retreat, all inspired by the vivid controversies in the Academy of which we can have only the dimmest imagination. A study of Plato which confines itself to the letter of the Dialogues, such as has been attempted by most scholarly interpreters in the past two centuries, has ended by stripping Plato of his philosophical dignity and interest, has set him before us as a brilliant, but basically frivolous, player-about with half-formed, inconsistent notions and methods, and has failed to explain the persistent, historical sense of him as a deeply engaged

67. H. Gomperz, “Plato’s System of Philosophy,” first published in the *Proceedings of the Seventh International Congress of Philosophy* (London, 1931): 426–31; and since reprinted in H. Gomperz, *Philosophical Studies* (Boston, 1953), 119–24, and in a German redaction as *Platons philosophisches System*, in *Das Problem der ungeschriebenen Lehre Platons. Beiträge zum Verständnis der platonischen Prinzipienphilosophie herausgegeben von J. Wippert*, ed. J. Wippert (Darmstadt, 1972), 159–65 (the German-language edition has been quoted from and the citations are also taken from it).

68. H. Gomperz, *Platons*, 165.

thinker, to whom we owe one of the most important, most coherently elaborated, most immensely illuminating ways of regarding the world.<sup>69</sup>

Thus, we are in the presence of the new paradigm.

V. THE REVOLUTIONARY TENOR OF THE PARADIGM OFFERED BY  
THE TÜBINGEN SCHOOL AND THE PERIOD OF "EXTRAORDINARY  
SCIENCE" IT HAS INITIATED

The outline we have presented above could give the impression that a systematic and scientific formulation of the new alternative paradigm would simply bring attention to it and its acceptance by scholars. The fact of the matter is somewhat different. As Kuhn has shown quite clearly, commonly such a thing does not happen. The new paradigm, by reason of its revolutionary tenor, produces the most vigorous reaction and resistance. Kuhn writes: "History shows that the way towards a lasting consensus in the field of research is extraordinarily arduous."<sup>70</sup>

We have already spoken above about the various psychological and sociological consequences of scientific revolutions, and here we shall have a great deal of material for their further confirmation in a particular case. But we wish to pause on the revolutionary aspect of the paradigm proposed by the Tübingen School, and hence on the way it has dictated the battle lines among scholars.

On the basis of the epistemological criteria which we presented above,<sup>71</sup> the new alternative paradigm implies the following:

1. It subverts the main claims of the traditional paradigm, and hence it involves a "revolution."

2. It implies (to use a metaphor of Butterfield and Kuhn) taking the other end of the "stick" insofar as "it handles a system of data already handled before," that is, both the direct and indirect traditions, but locating them "in a new system of mutual relations and hence giving to them a different structure," and starting from the Unwritten Doctrines rather than from the writings, with all that entails.<sup>72</sup>

3. To use another metaphor, the new paradigm of the Tübingen School implies a "Gestalt switch," that is, a change of the pattern (Gestalt) in which the data are viewed. From being a mere (more or less important) appendix, the Unwritten Doctrines handed down by the

69. J. N. Findlay, *Plato and Platonism: An Introduction* (New York, 1968), ix f.; see also de Vogel's *Rethinking Plato and Platonism* (Leiden, 1986).

70. T. S. Kuhn, *Revolution*, 15.

71. See Chapter 1, *passim*.

72. See above, 15 ff.

indirect tradition become the framework of and the foundation supporting the dialogues.<sup>73</sup>

4. Finally, to use another metaphor, the new paradigm produces an effect like an inverting lense, objects are seen upside down, upsetting us. The new paradigm reverses the relations within the traditional paradigm of the writings and the Unwritten Doctrines, with easily imagined consequences.<sup>74</sup>

The phase which the Tübingen School paradigm has started is therefore what Kuhn calls “extraordinary science.” Today the Plato scholar finds himself faced with the choice of a new research paradigm because the articulations carried out in the old paradigm have blurred it and the last-ditch defenses of it are no longer achieving their desired effect.

Nothing is to be gained by insisting here on these claims. But the Tübingen School has not assessed systematically its interpretation in terms of the epistemological theory of Kuhn.<sup>75</sup> Such an assessment is the main innovation of the present work; nevertheless, both Gaiser and Krämer have agreed in the main with the outline we have traced. Krämer refers to Kuhn, writing:

A change of paradigm in science often depends, as we know from T. S. Kuhn, on contingent influences and on extra-scientific factors. In research into Plato, at the moment, therefore, there are still strong antagonistic forces and difficulties which are obstacles to a final overcoming of Schleiermacherianism. However, the school of researchers who aim at the recovery and revival of the indirect tradition has strong arguments in its favor that justify such a change of paradigm, to wit: the greater capacity for clarification and in general the greater fruitfulness that the new paradigm can bring to Platonic research, and, in general, to the history of ancient philosophy.<sup>76</sup>

Recently, Krämer accepted and confirmed the epistemological account of the present book.<sup>77</sup> Szlezák even used the “paradigm” in the title of the Italian translation of his Plato book.<sup>78</sup> Generally, the term is gradually gaining acceptance in the sense which we have given to it.

73. Ibid.

74. Ibid.

75. Cf. Reale, *Per una nuova interpretazione di Platone*, Postfazione, 714. In the Italian, Reale mentions that he has corresponded with Kuhn on this matter. [Translator’s note]

76. Krämer, *Platone*, 134. See the American edition *Plato and the Foundations of Metaphysics* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), 63ff.

77. See also what Krämer says in “Mutamento di paradigma nelle ricerche su Platone,” in *Rivista di Filosofia neoscolastica* 78 (1986), 341ff. See also Krämer’s *La nuova immagine di Platone* (Naples, 1986), and his “Fichte, Schlegel und der Infinitismus in der Platondeutung,” in *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* 62 (1988): 583–621 (esp. 583–85).

78. T. A. Szlezák, *Platon und die Schriftlichkeit Philosophie. Interpretationen zu den frühen und mittlere* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1985); the Italian edition was entitled *Platone e la*



The greater clarity which the new paradigm allows for the reconstruction of a Platonic "system," that is, for seeing the unity of his thought, without recourse to theoretical perspectives extraneous to Platonism, much less to any political ideology or to psychoanalysis, but referring to a tradition which begins with Plato's spoken words, that is, with the oral dialectic in which he delivered his final teaching.

The fruitfulness of the new paradigm consists in its capacity to show how the Unwritten Doctrines can bring great help to the understanding of key themes in the major dialogues, which have long been obscure or problematic.

Furthermore, Szlezák has shown that the new paradigm can be used to reinterpret not just some passages of some dialogues, but the whole of all the dialogues in a genuinely stimulating and fruitful way.<sup>79</sup>

Also, the fruitfulness of the new paradigm is of the greatest importance for a more precise reconstruction of the history of ancient philosophy, in particular for a much enhanced understanding of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*,<sup>80</sup> not to mention the development of Neoplatonism, whose henology has its roots in Plato's Unwritten Doctrines,<sup>81</sup> and would not have been possible without Plato's Unwritten Doctrines.

In this volume we shall be especially concerned with the reconstruction of the underlying unity of Plato's thought and with reading the metaphysics of the major dialogues in the light of the new paradigm.

But first, it is necessary to sketch more fully the general structure of the new alternative paradigm of which we have indicated only some of the essential traits, to document its historical foundations,<sup>82</sup> and finally to bring out its interpretive advantages.<sup>83</sup>

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*scrittura della filosofia. Analisi di struttura dei dialoghi della giovinezza e della maturità alla luce di un nuovo paradigma ermeneutico*, trans. G. Reale (Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 1988, 1989<sup>2</sup>).

79. Szlezák demonstrates that the "assistance to the writings" also constitutes the true supporting structure for the comprehension of the Platonic writings in general at different levels, as we explain below.

80. What W. Jaeger wrote in a work early in his career, *Studien zur Entstehungs geschichte der Metaphysik des Aristoteles* (Berlin, 1912), 140, has since been substantially verified, namely, that the philosophy of Plato which Aristotle had aimed at was precisely that of the oral teaching. In fact, only in that perspective is it possible to give a unified account of all the passages in which Aristotle sets out and discusses Plato on the theoretical level. Unfortunately, Jaeger did not develop this basic intuition, but went in other directions.

81. See, for example, our work "L'estremo messaggio spirituale del mondo antico nel pensiero metafisico e teurgico di Proclo," in *Proclo, I Manual: I testi magico-teurgici* (Milan: Rusconi, 1985), i–ccxxxiii, esp. lxxviff., xciiiff., ciiff.

82. Cf. Chapters 3 and 4.

83. See what we say and document in Parts 3 and 4, below.



### 3 The Starting Points of the New Paradigm: Plato's Self-Testimonies and the Testimonies of His Followers

#### I. PLATO'S DENIAL IN THE SELF-TESTIMONIES OF THE *PHAEDRUS* ON THE AUTONOMY OF THE WRITINGS

The preponderance of Plato studies in the traditional paradigm depend on the claim that Plato's writings are self-sufficient and that exclusive attention should be paid to his writings. This consensus is exploded by attentive and close analysis of what Plato himself says by way of "self-testimony" both in the *Phaedrus* and in the *Seventh Letter*, whose authenticity is no longer in doubt. In these "self-testimonies" Plato says, clearly what he thinks of written works and notes specifically that they are not able to communicate to the reader either method or content.

There have been many discussions of the self-testimonies in the *Phaedrus* since the time of Schleiermacher, and in the *Seventh Letter* in the present century, and rightly so. Because they deny the self-sufficiency and autonomy of Plato's writings, the paradigm initiated by Schleiermacher and maintaining the opposite was faced with a "counter-instance," an "anomaly" of such importance as to undermine the paradigm itself. For this reason, various ways were tried to interpret the self-testimonies in order to include them in a general outline, and Plato's words were pulled and twisted to produce harmony between them and the paradigm. Epistemologically, we might say that this remarkable "counter-instance" has with great ability and ingenuity been refashioned into something artificial. However, the general blurring of the traditional paradigm, noted in the previous chapter, now enables the real meaning of the self-testimonies to reemerge and allows full sway to their disruptive power against the beliefs of the past. Thus, the self-testimonies play the role of basic facts on which the new alternative paradigm is founded, and are a crucial reference point for the understanding of Plato.

We may begin with the self-testimonies of the *Phaedrus*; given their great importance, we will examine them in detail.<sup>1</sup> Plato advances a very compact and sharp-edged case, which can be articulated in six stages:

1. On this theme, see: H. Krämer, "Die grundsätzlichen Fragen der indirekten Platonüberlieferung," in *Ideen und Zahl. Studien platonischen Philosophie* (Heidelberg 1963),

1. Writing does not increase the wisdom of human beings, but increases only the appearance of wisdom (that is, mere opinion): in addition, it does not reinforce memory, but offers only a means to recall to memory what is already known.

2. Writing is soulless, and incapable of speaking as a living thing; it is unable to help or defend itself against criticisms, but requires the active intervention of its author.

3. Much better and much more powerful than a discussion entombed in writing is the animated and living oral discussion by means of which knowledge is impressed on the soul of him who learns; written discourse is like an image or a copy of what happens in spoken discussion.

4. Writing carries with it a great deal of "playfulness," while orality implies a deep "seriousness." Although the playfulness of some writings can be quite beautiful, much more beautiful is the obligation that oral dialectic demands about the same subject matter that writings are concerned with and much more powerful are the results it achieves.

5. Writing, inasmuch as it proceeds in accordance with the rules of art, implies a knowledge of dialectically well-founded discussions and, at the same time, a knowledge of the souls of those to whom it is addressed, and hence the consequent structuring of the discussion (which may be either simple or complex, according to the capacities of the soul at which it is aimed). Nevertheless, the writer must take into account that there cannot be great solidity or permanence in writing because it is marked by playfulness. Writing cannot teach or assist genuine learning, but can only be of assistance in recalling to memory (recollection) what already has been learned. Thus, only in oral dialectic is there any clarity, perfection, and seriousness.

6. The writer-philosopher is one who has written works knowing what the truth is and, so far forth, can help and defend his works when necessary, and he can hence explain how writings are of "lesser value" relative to the things of "greater value" which he knows, but which he has not entrusted and does not intend to entrust to writing because he reserves them exclusively for orality.

Given the great importance of these six tenets, we will proceed to examine them in detail.

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106–50 (esp. 125ff.) and *Platone*, 36–50 [American edition, trans. J. R. Catan, *Plato and the Foundations of Metaphysics* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 3–13]; T. A. Szlezák "Dialogform und Esoterik. Zur Deutung des platonischen Dialogs Phaidros," in *Museum Helveticum* 35 (1978): 18–32, and especially the new volume, *Platone*, 7–48, which contains detailed analyses of the positions of the *Phaedrus* that are of interest to us here, and with which we fully agree. See also K. Gaiser, *Platone come scrittore filosofico. Saggio sull'ermeneutica dei dialoghi platonici* (Naples: Bibliopolis, 1984), 77–101.

1. *Writing Does Not Increase Either the Wisdom or the Memory of Human Beings*<sup>2</sup>

The first claim in this wide-ranging discussion is introduced by a famous story, set in Egypt, which tells of the discovery made by the God Theuth and presented by him to King Thamus, who lived in a great city on the Nile (Egyptian Thebes). Theuth, after having discovered many arts—arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, the games of draughts and dice, and in particular writing—presented them to King Thamus, claiming that he ought to teach them to the Egyptians since they would be of great benefit to them. To shed light on the usefulness of writing, Theuth affirmed the following:

Here, O king, is a branch of learning that will make the people of Egypt wiser and improve their memories; my discovery provides a recipe for memory and wisdom.<sup>3</sup>

The response of King Thamus, which expresses Plato's primary beliefs on this matter and the very important issue of the complex relations (a) between writing and wisdom and (b) between writing and memory, is as follows.

(a) Instead of truth and, a fortiori, wisdom, writing is able to produce only the appearance of truth, that is, opinion, because writing falls short of teaching, which is the unique function of oral discussion. Writing offers to make the reader learned, as a matter of belief, but in reality he accepts this from writing only as mere opinion, and hence without really knowing, because writing falls short of being a true instrument for the communication of knowledge, namely, teaching. Writing, therefore, risks producing not men of wisdom nor bearers of knowledge, but merely "opinionated people" or "opinion-mongers."

(b) Here are the conclusions Plato draws about the relations between writing and memory:

*Phaedrus*: I deserve your rebuke, and I agree that the king of Thebes is right in what he said about writing.

*Socrates*: Then anyone who leaves behind him a written manual and likewise anyone who takes it over from him, on the supposition that such writing will provide something reliable and permanent, must be exceedingly simple-minded; he must really be ignorant of Ammon's utterance if he imagines that written words can do anything more than remind one who knows what the writing is concerned with.

*Phaedrus*: Very true.<sup>4</sup>

2. *Phaedrus* 274B–275D.

3. *Ibid.*, E 4–7.

4. *Ibid.*, C3–D3.

2. *Writing Is Incapable of Helping and Defending Itself on Its Own and Needs the Intervention of Its Author*<sup>5</sup>

The limited capacity to communicate knowledge which is characteristic of writing is further explained by the following considerations.

Writing is like a painting. The images in a painting may seem to be alive, but in reality they are lifeless, silent, unresponsive. And so it is with writing: no matter how many times it is questioned, it can do nothing but repeat itself, always in the same way.

But something worse happens to writings. Writings fall into the hands of all. Consequently they come into contact with people who are competent concerning the things which they discuss and who are really able to think about them. In addition, they turn up among people who are incompetent and do not have the adequate capacities and interests. Therefore, writing is not able to discriminate and to choose between those to whom it is possible and appropriate to speak, and those with whom it is impossible and hence not appropriate to speak.

Writing is unable to defend itself against those who criticize it and offend against it: it needs assistance and help from its author because it cannot give this help to itself.

And this establishes a very basic feature about writing: writing needs the help of its author, and hence is organically dependent on oral discussion and the oral is not limited to repeating the same things which writing repeats, and therefore it goes beyond writing.

*Socrates:* You know, Phaedrus, that's the strange thing about writing, which makes it truly analogous to painting. The painter's products stand before us as though they were alive, but if you question them, they maintain a most majestic silence. It is the same with written words; they seem to talk to you as though they were intelligent, but if you ask them anything about what they say . . . they go on telling you just the same thing forever. And once a thing is put in writing, the composition, whatever it may be, drifts all over the place, getting into the hands not only of those who understand it, but equally of those who have no business with it; it doesn't know how to address the right people and not address the wrong. And when it is ill-treated and unfairly abused it always needs its parent to come to its help, being unable to defend or help itself.

*Phaedrus:* Once again you are perfectly right.<sup>6</sup>

3. *The Reasons for the Superiority of Oral Discourse over Writing*<sup>7</sup>

Oral discourse, when compared with written discourse, despite being its legitimate brother, turns out to be "better and more powerful" and is able to make precise what written discourse cannot.

5. *Ibid.*, 275D-E.

6. *Ibid.*, D4-E6.

7. *Ibid.*, 276A.

While a written discourse lacks life and is inert, oral discussion is "living and animated"; the written is like an image or a copy of the oral, and consequently it is inferior in the way a copy is to the original.

In addition, while written discourse is fixed on pieces of paper, and hence on an external thing, oral discussion is written in the very soul of him who learns by means of knowledge and the process which that demands; and because of the immediate contact which it sets up with the soul of him who learns. A teacher knows with whom it is appropriate to speak, and with whom he ought not to speak, and he acts accordingly.

Finally, oral discussion is able to defend itself because it goes far beyond the single chance that writing has (which can only continually repeat itself), insofar as it is discourse conducted face to face "by one who knows." Plato will reveal at the end of the passage the way in which the speech of "one who knows" can help the written. These reasons concern, in addition to methodological rules of oral teaching, the very content of the discourse. Here is the text of Plato:

*Socrates:* But now tell me, is there another sort of discourse which is brother of written speech, but of unquestioned legitimacy? Can we see how it originates, and how much better and more effective it is than the other?

*Phaedrus:* What sort of discourse have you now in mind, and what is its origin?

*Socrates:* The sort that goes together with knowledge, and is written in the soul of the learner, that can defend itself, and knows to whom it should speak and to whom it should say nothing.

*Phaedrus:* You mean no dead discourse, but the living speech, the original of which the written discourse may fairly be called a kind of image.

*Socrates:* Precisely.<sup>8</sup>

#### 4. *The "Playfulness" of Written Discourse and the "Seriousness" of Oral Discussion*<sup>9</sup>

To clarify further the respective aptnesses and bearings of written discourse and oral dialectic, Plato makes use of a new and significant simile. On the feast of Adonis (which fell in the hottest part of the summer), the Greeks used to plant seeds in shells and in small pots, the so-called gardens of Adonis which, because they were planted in the late heat of summer and kept in an artificial environment, grew in only eight days; but they could not bear fruit, and died quickly (thus symbolizing the premature death of Adonis himself).

The farmer who has judgment (a) when he plants the seeds he cares about and from which he wants fruit, will not plant them in the "Adonis-

8. *Ibid.*, A1-B1.

9. *Ibid.*, 276B-277A.

garden," or if he does so, it is only for amusement and because of the feast. (b) On the other hand, seeds planted seriously will be planted in the appropriate place according to the precise rules of the science of agriculture, so that the farmer will be content that these seeds bear fruit not in eight days, as in the "Adonis-gardens," but in eight months.

The difference between (a) the farmer who plants for fun in the "Adonis-gardens" to obtain rapid growth of the seeds and (b) the farmer who plants with seriousness in the right place and with the correct method and allows for the length of time necessary, is analogous to the difference among those who possess reliable knowledge between (a) those who crystallize it in writing and (b) those who entrust it to oral discussion, making use of the art of dialectic, in accordance with the methods and times it requires.

(a) He who possesses knowledge cannot be working with "seriousness" when, writing with pen and ink on a sheaf of paper he fixes the things which he cares about, precisely because a written work, as we know, cannot defend itself with respect to its content, or communicate the truth adequately (because this is the prerogative of oral teaching).

Consequently, the possessor of knowledge, when he writes, writes only "for amusement." And he goes in for such "amusement" not only for the pleasure of seeing what is put in writing rapidly grow, but also with a mnemonic aim, that is, to be able to recall those things from memory for himself when he is old, and for those who follow after him. In this way it is a remedy against forgetfulness. While other men are occupied with other amusements (drinking and the like), he who writes delights instead in these noble amusements.

(b) Writing, hence, is a "most beautiful amusement," elevated in dignity compared with other amusements, which are of no importance at all. But the dialectical art in verbal discourse is more beautiful still because it is characterized by "seriousness" (like the farmer who plants seeds seriously). So discussions with serious purposes are planted in the right soul (that is, not in artificial places, which are the sheaves of paper, but in the right place, which is the soul), and in accordance with the necessary and appropriate method for teaching and the communication of knowledge. Discourses entrusted to the spoken word can help themselves and produce reliable results. Indeed, they create other discourses in the souls of other men, and in this way the seed becomes immortal and gives true happiness to whoever possesses it in that way.

(c) Plato says this generally, and particularly with reference to himself by alluding to his greatest written work, the *Republic*.<sup>10</sup>

10. *Ibid.*, 276, 276E4ff. See also W. Luther, "Die Schwache des geschriebenen Logos," in *Gymnasium* 68 (1969): 526-48, esp. 536ff.



This dialogue begins with the basic theme of justice,<sup>11</sup> to arrive at the high point which is the Idea of the Good.<sup>12</sup> In particular, Plato refers to justice, the beautiful, and the Good, and treats them as closely interconnected,<sup>13</sup> and, speaking of the guardians of the ideal city-state, he explains that in order to be adequately trained, they must know what justice and beauty are. In two passages of the *Republic*<sup>14</sup> Plato calls his own discourse a *mythologein*, in the wide sense of “narration” or “story-telling.”<sup>15</sup> Therefore it is not conducted in a strictly dialectical fashion.

So it is understandable both why the passage of the *Phaedrus* on which we have been commenting speaks of those who possess knowledge “of just, beautiful, and good things,”<sup>16</sup> and also why Plato clearly says that when such people write they proceed by “mythologizing,”<sup>17</sup> that is, by narrating or telling a story about “justice” and the other things connected to it. On the other hand, in the oral realm, such persons make use of the art of dialectic,<sup>18</sup> and they write discourses on just, beautiful, and good things on the soul.<sup>19</sup>

The meaning of the proviso that Plato makes about his own masterpiece is evident: insofar as it “mythologizes” (in the wide sense) about justice, beauty, and the good, it does not write about justice, beauty, and the good on the souls of those to whom it is addressed, because this can only really occur by means of oral dialectic.<sup>20</sup> This does not mean that Plato denied that his work had any value at all, just because it was “play” and “myth” (narration and exposition); in fact, in the *Phaedrus*, he describes this “play” as “very beautiful,” in the sense explained above; but he redresses the importance and value of his written work relative to oral dialectic which is presented as “serious” and “much more beautiful” compared with writing.

From all this, we conclude that Plato judged his masterpiece to be “very beautiful,” but he was profoundly convinced that his commitment

11. From Book 1 onward; of course, “On Justice” is the *Republic*’s subtitle.

12. Especially Books 6 and 7.

13. In any case, there is a structural relation among the three concepts: the Beautiful is one way of unpacking the Good; insofar as justice imposes order on disorder (and so unity on multiplicity), it too is a form of the Good.

14. *Republic* 2.376D9–E4, 6.501E2–5.

15. In the two passages cited in the previous note Plato himself describes his operation as mythologizing; likewise, the most famous moves in the *Republic* are known by the images with which Plato expressed them: the Sun, the Line, and the Cave.

16. *Phaedrus* 276C1–9, 276E1–277A4.

17. Note how *Phaedrus* 276E1–3 connects “play” with “myth,” thus strengthening the equation “play” = “myth” = “writing.” Cf. 276C3 and 278A3.

18. *Phaedrus* 276E4.

19. The concept of writing on the soul returns at *Phaedrus* 278A3.

20. *Phaedrus* 278A1–5 places the *Republic* among the best of writings which “are capable of reminding those who already know”; cf. *Phaedrus* 277D10–E3.

to the realm of oral dialectic (that is, in the teaching which he undertook in the Academy) was the real commitment to “seriousness” and that this teaching was “much more beautiful.” Let us read the whole of this fundamental text:

*Socrates:* Now tell me this. Would a sensible husbandman, who has seeds which he cares for and which he wishes to bear fruit, plant them with serious purpose in the heat of summer in some garden of Adonis, and delight in seeing them appear in beauty in eight days, or would he do that sort of thing, when he did it at all, only in play and for amusement? Would he not . . . follow the rules of husbandry, plant his seeds in fitting ground, and be pleased when those which he had sowed reached their perfection in the eighth month?

*Phaedrus:* Yes, Socrates, he would, as you say act in that way when in earnest and in the other way only for amusement.

*Socrates:* And are we to maintain that he who has knowledge of what is just, honorable, and good has less sense than the farmer in dealing with his seeds?

*Phaedrus:* Of course not.

*Socrates:* Then it won't be with serious intent that he “writes them in water” or that black fluid we call ink, using his pen to sow words that can't either speak in their own defense or present the truth adequately.

*Phaedrus:* It certainly isn't likely.

*Socrates:* No, it is not. He will sow his seed in literary gardens, I take it, and write when he does write by way of pastime, collecting a store of refreshment both for his own memory, against the day “when age oblivious comes,” and for all such as tread in his footsteps, and he will take pleasure in watching the tender plants grow up. And when other men resort to other pastimes, regaling themselves with drinking parties and suchlike, he will doubtless prefer to indulge in the recreation I refer to.

*Phaedrus:* And what an excellent one it is, Socrates!

*Socrates:* Yes indeed, dear Phaedrus. But far more excellent, I think, is the serious treatment of them, which employs the art of dialectic. The dialectician selects a soul of the right type, and in it he plants and sows his words founded on knowledge, words which can defend themselves and him who planted them, words which instead of remaining barren contain a seed whence new words group up in new characters, whereby the seed is vouchsafed immortality, and its possessor the fullest measure of blessedness that man can attain.<sup>21</sup>

##### 5. *The Clarity and Completeness That Belong to Oral Discussion but Not to Written Discourses*<sup>22</sup>

Having set this out, Plato draws his conclusions about the overall issue, by connecting them with the basic theme with which the dialogue began. Writing, to conform to the rules of art, must respect three clear conditions.

First, a writer must know the truth, be able to define, and distinguish and subdivide it into kinds by means of the dialectical method.

21. *Phaedrus* 276B1–277A5.

22. *Ibid.*, 277A–278B.

Second, he must know the souls of those whom he addresses and must be able to establish what is appropriate to the nature of those souls, to the specific tendencies, interests, and capacities of those souls.

Finally, and consequently, he must structure the writing in such a way as to produce an adequate correspondence between the contents of the discussions and the souls to which they are to be delivered. To simple souls he must know how to offer simple discussions, while to the sophisticated he must offer sufficiently nuanced discussions.

In any case, those who write on private or public matters, and present laws or political works, are mistaken if they think that there can be found any “great reliability or clarity” in these writings.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, knowledge of the foundations concerning the just and the unjust, good and evil cannot be found in written works.

In written works there is a great deal of “play,” and so they cannot contain “great seriousness.” Even the best of writings are simply “means for helping the memory of those who know already.”<sup>24</sup>

Consequently, only in oral discussions aimed at learning and teaching, which write in the soul “just things, beautiful and good,” is the “clarity,” “completeness,” and “seriousness” contained which is not found in the written works.

Here is the key point of the text:

But the man who thinks that in the written word there is necessarily much that is playful, and that no written discourse . . . deserves to be treated very seriously (and this applies also to the recitations of the rhapsodies, delivered to sway people’s minds, without opportunity for questioning and teaching), but that the best of them really serve only to remind us of what we know; and who thinks that only words about justice and beauty and goodness spoken by teachers for the sake of instruction and really written in a soul is clearness and perfection, and serious value, that such words should be considered the speaker’s own legitimate offspring, first the word within himself, if it be found there, and secondly its descendants or brothers which may have sprung up in worthy manner in the souls of others, —that man, Phaedrus, is likely to be such as you and I might pray that we ourselves may become.

By all means that is what I wish and pray for.<sup>25</sup>

6. *The Philosophical Writer Does Not Entrust to Written Works  
“the Things of Greatest Value”*<sup>26</sup>

From these conclusions on writing and its relations with orality, Plato draws the characterization of the “philosopher.” A “philosopher” is one

23. Ibid., 277D9.

24. Ibid., 278A1.

25. Ibid., 277E5–278B6.

26. Ibid., B–E.

who has composed written works as long as he has composed them knowing the truth and is able to help and defend what he has written, and can show how “weak” written things are (relative to other things that he has not put into writing, but which he can defend orally). This honorific does not derive from the things he has written (which is an “amusement”), but from what he has done in all “seriousness.” But he who does not possess “things of the greatest value” relative to the written works should be given a name deriving from the contents and the characteristics of his writings: poet, legislator, speech writer, and the like. The essence of the philosopher, Plato states, is realized not in the sphere of the “written,” but rather in that of the “oral.”

*Socrates:* Then we may regard our literary pastimes as having reached a satisfactory conclusion. Do you now go and tell Lysias that we two went down to the stream where is the holy place of the nymphs, and there listened to words which charged us to deliver a message, first to Lysias and all other composers of discourses, secondly to Homer and all others who have written poetry whether to be read or sung, and thirdly to Solon and all such as are authors of political compositions under the name of laws—to wit, that if any of them has done his work with a knowledge of the truth, can defend his statements when challenged, and can demonstrate the inferiority of his written works out of his own mouth, he ought not to be designated by a name drawn from those written works, but by one that indicates his serious pursuit.

*Phaedrus:* Then what names would you assign him?

*Socrates:* To call him wise, Phaedrus, would, I think, be going too far; the epithet is proper only to a god. A name that would fit him better, and have more seemliness, would be “lover of wisdom,” or something similar.

*Phaedrus:* Yes, that would be quite in keeping.

*Socrates:* On the other hand, one who has nothing to show of more value than the literary works on whose phrases he spends hours, twisting them this way and that, pasting them together and pulling them apart, will rightly, I suggest, be called a poet or speech writer or law writer.

*Phaedrus:* Of course.<sup>27</sup>

Plato spells out in the *Seventh Letter* what exactly these “things of the greatest value” consist in; but, in the *Phaedrus*, it is clear that these “things of the greatest value” are those that bring aid to writing. They are things which go back to the very foundations of what has been written and so give it its “reliability,” “clarity,” and “completeness.” These foundations, according to the different themes discussed in written works, can be found on different levels; but, because in our passages Plato speaks several times about those matters which concern “just, beautiful, and good things,” evidently the “things of the greatest value” are, clearly, the primary and highest Principles.<sup>28</sup>

27. *Ibid.*, B7–E2.

28. See Szlezák’s observations on this issue, in *Platon*, 20–23.

7. *Conclusions on the Self-Testimonies in the Phaedrus*

Before going on to the *Seventh Letter*, we may recall a statement made at the beginning, to round off our discussion of the self-testimonies in the *Phaedrus*.

We said that these self-testimonies are a massive “counter-instance” for the traditional interpretive paradigm, and that scholars have tried to blunt and attenuate them in various ways in order to fit them into that paradigm. The attempts made are reducible to three chief ones.

(a) Since the time of Schleiermacher, there have been efforts to see in these self-testimonies an attempt to account for the Platonic dialogues, inasmuch as the writings are spoken of as an εἶδολον (image) of the oral discussion, in which one can see the scheme Plato followed in his dialogues, which were aimed at faithfully reproducing in writing his oral teaching. But it has long been recognized that the text uses εἶδολον in the sense of “copy” or “image,” and hence in a pejorative sense, that is, as a shadow of the original.<sup>29</sup> And so this attempt is unmasked as quite arbitrary and unfounded.

(b) Another way which has been tried to force the self-testimonies of the *Phaedrus* to fit the traditional paradigm is the attempt to show that Plato did not include his own dialogues in his criticism of writing. But even this attempt does not stand up, because Plato speaks of the “written” and of “writings” in general, that is, using a language which does not admit any exceptions. This objection goes through even if one does not accept that the criticism of written discourse in the *Phaedrus* makes specific reference to the *Republic*. Nor can arguments be accepted that are based on the attempt to show that the type of writing that Plato rejects is σύγγραμμα, meaning a “treatise” or a doctrinal “compendium,” and that the dialogues are obviously not treatises or doctrinal compendia. In fact, attentive examination of the term’s use, in both classical and in later Greek, has shown that the term indicates a work in prose, as distinct from verse, and that the Platonic dialogues themselves were called συγγράμματα.<sup>30</sup>

Therefore, this way of squeezing the self-testimonies of the *Phaedrus* to make them fit into the traditional paradigm is not a real option.

(c) A third way which has been tried is the attempt to restrict the “serious” things and those of “greatest value” to the form and not to the

29. See what Krämer says in this respect in *Platone*, 37ff. and notes 9 and 25 [Am. ed., 5, note 9, p. 219 and note 25, p. 222]. Cf. Szlezák, *Platon*, 11ff.

30. See Szlezák, *Platon*, and in particular Chapter 2: Die Bedeutung von σύγγραμμα, 376–85. Also see 379ff. where seven documents are cited in which the dialogues of Plato are named σύγγραμμα (taken from Isocrates, the pseudo-Platonic author of the *Second Letter*, Diogenes Laertius, Themistius, Proclus, Marcellinus, and Philo of Alexandria).

content. Oral discussion possesses a different vital charge with all that entails, and in this sense it would possess a purely formal superiority to writing, although not in doctrinal content. But this too is a blind alley, because from beginning to end Plato's argument is aimed at showing how, unlike writing which repeats only one thing, orality says different things, and hence new things. Moreover, the goal of the self-testimonies makes sense only if those "things of the greatest value," which are not written, are understood as having "doctrinal content" insofar as it is only because of that that a writer should be called a "philosopher," irrespective of the nature of the things which can be put into writing as either poetry or prose.

As recent studies have shown on the basis of detailed documentation, the sort of "help" which the writer brings to his writing, according to Plato, concerns the content, and justifies and grounds the conclusions of the writing by bringing them to a higher plane as to their content.<sup>31</sup>

We shall not linger over attempts to save the traditional paradigm because from the epistemological viewpoint they are already obsolete and they have lost a great deal of their significance with the blurring of the paradigm which they were intended to support.

## II. THE SUPREME PRINCIPLES ARE THE "MOST SERIOUS" THINGS WHICH THE PHILOSOPHER DOES NOT ENTRUST TO WRITING

In the excursus of the *Seventh Letter*,<sup>32</sup> Plato takes up again the doctrine we examined in the *Phaedrus* to explain his personal relations with the tyrant Dionysius of Syracuse concerning writing.

The exposition of these self-testimonies is well composed and spelled out in four points:

1. Plato first explains what the "test" is that he subjects those who wish to study philosophy to ascertain whether they are able to pursue it.

2. He then lays out Dionysius's terrible results relative to the "test" insofar as he thought that, after having only one oral presentation by Plato, he could put into writing what is concerned with "the most important things," things about which, giving reasons, Plato firmly denies, there can be appropriate and useful writing.

3. In order to explain his position, Plato presents some basic epistemological arguments. If a writer is "serious," the things which he en-

31. On these points consult the excellent documentation of Szlezák, *Platon*, passim.

32. On the *Seventh Letter* the work of Krämer is fundamental; see *Arete*, 22ff., 400ff., 457ff.; *Die grundsätzlichen Fragen*, 115-24; and *Platone*, 99-107 [Am. ed. 42-46], 121-30 [Am. ed. 56-61], with directions for further study on 99, note 69. See also Szlezák, *Platon*, Chapter 3: "Zum Siebenten Brief," 386-405.

trusts to writing are not “the most serious things,” since the writer-philosopher keeps these things in the best part of himself (in his own soul).

4. Consequently, Dionysius and those who have written about the things which, for Plato, are the “highest things” are not right to have done so, but have bad reasons for doing so.

1. *The Great “Test” to Which Those Who Approach Philosophy Must Submit*<sup>33</sup>

The “test”<sup>34</sup> which those who mean to adopt philosophy must undergo is a preliminary presentation of philosophy and the exemplification of what it entails, especially its difficulties. Those who undergo this “test” in general assume either of two opposed attitudes, each of which fully reveals whether they have a nature suited to philosophy.

(a) If those who undergo the “test” have a nature suited to philosophy, they judge wholly favorably the way peculiar to philosophy and want to set off immediately on it. They join their efforts with those of their guide until they achieve the objective, or at least until they have matured the powers to allow them to proceed alone along the way of philosophy. Consequently, they arrange and conduct the affairs of their private lives so as to make them coherent with the philosophical life.

(b) If, on the other hand, those who are “tested” do not have a nature suited to philosophy, and their knowledge boils down to personal opinion, they react against the great number of things to be learnt, against the labor involved, and against the severe daily discipline which they must impose on their life to practice philosophy authentically. Consequently, they are convinced immediately that they have heard enough about the whole subject, and have no need of further commitment.

2. *“The Greatest Things” Must Be Entrusted to Oral Discussion and Not to Written Discourse*<sup>35</sup>

The immediate reaction of Dionysius, when subjected to the “test,” was of the second type. He pretended immediately that he knew these things, because he had heard them from others as well as “the most important things,” and then he put in writing the things he heard from Plato, just like others who decided to write about the same things said, but not written, by Plato.

Here are the drastic conclusions which Plato draws: anyone who puts in writing those things entrusted by him only to oral discussion under-

33. *Seventh Letter* 340B–341A.

34. The term used by Plato is *πειρα* (340B5).

35. *Seventh Letter* 341B–E.

stands nothing about them; so much so that a written text by Plato himself on those things does not exist, nor will such a thing ever exist.

The text has become quite well known because it is wholly baffling in the context of the traditional paradigm, while it is the foundation supporting the alternative paradigm:

One statement at any rate I can make in regard to all who have written or who may write with a claim to knowledge of the subjects to which I devote myself—no matter how they pretend to have acquired it, whether from my instruction or from others or by their own discovery. Such writers can in my opinion have no real acquaintance with the subject. I certainly have composed no work in regard to it, nor shall I ever do so in the future.<sup>36</sup>

Plato explains his reasons for not wishing to entrust “the most important things” and the “things of the greatest value” to written works, reserving them to oral dialectic, as follows.

In the first place, the knowledge of these things cannot be communicated like other things, because it requires a long series of discussions between teacher and learner living together until there is born in the very soul of the learner a spark which lights up the truth. Here are Plato’s words:

The knowledge of these things is not at all communicable like other knowledges, but acquaintance with it must come rather after a long period of attendance on instruction in the subject itself and of close companionship, when, suddenly, like a blaze kindled by a leaping spark, it is generated in the soul and at once becomes self-sustaining.<sup>37</sup>

What is at issue here, then, is not knowledge which is intrinsically incommunicable or ineffable, as some, perhaps mistaking Platonic for Neoplatonic doctrines, have thought. Rather, this knowledge is not communicable as other knowledge is because, to be acquired, it demands not just special gifts but a long initiation.

Plato stresses that, if it were appropriate to put these things into writing, then he would be the one to do it “in the best possible way”; however, this could not happen, since these things cannot be “communicated in an adequate way to the many.”<sup>38</sup>

Once more, then, Plato denies that the things are not sayable or writable at all. Rather they cannot be said or written for the many, because such people would not get the point, as we shall see below.

Some men could undoubtedly get some benefit from writings on these things, but they would be the few “who are capable of discovering

36. *Ibid.*, B7–C5.

37. *Ibid.*, 341C5–D2.

38. *Ibid.*, D4–6.



the truth for themselves with a little guidance."<sup>39</sup> On the other hand, the majority of men would not understand, and would unjustifiably be condemned; or they would be puffed up with pride, convinced of having learned great things, which they had not really understood. Therefore, writing about these things is useless and completely unprofitable.<sup>40</sup>

3. *The Epistemological Reasons Why "the Most Serious Things" Should Not Be Entrusted to Written Works*<sup>41</sup>

In this discussion Plato goes still further by indicating the epistemological foundations of his rejection of writing.

We use (1) names, (2) definitions, and (3) images to achieve (4) knowledge which brings us (5) to grasp the intelligible itself. Knowledge includes the first three things and carries us to the fifth. Of all these things, the most like the fifth, the intelligible, is intellectual intuition which is the basis of knowledge while the others are proportionally further removed from it.

Thus, the images, since they are sensibles, are full of things contrary to the intelligible (to which knowledge tends); and names and definitions contain instabilities and obscurities of various kinds, and they also evidently limit knowledge. Here is the focal point of the argument:

One might, however, speak forever about the inaccurate character of each of the four! The important thing is that . . . there are two things, the essential reality and the particular quality, and when the mind is in quest of knowledge not of the quality but of the essence, each of the four confronts the mind with the unsought particulars, whether in verbal or bodily form. Each of the four makes the reality that is expressed in words or illustrated in objects liable to easy refutation by the evidence of the senses. The result of this is to make practically every man a prey to complete perplexity and uncertainty.<sup>42</sup>

In particular, those who possess the art of refutation can appear to conquer those who espouse doctrines in discourse or in writing by appealing to the first four things, which by their nature are weak and hence liable to be attacked in various ways. Consequently, those who possess the art of refutation can make those who speak or write appear as though they were ignorant about the things about which they write or speak. The four things can be a way which brings us to knowledge of the fifth (which is reality intelligible in and of itself); but they can also constitute an impediment to the achievement of that aim because of their nature. Only those few who possess a good nature "going up and

39. *Ibid.*, E2-3.

40. Cf. *Ibid.*, E3-6.

41. Cf. *Ibid.*, 342A-344D.

42. Cf. *Ibid.*, 343B6-C5.

down each of them” and with much labor can achieve the knowledge of “that which has a good nature.”<sup>43</sup> Instead, most men, because of their unsuitable natures, get lost among the four things (individually or collectively) and do not achieve knowledge of “that which has a good nature.” And for men of exactly this kind (who, as we have seen, are the majority) written works about such things of a superior nature would be of no use, because not even Lynceus could make such a man see.

Here, in summary, are Plato’s conclusions along with the basic meaning of his self-testimonies:

To sum it all up . . . , natural intelligence and a good memory are equally powerless to aid the man who has not an inborn affinity with the subject. Without such endowments there is of course not the slightest possibility. Hence all who have no natural aptitude for and affinity with justice and all the other noble ideals, though in the study of other matters they may be both intelligent and retentive—all those too who have affinity but are stupid and unretentive—such will never any of them attain to an understanding of the most complete truth in regard to moral concepts. The study of virtue and vice must be accompanied by an inquiry into what is false and true of existence in general and must be carried on by constant practice through a long period. . . . Hardly after practicing detailed comparisons of names and definitions and visual and other sense perceptions, after scrutinizing them in benevolent disputation by the use of question and answer without jealousy, at last in a flash understanding of each blazes up, and the mind, as it exerts all its powers to the limit of human capacity, is flooded with light. For this reason no serious man will ever think of writing about serious realities for the general public so as to make them a prey to envy and perplexity. In a word, it is an inevitable conclusion from this that when anyone sees anywhere the written work of anyone, whether that of a law-giver in his laws or whatever it may be in some other form, the subject discussed cannot have been his most serious concern—that is, if he is himself a serious man. His most serious interests have their abode somewhere in the noblest region of the field of his activity. If, however, he really was seriously concerned with these matters and put them in writing, “then surely” not the gods, but mortals “have utterly blasted his wits.”<sup>44</sup>

4. *Those Who Write about the Highest Things Do Not Do So for Good Reasons*<sup>45</sup>

Returning to the conduct of Dionysius and others who have written about “the first and highest Principles of reality,” Plato claims unwaveringly that anyone who has done so has not done so for good reasons.

a. He cannot have done it for use, that is, to help his own memory, because anyone who has correctly understood these ultimate things (that is, the things which are the “first and highest Principles”)<sup>46</sup> and

43. Cf. *Ibid.*, E 1 ff.

44. *Ibid.*, 344A2–D2. The final part of this passage refers to *Iliad*, 7.360 and 12.234.

45. *Ibid.*, 344D–345C.

46. *Ibid.*, D4–5: τὰ περὶ φύσεως ἄκρα καὶ πρῶτα.

has had them impressed on his soul could not forget them, since they can be put into the “very briefest statements.”<sup>47</sup>

b. He may, on the other hand, have done it for personal ambition (either to pass these things off as his own, or to show that he is a follower of a teacher who makes one famous).

c. Anyone who has so written has done so without adequate training, and Dionysius in particular did it on the basis of a single lesson.

##### 5. Conclusions on the Self-Testimonies in the Seventh Letter

As the reader will easily appreciate, the themes of the self-testimonies of the *Seventh Letter* are the same as those in the *Phaedrus* but they make more explicit the characteristics of those matters about which Plato refused to write. By way of recapitulation, we may list the terms and expressions Plato uses to characterize the matters with which the Unwritten Doctrines are concerned:

1. the whole, or, the all;<sup>48</sup>
2. the greatest;<sup>49</sup>
3. nature, that is, reality as its foundation;<sup>50</sup>
4. the good;<sup>51</sup>
5. the truth about virtue and vice;<sup>52</sup>
6. the false and the true about the whole of being;<sup>53</sup>
7. the most serious things;<sup>54</sup>
8. the first and highest Principles of reality.<sup>55</sup>

As can be seen, they form a series of steps leading up to the evidence for the theory of the first and highest Principles which we shall discuss fully later, and which we shall see is the very basis of Plato’s thought.

Given what we have said so far, it is clear how these self-testimonies in which Plato says with absolute definiteness that on these matters, there never has and never shall be any σύγγραμμα<sup>56</sup> written work by him, constitute a most significant “counter-instance” which confronts the traditional paradigm, even more than does what was said in the self-testimonies in the *Phaedrus*.

47. Ibid., E2: ἐν βραχυτάτοις.

48. Ibid., 341A2: τὸ ὅλον.

49. Ibid., B1: τὰ μέγιστα.

50. Ibid., D7: φύσις.

51. Ibid., 342D4: ἀγαθόν.

52. Ibid., 344A8ff.: ἀλήθεια ἀρετῆς εἰς τὸ δυνατόν καὶ κακίας.

53. Ibid., B2: τὸ ψεῦδος ἅμα καὶ ἀληθές τῆς ὅλης οὐσίας.

54. Ibid., C6: τὰ σπουδαιότατα.

55. Ibid., D4-5: τὰ περὶ φύσεως ἄκρα καὶ πρῶτα.

56. Ibid., 341C4-5.

In order to try to overcome or, at the least, to contain the crisis the anomaly raises for the paradigm which claims the autonomy and self-sufficiency of the Platonic writings, basically two approaches have been tried: (a) rejection of the authenticity of the *Seventh Letter* and (b) more prudently, the attempt to interpret the "writing" (σύγγραμμα) which Plato rejected by limiting its meaning to the sense of "treatise," "compendium," or "systematic exposition," thus trying to distinguish it from the "dialogues," as if Plato wanted in some way to specify that what he had to say, he meant to say only in the dialogue form.

(a) The claim about the inauthenticity of the *Seventh Letter* falls into a vicious circle: we must reject the authenticity of this written work because we do not accept what it says about written works insofar as that does not fit into our interpretive paradigm. Cherniss's position is typical of this sort of strategy.<sup>57</sup> It is to be noted that only a very few scholars now claim that the *Seventh Letter* is not authentic, and its authenticity has become a commonly held opinion.<sup>58</sup>

(b) Nor is the second position sustainable, for the reason given in the discussion in the *Phaedrus*: all the historical documents that are at our disposal forbid us to interpret the term "σύγγραμμα" in a restrictive sense, whereas the dialogues themselves are to be considered and have been considered "συγγράμματα," insofar as they are works in prose and not in verse. Rather, it can be directly demonstrated that, far from being used in a restrictive sense, the term "σύγγραμμα" to mean not a work in prose generally but only a work in prose of a specifically systematic character or a textbook as opposed to a dialogue, Plato used the term in the opposite sense, in his final writings, to indicate also written poetical works.<sup>59</sup> Thus, we discover the very opposite of the restriction which would be necessary to eliminate the *Seventh Letter* as a counter-instance. Thus the traditional paradigm's escape hatch is closed off.

In conclusion: from the self-testimonies it is very clear that the dialogues do not contain those things which for Plato are of maximum "seriousness"; for our philosopher such things are not communicable in writing but only by means of oral communication.<sup>60</sup>

Moreover, we shall see how, in several dialogues, at points at which it is necessary to approach the things of "greatest value," Plato not only

57. This would be the only way of eliminating the most embarrassing counterevidence for the traditional paradigm, given that Plato's claim that he would never write down his primary and highest Principles categorically denies the autonomy and self-sufficiency of the dialogues. In any case, there would still remain untouched the "self-testimonies" of the *Phaedrus*.

58. Even Cherniss's followers do not think it possible to deny the authenticity of the *Seventh Letter*.

59. *Laws* 11.858C10.

60. *Seventh Letter* 341D2-342A1.

does not reveal them, but puts them off to another time and another treatment, that is, to the Unwritten Doctrines, not to mention the overwhelming confirmations from the indirect tradition.

First, however, we ought to tackle a serious difficulty which has been put forward by the upholders of the traditional paradigm: Should someone in the past have written, and should others continue to write about those things which Plato intended to limit to oral discussion? This is the difficult problem that we must now solve.

### III. WHY WAS IT POSSIBLE FOR PLATO'S FOLLOWERS TO WRITE ABOUT THE "UNWRITTEN" IN SPITE OF THE PROHIBITIONS OF THEIR TEACHER, AND WHY IS IT NECESSARY FOR US?

In the face of these self-testimonies two serious doubts can arise: (1) Is it not an absurd contradiction that the followers of Plato thought that they could and should write about the doctrines about which Plato not only did not wish to write but did not wish anyone else to write? (2) Does not a writer of today risk falling into a double contradiction by doing the proscribed thing about prohibited things?

To raise these questions is equivalent to asking the question about the legitimacy of writing about Plato's Unwritten Doctrines. In other words: (1) How can the legitimacy of the indirect tradition be maintained if it arises from the contravention of that proscription? (2) How can the claim of the modern historian be legitimate since he begins from writings arising from a prohibition, and he himself writes about those writings, thus twice contravening the prohibition?

At first glance, such questions seem impressive, but with a careful evaluation of the facts they turn out to be completely solvable.

Actually, Plato did not say that it was impossible to write about the "things of the greatest value," that is, about the "most serious things," because it was impossible to write about them, but because it was useless and moreover because it was damaging to place these doctrines within reach of the many. Plato depends chiefly on reasons of an ethical and pedagogical-dialectical character, as we have seen at length.

In other words, Plato never said that the doctrines that he did not want to entrust to writing were in incapable of being written, that is, absolutely not susceptible of being fixed in discourses put on paper. Rather, Plato says quite clearly that if it had been worthwhile to do it, he would have been able to do it "in the best way." And he explains his not having done it for no other reasons than for the ethical, pedagogic, and didactic reasons which we have noted above. Plato believed that this would be useful for only those few men who are capable, with a little

guidance, of finding for themselves the ultimate truths in the context of oral discussions; but to write it only for those few would be in itself useless. On the other hand, it would have been damaging for the greater part of mankind, who would not be able to understand them; either they would be contemptuous and deride what they do not understand or they would be filled with illusory pride believing that they had learned things which in reality they were incapable of understanding.

Here is Plato's text in which he declares himself clearly:

Besides, this at any rate I know, that if there were to be a treatise or a lecture on this subject, I could do it best. I am also sure for that matter that I should be very sorry to see such a treatise poorly written. If I thought it possible to deal adequately with the subject in a treatise or a lecture for the general public, what finer achievement would there have been in my life than to write a work of great benefit to mankind and to bring the nature of things to light for all men? I do not, however, think the attempt to tell mankind of these matters a good thing, except in the case of some few who are capable of discovering the truth for themselves with a little guidance. In the case of the rest to do so would excite in some an unjustified contempt . . . , in others certain lofty and vain hopes, as if they had acquired some awesome lore.<sup>61</sup>

In addition, Plato explains that to write on these things would not even be useful as a "memory-aid," insofar as "the most serious things" are summarized in a few very brief statements which, as we have seen, those who have grasped them have impressed on their souls and can no longer forget.

Nor did he put the doctrine in writing to aid his own memory, for there is no danger of anyone's forgetting it, once his soul grasps it, since it is contained in the very briefest statements.<sup>62</sup>

This being so, the followers who wrote were not trying to do what Plato believed was objectively and logically impossible, but simply what he held to be ineffective, useless, and dangerous, for ethical and educational reasons.

But Plato held this opinion chiefly because he was the immediate follower of Socrates. He still upheld the Socratic claims to the spiritual supremacy of oral dialectic over those of the written, although he had conceded a great deal to writings at least as regards the ultimate realities: the highest and first Principles. But the followers of Plato were sufficiently distant from Socrates as not to feel so utterly bound by those ethical convictions, and so to believe that the whole of philosophy could be put into writing without the restrictions and limitations on

61. *Ibid.*, 344D9-E2.

62. *Ibid.*, A8.

form being operative. What was important for them was to carry through the line of thought opened up by Plato when he decided to write: and this entailed the transgression, at least within the School, of the precept and practice of Socrates.

Therefore, the prohibition in Plato against writing about certain matters depends only on a theory of teaching and learning bound up with an archaic cultural background, that is, to the radical conviction of the communicative superiority of the oral over the written.

The modern scholar can well understand these things historically or objectively and without being in any way bound by them. In other words, understanding why Plato did not wish any writing about the ultimate truths does not at all imply that no one ought to write about such things, nor that one ought to adopt his views about the material handed down to us by the indirect tradition and justified as above. On the contrary, the objective historian, when he understands the reasons and the motives internal to the archaic mind-set for the belief in the primacy of the oral over the written, is set free by that understanding.

In conclusion, Krämer is absolutely right about this when he writes,

To say it in another way, we people of today, after two millennia of experience with the culture of the written word, in regard to the Platonic method of teaching, find ourselves inevitably at a critical distance that cannot be overcome and that takes us as historians away from the Platonic norms concerned with the limitations of written work. The situation of Socrates and other philosophers who carried on their activity only orally (Pyrrho, Arcesilaus, Carneades, Ammonius) is instructive, for modern historians have at all times written about them without any hesitation. But, the thesis of the superiority of "oral discourse" maintained by Plato had its origin precisely in Socrates.<sup>63</sup>

#### IV. THE INDIRECT TRADITION AS A BASIC SOURCE FOR THE RECONSTRUCTION OF THE UNWRITTEN DOCTRINES OF PLATO

It might be objected that the pretensions of the new paradigm would seem to contradict at least the verdict expressed by Plato against all writing both past and future about his doctrines concerning the ultimate truths, which were entrusted by him entirely to oral communication. How can we justify and preserve his students' writings about these matters, from whose remaining fragments we draw our inspiration?

In the *Seventh Letter* we find the following:

I do know, however, that some others have written on these same subjects, but those who have done so, do not know themselves.<sup>64</sup>

63. Krämer, *Platone*, 131 [Am. ed., 61].

64. *Seventh Letter* 341B5-7: γεγραφότας περὶ τῶν αὐτῶν τούτων.

One who has followed my account of reality and of the deviations from it will be assured of the fact that, whether Dionysius has written anything on the first and highest principles of reality, or anyone else great or small, that man in my opinion has neither received any sound instruction nor profited by it in the subject of which he wrote. For if he had, he would have felt the same reverence for the subject that I do and would not boldly have cast it out unbecomingly and unfittingly.<sup>65</sup>

But it is important to note that among those who have not understood anything about these things we ought not to include his own followers, from whom we have received writings and testimonies. Plato gives us a clear and straightforward positive judgment about them, saying that they have understood quite well the doctrines at issue. Again in the *Seventh Letter* we read:

Then, if [Dionysius] believed them to be puerilities, then truly it is in contrast with many testimonies which maintained the contrary, and which on these things could judge much more authoritatively than Dionysius.<sup>66</sup>

This being so, the consequences to be drawn are inevitable: the extant testimonies of the ancient Academy on Plato's Unwritten Doctrines are to be taken into very serious consideration; in any case, it is incorrect to set them aside or not to give them due attention in the interpretation of Plato. In sum, the indirect tradition must be considered a source of fundamental importance alongside and together with the dialogues insofar as it goes back to his followers, whom Plato himself acknowledged to be good judges and witnesses about the matters which we find in that tradition.

On the other hand, the scholars who adhere to the old paradigm have insisted in various ways on the "misunderstandings" and "deformations" on the part of Plato's students who transmitted reports concerning the Unwritten Doctrines, and consequently these scholars have vigorously contested the credibility of those reports. In a quite extraordinary way, they have insisted on the untrustworthiness of what Aristotle says, claiming that he often misleads us about Plato, especially when he is arguing with him.

It is true that Plato does not mention the names of those who understood him properly; but Aristotle was part of the circle of the followers closest to Plato and what he wrote was certainly subject to check by the entire School; so it is totally unacceptable to say that he invented the Unwritten Doctrines, and so was the author of a sensational forgery.

But since Aristotle is our source of greatest importance, it is worthwhile giving some further explanation.

65. *Ibid.*, 344D3-9.

66. *Ibid.*, 345B5-7.



It is true, as many have complained, that Aristotle very often presents the authors he discusses in terms of his own categories and technical language, and it is also true that he presents the doctrines of Plato in a onesided way that allows him to refute them or at least to criticize them, in order to propose the superiority of his own views. But it is also true (and a crushing set of examples could be brought to bear) that what Aristotle says at worst always has some objective basis. So the work of the historian is to distinguish on a case-by-case basis between the objective facts and what is, rather, the interpretation of the facts.

For example, Aristotle presents Plato's theory of Ideas in a very questionable format (as can be easily seen by a simple comparison with the Platonic dialogues which also present that doctrine), often hedging it in so as to make it easier for him to show its weaknesses, and using language which is for the most part not Plato's own. But from this it is not correct to conclude that Aristotle invented everything that he says and is thus absolutely lacking in credibility. After all, the theory of Ideas is a Platonic doctrine, and furthermore, seen from a certain perspective, it can be theoretically interpreted (although in great part incorrectly) as it was interpreted by Aristotle.

Here are the key points to consider.

a. Aristotle never invented what he presented as a matter of fact or as a historical circumstance. Consequently, it must be admitted that when Aristotle states that Plato placed above the doctrine of Ideas a further doctrine of the Principles, he is correct. For this is a pure matter of fact and not a theoretical interpretation, a truth which is fully confirmed by parallel testimonies as well as in Plato's *Seventh Letter*.

b. It is true that the exposition of the doctrine of the Principles—like that of the doctrine of Ideas—was carried out in polemically advantageous language and using categories which to some extent deform the original doctrine; nevertheless, it is possible to calculate—so to speak—the refractive index which Aristotle interposes between us and the original doctrines and to compensate plausibly for it, transposing the terms of the theory.

c. This task of criticism can be performed with the aid of other parallel testimonies in addition to the criticism internal to Aristotle.

d. Those who radically contest the credibility of Aristotle's testimonies concerning the Unwritten Doctrines of Plato use Aristotle himself as an unimpeachable source for the reconstruction of the doctrines of other philosophers and, in particular, for the reconstruction of the doctrines of other Platonists, and hence they condemn themselves and their methods as inconsistent.<sup>67</sup>

67. See Krämer, *Platone*, 113 [Am. ed., 51].

We must conclude that the indirect tradition, centered especially but not wholly on Aristotle, is to be upheld and is well founded, especially as testimony about that “extra” which it contains by way of testimony about what is absent from the Platonic dialogues, but to which Plato himself often refers.

## 4 The Advantages of Rereading Plato's Dialogues in the Light of the Unwritten Doctrines That Have Come Down to Us in the Indirect Tradition

### I. THE SIGNIFICANCE, PURPOSE, AND INFLUENCE OF PLATO'S WRITINGS IN THE NEW INTERPRETIVE PARADIGM

On the basis of what has been said, it is evident both that we must return to the Platonic writings with a new vision, and that, in response to the ancient problem "of the nature and significance of the Platonic writings," various solutions offer themselves which are more articulated, complex, and constructive than the old paradigm allowed.<sup>1</sup>

First, we may recall that the dialogue form in which almost all the writings of Plato were composed had its origin in Socrates' way of philosophizing. For Socrates, to philosophize meant to examine, to test, to cure and purify the soul; and this, in his opinion, could happen only through a living dialogue, in the direct confrontation of two souls, which sets the ironic-maieutic method going.

Plato believed in the possibility of a *via media* between, on the one hand, Socrates' outright rejection of writing and his exclusive emphasis on oral dialectic, and, on the other, the Naturalists' systematic treatises and the Sophists' rhetorical writings. He envisaged a way which could, despite its sketchiness and the constraints on it noted, respond adequately to the situation. What was needed was a way of writing in prose σύγγραμμα which, without the rigidities of dogmatic exposition and the full-dress speeches of the Sophists and Rhetoricians, could aim at reproducing the Socratic spirit without sacrificing it entirely.

It was a matter of trying to reproduce in writing *Socratic* conversation, and of imitating its specialness. Thus we find the alternating and inces-

1. For an analysis of the structure of Plato's writing within the traditional paradigm, see H. Gundert, *Dialog und Dialektik. Zur Struktur des platonischen Dialogs* (Amsterdam, 1971). For an outline of the traditional paradigm, see Szlezák, *Platon*, Appendix 1: "Die moderne Theorie der Dialogform," 331-75. For the new paradigm, see K. Gaiser, *Protreptik und Paränese bei Platon. Untersuchungen zur Form des platonischen Dialogs* (Stuttgart, 1959) and his *Platone come scrittore filosofico*, passim; Krämer, *Platone*, 140ff. [Am. ed., 68ff.]; Szlezák, *Platon*, passim. Also of great interest is E. Schmalzriedt, *Platon. Die Schriftsteller und die Wahrheit* (Munich, 1969), which takes the new paradigm into (partial) consideration.

sant questioning, with all its bristling doubts. Sudden breaks direct us maieutically toward the truth, without revealing its overall systematic sense, and attract the soul to find truth in the dramatic ruptures which open further lines of inquiry. Thus, all the typically Socratic ploys are set to work. In this way, the Socratic dialogue was born, becoming a literary genre taken up by Socrates' followers and by later philosophers. It is a form that Plato can be said to have invented, and of which he was certainly by far the greatest exponent, and even its only true practitioner, for it is only in Plato's dialogues that we find the authentic and unrepeatable voice of Socratic philosophizing.

But Plato's assessment of writing, in the *Phaedrus*, applies even to the dialogue conceived thusly. This means that, for Plato, the supreme truths of philosophy—the things of greatest value—cannot be entrusted to *writing* in any form, even to written dialogues, but only to oral dialectic. Written dialogues serve some purposes, but not all, and certainly not the highest at which Plato aimed as a philosopher, especially not those of the communication of the first and highest Principles.

What are the goals of the written dialogues, and how effectively are they achieved? We may answer summarily in the following six claims:

1. In the earliest dialogues, which are closest in spirit to Socrates, Plato sets himself protreptic, educative, and moral goals like those which Socrates set in his moral philosophizing. The purification of the soul from false opinions, the maieutic preparation for the truth, and educative discussion are some of the constants that we find again and again in all the Platonic writings. In the early dialogues they are very prominent and the principal objective. In later dialogues their role is somewhat diminished, but they remain as fixtures. Consequently, the reader's role in the dialogues of the first period is very important: so much so as to be, in a certain sense, identified with that of a genuine interlocutor along with the characters within the dialogue. These works generally end without any explicit conclusion (or rather with a kind of aporetic solution), and leave the reader the task of taking the last step and of maieutically drawing from himself the solution of the problems discussed, the solution having been set up or, at least indicated by, the flow of the dialogue.<sup>2</sup>

2. The Platonic dialogues never aim at reflecting actual conversations, but instead represent models of ideal conversations, or models of

2. It has been seen how important it is to read the Socratic-aporetic dialogues in terms of the capacity of Socrates' interlocutor to understand the lessons to be learned from the various *aporiai*. See Szlezák's book cited above and Erler's *Il senso delle aporie nei dialoghi di Platone* [Italian ed., Milan, 1991; German original Berlin-New York, 1987] and *I dialoghi aporetici di Platone alla luce del nuovo paradigma ermeneutico* (Naples, 1991).

philosophical communication crowned by success or issuing in failure. This idealization of conversation always carries with it an ever more exact outline of the methodology that comes to play a regulative role, and which is probably a response to the discussions then taking place in the Academy. The dialogues present well orchestrated dialectical discussions, in which we are shown the full resources of the *elenchus*: the method of inquiring about the truth by the refutation of adversaries.

In this way, the methodological models of the dialogues, reflecting the discussions held in the Academy, probably were themselves mirrored in those discussions as prime examples of method. Krämer writes: “[S]uch ideal schemata of dialogue can only prepare for concrete application in a real dialogue, and cannot replace it. The process of genuine intellectual formation [for Plato] is inextricably bound to its concrete actualization in the development of real dialogue.”<sup>3</sup>

3. In our exposition of the doctrines contained in the self-testimonies of the *Phaedrus* and the *Seventh Letter*, we saw that Plato gave a precise *mnemonic* role to writing.<sup>4</sup> Writing ought to secure and make available to its author and others the ideas arrived at by other means, namely, in previous conversations, in the realm of the oral, which is prior to writing. This mnemonic role comes to the fore as the Platonic dialogues carry more doctrinal weight, as in the dialogues which run from the *Phaedo* and the *Republic* (and in part also from the dialogues immediately preceding them) to the *Laws*.

We may recall that writing may be useful for calling to mind a range of doctrines; but, for the reasons that we explained above, these do not include the ultimate doctrines concerning the highest Principles of reality.<sup>5</sup> These are destined to remain unwritten because they have no need of memory aids, insofar as they are summarized in *very brief statements* which, when fully understood, will never be forgotten. Nevertheless, the writings make precise reference to them, at least with various pointers and hints. Such allusions can be called *mnemonic allusions*, and may be helpful for those who know the teaching but nothing more.<sup>6</sup>

4. Plato denies to writing the capacity to really *communicate* doctrine, reserving this capacity for oral discourse. Nevertheless, the protreptic, pedagogical, methodological roles and the mnemonic role itself obviously would not be possible if the communicative ability of writing were

3. Cf. Krämer, *Platone*, 147ff. [Am. ed., 72–73].

4. See above, pp. 51ff. and 55–56.

5. See above, pp. 63ff. and 70–71.

6. There are very many such allusions. Here we simply call the reader's attention to eleven of the most important, collected by Krämer in the Appendix of his *Platone*, 358–69 [Am. ed., 199–202], as Plato's own written references to his Unwritten Doctrines: *Protagoras* 356E8–357C1; *Meno* 76E–77B1; *Phaedo* 107B4–10; *Republic* 506D2–507A2, 509C1–11;

utterly nonexistent. Despite the resounding denials in the *Phaedrus*, it is clear that Platonic writing is also, and often powerfully, a means of philosophical communication.

Even if its author denies it in so many words, at least insofar as he did write and given the way he wrote, he ends up admitting, and even proving, that writing communicates.

5. Making use of some remarks of Schmalzriedt,<sup>7</sup> Krâmer has clarified this point. In his writings, Plato used philosophical themes as occasions for literary creation in which he sets on foot a truth-oriented process which proceeds “toward the central unwritten nucleus of the Platonic philosophy without ever revealing it.” This procedure remains unfinished because it uses literary means, and refers us back to the sphere of the oral for its ultimate completion. “The dialectical procedure of Plato-the-writer begins a cognitive process which culminates not in the writings, but in the activity of oral teaching in the Academy.”<sup>8</sup>

The dialogues set this cognitive process on foot, and do so at the highest level, even though as a matter of principle they do not take it upon themselves to finish it. And the history of the interpretation of Plato in general and of the individual dialogues fully confirms that the dialogues are not the end of the story.

Therefore, as Gaiser points out, we “can understand the Platonic dialogues in their totality only if we take into account their dependence in particular and in general on a justification of profound importance which is not explained in the written work, but which is presupposed throughout it.”<sup>9</sup>

The circle in which Plato seems to enclose the reader with the written word often directs the reader along its radii to an *unwritten word* that is like a wider circle which encloses the circle of the written and limits it altogether.<sup>10</sup>

6. A noteworthy corroboration of this point of view comes from the recent contribution of Szlezák. He begins with an examination of the dialogues and keeps his attention on them, without discussing the Unwritten Doctrines handed down by the indirect tradition. He demonstrates that the oral *help* which is to be brought to the writings, and to which the *Phaedrus* refers, is the structure supporting all the Platonic writings, including those of his youth. Plato, as Szlezák says, “conceives

*Parmenides* 136D4–E3; *Sophist* 254B7–D3; *Statesman* 284A1–E4; *Timaeus* 48C2–E1, 53C4–D7; *Laws* 894A1–5. We shall take up many of these passages below.

7. Schmalzriedt, *Platon*, cited in note 1 above.

8. Krâmer, *Platone*, 148 [Am. ed., 73–74].

9. Gaiser, *Platone come scrittore*, 46.

10. See note 6 above.

philosophical writing right from the beginning as not self-sufficient, that is, as writing which, as regards content, has to be transcended if it is to be fully understood. The ultimate justification of the arguments of the philosopher's written work must come from beyond the written work itself."<sup>11</sup>

The detailed accounts furnished by Szlezák are very interesting since they indicate how this help must be furnished at different levels and in very different contexts.<sup>12</sup> At some levels, this help means a doctrine which is found in another dialogue, while, at the highest level, this help involves doctrines which Plato did not put into writing at all. Szlezák shows how, even beginning from the Schleiermacher interpretation and without presupposing the Unwritten Doctrines, a close examination of the dialogues, including the very earliest ones, can overturn that very paradigm. "[I]n everything he wrote, [Plato] allowed room for the help of the oral; writing cannot replace the orality of philosophy. But he shows what the philosophical *help* amounts to by imitating dialogue in the written works. In them, there is a scale of the sorts of *help* required: one section of a dialogue can be of *assistance* to another, just as one dialogue can be of assistance to another; with this gradation, we can understand by analogy how oral philosophizing helps written philosophical works."<sup>13</sup> But the help which brings us to the ultimate foundations is not found in the dialogues, and it is exactly what Plato did not wish to put into writing, and what the indirect tradition has handed down to us. Therefore, Szlezák concludes: "The dialogues themselves force us to take the indirect tradition of Plato seriously."<sup>14</sup>

And so we reach the heart of our problem, that is, the help that we cannot forego, but which the indirect tradition can bring to the Platonic dialogues and to which we can now turn.

## II. THE UNWRITTEN DOCTRINES OF THE INDIRECT TRADITION ARE ABLE TO BRING TO THE WRITINGS THE HELP THEY NEED

Beginning with Robin, various scholars have begun to admit that some assistance can be had from the indirect tradition.<sup>15</sup> Nevertheless, this admission was limited to the very last dialogues, and was applied to a very narrow chronological range, encouraging attempts at *articulation* of the traditional paradigm discussed above.

11. See Szlezák, *Platon*, 66.

12. *Ibid.*, *passim*.

13. *Ibid.*, 417.

14. *Ibid.*, 419.

15. See above, pp. 52–53ff.

The central feature of the new paradigm is that it decisively shifts the chronology.<sup>16</sup>

The Unwritten Doctrines about the first Principles have their origin, if not in the period of the first dialogues, certainly in the middle period, that is, in the period of the composition of the doctrinal writings, and hence at the time of the foundation of the Academy. Consequently, all the most important dialogues of Plato, which have always been seen to be essential for the reconstruction of his thought, presuppose the doctrine of the Principles.

In the *Seventh Letter* (written about 353 B.C.E.) Plato tells us not only that the doctrine on the supreme Principles of reality was heard by Dionysius at the time of Plato's third visit to Sicily in 361 B.C.E., but that he could have heard it at the time of the second visit in 366 B.C.E. Hence it must be concluded that over a period of twenty years, from the second visit to Sicily (366 B.C.E.) to Plato's death (347 B.C.E.), the Unwritten Doctrines must have remained substantially unchanged. Several important hints concerning the Unwritten Doctrines are to be found in the central books of the *Republic* (of which more later), and the references in the *Phaedrus* to the *Republic* all indicate that the Unwritten Doctrines about the supreme Principles of reality go back to a period which can be fixed approximately around the middle of the 370s, the period which many scholars agree to be the date of the composition of the central books of the *Republic*.<sup>17</sup>

Central parts of many of Plato doctrinal writings, which have hitherto resisted full, clear, and natural explanation, can be accounted for against the background of the Unwritten Doctrines insofar as the indirect tradition provides a key to setting them in historical context.

The *extra*, which was unwritten and not to be found in any dialogue, gives help to the understanding of even some early dialogues, and certainly of the dialogues from the *Republic* and *Phaedo* onward, and is to some extent available to us by means of the indirect tradition.<sup>18</sup>

Although this tradition has all the defects and limitations which generally afflict doxography, this does not subtract from its importance. As Gaiser correctly observes,

Undoubtedly the information handed down to us is dead from the literary point of view and much overlaid from the doxographical. The poverty of

16. The mere readjustment of the traditional paradigm is put into crisis by this shift of chronology parameters. See above pp. 42ff., and further on, pp. 84ff.

17. See Krämer, *Platone*, 106 [Am. ed., 46], and K. Gaiser, "La teoria dei Principi in Platone," in *Elenchos* 1 (1980): 45-75, esp. 69.

18. For some of the dialogues prior to the *Republic*, see, for example, Krämer, *Arete*, 57ff. On the *Gorgias*, see K. Gaiser, "Platons *Menon* und die Akademie," in *Archiv für Geschichte der*



writing, frequently explained by Plato, is powerfully underlined in the formally unyielding reports, which are easy to misunderstand. We have before us, so to speak, only a skeletal and petrified copy of a living reality. Nevertheless, this is insufficient for thinking it implausible to try . . . to reconstruct and clarify the information we have, just as it is not implausible to collect and restore the separate remains. And why should it be impossible in our case, to find in these accounts something of their original meaning, just as the paleontologist, on the basis of mere petrified remains or parts of skeletons, can still make some statements about the life once contained in his preserved forms?<sup>19</sup>

### III. THE GREATNESS AND VALUE OF THE DIALOGUES IS INCREASED BY THE CORRECT INTERPRETATION OF THE INDIRECT TRADITION

Scholars within the old paradigm often think that the widespread appeal to the indirect tradition, and the radical reevaluation which results from the alternative paradigm, is a diminution of the dialogues; they see, moreover, two hundred years' worth of work set at naught.

The new interpretive paradigm does not imply any of this. Krämer has explained the situation quite clearly as follows:

a. The indirect tradition, far from diminishing the dialogues, brings about their reevaluation by making their meaning comprehensible.

b. In terms of content, the dialogues are endowed with an incomparably greater richness of material.

c. The dialogues are full of information about the articulation and development of Plato's thought than does the indirect tradition.

d. The tasks of examining the dialogues and interpreting their content continue to have the value they always had because the dialogues were written for a public that was wholly or partially ignorant of the unwritten teachings, and, in any case, the analysis of the dialogues cannot be replaced by the exclusive study of the indirect tradition.<sup>20</sup>

The new paradigm merely implies the philosophical priority of the indirect tradition as to content, because it contains that extra not given to us in the dialogues. That extra coincides with the things of *greatest value* which, according to the *Phaedrus*, the philosopher gives in oral conversation alone. As Krämer observes:

. . . [I]n the case of Plato, it is of considerable importance that . . . the tradition of oral teaching is indirect is compensated for by the fact that it has a

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*Philosophie* 46 (1964): 241–92, now published in *Das Problem der ungeschriebenen Lehre Platons* (cited in Chapter 2, note 67), 329–93; also see his *Name und Sache in Platons "Kratylos"* (Heidelberg, 1974).

19. Gaiser, *Platons*, 585.

20. See Krämer, *Platone*, 139ff. [Am. ed., 67ff.].

precedence with respect to the content of Plato's philosophy. Unlike what we observe concerning many other authors, the indirect tradition of Plato is not made up of some ancillary doctrine which may add . . . to our understanding. Rather, it is at the heart of Platonic philosophy: it concerns the theory of principles, and it determines . . . the structure of the system which is derived from it. Anyone who wants to understand the historical Plato cannot ignore the reports on his . . . Unwritten Doctrines, and could not ignore them even if they had been handed down in a much worse state than they actually were.<sup>21</sup>

Since this feature of the new paradigm has been misunderstood, we may quote Gaiser's very clear statement, which emphasizes that the new reconstruction of Plato's thought

. . . cannot lead to a *depreciation* of the literary dialogues. What is at issue is the attempt to regain an important perspective for understanding those very writings, after it had been for centuries lost to view. Every claim about an esoteric doctrine which lies behind the dialogues should be accepted as useful only when it facilitates understanding the written works, and when what is in the dialogues demands it—especially when that appears fragmentary, aporetic or playful. It must also be understood that the singularity and significance of Plato's philosophizing as a whole can be seen anew by placing it in the context of the additional material.<sup>22</sup>

Such claims do not imply a shifting of the monopoly from the written tradition to the oral. Rather, they indicate the necessity of bringing about the summation and synthesis of the two traditions, and the clarifying as fully as possible of the one by means of the other.

In the new paradigm, the loss of the dialogues' self-sufficiency as a result of acceptance of the indirect tradition does not mean any loss in their value; rather, it increases their value, because their shadowy areas are illuminated. The dialogues are thus shown to be clearer, richer in content, and directed toward wider concerns. Further, the extra given by the indirect tradition is a very brief report. The report is like the final ascent to a summit, which is the shortest stage but, at the same time, the most demanding. The Platonic writings help us to climb mountains, but not to their summits; the indirect tradition gets us to the very summit.

#### IV. THE RADICAL MODULATION OF MEANING AND THE ROLE OF IRONY IN PLATONIC PHILOSOPHIZING WITHIN THE NEW PARADIGM

Plato also had to embrace the irony of Socratic dialogue and to integrate it into his writings as an essential ingredient. In the new paradigm, irony too is radically reinterpreted.

21. Krämer, *Platone*, 120 [Am. ed., 54-55].

22. Gaiser, *Platons*, 3.

For Socrates, irony is a skillful game played using, above all, the pretense of ignorance in all its multiform and multicolored variants, with a view to revealing the real ignorance of his pompous interlocutors. In the kaleidoscopic game of dissembling, Socrates pretended to take up his opponents' ideas and methods as if they were his own and he took to extremes so that points in their positions would come out more easily and they would be refuted by their own logic.

Both of these uses of irony are to be found in Plato. The former, rather more marked in the early dialogues, is gradually reined in as to its bite and influence as the dialogues are enriched in their doctrinal content and as the positive constructive drive takes over from the aporetic and negative drives. The latter sort of irony, on the other hand, tends to widen and become more complex, reaching its apex in the most important dialogues, such as the *Parmenides*. This aspect of Platonic irony makes some dialogues difficult to interpret, because the philosopher does not openly acknowledge the ironic fiction as such and keeps changing masks without ever letting us see his true face.

Platonic irony has profound methodological significance with its roots in Socratic maieutic. The reader of the dialogues is involved in the inventions and in the play of these fictions in such a way as to obtain his total commitment, which itself aimed at lighting within him the sparks of truth.

Therefore, as Jaspers points out, Platonic irony has nothing in common with the nihilistic vision which is simply negative, using destructive ridicule. The irony which is inspired by the nihilistic position "follows the principle of Gorgias: answer the ridiculous with seriousness, the serious with ridicule. This irony discloses nothing but nothingness. It is not the self-effacing language of the Eros, but a weapon serving the power of nothingness."<sup>23</sup>

On the contrary, Platonic irony implies the occupation of a positive position which cannot be directly expressed if it is to avoid the misunderstanding of those for whom it is not intended. "Philosophical irony," writes Jaspers again, "on the other hand, expresses the certainty of a fundamental meaning. Perplexed by the discrepancy between the simplicity of rational discourse and the ambivalence of appearances, it strives to attain the truth, not by saying it but by awakening it. It strives to give an intimation of the hidden truth, whereas nihilistic irony is empty. In the whirl of appearances, philosophical irony strives to lead, by true disclosure, to the ineffable presence of the truth, whereas empty irony leads from the whirl of appearances to nothingness. Philosophi-

23. K. Jaspers, *Die grossen Philosophen* (Munich, 1957), 267; trans. Ralph Mannheim, *The Great Philosophers* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1962), 137.

cal irony is a diffident fear of directness, a safeguard against the direct misunderstanding that is total."<sup>24</sup> "With his irony Plato seems to say: Let those who cannot understand misunderstand."<sup>25</sup> Because of this, the plea of Goethe becomes unavoidable: "Certainly, anyone who can explain what men like Plato state seriously, in a joking or in a semi-joking way, and what they say through conviction or simply by their way of saying it, would render an extraordinary service and would make an infinitely great contribution to our culture."<sup>26</sup>

If we accept the new interpretive paradigm, many dialogues cease to be mysterious, and what Plato said seriously and from conviction can be understood. The precise indications which we can glean from the indirect tradition throw a great deal of light on many dialogues, and more particularly on the enigmatic parts of some dialogues. They offer the key both to understanding the ironic play and thus make the mask fall, and to the effective identification of Plato's philosophical views. In any case, the panironic interpretation of Plato's dialogues, according to which irony in the end overflows everything, even itself, can no longer be sustained in the light of the reevaluation of the indirect tradition, while ironic play finally reveals its philosophical seriousness and constructive purposes.<sup>27</sup>

#### V. THE REEVALUATION IN THE NEW PARADIGM OF THE CRUCIAL ISSUE OF THE EVOLUTION OF PLATONIC THOUGHT

Within the traditional paradigm, an important stage began with Hermann's significantly entitled book *Geschichte und System der platonischen Philosophie* [*The History and System of Platonic Philosophy*],<sup>28</sup> which introduced the notion of the *evolution* of Platonic thought and attempted to reconstruct its trajectory.

This claim met with widespread agreement such that the notion of the evolution of Platonic thought became a maxim for the interpretation of his texts, from which it received considerable confirmation by way of the application of stylistic analysis and statistical studies of texts using the most advanced methods of modern philology. Such studies begin with the *Laws*, which we know for certain to have been Plato's last writing. Careful identification of this work's stylistic characteristics led to the attempt to establish which of the other writings share them.

24. Ibid.

25. Ibid.

26. *Goethes Werke* (in the series Deutsche National-Litteratur historisch kritische Ausgabe), 32: 140.

27. See what we said above about the self-testimonies of the *Phaedrus*, pp. 59-70.

28. K. F. Hermann, *Geschichte und System der platonischen Philosophie* (Heidelberg, 1839).

With due consideration given to collateral evidence of various kinds it was determined that the writings of the latest period were very probably composed in the following order: *Theaetetus*, *Parmenides*, *Sophist*, *Statesman*, *Philebus*, *Timaeus*, *Critias*, and the *Laws*. It could further be established that the *Republic* belongs to the middle period of Plato's authorship, preceded by the *Phaedo* and the *Symposium*, and followed by the *Phaedrus*.

It could likewise be ascertained that there is a group of dialogues which corresponds to the period of Plato's maturation and the passage from a youthful phase to the phase of his greatest originality. The *Gorgias* belongs probably to the period immediately before the first visit to Italy and the *Meno* to that immediately following it. The *Cratylus* probably also dates from the period of maturation.

The *Protagoras* is perhaps the high point of the early activity. The other dialogues, especially the short ones, were certainly written in his youth, as is confirmed by the distinctively Socratic themes which are discussed in them. Some of them were certainly retouched and partially rewritten in the period of Plato's maturity.

The conclusions that can be drawn about Plato's theory and doctrine, and which exemplify the schema once entertained by the present author, can be summarized as follows.

At the beginning of his career Plato was chiefly concerned with ethical (ethic-political) problems, taking up where Socrates had left off. Later, by deepening his ethic-political thought in all its ramifications, he understood the necessity for reconsidering the questions of *physis*: he grasped that the ultimate underpinning of ethics could not come from ethics itself, but only from a knowledge of being and the cosmos of which man is part.

But the recovery of the cosmological reflections of the Physicists came about in an utterly novel way, revolutionizing thought by the discovery of the supersensible realm (of superphysical being).

The discovery of supersensible being and its categories started the revision of a set of ancient problems and it raised a whole set of new ones on which Plato commented, and to which he devoted himself tirelessly in the dialogues of his maturity and old age.

The achievement of the concept of the supersensible gave a fresh meaning to the Socratic *psyche* and to the Socratic notion *tending the soul*; it gave new meaning to man's nature and to his destiny, as well as to the divine, to the cosmos, and to truth.

From the position arrived at by the discovery of the supersensible, Plato could settle the differences between Heraclitus and Parmenides, could ground Anaxagoras's teleological intuition, could solve many of

the aporias of Eleaticism, and could give a new meaning to Pythagoreanism. In the mature period, the Eleatic challenge became so pressing that it not only inspired entire dialogues, such as the *Parmenides*, but it brought about the replacement of Socrates as the principal figure: in the *Sophist* and in the *Statesman* the main character is the Eleatic Stranger. And in the period of his old age, Pythagorean considerations, which had been present and at work since the *Gorgias*, come to the fore to such an extent that, in the final great cosmological synthesis, the *Timaeus*, Plato chose the Pythagorean Timaeus as the principal figure.

In short, according to the majority of scholars, including some scholars who had reconsidered them, the Unwritten Doctrines mark the final stage of Plato's evolutionary trajectory. Different interpreters sometimes have given markedly diverse versions of this sort of trajectory.<sup>29</sup>

In particular, we may note that many scholars have believed that they can perceive in the dialogues after the *Republic* the expression of a crisis, of an overcoming of his earlier preoccupations by various kinds of self-criticism and self-correction particularly regarding the central doctrine: the theory of Ideas. The question of the relative weights to be given to evolution and to systematicity was resolved in various ways, with an overall tendency to favor evolution as the interpretive maxim at the expense of systematicity and of the unity of Plato's thought.<sup>30</sup>

Accepting the Tübingen School's paradigm forecloses on the project of reconstructing the development of Plato's thought, with all that it presupposes. We may, hence, set out the advantages of the new paradigm's approach to the central issues and to their possible outcomes.

1. First, a genetic study of Plato's dialogues can achieve reliable results about Plato as a writer, but not about Plato as a thinker. As we shall soon be able to show, Plato the writer is far from coinciding systematically or point for point with Plato the thinker.

2. The genetic interpretation applies, without any proof offered, the principle that Plato only possesses no more than the doctrines and

29. We may remember that, together with Hermann, L. Campbell was among the first to employ the genetic method by introducing stylometric analysis into his *Sophistes and Politicus of Plato* (Oxford, 1867).

30. W. Lutoslawski, in *The Origin and Growth of Plato's Style and Chronology of His Writings* (London, 1897, 1905<sup>2</sup>), used the genetic method in an historically radical way maintaining that after the crisis of the *Parmenides* Plato moved from an ontological conception of the Ideas to a kind of nominalistic conception of them. Since his work, this approach has been twisted in various directions, so that some have even believed that Plato can be presented only by summarizing dialogue after dialogue. Among the numerous works in this direction, there is the very curious way of reading Plato's development taken by Gilbert Ryle in his *Plato's Progress* (Cambridge, England, 1966). See also H. Thesleff, *Studies in Platonic Chronology* (Helsinki, 1982), and more recently, L. Brandwood, *The Chronology of Plato's Dialogues* (Cambridge, 1990).

speculations which, at any given stage, he expresses in the dialogues. But—as Krämer points out—such a principle could only be confirmed if “Plato had tried in each of his writings clearly to show the totality of his philosophy. Only in this case could the *progress* be unearthed from the differences between one writing and another, by subtracting the old from the new. But this condition for the application of the genetic principle is not met, because of the differences in theme among the individual written works.”<sup>31</sup>

3. For purely formal reasons, the different aims and objectives of the different dialogues call for treatment on different doctrinal levels. The fact that we find greater or lesser, better or worse expressions of doctrine defeats the expectations of those who draw the inferences on which the genetic method is based. Some dialogues offer less doctrinal content because they aim at more limited ends than other dialogues or because they are adapted to the abilities of the people involved.<sup>32</sup>

4. Also, as we saw above, Plato clearly says in the *Phaedrus* that the stage of *oral elaboration* of doctrine comes first, and only in a second stage do at least some of the doctrines arrived at by oral discussion become fixed, for mnemonic purposes, in writing, stopping short only at the “things of greatest value,” that is, at the doctrines which, for the reasons given above, would have to remain forever “unwritten.”

5. In addition, he gives many hints regarding the Unwritten Doctrines which, in many dialogues, are unmistakable for readers who are not unduly biased.<sup>33</sup>

6. The conclusions are therefore evident:

a. In composing the various dialogues, Plato was taking into account a wider range of thought than that presented on any given occasion.

b. A proper estimate of the indirect tradition to some extent enables the reconstruction of this range of thought.

c. Once it is determined that the core of the Unwritten Doctrines dates from a much earlier period than was previously thought, it follows that the question of the evolution of Plato's thought has to be put in a wholly new way, namely, in terms of the relations between the written and oral teaching, that is, the two extant traditions, taking into account all the circumstances indicated above.

7. It is necessary, in any case, to distinguish the different levels of the evolutionary trajectory:

31. Krämer, *Platone*, 180 [Am. ed., 93–94]; also consult Szlezák, *Platon*, *passim*.

32. This is the point which emerges from Szlezák's close analysis of the early and middle dialogues in his *Platon*.

33. See note 6, above.

- a. that of Plato the thinker;
- b. that of Plato the writer in general; and
- c. that of the evolution of the relation between the writings and the oral teachings, which to some extent converge.

8. Stylistic analysis and lexical statistics must be given a clear primacy in the discussion of this matter.<sup>34</sup>

## VI. THE NEW POSSIBILITIES FOR SOLVING THE PUZZLES OF THE PLATONIC SYSTEM ON OBJECTIVE AND HISTORICAL GROUNDS

In addition to a radical reinterpretation of the question of the development of Plato's thought, the reevaluation of the indirect tradition reveals an equally or more radical reinterpretation which, for many scholars, poses a genuine dilemma: the question of the unity or disunity of Plato's thought, that is, whether it was systematic or nonsystematic (problematic).

The indirect tradition fills that gap in the dialogues by revealing what were for Plato the supreme and fundamental Principles of reality, the fundamental connections binding all realities to the first Principles.

From what has been elicited from the testimonies, there is no doubt that Plato aimed at presenting a unified vision which could embrace reality in its entirety and in its parts. Although these testimonies are incomplete, they nevertheless permit us to reconstruct the essential features and fundamental connections.

Since this discovery immediately renders obsolete many interpretations of Plato, and particularly those which attribute to him skeptical, aporetic, existential, or antimetaphysical concerns, it is worthwhile pausing over some of the Tübingen School's *systematicity* of Plato's thought, as well as its openness to various developments. Krämer writes:

The claim to correctness of the unitarian understanding of Plato's philosophy must be settled by making a series of distinctions. It is hardly likely that the dogmatic claim to a definitive correctness of the system was united with the claim that the system was not in need of any revision; this much can be inferred from the dynamic concept of philosophy (love of wisdom taken in its strong sense), as well as from the divergence which was permitted in the Academy, both with respect to Plato and with respect to each other. Nor was the claim made that the system exhausted all the matters of philosophical interest; the project was held to be rather elastic and flexible and was basically open to growth both as a whole and in its parts. The system can therefore be said to involve not a dogmatic but, rather, an heuristic stance which, on some matters, remained merely sketchy, and so an open system but certainly not an

34. See also Szlezák, *Platon*, 329.



antisystem made up of fragments of theory not held together by precise connections. Rather, we must take full account of the totalizing tendency towards a coherent and consistent overall project. This is corroborated by the theory of the Principles, by the elaboration of the general concepts of the relations and functions, and also by the agreement of all the followers about the exact purpose of constructing a system. Therefore, in the evaluation of these questions we must be careful to distinguish two matters: the degree of coherence of a given doctrine and the degree of its cogency.<sup>35</sup>

Similarly Gaiser notes:

In describing this theory as systematic I mean that it was a wholesale amalgamation, a universal synthesis, a synoptic and speculative gathering of all the specific knowledge acquired in all possible realms of reality. This description, however, does not mean it is a rigidly closed complex of propositions, scholastic and established once and for all. We find this sort of living and dynamic system today in the various sciences, which are *open-ended* as they try to represent reality in a way which is always and only hypothetical and dialectical; the same goes for ontology as a whole. The Platonic system . . . therefore does not exclude . . . ceaseless further development: even if its fundamental conception, like the nucleus of crystallization, remained unchanged for a long time, it was always possible to integrate new knowledge into the overall system.<sup>36</sup>

A word or two more may be in order. *System* need not be understood in the Hegelian or Neoidealistic sense, as some sort of *Ableitungssystem*, but rather in the sense that, from the Presocratics onward, was the characteristic mark of Greek philosophical thought: here, the emphasis is on the notion of explanation in the terms of a unified vision focused on certain key concepts which, in turn, derive from some single underlying concept. As we shall see, this does not imply dogmatic closure or systematic and deductive rigidity.

What we mean by Plato's system, or by his thought's having unitariness or a basic unity, can be neatly expressed by Bergson's remark, which, in our view, is pithily provocative, that "a philosopher worthy of the name has only ever said one thing."<sup>37</sup>

## VII. THE SENSE IN WHICH THE UNWRITTEN DOCTRINES CAN PROPERLY BE CALLED ESOTERIC

To conclude our critical and methodological considerations we wish to focus on the question of the so-called esoteric Plato.

Long since, scholars introduced the distinction between an exoteric Plato and an esoteric Plato. By *exoteric* is meant the thought which Plato

35. Krämer, *Platone*, 177ff. [Am. ed. goff.]

36. Gaiser, *La teoria*, 48.

37. M. Bergson, *La pensée et le mouvant* (Paris, 1934), 122ff.

directed through his writings to those who were outside of the School (*exoteric* derives from ἔξω, meaning *outside*). *Esoteric* means the thought which Plato reserved only for the circle of followers within the School (*esoteric* derives from ἔσω, meaning *inside*). But in the past esoteric was understood in a vague way, and it indicated indeterminately any doctrine that remained covered in secrecy, a sort of metaphilosophy for initiates.<sup>38</sup>

Against this way of understanding the esoteric Plato, Hegel seems to us to have got it right once and for all in this passage:

One . . . difficulty would be born from the distinction which is made between the esoteric and the exoteric. Tennemann says: "Plato availed himself of the right, which belongs to every thinker, of communicating only that part of his discoveries which he thought opportune, and of communicating them only to those whom he believe able to receive them. Aristotle also had an esoteric and an exoteric philosophy, but with this difference, that in him the distinction was a matter of form, in Plato of content." Nonsense! It would seem almost as if the philosopher owned his thought as he owns external things: on the contrary a philosophical idea is something totally different, and is what owns the man. As soon as philosophers talk about philosophical matters, they must express themselves according to their ideas and not try to keep them to themselves. Even if they express them in a way alien to some, nevertheless the idea is always contained in what they say, however little content the things they discuss have. To hand over an external object is not much, but to communicate an idea demands skill, and this always remains something esoteric, so that we never have the philosopher's purely exoteric thought.<sup>39</sup>

The Plato of the Unwritten Doctrines is an esoteric Plato, but in a wholly different sense. Gaiser explains: "[C]alling . . . the theory of the principles of Plato esoteric means that Plato aimed to speak about these things only in the restricted circle to his followers, who, after a long and intense mathematico-dialectical education, were capable of correctly understanding them. No artificial secrecy should be inferred of the sort to be encountered in the conclaves of religious cults, or in sectarian communities, or in elite groups."<sup>40</sup> Krämer would rather eliminate so ambiguous a term and substitute for it the German term *innerakademisch* (within the Academy). In English the disputed term can only be rendered with the periphrasis *doctrines professed within the Academy* (unless one wishes to coin the neologism *intra-Academic*). At least it gives the meaning of the term *esoteric* when it is applied to Plato.<sup>41</sup>

38. This notion was spread by W. G. Tennemann, *System der Platonischen Philosophie* (Leipzig, 1792–95), which Hegel himself tried to refute in the passage which we go on to quote.

39. Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, vol. 2.

40. Gaiser, *La teoria*, 48.

41. Right from the start, both Krämer and Gaiser have tried to make clear exactly what is meant by the term *esoteric*. The critics have misunderstood them; in particular, see the two

The term *esoteric* is used commonly to refer to those of Aristotle's writings addressed to the pupils of his school, the Peripatos. So far forth, with all the qualifications entered above, it can be also used for Plato.

Thus, the distinctive sense of the esoteric aspect of Plato's thought is the same as what is picked out by the choice of *oral dialectic* to express the doctrine of the first Principles. The access to the esoteric is identical with the very demanding educational apprenticeship which the *Republic*<sup>42</sup> and the *Laws*<sup>43</sup> pointedly discuss. As we shall see, the *Republic* propounds an apprenticeship which continues until fifty years of age. The supreme Principles which express the ultimate meaning of things are truly accessible to man as a result of a very long apprenticeship, by traversing *the long way of being* without wishing to find easy shortcuts.

Thus the term *esoteric* can take on its hidden connotation and an allusive meaning all its own, but, for all that, one which, as we saw from the passage from Gaiser quoted above, and as Szlezák has spelt out,<sup>44</sup> is to be distinguished from any connection with the restrictions of certain religious cults, with the secrecy of sectarian leagues connected to power, and with the rules of elite groups of various kinds.

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volumes of Tigerstedt, cited above, in Chapter 2, notes 1 and 37, which illustrate the reactions, fully described by Kuhn, of some of the upholders of the traditional paradigm against the proposals of the alternative paradigm.

42. Cf. *Republic* 6 and 7, *passim*.

43. Cf. *Laws* 12 from 960B to the end.

44. For a careful account of the distribution between the esoteric and the secret, see Szlezák, *Platon*, 484–88; for related topics, see 101ff., 212ff., 283ff., and esp. 452–57.



## PART 2

### The Second Voyage and the Two Levels of Plato's Metaphysics

... do you wish me to show you, O Cebes, the second voyage, which is undertaken in order to inquire into this cause (the true cause)?

I should like it very much indeed.

Plato, *Phaedo*, 99C–D



## 5 The Second Voyage as the Decisive Move from the Level of the Physical Inquiries of the Presocratics to the Level of Metaphysical Inquiry into Supersensible Realities (*Phaedo* 96A–102A)

### I. THE GREAT TRANSITION TOWARD A NEW KIND OF RESEARCH DESCRIBED BY PLATO IN THE *PHAEDO* AND ITS IMPORTANCE

One of the most famous and magnificent passages that Plato has left us in his writings is without doubt *Phaedo* 96A–102A.<sup>1</sup> For a long time scholars have recognized it as the first description in European literature of a mental history traced through its various phases, and as the first clear, if tentative, statement of the teleological view or ideal;<sup>2</sup> but it could moreover be said that it is the first rational search for and demonstration of the existence of a transcendent and supersensible reality. In our opinion, it could even be said that this passage is, for reasons to be explained, the Magna Carta of Western metaphysics.

Unfortunately the passage, though very clear in some of its essential ideas, it is rather difficult to understand a its inferential movements and its theoretical connections. It is still more difficult to understand the underlying trends, which interweave in various ways, to trace the whole map of the metaphysical project, in part explicitly, but in part only; together with implicit hints which are repeated appropriately and strongly enough, although with a certain allusiveness.<sup>3</sup> It is, consequently, not difficult to understand the reasons why many interpreters have left many problems unresolved and have not attempted to give an overall interpretation. This is precisely what we wish to provide in this

1. Information can be found on all secondary literature on the *Phaedo* in H. Cherniss, "Plato 1950–1957," *Lustrum* 4 (1959): 127–32; and in L. Brisson, "Platon 1958–1975," *Lustrum* 20 (1977): 274–76 and "Platon 1975–1980," *Lustrum* 25 (1983): 287ff. [In this American edition, we used the translation of R. S. Bluck, *The Phaedo of Plato Translated with Introduction, Notes, and Appendices* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1955; reprint, New York: Liberal Arts Press, n.d.); all references are to the Liberal Arts Press reprint.]

2. W. Goodrich, "On *Phaedo* 96A–102A and on the δεύτερος πλοῦς 99D," *Classical Review* 17 (1903): 381–84 and 18 (1904): 5–11 (the statement cited is on page 381).

3. We speak of the whole map of the metaphysical project because in it Plato develops three fundamental parts of his metaphysics: the theory of Ideas, the theory of Principles, and the doctrine of the Demiurge, as we shall show in detail.

chapter, while later we shall show how the map of the metaphysical project presented in the *Phaedo*, 96A–102A, is perfectly comprehensible and can be reconstructed if viewed from within the new paradigm.<sup>4</sup>

We should say straightaway that the purely or chiefly historical questions, those having to do with the problem of establishing which among the things that Plato puts in his mouth in our passage actually come from Socrates and which are uniquely Platonic, are at this point secondary to our purposes. We may recall, nevertheless, that the various responses to such questions can be boiled down to the following three: (1) what Plato put in Socrates' mouth wholly reflects Socrates' experience, at least in its central drive; (2) what Plato put in Socrates' mouth in reality reflects the experience of Plato himself; and (3) Plato presents some elements which come from Socrates' experience, but harmonizes them with elements from his own experience. This third response is the most common in the secondary literature. In any case, what is important for our present concerns is to understand the illustrative significance which Plato wishes to give to his narrative by showing through concrete exemplification the nature of the ideal history or ideal journey which the human mind must enact in the search for truth.

In describing and explaining this ideal journey, Plato distinguishes two essential phases: the physical and the metaphysical; the first follows the ways trodden by the Naturalist philosophers; the second follows a new way which he calls, with an image which has become distinctive, the *Second Voyage*. (A) The first phase (the First Voyage) proceeds in two stages: (a) that inspired by the doctrines of the Physicists in general, and (b) that inspired by Anaxagoras, who gives the highest expression of the naturalistic outlook. With the Second Voyage the second phase (B) begins which in its turn is in two steps: (a) the theory of Ideas and (b) the theory of supreme and ultimate Principles.

## II. THE FIRST ENCOUNTER WITH THE PHYSICISTS AND THE DISCOVERY OF THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF EXPLAINING THE CAUSES OF GENERATION AND CORRUPTION WITH THEIR METHODS<sup>5</sup>

The most important metaphysical questions and the possibility of their solution are connected with the great problem of the generation and corruption of things, and of the being of things, and in particular with the specification of the cause underlying them. The basic problem, hence, is the following: Why are things generated, why are they corrupt-

4. Here we treat specifically only two parts, the theory of Ideas and the theory of Principles; we shall consider the Demiurge in our Part 4.

5. *Phaedo* 95E–97B.



ed, why do they exist? Plato says (through Socrates) that he began as a youth from these fundamental problems trying to acquire wisdom about the inquiry into nature pursued by the first philosophers,<sup>6</sup> by frequently examining at length the answers that these philosophers had given to such questions.

In this kind of inquiry, the answers to these questions are purely physical. For example, life is generated by processes produced by the hot and the cold; similarly, thought is produced from blood (as Empedocles believed), or from air (as was believed by Anaximenes and Diogenes of Apollonia), or from fire (as Heraclitus believed), or by the brain understood as a physical organ (as Alcmaeon believed). All the answers the Physicists gave to the various problems about corruption and, in general, about the various phenomena of heaven and earth, are of the same kind.

But, according to Plato, repeated examination of the kinds of answers given to these problems produces the following result. What was first believed to be clearly known is obscured and obstructed by such inquiries. With this method, commonly held opinions not only do not grow but become confused.

On this point, Plato shows a truly extraordinary subtlety of analysis. In fact, he clearly tells us that common or prephilosophical opinions (both his own and those of others),<sup>7</sup> have in general a physical and naturalistic character which the first philosophers simply brought out on the level of theory and carried over to methodology. But here is the most interesting point: merely turning common opinions into a theory precipitates a crisis for them. We might explain Plato's thought in this way: the philosophers of Nature made ever clearer the inconsistency of the naturalistic foundation of common opinions.

Here are some examples. It is commonly believed that a man grows because he eats and drinks. Physical research explains that from bread comes flesh which is joined to flesh, bones to bones, and the other parts which are joined to other parts of the body which have the same nature. In this way, the bulk of the body increases from small to large. But this bringing together and addition of parts to parts (each of which is small) does not explain but instead obscures the understanding of the cause of becoming large.<sup>8</sup>

It is said, for example, that a man (or a horse) placed next to a small one is larger by a head (which is, however, a small thing). Or it is said that ten compared with eight is larger, because it is more by two (which

6. *Ibid.*, 96A8.

7. *Ibid.*, C4.

8. *Ibid.*, C-D.

is, however, less); or that two cubits are more than one cubit, because it is more by a half (which is, however, smaller). Evidently, the cause of being greater and larger is not explained, but is actually obscured.<sup>9</sup>

Likewise, on the level of the Physicists' inquiries, it is not possible to explain either the two or the one. In fact, it is said that by adding one unit to another unit, that is, by bringing them together and adding one to the other, two are produced; or it is also said that by dividing a unit in half, two are obtained. But these procedures of addition (bringing together and adding) and division (removing and separating) are each opposed to the other; therefore, as such, they cannot be the cause of the same effect. Still less is it possible, with these physico-mechanical procedures, to explain how one is generated, and in particular for what reason a thing precisely becomes or is one; and consequently, it is not possible to explain the cause of the generation, of the corruption, and of the being of things.<sup>10</sup>

Thus, Plato concentrates his first critical analysis of the Naturalists on the notion of two and one, and he concludes by focusing his attention on one:

Nor can I now persuade myself that I understand how it is that things become one, nor, in short, why anything else comes or ceases or continues to be, according to this method of inquiry. So I reject it altogether, and muddle out a haphazard method of my own.<sup>11</sup>

Later, we shall give an account of the doctrines to which Plato is clearly alluding in this passage. For now, it is sufficient to point out that the large and small and especially the two and one of which Plato frequently speaks are not limited to geometry or mathematics, but have an ontological and metaphysical sense connected to the problem of the generation of the one (ἓν) and so, by way of a skillful maneuvering of the linguistic expression for one (ἐνὶ λόγῳ), to the great issue of the cause of the generation and corruption of things.<sup>12</sup>

We may recall, however, how this problem is solved by the Unwritten Doctrines. How, then, is the one generated, that is, why does a thing exist and become one? Alexander of Aphrodisias, drawing on the discussion of Aristotle's treatise *On the Good*, which refers to the oral doctrines of Plato, has preserved the exact answer: "[Each] thing in fact is one, insofar as it is something definite and determinate."<sup>13</sup>

9. Ibid., D-E.

10. See *Phaedo* 96E-97B.

11. Ibid., 97B3-7 (trans. H. Treddennick, which we follow unless otherwise noted).

12. Ibid., 4-5 (quoted above).

13. Alexander of Aphrodisias, *In Arist. Metaph.* 56.30ff. Hayduck.

As we shall see, this is exactly the activity discharged by the first Principle, that is, by the absolute One, which delimits and determines the indefinite Dyad. And Plato's insistence on the one and on the two, which in our passage of the *Phaedo* cannot but allude to this doctrine of the Principles, can be understood only in relation to it.

### III. THE ENCOUNTER WITH ANAXAGORAS: THE THEORY OF THE MIND IS VITIATED BY THE METHOD OF INQUIRY OF THE PHYSICISTS<sup>14</sup>

Anaxagoras was right to affirm that Mind is the cause of everything, but he failed to justify or explain this statement because he was obstructed by the Naturalists' method of inquiry.

Here are the very important reasons adduced by Plato in this regard.

To affirm that Mind orders and causes all things is to affirm that it disposes all things in the best possible fashion. This means that Mind and the Good are essentially connected, and that the first cannot be spoken about without invoking the second. To posit the Mind as a cause implies ipso facto to posit the Best (the Good) as a condition for the generation and the corruption, and for the being of things. Plato goes beyond these allusions, and explains that those who embrace this perspective must know, as well as the perfect and the best, also the worst, because knowledge of the best and the worst is one. And this is true for all phenomena quite generally. This is a strong allusion to the polarity of the first and supreme Principles which we shall discuss later.

Believing in the ordering Mind, Anaxagoras should have explained its operation in terms of the best; and in those terms, he should have explained the acting, undergoing, and being of the earth, the sun, the moon, and the stars, their movements, and the relations of those movements, and, in sum, how the various phenomena are structured by the best, and hence with a precise understanding of the best and the worst.

It never entered my head that a man who asserted that the ordering of things is due to Mind [Intelligence] would offer any other explanation for them that it is best for them to be as they are. I thought by assigning a cause to each phenomenon separately and to the universe as a whole he would make perfectly clear what is best for each and what is the universal good. I would not have parted from my hopes for a great sum of money. I lost no time in procuring the books, and began to read them as quickly as I possibly could, so that I might know as soon as possible about the best and the worst.<sup>15</sup>

But Anaxagoras did not do this. He introduced Mind, but did not apply it in the way shown above; he continued to assign the role of cause

14. See *Phaedo* 97C–99D.

15. *Ibid.*, 98A6–B6 [with minor changes].

to the physical elements (air, aither, water, etc.) instead of to the best. But even if these physical elements are necessary to produce the constitution of the phenomena, they are not the true cause and they must not be confused with it.

This is a matter to which we shall return; here we limit ourselves to recalling Plato's quite famous example. The confusion in question corresponds exactly to the confusion of those who maintained that Socrates does all the things he does as a result of Mind, but then wanted to offer the cause of why he was and remained in prison by referring to his organs of local motion, to his bones, to his sinews, and so on, and not to the true cause which was his choice of the just and the best as a result of Mind. Clearly if Socrates did not have physical organs he could not do the things that he wished to do; nevertheless, he acts by means of his organs, but not as a result of his organs. The true or real cause ( $\tau\acute{o}$  ἀρτίον τῷ ὄντι), is his Mind which operates in accordance with the best.

Therefore, Mind and the physical elements are not sufficient for joining things or for holding them together. So we need another level on which to understand the true cause ( $\tau\acute{o}$  ἀρτίον τῷ ὄντι), that is, the that to which Mind refers.

And this is the level of the Intelligible, which can only be arrived at by means of a method quite other than that of the Physicists, of which Plato speaks at the end of the last quoted passage and which he picks out with the great metaphor of the Second Voyage, which is the most outstanding emblem of Plato's philosophizing:

But to say that it is because of them [to join mind with the physical elements and not with the best] that I do what I am doing, and not through choice of what is best—although my actions are controlled by mind—would be a very lax and inaccurate form of expression. Fancy being unable to distinguish between the cause of a thing and the condition without which it could not be a cause! It is this latter, as it seems to me, that most people, groping in the dark, call a cause—attaching to it a name to which it has no right. That is why one person surrounds the earth with a vortex, and so keeps it in place by means of the heavens, and another props it up on a pedestal of air, as though it were a wide platter. As for a power which keeps things disposed at any given moment, they neither look for it nor believe that it has any supernatural force. They imagine that they will someday find a more mighty and immortal and all-sustaining Atlas, and they do not think that anything is really bound and held together by goodness or moral obligation. For my part, I should be delighted to learn about the workings of such a cause from anyone, but since I have been denied knowledge of it, and have been unable either to discover it myself or learn about from another. Do you wish me to show you, O Cebes, the second voyage which is undertaken in order to inquire into this cause (the true cause)?

—I should like it very much indeed.<sup>16</sup>

16. *Phaedo* 99B22–D3.

IV. THE GREAT METAPHOR OF THE SECOND VOYAGE AS SYMBOL OF THE ASCENT TO THE SUPERSENSIBLE AND ITS IMPORTANCE IN THE HISTORY OF WESTERN THOUGHT<sup>17</sup>

The Second Voyage is a nautical metaphor, and its most obvious meaning seems to be that given by Eustachius, who, referring to Pausanias, explains that “second voyage is a term for the voyage plied by one who, left without wind, uses his oars.”<sup>18</sup> And this explanation, as scholars have long since pointed out, is confirmed also by Cicero, who contrasts the method of *pandere vela orationis* [spreading the sails of eloquence] to going on using the *dialecticorum remis* [oars of dialectic].<sup>19</sup> The First Voyage is made with the wind in the sails and corresponds to the Naturalists’ method; the Second Voyage is plied using the oars, and so is much more tiring and laborious: it corresponds to a new kind of method which leads to the conquest of the realm of the supersensible.

The sails of the Physicists were the senses and sensations; the oars of the Second Voyage are reasoning and hypotheses on which the new method is based.

Here is the passage in which Plato introduces the notion:

Well . . . said Socrates, when I was worn out with my physical investigations, it occurred to me that I must guard against the same sort of risk which people run when they watch and study an eclipse of the sun; they really do sometimes injure their eyes, unless they study its reflection in water or some other medium. I conceived of something like this happening to myself, and I was afraid that by observing objects with my eyes and trying to comprehend them with each of my other senses I might blind my soul altogether. So I decided that I must have recourse to theories, and use them in trying to discover the truth of things. Perhaps my illustration is not quite apt, because I do not at all admit that an inquiry by means of theory employs “images” any more than one which confines itself to facts. But . . . I started off in this way, and in every case I first lay down the theory which I judge to be the soundest, and then whatever seems to agree with it—with regard either to causes or to anything else—I assume to be true, and whatever does not I assume not to be true.<sup>20</sup>

The images Plato employs are very difficult and call for a great deal of attention to be properly understood.

The eclipse of the sun indicates sensible realities. Some pages earlier than this,<sup>21</sup> Plato explains that the sensible realities are inadequate and inferior to other realities, to which they are similar but in a defective way. And this is precisely symbolized by the eclipsed sun. Evidently, the

17. Ibid., 99D4–100A7.

18. Eustachius, *In Odysseis*, 1453.20.

19. Cicero, *Tusc. disp.* 4.5; *LCL* 337.

20. *Phaedo* 99D4–100A7.

21. Ibid., 74Aff.

sun not eclipsed and considered in itself would symbolize these other nonsensible realities, about which Plato will speak again.<sup>22</sup>

The eyes are to be understood not only literally, but as symbols of all the senses, as Plato himself explicitly says.

The images reflected in water, by means of which the eclipsed sun is grasped, indicate reasoning and hypotheses which are more secure than sensations.

And this is the most delicate point to understand, so much so that Plato himself, speaking of the reflected image in water, adds "or some other medium"<sup>23</sup> to indicate a passage to the vision of the eclipsed sun, which is more secure than the senses. Furthermore, he explains that the illustration could be misleading, insofar as it could make us believe that just as the reflection in the water catches an image of the eclipsed sun, so it is not the senses but reasoning, symbolized by the reflection in water, that catches images of the real. To be properly understood, the exemplification seems to have to be taken in the opposite sense from what at first glance it would seem to suggest, as Plato himself indicates:<sup>24</sup> he who sees things in the *logoi* sees them as they really are, while he who sees them directly with the senses sees them by means of their images, since the sensible things are copies of the intelligibles.

The blinding of the soul, brought about by looking directly at the eclipsed sun, symbolizes, as Plato clearly says,<sup>25</sup> the deceptive effect that the senses produce for the understanding. For they do not clarify but instead obscure things, as he has already pointed out using the same terminology.<sup>26</sup>

Thus, Plato's message is clear: the Naturalists' method based on the senses does not clarify but obscures understanding; the new type of method, therefore, must be based on *logoi*, and by means of them it must try to grasp the truth of things:

But I should like to express my meaning more clearly, because at present I don't think that you understand.

No, indeed I don't, said Cebes, not a bit.

Well what I mean is this, and there is nothing new about it. I have always said it; in fact I have never stopped saying it, especially in the earlier part of this discussion. As I am going to try to explain to you the theory of causation which I have worked out myself, I propose to make a fresh start from those principles of mine which you know so well—that is, I am assuming the existence of absolute beauty and goodness and magnitude and all the rest of them. . . .

22. Ibid., 103E ff.

23. Ibid., 99E1 (consult the text referred to in n. 20).

24. Ibid., 6-100A3 (consult the text referred to in n. 20).

25. Ibid., E1 ff.

26. Ibid., 66A-E, esp. 96C5.

Then consider the next step, and see whether you share my opinion. It seems to me that whatever else is beautiful apart from absolute beauty is beautiful because it partakes of that absolute beauty, and for no other reason. Do you accept this kind of causality?

Yes, I do.

Well, now, that is as far as my mind goes; I cannot understand these other ingenious theories of causation. If someone tells me that the reason why a given object is beautiful is that it has a gorgeous color or shape or any other such attribute, I disregard all these other explanations—I find them confusing—and I cling simply and straightforwardly and no doubt foolishly to the explanation that the one thing that makes that object beautiful is the presence in it or association with it, in whatever way the relation comes about, of absolute beauty. I do not go so far as to insist upon the precise details—only upon the fact that it is by beauty that beautiful things are beautiful. This, I feel, is the safest answer for me or for anyone else to give, and I believe that while I hold fast to this I cannot fall; it is safe for me or for anyone else to answer that it is by beauty that beautiful things are beautiful. Don't you agree?

Yes, I do.

Then it is by largeness that large things are large and larger things larger, and by smallness that smaller things are smaller?

Yes.

So you too, like myself, would refuse to accept the statement that one man is taller than another "by a head," and that the shorter man is shorter by the same. You would protest that the only view which you yourself can hold is that whatever is taller than something else is so simply by tallness—that is, because of tallness—and that what is shorter is so simply by shortness, that is, because of shortness. You would be afraid . . . that if you said that one man is taller than another by a head, you would be faced by a logical objection—first that the taller should be taller and the shorter by the same thing, and secondly that the taller person should be taller by a head, which is a short thing, and that it is unnatural that a man should be made tall by something short. Isn't that so?

Cebes laughed and said, Yes, it is.

Then you would be afraid to say that ten is more than eight "by two," or that two is the cause of its excess over eight, instead of saying that it is more than eight by, or because of, being a larger number, and you would be afraid to say that a length of two feet is greater than one foot by a half, instead of saying that it is greater by its larger size—because there is the same danger here too?

Quite so.

Suppose next that we add one to one. You would surely avoid saying that the cause of our getting two is the addition, or in the case of the divided unit, the division. You would loudly proclaim that you know of no other way in which any given object can come into being except by participation in the reality peculiar to its appropriate universal, and that in the cases which I have mentioned you recognize no other cause for the coming into being of two than participation in duality, and that whatever is to become two must participate in this, and whatever is to become one must participate in unity. You would dismiss these divisions and additions and other such niceties, leaving them for persons wiser than yourself to use in their explanations, while you, being nervous of your own shadow . . . and of your inexperience, would hold fast to the security of your hypothesis and make your answers accordingly.<sup>27</sup>

27. Cf. *Phaedo* 100A7–101D2.

The Second Voyage, then, has led Plato to recognize the existence of two levels of being: one phenomenal and visible, and the other metaphenomenal, graspable only with the *logoi* and hence purely intelligible, as we shall see later.<sup>28</sup> We can, however, summarize the theoretical core of the Second Voyage as follows: the passage from the sensible to the supersensible, the introduction of a nonphysical and, hence, metaphysical cause, is necessary to explain the sensible and to free it from the contradictions in which it is involved if left to itself.

Thus, Plato's Second Voyage is an achievement which signals the most important stage in the history of metaphysics. The whole of Western thought, indeed, will be deeply marked by this distinction, both insofar as it has been accepted (as is obvious), and also insofar as it has been rejected. In the later case, argument must be given to justify the refusal of the distinction; and the whole of Western thought continues to be marked by the give-and-take of such arguments.

After, and only after, the Platonic Second Voyage can we speak about the corporeal and the incorporeal, the sensible and the supersensible, the empirical and the metaempirical, the physical and the superphysical. And it is in the light of these categories (and only in their light) that the earlier Naturalists can be seen to be materialists, and that nature and the cosmos no longer make up the totality of the things that are, but only the totality of things that appear. Philosophy has gained the intelligible world, the realm of the realities which are not sensibles but only knowables. Against all his predecessors and many contemporaries, Plato did not relent throughout his life from expressing this fundamental and truly revolutionary discovery: there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in your (physical) philosophy.

#### V. THE TWO STAGES OF THE SECOND VOYAGE: THE THEORY OF IDEAS AND PLATO'S ALLUSIONS TO THE THEORY OF THE PRINCIPLES<sup>29</sup>

In the passage presented above, Plato says clearly that the things which bring the Second Voyage to an end are the things which he has continued to repeat always, on other occasions, as well as in the preceding reasoning of the *Phaedo*, and so are things about which he has spoken many times.<sup>30</sup> These things concern the whole realm of the supersensible. In the first place, we have the theory of Ideas, and, beyond them, the theory of the first and highest Principles. As is well known, Plato discusses the theory of the Ideas in many places other than in our

28. See Chapter 6, section II, 114-17.

29. *Phaedo* 100B-102A.

30. *Ibid.*, 100B1-3; the passages of the *Phaedo* referred to are 65Dff. and 78Cff.



text and in the rest of the *Phaedo*. But he makes only hints and references to the theory of the Principles in his writings, although in the passage we are looking at these references are very clear, repeated, and emphatic, as we find in few other dialogues. The references to the writings and the oral discussions, and in particular to the latter, are very obvious, as we shall show in detail in the light of the new paradigm proposed by the Tübingen School, which on this point is very fruitful.

Following the plan traced in the *Phaedo*, the Second Voyage is in two stages: in the first, it achieves the realm of the Ideas; in the second, it achieves the realm of the Principles which is the highest level.

Before discussing in detail the content of these doctrines, we wish to clarify Plato's repeated allusions to the Unwritten Doctrines.

The completion of the Second Voyage is the discovery of a new type of cause consisting in purely intelligible realities. What follows from the postulation of the existence of these realities is the explanation of all things in terms of them, and the denial that the physical and sensible can be counted as a true cause, and hence the demotion of the sensible to the status of a means or instrument by which the true cause acts.

Consequently, beautiful things would be explained not by physical elements (color, shape, etc.), but in terms of the beautiful-in-itself. Large things and small things would be explained not by comparisons of size, but in terms of the large-in-itself and the small-in-itself. Ten would be explained as greater than eight not by two, but by plurality; and the ways in which two and one are obtained would be explained not by the physical operations of division and addition, but by participation in Duality and Unity, as we saw above.

The first stage of the Second Voyage consists in taking as a basis the most solid hypothesis, which is that intelligible realities are true causes, and in taking as true the things that agree with this hypothesis and as false the things that do not (and so, in rejecting all those physical realities which have mistakenly been thought to be true causes).

What we have called the first stage of the Second Voyage ends with a definite allusion to the One in the new dimension<sup>31</sup> (just as the first stage of the First Voyage in the wake of the Naturalists ended with a reference to the One, which is not and cannot be explained within that inquiry).<sup>32</sup> This is a repeated gesture toward what we shall see is the focal point of the Unwritten Doctrines.

But Plato makes a much clearer reference to the protology in the discussion which immediately follows the passage above. What must be done if someone attacks the hypothesis on which the theory of Ideas

31. *Ibid.*, 101C.

32. *Ibid.*, 97B.

rests? Before answering, all the consequences that derive from the hypothesis must be examined, to discover whether they are consistent or not. And in order to justify the hypothesis, it is necessary to look for a still higher hypothesis, and we must proceed in this way until we have reached a self-sufficient hypothesis, one that has no need of any further hypothesis. Here is the text:

If anyone should fasten upon the hypothesis itself, you would disregard him and refuse to answer until you could consider whether its consequences were mutually consistent or not. And when you had to substantiate the hypothesis itself, you would proceed in the same way, assuming whatever more ultimate hypothesis commended itself most to you, until you reached one which was satisfactory.<sup>33</sup>

The indirect tradition states that, above the Ideas, Plato placed the first and highest Principles. Plato himself, in the passage which immediately follows what we have just quoted, uses the very word Principle (*αρχή*), although only by allusion and within the constraints of his choice not to put this doctrine in writing; he thus gives the discussion a very general sense, but nevertheless a suggestive one. Moreover, the text we are discussing speaks unreservedly about the theory of Ideas, without using the term (which occurs only further on); but to allude to the doctrine of the Principles, it uses the word *arche* (*αρχή*).

You would not mix the two things together by discussing both the principle and its consequences, like one of these destructive critics—that is, if you wanted to discover any part of the truth. They presumably have no concern or care whatever for such an object, because their cleverness enables them to muddle everything up without disturbing their own self-complacency, but you, I imagine, if you are a philosopher, will follow the course which I describe.<sup>34</sup>

And if that were not enough, the entire argumentative procedure of the dialogue, which is based on the postulation of the Ideas, ends by impressively pointing out the following:

As a matter of fact, said Simmias, I have no doubts myself either now, in view of what you have just been saying. All the same, the subject is so vast, and I have such a poor opinion of our weak human nature, that I can't help still feeling some misgivings.

Quite right, Simmias, said Socrates . . . even if you find our original hypotheses convincing, they still need more accurate consideration. If you and your friends examine them closely enough, I believe that you will arrive at the truth of the matter, insofar as it is possible for the human mind to attain it, and if you are sure that you have done this, you will not need to inquire further.<sup>35</sup>

33. *Ibid.*, 101D3–E1.

34. *Ibid.*, E1–102A1.

35. *Ibid.*, 107A8–B10.

Evidently only the highest Principles can constitute what, once achieved, does not require a search for anything higher.

Scholars have been very embarrassed by these passages. Many have seen a reference to the *Republic*, where Plato deploys a fuller version of the same reasoning and points to the pinnacle of metaphysics as reaching the unhypothetical or unconditioned.<sup>36</sup> But since, in the *Republic*, Plato also does not present the explicit determination and definition of this unconditioned, it has been believed that we must see in all this the gesture at a purely unrealizable ideal, or at least at one not realized by him.

It is here that the new paradigm shows one of its greatest powers in solving long-standing puzzles. In the last three passages cited Plato indicates just what level it is that, because of his pedagogical and moral choice, he wanted to set aside for oral discussions; for these are the things of greatest value which the philosopher, as such, does not put into writing. The last but one of the quoted passages, after speaking of the Principle and of how it is to be discussed, ends with an elucidation of the term *philosopher*, saying very revealingly: "But you, I imagine, if you are a philosopher, will follow the course which I describe."<sup>37</sup>

In short, the necessity of finding hypotheses which are higher than those that bring us to the vision of the theory of Ideas, and which are, therefore, the last stage of metaphysical discourse, is a necessity affirmed immediately after Plato has named the One.<sup>38</sup> Later he concludes with the word *Principle*,<sup>39</sup> and seals it with the term *philosophy*.<sup>40</sup>

Beyond doubt, in the very passage of the *Phaedo* in which Plato introduces the theory of Ideas most systematically, he tells us that they are not the first and highest causes. Sextus Empiricus backs up what we find in the *Phaedo*:

Let us take, for example, how the Ideas, which for Plato are incorporeal, are prior to bodies and how everything which comes to be comes to be in relation to them. All the same, they are not the first principles of things.<sup>41</sup>

We can conclude that the Unwritten Doctrines are already present and employed at the core of the *Phaedo* and that today Plato must be read in accordance with them if we wish to give his writings the meaning that he aimed to give to them.

36. See Chapter 11, section VIII, 218–20.

37. *Phaedo* 101E1–102A1.

38. *Ibid.*, 101C6–7.

39. *Ibid.*, E1.

40. *Ibid.*, D6; consult above, n. 34, at the end.

41. Sextus Empiricus, *Contra Mathematicos* X 258.



## 6 The Achievements of the First Stage of the Second Voyage: The Ideas, Their Essential Properties, and the Protological Problems They Pose

### I. THE ROLE AND CHARACTER OF THE THEORY OF IDEAS

Of all Plato's speculative conceptions, the Ideas have received the greatest attention, have undergone the largest number of reworkings, and have animated the central themes of the greatest philosophers.<sup>1</sup>

Aristotle began with the presentation of his interpretation of Plato's theory of Ideas as a reification or hypostatization of abstract concepts, in conjunction with a powerful theoretical criticism, which claimed that it was necessary to treat them as immanent, and represented them as form-in-matter. Aristotle's view has been very successful and continues to be held even today, at least implicitly.

Then came the Middle Platonists, who codified the interpretation of the Ideas as thoughts in the divine mind; they also tried to overcome the Aristotelian criticism by distinguishing between the transcendent Ideas (understood as divine thoughts, "first intelligibles") and the immanent forms dependent on them ("second intelligibles").

The Neoplatonists deepened and developed this tendency, placing the Ideas in the realm of the hypostasis of *Nous* and developing some of the implications that this involved.

The Fathers of the Church and the Scholastics affirmed the conception of the Ideas, understood as divine thoughts, developing some aspects of them in connection with the theory of creation, and following up with various reflections of the way which Philo of Alexandria had already opened.

There is also the interesting connection which medieval thinkers made between the Platonic notion of Ideas and the knotty question of universals. They identified the Platonic position with an "exaggerated realism" which gives an ontological importance to universals and hence interprets the Platonic Ideas along the same lines as did Aristotle.

1. For the modern secondary literature on the theory of Ideas, see the complete information furnished by H. Cherniss, *Lustrum* (1959): 261-308 and *Lustrum* (1960): 323-40; and by Brisson, *Lustrum* (1977): 259-61 and *Lustrum* (1983): 276ff.

With the rationalists and the empiricists of the modern period the Ideas come to be identified with concepts or with the contents of the human mind; this is the meaning that the term "Idea" has in common usage (and which is still dominant at all levels).

With Kant, the Ideas become the three forms of reason, and their "regulative" function is emphasized in a way which is now well known.

The doctrine of the Ideas is given an impressive turn by the new dialectic of Hegel, who does not hesitate to write that Plato's *true speculative grandeur* lies in the formulation of the doctrine of the Ideas "thanks to which he marks a milestone in the history of philosophy and hence in general in universal history."<sup>2</sup>

The Neo-Kantians and the School of Marburg gave new life to the doctrine, understanding the Ideas as laws and as structural methods of thought.

The theory of Ideas was seriously weakened by the positivists, and some even went so far as to identify them with the primitive conception of the "animists."

The situation is more complex in contemporary philosophy, which faces this matter in the light of some significant results of philological Plato studies and with a clear distinction between an historical-philosophical reading and an historical reading of Plato. Nevertheless, the influence of their theoretical presuppositions in the interpretation of Plato's theory of Ideas is very strong; in particular, among the most important influences those exercised by the philosophy of value, by phenomenology, by existentialist ontology, and by analytic philosophy.

It could be said that a history of the interpretation of the theory of Ideas would include most of the core of the history of Western philosophy. Nevertheless, we ought also to say that a detailed exposition of this complex theme would clarify the development of Platonism, but it would not add to the better understanding of Plato himself, or it would add only indirectly to such an understanding as regards his significance and theoretical fruitfulness, that is, in a *Wirkungsgeschichte*—a history of the effects his works have had on others.

The kaleidoscopic presentations Plato gives of the Ideas across many dialogues interweave in heterogeneous ways concepts and images, *logos* and myth, making things difficult for his readers. Likewise the purely theoretical demonstrations in various dialogues reveal a variety and nimbleness of thought which make them difficult to interpret. Nevertheless, the fact remains that it is a sheer illusion to believe that the various reworkings of the doctrine we have reviewed can help to pro-

2. G. Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*.

vide a historically well-founded resolution of the problems raised by the Ideas, which in any case must be explained and resolved if we are to read and understand Plato.

On the other hand, we claim that the new interpretive paradigm of the Tübingen School recovers just such an historical foundation, and so allows us to solve a set of difficulties which flow from this doctrine.

But first we must set aside a very widespread but ungrounded prejudice. Krämer and Gaiser have been little concerned with the theory of Ideas, because they have concentrated all their energies on the theory of the Principles. In this way, they have radically transformed the fundamental premises of the traditional paradigm, which is focused on the theory of Ideas.

There are three sources of controversy concerning the relations between the theory of the Ideas and the theory of the Principles. On each of them we take the side of the Tübingen School against the traditional paradigm in what follows.

No one denies that the theory of Ideas is one of the fundamental notions in Plato's writings. But we are concerned with a basis whose support is to be found outside the writings, or, at least, which can only be glimpsed in part in the writings. The "self-testimonies" of the *Phaedrus* and the *Seventh Letter* have fully shown this much. And with all the clarity that we could wish from Plato (given his reservations about writings) we have also seen it in the metaphysical map of the *Phaedo*: the theory of Ideas corresponds to the first stage of the Second Voyage, while the theory of Principles is the second and final stage. The Ideas are arrived at by the hypotheses which Plato introduces to overcome the position of the Physicists. However, the theory of Ideas cannot be adequately defended solely with the resources of that theory itself (that is, by analyzing only the consequences which follow from it). Rather, we must rise to higher hypotheses until we reach the self-sufficient hypothesis (which is the hypothesis of the "first and highest Principles").

In addition, we shall see that this will be fully confirmed not only in the *Republic*,<sup>3</sup> but also in the *Parmenides*, which follows this schema: (a) it first sets out the criticisms of the theory of Ideas and then (b) it presents one of the clearest meeting points with the theory of Principles, from which alone the ultimate response can be derived.<sup>4</sup> Again, the *Philebus* will provide a further confirmation.<sup>5</sup> And all this is consistent with the proposals contained in Plato's Unwritten Doctrines.<sup>6</sup>

3. *Republic* 6.510A–511C.

4. See Chapter 12.

5. See Chapters 14 and 17.

6. See Chapter 7 and following.

All this not only does not diminish the theory of Ideas, as some have thought, but, on the contrary, strengthens it by providing all the objective supports that are missing from the writings, gathering these supports from genuine historical sources and not from theoretical systems which are foreign to Plato.

The connection of the theory of Ideas with the theory of the Principles recasts all the interpretations which—to solve the many problems raised by the theory of Ideas—use the presumed evolution of Platonic thought as an interpretive tool, without achieving any reliable results about the fundamental problems.

In connection with the different themes Plato tackles, we shall see that, at least from the *Phaedo* and the *Republic* on, although the theory of Ideas is handled time and again from different perspectives, according to the nature of the themes under discussion, Plato increasingly makes allusions to the Unwritten Doctrines and frequent reference to the doctrine of the Principles.<sup>7</sup>

Thus in the *Republic*, where Plato's theme in the central books is the doctrine of the Good (that is, that doctrine which can be understood as the principal manifestation and expression of the first Principle), we find the most important connections and references to the theory of Principles (for example, the great claim that the Principle from which are derived all the Ideas, which in their totality are being par excellence, is itself beyond-being); indeed, the fact that the central theme of the *Republic* is the Good explains these strong allusions to the basic theme of the Unwritten Doctrines.<sup>8</sup> In the *Parmenides*, Plato does not criticize his own doctrine of Ideas, but sets out some of the principal criticisms offered by those who contested it. He then immediately afterward presents a perspective that leads to the higher hypothesis, which in turn leads to the Principles, in accordance with the schema explicitly presented in the *Phaedo*, as discussed above.<sup>9</sup> The *Sophist* changes perspective because the problem discussed in that dialogue calls for reference only to some great Ideas and not to all of them, and hence not to the first Principles.<sup>10</sup> The *Statesman*<sup>11</sup> tackles deep axiological issues, and presents a set of references to the Unwritten Doctrines; and the *Philebus*, by connecting axiological and ontological themes, also offers some of the most prominent protological connections between the Ideas and the Principles which Plato presented in his writings.<sup>12</sup>

7. See Chapter 11 and following.

8. See Chapter 11, *passim*.

9. See Chapter 5, above, and Chapter 12, below.

10. See Chapter 13, section I, 237–49.

11. See Chapter 13, section II, 249–53.

12. See Chapters 14 and 17.



In the new paradigm, the theory of Ideas reveals a coherence far superior to what we find if we restrict ourselves to the traditional paradigm and if Plato's writings continue to be regarded as self-sufficient.

We are in perfect agreement with Krämer and Gaiser as to the presence and influence of the theory of the Principles already in the dialogues of the middle period.

Nevertheless, we leave it as an open question whether Plato began from the theory of Ideas or from the theory of Principles. Personally, we would be more inclined to think (as a conjecture) that Plato began from the theory of Ideas; but to reach any certainty on this point, it would be necessary to conduct a fundamental and detailed reexamination of all the dialogues of Plato's youth, which it is not the aim of the present work to provide. We may, however, point out that, once one accepts the preceding point, this is not a problem which affects the substance of the paradigm but a problem which, in Kuhn's terms, uncovers a big puzzle internal to the paradigm itself, and which therefore is not a problem of primary importance for our present purposes.

So, it is necessary to point out that if, from the *Phaedo* and the *Republic* on, the presence of and allusions to the theory of Principles are very noticeable, then we can also find hints in dialogues like the *Charmides*,<sup>13</sup> the *Gorgias*,<sup>14</sup> and the *Meno*<sup>15</sup> which can be read in the same way. Not to mention that *Protagoras*<sup>16</sup> refers to an axiological metric which only the relatively late *Statesman* discusses and which in turn refers for the problem's ultimate answer to doctrines which fall outside the dialogues, and thus the dialogue makes clear reference to the Unwritten Doctrines.<sup>17</sup>

In the coming pages, we shall proceed as follows: first, we shall reconstruct the most important features of the Ideas, basing our account on Plato's texts, as we have done hitherto;<sup>18</sup> then we shall go on to the theory of the Principles;<sup>19</sup> finally, we shall show the considerable advantages which accrue from the Unwritten Doctrines about the first Principles for the understanding of the central claims of the great dialogues, and the way that the face of Platonic metaphysics takes on a much plainer and clearer complexion.<sup>20</sup>

13. *Charmides* 169A–D.

14. Cf. Krämer, *Arete*, 57ff.

15. Cf. Gaiser, *Platons Menon*, passim.

16. *Protagoras* 357B.

17. Cf. *Statesman* 262C, 263B, 284D.

18. Of course, we shall concentrate on Plato's texts, without entering into polemical discussions, for the reasons already given in the *Preface*.

19. In handling this matter we shall concentrate on the texts of the indirect tradition, as well as mobilizing the achievements of the Tübingen School, likewise not entering into polemical discussions with adversaries.

20. See also all the Chapters from 11 to 21.

To begin with, we wish to consider the essential features and nature of the Ideas to dispel the doubts of those who fear that the new paradigm, if it does not eliminate the Ideas, at the very least degrades and impoverishes them in favor of the Principles, as well as the doubts of those who claim that the transcendence of the Ideas is inconsistent with the *deductive* system of the theory of the Principles.

The basic characteristics of the Ideas can be summed up under the six following points which are referred to repeatedly in many writings, and are points of reference which cannot be given up:

1. Intelligibility (an Idea is par excellence the object of the mind or intellect and is graspable only by it);
2. Incorporeality (an Idea belongs to a realm totally different from the sensible corporeal world);
3. Being in the full sense (Ideas are the beings that are really real);
4. Unchangeability (Ideas are exempt from all kinds of change as well as from generation and corruption);
5. Self-identity (Ideas are in and of themselves absolutely objective);
6. Unity (each Idea is a unity, unifying a multiplicity of things which participate in it).

In addition to helping us to grasp the metaphysical status of the Ideas, a brief review of these six attributes will help us to understand some of the basic reasons why, despite offering an explanation of sensible realities at a high level, the Ideas still require a further justification and hence an ultimate explanation.

## II. THE IDEAS AS INTELLIGIBLE AND INCORPOREAL REALITIES

The first defining attribute of the metaphysical status of the Ideas is their intelligibility, which is connected to their incorporeality, with which it is identified. The new method characteristic of the Second Voyage, which Plato opposed to the sense-based method of the Naturalists, is founded on reasoning and on the reality which is grasped through reasoning, and this is the intelligible reality of the Ideas.

Intelligibility, therefore, is an essential characteristic of the Ideas, in contrast to the sensibles, that reveals the realm of reality existing beyond the sensibles themselves. It is graspable only by the intelligence, which is able to disengage itself from the senses. Let us read the most important passage of the *Phaedo* in this regard:

Is it not in the course of reflection, if at all, that the soul gets a clear view of facts?  
Yes.

Surely the soul can best reflect when it is free of all distractions such as hearing or sight or pain or pleasure of any kind—that is, when it ignores the body and becomes as far as possible independent, avoiding all physical contacts and associations as much as it can, in its search for reality?

That is so.

Then here too—in despising the body and avoiding it, and endeavoring to become independent—the philosopher’s soul is ahead of all the rest.

It seems so.

Here are some more questions, Simmias. Do we recognize such a thing as absolute uprightness?

Indeed we do.

And absolute beauty and goodness too?

Of course.

Have you ever seen any of these things with your eyes?

Certainly not, said he.

Well, have you ever apprehended them with any other bodily sense? By *them* I mean not only absolute tallness or health or strength, but the real nature of any given thing—what it actually is. Is it through the body that we get the truest perception of them? Isn’t it true that in any inquiry you are likely to attain more nearly to knowledge of your object in proportion to the care and accuracy with which you have prepared yourself to understand that object in itself?

Certainly.

Don’t you think that the person who is likely to succeed in this attempt most perfectly is the one who approaches each object, as far as possible, with the unaided intellect, without taking account of any sense of sight in his thinking, or dragging any other sense into his reckoning—the man who pursues the truth by applying his pure and unadulterated thought to the pure and unadulterated object, cutting himself off as much as possible from his eyes and ears and virtually all the rest of his body, as an impediment which by its presence prevents the soul from attaining to truth and clear thinking? Is not this the person, Simmias, who will reach the goal of reality, if anybody can?

What you say is absolutely true, Socrates, said Simmias.<sup>21</sup>

Plato introduces, therefore, a sharp distinction between two levels of reality: the intelligible and the sensible (or as he also says in the *Republic*, the *place* or the *region* of the intelligible from the *place* or *region* of the sensible). Thus is the critical distinction of the metaphysical level from the physical level sharply made for the first time in the history of Western thought.

The distinction of the two levels of reality is the high road of all Platonic thought; therefore, it is no wonder that all the writings make reference to it, implicitly or explicitly, as we shall repeatedly find.

Precisely insofar as it is not perceivable by the senses, which can only perceive the bodily, the intelligible can only be grasped by the intelligence which transcends the physical and bodily level, and which is of its nature incorporeal. Here is a very explicit passage from the *Statesman*:

21. *Phaedo* 65C2–66A10.

In fact incorporeal things, which are the most beautiful and the greatest, are clearly manifested only through reasoning and in no other way, and in view of this are said to be the things about which we spoke.<sup>22</sup>

Thus, with Plato, the term *incorporeal* takes on that meaning and conceptual value which to this day we attribute to it. And it is the Second Voyage which made possible the discovery of this dimension of being.

Because it is a point little emphasized and not often recognized, it is worth noting that the term *incorporeal* had been used by thinkers before Plato, but from a different perspective, that is, in the naturalistic realm of the First Voyage. We are told that Anaximenes said that *air* (which for him was the principle of all things) was *close to incorporeal* because it is *an unlimited and rich source which is never depleted*.<sup>23</sup> In addition, an Orphic fragment says Adrasteia-Ananke (the goddess representing Necessity) is like the *incorporeal* since *she extends throughout the entire cosmos, and reaches to the ends of it*.<sup>24</sup> There is also the especially interesting Fragment 9 of Melissus, reported by Simplicius, who writes:

That he wants what is to be incorporeal he makes clear when he says: "If, then, it were, it must be one; and being one, it must not have body. But if it had solidity, it would have parts and be no longer one."<sup>25</sup>

Then, as Heinrich Gomperz has shown among the Presocratics (or, for present purposes, we should say the Pre-Platonists) the term *incorporeal* means not having any determinate physical form, so much so that the *incorporeal* is connected with the *unlimited*, which does not have limits, or borders, or determination, and therefore lacks any form.<sup>26</sup>

Originally in Greek, for example, in Homer, σῶμα (*body*) meant *cadaver*. Then the semantic range of the term came to include animated bodies in general. Finally, it extended to inanimate objects which have in common with the body two properties: perceptibility (visibility) and being enclosed within more or less strict determinate limits. It is to this meaning of the term *body* that the more advanced sense of the term *incorporeal* is connected in Presocratic thought: *incorporeal* means what cannot be touched, what cannot be seen, what lacks obvious materiality, limits, and precise edges; and hence what is unlimited.<sup>27</sup>

22. *Statesman* 286A5.

23. Anaximenes frag. 3 Diels-Kranz, *Der Fragmente die Vorsokratiker*, hereinafter we will use the abbreviation DK.

24. Orpheus frag. 13 DK (frag. 54 Kern).

25. Simplicius, *In Arist. Phys.* 109.34 Diels. Also 87.6. On the interpretation of this latter fragment, see our book on Melissus cited in note 27 below.

26. H. Gomperz, "ΑΣΩΜΑΤΟΣ," *Hermes* 67 (1932): 155-67.

27. *Ibid.*, 154-57. See in addition G. Reale, *Melisso. Testimonianze e frammenti* (Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1970), 193-225.

Plato radically remodeled this meaning: for him the incorporeal goes beyond not only the characteristics of the physical body, but the very source of material bodies; and hence it goes beyond the one-all-unlimited itself of Melissus; and is identical with the nonphysical cause of physical things. In this way, the incorporeal becomes an intelligible form and hence a determined being which acts as determining cause, that is, the real and true cause.<sup>28</sup>

### III. THE IDEAS AS PURE BEING

As we have already seen from the *Phaedo*, another defining characteristic of the metaphysical status of the Ideas concerns *being*. The Ideas are repeatedly described by Plato as true being, as being in the fullest sense, and as being-in-itself, as really real, stable, and eternal being, and as being on a wholly different plane from the sensible world.

This attribute indicates the Ideas as that reality which is neither generated nor corrupted, which neither grows nor diminishes, which neither changes nor becomes in any fashion, and which has an essential relationship with the two attributes already noted.

In addition to the passage cited above, here are some others which are particularly important. We read in the *Symposium*:

Whoever has been initiated so far in the mysteries of Love and has viewed all these aspects of the beautiful in due succession is at last drawing near the final revelation. And now, Socrates, there bursts upon him that wondrous vision which is the very soul of the beauty he has toiled so long for. It is an everlasting loveliness which neither comes nor goes, which neither flowers nor fades, for such beauty is the same on every hand, the same then as now, here as there, this way as that way, the same to every worshipper as it is to every other. Nor will his vision of the beautiful take the form of a face, or of hands, or of anything that is of the flesh. It will be neither words, not knowledge, nor a something that exists in something else, such as a living creature, or the earth, or the heavens, or anything that is—but subsisting of itself and by itself in an eternal oneness, while every lovely thing partakes of it in such sort that, however much the parts may wax and wane, it will be neither more nor less, but still the same inviolable whole.<sup>29</sup>

And in the *Phaedo* it is also clear:

. . . [D]oes that absolute reality which we define in our discussions remain always constant and invariable, or not? Does absolute equality or beauty or any other independent entity which really exists ever admit change of any kind?

28. The passages in which Plato uses the term *asomatos* are the following: *Phaedo* 85E; *Philebus* 64B; *Sophist* 246B and 247C; and *Statesman* 286A (see also *Epinomis* 981B5).

29. *Symposium* 210E2–211B5.

Or does each one of these uniform and independent entities remain always constant and invariable, never admitting any alteration in any respect or in any sense?

They must be constant and invariable, Socrates, said Cebes.

Well, what about the concrete instances of beauty—such as men, horses, clothes, . . .—or of equality, or any other members of a class corresponding to an absolute entity? Are they constant, or are they, on the contrary, scarcely even in the same relation in any sense either to themselves or to one another?

With them, . . . it is just the opposite; they are never free from variation.

And these concrete objects you can touch and see and perceive by your other senses, but those constant entities you cannot possibly apprehend except by thinking; they are invisible to our sight.

That is perfectly true, said Cebes.

So you think that we should assume two classes of things, one visible and the other invisible?

Yes, we should.

The invisible things invariable, and the visible never being the same?

Yes, we should assume that too.<sup>30</sup>

And also here, as above,<sup>31</sup> the precise affirmations of the existence of two levels of being are particularly interesting: physical being (visible or sensible), and superphysical or metaphysical (neither visible nor sensible) which is “eternal” and “permanent.”

There is another very interesting passage of the *Phaedo* in which Plato presents the attribute of being as the hallmark that characterizes the Ideas and expresses their ontological absoluteness:

Our present argument applies no more to equality than it does to absolute beauty, goodness, uprightness, holiness, and, as I maintain, all those characteristics which we designate in our discussion by the term *absolute*.<sup>32</sup>

We may refer also to the famous passage of the *Phaedrus* which speaks of the realm of Ideas as a *Hyperouranios*, which we shall discuss further on,<sup>33</sup> and which is perfectly in harmony with what we have been saying.

Finally, let us recall that the *Republic* gives the theme of being an absolutely central role in its focus on its epistemological role, for only true being is truly knowable; the sensible world, which is a mixture of being and nonbeing, is the object of mere opinion, while there is only absolute ignorance about nonbeing.<sup>34</sup>

It is, therefore, no surprise that Plato describes the philosopher's inquiry as a *yearning for being*,<sup>35</sup> as a study capable of showing *that being*

30. *Phaedo* 78D1–79A11.

31. See above pp. 117ff.

32. *Phaedo* 75C10–D3.

33. See below pp. 130–32 and note 65.

34. See in particular *Republic* 5.476Eff.

35. *Phaedo* 66C2.

which is always and does not stray through generation and corruption,<sup>36</sup> and like a conversion of the soul from a day which is night to a true day,<sup>37</sup> and like a true ascent to being.<sup>38</sup> He describes the sciences which prepare the soul for dialectic (and so for true philosophy) as a winch which draws the soul from becoming to being,<sup>39</sup> not to mention the other famous images and similes of the *Republic* which we shall have occasion to discuss further on, such as the simile of the Line and the Myth of the Cave.<sup>40</sup>

The property of absolute being as belonging to Ideas is clarified by a straightforward argument. To truly explain becoming, Ideas cannot themselves be in becoming, but must have their own being which becoming does not have as its own, but must change and receive. Becoming as such is not being but only has being; in fact, it always implies nonbeing, and, therefore, insofar as it has being, it must have it through participation with another.<sup>41</sup>

With this, the way is open for a recovery both of Heraclitus and of Parmenides, and for a mediation between Heracliteanism and Eleaticism. The world of becoming is the sensible world, the world of being and immobility is the intelligible world. The world of sensible things has the characteristics which Heraclitus and the Heracliteans attributed to the whole of reality; the world of the Ideas has the characteristics which Parmenides and the Eleatics attributed to the whole of reality. Plato conciliated the two schools with the distinction of the two levels of reality: the Heracliteans do not cover the whole of reality, but only sensible reality; and likewise the Eleatics do not cover the whole of reality, but only intelligible reality, the Ideas. The realm of being (properly understood) of which Parmenides spoke is the *cause* (the *true cause*); the becoming of which the Heracliteans spoke is the *caused*.

#### IV. THE IDEAS AS IMMUTABLES EXISTING IN AND OF THEMSELVES

We now come to the characteristics of the immutability and self-identity of the Ideas, which further explain and specify pure being.

For Plato, these two features are closely connected and each is very important for understanding his thought.

It was against these features, especially self-identity, that some of Aristotle's most severe criticisms were leveled, and are still being repeated today, albeit in a different register.

36. See *Republic* 6.485A10-B3.

37. *Ibid.*, 521C3-6.

38. *Ibid.*, C7.

39. *Ibid.*, D3-8.

40. See Chapter 11.

41. See *Republic* Books 6 and 7, *passim*.

In citing Aristotle as an influential critic of the theory of Ideas, we wish to call the reader's attention to the following very curious fact: Aristotle is not taken seriously when he *informs* us about matters of fact concerning Plato's doctrines, especially concerning an Unwritten Doctrine of the Principles; but he is taken absolutely seriously when he *criticizes* Plato's doctrine. In modern terms, there is a tendency not to take Aristotle into serious consideration when he offers us historical material because it is said that it is only his interpretation. When, on the other hand, he makes some criticism of Plato's theories, then he is taken very seriously and is even used to interpret Plato. Instead, the proper attitude of the modern historian ought to be exactly opposite: Aristotle should be taken seriously when he offers us information and material which is not wholly attributable to his own theorizing, while his criticisms of Plato help us to understand his own thought more than they help us to understand Plato's thought.

We have brought up these considerations here to complete what we earlier noted<sup>42</sup> that within the old interpretive paradigm Aristotle tended to be treated wholly on his own terms as a speculative thinker.

Many scholars have judged (and still judge) the things Aristotle says about the theory of Principles as speculative developments of Plato's thought, and as such they have not accepted them; and contrariwise, they have accepted (and partly continue to accept) in full many speculative criticisms that Aristotle directs against the theory of Ideas. We, by contrast, reverse this position, and hold that the acceptance of Aristotle's criticisms of the theory of Ideas puts one in the least propitious position for a properly objective understanding of Plato's thought.<sup>43</sup>

Plato says the Idea is in itself and of itself (*auto kath'auto*), and he uses the expression *in itself* as a synonym of *Idea*: instead of saying the Idea of Beauty, the Idea of Good, he speaks of the *Beautiful-itself*, of the *Good-itself*, and so on. This characteristic of Ideas, which is connected by Plato with their *immobility*, has often been understood hypostatistically, as if it stated that an Idea is nothing other than the ontologizing of the concept or the reification of the abstract, or, the hypostatization of the universal. Aristotle was the first to give this reading.

Here are some passages of the *Metaphysics* which influenced the interpretation of Plato for a long time:

While the theory presents difficulties in many ways, the most paradoxical thing of all is the statement that there are certain things besides those in the material universe, and that these are the same as sensible things except that

42. See pp. 72ff. above.

43. We have tried to justify this claim in our commentary on Aristotle's *Metaphysics*.



they are eternal while the latter are perishable. For they say there is a man-himself and a horse-itself and health-itself, with no further qualification—a procedure like that of the people who said there are gods, but in human form. For they were positing nothing but eternal men, nor are the Platonists making the Forms anything other than eternal sensible things.<sup>44</sup>

Now regarding the Ideas, we must first examine the theory itself, not connecting it in any way with the nature of numbers, but discussing it in the form in which it was originally understood by those who first maintained the existence of the Ideas.

The supporters of the theory of the Ideas were led to it because concerning the question about the truth of things they accepted the Heraclitean sayings which describe all sensible things as always passing away, so that if knowledge or thought is to have an object, there must be some other and permanent entities apart from those things which are sensible; for there could be no knowledge of things which were in a constant state of flux.

But when Socrates was occupying himself with the excellences of character and in connection with them he became the first to raise the problem of universal definition (for the physicists Democritus only touched on the subject to a small extent and defined, after a fashion, the hot and the cold, while the Pythagoreans had before this discussed a few things whose definitions—for example, those of opportunity, justice, or marriage—they connected with numbers; but it was natural that Socrates should be seeking the essence, for he was seeking to syllogize, and *what a thing is* is the starting-point of syllogisms; for there was as yet none of the dialectical power which enables people even without knowledge of the essence to speculate about contraries and inquire whether the same science deals with contraries; for two things may fairly be ascribed to Socrates—inductive arguments and universal definition, both of which are concerned with the starting-point of science).

But Socrates did not make the universals or definitions exist apart; they, however, gave them separate existence, and this was the kind of thing they call Ideas. Therefore it followed for them, almost by the same argument, that there must be Ideas of all things that are spoken of universally and it was almost as if a man wished to count certain things and, while they were few, thought he would not be able to count them, but made more of them and then counted them; for the Forms are, one may say, more numerous than the particular sensible things, yet it was in seeking the causes of these that they proceeded from them to the Forms. For to each thing there answers an entity which has the same name and exists apart from the substances, and so also in the case of all other groups there is one over many, whether these be of this world or eternal.<sup>45</sup>

44. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* B 2.997b5–12.

45. *Ibid.*, M 4.1078b9–1079a4. Here is also an interesting parallel passage which is found in A 6.987a29–b10: “After the systems we have named came the philosophy of Plato, which in most respects followed these thinkers, but had peculiarities that distinguished it from the philosophy of the Italians. For, having in his youth first become familiar with Cratylus and with the Heraclitean’s doctrines (that all sensible things are ever in a state of flux and there is no knowledge about them), these views he held even in later years. Socrates, however, was busying himself about ethical matters and neglecting the world of nature as a whole but seeking the universal in these ethical matters, and fixed thought for the first time on definitions; Plato accepted his teachings, but held that

The absolute objectivity of Ideas in the Platonic context has, in fact, a much more complex and theoretically deeper meaning. Plato developed and fixed his theory of Ideas in opposition to two forms of relativism which were closely connected to each other.

The first form of relativism is that of Heraclitean origin (to which Aristotle himself refers in passing),<sup>46</sup> which proclaimed the perennial flux and the radical mobility of all things, and added, as a matter both of fact and of necessity, that the flux disperses everything in an irreducible multiplicity of mobile states, thereby making them elusive, unknowable, and unintelligible.

The second form of relativism is Sophistic-Protagorean, which reduced every reality and every value to something purely subjective and made of the subject itself the measure, that is, the criterion of the truth of all things.<sup>47</sup>

We shall seek to explain the characteristics of *immobility* and *self-identity* of the Ideas on the basis of Platonic texts.

Individual beautiful things, that is, the experiential and particular sensible things, change and alter but the Beautiful-itself does not and cannot change. The change of an Idea would mean an absurd distancing of itself from itself and its becoming other than itself. Sensible things can go from being beautiful to being ugly, but just insofar as they are experiential and sensible; on the other hand, Beauty-itself, which is the cause (the *true cause*) of the beautiful sensible things, cannot become ugly at all. A change of the Idea itself of Beauty, its becoming not-beautiful, would imply the total destruction also of every beautiful thing which participates in it, and hence the disappearance also of every empirical, beautiful thing. If the cause is compromised, so too is the effect.

By describing the Ideas as immutable, Plato affirmed that the true cause which explains what changes cannot itself change, otherwise it would not be the *true cause*, or the ultimate ground.

The Ideas were expressly introduced as the hypothesis which is necessary to overcome the contradictions into which fall explanations of the sensible by the sensible, and of the changeable by the changeable.

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the problem applied not to sensible things but entities of another kind—for this reason, that the common definition could not be a definition of any sensible thing, as they were always changing. Things of this sort, then, he called Ideas, and sensible things, he said, were all named after these, and in virtue of a relation to these; for the many existed by 'participation' in the Ideas that have the same name as they."

46. See the passages quoted above in the text and in note 45.

47. This point is wholly neglected by Aristotle, but if he had taken it into consideration it probably would have forced him to change, at least in part, his criticism of the Platonic theory of Ideas, since he was perfectly aware that man is not the measure of all things.

Here is how immobility and self-identity arise within the context of the argument against Heracliteanism that Plato conducts in the *Cratylus*:

*Socrates*: There is another point. I should not like us to be imposed upon by the appearance of such a multitude of names, all tending in the same direction. I myself do not deny that the givers of names did really give them under the idea that all things were in motion and flux, which was their sincere, I think, mistaken opinion. And having fallen into a kind of whirlpool themselves, they are carried around, and want to drag us in after them. There is a matter, master Cratylus, about which I often dream, and should like to ask your opinion. Tell me whether there is or is not any absolute beauty or good, or any other absolute beings?

*Cratylus*: Certainly, Socrates, I think so.

*Socrates*: Then let us seek the true beauty, not asking whether a face is fair, or anything of that sort, for all such things appear to be in a flux, but let us ask whether the true beauty is not always beautiful.

*Cratylus*: Certainly.

*Socrates*: And can we rightly speak of a beauty which is always passing away, and is first this and then that? Must not the same thing be born and retire and vanish while the word is in our mouths?

*Cratylus*: Undoubtedly.

*Socrates*: Then how can that be a real thing which is never in the same state? For obviously things which are the same cannot change while they remain the same, and if they are always the same and in the same state, and never depart from their original form, they can never change or be moved.

*Cratylus*: Certainly they cannot.

*Socrates*: Nor yet can they be known by anyone, for at the moment that the observer approaches, then they become other and of another nature, so that you cannot get any further in knowing their nature or state, for you cannot know that which has no state.

*Cratylus*: True.<sup>48</sup>

This reprises what we have seen clearly stated in the *Phaedo*.

Here is how self-identity in the sense of the solidity and stability of the Ideas, arises in the argument against Sophistic-Protagorean relativism (which Plato associates also with its opposite, Eleaticism, which holds that all things are always together in the same way, and hence they are not objectively differentiated):

*Socrates*: But would you say, Hermogenes, that the things differ as the names differ? And are they relative to individuals, as Protagoras tells us? For he says that man is the measure of all things, and that things are to me as they appear to me, and that they are to you as they appear to you. Do you agree with him, or would you say that things have a permanent essence of their own?

*Hermogenes*: There have been times, Socrates, when I have driven in my perplexity to take refuge with Protagoras, not that I agree with him at all.

48. *Cratylus* 439B10–440A5.

*Socrates:* What! Have you ever been driven to admit that there was no such thing as a bad man?

*Hermogenes:* No, indeed, but I have often had reason to think that there are very bad men, and a good many of them.

*Socrates:* Well, and have you ever found any very good ones?

*Hermogenes:* Not many.

*Socrates:* Still you have found them?

*Hermogenes:* Yes.

*Socrates:* And would you hold that the very good were the very wise, and the very evil very foolish? Would that be your view?

*Hermogenes:* It would.

*Socrates:* But if Protagoras is right, and the truth is that things are as they appear to anyone, how can some of us be wise and some of us foolish?

*Hermogenes:* Impossible.

*Socrates:* And if, on the other hand, wisdom and folly are really distinguishable you will allow, I think, that the assertion of Protagoras can hardly be correct. For if what appears to each man is true to him, one man cannot in reality be wiser than another.

*Hermogenes:* He cannot.

*Socrates:* Nor will you be disposed to say with Euthydemus that all things equally belong to all men at the same moment and always, for neither on his view can there be some good and other bad if virtue and vice are always equally to be attributed to all.

*Hermogenes:* There cannot.

*Socrates:* But if neither is right, and things are not relative to individuals, and all things do not equally belong to all at the same moment and always, they must be supposed to have their own proper and permanent being; they are not in relation to us, or influenced by us, fluctuating according to our fancy, but they are independent, and maintain to their own being the relation prescribed by nature.<sup>49</sup>

By pondering these two forms of relativism, Plato conceived and fixed the fundamental characteristics of the Ideas, their immutability, their self-identity, and their objective stability. Thus, it is clear what is meant by affirming that Ideas are *immutable* and *in and of themselves*. It means that they have a reality that is not enmeshed in becoming and is not relative to the subject, a reality that does not always undergo constant change and is not manipulable at the caprice of the subject, but that implies structural solidity and stability. If it were not so, our knowledge and judgment (and in particular our moral judgment) as well as our speech would be meaningless.

In a word, the immutability and self-identity of the Ideas display their objectivity and absoluteness and allow for the possibility of moral knowledge that will be safe from the vagaries of the constantly changing conditions of the world of flux.

49. *Ibid.*, 385E4–386E4.

V. THE IDEAS AS UNITIES

A last characteristic of the Ideas to which it is worth giving special attention is their unity, because it is of truly exceptional importance despite the fact that in the studies inspired by the traditional paradigm it has been ignored, or at least undervalued.

Each Idea is a *unity*, and as such it explains the sensible things that participate in it, thus constituting a unified multiplicity. For this reason, true knowledge is knowing how to unify the multiplicity in a synoptic vision, bringing together the sensible multiplicity into the unity of the Idea on which it depends.

For Plato, the very nature of the philosopher is demonstrated in his knowing how to grasp and hold to this unity, as he says in the *Republic*:

Whom do you mean, then, by the true philosopher?

Those for whom the truth is the spectacle of which they are enamored, said I.

Right again, said he, but what sense do you mean it?

It would be by no means easy to explain it to another, I said, but I think that you will grant me this.

What?

That since the fair and honorable is the opposite of the base and ugly, they are two.

Of course.

And since they are two, each is one.

That also.

And in respect of the just and the unjust, the good and the bad, and all the Ideas or Forms, the same statement holds, that in itself each is one, but that by virtue of their participation with actions and bodies and with one another as they present themselves everywhere, each has a multiplicity of aspects.<sup>50</sup>

This is what distinguishes the ordinary man, who is limited to the sensible, from the philosopher: the former aims at multiplicity and even clings to it, thus rejecting unity. As Plato says of him: "he would in no way be supported, if he were to say that one is the beautiful, the just and so on of other things. . . ."<sup>51</sup> Thus men who remain attached to the sensible suffer the consequence of wandering in multiplicity: "they wander in multiplicity, and are not philosophers."<sup>52</sup>

The philosopher, on the other hand, is one who can see the whole and can grasp the unity in the multiplicity. Plato summarizes his thought in this striking dictum: "He who can see the whole is a dialectician; he who cannot, is not."<sup>53</sup>

50. *Republic* 5.475E3-476A7.

51. *Ibid.*, 479A4ff.

52. *Ibid.*, 6.484B5ff.

53. *Ibid.*, 7.537C7.

In the dialogues that follow the *Republic* this theme is fully worked out; in the *Philebus* Ideas are even called *monads* (or *unities*),<sup>54</sup> and the notion of the Ideas is closely connected to the investigation of the One and the Many: "That the many is one and that one is many is a marvelous assertion."<sup>55</sup>

And Plato says that this problem arises not with reference to sensible things on the physical level, but with reference to the Ideas themselves:

*Socrates:* The one that is taken, my dear boy, may be something that comes into being and perishes, as it was in the cases we have just been speaking of; with such cases, with a one like that, it is admitted, as we said a moment ago, that there is not need to thrash the matter out. But suppose you venture to take as your one such things as man, ox, the beautiful, the good; then you have the sort of unities that involve you in dispute if you give them your serious attention and subject them to division.

*Protarchus:* What sort of dispute?

*Socrates:* First, whether we ought to believe in the real existence of monads of this sort; secondly, how are we to conceive that each of them, being always one and the same and subject neither to generation nor destruction, nevertheless is, to begin with, most assuredly this single unity and yet subsequently comes to be in the infinite number of things that come into being—an identical unity being thus found simultaneously in unity and plurality. Is it torn in pieces, or does the whole of it, and this would seem the extreme of impossibility, get apart from itself? It is not your questions, Protarchus, but these questions, where the one and many are of another kind, that cause all manner of dissatisfaction if they are not properly settled and satisfaction if they are.<sup>56</sup>

We shall return to this problem and its solution, which can be properly understood only in relation to the protology.<sup>57</sup> It is worth emphasizing that this characteristic of the Ideas was so important that the Academics in formulating one of the arguments to demonstrate the existence of the Ideas called it *the proof from the one-over-many*.<sup>58</sup> The argument follows: if there are many men and each of them is a man, and if there is something which is predicated of each and every man without being identical in each of them, then it is necessary that there be something beyond them, separate from them and eternal and which can be predicated in the same way of all the numerically distinct men. This *one which is beyond the many* is the Idea which transcends them and is eternal.<sup>59</sup>

54. *Philebus* 15A6.

55. *Ibid.*, 14C8-10.

56. *Ibid.*, 15A1-B8.

57. See Chapter 7, *passim*.

58. Cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* A 9.990b13; Alexander of Aphrodisias, *In Arist. Metaphysica* 80.9-15 Hayduck (*De ideis* frag. 3 Ross).

59. For an analysis of this argument, see E. Berti, *La filosofia del primo Aristotele* (Padua, 1962), 208ff.; and W. Leszl, *Il "De ideis" di Aristotele e la teoria platonica delle idee* (Florence, 1975), 141ff.

VI. PLATONIC DUALISM AND THE GREAT MYTH OF THE  
HYPEROURANIOS AS A SYMBOLIC IMAGE OF TRANSCENDENCE

From what has been said, it would seem inevitable to talk of Plato's *dualistic* conception of reality. Experiential realities are sensible things, while Ideas are intelligible things. Physical realities are mixed with non-being, while the Ideas are purely and wholly being. Sensible realities are corporeal, while the Ideas are incorporeal. Sensible realities are corruptible, while the Ideas are stable and eternal realities. Sensible things are relative, while the Ideas are absolute. Sensible things are multiple, while the Ideas are unities. Many scholars, repeating and variously developing Aristotle's criticisms (especially those contained in the passages above), fiercely attack this *dualism*, claiming that the *separation* of the Ideas from sensible realities, their *transcendence*, compromises their role as *causes*.<sup>60</sup>

As a matter of fact this is a purely theoretical prejudice, which must be given a wide berth if we are to understand Plato.

First of all, the Ideas are as *immanent* as they are *transcendent*, a fact which is frequently obscured or neglected. For Plato, the transcendence of the Ideas is the ground or foundation of their immanence. The Ideas could not be the cause of sensible things (i.e., the *true cause*) if they did not transcend the sensible things. It is by transcending them ontologically that they can support the immanent ontological structure of the sensibles. The transcendence of the Ideas is what allows them to be the *true cause*. To confound these two aspects, or even to treat them on the same level, is totally to forget the Second Voyage and its results.

It is, in any case, interesting to note that the first feature of the Ideas which Plato stresses is their immanence. The early dialogues present the Ideas as what remains identical in things, as what makes each thing be what it is and nothing else, as what fixes the nature of things and thus renders them intelligible. Subsequently, beginning with the *Phaedo*, where he focuses on the Second Voyage and its results, Plato develops, in addition to immanence, the aspect of the Ideas which, suitably understood, can properly be called *transcendence*.<sup>61</sup> If the Ideas are opposed to

60. We may recall what is frequently forgotten, that Aristotle does not criticize transcendence as such, but rather the way Plato conceives it. Aristotle held that the supreme Intelligence is transcendent (as are the Intelligences which move the celestial spheres) but that the Intelligibles are not. And the supreme Intelligence thinks itself, but not the totality of the Forms immanent in the sensibles. See in this regard the interpretation of Aristotelian metaphysics which we give in our *History of Ancient Philosophy*, Vol. 2: *Plato and Aristotle* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), translated by J. R. Catan.

61. Ross presents (in *Plato's Theory of Forms*, 228ff. [hereinafter *Plato's Forms*]) a schema in which he rightly lists the expressions with which Plato indicates the immanence of the

experiential things as the intelligible to the sensible, being to becoming, incorporeal to corporeal, immobile to mobile, absolute to relative, unity to multiplicity, then it is clear that they represent a different dimension of reality, a new and higher level of reality itself.

Ideas and the expressions with which he indicates their transcendence, and the principal places in which they are to be found. Unfortunately it has been neglected by the majority of scholars, and for this reason we present it here in its entirety.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <p>(I)</p> <p>(1) ἐν, εἶναι ἐν, ἐνεῖναι, ἐγγίγνεσθαι<br/>κεῖσθαι ἐν</p> <p>(2) κεκτῆσθαι, ἔχειν, ἴσχειν, ἔξις<br/>δέχεσθαι</p> <p>(3) μετέχειν, μετασχεσις, μέθεξις,<br/>μεταλαμβάνειν.</p> <p>(4) παραγίγνεσθαι, παρεῖναι,<br/>παρουσία</p> <p>(5) προσγίγνεσθαι</p> <p>(6) κοινόν, κοινῆ, κοινωρία,<br/>κοινωνεῖν.</p> <p>(7) ἐπεῖναι, ἐπιγίγνεσθαι.</p> <p>(8) κατέχειν.</p> <p>(9) ἰέναι εἰς.</p> | <p>(II)</p> <p>(a) παράδειγμα.</p> <p>(b) αὐτό καθ'αὐτό.</p> <p>(c) βούλεσθαι, ὀρέγεσθαι,<br/>προθυμεῖσθαι</p> <p>(d) εἰκέναι, προσεικέναι, εἰκῶν,<br/>εἰκάζεσθαι, ἀπεικάζεσθαι</p> <p>(e) τάκεϊ.</p> <p>(f) ὁμοίωμα, ἀφομοιοῦσθαι,<br/>ἀφομοίωμα.</p> <p>(g) μιμεῖσθαι, μίμησις, μίμημα,<br/>ἀπομιμεῖσθαι.</p> |
|---|---|

*Laches*

(1) 191E10, 192A2, B6.

(2) 192A4.

*Euthyphro*

(2) 5D3.

(a) 6E4.

*Gorgias*

(3) 467E7.

(4) 506D1.

*Hippias Major*

(2) 298B4, 300A9.

(4) 293E11, 294A1, C4,6.

(5) 289D4, 8, E5, 292D1.

(6) 300A10.

(7) 300A10, 303A5.

*Lysis*

(4) 217B6, D4, 5, 8.

*Euthydemus*

(4) 280B2, 301A4.

*Meno*

(1) 72E1, 7.

(2) 72C7.

(8) 74D8.

*Cratylus*

(1) 390A1, B2, 413C3.

(2) 389B10.

*Symposium*

(2) 204C6.

(b) 211B1.

(3) 211B2.

*Phaedo*

(2) 103E4, 104B9, D2, E8,9, 105A2, 5, 7, (b) 78D5, 100B6.



Plato is clear about the existence of two different levels of reality, as we have seen,<sup>62</sup> and he states categorically it in the *Timaeus* in an admirable passage:

Is there such a thing as "first just in itself" or any other things which we are always describing in such terms, as things that "are just in themselves"? Or are the things we see or otherwise perceive by the bodily senses the only things that have such reality, and has nothing else, over and above these, any sort of being at all? Are we talking idly whenever we say that there is such a thing as an intelligible Form of anything? Is this nothing more than a word?

Now it does not become either of us either to dismiss the present question without trial or verdict, simply asseverating that it is so, nor yet to insert a lengthy digression into a discourse that is already long. If we could see our way

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|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| B1, D11-106D4                  | (c) 74D9, 75B1, 7.                |
| (3) 100C5, 101C3, 4, 5, 102B2. | (d) 74E3.                         |
| (4) 100D5.                     |                                   |
| (5) 100D6.                     |                                   |
| (6) 100D6.                     |                                   |
| (8) 104D1.                     |                                   |
| <i>Republic</i>                |                                   |
| (1) 402C5, 434D6-435C1.        | (a) 500E3.                        |
| (3) 476D1, 2.                  | (d) 510B4, 8, D7, E3, 511A6.      |
| (6) 476A7.                     |                                   |
| (9) 434D3.                     |                                   |
| <i>Phaedrus</i>                |                                   |
| (1) 237D6.                     | (d) 250B4, 5.                     |
| (6) 205E4.                     | (e) 250A2, 6.                     |
|                                | (f) 250A6, B3.                    |
| <i>Parmenides</i>              |                                   |
| (1) 150A1, 2, 3.               |                                   |
| (2) 149E5, 159E5.              |                                   |
| (3) 158B6-C4, 160A2.           |                                   |
| <i>Theaetetus</i>              |                                   |
| (2) 203E4.                     | (a) 176E3.                        |
| <i>Sophist</i>                 |                                   |
| (2) 247A5.                     |                                   |
| (3) 228C1.                     |                                   |
| (4) 247A5, 8.                  |                                   |
| (6) 252B9, 260E2.              |                                   |
| <i>Timaeus</i>                 |                                   |
|                                | (a) 28A7, 29B4, 39E7, 48E5, 49A1. |
|                                | (b) 51C1.                         |
|                                | (d) 29B2, 3, C1, 2, 52C2, 92C7.   |
|                                | (f) 50D1, 51A2.                   |
|                                | (g) 39E2, 48E6, 50C5.             |
| <i>Philebus</i>                |                                   |
| (1) 16D2.                      |                                   |
| (2) 25B6.                      |                                   |

Naturally this schema could be considerably amplified, but for our purposes it abundantly verifies what we have said.

62. See above pp. 117ff.

to draw a distinction of great importance in few words, that would best suit the occasion. —My own verdict, then, is this.

If intelligence and true belief are two different kinds, then these things—Forms that we cannot perceive but only think of—certainly exist in themselves; but if, as some hold, true belief in no way differs from intelligence, then all the things we perceive through the bodily senses must be taken as the most certain reality. Now we must affirm that they are two different things, for they are distinct in origin and unlike in nature. The one is produced in us by instruction, the other by persuasion; the one can always give a true account of itself, the other can give none; the one cannot be shaken by persuasion, whereas the other can be won over; and true belief, we must allow, is shared by all mankind, intelligence only by the gods and a small number of men.

This being so, we must agree that there is, first, the unchanging Form, ungenerated and indestructible, which neither receives anything else into itself from elsewhere nor itself enters into anything else anywhere, invisible and otherwise imperceptible; that, in fact, which thinking has for its object. . . .

Second is that which bears the same name and is like that Form; is sensible; becomes, is perpetually moving, becoming in a certain place and again vanishing out of it; and it is to be apprehended by belief involving perception.<sup>63</sup>

Thus, Plato holds an unchanging position about the existence of the two levels of being and consistently focuses his philosophical message on it. But the error of many interpreters is to have mistaken this distinction of levels and the differences between them, for an absurd and unwarranted “separation,” taking the Ideas to be, “superthings” separated physically, rather than metaphysically, from things, as if they were simply invisible sensibles to be contrasted with sensibles.

The elements are now in place to draw some conclusions about the real meaning of the theory of Ideas, which is the first and most noteworthy achievement of the Second Voyage. With the Ideas Plato discovered the realm of the intelligible as the incorporeal and metaempirical dimension of being. It is true that this world of the incorporeal intelligible transcends the sensible, but not in the absurd sense of “separation,” but as a meta-empirical cause as true cause, and as the true ground of the sensible. Plato’s dualism is nothing but the dualism of one who admits the existence of a supersensible cause as a ground of the sensible, and who holds that the sensible, because of its self-contradictory nature, cannot be the whole of its own ground. Hence, Plato’s so-called metaphysical “dualism” has absolutely nothing to do with the ridiculous dualism which involves the hypostatization of abstractions, conceived as the exact opposites of the sensibles.

Plato also presents another form of dualism, having to do with the supreme Principles of which there are two; because of its complexity.<sup>64</sup>

63. *Timaeus* 51B7–52A7.

64. See below, pp. 154ff.

Reverting to the “dualism” understood as an expression of transcendence, we may consider an issue having to do with the famous great myth of the Hyperouranios, which has given rise to much misunderstanding. The “myth” is not simply an abstract *logos*, but it is to be understood for what it is, as a metaphorical or symbolic expression, speaking through images.

There is a famous passage in the *Phaedrus*, in which Plato speaks about the Hyperouranios:

Of that place beyond the heavens [hyperouranios] none of our earthly poets has yet sung, and none shall sing worthily. But this is the manner of it, for assuredly we must be bold to speak what is true, above all when our discourse is upon truth. It is there that true being dwells, without color or shape, that cannot be touched; reason alone, the soul’s pilot, can behold it, and all true knowledge is knowledge thereof. Now even as the mind of a god is nourished by reason and knowledge, so also is it with every soul that has a care to receive her proper food; wherefore when at least she has beheld being she is well content, and contemplating truth she is nourished and prospers, until the heaven’s revolution bring her back full circle. And while she is borne round she discerns Justice, its very self, and likewise temperance, and knowledge, not the knowledge that is neighbor to becoming and varies with the various objects to which we commonly ascribe being [phenomenal being], but the veritable knowledge of being that veritably is. And when she has contemplated likewise and feasted upon all else that has true being, she descends again within the heavens and comes back home.<sup>65</sup>

“The Hyperouranios” means the “place above heaven.” It is an image which indicates a place which is not at all a place in the usual physical sense, but rather a metaphysical “place,” the realm of the supersensible.

The *Republic* speaks of the “intelligible place” in just this sense, and in a too often overlooked passage it employs, with poetic irony, the same image, but concerning a matter which, in the myth of the Hyperouranios, was not expressed, but only strongly implied. Plato associates the term for heaven (οὐρανός) with that for seeing (ὄραω) and hence the region of heaven with that of the visible, and writes:

Consider then . . . that there are two realities [. . .] and the one rules over the intelligible realm and region, the other over the eyeball, to avoid saying over the sky-ball but pardon my wordplay. You surely grasp these two forms, the visible and the intelligible? —I do grasp them.<sup>66</sup>

The connection between the two passages is clear: the “heaven” is the “visible,” the “above-the-heaven” (ὑπερουράνιος) is “that which is above-the-visible,” meaning the “intelligible.”

65. *Phaedrus* 247C3–E4.

66. *Republic* 6.509D1–5.

In order to avoid misunderstanding the Hyperouranios, the Ideas which occupy the "realm" are immediately described as having features that have nothing to do with what can be seen: they are without shape, without color, invisible, and the like, and are graspable by us only with that part which rules the soul, namely, the intelligence.

In conclusion, with the theory of Ideas, Plato wanted to say this: the sensibles are explained only by the supersensible realm, the corruptible only by the incorruptible, the mobile by the immobile, the relative by the absolute, the multiple by the one.<sup>67</sup>

#### VII. THE ISSUE OF THE ONE AND THE MANY RELATIVE TO THE IDEAS THEMSELVES AND THE RELATIONS OF THE IDEAS TO EACH OTHER AND TO THE FIRST PRINCIPLE

The Ideas solve a group of serious problems, but themselves set other and more complex ones. A first group of these problems is raised by the fact of the multiplicity of the Ideas. Each Idea is "one," but in the aggregate they are "many." If so, what relations are there among them? Is there a principle on which they all depend?

We have seen that the *Phaedo* contains the first overall metaphysical map which Plato presents in his writings. There, he discusses the exact relations of inclusion and exclusion which the existence of structural links among the Ideas implies. In accordance with his rule of introducing in his written works only what is indispensable for discussing the matter in hand, and of adjusting appropriately to the interlocutor's willingness and ability to understand, Plato introduces in the *Phaedo* only what is necessary for demonstrating the immortality (deathlessness) of the soul.

With these provisos, Plato draws attention to the following points. What is ruled by the Idea of three (and hence the Idea itself of three) also necessarily implies the odd, precisely because the Idea of the odd is the cause of three, and is therefore fundamentally linked to it. The Idea of the odd excludes the Idea of the even, because it is contrary to it. Three as well as all the odd numbers exclude the even. Similarly, five never embraces the Idea of even, or ten that of odd; double never embraces the Idea of odd; nor the part the Idea of the whole.

Some Ideas exclude others just as the sensible things that participate in them imply corresponding exclusions. On the other hand, some Ideas necessarily include other Ideas, and the sensible things that par-

67. The explanation of the sensible by the sensible will not do because it falls into insuperable contradictions so long as it stays within the realm of the sensible itself: it remains entirely in the sphere of the First Voyage, the project of the Naturalists.

ticipate in these Ideas include the other things connected to those Ideas.

These relations of exclusion are not limited to the contraries themselves (as, for example, the odd and the even), but extend to all that is connected to any contrary relative to the other, and vice versa (three is contrary to the even and to what is connected to the even): and this goes for the Ideas, as well as for the things that participate in them. Likewise, the relations of inclusion can be set out: just as an Idea implies a structural connection with another (or with others), so the presence of an Idea in the sensible things which participate in it implies the presence in them also of what is necessarily connected to it (or them).

For example, it can be said that a thing is heated by the presence of heat, or that a person becomes ill by the presence of illness; nevertheless, it can also be correctly said that a thing is heated by the presence of fire, and that a person becomes ill by the presence of fever. The first type of response refers directly to the corresponding Idea as cause (the Idea of heat, the Idea of illness), whereas the second type of response goes back to an Idea, which, though not the corresponding Idea, nevertheless necessarily implies a connection with it.

Here are the conclusions that Plato draws about the matter for which he introduced the whole question of the mutual inclusions and exclusions of the Ideas. What must come to be produced in a body for it to be a living body? As an instance of the first kind of response, it could be said that a body produces life if the body participates in the Idea of life. But as an instance of the second kind of response we must refer to what, though it is not the Idea of life, implies an intimate connection with life, and so to what is a bearer of life (just as fever is a bearer of sickness and fire is a bearer of heat); and this is the "soul," which is a cause of life (just as fever is a cause of sickness and fire is a cause of heat). In general, life has death as its contrary and the one necessarily excludes the other, precisely because each is the other's contrary. But, because of the inclusions which subsist among some of the Ideas, also what is not identical with life, but necessarily includes it, excludes death; and this is the soul. Thus, soul excludes death, just as snow excludes warmth, three excludes even, two excludes odd, and so on.

We may now turn our attention to a long passage from the dialogue the *Phaedo* which is fundamental for understanding the power of the interpretive paradigm which we are employing. Many scholars have not understood that in this passage Plato does not at all take the Ideas to be realities totally independent of each other and he certainly does not speak of the only possible combination of Ideas as simultaneously present in sensible things. On the contrary, Plato turns the whole discussion

on the bonds of conjunction and opposition among the Ideas in such a way that the argument is made to apply to the soul, which is a reality closely akin to the Ideas. Here is the passage:

Well, then, pay careful attention to the point which I want to make, which is this. It seems clear that the opposites themselves do not admit one another, but it looks as though any things which, though not themselves opposites, always have opposites in them, similarly do not admit the opposite form to that which is in them, but on its approach either cease to exist or retire before it. Surely we must assert that three will sooner cease to exist or suffer any other fate than submit to become even while it is still three?

Certainly, said Cebes.

And yet two and three are not opposites.

No, they are not.

So it is not only the opposite forms that cannot face one another's approach; there are other things too which cannot face the approach of opposites.

That is quite true.

Shall we try, if we can, to define what sort of things these are?

By all means.

Well, then, Cebes, would this describe them—that they are things which are compelled by some form which takes possession of them to assume not only its own form but invariably also that of some other form which is an opposite?

What do you mean?

Just what we were saying a minute ago. You realize, I suppose, that when the form of three takes possession of any group of objects, it compels them to be odd as well as three.

Certainly.

Then I maintain that into such a group the opposite form to the one which has this effect can never enter.

No, it cannot.

And it was the form of odd that had this effect?

Yes.

And the opposite of this is the form of even?

Yes.

So the form of even will never enter into three?

No, never.

In other words three is incompatible with evenness.

Quite.

So the number three is uneven.

Yes.

I proposed just now to define what sort of things they are which, although they are not themselves directly opposed to a given opposite, nevertheless do not admit it, as in the present example, three, although not the opposite of even, nevertheless does not admit it, because three is always accompanied by the opposite of even—and similarly with two and odd, or fire and cold, and hosts of others. Well, see, whether you accept this definition. Not only does an opposite not admit its opposite, but if anything is accompanied by a form which has an opposite, and meets that opposite, then the thing which is accompanied never admits the opposite of the form by which it is accompanied. Let me refresh your memory; there is no harm in hearing a thing several times.

Five will not admit the form of even, nor will ten, which is double five, admit the form of odd. Double has an opposite of its own, but at the same time it will not admit the form of odd. Nor will one and a half, or other fractions such as one half or three quarters and so on, admit the form of whole. I assume that you follow me and agree.

I follow and agree perfectly, said Cebes.

Then run over the same ground with me from the beginning, and don't answer in the exact terms of the question, but follow my example. I say this because besides the "safe answer" that I described at first, as the result of this discussion I now see another means of safety. Suppose, for instance, that you ask me what must be present in a body to make it hot. I shall not return the safe but ingenuous answer that it is heat, but a more sophisticated one, based on the results of our discussion—namely that it is fire. And if you ask what must be present in a body to make it diseased, I shall say not disease but fever. Similarly if you ask what must be present in a number to make it odd, I shall say not oddness but unity, and so on. See whether you have sufficient grasp now of what I want from you.

Quite sufficient.

Then tell me, what must be present in a body to make it alive?

Soul.

Is this always so?

Of course.

So whenever soul takes possession of a body, it always brings life with it?

Yes, it does.

Is there an opposite to life, or not?

Yes, there is.

What?

Death.

Does it follow, then, from our earlier agreement, that soul will never admit the opposite of that which accompanies it?

Most definitely, said Cebes.<sup>68</sup>

Ross sees the importance of the passage on which we have focused and he writes: "The interest of the passage lies in the fact that in it Plato, apparently for the first time, notices the existence of pairs of Ideas related as genus and species. The passage is thus a prelude to the later problem of division (διαίρεσις)<sup>69</sup> and to the discussion of the community of the genera (κοινωνία τῶν γενῶν)<sup>70</sup> of the *Sophist*."<sup>71</sup>

We also find a clear reference to the whole problem of the bonds among the Ideas in the *Republic*, in a passage already noted, in which the Ideas are identified with "one" (the one-beautiful, the one-ugly, the one-good, etc.); moreover, in this passage each Idea is specified as "one" and nevertheless "is presented everywhere in community with

68. *Phaedo* 104B6–105D12.

69. See the passages of the *Phaedrus* and the *Sophist* which we are about to quote.

70. See Chapter 13.

71. Ross, *Plato's Forms*, 33.

action, bodies, and other <Ideas> as, each of which appears multiplied."<sup>72</sup>

This passage causes grave problems for many scholars because it implies, at least for the interpretations integrated in the traditional paradigm, a pretty sizable "anomaly." Each Idea is of itself a "unity," but it appears as "many" not only in the sensible realm but also in the ideal realm in its association with other Ideas. For example, there is the relation between the Idea of animal in general and the Ideas of the various species of animals with which it is associated and by which it is shown to be multiple. Plato clearly speaks of the generic Idea and of the specific Ideas into which it is articulated and subdivided. Thus he clearly already has in hand the doctrine which he will unpack more fully in the later dialogues.

Naturally, under the influence of the old paradigm, some scholars have tried to amend the text, to eliminate the "anomaly." That is, some have believed that Plato could only have at his disposal those theories which he sets out at length and at the times and in the ways he presents them. But Ross, while trying to remain within the traditional paradigm, writes as follows: "But we have already in the *Phaedo* found Plato saying that the Idea of three imports into particular groups of three the Idea of oddness, and this it can do only because it shares in that Idea itself, so that the notion of the participation of one Idea in another is no new one to Plato."<sup>73</sup>

In a well-known passage of the *Phaedrus*, Plato further clarifies the problem, because the issues discussed in this dialogue call for it, even if its full exposition is found only in the later dialogues, which had greater call for it and in which the characters were competent to grasp these explications and explanations.

*Socrates:* For the most part I think our festal hymn has really been just a festive entertainment, but we did casually allude to a certain pair of procedures, and it would be very agreeable if we could seize their significance in a scientific fashion.

*Phaedrus:* What procedures do you mean?

*Socrates:* The first is that in which we bring a dispersed plurality under a single form, seeing it all together—the purpose being to define so-and-so, and thus to make plain whatever may be chosen as the topic for exposition . . .

*Phaedrus:* And what is the second procedure you speak of, Socrates?

*Socrates:* The reverse of the other, whereby we are enabled to divide into forms, following the objective articulation; we are not to attempt to hack off parts like a clumsy butcher . . .

*Phaedrus:* That is perfectly true.

72. See note 50, above.

73. Ross, *Plato's Forms*, 37.



*Socrates*: Believe me, Phaedrus, I am myself a lover of these divisions and collections, that I may gain the power to speak and to think, and whenever I deem another man able to discern an objective unity and plurality, I follow in his footsteps where he leads as a god.<sup>74</sup>

The complementary procedures of dialectic are thus two: the generalizing procedure [*synagoge*] which consists in grasping in a synoptic vision many scattered particular Ideas in a broader and unifying single Idea; and the procedure of distinction or division [*diairesis*] in accordance with the arrangement naturally implicit in the Idea.

In the *Sophist*, Plato goes still further, and specifies the twofold procedure of dialectic as follows:

*Stranger*: Dividing according to kinds, not taking the same form for a different one or a different one for the same—is not that the business of the science of dialectic?

*Theaetetus*: Most certainly.

*Stranger*: And the man who can do that discerns clearly [*1a*] the Idea everywhere extended throughout many, where each remains a separated unity, and in addition [*1b*] many <Ideas> as different from one another, embraced from without by one <Idea>; [*2a*] and again one single <Idea> connected in a unity through many wholes; and in addition [*2b*] many <Ideas> as entirely marked off apart. That means knowing how to distinguish, kind by kind, in what ways the several kinds can or cannot combine.<sup>75</sup>

The passage has aroused spirited discussion, and has recently been reexamined in detail; however, it is ought to be said that the correct approach seems to be that spelled out by Stenzel and those who have followed his lead.<sup>76</sup> Let us quote one of the clearest explanations, given by Cornford and arrived at by way of Stenzel's line of thought:

The structure of the Forms is conceived as a hierarchy of genera and species amenable to the methods of *Collection* and *Division*. This first half of the sentence refers especially to the preliminary process of Collection described in the *Phaedrus* as "taking a survey of widely scattered Forms (species) and bringing them into a single (genus) Form." So here there are at first a definite number of Forms (πολλά) "each one lying apart." These are the scattered species to be collected, including the specific Form (or Forms) that we wish ultimately to define. The Dialectician surveys the collection and "clearly discerns" by intuition the common (generic) character "extended throughout" them all. So he divines the generic Form, that he will take for division. This

74. *Phaedrus* 265C–266B7.

75. *Sophist* 253D1–E2.

76. J. Stenzel, *Studien zur Entwicklung der platonischen Dialektik*, 62–71. Among the detailed studies of these passages, we should draw attention to A. Gomez-Lobo, "Plato's Description of Dialectic in the *Sophist*, 253D1–E2," in *Phronesis* 22 (1977): 29–47, which follows exactly the method which we do not share, and in our view does not shift the vision Stenzel had proposed.

generic Form he now sees as a unity which is complex, "embracing" a number of different Forms, which will figure in the subsequent Division as specific differences, or as specific Forms characterized by their differences.

The second half of the sentence is less easy to interpret. As the first half described the results of Collection, this second half appears to describe the results of the subsequent Division. The many Forms, which after Collection were to seem to be embraced by a single generic Form, are now seen "entirely marked off apart." Division has brought to light all the differences which distinguish them. The indivisible species in which Division terminates are "entirely separated," in the sense that they are mutually exclusive and incompatible: Man cannot blend with Ox, as both blend with Animal or as Man blends with Biped, Ox with Quadruped. With these many Forms is contrasted the "one Form connected in unity through many wholes" (διὰ ὅλων πολλῶν). The term "wholes" is applied to the many (specific) Forms because, now that they have been completely defined, they are seen as a complex: each is a whole whose parts are enumerated in the defining formula, such as "Man is the rational biped Animal." Finally, through all these subordinate wholes—Man, Ox, Horse, etc.—the single generic Form Animal is, as it were, dispersed. It blends with each specific Form, and yet in virtue of its own nature it is "connected in a unity" traversing them all.<sup>77</sup>

Here is an interesting parallel passage from the *Statesman*:

*Young Socrates*: Each of the subdivisions you have named is very extensive, and the one differs vastly from the other.

*Stranger*: Does not the statement . . . turn out to be precisely what many of our "erudite" friends [the Pythagoreans] say from time to time—and say with the air of men uttering a profound truth? We say like them that measurement is involved in all that is brought into being, for all activities directed by arts involve measurement in some form or other. But our friends, for all their erudition, have not been trained to study things by dividing them into real classes. As a result here we find them confusing these two types of measurement, which are in fact so different, just because they have judged them to be of like nature. There are other classes of things about which they commit the opposite error; they distinguish them but fail to distinguish according to the real distinctions. Now the following would be the right method. Whenever it is the essential affinity between a given group of Ideas which the philosopher perceives on first inspection, he ought not to forsake his task until he sees clearly as many true differences as exist within the whole complex unity—the differences which exist in reality and constitute the several species.<sup>78</sup>

Finally, the *Philebus* presents this problem with a clarification of the underlying logical relations between the One and the Many.

*Socrates*: We get this identity of the one and the many cropping up everywhere as the result of the sentences we utter; in every single sentence ever uttered . . . there it is. What we are dealing with is a problem that will assuredly

77. F. M. Cornford, *Plato's Theory of Knowledge* (London, 1935), 267ff.

78. *Statesman* 284E9–285B6.

never cease to exist; this is not its first appearance. Rather it is in my view, something incidental to sentences themselves, never to pass, never to fade.<sup>79</sup>

To properly understand the implications of these claims, we must bring them into relation with the protology of the Unwritten Doctrines, which are more visible in this dialogue than in any other (though still not wholly so), and so we should discuss them first.

What we have said hitherto clearly implies that the Ideas form a hierarchical order which, going from low to high, ascends toward ever more universal Ideas (just as, going from high to low, it descends toward ever more particular Ideas). Nevertheless, Plato does not say in a systematic fashion what these general Ideas are, he only offers discussions of some of them, as in the *Sophist*, or in another way, in the *Philebus*. But what is more striking is the fact that only in the *Republic* does Plato speak clearly (albeit partially) of the highest Idea, which is the Idea of the Good. But he does not present it at all as some kind of *summmum genus* (highest genus) of which the subordinate Ideas would be the articulations. Rather, he presents it as beyond-being, and as the cause of the very being and essence of the Ideas. But he does not explain how this type of causality is to be interpreted or how and why the Idea of the Good grounds being, knowledge, and all moral values.

It is this point which has sparked the greatest number of discussions and arguments to which the Unwritten Doctrines brings decisive aid. If the Unwritten Doctrines are neglected, then there are two ways which have been followed to solve these problems and explain the key points of these dialogues: one is to make surreptitious use of speculative developments from systems later than Plato; and the other is to treat the crucial passages as intuitive leaps and undeveloped fragments (as the present author once believed).

But there is yet another problem which the metaphysical map of the *Phaedo* raises, that is, the intervention of a universal Intelligence in explaining the relations that hold between the Ideas and the many sensible things. This problem is frequently taken up and discussed in the writings, and Plato supplies high-level solutions to it. Nevertheless, the ultimate solution of this problem involves relating it to the protology of the Unwritten Doctrines. Therefore, before going on to the protology, we ought to conclude our discussion of the theory of Ideas by specifying the basic conditions of the question in such a way as to complete the outline of the metaphysical problems raised in Plato's writings that must be connected with the protology if they are to be fully resolved.

79. *Philebus* 15D4-8.

VIII. THE ONE AND THE MANY, THE RELATION BETWEEN THE IDEAS  
AND THE SENSIBLE WORLD, AND THE MEDIATING WORK  
OF THE DEMIURGE

The problem of the relation between the One and the Many which arises when we try to understand the relations among the various Ideas and to explain their derivation from a first Principle, recurs for the explanation of the relations between the Ideas and sensible things.

Accounting for the relations between the world of the Ideas and the sensible world was subject to misunderstanding by some of Plato's contemporaries including even some of his followers, so much so that, in the *Parmenides*, Plato takes aim at, and in part refutes, interpretations which recall some of those maintained by Aristotle in the *Metaphysics*.

In his writings, Plato offers different perspectives on this matter, saying that between the sensible and the intelligible spheres there is (a) a relation of *mimesis* or imitation, (b) or of *methexis* or participation, or (c) of *koinonía* or community, (d) or again of *parousía* or presence.<sup>80</sup> And these words have provoked an excessive amount of debate. But in the *Phaedo* Plato explicitly says that these term must be understood as mere suggestions, not to be insisted on and not to be thought of as final answers; what he is concerned with is simply to establish that Ideas are the true causes of the sensible, that they are the principles of these things, their *ratio essendi* (reason for being), their metaphysical ground and condition for being.<sup>81</sup> He means to stop at the first level of the first stage of the Second Voyage. To arrive at the final answer, he would have had to call upon the protology of the Unwritten Doctrines, and the perspective of the highest Principles.

Bearing all this in mind, we may clarify the Platonic terms to which we have referred while staying at the level of the first stage of the Second Voyage, and leaving open a serious problem to which we shall return:

a. The sensible is a *mimesis* of the intelligible because it imitates it, without ever becoming its equal; in its continual becoming, it approaches asymptotically, and then it retreats from it as it corrupts.

b. The sensible, insofar as it realizes its essence, participates, that is, it has a part of the intelligible; in particular, it is through its having a part in the Idea that it is and is knowable.

c. It can be said that the sensible is in communion with, that is, has a contact with the intelligible, since the latter is the cause and foundation

80. See *Phaedo* 100C–E. In this passage Plato speaks expressly of the second, third, and fourth type of relations; but at 74D and 75B he is clearly talking about the relation of imitation.

81. Cf. *Phaedo* 100D.

of the former: whatever the sensible has of being and knowability is derived from the intelligible, and, insofar as it has this being and this intelligibility, it has “communion” with the intelligible.

d. Finally, it can also be said that the intelligible is present in the sensible insofar as the cause is in the effect, the principle is in that which is principled, the condition in that which is conditioned.

In this way the Platonic terminology becomes clear. So too does the famous term “paradigm,” or “model,” which Plato uses for the role of the Ideas in relation to the sensibles which “imitate” them and of which the sensibles are like “copies.”<sup>82</sup> Plato expresses with the word “paradigm” what, in modern terms, could be called the “ontological normativeness” of the Ideas, that is, how things ought to be, or the imperative of a thing’s being. The Idea of the pious is a “paradigm” because it expresses how things or actions ought to be and be to be called pious; the Idea of beauty is a “paradigm” because it expresses how things ought to be formally structured to be and be called beautiful, and so on.<sup>83</sup>

In addition to the protological problems of the relation of the One to the Many this conception leaves open also the problem which the metaphysical map of the *Phaedo* presents as basic (from which the Second Voyage itself begins), but which it then left unresolved: the relation between things and the Ideas cannot be conceived as unmediated, and therefore a mediator is called for, that is, a principle which produces the imitation, underwrites the participation, actualizes the presence, and grounds the communion between the Ideas and things.

This is the enormous problem of the ordering Intelligence and its role. As we shall see below, Plato had a complete solution to the problem when he wrote the *Phaedo*, so much so that he foreshadows it in several dialogues written immediately after the *Phaedo*, beginning with the *Republic*,<sup>84</sup> but he formulates it at length, in its classic form, in the *Timaeus*. The mediation between the sensible and the intelligible is the work of a supreme Intelligence, which is associated with the figure of the “Demiurge,” that is, the figure of an Artisan or Craftsman who molds the *chora* (the undetermined space, a kind of substrate or unformed receptacle), in accordance with the “model” of the Ideas, making each thing as perfectly similar to, as close an imitation of, the “ideal paradigms or Ideas” as possible. But, unless due account is taken of a

82. We shall speak about the concept of “paradigm” in Chapter 18, while discussing the *Timaeus*.

83. See, for example, *Euthyphro* 6D.

84. See Chapter 16, *passim*.

large protological contribution, the ultimate solution to this problem will not be achieved. Particularly in the *Philebus*, Plato will make use of the metaphysical categories of limit, unlimited, their mixture, and the cause of their mixture to explain the Ideas' operation on the undetermined *chora* and hence to explain the things that emerge from this "mixture," as a result of the Demiurgic Intelligence operating as the cause on the mixture. And this operation is the determining action of the One on the undetermined Many as a result of Intelligence; and the "mixture" from which "unity-in-multiplicity" derives.

At a certain point in the *Timaeus* Plato says:

Divinity has knowledge and power sufficient to blend the many into one and to resolve the one into many, but no man is now, or ever will be, equal to either task.<sup>85</sup>

Liberated from the old paradigm, we can now see that to solve the various problems that the theory of Ideas throws up we need to confront and decide once and for all what to do about the great issue of the Platonic protology as reconstructed by the School of Tübingen, which is the most advanced account of it so far contributed to the interpretation of Plato's philosophy and especially to his unwritten metaphysics.

85. *Timaeus* 68D4-7.

## 7 The Completion of the Second Voyage: The Theory of the Highest Principles (the One and the Indefinite Dyad) and Its Structure and Role

### I. FROM THE THEORY OF IDEAS TO THE PROTOLOGY

The time has now arrived to come to terms with the highest “hypotheses” Plato speaks about in tracing the metaphysical map of the *Phaedo* which describes the Second Voyage.<sup>1</sup> These are the “things of greatest value” the *Phaedrus* speaks about,<sup>2</sup> namely, the first and highest Principles set aside for oral dialectic.<sup>3</sup> We have already referred to Unwritten Doctrines about these and here we aim to trace their outlines, because it is only with their help that the ontology of the Ideas (and thus the whole of Plato’s thought) can be given its unity and full meaning.

Despite its being unpalatable to many scholars of Plato, we must begin with a general remark about a characteristic mode of thought of the ancient Greeks.

It is a basic conviction animating all the philosophy preceding Plato that to explain means to unify.

This conviction underlay the discussions of all the Naturalists, who proceeded to explain the variety of phenomena in the cosmos by reducing them to the unity of a single principle or to a few principles, conceived in a unifying way. This tendency reached its extreme expression in Eleaticism, which resolved the whole of being into unity, issuing in radical monism.

Just such a conviction also underlies Socrates’ inquiries, centered as they are on the question “What is it?” which carries with it the systematic reduction of the subject of discussion to unity. The tendency to which we are alluding is most evident in Socrates’ chosen sphere: ethics. All the complex affairs making up moral and political life are reduced to the unity of the virtues which is then reduced to knowledge (the many virtues are explained by being reduced to a single essence, consisting in the unity of true knowledge).

1. See Chapter 5.

2. See Chapter 3, section I, pp. 51–62 above.

3. See Chapter 3, pp. 59–60 and 63–64.

The whole of Plato's doctrine of the Ideas arose—as we saw above<sup>4</sup>—from such a conviction and from a significant increase in the importance of the synoptic vision, which steers the methodical procedure of “unifying” the multiplicity which it is meant to explain. The plurality of sensible things is explained precisely by reducing it to the synoptic unity of the relevant Idea.

But the theory of Ideas shows up a further plurality, this time on the new metaphysical level of the intelligible.<sup>5</sup> If the many sensible men are unified and explained by the relevant Idea of Man, the many trees by the Idea of Tree, the many manifestations of beauty by the Idea of Beauty, and so on for all the experiential realities to which we give a single name, then it is evident that sensible multiplicity is simplified and resolved by the unity of the intelligible Ideas; but the intelligible multiplicity in its turn is not itself resolved. Plato also admits Ideas not only for the things which we call substantial realities (like man, animals, and vegetables), but also for all qualities and all aspects of things which can be grouped together (Beauty, Great, Double, etc.), so that the plurality to be found in the world of Ideas is an outstanding feature of it—as Aristotle stressed in a passage already quoted.<sup>6</sup>

It follows that the theory of Ideas could not provide the ultimate level of explanation. The sensible “multiplicity” is explained by Ideas which are “unities,” but which taken together form an intelligible “multiplicity”; therefore, this “multiplicity” demands a further explanation. Thus we see the necessity of moving to a second level of metaphysical grounding.

In his dialogues and for those readers who restrict themselves to reading the dialogues, Plato held that the first level of metaphysical ground would be sufficient. For, once the theory of Ideas is arrived at, the various teachings that he entrusted to the writings would be adequately justified. But with his followers within the Academy, he focused his attention closely on the second level of justification, so as to solve the problems to which the theory of Ideas itself gave rise.

In this way the final stage of the Second Voyage is completed in accordance with the plan set out in the metaphysical map of the *Phaedo*.

Just as the sphere of the sensible multiplicity depends on the sphere of the Ideas, so the sphere of the multiplicity of the Ideas depends on a further sphere of reality, from which the Ideas are derived, and this is absolutely the first and highest sphere.

4. See in particular pp. 125ff. above.

5. See pp. 132ff. above.

6. *Republic* 5.475E3–476A7. See also the Aristotelian texts cited in Chapter 6, note 50.



This is the sphere of the first Principles. Plato explicitly calls them the highest and primary realities (τὰ ἄκρα καὶ πρῶτα), and it is for this reason that we propose to use the name “protology” for the teachings which deal with the study of the first Principles.

These teachings contain the ultimate foundation because they explain what the Principles are from which the Ideas arise (which in turn explain everything else), and therefore give the explanation of the totality of the things that exist.

Thus, we have a clear sense in which the ontology of the Ideas and the protology or the theory of Principles make up two distinct levels of grounding, two successive levels of metaphysical inquiry, that is, two stages of the Second Voyage.

## II. THE MOST IMPORTANT EVIDENCE FOR TWO LEVELS OF METAPHYSICAL FOUNDATION

To get a quick grasp of what the absolutely primary Principles are for Plato, we may begin with a review of the central texts.<sup>7</sup> The Principles are (1) the supreme One, which is the principle of formal determination, and (2) the indeterminate (indefinite or infinite) Dyad or the Dyad of the great-and-small, which is the Principle of indefinite variability. We shall discuss later the exact meaning of these Principles; for the present what we wish to focus on is the historical evidence for Plato’s separation between two levels of metaphysical foundation and for the One and the Dyad as the culmination of the theory of the Principles.

After giving a brief explanation of the origin of the doctrine of Ideas, Aristotle writes in the *Metaphysics*:

Since the Forms [= Ideas] were the causes of all other things [on the first level], he thought their elements were the elements of all things. As the mate-

7. On this issue, see Krämer, *Arete*, 249–318, and *Platone*, 153–78 [Am. ed., 77–91]; and Gaiser, *Platons*, 41–172. For information on all the important critical literature concerning this protological issue and the Unwritten Doctrines of Plato in general, see Krämer, *Platone*, 418–32 [Am. ed., 287–300] (which cites the works from 1742 to 1982), and G. Wipperfurth, *Das Problem der ungeschriebenen Lehre Platons*, 449–64 (which cites critical literature of the twentieth century and corresponding reviews). The collection of the testimonies of the indirect tradition concerning the Unwritten Doctrines of Plato which is the principal point of reference is Gaiser’s “Testimonia Platonica. Quellentexte zur Schule und mündlichen Lehre Platons,” published as an appendix to the volume *Platons ungeschriebene Lehre*, 441–557. Krämer has presented the principal testimonies in Appendix 3 of his *Platone*, 370–417 [Am. ed., 203–17]. For the convenience of the reader we shall give the references using the numbering which the testimonies are quoted by in both collections. [We shall also give, where appropriate, the numbering used by J. N. Findlay in *Plato: The Written and Unwritten Doctrines* (New York: Humanities Press, 1974), so the name Findlay followed by a page number and then the number of the testimony refers to the Humanities Press reprint. We have followed Findlay’s translations. (Eds.)]

rial element of the Forms [Ideas] he posited the Great-and-small, and as formal cause the One [the second level].<sup>8</sup>

And a little further on, while comparing the teachings of Plato with his own doctrine on the causes, Aristotle states very clearly that Plato employed the *material cause* and the *formal cause* in two senses, that is to say, on two levels:

Plato, then, declared himself thus on the points in question; it is evident from what has been said that he has used only two causes, that of the formal and the material cause. In fact the Ideas are formal causes of the other things [first level], and the One is formal cause of the other Ideas [second level]. And to the question what is the matter having the function of substrate, of which the Ideas are predicated in the sensible realm [first level], and of which the One in the sphere of the Ideas [second level] are predicated, he replied that it is the Dyad, that is, the great-and-small.<sup>9</sup>

Theophrastus for his part confirms this, with similar observations:

Now Plato also, in reducing things' links to the ruling principles [first level], might seem to be treating of the other things in linking them up with the Ideas and these with the numbers, and in proceeding from the numbers to the ruling principles [second level], and then, following the order of generation, down as far as the things we have named.<sup>10</sup>

The following passage from Sextus Empiricus touches on some reports about the Unwritten Doctrines of Plato:

It is . . . clear from what has been said that the principles of bodies which are graspable only by thought must be incorporeal. But if there are incorporeals which exist prior to bodies it does not follow that these are necessarily elements of existing things and primary principles. For we may consider how the Ideas, which are for Plato incorporeal, exist prior to bodies, and how everything which comes to be does so in virtue of its relation to them [first level]; yet they are not the first principles of existing things since each Idea taken separately is said to be a unit, but when taken in conjunction with one or more others it is said to be two or three or four, so that there is something which transcends their substance, namely number, by participation in which the terms one or two or three or a still higher number than these is predicated of them. . . . Thus there are two principles of being: the primary units, by participation in which all the unities are counted as one; and the indefinite Dyad, by participation in which all the dualities are specified as two [second level].<sup>11</sup>

Depending on Aristotle's reports of Plato's teaching, Alexander of Aphrodisias writes:

8. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* A 6.987b18–21 (Gaiser, 22A; Krämer, III.9; Findlay, 415.3).

9. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, A 6.988a7–14 (Gaiser, 22A; Krämer, III.9; Findlay, 416.3).

10. Theophrastus *Metaphysics* 6b11–16 (Gaiser, 30; Krämer, III.8, trans. Ross & Fobes).

11. Sextus Empiricus, *Adv. math.* 10.258 and 262 (Gaiser, 32; Krämer, III.12; Findlay, 427.17).

In addition, the Ideas are principles of other things, and since the Ideas are numbers, their principles are the principles of numbers; and the principles of numbers he said are the One and the Dyad.<sup>12</sup>

We also learn from Aristotle:

Further, he assigned the cause of good and that of evil to the elements, one to each of the two, as we say some of his predecessors sought to do, for example, Empedocles and Anaxagoras.<sup>13</sup>

Of those who maintain the existence of the immobile substances some say the One itself is the good itself; but they thought its substance lay mainly in the One.<sup>14</sup>

Faced with such teachings, many scholars at first feel a reaction of repulsion. This is the reaction of scholars who find that they are in conflict with the dialogues, and, being unable to account for them, look for ways of rejecting or condemning them. But it is also the reaction of many of Plato's contemporaries who failed to understand the meaning of these statements. In fact, we are explicitly told that on at least one occasion Plato himself tried to take these doctrines outside of the Academy, not in writing, but in a public lecture (or a series of lectures). But the results were as follows:

Aristotle was wont to relate that most of those who heard Plato's Discourse [*akrasis*] *On the Good* had the following experience. Each came thinking that he would be told something about one of the recognized human goods, such as Wealth, Health or Strength, or, in sum, some marvelous Happiness. But when it appeared that Plato was to talk on Mathematics and Numbers and Geometry and Astronomy, leading up to the statement that the Good was unity. They were overwhelmed by the paradox of the whole matter. Some then pooh-poohed the whole thing and others were outraged by it.<sup>15</sup>

Therefore, we must not fall into the error into which those hearers fell (and many modern scholars with them). But to avoid this error we must try hard to understand what Plato meant by speaking about the One and the indefinite Dyad as the highest and first Principles (τὰ ἄκροα καὶ πρῶτα), and by giving great importance to Numbers, that is, in some sense reducing the Ideas to Numbers, and finally by identifying the Good with the One.

Let us begin with seeing why the protology, in the first place, posits two Principles at the apex of reality and not just a single Principle as we might anticipate.

12. Alexander of Aphrodisias, *In Arist. Metaph.* 56.6–9 Hayduck (Gaiser, 22B; Krämer, III.10; Findlay, 417.5).

13. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* A 6.988a14–17 (Gaiser, 22A; Krämer, III.9; Findlay, 416.3).

14. *Ibid.*, N 4.1091b13–15 (Gaiser, 51; Krämer, III.24; Findlay, 440.28).

15. Aristoxenus, *Harm. elem.* 2.39–40 (Gaiser, 7; Krämer, III.1; Findlay, 413.2).

### III. WHY PLATO ADMITS TWO PRINCIPLES AS PRIMORDIAL AND DOES NOT REFER TO A SINGLE PRINCIPLE

The fundamental metaphysical problem for the ancient Greeks was: "Why are there many?" or "Why and how are the many derived from the One?"

We know that the problem came to occupy center stage and took on its most acute form after the radical experience of Eleatic thought, which, denying every form of nonbeing, had thereby denied every form of multiplicity, and had reduced all being to unity [ἓν] (understood as a thoroughgoing henology, or *radical monism*).

The Pluralists had tried to overcome the difficulty, by taking as primordial various multiplicities (the four *Roots* of Empedocles, the *Homoiomerics* of Anaxagoras, the *Atoms* of Democritus).

On the protological level, rather than that of the ontology of Ideas (on which the multiplicity of sensibles is explained by another multiplicity, that of the Ideas), Plato's innovation lay in the attempt to use the Principles of the One and the indefinite Dyad to give an exhaustive and ultimate "justification" of multiplicity itself.

Proclus attests that:

They [viz., Plato and Speusippus] held that the One is better than Being and is the source of Being, and they separated it from the usual understanding of what a Principle is. Maintaining that if the One itself is taken by itself and considered alone without other things, nothing else being added to it, it would not be able to produce any other thing, they introduced the principle of the indefinite Dyad [besides the One].<sup>16</sup>

Setting out the theory of the Principles of the One and the indefinite Dyad Aristotle confirms this thought as follows:

[ . . . ] they held that all things would have to be reduced to the One, that is to being itself unless they encountered and refuted the saying of Parmenides "For never will this be proved, that things that are not, are." They thought it necessary to prove that which is, is; for only thus—of that which is [One] and something else—could things that are be composed, if they are many.<sup>17</sup>

Thus the indefinite Dyad is obviously not the number two, just as the One, in the sense of the Principle, is not the number one. Both of these Principles have a metaphysical status, and hence are metamathematicals. It ought to be stressed that the "indefinite Dyad" is the Principle and root of the multiplicity of beings. It is conceived as the Dyad of the great-and-small in the sense that it is indefinite greatness and indefinite

16. Proclus, *In Plat. Parmenidem* (translated by William of Moerbeke), 38ff., ed. Kliban-sky-Labowsky (Gaiser, 50).

17. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* N 2.1089a2-6.

smallness, insofar as it is the potentiality of the infinitely great and the infinitely small. It is in virtue of this twofold directionality that it is called the "infinite (or indefinite) Dyad" and it is also defined as the Dyad of the great-and-small, of the more-and-less, of the greater-and-lesser, and as structural inequality.<sup>18</sup>

Alexander writes:

He [Plato] also tried to show that the equal and unequal were the principles of all things and of their opposites. [Plato] attributed equality to the One, and inequality to excess and defect. For inequality is to be found in two things, that is, in the great and the small, which are respectively that which is through excess and that which is through defect. For this reason he called it an indefinite Dyad, being as such neither one nor the other, that is, neither that which exceeds nor that which is excessive, insofar as it is not determined but indeterminate and indefinite.<sup>19</sup>

Referring to a book of Dercyllidas which cites Hermodorus, follower and friend of Plato, Simplicius reports:

Since Aristotle frequently says that Plato spoke of Matter as the *Great and Small*, one must note what, according to Porphyry, Dercyllidas wrote in the eleventh Book of his *Philosophy of Plato*, where Matter is under discussion. Dercyllidas, Porphyry says, cited a statement from a book on Plato by one Hermodorus, Plato's friend, from which it is clear that Plato put Matter in the class of the Infinite and Indefinite, and showed it to be one of the things that admit of the More and the Less, among which the Great and the Small are to be reckoned.<sup>20</sup>

Adopting some jargon not used by Plato, we may say that at the highest level the Dyad is a sort of "intelligible matter," whereas at the lowest level it is a sort of "sensible matter." It is an indeterminate and indefinite multiplicity which functions as substrate for the action of the One, producing the multiplicity of things in all their forms. Thus, besides being the Principle of plurality at any given level, it is also the Principle of the plurality of levels of the real.

We can, thus, resolve our original problem as follows: Plurality, difference, and gradation of entities arise from the action of the One determining the opposite Principle of the Dyad, which is an indeterminate multiplicity. The two Principles are therefore equally primordial. The One has no power to produce without the Dyad, even though it is hierarchically superior to it.

18. See further Krämer, *Platone*, 154ff. [Am. ed. 77ff.].

19. Alexander of Aphrodisias, *In Arist. Metaph.* 56.13–20 Hayduck (Gaiser, 22B; Krämer, III.10; Findlay, 417.5).

20. Simplicius, *In Arist. Phys.*, 247.30–248.2 Diels (Gaiser, 31; Krämer, III.13; Findlay, 425.16).

It is not entirely accurate to speak of two Principles, if the two is understood arithmetically. Since numbers are subsequent to the Principles and derived from them, they cannot be applied to them except metaphorically. Therefore, we ought to speak of two Principles understanding that we are using "two" in a prototypical sense. It would be certainly more exact to say not that the Principles constitute a dualism (since this term has generated and continues to generate numerous ambiguities and inappropriate theoretical and polemical inferences), but rather a "polarity" insofar as each Principle depends on the other structurally or necessarily.<sup>21</sup>

#### IV. BEING AS THE SYNTHESIS OF THE TWO HIGHEST PRINCIPLES AND ITS BIPOLAR STRUCTURE

The action of the One on the Dyad is a kind of delimitation, determination, and definition of the unlimited, of the indeterminate, and of the indefinite, or, as Plato seems also to have said, an equalization of the unequal.<sup>22</sup> The entities deriving from the action of the One on the Dyad are a kind of synthesis which manifests itself as unity-in-multiplicity, which defines and determines the indefinite and indeterminate. Alexander writes: "Each thing is one, insofar as it is something definite and determined."<sup>23</sup>

And this is the core of the Platonic protology: being is produced by two primordial principles and hence is a synthesis, a mixture of unity and multiplicity, of determination and indetermination, of limit and unlimited. In the *Philebus*, Plato sets himself to give a written synopsis of this matter.<sup>24</sup>

Krämer has summed up this notion:

Of course this "generation" is not to be understood as a temporal process, but rather as a metaphor to exemplify an analysis of the ontological structure. Its aim is to render the non-processive and atemporal ordering of being comprehensible to the discursive understanding. Everything which is, exists insofar as it is something limited, determined, distinct, identical, permanent, and, so far forth, shares in the primordial unity, which is the principle of every determination. A thing is not a something, unless it is in some measure one thing. But it can be something and one and participate in unity only because it participates at the same time in the opposed principle of unlimited multiplic-

21. See de Vogel, *Rethinking Plato and Platonism*, on the question "Was Plato a dualist?"

22. Cf. Krämer, *Platone*, 155ff. and the documents on page 156, note 6 [Am. ed., 78ff. and 245, note 6].

23. Alexander of Aphrodisias, *In Arist. Metaph.* 56.30ff. Hayduck (Gaiser, 22B; Krämer, III.10; Findlay, 417.5).

24. See Chapter 17.

ity, and it is thus distinct from unity itself. Being, therefore, is essentially unity within multiplicity. To that extent the role of the two principles is similar to what we find in the Aristotelian distinction of formal and material principles. Being is defined as that which is “generated” from two principles through the limitation and determination of the material principle by the formal principle and is thus in a certain respect like a mixture. This is the core of Plato’s basic ontological conception. Consequently, the principles themselves are not being, but, insofar as they make up every being, they are prior to being. Therefore, unity as a principle of determination is above being, and the indeterminate material principle as not being is rather below being.<sup>25</sup>

The indirect tradition provides little information about the status of the One conceived as above being. There is one testimony which says that the One is “*melius ente*”<sup>26</sup> [“better than being”]; but as we shall see, Plato himself offers a flavor of his views on this matter in the *Republic*.<sup>27</sup>

On the other hand, Simplicius discusses the status of the Dyad as not-being or below being referring to the text of Hermodorus at the end of the passage read already cited:

In virtue of the negation of Being, it can be said to be unstable, shapeless, boundless, and unreal. Neither Principle nor Essence has any role here, but it [the Dyad] rushes about unpredictably.<sup>28</sup>

We shall return to discuss the meaning of the metaphysical status of the One, which is identified with the Good and is understood as above being.<sup>29</sup> We shall try to account for what Plato says in the *Republic*, where the Good is expressly defined as “above being,” and to say how important this conception is in the light of the new interpretive paradigm.<sup>30</sup>

25. See Krämer, *Platone*, 156 [Am. ed., 78].

26. See the text quoted in note 16 above.

27. See Chapter 11 for the documents and various related matters.

28. Simplicius, *In Arist. Phys.* 248.13–16 Diels (Gaiser, 31; Krämer, III.13; Findlay, 425.16 fin.).

29. See note 27, above.

30. On this issue Krämer’s contribution is indispensable, “ΕΠΙΚΕΙΝΑ ΤΗΣ ΟΥΣΙΑΣ. Zu Platon, *Politeia* 509B,” in *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 51 (1969): 1–30.





## 8 The Ideal Numbers and the Ideas, Mathematical Numbers as Intermediates, and the Hierarchical Structure of Reality

### I. THE IDEAL NUMBERS AS THE FIRST ENTITIES CAUSED BY THE HIGHEST PRINCIPLES

A point which has always been a serious obstacle to the understanding of Plato's protology arises from the doctrine of the Ideal numbers and the Platonic reduction of the Ideas to numbers, in other words, from the conception of the Ideas as Ideal numbers. We know that the connection between the Ideas and the Ideal numbers was not made at the same time as the discovery of the theory of Ideas, but later than it.<sup>1</sup> It probably came about with the systematic and global formulation of the theory of the Principles, when Plato was able to provide the protological foundation of his ontology of the Ideas, as we shall explain later on.<sup>2</sup>

A preliminary clarification will avoid many confusions and misunderstandings.

The Ideal numbers with which we are concerned are not mathematical, but metaphysical: they are, for example, Two as essence of twoness, Three as essence of threeness, and so on. Thus, the Ideal numbers are the essences of mathematical numbers, and as such cannot be subjected to arithmetical operations. They have a metaphysical status different from that of mathematical numbers because they do not merely represent numbers, but are the essences of numbers. It therefore makes no sense to add the essence of two to the essence of three or to subtract the one from the other, and so on. They are the highest Ideal models.

Moreover, the Ideal numbers are presented as "firstborn," because they represent primordially, or paradigmatically, the synthetic structure of unity-in-multiplicity that characterizes everything at all levels of reality. The essence of an Ideal number consists in a specific determination and delimitation performed by the One on the Dyad, which is an indeterminate and unlimited multiplicity of the great-and-small.<sup>3</sup>

1. Cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* M 7.1078b7-12.

2. Cf. pp. 158ff. below.

3. On this issue, see Gaiser, *Platons*, 107ff., and Krämer, *Platone*, 157ff. [Am. ed., 79].

For example, Two, which is the first determination of the great and small, is multiplicity-and-smallness defined relative to the One as double and half. The Two implies an intrinsic relation between one quantity which is double (Two) and another which is half (One), and the first is determinately greater (twice greater) and the second is determinately smaller (by a half). Subsequent determinations of the indeterminate multiplicity give the subsequent numbers: Three, for example, will imply the relations of great-small, excess-defect, determined according to triple and a third, and so on. Here are three of the clearest testimonies on the issue:

When given definition by the One, the Indefinite Dyad became the Numerical Dyad. This Dyad was a single idea, and the first of the numbers. Its principles were the exceeding and the exceeded, since both double and half are present in the first Dyad. The double and half are exceeding and exceeded . . . but the exceeding and exceeded are not as yet double and half, and are therefore principles of the double. And since, when bounded, the exceeding and exceeded become double and half (for these are not indefinite any more than the triple and the third, or the quadruple and the quarter, or any other case of definite excess), it must be the nature of unity which effects this bounding (each thing being one since it is this definite thing). The elements of the numerical Dyad are . . . the One and the great and small. But this dyad is the first number, and so these are the elements of the dyad (and of every number). Such, . . . are the reasons why Plato made unity and the Dyad the principles of the numbers and of all realities, as Aristotle tells us in *On the Good*.<sup>4</sup>

But the first number is the Dyad, whose principles he said were the One and the great and small. Being a Dyad, it holds both multitude and fewness in itself. In so far as there is doubleness in it, it includes multitude—for the double is a case of multitude and excess—and magnitude—and in so far as halfness is in it, it includes fewness. Excess and defect and the great and the small are accordingly in it. But, inasmuch as each of its parts is a unity, and it itself is the single Eidos of duality, it shares in unity. He (Plato) therefore said that One and the great and small were the principles of the Dyad. He called it the indefinite Dyad in so far as it shared in the great and small, or the greater and smaller, and so was more or less. For these go on expanding or contracting unceasingly, and in progression towards the indefinitely infinite.<sup>5</sup>

From these principles the number one arose and the Dyad which succeeded it, from the prime Monad the number one, and from both prime Monad and the indefinite Dyad the number two. Twice one is two, and since there was not as yet a two or a twice among numbers, the number two arose out of the indefinite Dyad, and so was the offspring of this Dyad and the Monad. In the same way the other numbers were constructed . . . the One always setting bounds, while the indefinite Dyad doubled and so extended numbers in infinitum.<sup>6</sup>

4. Alexander of Aphrodisias, *In Arist. Metaph.* 56.20–35 Hayduck (Gaiser, 22B; Krämer, III.10; Findlay, 417.5).

5. Simplicius, *In Arist. Phys.* 454–55 Diels (Gaiser 23B; Krämer III.11; Findlay 419–20.7).

6. Sextus Empiricus, *Adv. math.* 10.276–77 (Gaiser, 32; Krämer, III.12; Findlay, 429.17).

## II. THE STRUCTURAL CONNECTION BETWEEN THE IDEAS AND THE IDEAL NUMBERS

Another noteworthy difficulty facing those who want to understand Plato's Unwritten Doctrines consists in trying to understand the meaning and nature of the reduction of the Ideas to numbers.

One error which we ought to avoid is that of taking the "reduction" to be an identification of the Ideas with numbers. It is quite true that our sources can seem to encourage this error, but this is only if they are understood superficially, without seeking the deeper explanations which they call for.

Aristotle, for example, continually conflates the two accounts, and so do his commentators. Alexander of Aphrodisias claims that Plato spoke of the number Ideas and so took the principles of the numbers to be the principles of the Ideas. Nevertheless, in his critical accounts Aristotle himself clearly distinguishes between the Ideal numbers and the Ideas and he subjects each of them to quite distinct objections. Aristotle's interpreters take a similar position.<sup>7</sup>

Theophrastus clarifies every doubt on the issue, specifying how the Ideas are distinguished from numbers, despite the derivation of the former from the latter. Theophrastus says that Plato proceeds by stages in bringing back things to the principles: (a) connecting the sensible things to the Ideas; (b) connecting these in their turn with numbers; and finally (c) rising again "from these to the principles."<sup>8</sup>

Thus, there is a close connection between the Ideas and the numbers but not a complete ontological identification.

A second error to avoid is that of maintaining that Plato aimed at reducing each Idea to a particular number, or of maintaining that in some way his thought took an arithmological or arithmosophic turn. Such a doctrine is to be found among the Pythagoreans, and especially the Neo-Pythagoreans, while as we shall see Plato's approach was wholly different and strongly rationalistic in character.

A third error to avoid is to read into the Platonic doctrine the modern concept of the integer expressing a determinate quantity, as well as being a pure conceptual abstraction. Instead, we must go back to the ancient Greek conception of number, as clearly explained by O.

7. In the Introduction to his commentary on the *Metaphysics* (*Aristotle's Metaphysics*, 1: lxxviff.) W. D. Ross accepted the thesis of the identification of the Ideas with Numbers, but in the volume *Plato's Theory of Ideas* he maintained the thesis of the subordination of the Ideas to Numbers (cf. 216ff.). See, in this regard, what Robin had already said (*La théorie*, 268ff., 454ff.).

8. Theophrastus, *Metaphysics* 6b11ff.

Töplitz<sup>9</sup> and beginning with Stenzel<sup>10</sup> and Wilpert<sup>11</sup> accepted by attentive scholars.

Töplitz showed that, for the ancient Greeks, number is always conceived not just as a whole number, or as a kind of compact quantity, but as an articulated relation of quantity and of fractions of quantity, of *logoi* and *analogiai*. If so, the Greek *logos* is essentially linked to the numerical sphere, and so has the fundamental meaning of "relation." Hence, for the ancient Greeks, it is quite natural to translate "relations" by "numbers," and to indicate relations with numbers, on account of the connection that holds between number and relation.<sup>12</sup>

Thus, we have the materials to solve our difficulty. Each Idea is located in a position in the intelligible world, according to its greater or lesser universality and according to the greater or lesser complexity of the relations which it has with other Ideas. This web of relations, then, can be reconstructed and specified by means of dialectic, and, given that a number expresses a relation, it can be expressed "numerically."

The conception of number as "relation" (*logos*) provides the key for reading and understanding this extremely finely poised part of the Unwritten Doctrines.

Moreover, Gaiser has shown that this interpretation of numbers as "relations" should not be narrowly understood as referring only to arithmetic, since it extends to geometrical relations, and thus is a structurally very complex kind of relation.<sup>13</sup>

And Gaiser clearly specifies the respect in which we are not dealing with a mere abstraction: "The reduction which, from concrete things perceptible by the senses, rises to numbers, is not a process of abstraction, but an enrichment of the content of reality. Numerical relations are immutably permanent, and so, for Plato, are the genuine being that endures through every difference and change of each single thing. Thus, the whole world is primordially contained in the harmony of the first numbers."<sup>14</sup>

A fourth error to be avoided is that of believing that Ideal numbers will multiply entities beyond believability, and without sufficient reason.

9. O. Töplitz, "Das Verhältnis von Mathematik und Ideenlehre bei Plato," in *Quellen und Studien zur Geschichte der Mathematik* 1 (1929): 3-33, reprinted by O. Becker in the collection *Zur Geschichte der griechischen Mathematik* (Darmstadt, 1965), 45-75.

10. J. Stenzel, "Zur Theorie des Logos bei Aristoteles," in *Quellen und Studien zur Geschichte der Mathematik* 1 (1929): 34ff., and reprinted now in Stenzel, *Kleine Schriften zur griechischen Philosophie* (Darmstadt, 1956), 188-219.

11. P. Wilpert, *Zwei aristotelische Frühschriften über die Ideenlehre* (Regensburg, 1949).

12. Cf. O. Töplitz, "Das Verhältnis," passim.

13. Gaiser, *Platons*, 115-45.

14. *Ibid.*, 124ff.

Aristotle explicitly says that, in the generation of the Ideal numbers, Plato "goes up to Ten [the Decad],"<sup>15</sup> and that he subordinated the deductive relations of all the other numbers to the Decad. Perhaps Plato reduced whole numbers conceived as derivatives of the One and the Dyad to the Decad, and understood all the other numbers as *logoi*, in the sense explained above. Gaiser's account of this matter is highly recommended.<sup>16</sup> A numerical expression in terms of a numerical relation (*logos*) can be given of the diairetic procedure, by which a general Idea is divided into the particular Ideas it includes, and thus permits us to specify the features of each and its position in the whole structure. And this, in turn, involves the notion that the general Ideas (the genera) from which the division begins, are whole numbers, from which are derived the succeeding numerical relations. The general Ideas probably must be referred to the ten numbers of the Decad of which the various relations (*logoi*) are the leading members.

Gaiser summarizes this proposed interpretation as follows:

Considered as number, or rather as numerically determined *logos*, an individual Idea can be determined only if the prior genus [the general Idea], from which the division begins, is already a number. Thus we can see that the diairetic division of the Ideas has its beginning with the first Ideal numbers and hence within the Decad. The most clearly distinguished of the individual Ideas must no longer be understood as pure numbers, but as *logoi*, which can be referred to whole numbers. But in this way all the Ideas would be subordinated to numbers, so that we might speak of the position of the Ideas on the same level as numbers, as well as of the subordination of the common particular Ideas to pure numbers.<sup>17</sup>

And again:

The ten numbers of the Decad must count as the highest Ideas. In fact they are unities which are constituted of a *relation-logos* and which are related to each other in a determinate way so that each unity can be understood as a pure whole number. Contrariwise, we must observe that further divisions of each of the Ideas no longer occur at the level of the Idea-numbers. Diairetic division . . . produces *logoi* that can be precisely described, but that no longer represent whole numbers.<sup>18</sup>

The highest Ideal numbers (those of the Decad) are analogous to what we shall see the most general Ideas or Meta-Ideas to be; they perform a regulative function, and, in conjunction with all the numeri-

15. Cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* M 8.1084a12-b2 and 13, 1073a18-22 (Gaiser, *Test. Plat.*, 61 and 62).

16. Gaiser, *Platons*, 118ff.

17. *Ibid.*, 128.

18. *Ibid.*, 137.

cal *logoi*, they offer a metaphysical digest of the whole of reality according to Plato's Unwritten Doctrines.<sup>19</sup>

A final error to be avoided is misunderstanding the information that Aristotle furnishes in the *Metaphysics* about the theory's development.

Now, regarding the ideas, we must first examine the Ideal theory itself, not connecting it in anyway with the nature of numbers, but discussing it in the form in which it was originally understood by those who first maintained the existence of the Ideas.<sup>20</sup>

In the traditional paradigm, this text indicated that the theory of Ideal numbers and its connection with the theory of Ideas should be placed to the end of Plato's life. But, in fact, as Krämer has rightly objected, Aristotle refers "originally" (ἐξ ἀρχῆς) to Plato's activity at the time at which the doctrine of the Ideas was not yet connected with the doctrine of Ideal numbers; but he does not say more.<sup>21</sup> If this is so, it is arbitrary to suppose that something whose date is not fixed as "at the beginning" must now be necessarily fixed "at the end," since between the beginning and the end there is a sweep of time, a series of successive moments. And Aristotle does not say in which of these moments the two doctrines were brought into connection with each other.

In dialogues much earlier than those written during Plato's old age, we find many hints at the doctrine of the Ideal numbers. For example, H.-G. Gadamer writes: "A dialogue such as the *Hippias*, which can be considered authentic, clearly hints at the doctrine of the Ideal numbers. It would not do, therefore, to minimize the problem by attempting to eliminate it with an historical hypothesis."<sup>22</sup>

### III. THE DOCTRINE OF THE MATHEMATICAL ENTITIES "INTERMEDIATE" BETWEEN THE IDEAS AND SENSIBLE THINGS

We have noted that the Ideal numbers are very different from numbers and mathematical objects in general, which occupy an "intermedi-

19. Here are Krämer's conclusions: "The theory of the *Ideal-Numbers* clearly expresses the structure of the relations of the universals on a mathematical basis, and, consequently, ontologically reduces the universals to the level of the Ideal Numbers, of which they participate in their determinateness and regularity. Among the universals, Ideal Numbers therefore possess a privileged status, and so are presented as the first to be 'generated' by the Principles. They mediate in the hierarchy of being between the Principles and the remaining Ideas, because they represent in paradigmatic form the characteristics of being, viz., delimitation, determination, and order" (Krämer, *Platone*, 157ff. [Am. ed., 79ff.]). Also see Gaiser, *Platons*, 139.

20. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* M 4. 1078b7-12.

21. Cf. Krämer, *Die grundsätzlichen Fragen*, 110ff., note 20; *Arete*, 35; *Platone*, 107, and note 81 [Am. ed., 46 and note 81, pp. 237-38].

22. See Gadamer, *Gesammelte Werke*, 6: 243.

ate" (μεταξύ) ontological position, midway between the Ideal entities and the sensible entities. This is what Aristotle says about the matter:

In addition, Plato affirms that besides the sensibles and the Ideas there are mathematical intermediate between the former and the latter, which differ from the sensibles because they are unchanging and eternal, and differ from the Ideas in that there are many of them alike, while each Idea is only one and individual.<sup>23</sup>

This is, at first glance, a surprising doctrine, but in fact it fits neatly into the general outline of Platonic thought. These mathematical entities are "intermediates" insofar as, on the one hand, they are unchanging and eternal just like the Ideas (and the Ideal numbers), and, on the other hand, there are many of the same kind. Thus, they have, at once, a fundamental feature of the Ideas and a feature characteristic of sensible things, and so are "intermediates." Hence they are also "intermediary" between intelligible realities and sensible realities, as we shall see in the *Philebus* and above all in the *Timaeus*.

Plato introduced them for the following reasons:

(a) The numbers on which arithmetic operates—like the extension on which geometry operates—are not sensibles, but intelligibles, as the sciences which deal with them show.

(b) On the other hand, the numbers and the extension with which arithmetic and geometry deal cannot be Ideal numbers, nor Ideal extension, because arithmetic operations presuppose many equal numbers and geometrical operations and demonstrations presuppose many shapes which are instances of a single essence (for example, many equal triangles which all figure in one demonstration), while each of the Ideal numbers is unique, just as each Ideal Figure is unique.

Bearing this in mind, it is easy to understand Plato's conclusions about mathematical entities as being "intermediates" between the intelligible world and the sensible world.

The theoretical source of this doctrine is to be sought in Plato's deep-rooted belief about the perfect correspondence between knowledge and being ("for that which it is possible to know is the same as that which can be"),<sup>24</sup> according to which any given level of knowledge of a given type must refer to a corresponding level of being.

To the level of mathematical knowledge, which is above sensible knowledge but below dialectical knowledge, there must correspond a level having the appropriate ontological features. Thus we have the many

23. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* A 6.987b14–18 [Gaiser, 22A; Krämer, III.9; Findlay, 416–17.3].

24. DK frag. 3, (Parmenides).

equal numbers called for by arithmetic, and the many equal figures—thus many squares, many triangles, and so on—that are called for by geometry.

We shall see that this Unwritten Doctrine is essential for understanding Plato's epistemology as it is found in the dialogues (in particular in the *Republic* and the *Timaeus*), in such a way that it is the fundamental bedrock of the system.

#### IV. THE CONSISTENCY OF THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE IDEAL NUMBERS AND MATHEMATICAL NUMBERS WITH PLATO'S THEORY OF IDEAS

Some scholars have rightly seen that the distinction between, on the one hand, the Ideal numbers and Ideal extension and, on the other hand, the intermediate mathematical numbers and extension, is a distinction dictated by the overall system of the theory of Ideas. Here are the conclusions of a recent study of this issue, which round off the remarks we have made:

[T]he Ideal numbers and figures are not quantities at all, but are rather qualities such as squareness and triangularity, or twoness and threeness. Aristotle calls these entities (ἀσύμβλετοι) "incomparables," or in the case of numbers "inadmissible"; they are so, of course, because as squareness, or as twoness, they have no determinate properties that are usable in mathematical operations. One does not inscribe triangularity inside circularity: the Ideal circle has no area, no diameter, no circumference, no center; the Ideal square is not a four-sided entity with an incommensurable diagonal. This is in a way obvious, and in a way rather shocking; it is obvious when we consider analogous distinctions, such as are made when we recognize that the idea of man possesses no arms or legs or desires or thoughts; it is shocking because we are accustomed to think, as do the modern critics, that for Plato the theorems of geometry and kindred sciences are about, in a very simple sense of "about," absolute being. Now to think of the Ideal numbers as ἀσύμβλετοι [incomparables] . . . is tantamount to the realization that the subject matter of the theorems of the mathematical sciences must be somehow intermediate, provided of course that one rejects Mill's view of mathematics. Pythagoras' theorem is not about, in a simple sense, the Ideal triangle; for the idea of triangularity has no sides and no hypotenuse. The theorem must then be about "intermediate" triangles, which are neither merely drawn, nor merely conceptual, nor which come to be and pass away. For if it were about a drawn triangle it would be false, or what is the same from a mathematical point of view, merely approximate; if it were about a conceptual entity it would not be objectively true; if it were about entities which come to be and pass away, and conceptual entities would be an example of these, it would be sometimes true and sometimes simply meaningless (neither true nor false). Although the intermediates are imperfect, and merely images, from the standpoint of the ideas, from the standpoint of "becoming" they have a sort of perfection, and can rightly be called perfect partic-



ulars. They participate in the ideas, but in a different way than drawn or wooden triangles participate. The latter “share in” triangularity just insofar as they possess the simple, intuitable quality “triangularity,” taken apart from their determinate quantitative features. But whatever may be the exact nature of an intermediate or of an idea, and of their relationship, it should be clear that Plato’s “systematic approach” requires these two kinds of entities.”<sup>25</sup>

We need only add that the Eleatic postulate concerning the correspondence between “knowledge” and “being,” to which we referred above, supplies a historical and theoretical background for this Platonic doctrine.

But it must also be emphasized how truly important is the “intermediate” position of the mathematical. Insofar as they share some of the characteristics of the Ideas and, at the same time, some of the characteristics of the sensibles, they reflect, in a certain sense, characteristics belonging to the whole of reality, and so offer a splendid route to an understanding of reality itself. And this would explain the great cognitive role that Plato attributed to mathematics in the Academy in the preparation for dialectic.

Thus Gaiser rightly notes that “just because mathematical realities in the strict sense stand at the center of the structure of being and unite in themselves the opposed properties of what is subordinate and of what is superordinate, it is in the mathematical entities that we can see a model of the whole of reality.”<sup>26</sup>

Naturally, it is a “model” in an analogical sense, insofar as mathematics and metaphysics remain quite distinct.

Because, for Plato, the system of the mathematical represents an ontologically inferior imitation, limited and special, but analogical, it is possible for him to establish the laws of being by looking to the laws of the mathematical as a model. That is to say that, relative to a philosophical ontology, mathematics has an advantage from the point of view of inquiry and method, although it is subordinate from the point of view of content. The structure of being is not itself in any special way mathematical; taken together, the mathematical laws do not have their foundation within mathematics, but, ultimately, in the general principles of being.<sup>27</sup>

In short: Plato did not mathematicize metaphysics, but, rather, he grounded it metaphysically, and so employed mathematics analogically to do metaphysics.<sup>28</sup>

25. J. A. Brentlinger, “The Divided Line and Plato’s Theory of Intermediates,” in *Phronesis* 7 (1963): 146–66; the passage quoted is on page 159ff.

26. Gaiser, *Platons*, 89.

27. *Ibid.*, 299.

28. On this point Gaiser made the most significant contributions in *Platons*, *passim*.

V. THE HIERARCHICAL STRUCTURE OF REALITY AND THE BONDS  
THAT CONNECT ITS VARIOUS LEVELS

It is thus clear that Plato thinks of the reality derived from the Principles not as a horizontal arrangement, but as structured vertically by a series of successive levels, one subordinate to another, and all alike dependent on the two highest Principles.

We may postpone until our discussion of the *Timaeus* questions about the soul and its structure and connection to the mathematical. Let us concentrate instead on the general problem of the metaphysical relations existing among the levels we have noted. It goes almost without saying that we speak of "levels" not in its literal, physical sense, but merely as an image to refer to a metaphysical structure or an hierarchical arrangement.

The relation between levels is that of transitive, asymmetrical, and irreflexive ontological dependence. The lower levels cannot be (or be conceived) without the higher levels, but the higher levels can be (and be conceived) without the lower. It is the relation of "priority" and "posteriority" in respect of substance and nature (πρότερα καὶ ὕστερα, τὰ δὲ κατὰ φύσιν καὶ οὐσίαν) to use an expression of Aristotle's:

The attributes of prior things are called prior, for example, straightness is prior to smoothness; for one is an attribute of a line as such, and the other of a surface. Some things . . . are prior and posterior in this sense, others in respect of nature and substance, that is, those which can be without other things, while the other cannot be without them—a distinction which Plato used.<sup>29</sup>

The technical Platonic formula was the following: "that which is dependent can be destroyed without destroying that on which it depends (συναναίρειν καὶ μὴ συναναίρεισθαι)." <sup>30</sup>

Krämer has picked out this theoretical notion which specifies the kind of relationship among the various levels as follows: "There exists, therefore, an asymmetrical and irreflexive relation of dependence, in which, however, the higher level is only the necessary, but not sufficient condition for the lower. Just so, the Dyad of the great-and-small plays a fundamental role at all levels, as a material principle, even though differentiation is not further grounded; therefore the categorical *novum* is not explained."<sup>31</sup>

This means that what we have is a kind of metaphysical dependence of the successive levels of being each on the one above, which implies,

29. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* Δ 11.1018b37–1019a4 (Gaiser, 33A; Krämer, III.7).

30. As well as the Aristotelian passage, see also Alexander of Aphrodisias, *In Arist. Met.*, pp. 55.22ff. (Gaiser 22B; Krämer, III 10; Findlay 5; and Iamblichus, *Protreptic*, pp. 38.1off.; Gaiser 34; Krämer III 26).

31. Krämer, *Platone*, 164 [Am. ed., 83].

so to speak, an enrichment at each stage of the Dyadic Principle, which is not deduced or systematically explained, but simply presented as such. The cause which the higher level provides is necessary, but not sufficient, because it explains only the metaphysical and formal aspect of the lower level, not the difference in content, which depends on the Dyadic Principle. This point is of enormous importance because it wholly excludes the possibility of classifying Plato's view as a sort of pantheism or immanentism, as we shall see in Part 4.

We have seen that the Ideal numbers are derived from two supreme principles (as are all the Ideas, because of their numerical structure), through a process of limitation or equalization on the part of the One operating on the indeterminate multiplicity of the Dyad.

Plato explains the level of the mathematical as follows. The mathematical numbers are deduced from monads (unities of individual entities) and from the plurality of the "many-and-few." The geometrical and stereometrical shapes are deduced from a particular kind of point that Plato called the "indivisible line," which is a mathematical point having position, and acts as a formal principle, while he speaks of the "short-and-long" as a material principle of the line of the "wide-and-narrow" for surfaces and the "deep-and-shallow" for bodies. What is clearly at issue are specific differentiations of the supreme principle of the Dyad of the great-and-small, which comes to incorporate an enrichment in intelligible materiality and multiplicity.<sup>32</sup>

Passing to successive ontological levels we witness the birth of the physical cosmos. Here the material principle is such solidity as to produce the realm of the sensible and to generate the world of becoming. We shall again pick up the cosmological themes involved in this matter.<sup>33</sup>

## VI. ARISTOTLE ON THE PLATONIC ORIGIN OF THE NOTION OF THE STRUCTURE OF REALITY

Confronted with such a hierarchical conception of reality, the reader who finds only traces of it in the dialogues might begin to think that we are attributing to Plato the sort of hierarchical plurality that the Neoplatonists produced and that reached its culmination in Proclus, who enshrined it as a point of method: "The processions of beings . . . do not tolerate any gaps, but everywhere there are intermediates between extremes which guarantee their mutual connection."<sup>34</sup>

32. See also Gaiser, *Platons*, passim.

33. See also Chapters 18 and 20 for the role of the Demiurge as efficient cause.

34. Proclus, *De Providentia* 20.45.21-24 Isaac. See what we say in this regard in our *Proclo*, lxxxix.

It is not only in Plato that the hierarchical structure of the real is very prominent, but also his followers were strongly influenced by it, as Aristotle himself eloquently demonstrates. And it is not only when he is reporting Plato that Aristotle refers to the principal levels of reality which Plato admitted, but he introduces this conception into his own theorizing as one of the basic notions of his metaphysics.

We discuss this point at length in our book on Aristotle, in which, against Jaeger, we show how the unity of Aristotle's metaphysics and theology is based on just such a hierarchical conception.<sup>35</sup>

In addition to the famous unification of the various meanings of being by reference to unity (τὰ πρὸς ἓν λεγόμενα [in the felicitous phrase of G. E. L. Owen, "focal meaning"]), which is that of substance, Aristotle speaks also of another form of unity which is of a succession or a series: a unification of entities resulting from one being succeeded by another (τὰ τῷ ἐφεξῆς). This sort of unity by succession occurs when there is a series of entities in which one is prior to another in a hierarchical ordering, when the posterior depends on the prior (and not vice versa), and when all depend on the first. In virtue of just this dependence, all the terms that form the series fall under the one science that has the first term of the series as its object. Aristotle employs first the criterion of unification horizontally, to unify the various meanings of being that are not substance, but that depend on and are referred to substance. But, in its turn, substance does not have a univocal meaning, because there are sensible, celestial, and supersensible substances. This being so, the substances, as Aristotle conceived of them, form a precise hierarchy in which the lower grades depend on the higher (and not vice versa), and all depend on the primary substance.<sup>36</sup>

Whereas, in the first case, the unity of a science follows from all the meanings of being said in relation to a single reality (substance), in the second, the unity of a science comes from the fact that by inquiring about the first term of the series one thereby grasps the whole series, insofar as the series depends on the first term; and thus given the structure of the hierarchy knowledge of the first term is universal.<sup>37</sup>

35. G. Reale, *Il concetto di filosofia prima e l'unità della Metafisica di Aristotele* (Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 1961, 1985<sup>4</sup>, 1993<sup>5</sup>). The additions in the American edition, *The Concept of First Philosophy and the Unity of the Metaphysics of Aristotle*, trans. J. R. Catan (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1980) were included in the fourth Italian edition, but the final Italian edition [the fifth] published in 1993 was revised and now includes as appendices two previously published articles by Reale, "La dottrina aristotelica della potenza, dell'atto e dell'entelechia nella Metafisica" and "L'impossibilità di intendere univocamente l'essere e la 'tavola' dei significati di esso secondo Aristotele."

36. G. Reale, *Il concetto*, 119ff.; [Am. ed., 129ff.]

37. *Ibid.*, 149ff. [Am. ed., 170ff.].

For Aristotle, the hierarchy is not limited to distinguishing (1) supersensible realities, (2) incorruptible celestial realities, and (3) the corruptible realities of the sublunary realm; but it ramifies further, as scholars sometimes forget. The supersensible realities, which for Aristotle are pure Intelligences, can be distinguished into three different levels: (1) the supreme Intelligence (the Immobile Movent); (2) the movent Intelligences of the heavens; and (3) human Intelligences (the rational part of the human soul).

Aristotle presents even the movent Intelligences, of which there are fifty-five, in a hierarchy, as we have shown in our volume on *Theophrastus*,<sup>38</sup> against Jaeger, according to whom Aristotle could not admit fifty-five movents for the following reasons: "If matter is the principle of individuation as Aristotle teaches . . . either the movers of the spheres cannot be immaterial, since they form a plurality of exemplars of a genus, or Aristotle refutes himself by retaining his doctrine of immateriality, since this excludes individual multiplicity. In either event he falls into contradiction with the presuppositions of his own philosophy."<sup>39</sup>

However, the conception of the hierarchy of reality easily solves these difficulties. The fifty-five movents of the fifty-five celestial spheres not only are not on the same level as the first Movent, but they are not even the same as each other. Rather, they form a hierarchical order, as Aristotle himself says, by affirming explicitly that one "comes first" and another comes "after," as is shown "by their order relative to the spheres of the stars" which they move.<sup>40</sup>

Finally, let us also remember that in *Metaphysics*  $\Lambda$ , Aristotle speaks in exactly the Platonic terms from which he got the idea of the categories of being as themselves forming a series,<sup>41</sup> clearly referring to their different grades of being.<sup>42</sup>

As can be clearly seen, the invention of the hierarchical conception of the real, which is one of Plato's most significant contributions to metaphysics, also influenced Aristotle to a truly extraordinary degree. It is for this reason that we have fully discussed it at length here, as well as to illustrate concretely how fruitful the new interpretive paradigm of the Tübingen School is for a fuller understanding not only of Plato, but also of his powerful influence on Aristotle.

38. G. Reale, *Teofrasto e la sua aporetica metafisica. Saggio di ricostruzione e di interpretazione storico-filosofica con traduzione e commento della Metafisica* (Brescia: La Scuola Editrice, 1964). The relevant part of Theophrastus is now in the fourth edition of *Il concetto*, 379-473 [Am. ed., 364-423].

39. W. Jaeger, *Aristoteles* 481; Aristotle, trans. R. Robinson, 352.

40. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*  $\Lambda$  8.1073b1-3.

41. *Ibid.*,  $\Lambda$  1.1069a2off.

42. See G. Reale, *Aristotele, La Metafisica*, 2: 256.



## 9 The Intrinsic Polyvalence of the Principles, the Categorical Division of Reality, and the Twofold Procedure of the Dialectical Method That Leads to the Principles

### I. THREE ASPECTS OF THE PRINCIPLES: ONTOLOGICAL, EPISTEMOLOGICAL, AND AXIOLOGICAL

We have been gathering the elements to understand why these complex protological doctrines were all included in the cycle of the lectures that Plato gave in the Academy entitled *On the Good* (περὶ τὰγαθοῦ). The One, the metaphysically supreme Principle, is (1) the foundation of Being, (2) of Truth, and (3) of the Good.

We may summarize reasons for these three aspects of the One as follows:

1. The One, acting on the unlimited multiplicity, determines, delimits, and hence unifies it, producing, in this way, entities on various levels, as noted above.
2. But what is delimited, determined, and ordered is structurally knowable. In this way, unity, limit, and order are the foundations of the knowableness of things. Thus truth and knowableness (the cognitive aspect of things) wholly depend on the first Principles.
3. But, by operating in this way on multiplicity, the One produces order and stability, and hence produces value. What is ordered, harmonious, and stable is good and beautiful. The Good is, the order produced by the One. Thus, the axiological aspect of the doctrine of the Principles is fully explained. Virtue finds a role in this perspective as the regulation of what tends to excess or defect as well as unity-in-multiplicity, relative to what we find in all the other grades and spheres of being.

With this conception of the Principles, "Plato is revealed as the precursor of the medieval doctrine of the transcendentals (*ens, unum, bonum, verum convertuntur*"; *omne ens est bonum*"). . . . However, he grounded it on a unitary conception of being, which is rooted in his theory of the principles. The fundamental concept that functions as a mediation between the various aspects is that of *limit*."<sup>1</sup>

1. Krämer, *Platone*, 171 [Am. ed., 86ff.].

Moreover, we can recover Plato's account of Unity as "measure," as "very accurate measure" of multiplicity, and more generally as "the supreme measure of all things."<sup>2</sup> Such a measure is explicated, under its three aspects as follows:

1. Under its ontological aspect, "measure" is limit and limiting principle;
2. Under its epistemological aspect, "measure" is knowledge based on units of measurement, which are intimately connected with limited things and so with what is measured;
3. Under its axiological aspect, "measure" is essentially the norm, the "measure" of the multiplicity which it delimits.

Krämer writes: "In its relations with the world unity is the highest measure of being, goodness (*areté*), and truth, and it is as measure that it refers to the world. Therefore the concept of unity as measure expresses the correlation between being and the first Principle. And insofar as it functions as an intermediary between them, it encapsulates Plato's underlying ontological conception."<sup>3</sup> This is one of the most significant of Krämer's contributions to the understanding of the speculative importance of the theory of the Principles.<sup>4</sup> This interpretation provides an overall unification of the main lines pursued by Plato in his writings: (1) the metaphysical, (2) the epistemological, and (3) the ethico-political. We may also add a religious aspect: the assimilation to the Good consists in assimilation to the One, or rather, in the approach to the Supreme Intelligence which unifies the multiplicity and consummates private and public life.

We may round off this point by looking at some important testimonies which show up clearly the axiological, epistemological, and ontological aspects of the Principles, and especially of the One.

Further, he [Plato] assigned to these two elements respectively the causation of good and of evil; a matter which, as we have said, was investigated by some of the earlier philosophers, such as Empedocles and Anaxagoras.<sup>5</sup>

Of those who admit unchanging Substances some say that the One Itself is the Good Itself. But they make its Essence consist mainly in its Unity.<sup>6</sup>

Also the proper method of proving the Absolute Good is the contrary of the method now adopted. At present it is from things not admitted to possess goodness that they prove the things admitted to be good, for instance, they prove from numbers that justice and health are good, because they are ar-

2. *Ibid.*, 172 and note 46 [Am. ed., 87 and 250, note 46].

3. *Ibid.*, 173 [Am. ed., 87-88].

4. Also Krämer, *Arete*, *passim*.

5. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* A 6.988a14-17 [Gaiser, 22A; Krämer, III.9; Findlay, 416.4].

6. *Ibid.*, N 4.1091b13-15 [Gaiser, 51; Krämer, III.24; Findlay, 440.28].



rangements and numbers—on the assumption that goodness is a property of numbers and monads because the Absolute Good is unity. But the proper method is to start from things admitted to be good, for instance health, strength, sobriety of mind, and prove that beauty is present even more in the unchanging; for all these admitted goods consist in order and rest, and therefore, if that is so, the things unchanging are good in an even greater degree, for they possess order and rest in a greater degree.

And it is a hazardous way of proving that the Absolute Good is unity to say that numbers aim at unity; for it is not clearly stated how they aim at it, but the expression is used in too unqualified a manner; and how can one suppose that things not possessing life can have appetite?<sup>7</sup>

It is easy to show that we are able to grasp the sciences which concern just and correct things and in addition those that concern nature and the remaining truths.

The prior things are always more knowable things than the posterior things and likewise those which by nature are better relative to those which are worse. There is more knowledge of the determined and ordered than of their opposites, and of the causes than of the consequences. For good things are more definite and ordered than evil things, just as the virtuous man is more definite and ordered than the vice-ridden man; the same difference must obtain in each case. The prior things are greater causes than are the posterior things; if the former are destroyed, so are the latter; which depend upon them; and if numbers are destroyed so are the lines, and if lines, then also surfaces and solids, and if letters . . . then so are those things which are called syllables.<sup>8</sup>

In the *Republic* we shall find the fullest confirmation of all this, at least insofar as Plato believed it could be “written.”

## II. THE CATEGORICAL DIVISION OF REALITY AND THE META-IDEAS OR MOST GENERAL IDEAS

The Ideal numbers are derived from two supreme Principles in the same ways as the Ideas, which have numerical structure in the sense explained above, and so as a result are all things.

Nevertheless, Plato does not restrict himself to this deduction, and by way of confirmation and as a fundamental prop, he also presents a general scheme of the categorical division of the whole of reality with a view to showing that all beings can be referred to the two Principles, insofar as they are derived from the mixing of them. This is an argument of the highest speculative and historical importance because, in addition to clarifying the basic outlines of the Unwritten Doctrines, it also provides the basic inspiration for Aristotle's doctrine of the categories (despite the differences in the uses to which it is put).

7. Ibid., *Eudemian Ethics* I 8.1218a15–28 [Krämer, III.25].

8. Iamblichus, *Protrepticus* 6.37.26ff. Pistelli [Gaiser, 34; Krämer, III.26].

This categorical division is widely attested to by reliable sources, and it also makes fairly overt appearances in the dialogues themselves. In the present century, Paul Wilpert has done most to bring this doctrine to the attention of scholars, while the Tübingen School has succeeded in setting it against its proper philosophical background.<sup>9</sup>

In short, being can be divided into (1) self-sufficient beings (such as a man, a horse, the Earth, water, etc.); (2) beings existing in relation to other things, which can be further subdivided into the categories (2a) contraries (as: even-odd, immobile-mobile, proper-improper, etc.); (2b) correlatives (as big-small, high-low, right-left, etc.).

At first, the distinction between (2a) contraries and (2b) correlatives might be surprising, since both are beings-in-relation-to-others. But the first is clearly distinguished from the second: for contraries cannot coexist, and the disappearance of one of the contraries coincides with the appearance of the other (think, for example, of life and death, or the mobile and the immobile); on the other hand, the correlatives are characterized by coexistence and codisappearance (there is no high without a low, there is no right without a left, etc.). Moreover, the former do not admit a middle term (e.g., there is no middle state between life and death, or between moving and not moving), whereas the latter do admit a middle term (for example, between the great and the small, the equal; between the more and the less, the sufficient; between the sharp and the flat, the harmonious):

By way of opposition we conceive things in virtue of their opposition to one another, such as good and bad, just and unjust, profitable and unprofitable, holy and unholy, pious and impious, . . . and other similar cases. By way of relation we conceive things in relation to something else, such as right and left, above and below, double and half. For the right is conceived in its relation to the left, and the left in relation to the right, the below in relation to the above and vice versa, and . . . other cases. They say things conceived in opposition differ from things conceived in relation. For in the cases of opposites, the destruction of one is the coming to be of the other, as in the case of health and disease, motion and rest. For the arising of disease is the ceasing of health, the arising of health the ceasing of disease, the existence of motion the destruction of rest and vice versa. The same argument holds of pain and painlessness, good and bad, and in general of all that have an opposed nature. But relatives involve the joint presence and removal of one another. For nothing is right unless something is left of it, and every double presupposes a half of which it is the double. . . . [T]here is in general no mean of opposites, for example of health and disease, of life and death, of motion and rest. In the case of things

9. P. Wilpert, *Zwei aristotelische Frühschriften*, esp. 172–202; Krämer, *Arete*, 282–379, 438–42, and also *Platone*, 159ff. [Am. ed., 80ff.]; Gaiser, *Platons*, 24ff., 73–88, 177ff., and also see “Quellenkritische Probleme der indirekten Platonüberlieferung,” in *Idee und Zahl*, 31–84, esp. 63ff.

which have relative determination, there is such a mean. For the things determined as greater and less in relation to something may have a mean in what is equal, and in the same way the sufficient is the mean of the more and less, and the well-tuned of the sharp and flat.<sup>10</sup>

It is hardly necessary to point out that, as in the case of Ideal numbers, this categorical distinction, and hence these different categories, are not purely logical and abstract distinctions, but uncover the very structure of being. Wilpert has emphasized, with reference to the first group of categories, that they are self-sufficient beings, and that we are faced with the archetypal “parallelism of knowledge and being,”<sup>11</sup> and hence with the internal relation between logico-epistemology and ontology. And the same obviously holds also for the relative opposites, both generally and particularly. Thus we are presented with the most general Ideas, which Krämer suggests should be called the Meta-Ideas.

### III. THE STRUCTURAL DEPENDENCE OF THIS THREEFOLD CATEGORICAL DISTINCTION ON THE FIRST PRINCIPLES

The aim of this categorical tripartition was to reduce or subsume all things without exception, by successive stages of simplification, under the Principles, which are the fundamental, simple, and absolute realities and the Principles of all things.<sup>12</sup>

The procedure of this categorical distinction of being is based on a schema of relations characteristic of the Ideal world, rising from species to genus, that is, toward the ever more universal. Here is how this categorical distinction occurs in the concrete:

1. The “self-sufficient beings” (or substances) fall under the genus of Unity. The self-existent beings or substances are beings which are perfectly differentiated, defined, and determined; and, as we have seen, a thing is differentiated, defined, and determined exactly insofar as it is one (a result of the action of the One).

As Wilpert correctly points out, the essence of “self-sufficient beings,” that is, their substantiality, is unity: “[T]he unity of the multiple explains the essence of substantial beings. Substance is substance only insofar as it is one.”<sup>13</sup>

10. Sextus Empiricus, *Adv. math* 10.264–68 [Gaiser, 32; Krämer, III.12; Findlay, 427–428.17].

11. P. Wilpert, *Zwei aristotelische Frühschriften*, 184.

12. In addition to the passage quoted above, see Simplicius, *In Arist. Phys.* 24.7.30–24.8.15 Diels [Gaiser, 31; Krämer, III.13; Findlay, 425.16] and the relevant passages from the *Divisiones Aristoteleae* [Gaiser, 43 and 44 AB; Krämer, III 27–31].

13. P. Wilpert, *Zwei aristotelische Frühschriften*, 187.

2a. The beings which bear to each other the relation of "opposition of contrariety," that is, the contraries, fall under the genera of "equality" and "inequality" (different). The first member of this set is not subject to "more or less," while the second is so. For example, whereas what is immobile cannot be more or less immobile and the suitable cannot be more or less suitable, what is moved can be more or less moved and what is unsuitable can be more or less unsuitable.

From these genera, it is easy to rise further toward the Principles. The "equal" is subsumed under the One, because the One is the primary representation of equality itself. On the other hand, insofar as it implies the more or less, the "unequal" implies excess or defect, and so is referred to the Principle of indefinite Duality.

2b. The beings which form pairs of "correlatives" imply a reference to "excess and defect," in that their mutual relations are structurally indefinite, given that each term can increase or decrease, and so become "more or less." For example, in the pair "great and small" each term can be "more or less" than it is at a given moment. The same holds for "high and low" and for other correlatives. Indeed, this type of relation is based on the indeterminateness of the two terms. These beings fall under the genus of "excess and defect." And "excess and defect" fall under the Principle of the indefinite Dyad.

Of course, the reduction to Principles explained above does not imply that some entities depend only on the first Principle and others depend only on the second, because everything which follows from the Principles implies a mixture and synthesis of both.

The reduction to Principles implies rather that in some entities the action of the first Principle (of the One) is more important, while in others the action of the second Principle (of the indeterminate Dyad) is more significant.

In every case, unity is the fundamental ontological constituent, even if its importance varies relative to the opposed Principle. The following text may be of use here:

But these three kinds of being, that of things that exist by themselves, of things conceived as opposites, and of things conceived relatively, must have a kind ranged above themselves, which is first in being since every genus exists prior to the species ranged under it. If this genus is destroyed, all its species go to destruction with it, but if a species is destroyed, the genus remains undismantled. The species depends on the genus and not vice versa. The followers of Pythagoras then placed the one in a position of transcendence over the class of things conceived by themselves. For it is through this one that this class has self-existence, so that each distinct entity is a single thing and can be contemplated on its own. And over the things spoken of oppositely, they placed as ruling genus the equality and inequality. In these the whole nature of all

opposites displays itself; the nature of rest, for example, in an equality which admits neither of more or less, and of motion in inequality, since it admits both of them. In the same manner what is natural is seen in equality—the summit cannot be surpassed—while what is unnatural is seen in inequality, since it admits the more and less. The same rule applies to health and disease, and to straightness and crookedness. Relatives, however, fall under the genus of excess and defect. Great and greater, many and more, high and higher are conceived by way of excess, whereas small and smaller, few and fewer, low and lower are conceived by way of defect. But since thing, self-existent, opposite, and relative are genera that have been found to be subordinate to other genera, that is, to Unity or equality-inequality or excess-defect, we must consider whether those higher genera cannot be referred to yet higher ones. Plainly equality is subsumed under unity—for unity is the prime case of self-equality—while inequality is seen in excess and defect, since unequal things are those of which one exceeds while the other is exceeded. But excess and defect are ranged under the account of the indefinite dyad, since the prime excess and defect occurs among two terms, the exceeding and the exceeded term.<sup>14</sup>

#### IV. THE “DIVISION OF THE CONTRARIES” AS PART OF PLATO’S CATEGORICAL DIVISION OF ALL BEINGS

Here, we also encounter the “division of the contraries,” that is, the systematic determination and division of the highest pairs of contraries, which are related to (2a) above. In view of their universality and generality, the Ideas that fall under these supreme pairs of contraries can be called Meta-Ideas. Here, by way of example, are four of the most important pairs: Identity-Difference, Similarity-Dissimilarity, Motion-Rest, and Odd-Even.

Such pairs of contraries interested Aristotle, who devoted a work to them (unfortunately now lost) under the title of *Division of the Contraries*, in which, as Alexander attests, he reproduced material taken from Plato’s lectures *On the Good*.

Clearly this distinction of very general Ideas was also made with the same aim as that of the categorical division, of which it forms a specific and detailed part. That is, Plato aimed to subsume the general Ideas which constitute the contraries under the two supreme Principles.<sup>15</sup>

The function of these Ideas must have been “normative” and similar to the Ideal numbers.<sup>16</sup>

Each member of the pairs of contraries is already the synthetic result of both of the two Principles, although the Principle of Unity is more

14. Sextus Empiricus, *Adv. math.* 10.269–75 [Gaiser, 32; Krämer, III.12; Findlay, 428–29.17].

15. See the documents given in Gaiser, *Test. Plat.*, 39A–42B, and in Krämer, *Platone*, III 14–21 (reproduced in part by Findlay, 631–32 [texts 19–23]).

16. Cf. above pp. 155ff.

important in the first Idea in each pair of contraries and the Dyad in the second Idea of the pair. Identity, for example, is not the One, but is its first qualification (it is the first determination of the indeterminate in which Unity is dominant). Likewise, Difference is not pure indetermination, but it is the first determination of the indeterminate (in which indeterminateness dominates the One), and so on.

#### V. THE TWO ASPECTS OF THE DIALECTICAL PROCESS: THE REDUCTION TO THE ELEMENTS AND GENERALIZATION

In the procedure which leads to the identification of the Ideas with the numerical *logoi*, and from these to the highest principles, we find in play a kind of method which is aimed at uncovering the simplest and most elementary constituents and at specifying the primary "elements."

On the other hand, in the procedure of the categorical division, a greater role is given to a method which is directed toward ever more universal genera, ending with the most universal.

Krämer summarizes the position as follows:

What is at issue is, substantially, two different forms of thought, which, on the whole, complement each other, but which are sometimes in opposition or, rather, in competition with one another: (a) that process of reducing things to their elements associated with the mathematical model which, analyzing everything into smaller and smaller parts, refers them to their ultimate and simplest principles; this form of thought is chiefly concerned with the reduction of the number series and dimensions; (b) the process of generalization, of Socratic origin, which rises from the particular to the ever more general; this form of thinking refers to the realm of the universals in the narrow sense, and especially to the Meta-Ideas mentioned above, of identity, equality, similarity and their contraries. These categorical concepts, or concepts of reflection, as they would be called today, have a normative role relative to the universal, similar to that of the Ideal numbers. They stand to the principles in the same relation as the species stand to the genera, in that, for example, identity and similarity are species of unity, difference and dissimilarity are species of multiplicity. The categorical reduction or generalization, which has only been given closer attention since the work of Paul Wilpert, plays a role, in the Unwritten Doctrines, of equal weight with the process of reducing things to their elements. We must therefore bear in mind that Plato has at his disposal a plurality of methods, in consequence of which the principles acquire two aspects both as primary element and most general genus (unity, therefore, means the simplest and the most universal). Plato was clearly trying to use a variety of convergent tools to grasp the whole of being, as far as possible fully and without gaps, and to guarantee thereby the greatest universality possible for the principles. (Such a methodological pluralism can be related, albeit distantly, with the pluralism of perspectives to be found in the dialogues).<sup>17</sup>

17. Krämer, *Platone*, 161 ff. [Am. ed., 81 ff.].

This claim, for all it may be shocking to some scholars, turns out however to be very helpful for explaining not only the general plan of Platonic method, but also certain developments in the Academy, and even some very controversial points of Aristotelian metaphysics.

Let us begin with a passage of Aristotle, in which he considers this twofold method in the Academy:

How then is one the principle? Because it is not divisible, they say; but both the universal, and the particular or the element, are indivisible. But they are starting-points in different ways, one in definition and the other in time. In which way, then, is one the principle? As has been said, the right angle is thought to be prior to the acute, and the acute to the right, and each is one. Accordingly they make one the principle in both ways. But this is impossible. For the universal is one as form or substance, while the element is one as a part or as matter. For each of the two is in a sense one—in truth each of the two units exists potentially (at least if the number is a unity and not like a heap, that is, if different numbers consist of differentiated units, as they say), but not in complete reality.<sup>18</sup>

We may set aside questions about the elaborations and developments of the two methods, which led some Academics into conflict with each other, and concentrate instead on how, quite apart from such criticisms, Aristotle himself took them over to solve the truly radical problem of his own metaphysics.

In Book E of the *Metaphysics* Aristotle tries to demonstrate the harmony of the ontology and theology, which, since Jaeger, scholars have supposed to be an unsuccessful attempt to unify the two definitions of metaphysics which the historical genetic interpretation has considered logically irreconcilable,<sup>19</sup> but which in the light of the new interpretive paradigm of the Tübingen School can be seen to be, at least in large measure, consistent, and in any case, not interpretable in Jaeger's terms. Here is the passage in question:

For one might raise the question whether first philosophy is universal, or deals with one genus, that is, some one kind of being; for not even the mathematical sciences are all alike in this respect—geometry and astronomy each deal with a certain particular kind of reality, while universal mathematics applies alike to all. We answer that if there is no substance other than those which are formed by nature, natural science will be the first science; but if there is an immovable substance, the science of this must be prior to the other sciences and must be first philosophy, and universal in this way, because it is first. And it will belong to this to consider being qua being—both what it is and the attributes which belong to it qua being.<sup>20</sup>

18. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* M 8.1084b13–23.

19. Jaeger, *Aristotle*, 217.

20. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* E 1.1026a23–32.

Jaeger and many other scholars considered this passage as "a note taken out of context," "a later addition," made by Aristotle to reconcile his "first," Platonically inspired, conception of metaphysics, understood as theology, with his later conception of metaphysics as the theory of being qua being, wholly different in kind from the first, and fully Aristotelian (that is, no longer Platonic). But, Jaeger continues, the gloss not only does not succeed in eliminating the contradiction, but it even accentuates the gap which it is supposed to mediate between the two positions that underlie the two conceptions of metaphysics.<sup>21</sup>

We have shown in our volume on *The Concept of First Philosophy*<sup>22</sup> on the basis of criticism internal to Aristotle's text that far from being a "gloss," the passage of Book E quoted above expresses such basic Aristotelian convictions that it recurs in its entirety in Book Γ:

And there are as many parts of philosophy as there are kinds of substance, so that there must necessarily be among them a "first" philosophy, and one which is "second." For being is divided . . . into genera; and the sciences too will correspond to these genera. For the philosopher is like the mathematician, as that word is used; for mathematics also has parts, and there is a first and a second science and other successive ones within the sphere of mathematics.<sup>23</sup>

But since there is one kind of thinker who is above even the natural philosopher (for nature is only one . . . genus of being), the discussion of these truths also will belong to him whose inquiry is universal and deals with primary substance. Physics also is one kind of wisdom, but it is not the first wisdom.<sup>24</sup>

The science of mathematics (first mathematics) is universal, insofar as it is concerned with numbers and their basic "elements," and these are the foundation and condition of all the other mathematical sciences, which, despite the diversity of their objects, cannot advance except on the basis of numbers.

21. Here are Jaeger's exact words: "This gloss does not remove the contradiction. On the contrary, it only makes it more obvious. In attempting here to combine the two definitions he understands by a universal science a science of the 'first' object, which is a principle in a more comprehensive sense than are the other kinds of being; but in Γ1, and the beginning of E, universal meant that which does not refer to any particular part of being at all, and Aristotle could not and does not assert that the immaterial movers of the stars are not 'particular beings' [ὄν τι] nor 'one sort of being' [φύσις τις μία τοῦ ὄντος]. One might perhaps be inclined to suspect that neither the problem [ἀπορία] or its solution [λύσις], which looks so much like an observation en passant, comes from Aristotle himself; but since it also appears in the other version of K8, and since it expresses a contradiction that is really present, there is nothing for it but to admit that the philosopher did not find the solution of the problem, or at any rate that it did not occur to him until after the two versions were already fused together" [*Aristotle*, 218].

22. G. Reale, *Il concetto*, 149ff. [Am. ed., 170ff.]. See also, *ibid.*, 114-21 [Am. ed., 125-31].

23. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* Γ 2.1004a2-9.

24. *Ibid.*, 3.1005a33-1005b2.



“First philosophy,” or metaphysics, is universal in the same sense. If there were no substance besides sensible substances, physics would be the first of all the sciences, and as such it would be the most universal, because the principles investigated by it would be the “principles of all beings,” that is, of the whole of reality. If, on the other hand, there are immobile, eternal, transcendent beings, the science which has this substance as its object of inquiry will be superior to the other sciences and would be first because it investigates the first substance (the primary principle); insofar as it is first, it will be also universal, insofar as the principle of all things is a universal principle.<sup>25</sup>

We have presented this example to emphasize the fruitfulness which the new interpretive paradigm of the Tübingen School offers not only for reading Plato, but also for deepening the interpretation of Aristotle in relation to its most sensitive problems. As the passages which we have quoted above show quite clearly, Aristotle too employed both of Plato’s methods, of reduction to the elements (as his references to mathematics show), and of generalizing (as his references to the universal show); moreover, he considered them to be in harmony. And this fully confirms, with materials external to Aristotle’s text, what we showed at the beginning of the 1960s, restricting ourselves to materials internal to Aristotle’s text.

Other themes in Aristotelian metaphysics would be illuminated if they were examined in the light of the methods of universalizing and of reduction to elements, such as, for example, the complex question of substance, which Aristotle discusses both horizontally and vertically, continually crossing over the levels of the two methods.

But what we have said is more than sufficient to vindicate the position which we are upholding in this volume and whose foundations we are seeking to evince.

25. G. Reale, *Il concetto*, 119ff. [Am. ed., 129ff.].



## 10 Connections between Ancient Greek Aesthetics and Spirituality, and the Theory of Ideas, Numbers, and Principles

### I. THE IDEAS AS OBJECTS OF INTELLECTUAL VISION ARE A CHARACTERISTIC INVENTION OF THE ANCIENT GREEK SPIRIT

Let us begin by noting that the term "Idea" is the normal translation of the Greek terms "ἰδέα" and "εἶδος." Unfortunately the translation (a transliteration) is not the happiest because in modern usage "Idea" has taken on a sense which is alien to the Platonic meaning. We shall indicate why "Form" would be a more appropriate translation. By "Idea," we moderns understand a concept, a thought, a mental construct, a mental representation, something at the psychological or noetic level; by contrast, by the notion of "Idea," Plato understands something which, in a certain sense, constitutes the specific object of thought, that is to say, that on which thought is directly turned, that without which thought would not be thought: in short, Platonic Ideas are not products of thought. Rather, they are the things which are absolutely true beings.

The terms "ἰδέα" and "εἶδος" are derived from "ἰδεῖν," which means "to see," and in Greek before Plato they were chiefly used to refer to the visible shape of a thing, that is, the exterior form and the shape which is grasped by the eyes, hence the sensible "look" of the thing.

Later, *idea* and *eidos* were used by extension to refer to the internal constitution, that is, the specific nature of the thing, the essence of the thing. This second use, rare before Plato, comes to be fixed in the metaphysical terminology of our philosopher.

Thus Plato uses *idea* and *eidos* to refer to this internal constitution, this metaphysical structure or essence of natural things, which is intrinsically intelligible; he also uses as synonyms the terms "οὐσία," that is, substance or essence, as well as "φύσις," meaning the nature of things, the reality of things.<sup>1</sup>

1. On the genesis of the terms *Idea* and *Eidos* the following works are important: C. Ritter, *Neue Untersuchungen über Plato* (Munich, 1910); A. E. Taylor, *Varia Socratica* (Oxford, 1911); G. F. Else, "The Terminology of the Ideas," in *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 48 (Cambridge, Mass., 1936); K. von Fritz, *Philosophie und sprachlicher Ausdruck bei Demokrit, Plato und Aristoteles* (New York, 1938; reprint, Darmstadt, 1963); and W. D. Ross,

The issue which we must try to understand is this: How is it that a term which originally meant the object of sight later came to mean the highest metaphysical form of being? Fully to grasp the reasons which brought Plato to invent the theory of Ideas is to understand the close bond which, for the ancient Greeks, conceptually united the notions of "sight," "form," and "being."

Scholars have often articulated how the spiritual civilization of the ancient Greeks was a civilization of "sight" and hence of "form" which is the object of sight, and that in many respects it is opposed, for example, to Hebraic civilization for which the predominant motif is "hearing" and "listening" (to hear the "voice" and "word" of God and the prophets). This account is correct and of the highest importance for the historical-philosophical understanding of Plato's theory of Ideas, since that theory is, in a certain sense, the most important philosophical expression of the general sensibility of the ancient Greeks.

Democritus used the term *idea* to refer to the atoms, meaning the geometrical shape or form which was indivisible and taken to be invisible to physical eyes but graspable only by the mind.<sup>2</sup> Democritus's atom idea is, therefore, "the filled" which is quantitatively differentiated and determined; it is visible only to the intellect, not to the senses; it is nevertheless physical. The "form" of the Atomists is purely material, insofar as it is determined and differentiated only quantitatively. Thus, it can be said that before "the Platonic Idea, which is qualitative, immaterial, and purposeful, there is the Democritean idea which is quantitative, material, and necessary."<sup>3</sup>

Anaxagoras also followed a similar path, as is shown by his postulation of the infinitely many seeds (*homoiomeries*). The totality of the *homoiomeries* is a "formed" world, in which "every form is crystallized and so to speak sublimated, in that the infinite differences of reality not only are justified in their innumerable variety, but even shown to be infinitely more true than they seem. . . ."<sup>4</sup> In a famous fragment, Anaxagoras explicitly used the term *idea*, speaking of "seeds" which have "shapes [ideas], colors, and tastes of every kind."<sup>5</sup> Even this "primordial qualitative-ness" can be grasped in its purity only by thought and not by the

*Plato's Theory of Ideas* (Oxford, 1951). Further bibliographical information is to be found in the works of Brisson and Cherniss as indicated above, in Chapter 7, note 1.

2. For the significance which the term had in Democritus, V. E. Alferi's *Atomos Idea. L'origine del concetto dell'atomo nel pensiero greco* (Florence, 1953; reedited by Congedo Editore, Galatina, 1979) is fundamental.

3. Alferi, *Atomos Idea*, 54, 602.

4. G. Calogero, *Storia della logica antica* (Bari: Laterza, 1967), 268.

5. Anaxagoras, frag. 4 DK. See what we say in this regard in our *History of Ancient Philosophy*, 1:163ff.

senses, though it does not extend beyond the sphere of the physical. Just as in the case of Atomism, we are within the sphere of the material.

Plato's crucial move is made possible only by the Second Voyage: the Forms or Platonic Ideas are primordially immaterial qualitatively, and hence are realities of a nonphysical but metaphysical character.

Friedländer correctly writes: "Plato possessed . . . the plastic eye of the Greeks, an eye akin to that by which Polykleitos perceived the canon . . . ; and also to the eye by which Greek mathematicians looked at the pure geometrical forms. It would seem that Plato would have been aware of this gift, which among all the thinkers it had fallen to his lot."<sup>6</sup> The evidence for this awareness is the fact that Plato coined the expressions "the vision of the mind" and "the vision of the soul" to refer to the intellect's capacity for thinking and for grasping essences.<sup>7</sup>

The analogy is clear: the things we grasp with bodily eyes are physical forms; the things we grasp with the "eye of the soul" are, rather, nonphysical forms: intellectual vision grasps intelligible forms, which are pure essences. "Ideas" are the eternal essences of goodness, truth, beauty, justice, and the like which when it is stretched to the limit of its capacities, and moves in the pure realm of the intelligible, the intellect succeeds in "discerning," and "observing."

For Plato, there is a metaphysical connection between the sight of the eye of the soul and the cause to which we owe this sight. Intellectual sight implies as its ground what the Intellect sees: the Ideas. Hence, the Ideas depend upon a close bond, a unified structure linking sight, the object-of-sight, and being. In this way, with the theory of Ideas, Plato expresses one of the great spiritual motifs of the ancient Greeks.

But if the theory of Ideas is so characteristic of the spirituality of the ancient Greeks, what are we to say of the theory of the Principles? Does it jeopardize our account, or confirm it and fill it out?

## II. THE ROOTS OF PLATO'S REDUCTION OF THE IDEAS TO NUMBERS IN THE PLASTIC ARTS OF THE GREEKS AND IN THEIR "CANON"

The Platonic protology, by going beyond the theory of Ideas, has been considered by some scholars as extremely abstract, and even convoluted, especially in the particular form in which it is reconstructed by

6. P. Friedländer, *Platon* (Berlin 1928, 1964<sup>3</sup>), 1:13.

7. On this important metaphor, see B. Schweitzer, *Platon und die bildende Kunst der Griechen* (Tübingen, 1953), 13ff.; C. J. Classen, *Sprachliche Deutung als Triebkraft platonischen und sokratischen Philosophierens* (Munich, 1959), 43ff.; Friedländer, *Platon*, 1:16ff. The expressions of Plato quoted are: ἡ τῆς διανοίας ὄψις (*Symposium* 219A) and ἡ τῆς ψυχῆς ὄψις (*Republic* 519B).

the Tübingen School. In other words, this doctrine is taken to be an impoverishment of the magnificent theory of Ideas, which is more interesting, more beautiful, and much more stimulating.

It seems to us on the other hand that the Platonic protology reconstructed according to the new paradigm is, like the theory of Ideas and perhaps more so, an utterly genuine metaphysical expression of the firmest and deepest roots of ancient Greek sensibilities, as they manifest themselves in art, in religion, and in great moral rules, as well as in philosophy.

As evidence for this view we shall develop two lines of thought about two of the more debatable claims of the protology, which are also two significant anomalies for the traditional paradigm. A first consideration concerns the reduction of the Ideas to Numbers, while the second concerns the two supreme Principles of the One and the indefinite Dyad of the great-and-small.

What does it mean to reduce the Ideas to Numbers? If this doctrine is certainly not an invention of Plato's followers or a misunderstanding, then, from the viewpoint of the balanced and sunny spirituality of the Greeks, does it not perhaps signal a regression, or even a damaging lapse in Plato's speculation?

We may rework, in the present broader context, the response we gave in the theoretical and philosophical context. The protology not only does not signal a regression from the formulation of the theory of Ideas to be found in the dialogues, but, rather, it is a logical and necessary consequence of it. To explain the theory of Ideas of the dialogues and the "visual" dimension which it implies, Friedländer notes (as we have already quoted) that "Plato possessed . . . an eye akin to that by which Polykleitos perceived the canon . . . and also to the eye by which Greek mathematicians looked at the pure geometrical forms."<sup>8</sup> Friedländer, who took very little account of the Unwritten Doctrines of Plato, could not have imagined how widely this statement could be applied, nor how useful it could be for understanding the reduction of the Ideas to Numbers.

We may pause briefly over the plastic arts and the "canon," which offer an excellent cultural analogy for the theory of Ideal numbers in ancient Greece. Architecture, sculpture, and even pottery were based on a "canon" corresponding to a *nomos* (law), which regulated music. This "canon," unlike what we find in other civilizations, expressed an essential "rule of perfection," which the ancient Greeks specified by a perfect proportion which was numerically expressible. Therefore, the

8. See note 6 above.

“Form” (= Idea), which was variously embodied in the plastic arts, was reducible by the ancient Greeks to a numerical ratio and to number.

Let us take some examples from W. Tatarkiewicz’s *History of Aesthetics*. Writing about architecture and in particular about temples, he says:

In a Greek temple each detail had its due proportion. If we take half the width of a column as a module, then the Athenian Thesaeum has a six-column facade of 27 modules: the six columns measure 12 modules, the three middle aisles cover 3.2 modules, the two side aisles 2.7 each—27 in all. The relation of a column to the middle aisle is thus 2:3.2, or 5:8. The triglyph is one module wide and the metope is 1.6 of this, so their relation again is 5:8. The same numbers are to be found in many Doric temples.<sup>9</sup>

In this connection, Tatarkiewicz adduces the following illustrative passage of Vitruvius:

The module is the basis of all calculations. The diameter of a column should equal 2 modules, the height of a column, with the capital, 14 modules. The height of the capital should equal one module, its width 2 modules and  $\frac{1}{6}$ . . . . The architrave together with the tenia and the drops should be 1 module in height. . . . Above the architrave should be placed the triglyphs and the metopes; the triglyphs should be  $\frac{1}{2}$  modules high and 1 module wide.<sup>10</sup>

In short, all the elements of the architectonic construction “were determined numerically.”<sup>11</sup>

Sculpture is the same. “The canon of sculpture,” explains Tatarkiewicz, “was also numerical and depended on a fixed proportion. As Galen informs us, beauty resides ‘in the proportions . . . of the parts, that is to say, of finger to finger and of all the fingers to the palm and wrist, and of these to the forearm, and of the forearm to the upper arm, and of all the parts to each other, as set forth in the Canon of Polykleitos.’”<sup>12</sup> It is clear, that the famous “canon” of Polyclitus expressed the proportion of the parts as convertible into precise “numerical relations.” The perfection of shape and form portrayed in sculpture was subsumed under geometrical shapes. Tatarkiewicz writes again: “During the Greek classical period the idea was also established that the body of an ideally built man could be contained within the simple geometric figures of the circle and the square. ‘If we lay a man on his back with his legs and arms outstretched and draw a circle with its

9. W. Tatarkiewicz, *History of Aesthetics*, Vol. 1: *Ancient Aesthetics* (Paris, Warsaw, and The Hague, 1970), 51.

10. *Ibid.*

11. *Ibid.*

12. *Ibid.*, 55. The passage quoted from Galen is at *De plac. Hipp. et Plat.* V. Muller 5.425; this passage is collected among the testimonies of Polyclitus in DK 40A3 (1.391). On the “canon,” see H. Oppel, “KANŌN,” *Philologus* (1937), Supplement.

center in the man's navel, the circumference of the circle will touch the tips of the man's fingers and his toes."<sup>13</sup> So also, if we imagine a man with arms and hands stretched out, and we trace a straight line from hand to hand, and then a straight line from hand to foot on the right and on the left and from foot to foot, we obtain a square (which is perfectly inscribed within the circle we described above) the diagonals of which intersect exactly at the navel. This is the now classic representation which is called the *homo quadratus* (in Greek ἀνὲρ τετράγωνος).

Also in the art of vase-making there were canons expressed by numerical ratios, which regulated the relations between the height and the width, and they go from the simplest (1:1) to the most complex, which embody the ratio of the golden section, which was widely used in the construction of buildings and statues.<sup>14</sup>

The plastic eye of Greece did not see Form or Shape (Idea) as ultimate, but saw, beyond it: number and numerical relation.

Transferring all this onto the level achieved by Plato's Second Voyage, we can see the clear correspondence on the metaphysical level of what the ancient Greeks expressed with their artistic creations. The Ideas, expressing the spiritual forms and the essences of things, are not the ultimate grounds, but presuppose something further, which consists in numbers and in numerical relations, and hence in the supreme Principles from which the Numbers and numerical relations derive (naturally, at the metaphysical level, as we have explained above).

### III. THE PLATONIC THEORY OF THE TWO OPPOSED SUPREME PRINCIPLES MYTHICALLY EXPRESSED THE THEOLOGICAL AND RELIGIOUS CONCEPTION OF THE ANCIENT GREEKS

We move to consider to what extent the theory of the two supreme Principles, far from being marginal, illuminatingly represents a scheme of thought that expresses the core of ancient Greek sensibility.

If we look at the most complete expression of Greek theology, that is, the *Theogony* of Hesiod, we can see that, from the very beginning, the cosmic forces and gods are divided into two clearly opposed realms, with Chaos and Gaia at their heads and characterized respectively by "formlessness" and by "form," which, with this opposition, epitomizes the whole of reality.<sup>15</sup>

13. W. Tatarkiewicz, *History of Aesthetics*, 58ff.

14. *Ibid.*, 59ff.

15. We call the attention of the reader to the interesting study of P. Philippson, *Genealogie als mythische Form: Studien zur Theogonie des Hesiod* (a supplementary volume of *Symbalae Osloenses* [Oslo, 1936]; reprinted with *Thessalische Ulythologie* in *Untersuchungen*



In the second phase of the theogony, that is, with the advent of the reign of Zeus and hence of the remaining Olympian gods, this basic conception is still in evidence. The Titans defeated by Zeus were cast down into Tartarus, which is the “counter-world at the opposite pole”<sup>16</sup> from Olympus. Each of the gods is like a mixture of forces having opposed features. For example, Apollo has as his device the sweet-sounding lyre and the bow and cruel arrows; Artemis is a virgin and at the same time is the protectress of childbirth, and so on. In addition, every divinity has another divinity as its polar opposite, as, for example, Apollo has as his polar opposite Dionysus, Artemis has as her polar opposite Aphrodite, and so on.<sup>17</sup>

Paula Philippson rightly observed that “the bipolar form” is the basic structure of Greek theogony and of the Greek way of thinking in general.<sup>18</sup> Here is what she has to say on the matter, which eloquently underwrites our own claims:

The bipolar form of thought sees, conceives, models and organizes the world, as unities, pairs of contraries. They are the form in which the world is presented to the Greek spirit, which transforms and conceives the multiplicity of the world in and through an arrangement. These pairs of contraries or polar opposites of thought are fundamentally different from pairs of contraries in monistic or dualistic thought, within which they are mutually exclusive, if they are in contention with each other, they are destroyed, or if reconciled, cease to exist as contraries. . . . In the form of polar thought the contraries in a given pair are not only each indissolubly joined to the other, as the poles of the axis of a sphere, but they are so conditioned by their opposition in their most intimate logical existence, that is, as polar, without the opposite pole, each would also be deprived of its sense. Each, like its contrary—and like the axis which separates them at the same time as joining them as contraries in the same way as the axis which separates them—is a part of a greater unity which is not exhaustively definable in terms of them: in geometrical terms, they are points on the surface of a sphere which is complete in itself. This polar form of thinking is essential to every embodiment of Greek thought. For that reason, even the Greek view of the divine is also formed with its imprint.<sup>19</sup>

We are now in a position to see how this “bipolar form,” which characterized ancient Greek thought in all its manifestations, is clearly stamped on the theory of the highest Principles, namely, the One/Dyad and the related theses, which Plato expresses in his Unwritten Doctrines and to which he alludes also in his writings.

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*über den griechischen Mythos* [Zurich, 1944]); the Italian translation of both works cited is by A. Brelich, *Origini e forme del mito greco* (Turin: Boringhieri, 1983).

16. Philippson, *Origini*, 51.

17. *Ibid.*, 67.

18. *Ibid.*, 65–68.

19. *Ibid.*, 65–66.

IV. PRESOCRATIC PRECURSORS OF THE BIPOLAR FORM  
IN PLATO'S THEORY OF THE FIRST PRINCIPLES

The general tendency of the ancient Greeks to conceive reality as deriving from a supreme pair of opposites (one positive and the other negative) is recorded from the very beginning. Parmenides, for example, says that "mortals" (that is, men) have posited two primordial realities, represented by "light" and "obscure night," as the principles from which all things arise.<sup>20</sup> If we accept a new interpretation of this aspect of Parmenides' thought, the anticipation of the Platonic theory which we are discussing becomes even more marked.<sup>21</sup> Parmenides writes: "They have made up their minds to name two forms, of which they must not name (as many as) one—that is where they have gone astray."<sup>22</sup>

Hence, "mortals" have erred because they have not understood that the two forms are included in a higher necessary unity, that is, the unity of being. In Fragment 9, he writes:

But since all things are named *Light and Night*, and names have been given to each class of things according to the power of one or the other (Light or Night), everything is full equally of Light and invisible Night, as both are equal, because to neither of them belongs any share (of the other).<sup>23</sup>

Overcoming the error of mortals, Parmenides would unify within being "Light," "Night," and their duality.<sup>24</sup>

Empedocles' position is very interesting; he maintained that the mixture and the separation of the four elements (water, air, fire, and earth) which produce the generation and corruption of all things, are caused by the two great cosmic powers, Love and Strife. So, Empedocles maintained a strongly bipolar conception of the global structure of reality.<sup>25</sup>

But the position closest to Plato's is undoubtedly that of the Pythagoreans, who not only maintained that numbers are the principles of all things, but who also affirmed that, because numbers themselves are derived from further elements, the elements from which they are derived are the elements of all things. Here is one the most significant testimonies, from Aristotle:

20. Parmenides describes them in exactly these terms, while the later doxographers will call these principles "hot" and "cold."

21. See what we say in the update of Zeller: E. Zeller and R. Mondolfo, *La Filosofia dei Greci nel suo sviluppo storico*, Part 1, Vol. 3: *Eleati*, ed. G. Reale (Florence: La Nuova Italia Editrice, 1967) 246ff., 250ff., 313ff.; see also Reale, *Melisso. Testimonianze e frammenti*, 226–34.

22. Parmenides frag. 8.53ff. DK.

23. *Ibid.*, frag. 9 DK.

24. For the defense and documentation of this interpretation, see our works mentioned in note 21 above.

25. Cf. Empedocles frag. 17, vv. 27ff. and frag. 26 DK.

They [the Pythagoreans] were the first to take up mathematics, not only advanced this study, but also having been brought up in it they thought its principles were the principles of all things. Since these principles, numbers, are by nature the first, and in numbers they seemed to see many resemblances to the things that exist and come into being—more than in fire and earth and water (such and such a modification of numbers being justice, another being soul and reason, another being opportunity—and similarly almost all other things being numerically expressible); since, again, they saw that the modifications and the ratios of the musical scales were expressible in numbers;—since, then, all other things seemed in their whole nature to be modeled on numbers, and numbers seemed to be the first things in the whole of nature, they supposed the elements of numbers to be the elements of all things, and the whole heaven to be a musical scale and a number.<sup>26</sup>

This view closely prefigures Plato's, in the following way. Numbers are all divided into two species, odd and even, except the One, which is an exception, being capable of generating the odd and the even. Insofar as each thing is reducible to number, it is an expression of an even number or an odd number.<sup>27</sup> But the odd and the even are not the ultimate elements. Philolaus, propounding and elaborating a conception which must have been present in the earliest Pythagoreanism, if not in Pythagoras himself, speaks explicitly of the unlimited (or indeterminate or infinite) and of the limit (or limiting or determining) as the first and highest principles of all things:

All things are necessarily either limiting or unlimited, or both limiting and unlimited. But there could not be only unlimited [*<otherwise nothing could be known>*]. Because, then, it is clear that the things which exist could not be constituted neither only of limiting elements nor only of limited elements, it is evident that the universe and the things which are in it are constituted by the harmony of the unlimited and limiting elements.<sup>28</sup>

The point of contact with the Platonic theory of the highest Principles is quite clear. And that the early Pythagoreans and Pythagoras himself followed such a route is shown by the fact that they conceived the unlimited as a void circumscribing the whole, and they represented the universe as arising from a kind of "inspiration" of this void on the part of the One. Numbers and things were generated precisely from this breathing in of the unlimited void into the One.<sup>29</sup>

Thus, the bipolar conception we have discussed is one of the foundations of ancient Greek thought, as Aristotle acknowledges explicitly:

26. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* A 5.985b24–986a3.

27. See Philolaus frag. 5 DK.

28. Philolaus frag. 2 DK, with DK frag. 3 inserted in lacuna; see Kirk, Raven, and Schofield, *The Presocratic Philosophers*, (Cambridge, 1983<sup>2</sup>), 325.

29. Cf. Aristotle, *Physics* Δ 6. 213b22ff. (58B30 DK).

The one side-list of opposites is privative, and all opposites are reduced to being and non-being, and unity and multitude. The rest is a case of unity, and movement of multitude. And . . . philosophers agree that existents and existence consists of opposites. All at least have opposing principles, some the odd and even, the hot and the cold, the limit and the unlimited, love and strife. And we may take it for granted that all other reductions are into unity and multitude, since all the principles of other thinkers fall under these genera.<sup>30</sup>

Of course, in addition to philosophical thought, we could call attention to the moral thought of the ancient Greeks, especially as it is expressed by the Seven Sages and the gnomic poets, in which this polarity and structural synthesis of opposite principles is evident. The maxims "use a measure," "nothing in excess," "the better is in the mean," and "the measure is the best thing" essentially presuppose a "limit" opposed to an "unlimited" (this latter being excess and defect), that is, a synthetic polar vision.

But we shall not dwell on the point, because it is so well known, as Aristotle himself took it up and discussed it in his famous teaching on the ethical virtues, which he presented as "mean," that is, as a just measure which reason imposes on emotions and actions which, of themselves, tend to excess or defect. Aristotle goes on to clarify with great perspicacity that the virtues as "means," far from being understood horizontally, are to be understood in a vertical sense, because they are the "highest point" (or extreme) in respect of the good and best.<sup>31</sup> And, in this way, Aristotle expresses, as well as the genius of Greek moral wisdom, Plato's great concept of "measure" and "just measure": and he ultimately accepts in ethics, if not in metaphysics, the notion of a unity-in-multiplicity, of order in the midst of disorder.<sup>32</sup>

Of course our discussion could be extended, and would receive a further collateral corroboration, if we were to examine the ideas of ancient Greek music and medicine. But this is not the place to do so.

In short, the Platonic theory of the Principles certainly represents the fullest philosophical expression of the deepest and most characteristic way of thinking among the ancient Greeks, and of their imagination and sensibility; so far forth, it expresses the crowning motif of Hellenic spirituality in its highest manifestation.

30. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* Γ 2.1004b27–1005a2 (Gaiser, 40A; Krämer, III.16; Findlay, 431.20).

31. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* B 6.1107a6–8.

32. Cf. Chapter 13, section II, 249ff. below.

## PART 3

### The Structural Connections between the Theory of Ideas and the Protology

What Heraclitus said of the God at Delphi can be applied to the Platonic dialogues: "I neither speak nor conceal, but indicate. . . ." There are texts whose significance is revealed to the reader only by dint of interpretation and a personal effort of assimilation.

K. Gaiser, *Platone come scrittore filosofico*, 8

In the activity of oral teaching, in which Plato—in contrast to the dialogues in which Socrates is imitated—really speaks for himself "seriously," without concealing himself, we find the Archimedean point which serves as a foundation for the "philosophical seriousness" and from which the content of the dialogues can be demonstrated and guaranteed. The indirect tradition, therefore, does anything but lead to a devaluation of Plato's written works. On the contrary, it brings us instead to reevaluate them, insofar as it demonstrates that Plato spoke in his own voice also in the dialogues.

H. Krämer, *Plato and the Foundations of Metaphysics*, 139



## 11 The Nature and Solution of the Major Metaphysical Problems of the *Republic* Left Unsolved in the Traditional Paradigm

### I. THE BASIC TASK OF THE *REPUBLIC*, THE DEFINITION OF THE GOOD, IS OFFERED BY PLATO AS THE REPAYMENT OF "INTEREST" ON A DEBT WHOSE "CAPITAL" IS SET ASIDE FOR ORAL INSTRUCTION

#### 1. *The Republic as a Test Case for the New Paradigm*

The *Republic* is a test case for the new alternative paradigm, whose acceptability or otherwise depends on the account we give of Plato's masterpiece.

The *Republic*<sup>1</sup> is the richest and most significant synthesis of the activity of Plato the writer (rather than the "thinker," in the sense which we have explained above).<sup>2</sup> It is to be dated to the middle period of his life, between the two voyages to Sicily around the mid-70s of the fourth century B.C.E. which was his greatest creative period. Moreover, it summarizes all the results of the writings which preceded it, and constitutes the basis of what followed. Therefore, if it can be shown that the *Republic* is inextricably linked to the Unwritten Doctrines, then that would spell doom for various attempts to disparage the relations between the written and the Unwritten Doctrines, and to limit the latter to the latest stage of Plato's activity. Hence, it would spell doom for every chance of

1. Guides to the rich scholarly literature published on the *Republic* in our century can be found in Praechter, *Die Philosophie des Altertums*, 79ff.; Totok, *Handbuch*, 193–97; Cherniss, *Lustrum* (1959): 153–77; and Brisson, *Lustrum* (1977): 279–83 and *Lustrum* (1983): 290–93. Somewhat old but still useful commentaries include B. Jowett and L. Campbell, *Plato's Republic: The Greek Text, with Notes and Essays* (Oxford, 1894), 3 vols.; and J. Adam, *The Republic of Plato. Edited with Critical Notes, Commentary, and Appendices* (Cambridge University Press, 1902, 1963<sup>2</sup>; reprint, 1965), 2 vols. M. Untersteiner presented a very interesting commentary to Book 10 in which he began, although only partially, to accept some points of the new interpretive paradigm; see his *Platone, Repubblica, libro X. Studio introduttivo testo greco e commento*, edited by M. Untersteiner (Naples: Loffredo Editore, 1966). See also R. C. Cross and A. D. Woodley, *Plato's Republic: A Philosophical Commentary* (London and New York 1964); and *Plato's Republic*, trans. G.M.A. Grube (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1974) [the pagination from this English translation is used in all the subsequent references]. Finally, see F. M. Cornford, *The Republic of Plato Translated with Introduction and Notes* (Oxford University Press, 1941; reprint, 1975).

2. See pp. 86–87, above.

a last-ditch defense of the traditional paradigm. We can understand, therefore, why Krämer has devoted his attention to this dialogue on several occasions.<sup>3</sup> We accept the results of his efforts, whose essential points we shall recall while presenting some supporting material. By way of novelty, we shall add an account of the protological principle opposed to the One-Good which figures in our dialogue, providing a contrapuntal background to the whole. We shall show that in the *Republic* there is present not only a close relation between the highest Principles and the Unwritten Doctrines, but a close connection with the doctrine of the Demiurge which emerges as already clearly formulated. Therefore the metaphysical map traced out in the *Phaedo* is fully executed.

Given the complexity of the problems which all this involves, we shall consider some relations between the metaphysical positions of the *Republic* and the Unwritten Doctrines in this chapter, while we shall take up the views about the Demiurge, insofar as they are present and operative in our dialogue, in a later chapter.<sup>4</sup>

### 2. *Plato's Declared Intention to Treat the Good Only Partially*

The first matter we must tackle is the issue of what Plato has to say about the doctrine of the Good, which is the pivot around which the masterpiece turns, with particular reference to his determination to present this doctrine only partially just as the whole of Plato's philosophy revolves about it.

We are concerned with some genuinely programmatic declarations that have caused serious embarrassment to past interpreters but whose meaning and importance can now be seen.

The longest, fullest, and most important passage in which he speaks of the Good<sup>5</sup> has become perhaps the most famous of Plato's metaphysical disclosures and is fundamental to the history of Platonism. It starts with a preliminary methodological declaration<sup>6</sup> and it finishes with similar reaffirmations in which Plato takes account of the systematic limitations in his treatment of this issue.<sup>7</sup>

The first part of the passage is as follows:

3. Krämer, ΕΠΕΚΕΙΝΑ; also see his "Über den Zusammenhang von Prinzipienlehre und Dialektik bei Platon. Zur Definition des Dialektikers *Politeia* 534B/C," in *Philologus* 110 (1966): 35-70, reprinted in *Das Problem der ungeschriebenen Lehre Platons. Beiträge zum Verständnis der platonischen Prinzipienphilosophie Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft*, ed. J. Wipperfurth (Darmstadt, 1972), 394-448, and his *Platone*, 184-98 [Am. ed., 96-103]. See also our "Ruolo delle dottrine non scritte di Platone 'Intorno al Bene' nella *Repubblica* e nel *Filebo*" (Naples, 1991).

4. See Chapter 16, section III, 314-22 below.

5. *Republic* 6.507A1-509C2.

6. *Ibid.*, 506D2-507A6.

7. *Ibid.*, 509C1-11.



By Zeus, Socrates, said Glaucon, do not stand off as if you had come to the end. We shall be satisfied if you discuss the Good in the same fashion as you did justice, moderation, and the other things.

That, my friend, I said, would also quite satisfy me, but I fear I shall not be able to do so, and that in my eagerness I shall disgrace myself and make myself ridiculous. But, my excellent friends, let us for the moment abandon the quest for the nature of the Good itself, think is a larger question than what we started on, which was to ascertain my present opinion about it. I am willing to tell you what appears to be the offspring of the Good and most like it, if that is agreeable to you. If not, we must let the question drop.

Well, he said, tell us. The story of the parents remains a debt which you will pay us some other time.

I wish, I said, that I could pay it in full now, and you could exact it in full and not, as now, only receive the interest. However, accept then this offspring and child of the Good. Only be careful that I do not somehow deceive you unwillingly by giving a counterfeit account of this offspring.

We shall be as careful as we can. Only tell us!<sup>8</sup>

We shall examine later the closing declarations, following the exposition of the doctrine of the Good, in terms of the simile of the Sun.

Glaucon was quite amused and said: By Apollo, a miraculous superiority!

It is your own fault, I said, you forced me to say what I thought about it.

Don't you stop, he said, except for a moment, but continue to explain the similarity to the Sun in case you are leaving something out.

I am certainly leaving out a good deal, I said.

Don't omit the smallest point.

Much is omitted, I said. However, as far as the explanation can go at present, I will not omit anything.

Don't you.<sup>9</sup>

### 3. *An Account of Plato's Important Statements about His Presentation of the Doctrine of the Good*

These two programmatic passages draw to our attention some basic concepts which we have already noted, especially in looking at Plato's self-testimonies in the *Phaedo* and at some of the indirect testimonies.<sup>10</sup>

1. Plato speaks clearly of having precise opinions on the Good itself, that is, knowing its essence.<sup>11</sup> But he adds that the furnishing of such a definition would imply taking the conversation to a higher level than that of the discussion in the dialogue, and so it would be out of place.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, Plato assures us that he will not leave anything out that is

8. *Ibid.*, 506D2-507A6 (Grube, 161).

9. *Ibid.*, 509C1-11 (Grube, 163ff.).

10. See Chapter 3.

11. Note in particular what is said in lines 506D8-E3 and in lines 509C3ff., where Plato affirms beyond any doubt his precise convictions on the nature of the Good.

12. See esp. lines 506E1ff.

necessary to the explanation as required for the dialogue's discussion.<sup>13</sup> This means that, given the ethico-political character of the issue, the discussion of the Good will be limited to an explanation of what is strictly necessary for the solution of the problem while remaining in the sphere of writing.

We should bear in mind that the participants in the *Republic* are culturally and spiritually advanced. Two of the principal participants in the *Republic*, Glaucon and Adeimantus, were Plato's brothers. But they are not able to deal with the "extra," that is, with the effort indispensable for coming to grips with the treatment of the essence of the Good. This being so, the schema of the *Phaedrus*, which outlines the conditions of good writing, is fully applicable. One who writes must know exactly what he is writing about and know the soul of those to whom it is addressed. Consequently, Plato measures what he has to say against the capacities for understanding of his listeners.<sup>14</sup>

2. Note that Plato clearly states that he does not wish to treat the essence of the Good for fear of attracting derision by tackling this question, that is, for fear of being ridiculed and disgraced.<sup>15</sup>

Now, for Plato, the essence of the Good was the One.<sup>16</sup> In a series of public lectures treating this matter, he went well beyond those things which men commonly call goods, and maintained that the Good is the One, and consequently some pooh-pooed it, and others were outraged by it.<sup>17</sup>

So, in the *Republic*, he aimed to demonstrate that the so-called goods<sup>18</sup> ruin the philosophic nature, and that the true Good is a much higher thing. But the choice Plato made in this book is precisely to avoid these misunderstandings by being silent about what it is necessary to be silent about with those with whom it is necessary to be silent, thus limiting the discussion to what was strictly necessary and holding back everything which ought to be held back in the way and from the people from whom it ought to be held back.<sup>19</sup>

3. The things concerning the essence of the Good about which Plato says in the *Republic* that he wishes to be silent are exactly the things of

13. As we can see from lines 509C9ff.

14. On this problem and the issues connected to it, see especially the important chapter of Szelezák, *Platone e la scrittura*, 271–326.

15. As we can see from lines 506D7ff.: ἀλλ' ὅπως μὴ οὐχ οἶόν τ' ἔσομαι, προθυμούμενος δὲ ἀσημονῶν γέλωτα ὀφλήσω.

16. See what is said in this regard in Chapter 7 above, and below at pp. 203–4ff.

17. Consult above, p. 147 and n. 15.

18. Cf. *Republic* 5.491C, 495A.

19. Cf. *Phaedrus* 276A. Refer to Chapter 3 for the Platonic self-testimonies contained in the *Phaedrus* and the analyses of them.

greatest value (τὰ τιμιώτερα) with which, according to the *Phaedrus*, the philosopher is well acquainted, but which must not be put into writing and which the *Republic* itself presents as an essential feature of the philosopher. Indeed, those who love reality in its entirety and do not leave aside any part of it, whether great or small, or of greater or lesser value, are expressly called philosophers.<sup>20</sup>

This is the highest knowledge, the knowledge of the Good, which is par excellence the concern of the philosopher.<sup>21</sup> But to achieve this knowledge, the philosopher must travel the longer way and be committed to it no less intensely and strenuously than in athletic exercises.<sup>22</sup>

Plato conceived this way as extraordinarily long: the inquirer must pass through the mathematical sciences, until he arrives at dialectic, to rise up to the knowledge of the Good, which is reached at thirty-five years of age, plus another fifteen years to complete the contemplation and actualization of the practice of the Good.<sup>23</sup> It is clear that this long way required a long practice which, obviously, could not be achieved entirely through writings, but only in the realm of oral dialectic.

4. Now we are in a position to interpret Plato's putting off to "some other time"<sup>24</sup> the definition of the essence of the Good. In the traditional paradigm, those commentators who noticed that Plato does not define the essence of the Good in any other dialogue were close to the truth. Indeed, he does not pay the capital of what, in the *Republic*, he only pays the interest on. Although perhaps there is an oblique reference to the *Philosopher*, a dialogue Plato announced but never written in which a full payment of the capital was to be made. Such an interpretation would be accurate if, instead of thinking about a dialogue promised but not written, we understand unwritten *logos* in the sense we well recognize by now: the *logos* entrusted to the realm of oral dialectic. For it is only in this realm that we would be able to pass through all the required stages towards the achievement of the highest knowledge.<sup>25</sup>

5. But, if Plato does not pay the principal in the *Republic*, by giving the definition of the Good itself, but refers us to the Unwritten Doctrines, nonetheless the payment of the interest of this debt is taken a long way.

20. Note in *Republic* 6.485B6 the references to the allusive and technical expressions of the *Phaedrus* 278D8: τιμιώτερα. In the passage of the *Republic* cited it is explained that the philosopher embraces reality in its entirety και οὔτε σμικροῦ οὔτε μείζονος οὔτε τιμιωτέρου οὔτε ἀτιμιωτέρου μέρους ἐκόντες ἀφίενται and also seems to recall the opposites φαῦλα—τιμιώτερα of the *Phaedrus*.

21. Cf. *Republic* 6.504C–D.

22. Cf. *Ibid.*, 504D1ff.

23. Cf. *Ibid.*, Book 6, passim.

24. Note the reference in *Republic* 6.506E6: εἰς αὐθις.

25. On the unwritten dialogue the *Philosopher*, see the interpretation which we give in Chapter 13, section III, 253–64 below.

On this point Plato skillfully plays on the double meaning of the term τὸνος, which means both "interest" and "offspring," and which then is associated with ἔκγονος, which means "son," in order to say that what he presents is interest-dividend, which as such is the offspring of the Good. Instead of the original principal (or capital, as we might nowadays say) or instead of the father, he wants to present the interest-offspring of that principal, namely, the son of that father; and, in addition, he wants to present this entirely properly, in its due proportion.<sup>26</sup> Consequently, if the text is not read and not interpreted in its due proportion, then its significance and value will be wholly lost.

This fact undermines the foundations of the traditional paradigm, which depends on the autonomy and self-sufficiency of the writings. Plato presents his masterpiece only as the interest on, or as the offspring of, something he has not entrusted to writing, which therefore lies outside what he has written. Plato's *Republic* can be correctly interpreted only in this way. This being so, a satisfactory understanding of this great piece of writing requires us to use the interest or the offspring to calculate the original capital which is held back for oral dialectic. And this maneuver requires, in turn, that we follow the only historically reliable path, which is that offered by the indirect tradition.

Because the underlying theme of the *Republic* touches the core of his philosophy, Plato was careful to provide clear hints and precise indications which, for anyone who knew about the Unwritten Doctrines, made it not only possible, but even easy to move from the interest to the original capital, from the son to the father, that is, to the essence, or at least to some fundamental features of the essence of the Good.

## II. TWO CRUCIAL PASSAGES ON THE GOOD IN THE *REPUBLIC*

### 1. *Analysis and Reading of the First Text*

The first passage contains a very important introduction to the problem of the Good and can be divided as follows.

a. In the early books of the *Republic*, the virtues (justice, temperance, courage, and wisdom) were set out in terms of the tripartite division of the soul (as concupiscible, irascible, and rational). It was argued that each virtue stands in a particularly close relation to one or other part of the soul, and that justice consists in the harmonious interrelation of the parts. But, to reach full knowledge of the virtues, it is necessary to travel another, longer way<sup>27</sup> leading to a higher level of justification.

26. *Republic* 6.507A1-5.

27. *Ibid.*, 435D3, 6.504B3.

b. What had been lacking in the earlier explanations was the ultimate justification to which Plato refers here in terms of measure and precision,<sup>28</sup> a terminology that, as we shall see further on, is highly allusive.<sup>29</sup> The justification of the earlier teaching was only partial and therefore unfinished. Consequently, it did not achieve the ultimate measure of these things, insofar as what is unfinished cannot be the measure of anything.<sup>30</sup>

c. The journey along this longer way which brings us to the “greatest knowledge” involves a very serious effort, no less than does athletic training which demands a long and constant commitment. And because, with the greatest knowledge, we reach something that is greater than justice, and we arrive at the highest level, we must also achieve maximum precision.<sup>31</sup>

d. The object of this greatest of the sciences is the Idea of the Good. It is from the Idea of the Good that the virtues themselves derive their usefulness and advantageousness, and it is from it that every axiological value derives.<sup>32</sup>

e. If the knowledge of the Good is not reached, then no advantage can accrue from the knowledge or possession of any other thing.<sup>33</sup> The Good, therefore, is, above all, the Principle which gives meaning and value to all things.

f. Plato, responding to the question about the object with which the supreme science is concerned, emphasizes that the interlocutor has heard (*ἀκήκοας*) it already several times from him. Plato is explicitly referring to something heard, and he says it in a way that makes very clear the reference to the Unwritten Doctrines: for the dialogues earlier than the *Republic* do not speak several times (*οὐκ ἐλιγάκις*) or even many times (*πολλάκις*) about the Idea of the Good.<sup>34</sup> On the contrary, the theme of the Idea of the Good in its precise metaphysical sense appears for the very first time in this dialogue in the following text:

You remember, I said, that when we had distinguished three parts of the soul, we discussed with reference to these parts the nature of each of justice, moderation, courage and wisdom.

If I did not remember that, he said, I should not deserve to hear the rest.

And also what we said before that?

What was that?

28. Ibid., B8–C4.

29. See pp. 204ff.

30. *Republic* 6.504C2ff.

31. Ibid., D2, 4, 6, 7; E1–2.

32. Ibid., 505A; consult pp. 207ff.

33. Ibid., A4–B1.

34. Ibid., E6–505A4.

We spoke as best we could at the time, and we said that to see these things most clearly there was a longer way round which would make them plain to anyone who traveled it, but that it was possible to deal with them on a level of proof compatible with what had been said up to then. You said that this was satisfactory; however, I thought that what was said then in that way was lacking in precision, but you might tell me if it satisfied you.

I thought you gave us good measure, he said, and so apparently did the others.

Any measure, my friend, I said, which in these matters falls short of reality to any degree, is not good measure. Nothing which is incomplete is a measure of anything, though sometimes people think it is already enough and that there is no need to search further.

They do this because they are lazy.

Laziness, however, is a quality that the guardian of a city and of laws can do without.

Very likely.

That sort of man should go round the longer way, my friend, I said, and put as much effort into his studies as into physical training; otherwise he will never reach the end of the most important and most appropriate study.

Are these virtues then, he said, not the most important subject of study? Is there anything still more important than justice and the things we discussed?

There is, I said. Also, we should not observe a mere outline of these things themselves, as we are doing now, and neglect the most finished picture. Is it not ridiculous to strain every nerve to have a most exact and pure picture of other things of little value, and not to require the greatest accuracy for the greatest subjects?

It certainly is, he said, but do you think that anyone is going to let you off without asking you what this greatest study is, and what you say it is about?

No indeed, I said, you too can ask me. You have certainly heard it often enough, but now either you are not thinking or you again intend to make trouble for me by your intervention. I rather think that the latter is the case, for you have often heard it said that the Form of the Good is the greatest object of study, and that it is by their relation to it that just actions and the other things become useful and beneficial. You probably knew that I was about to say this and, besides, that our knowledge of it is inadequate. If we do not know it, even the fullest possible knowledge of other things is no help to us, any more than if we acquire any possession without the Good. Do you think there is any advantage to have acquired every kind of possession, if it is not good, or to have every kind of knowledge without that of the Good, thus knowing nothing beautiful or good? —No, by Zeus, I do not.<sup>35</sup>

## 2. *Analysis and Reading of the Second Basic Text*

The second passage is more important because Plato sets out the image of the Good as the offspring of the Good. Thus Plato is committed to paying the interest on the debt, whose balance is put off in the sense already discussed.

35. *Ibid.*, 504A4–505B4.

The essential line of thought is as follows.

Plato starts from the theory of Ideas, which he has already discussed in the *Republic*, and about which he claims to have spoken also many times elsewhere. He presents the matter in terms of the one and the many, about which we have already spoken.<sup>36</sup> There are many beautiful things, many good things, and so on; but there is also the beautiful itself, the good itself, and so on; and each of these realities is a single Idea. Now, by consideration of the multiplicity of things in accordance with their corresponding Idea and referring them to it, we can say of each thing what it really is. So, the starting point is the overcoming of the multiplicity of sensible things by reference to the unity of each corresponding Idea, and to the bipolar schema of multiplicity-unity.<sup>37</sup>

The multiplicity of things about which we speak is perceived with the senses (vision, hearing, etc.), while the Ideas and unity of each of them are perceived by the intellect. Multiplicity, therefore, is found chiefly in the realm of the sensible, and unity in that of the intelligible.

We ought not to forget that the Ideas make up their own sort of intelligible multiplicity, not only when they are taken together, but also inasmuch as each is multiplied by being associated with other Ideas.<sup>38</sup>

The Craftsman or Demiurge of the senses<sup>39</sup> has formed in the most exquisite fashion the capacity of sight and, corresponding to it, the visibility of things inasmuch as he has introduced a third element between sight and visibility to join them.

Each of the other senses is directly linked to its object, while sight and the visible are joined by a bond of greater value,<sup>40</sup> that is, by the light. Now, the source of light is the Sun. But sight is not identical to the Sun; nevertheless, among the sensory organs, it is the most similar to the Sun, and from the Sun it derives its own capacities and its own power. In addition, as the Sun produces the capacity to see what is proper to sight, just so it is seen by means of it. Therefore, sight receives its capacity from the Sun, and for this reason it can also see the Sun.<sup>41</sup>

36. *Ibid.*, 507A7ff.; see pp. 124–25 and 131–32ff.

37. *Ibid.*, B5ff.

38. *Ibid.*, 5.475E9–476A7; see pp. 124–25ff.

39. See what is said on this argument in Chapter 16, section III, 314–22.

40. *Republic* 6.508A1: τιμιωτέρω ζῆγῶ ἐζύγησαν. Note the *analogical* reference to the term that expresses the concept for the object which the philosopher does not put into writing in the *Phaedrus*; see note 20 above.

41. *Republic* 6.508B9–10. This affirmation implies, in terms of the analogies which Plato stresses between the Sun and the Good, that insofar as the intelligence receives the power of knowing from the Good itself, for this reason it knows the Good, just as the eye, insofar as it receives vision from the Sun, also sees the Sun. And a little further on, at line 508E3ff., Plato determines it just as explicitly by affirming that the Good, being the cause of knowledge, is also itself knowable.

In addition, the Good can be understood by analogy with the Sun, which has been presented as the son of the Good. In the intelligible realm the Good plays the same role in relation to the intelligible and the intellect as the Sun plays in the sensible realm in relation to sight and the visible. When the eyes look at things by night, they see little or nothing; but, when they look at things in the light of the Sun, they see them with clarity and sight takes on its proper role. And so it is also with the soul, which, when it attends to things that are mixed with darkness—that are born and that die—then it is capable only of opinion and conjecture, and seems almost not to have an intellect. On the other hand, when it contemplates things illuminated by truth and being, that is, pure intelligibility, then it takes on its proper stature and role.

This, then, is how, by analogy with the Sun (the son), the Good (the father) performs its essential function.

The Idea of the Good gives truth to things known and the capacity of knowing the truth to him who knows them, and, given what it is, the Idea of the Good is itself knowable.

And as sight and the seen are not the Sun, but are akin to the Sun, so also knowledge and truth are not the Good, but are akin to the Good.

Moreover, as the Sun is above vision and the visible, so the Good is above knowledge and truth. The Good is, therefore, an extraordinary beauty, insofar as it exceeds the beauty of knowledge and truth.<sup>42</sup>

The comparison with the Sun carries further implications. The Sun does not merely give things the capacity to be seen, it also causes generation, growth, and nutrition, although it is not itself involved in generation. Likewise, the Good not only causes the knowability of things, but also causes being and essence.<sup>43</sup> But it is not itself *ousia*—being and essence; it is above *ousia* and exceeds being and essence in importance and power. Here is the text, which has become very famous:

I will, I said, after coming to an agreement with you and reminding you of the things we said before, and also many times elsewhere.

What are these things?

We speak of many beautiful things and many good things, and we say that they are so and so define them in speech.

We do.

And Beauty itself and Goodness itself, and so with all the things which we then classed as many; we now class them again according to one Form of each, which is one and which we in each case call that which is.

42. *Republic* 6.508E–509A6.

43. The terms which Plato uses here are εἶναι and οὐσία (509B6ff.). The term οὐσία is very difficult to translate, insofar as it covers a vast conceptual and semantic space. *Essence* and *substance* are terms which can be used, provided that the term *substance* is not given too Aristotelian a coloration. At line 509B9 occurs the famous expression ἐπέχειναι



That is so.

And we say that the many things are the objects of sight but not of thought, while the Forms are the objects of thought but not of sight.

Altogether true.

With what part of ourselves do we see the objects that are seen?

With our sight.

And so things heard are heard by our hearing, and all that is perceived is perceived by our other senses?

Quite so.

Have you considered how very lavishly the maker of our senses made the faculty of seeing and being seen?

I cannot say I have.

Look at it this way: do hearing and sound need another kind of thing for the former to hear and the latter to be heard, and in the absence of this third element the one will not hear and the other not be heard.

No, they need nothing else.

Neither do many other senses, if indeed any, need any such other thing, or can you mention one?

Not I.

But do you not realize that the sense of sight and that which is seen do have such a need?

How so?

Sight may be in the eyes, and the man who has it may try to use it, and colors may be present in the objects, but unless a third kind of thing is present, which is by nature designed for this very purpose, you know that sight will see nothing and the colors remain unseen.

What is this third kind of thing?

What you call light, I said.

Right.

So to no small extent the sense of sight and the power of being seen are yoked together by a more honorable yoke than other things which are yoked together, unless light is held in no honor.

That is far from being the case.

Which of the gods in the heavens can you hold responsible for this, whose light causes our sight to see as beautifully as possible, and the objects of sight to be seen?

The same as you would, he said, and as others would; obviously the answer to your question is the Sun.

And is not sight naturally related to the Sun in this way?

Which way?

Sight is not the Sun, neither itself nor that in which it occurs which we call the eye.

No indeed.

But I think it is the most Sun-like of the organs of sense.

Very much so.

And it receives from the Sun the capacity to see as a kind of outflow.

Quite so.

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τῆς οὐσίας, and in this context οὐσία can be translated also as *being* in the narrow sense. Remember being, as Plato uses it, is always a determined and limited reality.

The Sun is not sight, but is it not the cause of it, and is also seen by it?  
Yes.

Say then, I said, that it is the Sun which I called the offspring of the Good, which the Good begot as analogous to itself. What the Good itself is in the world of thought in relation to the intelligence and things known, the Sun is in the visible world, in relation to sight and things seen.

How? Explain further.

You know, I said, that when one turns one's eye to those objects of which the color are no longer in the light of day but in the dimness of the night, the eyes are dimmed and seem nearly blind, as if clear vision was no longer in them.

Quite so.

Yet whenever one's eyes are turned upon objects brightened by sunshine, they see clearly, and clear vision appears in those very same eyes?

Yes indeed.

So too understand the eye of the soul: whenever it is fixed upon that upon which truth and reality shine, it understands and knows and seems to have intelligence, but whenever it is fixed upon what is mixed with darkness—that which is subject to birth and destruction—it opines and is dimmed, changes opinions this way and that, and seems to have no intelligence.

That is so.

Say that what gives truth to the objects of knowledge, and to the knowing mind the power to know, is the Form of Good. As it is the cause of knowledge and truth, think of it also as being the object of knowledge. Both knowledge and truth are beautiful, but you will be right to think of the Good as other and more beautiful than they. As in the visible world light and sight are rightly considered Sun-like, but it is wrong to think of them as the Sun, so here it is right to think of knowledge and truth as Good-like, but wrong to think of either as the Good, for the Good must be honored even more than they.

This is an extraordinary beauty you mention, he said, if it provides knowledge and truth and is itself superior to them in beauty. You surely do not mean this to be pleasure!

Hush! said I, rather examine the image of it in this way.

How?

You will say, I think, that the Sun not only gives to the objects of sight the capacity to be seen, but also that it provides for their generation, increase, and nurture, though it is not itself the process of generation.

How could it be?

And say that as for the objects of knowledge, not only is their being known due to the Good, but also their being, though the Good is not being but superior to and beyond being in dignity and power.

Glaucon was quite amused and said: By Apollo, a miraculous superiority!<sup>44</sup>

### 3. *The Principal Problems Left Unresolved by the Passages Examined*

These two passages are of the greatest importance, but they leave open a number of problems which can be solved by understanding their true meaning. The solution of these problems directs us to the

44 *Republic* 6.507A7-509C2.

Unwritten Doctrines, whose basic claim Plato recalls at the end of the latter passage with a very significant and allusive image.<sup>45</sup>

The major problems left unresolved in the passages reviewed are:

1. The essence itself of the Good, about which he speaks and which is said to be knowable and which, moreover, Plato says he possesses, is not revealed, and its definition is put off.

2. The causal and explanatory role of the Good is affirmed but not explained.

a. The Good, in the first passage, is presented as the explanation of justice (and of virtue in general) and of everything useful and advantageous and valuable (that is, as the explanation of the axiological realm), but a full explanation is not given.

b. In the second passage, the Good is presented both as the cause that gives the intellect the capacity of knowing and as the cause which gives knowability to the things known, and hence as the cause of knowledge and truth (that is, as the explanation of the noetic realm), without the explanations being given.

c. Plato speaks of the Good as the cause of being and essence (that is, as the explanation of the realm of being), but he does not supply the reasons for this.

The two passages are limited to asserting that the Good is the cause of value, truth, and being, but they do not explain why.

3. Finally, the Good is placed above being; again, Plato limits himself to stating the fact, and does not explain the why or wherefore of it.

Such are the causes of scholars' difficulties and uncertainties as well as of the differences and disagreements among their interpretations. These problems are insoluble so long as we stay within the traditional interpretive paradigm.

The new interpretive paradigm, on the other hand, is able to solve quite satisfactorily all the difficulties related to these central passages of the *Republic* by recourse not to speculations or to theoretical presuppositions foreign to Plato, but to the precise historical data offered by the indirect tradition, which fills in the postponements and the references that Plato repeatedly presents.

Considered in the light of this tradition, these passages of the *Republic* represent, so to speak, the tip of the iceberg. That is to say, they are an outcrop of the Unwritten Doctrines, which only peep out from the writings, and whose importance and value can be extracted only with the assistance of the indirect tradition.<sup>46</sup>

45. See pp. 204–5ff.

46. Cf. what we said above in Chapters 3 and 4, *passim*.

Let us see, therefore, how these "assistances" from the indirect tradition solve these problems, and in addition are in full agreement with the texts of the *Republic*.

### III. THE ESSENCE OF THE GOOD AS THE ONE AND AS THE SUPREME MEASURE; THE EXPLANATORY CONNECTIONS IN AXIOLOGY, EPISTEMOLOGY, AND ONTOLOGY

#### 1. *In the Republic, the Good Is Not Defined as the One, But Strong Hints Are Given of Such an Identification*

The indirect tradition is very explicit about Plato's determination of the essence of the Good. Aristotle writes that Plato attributed the cause of the Good to the first of his elements,<sup>47</sup> namely, the One; he states that for the Platonists the One is the Good, and that the essence of the Good is indeed the One.<sup>48</sup> From Aristoxenus we learn that it was this very definition that the Good is the One which aroused outrage and contempt on the famous occasion when Plato gave a public lecture about the content of his Unwritten Doctrines.<sup>49</sup> And we have already seen that the various sources are in agreement on this very important matter.<sup>50</sup>

But the more delicate issue that concerns us here is the following: What indications of this identification does Plato give in the *Republic*, so that anyone who knew the oral teachings would be able to find his bearings? Let us begin with Plato's firm belief that the ultimate truths are summarizable in brief propositions and have no need to be put into writing, even as a memory aid, because anyone who understands them has them written in his soul and has made them his own so as not to need any mnemonics to bring them to mind.<sup>51</sup> Given that belief, we would not expect to find in the *Republic* anything other than allusions of various kinds and at different levels.

We shall show how these allusions are among the most effective and most beautiful that could be imagined.

In the decisive passage about the Good, in which the interest and the son of the Good is disclosed,<sup>52</sup> Plato introduces the theory of Ideas, on the level on which one must move to reach the Good. He chooses, from among their essential characteristics, that of unity.<sup>53</sup> The sensible things

47. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* A 6.988a14ff. (Gaiser, 22A; Krämer, III.9; Findlay 414.3).

48. *Ibid.*, N 4.1091b13-15 (Gaiser, 51; Krämer, III.24; Findlay 440.28).

49. See note 17, above.

50. See Chapter 7, passim.

51. *Seventh Letter* 344D-E.

52. See note 44, above.

53. See Chapter 6, passim.

are many, while the Ideas are a unification of this multiplicity; each Idea is an individual, and as such unifies the many sensibles. In the passage in which he begins the discussion of the nature of the philosopher, Plato directs us to the theme of the one-many, to which he also referred in the passage on the Good. He plainly claims that each of the Ideas is one, but, because each appears everywhere in association with actions, and bodies, and with other Ideas, it appears to be many.<sup>54</sup>

Thus, the metaphysical journey proceeds from the many (sensibles) to the unity of the Ideas; but these, in their turn, are many (many unities), and hence, relative to each other, imply a plurality at the intelligible level. So, in order to overcome this further plurality at the intelligible level, we must proceed to a further level of unification. We must place the absolute One at the head of the hierarchy.

In referring to the special yoke that only the seeing (= intelligence) and the thing seen (= the intelligible) have received, that is, to the light of the Sun (= Being), Plato uses the expression “with a yoke of greater value” (τιμιωτέρου ζυγῶ)<sup>55</sup> by allusion to the things of greatest value which, according to the *Phaedrus*, the philosopher must not put into writing.<sup>56</sup> And after going further than ought to be possible for him, given the structural limitations he has imposed on writings, he uses the most telling term he could in confirmation of these two assertions, that is to say, the name of the God which, for the ancients, stood for the One: “Apollo, that divine superiority!”<sup>57</sup>

Note that the first passage on the Good ends with the expression “By Zeus!”;<sup>58</sup> the second, on the other hand, uses Apollo; and it is only in this passage that Plato uses it in this way.<sup>59</sup>

Apollo was the symbolic name the Pythagoreans used for the One. From the etymological viewpoint, we note that *A-pollo* might be, by a verbal coincidence, understood as a privation of the multiple, playing upon the privative *α* and *πολλόν* = many (the not-many).

Here is a beautiful and interesting testimony from Plotinus on this issue:

Probably this name One does not have another meaning than that of abolition relative to plurality. Whence it is that the Pythagoreans also among them-

54. *Republic* 5.476ff.

55. *Ibid.*, 6.508A1.

56. See note 20, above.

57. *Republic* 6.509C1ff.; see the end of the passage referred to in note 44.

58. *Ibid.*, 505B4.

59. See the complete list of Platonic passages in which Apollo is mentioned in L. Brandwood, *A Word Index of Plato* (Leeds, 1976), 104. It is to be noted that it is only in the *Republic* that Plato uses “Apollo” as an exclamation. Even if, following R. Ferber, in *Platos Idee des Guten* (Sankt Augustin, 1989<sup>2</sup>), “Apollo” means (at most) “not many,” we proceed to show that, in the *Republic*, Plato certainly meant that the Good is One.

selves symbolically called it Apollo, as if wishing to express the negation ( $\alpha$ -) of the many.<sup>60</sup>

It thus seems that readers of this passage of the *Republic* who were aware of the Unwritten Doctrines would have been able, albeit partially, to grasp what the account is of which Plato says he wishes to repay only the interest. They would have understood that the debt to be paid was the definition of the Good, which is based on a systematic conjunction with the One. They would also have known that, to grasp the meaning of the definition, which Plato recalls and to some extent explains, it is necessary to travel the full distance of the longer way.

In the first of the two passages in the *Republic* in which Plato speaks of the Good, dropping hints to the reader who knows about it from discussion and oral dialectic, he alludes to the very concept of the most accurate measure,<sup>61</sup> or the supreme measure of each form of plurality, which is the characteristic of the One, as we shall specify later.<sup>62</sup>

Discussing arithmetic as the science that prepares for dialectic, Plato insists heavily on the One, with the clear aim of drawing the reader's attention to this term, at the level of analogy.

It is worth looking at the main claim of this passage:

This is what I was trying to express before when I said that some things call upon thought, and other do not. Those which affect the senses in contrary ways at the same time I defined as calling on thought, while those which do not I described as not rousing the intelligence.

I understand now and I think that it is right.

Well then, to which of these two classes do number and the One seem to belong?

I do not understand.

Reason it out from what was said before. If the One, . . . is adequately seen or perceived by any other sense, as we were saying in the case of the fingers, it would not draw one toward reality. If, however, something contrary to it is always seen at the same time so that it does not appear to be one more than the opposite, it would stand in need of a judge. The soul would as a result be at a loss, search for an answer, stir up intelligence within itself, and ask what is the nature of the One in itself, and so the study of the One would be one of those which leads the soul and turns it toward the contemplation of reality.<sup>63</sup>

We may, lastly, draw the reader's attention to a passage, the whole of which we quote below, but whose core concept should be pointed out now. If the Good is the One, then it follows that the greatest good for the city is that which binds it and makes it one ( $\delta$  ὅν συνδῆ τε καὶ ποιῆ

60. Plotinus, *Enneads* 5, 5.6.

61. See notes 28–30, above.

62. See below 253ff.

63. *Republic* 7.524D2–525A2. (cf. 7.525A–E).

μίαν) while the worst evil is that which divides it and makes it many instead of one (ὁ ἄν ποιῆ πολλὰς ἀντὶ μιᾶς).<sup>64</sup>

### 2. *The Good's Role as Metaphysical Explanation*

Having specified that the essence of the Good is the One, which is the supreme measure, the second set of problems are easily solved.

The One is the cause of justice, of the other virtues, and of everything useful and beneficial, insofar as it produces order and harmony; and thus it is the ultimate explanation of the axiological sphere.<sup>65</sup>

In addition, the One is the cause of knowability and of truth insofar as it determines things and their essences. It is in virtue of this capacity to determine that it is the explanation of the noetic and alethic realms (for only the determined is knowable).<sup>66</sup>

Again, the oracular formulation of the *Republic*, that the Good gives to the knower the faculty of knowing, can be spelt out by recourse to the indirect tradition which has preserved the Unwritten Doctrines. Indeed, the essential moment of human knowledge consists in the synoptic procedure, that is, in the essentially unifying procedure which comes about in the progressive reduction of plurality to unity, and ends up in the intellectual intuition of the One itself. This, evidently, is possible only if the nature of the intellect is unifying by its very structure. Aristotle writes as follows: "it was established that Mind is the One."<sup>67</sup>

Finally, the One is the cause of being and essence, insofar as it functions as the unifying principle of the multiple, and thus determines it ontologically at all levels, and generates in this way the variety of beings. It is in this sense that it explains the whole ontological sphere.

### 3. *The Meaning of the Famous Claim That the Good Is above Being*

To conclude the consideration of the metaphysics of the *Republic*, we must go back to the claim that the Good is above being (ἐπέκεινα τῆς οὐσίας),<sup>68</sup> which became a famous term of art in Neoplatonism, although the Neoplatonic meaning was already clearly anticipated in Plato.

As we know, being is identified especially with the world of the Ideas, and hence with the plurality of ideal entities; the *Republic* is perhaps the dialogue which most stresses the equation of the world of the Ideas with true being. The Ideas have being insofar as they are generated by a

64. *Ibid.*, 5.462A2–B3.

65. *Ibid.*

66. See Chapter 9, section I, pp. 167ff.

67. Aristotle, *De anima* A 2.404b22: ... νοῦν μὲν τὸ ἓν.

68. *Republic* 6.509B9.

limitation and determination of an original plurality (the indefinite Dyad) by the action of the One; they are a synthesis, a mixture of two Principles. Given these two claims, it follows that the One, which functions as unifying cause and a limitation of the indeterminate plurality, cannot be merely an οὐσία, a substance or being (which involves a mixture of the two Principles), but must be located above substance insofar as it does not imply synthesis or mixture. Therefore it must be superior in dignity and power just because it is the supreme cause which determines, limits, and unifies the opposed Principle. In this way it gives rise to all essences and so to the whole of being.<sup>69</sup>

The various very complex affirmations of the *Republic* including this last one, which is the most difficult, are therefore fully and satisfactorily explicable on the basis of the Platonic protology.

It is quite true that Aristotle does not confirm that Plato said that the One is above Being. On the contrary, he frequently speaks of the Platonic One as the supreme Being or Being itself.<sup>70</sup> But, apart from the fact that Xenocrates and Proclus allude to this Platonic specification of the first Principle as *melius ente*,<sup>71</sup> the Eleatic vocabulary preferred by Aristotle does not exclude it. Rather, it is confirmed by some parallel expressions which are encountered in Plato's own writings, for example, in the *Republic* itself, he speaks of the Good using the expression the brightest of beings<sup>72</sup> and also the best among beings.<sup>73</sup>

This is simply a different way of designating the Good as the source of Being. In the end, the claim that the Good (One) is above Being means that it is its supreme source or origin. Thus, to speak of the brightest of beings or of Being itself is to use the term "Being" in a prototypical sense, and hence in a sense different from its common use. In the end, the expression "brightest of beings" means the same as the claim that the Good is above Being.

It is worth remembering that there is a structural similarity between mathematics and metaphysics in Plato, which throws further light on this point.

As is well known, for the ancient Greeks, the One is not simply a number, which is a unity of multiplicity, but it is the principle and element of number as such, as Plato himself implies in the passage quoted above in which he speaks of the One and number stressing the

69. Krämer, ΕΠΕΚΕΙΝΑ, passim.

70. See Aristotle, *Metaphysics* B 3.998b9ff., 18ff.; 4.1001a9ff., 22ff.; K 2.1060a36ff.; 3.1061a15ff.; N 2.1089a2ff.; and numerous other passages.

71. Gaiser, *Test. Plat.*, 50; see p. 148, above, and note 16.

72. *Republic* 6.518C9: "τὸ ὄν καὶ τοῦ ὄντος τὸ φανότατον."

73. The contemplation of the Good on the part of man is defined in *Republic* 7.532C5ff. as a vision of the best among beings.



distinction between them,<sup>74</sup> and as Aristotle claims, in a passage which makes out a parallelism similar to the one we have been interpreting:

Therefore the one is not in itself a substance. And this is reasonable; for the One means the measure of some plurality, and number means a measured plurality and a plurality of measures. Therefore it is natural that One is not a number, for the measure is not measureness, but both the measure and the One are principles.<sup>75</sup>

Thus, just as the One, insofar as it is a condition of numbers, is not a number, so likewise the One, insofar as it is a condition of being, is not a being,<sup>76</sup> in the sense that the conditioning entity is metaphysically differentiated from what is conditioned.<sup>77</sup>

#### IV. THE PRINCIPLE OPPOSED TO THE ONE-GOOD, AND THE BIPOLAR SYSTEM OF REALITY IN THE *REPUBLIC*

In the *Republic* there are no explicit or extended references to the Principle opposed to the One: the indefinite Dyad about which the Unwritten Doctrines speak. Nevertheless, it can hardly be concluded from this that, at this stage, Plato had not yet discovered this Principle. Indeed, in addition to precise reasons of a purely theoretical character which necessarily presuppose this principle, we find in the *Republic* allusive references which are variously modulated, appropriately shaded, and given a certain prominence, and which it is therefore impossible to disregard.

Here are the theoretical reasons and the allusive references.

a. We ought to remember first that, in his dialogues, Plato explicitly displayed only those metaphysical doctrines that are indispensable for the development of the issues in question, avoiding every reference to the teachings that would have implied large-scale digressions from the line of the discussion. Consequently, in the development of the political issues of the *Republic* and in the terms in which they are treated, the question of the Principle of the indefinite Dyad, and the question of the Ideal numbers and the Ideal-numbers, could very well be left in the

74. *Republic* 7.524D7; here Plato clearly distinguishes "ἀριθμός," from "ἕν."

75. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* N 1.1088a3-8.

76. Note that the thesis is not merely implicit, as in the Aristotelian passage, but it serves as the fulcrum of the argument. Naturally, Aristotle's doctrine of categories is operative here; but an analogical transposition of the Platonic categories seems evident. Of course, the fact that the Greeks placed the One above Numbers is a mere antecedent, or prompt, which, when carried over into the context of the Platonic henology, takes on a much profounder and wider ranging speculative significance.

77. Aristotle clearly claims at *Metaphysics* B 3.990a17-19 that the principle and the cause must be above and separate from the things of which they are the principles.

shade, because of the sharp line between written and oral doctrines that Plato had set up and steadfastly observed.

b. In addition, if the Dyadic Principle were thought to be absent from the theoretical framework arrived at by Plato when composing the *Republic*, we would have to accept the following result. The causality of the Good, which is expressly specified as efficient, would necessarily be absolute, a kind of creationism, and wholly processive in character. This would run wholly counter to the theoretical and historical evidence (given that it is agreed that such theories arrived in Western thought only in the Christian epoch) and to all of Plato's texts, as well as to the indirect tradition.

c. If we look closely at the image of the Sun, which is said to be very similar to what it is the image of, we see that it is based on the bipolar relation which holds between the Sun and what it acts on, illuminating and nourishing it. In any case Plato himself clearly claims the polarity of the Principles, recalling the antithetical images of day and night, light and shadow.<sup>78</sup>

d. The bipolar structure of reality is even more forcefully referred to at the outset of the discussion of the true philosopher, where Plato makes reference to the just and to the unjust, to Good and to Evil;<sup>79</sup> and this reference is repeated.<sup>80</sup> It is under this guise that Plato also presents the polar antitheses between measure and absence of measure,<sup>81</sup> and between unity and plurality.<sup>82</sup>

e. In order to remove any remaining doubt and to finish off what we have to say about the bipolar structure of the Principles, we wish to direct attention to three very significant passages. Even if the bipolarity is not given pride of place, as the One-Good is, we wish to indicate why, despite the views of many scholars, that structure is of fundamental importance throughout the *Republic*.

With the superb artistry he employs in other dialogues, Plato guides his readers—those who are acquainted with his thought by other routes—to a full understanding of his notion of the essence of the Good, and therefore also of its opposite, Evil. He does not perform the second part of this task at the place at which it might be most expected, in the passage in which he presents his image of the Good. For, as we have already noted, he is not paying the capital, but only the interest.

78. *Republic* 6.508C–D.

79. *Ibid.*, 5.476A.

80. Thus, in the similarly bipolar pairs justice–injustice and beautiful–ugly: 5.479A–B; 6.484A–B, 408C.

81. *Republic* 6.486D.

82. *Ibid.*, 5.476A, 479A–B, 493E, 507B–C; 7.524Bff.

Rather, he does so both before and after, surrounding and converging on the focal point.

We may recall what Aristotle and other ancient sources tell us about the essence of Good and Evil. Good is One, whereas Evil is Dyadic or Plural. Applying this to the construction of the state, we may ask ourselves what, in henological terms, is the perfect state and what is its opposite?

There can only be one answer. If the Good is One, the perfect state is the one that instantiates Unity. And if Evil is the Dyad of the great-and-small and Plural, an imperfect state is one over which duality, division, and plurality rule.

With all the clarity we could hope for in a written work, Plato tells us all this in a passage which is properly separated from his imagistic treatment of the Good. We find the following in *Republic* Book 4:

But how simple of you to think that the term State is applicable at all to any but our own!

Why so?

You ought to speak of other States in the plural number; not one of them is a city, but many cities, as they say in the game. Each will contain not less than two [note the symbolic reference to the Dyad!] divisions, one the city of the poor, the other of the rich, which are at war with one another; and within each there are many smaller divisions. You would be altogether beside the mark if you treated these as one State; but if you deal with them as many, and give the wealth or power or persons of the one to the others, you will always have a great many friends and not many enemies. And your State, while the wise order which has now been prescribed continues to prevail in her, will be the greatest of States, I do not mean to say in reputation or appearance, but in deed and truth, though she number not more than a thousand defenders. A single State of that size you will hardly find, either among Hellenes or barbarians, though many that appear to be as great and many times greater.

That is most true, he said.<sup>83</sup>

Then, in the following book, Plato offers us an allusion which is so stark that the specifications of the Good as One, and of Evil as Many, are as good as stated:

Shall we try to find a common basis by asking of ourselves what ought to be the chief aim of the legislator in making laws—what is the greatest good, and what is the greatest evil, in the organization of a State; and then consider whether the manner of life we have just described has the stamp of the good and that of evil?

By all means.

Can we name anything more harmful for a State than a force, whatever it may be, which causes distraction and plurality where unity ought to reign? or any greater good than the bond of unity? —We cannot.<sup>84</sup>

83. *Ibid.*, 4.422 E3–423B–C.

84. *Ibid.*, 5.462 A2–B3.

Lastly, we may look at a passage from Book 2 of the *Republic*. Here, Plato clearly contrasts God, who is good by his nature and is therefore the Good, with the opposite principle. The Good is the cause of all good things, and cannot be in any way the cause of evil things. Therefore, we must suppose another cause from which evil things flow.

It follows therefore that the good is not the cause of all things, but those which are as they should be; and it is not to be blamed for evil.

Assuredly.

Then God, if he be good, is not the author of all things, as the many assert, but he is the cause of a few things only, and not of most things that occur to men. For few are the goods of human life, and many are the evils, and the good is to be attributed to God alone; of the evils the causes are to be sought elsewhere, and not in him.<sup>85</sup>

Even though, in a written work like the *Republic*, Plato wants to repay only the interest and not the capital, he could hardly have gone further than these indications of his thought about the two Principles and the bipolar structure of reality.

#### V. NUMERICAL STRUCTURE OF THE IDEAL WORLD AND IDEAL NUMBERS IN THE *REPUBLIC*

In the context of a passage quoted above<sup>86</sup> on the importance of arithmetic for arriving at dialectic, the discussion is broadened with a play on "one" and on "two," which brings the great-and-small to the fore. It would be quite unrealistic to suppose that this text was not meant to remind readers in the know of the issue of the Dyad of the great-and-small. And it is hard to ignore the background doctrine of the numerical structure of the ideal world.

We have already seen how, in the *Phaedo*, in drawing up the general metaphysical plan, Plato depends heavily on the one and the two.<sup>87</sup> We find the same in other dialogues, and Plato must have insisted on it to such an extent that the comic poets used it to make fun of him.<sup>88</sup> In the passage which we have been discussing, the *Republic* gives us one of the more characteristic examples.

Although he has not fully embraced the new paradigm, H.-G. Gadamer has understood this point clearly. We wish, therefore, to cite an exemplary passage from him in order to convince those who hold

85. *Ibid.*, 2.379B15-C7.

86. *Ibid.*, 7.524B-526B; cf. note 63, above.

87. Cf. Chapter 5, *passim*.

88. See the fragment of Theopompus quoted by Diogenes Laertius 3.26; LCL 1.301 which is also cited by Gadamer.

onto the traditional paradigm that the old interpretive schema can no longer stand.

Gadamer stresses how, from the outset, the problem of plurality is associated with that of the Dyad. This conception underlies the numerical structure of the *logos* and hence of the Ideas in just the way that we have been explaining. Plato understands the Good and the Beautiful as number and as measure, and we must understand them precisely in that way too if we are to read him correctly.

Setting out from the *Hippias Major*, after having quoted a fragment of the comic poet Theopompus, and then going on to the *Phaedo*, this is what Gadamer adds to the passage of the *Republic*:

. . . [T]he indivisible unity of the essence does not constitute the last word—for his purpose is for number to serve as a model. The true enigma of number lies in the following: that one plus one makes two, without either of them, alone, being two, and without the two being one. Theopompus, a contemporary of Aristophanes, makes fun of this Platonic idea in a comic verse: “For not even the one is one. And two? The number two is hardly one according to Plato.” If I get the point, this riddle appears for the first time in the *Hippias Major*, without any positive consequences being derived from it. It serves only to criticize an attempted definition. Ought we not think that, with this particular structure of number, Plato alludes to something which is very important in another context. Was it not perhaps the structure of the *arithmos* of the *logos* which he then had in mind? Obviously, mere participation in an Idea does not yet mean knowledge. I think that a theory of the doctrine of Ideas, which was presented as an atomistic Eleaticism, would have been always inadequate. And Plato seems very quickly to have recognized that fact. What knowing is can be grasped only when we understand how it is possible that one plus one makes two and the two are one. The problem of the Dyad and its relations to the one appears now more frequently in Plato, and always in reasoned contexts which determine Plato’s thought from beginning to end. We may recall the puzzle of how two comes from one, whether by addition or by division of the one, a puzzle that in the *Phaedo* requires Socrates to change his mind and provokes the famous flight into the *logoi* (*Phaedo* 96ff.). In that dialogue, on the basis of the inquiry about the nature of two, the hypothesis of the Idea is developed. Likewise, the problem of the relativity of sense perception, which is of such a fundamental importance for Plato, allows him to see a connection with the problem of two. In the *Phaedo* (96 D–E) it appears in this context. In the Seventh Book of the *Republic* the problem is pursued of whether the great and the small, which are attributed at the same time to the middle finger and the pinky finger, are one or two. The reply is given that they must be distinguished in thought. For . . . each is itself one, and together they are two (*Republic* 524B–C). What a banality! Or do we have here a first hint of the structure of the one-two, which later becomes the structure of the great-and-small or the more-or-less (μέγα καὶ μικρόν, μᾶλλον καὶ ἥττον)? The problem of relativity, which here hints to the relation between the one and the two, likewise at the *archai* of the ἕν and δυάς is the famous “invitation to thought,” with which the whole introduction of the Ideas begins. We can overcome the contradiction brought about by the testimony of the senses only by thought, by distinguishing, in the

same thing, the greatness and smallness. This implies not only that the co-existence of various different aspects in the same object does not involve a real contradiction, but also, tacitly, that the aspects so distinguished by thought alone, the Ideas, are inseparable one from the other, and so belong each to the other—a view which will be explicitly discussed in the *Parmenides*. It seems to me a matter of fact not yet sufficiently highlighted by scholars, that the relativity of sense perception already contains within it everything that was later to be made explicit as the mutual participation of the Ideas and was to be accomplished on the model of the *arithmos*, which we call the theory of Ideal numbers.<sup>89</sup>

89. H.-G. Gadamer, "Platons ungeschriebene Dialektik," in *Idee und Zahl*, 9–31. Given the technical importance of the passage of *Republic* 6 to which Gadamer is referring, we quote it here at length, putting the crucial terms (one, two; great, small) in *italic* to help the reader. We may recall that this passage immediately precedes that cited above, in note 63. See also Stenzel, *Zahl und Gestalt*, 175ff. *Republic* 7.523C4–524D2 (trans. Grube, *Plato's Republic*, 175–76).

You will understand my meaning better if I put it this way: here, we say, *are three fingers*, the smallest, the second, and the middle finger.

Quite so.

Assume that I am talking about them as being seen quite close. Now examine this about them.

What?

Each of them equally appears to be a finger and in this respect it makes no difference whether it is seen to be at the end or in the middle, whether it is white or black, thick or thin, and all that sort of thing. In all this the soul of the many is not compelled to ask the intelligence what finger is, for the sense of sight does not indicate to it that the finger is the opposite of a finger.

Certainly not.

Therefore this sense perception would not be likely to call on the intelligence or arouse it. Not likely.

What about their *bigness or smallness*? Does the sense of sight have sufficient perception of them, and does it make no difference to it whether the finger is in the middle or at one end? or their thickness, their hardness, or softness in the case of the sense of touch? And do our other senses not lack clearness in their perception of these qualities? Does not each sense behave in the following way: in the first place the sense concerned with the hard is of necessity also concerned with the soft and it declares to the soul that it perceives the same object to be both hard and soft.

That is so.

Then in those cases the soul in turn is puzzled as to what this perception means by hard, if it says that the same thing is also soft; and so with the perception of the light and the heavy, the soul is puzzled as to what is the meaning of the light and the heavy, if sense perception indicates that what is light is also heavy, and what is heavy, light.

Yes, he said, these indications are strange to the soul, and need investigation.

It is likely then, I said, that in these cases the soul will attempt, by calling upon calculation and intelligence, to examine *whether each of the things announced to it is one or two*. —Of course.

*Then if they appear to be two*, each appears as different and *one*. —Yes.

If each is *one* while both are *two*, it will think of the *two* as separate, for if they were not separate, it would not think of them as *two*, but as *one*. —Correct.

But we say that the sense of sight saw *big* and *small* not as separate but as commingled. Is that not so?

So in order to clarify this, intelligence is compelled to see *big* and *small* not as commingled but as separate, the opposite way from sight. —True.

The passage of the *Republic* we have been insisting on so much in the foregoing pages, with its reference to the plurality that the Idea-One itself takes on at the intelligible level in conjunction with other Ideas, confirms the *arithmos* structure of the world of Ideas and the presence of the theory of Ideal numbers in the *Republic*:

And of just and unjust, good and evil, and of every other idea, the same remark holds: taken singly, each of them is one; but from the various combinations of them with actions and bodies and with one another [the Ideas], they are seen in all sorts of lights and appear many.<sup>90</sup>

And here is a reflection of the ontological structure of the *arithmos* on moral life in the background of the following passage:

For Adeimantus, he whose mind is fixed upon true being, has surely no time to look down upon the affairs of earth, or to be filled with malice and envy, contending against men; his eye is ever directed towards things fixed and immutable, which he sees neither injuring nor injured by one another, but all in order moving according to reason; these he imitates, and to these he will, as far as he can, conform himself. Can a man help imitating that with which he holds reverential converse? —Impossible.

And the philosopher, holding converse with the divine order, becomes orderly and divine as far as the nature of man allows.<sup>91</sup>

In this way, Plato draws attention to the things about which the philosopher is concerned. He specifies them as the things that are orderly (τεταγμένα), that exist always in the same way (κατὰ ταυτὰ ἀεὶ ἔχοντα), that, among themselves, neither do nor undergo injustice (οὔτ' ἀδικοῦντα οὔτ' ἀδικοῦμενα ὑπ' ἀλλήλων), and that are all in order (κόσμῳ) and in proportion (κατὰ λόγον ἔχοντα). That is to say, they are structured in accordance with a relation which is clearly arithmetical (λόγος = ἀριθμός, as described above) as is demanded of necessity by τάξις and κόσμος.

It is worth noting how the “imitation of the divine,” to which we shall return, is thought of in terms of bringing order into one’s life and is put forward as introducing this set of relations into ethics and politics. The philosopher must imitate these things, that is, their metaphysical structure and become as much like them as he can (ταῦτα μιμεῖσθαί τε καὶ ὅτι μάλιστα ἀφομοιοῦσθαι).

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And it is from some such circumstances that it first occurs to us to ask: *What is the nature of bigness, and again of smallness?*

That is surely true.

And so we call *the one intelligible and the other visible*. —Quite correct.

That this passage, although frequently neglected by scholars, contains a clear reference to the indefinite Dyad, has been recognized by Stenzel; see *Zahl und Gestalt*, 175ff.

90. *Republic* 5.476A4–7.

91. *Ibid.*, 6.500B8–D1.

The structure of *logos-arithmos* can bring about order-in-disorder, measure-in-measurelessness, and unity-in-multiplicity.

#### VI. SOME OTHER KEY POINTS OF THE *REPUBLIC* CLARIFIED BY THE NEW PARADIGM

1. Let us recall the hints at the composite structure of the soul, which referred not only to the soul in its tripartition into rational, irascible, and concupiscible, but which also seemed to allude to the composite structure of the rational soul itself.<sup>92</sup> Such hints are inexplicable except by reference to what is set out only in the *Timaeus*, with its complex relations to the Unwritten Doctrines.<sup>93</sup>

2. Likewise, the famous, and in many respects very obscure, speech of the Muses,<sup>94</sup> in which the mysterious "nuptial number" is mentioned,<sup>95</sup> can be most plausibly explained if it is read from the perspective of the esoteric doctrines of the Idea-Numbers and their numerical relations, as Gaiser has shown very clearly.<sup>96</sup>

3. We make considerable interpretive advances concerning the specification and interpretation of some passages and figures in the great Myth of the Cave which had previously not been understood, such as the shadows and images reflected in water which stand for the intermediate position of the mathematical entities, and the stars which symbolize the Meta-Ideas.<sup>97</sup>

#### VII. THE REGION OF THE INTERMEDIATE (Μεταξύ) IN THE *REPUBLIC*

But the problems which are of greatest interest to us are those concerning the interpretation of the two most delicate points of the famous Simile of the Divided Line,<sup>98</sup> that of mathematical knowledge, and more particularly that of dialectic; thus we shall focus on the last two sections of the Divided Line.

As is well known, Plato describes human knowledge and the parts into which it is articulated in terms of the simile of a line divided into two

92. *Ibid.*, 10.611B-C; also see 9.589 C-D, 590 C-D; Chapter 15, pp. 291-99.

93. See Chapter 20, pp. 391-415.

94. See *ibid.*, 8.545D-547A.

95. See *ibid.*, 546A-D.

96. K. Gaiser, "Die Rede der Musen über den Grund von Ordnung und Unordnung: Platon *Politeia* VIII, 545D-547A," in *Studia Platonica. Festschrift für H. Gundert* (Amsterdam, 1974), 49-85.

97. Cf. Krämer, *Platone*, 193, note 34, and 194 [Am. ed., 101 and 254-55, note 34]. See also K. Gaiser, *Il paragone della caverna* (Naples, 1985).

98. For the bibliography on this issue, see the essential guide which Krämer furnishes us in *Über den Zusammenhang*, 37, note 10 ([Ital. Ed., 398, note 10]).



unequal parts, of which each half is subdivided into two parts. The first and smaller part of the line represents sensible knowledge, the second and larger part represents intelligible knowledge. Our philosopher says that the first or lower segment of intelligible knowledge corresponds to a less clear form of knowledge than the second, and he calls the lower *dianoia* and the higher *noesis*. Thus, since the forms of knowledge (as we know) correspond to the forms of being, it follows that the intelligible realm (to which all knowledge represented by the second part of the line is referred) must be divided into two levels: a higher constituted by pure Ideas, and a lower constituted by intelligible entities partly similar to and partly different from pure Ideas.

Now, since Plato identifies *dianoia* with mathematical knowledge, it follows that the corresponding intelligible entities called for by *dianoia* are just those mathematical entities that the Unwritten Doctrines describe and that make up the level of the intermediate (μεταξύ) which lies between pure Ideas and sensible things.<sup>99</sup>

This account has been in the public realm for some time under various guises, but it has been in various ways contested because Plato does not speak openly of these “intermediates” in our dialogue. However, in the light of the Unwritten Doctrines everything becomes clear. Plato avoided speaking openly about them in the *Republic*, employing his standard of doctrinal economy. Indeed, and most significantly, he expressly says that he wishes to remain silent on this question, because it would carry him far beyond the limits of his writing:

We pass over the proportions between the objects to which they apply, and the division of either section, the opinable and the knowable, into two, Glaucon, lest it involve us in a great many more arguments than those which went before.<sup>100</sup>

But, as if that were not enough, Plato uses the term “intermediate” in the *Republic* to refer to the type of knowledge that *dianoia* involves, which is concerned with mathematical entities, just as, in the Unwritten Doctrines, he calls the metaphysical place and status of the mathematical entities intermediate (μεταξύ). Indeed, as the mathematical entities are ontologically in between the Ideas and the sensibles, so *dianoia*, as the noetic reality corresponding to mathematical entities, is in between the intelligence or mind that grasps the Ideas and mere opinion, which grasps the sensibles.

Here is the text:

99. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* A 6.987b14–16 (Gaiser, 22A; Krämer, III.9; Findlay, 414.3). See pp. 158–59, above.

100. *Republic* 7.534A5–8.

You seem to me to call the attitude of mind of geometers and such reasoning [διάνοια] but not understanding, reasoning [διάνοια] being midway [μεταξύ] between opinion and understanding [νοῦς].<sup>101</sup>

### VIII. THE PINNACLE OF DIALECTIC AND THE DEFINITION OF THE GOOD IN THE *REPUBLIC*

The advantages of the new interpretive paradigm are even greater in the interpretation of the last section of the simile of the Divided Line, which corresponds to dialectic.<sup>102</sup>

The most important passages on dialectic are the following:

Consider now how the section of the intelligible is to be divided.

How?

In such a way that in one section the soul, using as images what before were models, is compelled to investigate from hypotheses, proceeding from these not to a first principle but to a conclusion. The other section which leads to a first unhypothetical principle proceeding from the Forms themselves and proceeding through these.<sup>103</sup>

Understand also that by the other section of the intelligible I mean that which reason itself grasps by the power of dialectic. It does not consider its hypotheses as first principles, but as hypotheses in the true sense of stepping stones and starting points, in order to reach that which is beyond hypothesis, the first principle of all things. Having reached this and keeping hold of what follows from it, it does come down to a conclusion without making use of anything visible at all, but proceeding by means of Forms.<sup>104</sup>

These passages contain the two expressions that those who cling to the traditional paradigm have most difficulty explaining: an unhypothetical principle<sup>105</sup> and a principle of all things,<sup>106</sup> which refer to the Good, and which Plato here does not wish to call an Idea, but rather a Principle, and he insists on the term many times.

As the reader will have gathered, the account already given of the metaphysical map of the *Phaedo*<sup>107</sup> is notably enlarged but not resolved. Once again, its solution is put off.

101. *Ibid.*, 6.511D2–5.

102. Although these passages have been much discussed, the discussion has been unsatisfactory because it has been based on the supposition that everything Plato thought on the matter could be recovered from them. But just as he had done with respect to the Good, Plato warns us, in introducing the concluding speech on dialectic, not only that the issues are difficult, but that they must be heard not just in the present moment but they must be gone over again frequently (“αὐθις πολλάκις ἐπανιτέον”), as is clear from the passage cited in note 113.

103. *Republic* 6.510B2–9.

104. *Ibid.*, 511B3–C2.

105. *Ibid.*, B6.: “ἀνυπόθετον.”

106. *Ibid.*, 7: “τοῦ παντὸς ἀρχή.”

107. See Chapter 5.

This time, however, at the end of his discussion of the mathematical sciences which lead to dialectic, Plato stresses that, in grasping the essence of the Good,<sup>108</sup> dialectic arrives at the goal and the end of the voyage<sup>109</sup> (at the conclusion of the Second Voyage, we might say), and he offers some decisive references in the following passage:

And so you also call a dialectician the man who can give a reasoned account of the reality of each thing? To the man who can give no such account, either to himself or another, you will to that extent deny knowledge of his subject?

How could I say he had it?

And the same applies to the Good. The man who cannot by reason distinguish the Form of the Good from all others, who does not, as in a battle, survive all refutations, eager to argue according to reality and not according to opinion, and who does not come through all the tests without faltering in reasoned discourse—such a man you will say does not know the Good itself, nor any kind of good. If he gets hold of some image of it, it is by opinion, not knowledge; he is dreaming and asleep throughout his present life, and, before he wakes up here, he will arrive in Hades and go to sleep forever.<sup>110</sup>

In our century, Jaeger noted, but only in passing, the connection between the separation or abstraction of the Good from the other Ideas about which our passage speaks, and the Aristotelian treatise *On the Good*.<sup>111</sup> But it was Krämer who subjected this passage to careful analysis and who displayed all its complex implications.<sup>112</sup>

We ought to bear in mind that a thinker who (1) maintains (as Plato does in our passage) that only one who knows how to define the essence of every individual thing is a dialectician; (2) adds that one who does not know how to give definitions of them does not have knowledge; (3) stresses that this applies in full force also to the Idea of the Good; and (4) maintains specifically that one who is not capable of defining the essence of the Good, separating it from all the other Ideas, after reviewing them, does not know the Good, and both lives and will live as if asleep; in short, one who affirms all these things that Plato affirms, obviously can affirm them only if he is in secure possession of that definition, that is, of the exact definition of the Good.

Actually, if we place the last passage in relation with the earlier ones, the main lines that emerge are those we have uncovered from the Unwritten Doctrines. There are some Ideas which follow very closely on

108. See the text to note 110, below.

109. Cf. note 110, below.

110. *Republic* 7.534B3–D1.

111. See W. Jaeger, "Review of P. Wilpert, *Zwei aristotelische Frühschriften über die Ideenlehre*," in *Gnomon* 23 (1951): 242–52, in particular 252. (This review can also be found in W. Jaeger, *Scripta minora* [Rome, 1960], 2:427.)

112. Jaeger's vague hint would have escaped everyone if Krämer had not focused on the problem in *Über den Zusammenhang*.

the first Principle: these are the most general Ideas, which, therefore, are like go-betweens to the other Ideas. In the dialectical ascent, which proceeds toward and through the Ideas, they constitute the final stage. Just as it is necessary to rise synoptically from particular Ideas to more general Ideas abstracting them from the particulars, so likewise, if we start from these most general Ideas (identity, difference, equal-unequal, similar-dissimilar, etc.), it is necessary to know how to perform the final abstraction, which separates the One from its own highest determinations, which are set out in the most general Ideas.

What, then, is the definition of the Good?

The indirect tradition tells us that the essence of the Good for Plato was the One (just as the second passage on the Good in the *Republic* indicates with the emblematic "*A-pollo*"), and this was understood as the most exact measure (as is stated in the first of the passages on the Good in the *Republic*).

Hence, the conclusion is final and ultimate: the Good is the One, and the One is the absolute measure of all things.

Having this definition, which does indeed sum up those very brief propositions, or very few words to which, as Plato himself says, the Unwritten Doctrines are reduced, can be a great benefit for the modern reader; but only if the reader himself is prepared to take, on his own, the longer way, which in the *Republic* Plato tries to account for fully; only if he is able to persevere with that Second Voyage which Plato describes in the *Phaedo*.

In any case, before concluding with the great summary passage which we have seen above, Plato refers in a very distinctive way to the oral realm, writing absolutely clearly that these things: "we have not to hear it at this time only, but are to repeat it often hereafter."<sup>113</sup> And in addition, he tells us that only in this way is it possible to arrive at that place: "where a man may find rest from traveling and the end and purpose of his journey."<sup>114</sup>

113. *Republic* 7.532D4-5.

114. *Ibid.*, E2-3.

## 12 The Transposition from Physical to Metaphysical Dialectic, *Aporias* Arising from the Theory of Ideas, and the Polarity of the Primary Principles in the *Parmenides*

### I. CONFLICTING INTERPRETATIONS OF THE *PARMENIDES* AND THE POSSIBILITY OF A CONSTRUCTIVE REREADING OF IT IN THE LIGHT OF THE NEW PARADIGM

The *Parmenides* is certainly a most enigmatic dialogue.<sup>1</sup> In fact, the history of the interpretations which have been given of it is the most disconcerting and tortured.

As we have already noted, the Neoplatonists found in this dialogue the highest expression of the greatest metaphysical and theological truths, and consequently, from this viewpoint, they considered it the most remarkable summa of Platonic metaphysics.

Hegel, and a succession of scholars in his footsteps, held our dialogue to be the masterpiece of Platonic dialectic (which means, in the final analysis, of all ancient dialectic).

Others, on the other hand, have interpreted it as a pure intellectual game, or as some sort of sly scholastic exercise, or even as a work full of logic-chopping, and therefore as a work of limited value.

Still others have understood our dialogue as an expression of the spiritual crisis of Plato and as a noteworthy act of self-criticism.

Some scholars instead have interpreted the *Parmenides* as a work of a fundamentally critical nature, aimed at demolishing Megaricizing and Eleaticizing adversaries, and in general those thinkers who based their views on Megaric attitudes to the theory of Ideas.

Finally, in the last century there were plenty of scholars who have even denied that the dialogue could be authentic, or who at least have cast doubt on its authenticity.<sup>2</sup>

1. For the bibliography of the scholarly literature on the *Parmenides* published in the present century, see Praechter, *Die Philosophie des Altertums*, 83; Totok, *Handbuch*, 198–200; Cherniss, *Lustrum* (1959): 118–27; and Brisson, *Lustrum* (1977): 273ff. and *Lustrum* (1983): 287. More recently, there is a wide-ranging analytic bibliography in M. Migliori's *Dialettica e verità. Commentario filosofico al "Parmenide" di Platone* (Milan, 1990).

2. See Migliori, *Dialettica*, 43–68.

In rereading this work, we find that even more than elsewhere references to the indirect tradition and to the Unwritten Doctrines turn out to be decisive in furnishing a correct interpretation.

In the first place, the new paradigm offers critical assistance in bringing order into this thicket of conflicting interpretations. In fact, all the interpretations to which we have alluded do not take any account of Plato's attitude to writing, as expressed in his self-testimonies. Therefore, they wholly run together the two spheres of playfulness and seriousness, whose relations are essential to the underlying structure of the whole of Plato's work. If these two spheres are not carefully discriminated as such, we shall fatally misunderstand Plato's authentic teachings. We may also recall that Parmenides himself unequivocally presents his dialectical discourse as playing out this laborious game.<sup>3</sup>

It is worth noting how those who have believed that they could make out Plato's metaphysics concisely expressed in the dialogue with which we are concerned have claimed to find in all of it the seriousness (hence those "things of greatest value") which Plato had firmly decided not to entrust (except partly) to written works; and they have distorted the way in which to read this dialogue, like all of Plato's other dialogues.

In addition, those who have seen an absolute and determinate value in the dialectic of the *Parmenides* have not taken any account of the fact that Plato himself says that the true art of dialectic, in the full and total sense, is that which is only realized in the realm of oral discussion. Therefore, the dialectic presented in the *Parmenides* will necessarily be only a part of dialectic, and not the totality of what dialectic is, which can only be fully expressed in oral discussions.

On the other hand, those who have belittled the *Parmenides*, judging it as mostly empty sophistry, have not taken any account of the fact that Plato, beyond any possibility of misunderstanding, counted writings executed according to the rules as certainly not serious, but as very beautiful; and this is not beauty in the modern aesthetic sense but in the Greek sense of the term, as something good which has its own value.

Furthermore, we see no prospects for the views of those who have believed that they can read in the *Parmenides* Plato's self-criticism of his own theory of Ideas, and hence can see in it an expression of a particular phase of his spiritual evolution. Indeed, for the reasons given above, there is no historical or theoretical grounds for assuming a spiritual evolution as an overall interpretive maxim.

In any case, even within the traditional paradigm, some scholars have understood that the criticism of the theory of Ideas in the *Parmenides*

3. Plato, *Parmenides* 137B2.

depends, as we shall see, on mistaken interpretations of that theory. Nevertheless, no one has given a full account of relation of the second with the third part of the dialogue; indeed, as we shall show, this relation presupposes a structural connection set up in the *Phaedo*.

Finally, the denial of the authenticity of the *Parmenides* was simply the discounting of a recalcitrant fact, which for some scholars did not fit in well with their interpretation of the traditional paradigm. Today, there are no scholars who support such a denial.

The correct framework for a rereading of the *Parmenides* is, instead, as follows. In this dialogue Plato goes a long way toward speaking about the apex of metaphysics, about the Principles whose bipolar structure is uncovered; nevertheless, he does not disclose the whole of dialectic; and most importantly, he does not, except very partially, set out the essence of these Principles and their underlying relations. In particular, Plato is wholly silent about the underlying axiological relations (not mentioning the Good at all). And this is completely consistent with his choice of interlocutors (namely, the Eleatics) and their interests.

The guidelines followed by Plato in this work are exactly those set out in the *Phaedrus*: anyone who writes has complete knowledge of what he is writing about, and presents the issues in the right proportions relative to the souls of those involved in the dialogue: in this case, the Eleatics Parmenides and Zeno, as well as Socrates and a very young Aristotle. In addition, as we shall see, Plato limits the things he has to say to only a few persons, to a circle of experts, who know the rules of the game.

In this sense the game of the *Parmenides* is indeed very beautiful: it discusses the heights of metaphysics within a narrow group of people, with a limited range of exemplification, and with a restricted ontological-noetic perspective, especially in the last, third, great section, and hence excluding the axiological realm, exactly because this was foreign to Parmenides, who in this last section is the protagonist speaking with the youthful Aristotle. But, precisely within these limits, the heights of metaphysics are effectively presented even though with all the amusements that go to make up a great and beautiful game.

If we examine carefully the theoretical framework of the dialogue and if we reduce it to its outline, we can see that it follows the main features of the metaphysical map of the *Phaedo*. The discussion between Socrates and Zeno, which occupies the first section of the dialogue, is conducted as part of the First Voyage, insofar as it discusses the issue of the One and the Many and remains on the level of the philosophy of the Physicists.<sup>4</sup> The discussion of the theory of Ideas, which takes up the

4. Ibid., 126A–128E.

second section of the dialogue, corresponds exactly to the first stage of the Second Voyage: it prepares the way to the second stage. We may recall that the move from the first to the second stage of the Second Voyage must be accomplished purely by examining the consequences of the theory of Ideas and the criticisms of those who attack it, with a view to being able to proceed to the higher hypotheses up to the last and fullest. Finally, in the third part of the dialogue, Parmenides himself, with the youthful Aristotle, develops a highly complex discussion which, by approaching the bipolar structure of the real, focuses on the hypotheses that the One exists and that the One does not exist. It presents wide-ranging insights into the first Principles, and thus carries out that final stage, even if only by means of a partial dialectic, and with various ironic masks; but, viewed in this way, the dualistic-polar thesis of the first Principles stands out more clearly than in any other dialogue.<sup>5</sup>

## II. THE FIRST PART OF THE *PARMENIDES*

Let us examine these three parts in detail, beginning with the first. This section has become very famous because it sets out the interpretation and the general framework of Zeno's dialectic.<sup>6</sup> In brief, it explains how the famous arguments of Zeno could be understood to be a proof in support of the views of Parmenides. He affirmed that the All is One; thus, he affirmed the unity and unicity of being. His adversaries drew from the affirmation that the One is a set of absurd consequences systematically opposed to the position, and hence destructive of it.

Thus, in his writing, Zeno gives tit for tat to the adversaries of Parmenides by showing how the hypotheses of these adversaries, maintains the opposite position, that the many exist (and that the One is not), involves consequences more absurd than those implied by that of Parmenides. Consequently, the proof of the impossibility of the pluralistic thesis, opposed to that of the monistic one of Parmenides, is a dialectical confirmation of monism itself, as the following text shows:

I see, Parmenides . . . that Zeno's intention is to associate himself with you by means of his treatise no less intimately than by his personal attachment. In a way, his book states the same position as your own; only by varying the form he tries to delude us into thinking that his thesis is a different one. You assert, in your poem, that the all is one, and for this you advance admirable proofs. Zeno . . . asserts that it is not a plurality, and he too has many weighty proofs to bring forward. You assert unity; he asserts no plurality; each expresses himself

5. Ibid., 128A4–135C (second section), 135–166C (third section); cf. Migliori, *Dialettica*, 99.

6. For an account of the effect on Platonism of this reorientation in Eleaticism, see Migliori, *Dialettica*, 370–97.



in such a way that your arguments seem to have nothing in common, though really they come to very much the same thing. That is why your exposition and his seem . . . rather over the heads of outsiders like ourselves.

Yes, Socrates, . . . but you have not quite seen the real character of my book. True, you are as quick as a Spartan hound to pick up the scent and follow the trail of the argument, but there is point you have missed at the outset. The book makes no pretense of disguising from the public the fact that it was written with the purpose you describe, as if such deception were something to be proud of. What you pointed out is only incidental; the book is in fact a sort of defense of Parmenides' argument against those who try to make fun of it by showing that his supposition, that there is a one, leads to many absurdities and contradictions. This book . . . is a retort against those who assert a plurality. It pays them back in the same coin with something to spare, and aims at showing that, on a thorough examination, their own supposition that there is plurality leads to even more absurd consequences than the hypothesis of the one.<sup>7</sup>

### III. SOME OBJECTIONS TO THE THEORY OF IDEAS

In the second part, Socrates presents the theory of Ideas, which are structurally multiple. The dialogue again defends plurality, but moving to a different plane from that of the Pluralist adversaries of the Eleatics. These latter, in fact, operate on the sensible plane, whereas Plato, in our work, operates on the plane reached with the Second Voyage, that is, on the intelligible plane. Now, as we already know, all the contradictions of the multiple sensibles are solved and overcome by means of the doctrine of the Ideas. The participation of things in the Ideas explains all the contradictions encountered among the multiple sensibles. It would be, therefore, a very serious matter if the contradictions revealed within the sphere of the multiple sensibles reappeared in the same or a similar form among the Ideas if those contradictions reappeared also in the realm of the plural intelligibles. It is to this problem that Plato finally calls our attention. Here is a very important passage:

I accept that . . . and I have no doubt it is as you say. But tell me this. Do you not recognize that there exists . . . a Form of Likeness and again another contrary Form, Unlikeness itself, and that of these two Forms you and I and all the things we speak of as many come to partake? Also, that things which come to partake of Likeness come to be alike in that respect and just in so far as they do come to partake of it, and those that come to partake of Unlikeness come to be unlike, while those which come to partake of both come to be both? Even if all things come to partake of both, contrary as they are, and by having a share in both are at once like and unlike one another, what is there surprising in that? If one could point to things which simply alike or unlike proving to be unlike or alike, that no doubt would be a portent, but when things which have a share in both are shown to have both characters, I see nothing strange in

7. Plato, *Parmenides* 128A4–D6.

that, Zeno, nor yet in a proof that all things are one by having a share in unity and at the same time many by sharing plurality. But if anyone can prove that what is simply Unity itself is many or that Plurality itself is one, then I shall begin to be surprised. . . . [I]f the kinds or Form themselves were shown to have these contrary characters among themselves, there would be good ground for astonishment, but what is there surprising in someone pointing out that I am one thing and also many? When he wants to show that I am many things, he can say that my right side is a different thing from my left, my front from my back, my upper parts from my lower, since no doubt I do partake of plurality. When he wants to prove that I am one thing, he will say that I am one person among the seven of us, since I partake also of unity. So both statements are true. . . . [I]f anyone sets out to show about things of this kind—sticks and stones, and so on—that the same thing is many and one, we shall say that what he is proving is that something is many and one, not that Unity is many or that Plurality is one; he is not telling us anything wonderful, but only what we should all admit. But . . . if he begins by distinguishing the Forms apart just by themselves—Likeness, for instance, and Unlikeness, Plurality and Unity, Rest and Motion, and all the rest—and then shows that these Forms among themselves can be combined with, or separated from, one another, then, Zeno, I should be filled with admiration. I am sure you have dealt with this subject forcibly, but, as I say, my admiration would be much greater if anyone could show that these same perplexities are everywhere involved in the Forms themselves—among the objects we apprehend in reflection, just as you and Parmenides have shown them to be involved in the things we see.<sup>8</sup>

This Socratic challenge calls forth the intervention of Parmenides himself, who takes up the burden of refutation. We may observe that, at this point, Eleatic dialectic is moved, by a genuine transposition, to the level reached by the Platonic Second Voyage. Nevertheless, at first, Parmenides' dialectic limits itself to revealing *aporai*, that is, difficulties and contradictions contained in the theory of Ideas itself, while in the third section it opens up all its power and significance, pushing itself up to the level of the supreme Principles.

The Parmenidean *aporai* against the theory of Ideas are seven,<sup>9</sup> and, clearly, some of them were already very widespread at the time of the composition of this dialogue (some of the most important also return in Aristotle's *Metaphysics* and so have become very well known).<sup>10</sup>

It will be useful to make a list of them and summarize them briefly, because some of them are very important to demonstrate that Plato was

8. Plato, *Parmenides* 128E5–130A2.

9. These *aporai* all turn in their various and complex ways on the conception of the intelligible Ideas as separate from sensible things. But it must be remembered that the *separation* which is here in play involves scarcely any understanding of the results of the Second Voyage. Therefore these are not criticisms that Plato is making of his own doctrine, but are criticisms directed at those thinkers who object to the theory of Ideas without having understood the level at which it is pitched.

10. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* A 9. See Migliori's discrimination of the so-called seven *aporai* and his account of Socrates' debt to the Eleatics (*Dialettica*, 132–60 and 164–67, respectively).

fully aware both that his theory ran into a set of difficulties and also of how to resolve them.

The first set of problems Parmenides raises do not, strictly speaking, amount to a real difficulty; indeed, they lead to a statement of general significance. They turn on the necessity of establishing whether or not the Ideas exist (naturally taking the Ideas as transcendent of sensible things). Socrates says (a) that he is very certain of the existence of the Ideas corresponding to ethical values; (b) that he has had some difficulty in admitting Ideas for natural objects (as man, water, fire, etc.); (c) that he does not admit Ideas of hair, mud, dirt, and in general trivial and undignified things.

Parmenides observes that this limitation is unjustified, and that it is only because he is still young and inexpert that Socrates thinks in this way. When Socrates grows up and philosophy has taken him over fully, and when he has learned not to pay attention to the common opinions of men, he will know how not to despise any object, and hence to admit Ideas for everything.

It is clear that in this way Plato is telling us what is the right attitude to adopt: once embarked on a journey, it is necessary to have the courage to push on to its conclusion, with consistency and consecutiveness. Hence, nothing is to be excluded from the ideal world. The remaining discussion follows from the implicit admission of this thesis.<sup>11</sup>

The second *aporia*, like the next one, tries to undermine the theory of Ideas by bringing to the fore the difficulties inherent in the relation of participation between sensible things and Ideas. Indeed, sensible objects do not participate in their corresponding Ideas entirely (that is, in the entire Idea) because we could not see how it could remain one and identical in each and every object which participates in it, except by being broken up, that is, by multiplying itself. But if this is admitted, we would be led to equally absurd consequences: for example, we would have to admit that large sensible things participate in a fraction of the Idea of largeness, and hence of a part of the Idea of largeness, which is obviously smaller (as a fraction) than Largeness itself (that is, than the Idea in its totality). But this also will not do.<sup>12</sup>

The third *aporia* is aimed at showing that the logico-methodological relation which leads to the theory of Ideas ought to lead us beyond the Ideas, transcending them in a kind of infinite regression as follows.

The Ideas are introduced as the unity of a plurality: for example, the plurality of large things and various types of sensible largeness are ex-

11. Plato, *Parmenides* 130B–E.

12. *Ibid.*, 130E–131E.

plained by supposing that there exists a single Idea of largeness itself, by participation in which the large things are large. But Parmenides objects that, by applying this very logical procedure I can maintain that between many large sensible things, on the one hand, and the Idea of large, on the other, it is necessary to have a third thing which unifies them, that is, the existence of the third largeness. But then, once again, for the same reasons, it is necessary to introduce a further ideal largeness to unify the others, and so on to infinity.<sup>13</sup>

The argument has become very famous under the tag the "Third Man Argument," which was used by Aristotle. In order to explain the many sensible men, in terms of the logic on which the theory of Ideas seems to be based, it is necessary to introduce the Idea of man conceived as (intelligible) unity of (sensible) plurality. But between sensible men and the Idea of man, it is necessary to establish a further unification, that is, to introduce a further Idea unifying sensible men with the Idea of man, and hence a third man would be introduced; and then, once again, along the same lines, it would be necessary to introduce a fourth man, and a fifth, and so on to infinity. This argument, of course, was one of Aristotle's warhorses against Plato's theory of Ideas.<sup>14</sup>

Socrates tries to avoid the foregoing *aporiae* by proposing to understand the Ideas as thoughts or concepts (*νόημα*), thus transposing the doctrine from the ontological to the noetic plane, and so reducing it to a mere dimension of the soul, or the intellect. In this case, each thought-Idea would be one thing, and therefore all the objections would disappear.

But Parmenides responds that a thought is always a thought of something real, and that this something must be supposed as present in all the things which are thought of by means of the Ideas. But then we would have the following consequences: (a) all things, being formed by thoughts, are thinking; or (b) even though formed of thoughts, they would be thoughts which do not think. These consequences are obviously absurd and unsustainable.<sup>15</sup>

The fifth *aporia* returns to the issue of the relation of the participation of things in Ideas, seeking to understand it as imitation. The Ideas are like models, the sensible things are like copies and images, and the relation of the latter with the former is that of similarity.

But we shall again encounter the difficulty which came up with the Third Man. Indeed, if, in order to explain the similarity among various sensible things, we postulate a single Idea of which they are copies, and to which therefore they have a common similarity, it is necessary in turn

13. *Ibid.*, 132A-B.

14. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* A9.990b15ff. See our commentary, 1.193ff. (5th ed., 3: 78-81).

15. Plato, *Parmenides* 132B-C.

to introduce a further archetype-Idea which explains the similarity between things and the first Idea introduced, and then for the same reasons, a further Idea with a similar role and so on to infinity.<sup>16</sup>

The sixth *aporia* is the first of the two which Parmenides thinks the most important. It plays on the total separation of the world of Ideas from the world of sensible things, as a consequence of the previous *aporia*. The Ideas are in and of themselves and not in us. Therefore, they depend exclusively on themselves and on the relations which they have among themselves, whereas, on the other hand, the things of this world, having the same name as the Idea, do not depend on the Ideas, but on themselves. In sum, the two worlds do not mutually interact from the ontological viewpoint.

A conclusion of this kind is reached, by similar reasoning, also from the epistemological viewpoint. The idea of knowledge is not our knowledge. The knowledge of truth is, obviously, just the former; on the other hand, our knowledge, that which is present in us men here on earth, could not therefore be knowledge of the truth, or knowledge of the Ideas. Therefore, for us men, the Ideas are unknowable.<sup>17</sup>

The seventh *aporia* is the sixth run backward. If each of the two worlds (sensible and intelligible) has relations only with itself, the perfect power and the true knowledge that God possesses is operative in the sphere of the world of Ideas, but does not affect us and our world. God knows the Idea of man and the Ideas of things and acts on them, but he does not know real sensible men, and does not act on their behalf.<sup>18</sup>

These are the *aporiae* which form the subject matter of the text which we are analyzing, but it is explicitly said that there are also others. Obviously, already at the point at which Plato was writing this dialogue, an array of objections was in circulation, of which Aristotle has handed down a very full list.<sup>19</sup>

For those who properly understand the theory of Ideas, a reading of these criticisms is an intellectual diversion. Plato behaves toward his adversaries like a cat with a mouse: he does not deliver the fatal blow, but instead plays with the mouse, pretending to let it go, waiting for the right moment to give it the coup de grâce.

We can already say that these criticisms in general, and specifically those which appear to be the most damaging, really arise from a fundamental mistake: they treat the Ideas, which are introduced by Plato as causes, as on the same level as the things of which they are the causes,

16. Ibid., 132C-133B.

17. Ibid., B-134C.

18. Ibid., C-E.

19. Ibid., 135A; see also Aristotle, *Metaphysics* A 9.

that is, they demote the cause to the same ontological level as the effect, with all the consequences that this error implies.

But Plato prefers not to take this shortcut but the longer way, which, for him, is the only certain one in philosophy. His overall response, serves to bring the second section to a close and to open the third, is the following. Plato makes Parmenides say that it takes exceptional gifts to understand the theory of Ideas (that is, it is far from being known by the many) and that it involves still greater special gifts to know how to teach it and to communicate it to others. Plato puts into Socrates' mouth the following conclusion: the theory of Ideas raises *aporiae*, but if it is given up, we should have to give up thought and dialectic; and, if so, philosophy would be done for. The following is a very important statement:

And yet, Socrates, Parmenides went on, these difficulties and many more besides are inevitably involved in the forms, if these characters of things really exist and one is going to distinguish each form as a thing just by itself. The result is that the hearer is perplexed and inclined either to question their existence, or to contend that if they do exist, they must certainly be unknowable by our human nature. Moreover, there seems to be some weight in these objections, and, as we were saying, it is extraordinarily difficult to convert the objector. Only a man with exceptional gifts will be able to see that a form, or essence just by itself, does exist in each case, and it will require someone still more remarkable to discover it and to instruct another who has thoroughly examined all these difficulties.

I am in agreement with you, Parmenides, said Socrates, in fact you certainly speak my thought.

Therefore, Socrates, Parmenides continued, if, in view of all these difficulties and others like them, a man refuses to admit that Ideas of things exist or to distinguish a definite Idea in every case, he will have nothing on which to fix his thought, so long as he will not allow that each thing has a character which is always the same, and in so doing he will completely destroy the significance of all discourse. But of that consequence I think you are only too well aware.<sup>20</sup>

It is clear, therefore, that the theory of Ideas must be upheld. How it is possible to free it from the *aporiae* will emerge from the doctrine on the Principles which is to be introduced in the third section.

#### IV. THE DIALECTICAL METHOD TRANSPOSED FROM THE PHYSICAL PLANE TO THE METAPHYSICAL PLANE WITH THE SECOND VOYAGE

Thus begins the third part of the dialogue, which is the longest and most complicated part.<sup>21</sup> There is a kind of methodological and programmatic prologue setting out most of the aims pursued by Plato. It

20. *Ibid.*, E9-135C3.

21. *Ibid.*, C-166C.

says that the condition for not falling into the *aporiae* which we have examined and so for solving them, is exercise in dialectic, the exercise of long duration and great commitment which Plato prescribed within the Academy. It will certainly not be the old exercise of dialectic conducted by the Eleatics on the physical plane, but a new exercise on the plane reached by what the *Phaedo* calls the Second Voyage: dialectic on the level of the intelligible world. Zeno's dichotomous dialectic is thus reapplied to a new plane, producing a genuine transposition.<sup>22</sup>

The procedural framework formulated by Zeno and applied to the new metaphysical plane is as follows. The existence of an Idea must be hypothesized, and then we must see what follows from considering it in relation to itself and in relation to its contrary. Next, the hypothesis that the Idea does not exist must also be posited and we must likewise find out what follows from that hypothesis by considering it in relation to itself and in relation to its opposite. This must be done not only for the One and for the Many, but likewise for the Ideas of similar and dissimilar, movement and rest, of being and nonbeing, and so on for all the Meta-Ideas.<sup>23</sup>

In order to call the reader's attention to the fact that the matters he will be discussing are connected with the Unwritten Doctrines reserved for a narrow circle of colleagues, Plato makes Zeno make the following significant affirmation: if those present were more numerous, it would not be appropriate to ask Parmenides to speak, because most people do not realize the necessity of undertaking that long journey through the totality of things. And a little further on Parmenides himself takes up the point, saying that he is ready to oblige, precisely because we are, as Zeno says, alone, that is, in a narrow circle of chosen men, just as Plato required for his lectures in the Academy about the teachings that must not be written. Here is the passage which contains the leading methodological doctrine of the dialogue:

What are you going to do about philosophy, then? Where will you turn while the answers to these questions remain unknown?

I can see no way out at the present moment.

That is because you are undertaking to define beautiful, just, good, and other particular Ideas too soon, before you had a preliminary training. I noticed that the other day when I heard you talking here with Aristotle. Believe me, there is something noble and inspired in your passion for argument, but you must make an effort and submit yourself, while you are still young, to a severer training in what the world calls idle talk and condemns as useless. Otherwise, the truth will escape you.

22. *Ibid.*, 135D-E.

23. *Ibid.*, 136A-C.

What Idea, then, should this exercise take, Parmenides?

The Idea that Zeno used in the treatise you have been listening to. With this exception—there was one thing you said to him which impressed me very much—you would not allow the survey to be confined to visible things or to range only over that field; it was to extend to those objects which are specially apprehended by discourse and can be regarded as Ideas.

Yes, because in that other field there seems to be no difficulty about showing that things are both like and unlike and have any other character you please.

You are right. But there is one thing more you must do. If you want to be thoroughly exercised, you must not merely make the supposition that such and such a thing is and then consider the consequences; you must also take the supposition that that same thing is not.

How do you mean?

Take, if you like, the supposition that Zeno made—if there is a plurality of things. You must consider what consequences must follow both for those many things with reference to one another and to the one, and also for the one with reference to itself, and to the many. Then again, on the supposition that there is not a plurality, you must consider what will follow both for the one and for the many, with reference to themselves and to each other. Or, once more, if you suppose that likeness exists, or does not exist, what will follow on the supposition both for the terms supposed and for other things, with reference to themselves and to each other. And so again with unlikeness, motion, and rest, coming-to-be and perishing, and being and not-being themselves. In a word, whenever you suppose that anything whatsoever exists or does not exist or has any other character, you ought to consider the consequences with reference to itself and to any one of the other things that you may select, several of them, or all of them together, and again you must study these others with reference both to one another and to any one thing you may select, whether you have assumed the thing to exist or not to exist, if you are really going to make out the truth after a complete course of discipline.

There would be no end to such an undertaking, Parmenides, and I don't altogether understand. Why not enlighten me by illustrating the method on some supposition of your own choice?

That is a heavy task, Socrates, to lay on a man of my age.

But you, Zeno, said Socrates, why don't you give us the illustration? Zeno laughed and replied, Let us beg Parmenides himself to do it, Socrates. What he means is no light matter, I am afraid. You must see what a task you are setting. If we were a larger company, it would not be fair to ask him. Such a discourse would be unsuitable before a large audience, particularly in a man of his age, because most people are unaware that you cannot hit upon truth and gain understanding without ranging in this way over the whole field. So, Parmenides, I join with Socrates in his request, in the hope of sitting at your feet again myself after all these years.

After these words from Zeno, Pythodorus joined with Aristotle and the rest in begging Parmenides not to disappoint them, but to demonstrate the method he had in mind.

Parmenides replied, I cannot refuse, although I feel like the old race horse in Ibycus, who trembles at the start of the chariot race, knowing from long experience what is in store for him. The poet compares his own reluctance on finding himself, so late in life, forced into the lists of love, and my memories



too make me frightened of setting out, at my age, to traverse so vast and hazardous a sea. However, I must do as you wish, for after all, as Zeno says, we are all friends here. Where shall we begin, then? What supposition shall we start with? Would you like me, since we are committed to play out this laborious game, to begin with myself and my own original supposition? Shall I take the one itself and consider the consequences of assuming that there is, or there is not, a one? —By all means, said Zeno.

Then who will answer the questions I shall put? Shall it be the youngest? He will be less likely to give the least trouble and to be the most ready to say what he thinks, and I shall get a moment's rest while he is answering.

The youngest means me, Parmenides, said Aristotle, and I am ready. Put your questions and I will answer them.<sup>24</sup>

#### V. THE GREAT DISCUSSION OF THE SUPREME PRINCIPLES (THE ONE AND THE OTHER THAN THE ONE) AND THE DIALECTICAL DEMONSTRATION OF THE BIPOLAR STRUCTURE OF REALITY

Accepting the request, Parmenides begins from the hypothesis on which his own rigidly monistic philosophy is based as Plato understands it.<sup>25</sup> The hypothesis is that the One exists. Parmenides will analyze the dialectical consequences of this hypothesis, concerning the One itself and the Other itself than the One. He will then proceed to the consequences which derive from each of them, considered both in itself and in relation to other things. Next, he will examine the contrary hypotheses, following the same logical procedure. In this way, he will arrive at eight hypotheses (or rather eight horns of four pairs of antinomies).<sup>26</sup>

Dialectical examination of these eight theses involves alternating positive and negative results; concerning the One nothing can be said and everything can be said; likewise, of the Other than the One, nothing can be said and everything can be said. It would seem that this exhausting exercise must conclude negatively with a resounding zero.

Actually, this is not the case. The group of the last four hypotheses, which draw out the general negative proposition if the One does not exist, expresses a counter-argument to the first four. The first of these, which takes the One as absolutely and in every case unique, turns out to be bluntly unacceptable.<sup>27</sup> Then we have the second<sup>28</sup> and third hy-

24. *Ibid.*, 135C5–137C3.

25. The strongly monistic bent is to be found more in his followers Zeno and Melissus than in Parmenides himself.

26. The distinction of nine hypotheses which some scholars make is inaccurate. The majority of scholars admit eight hypotheses. After all, this is the way that Parmenides sets up the issue, for all that the working out of it might appear wayward and inconclusive (cf. Migliori, *Dialettica*, 364 and 419–33).

27. Plato, *Parmenides* 142A6–8. This is the sole case in the third part of the dialogue in which the result is clearly condemned.

28. *Ibid.*, 142B–157B.

potheses,<sup>29</sup> which suppose the One as having predicates, and thus relations with the Other-than-itself, and the Other from the One as having relations of participation to the One. These two hypotheses are to be accepted as basic to the fundamentals of Platonic metaphysics, that is, to the bipolar structure. For some time, some scholars have recognized the presence in the second and especially in the third hypotheses of some basic concepts which return in the *Philebus*. But the interpretation of the *Philebus* is in certain respects problematic; the most reliable point of comparison and reference is still the Unwritten Doctrines handed down by the indirect tradition, which confirm that, in the third hypothesis, Plato shows at least one of his most significant cards, by speaking of the One which participates in the Other, understood as infinite plurality, and by alluding to the limiting function of the One.<sup>30</sup>

Traditionally, the fourth hypothesis was taken to refer to a plurality posited independently of the One. We are now indebted to Maurizio Migliori for having emphasized the fact that such an understanding fits better with the hypotheses of the second group. After all, these latter are premised on the negation of the One, and not on its being merely separated, as is the case here. It seems therefore possible to read this argument as directed not only or so much at pure plurality, but at the corresponding term of the original dichotomy, as a revealing glimpse of the nature of the Dyad of the large-and-small.<sup>31</sup>

The theoretical core of the dialogue therefore is the following: the monistic conception of the Eleatics does not stand up, because it falls into insuperable *aporiae*; nor does a purely pluralistic position, such as that of the atomists, stand up. But between monism and pluralism there exists a synthesizing middle way, which admits a polar or, rather, bipolar structure of reality, and which is headed by two Principles—the One and indefinite Plurality—such that neither can exist without the other, that is to say, the Principles are indissolubly connected.

This conception of the two highest Principles and their structural participation throws a wholly different light on the theory of Ideas. The relation between Ideas and sensible things ought to be reexamined in the light of the general bipolar structure of Unity and Plurality. By means of this conception, the basis of the *aporiae* in the second part of the dialogue is wholly overthrown.

29. *Ibid.*, 157B–160B.

30. For example, at the beginning of the third hypothesis, tackling the problem of what follows from the other than the One, if the One exists, there is the idea of participation of the Others in the One (157C). But at 158A and following the discussion is deepened, and appeal is made to the concepts of limit and unlimited, of which we will speak in our account of the *Philebus*.

31. See Migliori, *Dialettica*, 318–21.

Two final points are worth stressing.

As we have already noted, Plato refers to the Meta-Ideas several times, and makes full use of them: identity-difference, equal-unequal, similar-dissimilar.<sup>32</sup> In addition, numbers are also frequently referred to, especially in discussions linked to the supreme Principles, even though under an ironic mask, which, after all, is the key trait of the whole dialogue.<sup>33</sup>

Overall, therefore, in addition to the different arguments with the various philosophical schools, the *Parmenides* says this: We must move from the dialectical plane of the Eleatics, who were Naturalists, to the dialectic of the theory of Ideas, on the plane reached by the Second Voyage; but the theory of Ideas raises numerous difficulties, which can be untangled only if the protological problems concerning the first and highest Principles are solved. But the *Parmenides* gives us only a glimpse of the core of this theory; as Parmenides himself says, the dialogue offers only an illustration of it. The theory as a whole corresponds to the final stage of the Second Voyage;<sup>34</sup> but the dialogue consigns to the realm of oral dialectic a full working out of what is involved.<sup>35</sup>

32. See in particular *Parmenides* 129Dff., 136Aff., 145Eff., 147C., 149D., 158Bff., 158Eff., 159Eff.

33. See E. Berti, "Struttura e significato del *Parmenide* di Platone," in his *Studi Aristotelici* (L'Aquila, 1975), 323-25.

34. Cf. Chapter 5, passim.

35. For the fascinating discussions in the *Parmenides* of *becoming*, of *movement*, and of the *instant* as an extratemporal dimension (156C-157B), see Migliori, *Dialettica*, 451-88.



### 13 The Trilogy *Sophist*, *Statesman*, and *Philosopher* Elucidated in Terms of the New Paradigm

#### I. THE ONTOLOGY OF THE SUPREME GENERA OF THE *SOPHIST* UNDERSTOOD AGAINST THE BACKGROUND OF THE UNWRITTEN DOCTRINES

##### 1. *The Sophist Does Not Discuss the First Principles, but Only a Limited Set of Meta-Ideas*

The interpretation of the great metaphysical passages of the *Sophist*<sup>1</sup> would seem at first glance less complex, but this is only an illusion stemming from the outlook of the traditional paradigm. In fact, unless the dialogue is seen against the theoretical background of the Unwritten Doctrines, it is very easy to fall into a set of misunderstandings, as has happened to not a few scholars. Therefore, the contribution which the new paradigm brings is truly decisive for the understanding of the great metaphysical passages of the *Sophist*.

On the other hand, since the *Sophist* treats of the concepts of being and nonbeing, which, for many sorts of ontological metaphysics, are the highest ultimate concepts, it is easy to think that Plato, insofar as he is here concerned with these concepts, is giving a foundation to his protology, and therefore is presenting a final treatment of all the supreme genera. But this is not so, as can be seen from Plato's own explicit statements; at least twice, he goes out of his way to tell us that he is not discussing the highest Ideas and the highest genera as a whole, but only a chosen set from among them.

Therefore, Plato chooses appropriately among the most general Ideas, on the basis of their relevance to the issue which is the subject of discussion in the dialogue, namely, the definition of the sophist.

Here is the most important text in which this choice is indicated:

*Stranger*: Now that we are agreed . . . that some of the kinds will combine with one another and some will not, and that some combine to a small extent,

1. Bibliographies concerning the scholarly literature published in our century on the *Sophist* can be found in Praechter, *Die Philosophie des Altertums*, 83ff.; Totok, *Handbuch*, 202ff.; Cherniss, *Lustrum* (1959): 177-89; and Brisson, *Lustrum* (1977): 283ff. and *Lustrum* (1983): 293ff. See also G. Movia, *Apparenze, essere, e verità. Commentario storico-filosofico al "Sofista" di Platone* (Milan, 1991).

others with a large number, while some pervade all and there is nothing against their being combined with everything, let us next follow up the argument in this way. We will not take all the forms, for fear of getting confused in such a multitude, but choose out some of those that are recognized as most . . . important, and consider first their several natures and then how they stand in respect of being capable of combination with one another. In this way, though we may not be able to conceive Being and nonbeing with perfect clearness, we may at least give as satisfactory an account of them as we can under the conditions of our present inquiry, and see if there is any opening allowing us to assert that what is not, really is what is not, and to escape unscathed.<sup>2</sup>

Shortly afterward, having made some preliminary distinctions among the five Ideas, Plato repeats what he intends to discuss:

*Stranger:* Then we must call the nature of Difference a fifth among the Forms we are singling out.

*Theaetetus:* Yes.<sup>3</sup>

Here, therefore, it is not the highest Principles (the One and the indefinite Dyad) that are being referred to, but rather a chosen group of Meta-Ideas, and the aim is to see how they can combine in reciprocal relations of positive and negative participation.

We have here the claim that the logical interlacing of all the Forms is outside the purview of the dialogue. The aim is to clarify everything necessary for establishing without contradiction that there is nonbeing, a claim which is essential for the explanation of the art, deception, and error of the sophist, all of which presuppose nonbeing. Let us here set aside the definition of the sophist, which does not directly interest us, and concentrate on the metaphysical affirmations of the dialogue.

Krämer has insisted with great energy and effectiveness on the thesis that, in this work, Plato does not discuss the supreme foundations, but only some of the most general Ideas.<sup>4</sup>

This had already been noted by some of the more careful scholars of the traditional paradigm. Taylor, for example, wrote: "It is never said [in the *Sophist*] that the list of the *universalia universalissima* is complete, though later Platonists, like Plotinus in *Ennead* 6.1–3, discuss them as a complete list of Platonic highest universals, or categories."<sup>5</sup>

After stressing that the supreme genera which the *Sophist* discusses are a limited selection, A. Levi writes: "In the *Sophist* there is no mention of the unconditioned principle of the *Republic* and there is no attempt

2. *Sophist* 254B7–D2.

3. *Ibid.*, 255D9–E2.

4. Cf. Krämer, *Platone*, 205ff [Am. ed., 108ff.] and Movia, *Apparenze*, 319–21.

5. A. E. Taylor, *Plato: The Man and His Work* (London, 1946<sup>6</sup>), 389. The edition we have used is Meridian Books's third printing (1957) of the sixth edition (Humanities Press, 1952).

to apply the procedure of division to the highest genera of Being, which are investigated in a special way (nor can it be said that the five genera in play are the only ones, because it is clear that at least two others, unity and plurality, have a right to the same title).<sup>6</sup> And again: “. . . [I]t does not mention a first principle of the Ideas; and since we are told that they are insofar as they participate in Being, it seems that the thesis of the *Republic*, which affirms that Being and essence are derived from the Idea of Good, has been abandoned. It is inadmissible to think that Plato would have turned against seeing in the Good the first principle because it reappears in the *Philebus* and in the theory of the Number-Ideas. . . .”<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, Levi complains that he cannot see how, in the *Sophist*, Plato could relate the Idea of Being to the Good.

The problem is clarified if we remember how, as Krämer has clearly explained, the Unwritten Doctrines consider Being as a mixture derived from the One-Being (and from the Dyad) given that the Good is above-being and not a mere being,<sup>8</sup> or at least not a being in the usual sense. The Being of which the *Sophist* speaks, therefore, is already a definite but very general Idea, and therefore it has the supreme Principles above itself.

Some have thought that the hierarchy of the highest kinds of which the *Sophist* speaks could be represented in the following way.

This framework would be an adequate representation, only if, in the *Sophist*, Plato had presented all the highest genera, and had not limited himself to a selection of a group from among the highest genera which were relevant to the theme of the dialogue. This is why the selection is very partial. This schema would have to be corrected as follows, if we take into account the Unwritten Doctrines, which are present not merely in the background, but openly referred to, as we shall see.

Naturally, in this schema we leave out the relations of positive and negative communion which each of these Ideas further implies, and which we shall discuss later.

But before going on to the treatment of this issue, let us recall that no map of the Meta-Ideas is given in any dialogue nor even transmitted within the indirect tradition, except partially.

This is worth remembering, the Pythagoreans had already thought very important, and their arrangement of a list of ten in contrary pairs had become well known and has been handed down to us by Aristotle.<sup>9</sup> Here are the ten supreme contraries arranged by the Pythagoreans:

6. A. Levi, *Il problema dell'errore nella metafisica e nella gnoseologia di Platone*, 100.

7. *Ibid.*, 102.

8. See above pp. 207–8ff.

9. Aristotle relates it at *Metaphysics* A 5.986a22ff.

1. limit—unlimit
2. odd—even
3. one—plurality
4. right—left
5. male—female
6. rest—movement
7. straight—curved
8. light—darkness
9. good—bad
10. square—oblong

It is probable, or at least possible, that Plato had also drawn up a complete table of the great Meta-Ideas as contrary pairs. So it is worth pointing out how the arrangement derived of necessity from the dualistic-polar structure of the first and highest Principles, and from the polar structure which extends through the whole of reality. Aristotle himself, as we have already seen above, even wrote a treatise on this subject.<sup>10</sup>

Consequently, it is possible to trace, at least in rough form, a list of the most significant of these Meta-Ideas following ontological-metaphysical and axiological distinctions. Here is such a table:

One	Dyad
1. unity	multiplicity
2. being	nonbeing
3. in itself	relative
4. identity	difference
5. equal	unequal
6. similar	dissimilar
7. limit	unlimited
8. determination	indetermination
9. form	privation of form
10. indivisibility	divisibility
11. immobile	mobile
12. immutable	mutable
13. order	disorder
14. odd	even
15. good	evil
16. virtue	vice

Naturally, the list could be extended if it were to include pairs of Ideas of an arithmetical, geometrical, or epistemological nature.<sup>11</sup> Nev-

10. On this problem, see E. Berti, "La 'riduzione dei contrari' in Aristotele," in Berti, *Studi aristotelici*, 209-31.

11. See, for example, a similar list put together by Gaiser, in *Platons*, 19.



ertheless, this is more than enough to indicate how limited was the selection for the treatment of the subject of the *Sophist*. The five highest Ideas discussed are exactly those to which it is indispensable to refer in order to reform Eleaticism, insofar as this is necessary to explain the matters with which the sophist deals, matters which amount to mere appearance. And the study of the relations of communion is limited to what is necessary for the exploration of this theme.

On this point, there can remain little room for doubt: in the *Phaedo* and in the *Republic*, Plato speaks about the relations existing among the Ideas;<sup>12</sup> in the *Sophist*, he further explains them, always with relevance to the theme with which he is concerned, and always in a perspective limited by the requirements of written discourse.

2. *The Dialectical Relations of the Five Meta-Ideas Selected to Solve the Problem of the Definition of the Sophist*

We may proceed to consider the nature of the dialectical relations which connect the most general genera (or Meta-Ideas) selected in the *Sophist* to pursue its specific discussion. Plato begins from the three following Ideas: Being, Rest, and Motion. Between the last two of these there is a negative relation, because they do not participate in each other. But the Idea of Being has positive relations with both of them, insofar as Rest is and Movement also is. But these three Ideas, simply by being three, must be each different from the others, and, at the same time, each must be identical with itself. Consequently, there are two other general Ideas: Identity and Difference.

In this way we have obtained five of the most general Ideas. Here is how Taylor summarizes the dialectical relation that connects them:

Motion is not rest, nor rest motion. But both are and are identical with themselves, and thus partake (μετέχειν) of Being and identity, . . . since each is different from the other, of difference. Thus we can say, . . . that motion is—it is motion; but also is not—it is not rest. But . . . we can say that motion partakes of Being and so is—there is such a thing as motion; but motion is not identical with being, and in that sense we may say that it is not, that is, it is nonbeing. The same line of thought shows that nonbeing may be asserted of all the five forms already enumerated, even of Being itself, since each of them is different from any of the others, and thus is not any of the others.<sup>13</sup>

We thus speak of nonbeing in two very different senses: (a) one in which we understand it as the contradiction of Being, as a negation of Being; and another (b) in which we understand it as other than Being,

12. See pp. 131–36, above.

13. See A. E. Taylor, *Plato: The Man and His Work*, 389, and Movia's close analysis in *Apparence*, 267–421.

that is, we understand it not as the contrary of, but as different from, Being.

(a) In the first sense nonbeing cannot exist (because the negation of Being cannot be); (b) on the other hand, in the second sense, it can exist, because it possesses its own specific nature (the nature of otherness and of difference).

3. *The Parricide of Parmenides and Its Meaning*  
(*the Admission of Nonbeing*)

In this way, Plato carries out what he himself calls the parricide of Parmenides. Indeed, Plato disguises himself in this dialogue as the Eleatic Stranger in order to strike out along Parmenides' forbidden second path, according to which nonbeing is. But Plato-Eleatic Stranger says in so many words that nonbeing is, if it is understood in the sense of Otherness.

Here is the passage in which Plato presents us with the parricide of Parmenides:

*Stranger:* Then I have another still more pressing request?

*Theaetetus:* What is that?

*Stranger:* That you will not think that I am turning into a sort of *parricide*.

*Theaetetus:* In what way?

*Stranger:* We shall find it necessary in self-defense to put to the question that pronouncement of father Parmenides, and establish by main force that what is not in some respect has being, and conversely that what is, in a way is not.

*Theaetetus:* It is plain that the course of the argument requires us to maintain that at all costs.

*Stranger:* Plain enough for the blind to see, as they say. Unless these propositions are either refuted or accepted, anyone who talks of false statements or false judgment as being images or likenesses or copies or semblances, or of any of the arts concerned with such things, can hardly escape becoming a laughing stock by being forced to contradict himself.

*Theaetetus:* Quite true.

*Stranger:* That is why we must now dare to lay unfilial hands on the pronouncement, or else, if some scruple holds us back, drop the matter entirely.

*Theaetetus:* As for that, we must let no scruple hinder us!<sup>14</sup>

Here is the passage that has become famous in the history of ontology in which the parricide of Parmenides takes place on the ontological plane:

*Stranger:* So, it seems, when a part of the nature of the different and a part of the nature of a being are set in contrast to one another, the contrast is, if it be permissible to say so, as much a reality as Being itself; it does not mean what is contrary to a being, but only what is different from that being.

14. *Sophist* 241D1–242A4.

*Theaetetus*: That is quite clear.

*Stranger*: What name are we to give it, then?

*Theaetetus*: Obviously this is just that what-is-not which we were seeking for the sake of the Sophist.

*Stranger*: Has it then, as you say, a Being inferior to none of the rest in reality? May we now be bold to say that that which is not unquestionably is a thing that has a nature of its own—just as the tall was tall and the beautiful was beautiful, so too with the not-tall and the not-beautiful—and in that sense that which is not also, on the same principle, both was and is what is not, a single form to be reckoned among the many realities? Or have we any further doubts with regard to it, *Theaetetus*?

*Theaetetus*: None at all.

*Stranger*: You see, then, that in our disobedience to Parmenides we have trespassed far beyond the limits of his prohibition.

*Theaetetus*: In what way?

*Stranger*: In pushing forward on our quest, we have shown him results in a field which he forbade us even to explore.

*Theaetetus*: How?

*Stranger*: He says, remember, never shall this be proved, that things that are not, are, but keep back your thought from this way of inquiry.

*Theaetetus*: Yes, he does say that.

*Stranger*: Whereas we have not merely shown that things that are not, are, but we have brought to light the real character of nonbeing. We have shown that the nature of the different has Being and is parceled out over the whole field of a being things with reference to one another, and of every part of it that is set in contrast to that which is we have dared to say that precisely that is really that which is not.

*Theaetetus*: Yes, sir, and I think what we have said is perfectly true.

*Stranger*: Then let no one say that it is the contrary of the Being that we mean by what is not, when we make bold to say that what is not exists. So far as any contrary of the Being is concerned, we have long ago said good-by to the question whether there is such a thing or not and whether any account can be given of it or none whatsoever. But with respect to the what-is-not that we have now asserted to exist, an opponent must either convince us that our account is wrong by refuting it, or, so long as he proves unable to do that, he must accept our statements that the kinds blend with one another, that Being and difference pervade them all, and pervade one another, that difference [or different], by partaking of Being, is by virtue of that participation, but on the other hand is not that Being of which it partakes, but is different, since it is different from Being [or a being], quite clearly it must be possible that it should be a thing that is not, and again, being, having a part in difference, will be different from all the rest of the kinds, and, because it is different from them all, it is not any one of them nor yet all of the others put together, but is only itself, with the consequence, again indisputable, that existence is not myriads upon myriads of things, and that all the other kinds in the same way, whether taken severally or all together, in many respects are and in many respects are not.

*Theaetetus*: True.<sup>15</sup>

15. Ibid., 258A11–259B7 and Movia, *Apparenze*, Chapter 22.

4. *Further Theoretical Implications of the Parricide of Parmenides  
(the Admission of Plurality)*

Contrary to the normal view, the parricide of Parmenides is not committed only on the ontological level, in terms of the concepts of being and nonbeing, particularly by the admission of this latter. Indeed Plato also refers to the henological issue of the One and the first Principles, and moreover confronts the necessity of allowing Being to have a hierarchical structure.

In any case, we have already seen how Plato puts into Parmenides' mouth, in the dialogue which bears his name, the highlighting of the dialectical-polar structure of reality. Plato thus makes Parmenides kill himself by admitting a polarity which radically conflicts with Eleatic monism.<sup>16</sup>

But here is how, immediately after speaking of the parricide of Parmenides, Plato subjects the conclusions of the father to further attack.

It ought to be noted that this attack is not part of the discussion about nonbeing, but rather arises from the discussion about Being itself and its structure, and in particular about the incoherence of the concept of the Being-One taken in the monistic-Eleatic sense:

*Theaetetus*: Tell me more plainly what you mean.

*Stranger*: It strikes me that Parmenides and everyone else who has set out to determine how many real things there are and what they are like, have discoursed to us in rather an offhand fashion.<sup>17</sup>

Plato tells us that unclear and contradictory things have been said on this issue: some have said that beings are two, others that they are three; instead the Eleatics maintained that Being is a unity, a one-whole (a unique one); others instead tried to reconcile these two positions, maintaining that Being is one and multiple. But all these positions involve insuperable difficulties, showing not only that the understanding of nonbeing is difficult, but that the understanding of Being involves serious problems. Here are the most serious of these difficulties deriving from the responses offered by the Presocratic philosophers.

1. Let us take, for example, those who admit two highest Principles (naturally, in terms of Presocratic physics), such as the hot and the cold (or the like). What is being for them? (a) Either it is a third term which is added to the first and to the second Principle; but, then, the whole is not two, but rather becomes three (the two Principles, plus Being which includes them both). (b) Or it is understood as being both the one and the other principle; but, in this way, Being absorbs both of them (inso-

16. See Chapter 12, above.

17. *Sophist* 242C3-6.

far as both are identified with Being). Consequently, they will not be two, because the two elements resolve into the unity of being, and thus the two will become one.

2. Let us consider the Eleatic position which held that Being is One.

(a) If so, Being and One are two names; but it is incoherent to admit two names, since only the One and nothing else is admitted. But it will become totally absurd to admit that a name is, because if it is different (insofar as it is a name) from the thing that it expresses, together they will add up to two (one thing is the name and a second thing is that which the name names). Consequently, in order to be coherent, absolute monism must also include the name in its unity.

(b) But the Eleatic position involves further complications, insofar as the One is thought of as identical with the Whole. In fact, Parmenides identified the Whole with a sphere, and in consequence attributed to it a center and a circumference, and therefore parts. Yet what has parts may participate in the One, but cannot be the One itself. Indeed, the One as such is indivisible, and hence is above having parts. Nor can we follow Parmenides and identify Being, One, and Whole, because each of them has its own distinct nature: Being participates in the One, and hence is not the One; and the Whole is something more than the One, insofar as it embraces both Being and the One.<sup>18</sup>

Here is a passage in which, even if purely dialectically and in the context of a lively polemical discussion in which he refutes Parmenides, Plato calls on some elements of his protology, albeit through the variously painted masks of irony which he enjoys using in such cases, but which however do not hide more than partially some salient traits of the Unwritten Doctrines:

*Stranger:* And what of the whole? Will they say that this is other than their real one thing or the same?

*Theaetetus:* Certainly that it is the same. In fact they do say so.

*Stranger:* Then if it is a whole—as indeed Parmenides says, Every way like the mass of a well-rounded sphere, evenly balanced from the midst in every direction, for there must not be something more nor something less here than there—if being is like that, it has a middle and extremities, and consequently it must have parts, must it not?

*Theaetetus:* It must.

*Stranger:* Well, if a thing is divided into parts, there is nothing against its having the property of unity as applied to the aggregate of all the parts and being in the way one, as being a sum or whole.

*Theaetetus:* Of course.

*Stranger:* On the other hand, the things which have these properties cannot be just unity itself, can it?

18. *Ibid.*, 242D–245D.

*Theaetetus*: Of course.

*Stranger*: On the other hand, the thing which has these properties cannot be just unity itself, can it?

*Theaetetus*: Why not?

*Stranger*: Surely unity in the true sense and rightly defined must be altogether without parts.

*Theaetetus*: Yes, it must.

*Stranger*: Whereas a thing such as we described, consisting of several parts, will not answer to that definition.

*Theaetetus*: I see.

*Stranger*: Then, is being one and a whole in the sense that it has the property of unity, or are we to say that being is not a whole at all?

*Theaetetus*: That is a hard choice.

*Stranger*: Quite true. For if the being has the property of Being in a sense one, it will evidently not be the same thing as unity, and so all things will be more than one.

*Theaetetus*: Yes.

*Stranger*: And again if Being is not a whole by virtue of having this property of unity, while at the same time wholeness is real, it follows that being falls short of itself. —*Theaetetus*: Certainly.

*Stranger*: So, on this line of argument too, Being will be deprived of reality and will not be a thing that is. —*Theaetetus*: Yes.<sup>19</sup>

This text contains the parricide of Parmenides at the henological level reached by Plato. It can be set out as follows:

- a. The One in a primary sense is absolutely indivisible or simple.
- b. That which has parts can have unity, only by sharing in the One.
- c. Being participates in the One, but is not identical with the One (the One is above Being, and Being depends on the One).
- d. The Whole is not identical with the One nor with Being, but is, in a certain sense, the realm which includes them.
- e. And since Being is not identical with the Whole, because it implies the One as external to itself, but in which it participates, Being is not of itself complete and it includes nonbeing (in the sense clarified in our dialogue, of difference: in particular, it is not One).

We can see that some of the most important protological notions are in place, but Plato tones them down as playful, as is called for by writing.

##### 5. *The Battle of the Giants and Some Features of the Hierarchical Structure of Being*

In our dialogue, Plato explains that Being cannot be fully grasped unless we understand its hierarchical structure and specifically the two planes of the sensible and the supersensible, which are brought into

19. Ibid., 244D14–245C10. Also see Movia, *Apparenze*, Chapter 17.

play in a very original way and presented in the brilliant metaphor of the Battle of the Giants, the great struggle of the Giants against the Gods.<sup>20</sup> In modern terms this is the struggle between materialists and immaterialists, between those who maintain that Being is bodily, that the sensible is bodily, and those who hold that true Being is in the dimension of the intelligible, the transempirical, and the immaterial.

Let us read this passage which, although it refers to the determinate historical conditions of Plato's age, expresses a truth which remains valid, under different forms, but with the same content, today:

*Stranger:* So much, then, for those who give an exact account of what is Being or nonbeing. We have not gone through them all, but let this suffice. Now we must turn to look at those who put the matter in a different way, so that, from a complete review of all, we may see that Being is just as hard to define as nonbeing.

*Theaetetus:* We had better go on then, to their position.

*Stranger:* What we shall say is something like a battle of Gods and Giants going on between them over their quarrel about Being.

*Theaetetus:* How so?

*Stranger:* One party is trying to drag everything down to earth out of heaven and the unseen, literally grasping rocks and trees in their hands, for they lay hold upon every stick and stone and strenuously affirm that real Being belongs only to that which can be handled and offers resistance to the touch. They define Being as the same thing as body, and as soon as one of the opposite party asserts that anything without a body is a being, they are utterly contemptuous and will not listen to a word.

*Theaetetus:* The people you describe are certainly a formidable crew. I have met quite a number of them before now.

*Stranger:* Yes, and accordingly their adversaries are very wary in defending their positions somewhere in the heights of the unseen, maintaining with all their force that true Being consists in certain intelligible and bodiless Ideas. In the clash of arguments they shatter and pulverize those bodies which their opponents wield, and what those others allege to be true Being they call, not real being, but a sort of moving process of becoming. On this issue an interminable battle is always going on between the two camps.<sup>21</sup>

We are not concerned to enter into the particular arguments that Plato employs to treat this problem, even if they are of great intrinsic interest. It is more to our purpose to point out the line he takes, which is very revealing of the underlying structure of his system. Here, too, the polar structure of the real is brought decisively to the fore.

Plato does not oppose his own theory of Ideas to that of the materialists, since the theory of the "friends of the Ideas" represent the extreme opposite position of the materialists. It is not at all easy to work out who

20. See Hesiod, *Theogony*, 674ff. and 629ff.

21. *Sophist* 245E6–246C4.

these "friends of the Ideas" might be. Many scholars thought that they might be Megarians or thinkers of a Megaricizing tendency (or even Pythagoreans). But it is certainly a mistake to think that Plato is presenting his own earlier conception of the Ideas, with a view to criticizing it; even if we want to allow the old paradigm, this suggestion does not stand up, because none of the writings prior to the *Sophist* show Plato maintaining the views which are ascribed to the friends of the Ideas, nor the manner in which they are presented.<sup>22</sup> Whoever they might be, it is certain that their position is just an extreme case characterized by an Eleaticizing reduction of the theory of Ideas and of incorporeal beings, which aims at the total and absolute immobility of the whole of Being.

Plato asserts the structural polarity of the real in the following way.

The materialists hold that Being is only body and that the bodily is characterized by overall mobility; the friends of the Ideas maintain the exactly opposite position, that true Being is nonbodily and that it is characterized by total immobility.

Thus the materialists are mistaken in maintaining that Being is only bodily (that is to say, what can be grasped in the hands), therefore they are correct in including movement in Being; the Eleaticizers are correct in upholding that true Being is nonbodily, but they are mistaken in excluding from Being every form of movement.

Here is what Plato offers of his pluralistic conception of Being, which involves communicative relations and a hierarchical structure.

Knowledge itself, from which the Eleaticizing friends of the Ideas begin, implies a knower who acts and a known which undergoes this action, and hence an active and a passive movement. Therefore, Being in its totality (*παντελῶς ὄν*)<sup>23</sup> is not to be regarded as immutable in solemn aloofness, devoid of intelligence,<sup>24</sup> but it is to be conceived as necessarily including change, life, soul, and understanding.<sup>25</sup> Indeed, understanding involves life and soul, and hence mobility; therefore the sphere of Being must include all these. This does not mean taking the whole of Being (each and every Idea) as having these characteristics, but it means attributing a structural polarity to the sphere of ideal reality: movement (at least one form of movement) has to be admitted

22. Naturally, it is hardly necessary to emphasize that there is little point in trying to find antecedents by extrapolating from this or that phrase or expression in dialogues written prior to the *Sophist*. What counts is the entire vision that is here presented, which is not found in any corresponding way in any Platonic writings prior to the *Sophist*. In any case, at *Sophist* 249C10–D4, cited at note 27, Plato associates the position of Parmenides with that of some *friends of the Ideas*, showing clearly that these latter are Eleaticizers.

23. *Ibid.*, 248D7ff.

24. *Ibid.*, 249A1ff.

25. *Ibid.*, 248E6ff.



in order to explain intellectual undersanding, and hence life and soul immobility is admitted as a precondition of understanding. If we take away immobility we also take away, for example, the Ideas of Identity, Similarity, and Relation and other such Ideas that obviously do not imply mobility, life, or animation.<sup>26</sup>

Therefore, we must admit the polarity of Being at every level.

The two great Meta-Ideas of Immobility and Movement and their relations of positive and negative participation are a fundamental consequence of this conception. And here is the concluding passage of this discussion, which sheds a good deal of light on the bipolar conception:

*Stranger:* On these grounds, then, it seems that only one course is open to the philosopher who values these things above all else. He must refuse to accept from the champions either of the One or of the many Forms the doctrine that all Being is changeless, and he must turn a deaf ear to the other party who represent Being as everywhere changing. Like a child begging for both, he must declare that Being or the Whole is both at once—all that is unchangeable and all that is in change.<sup>27</sup>

We shall return later to the bringing into the foreground the Intellect in the discussion with the Eleaticizers, because this issue implies a consideration of the complex question of the Demiurge and his role.

## II. THE THEORY OF DUE MEASURE IN THE *STATESMAN* AND ITS RELATIONS WITH THE HIGHEST PRINCIPLES AS THE MOST ACCURATE MEASURE

### 1. *The Problem of Axiological Measurement*

In the *Protagoras*, which is counted among the writings of Plato's early period, he speaks of mensuration, that is, an art and science of measurement which is different from the purely mathematical one.<sup>28</sup> His reasoning was the following: assuming that the Good is pleasure, as almost all men believe (a hypothesis which Plato offers, but does not affirm), the

26. This passage of the *Sophist* has received wholly contradictory interpretations, precisely because of inexact readings of παντελῶς ὄν. (a) Some have understood it as a reference to the Ideas and to the being which belongs to them; (b) others have understood it as referring to the cosmos; and (c) still others understand it as referring to the Demiurge. In fact, the context requires that the meaning of the expression παντελῶς ὄν be that being as a whole in its entirety and totality. It is within this entirety and totality of being that we find life, soul, intellect, and motion, as *parts or moments* of this whole, just as within this entirety must be admitted also the contraries of these, with the general relations of union and nonunion. Cf. Movia, *Apparenze*, 257 and note 10.

27. *Sophist* 249C10–D4 and Movia, *Apparenze*, 257–63.

28. Cf. our translation of and commentary on the *Protagoras* (356E–7B) (Brescia: La Scuola Editrice, 1969).

Good would not be pleasure as such, but rather it would be correct choice among pleasures and pains. But correct choice presupposes a science and an art. What science and what art? (a) If our living well depended on the correct choice of the greater rather than the smaller, it would be a science which would help us to choose what is good and not to fall into errors of perspective and it would allow us not to be tricked by mere appearances. This knowledge would be geometry with its related art of measurement which preserves us from error.

(b) Similarly, if our living well were to depend on the correct choice of the odd and the even, of the more or less numerous, there would be another science of measurement, arithmetic, to preserve us from error.

(c) So, since our life depends on a complex evaluation of pleasures, and hence on the calculation of excess and defect and mutual equality regarding them, it is clear that what can guarantee these evaluations and these calculations cannot be anything but the science and art of moral measurement.

In the *Protagoras*, Plato shows an acquaintance with this science; but he does not reveal it and writes: "What science and what art it is, we will take up another time."<sup>29</sup>

Within Plato's written works this question is taken up only in the late dialogue the *Statesman*.<sup>30</sup> Here Plato shows his hand, but only partially, with a view to supplying the metaphysical grounding for the political discussion under way in the dialogue. As to the ultimate protological foundation, he puts it off with the usual formulae to another place (or rather to another moment), committing himself to a full discussion only of the matters relevant to the theme of the dialogue. In this work, too, he does not go on to pay off the debt, or principal, but still limits himself to paying off only the interest on it.

To calculate the capital or principal, we shall have to refer to what the indirect tradition has handed down to us, as well as to the hints given in other dialogues. Some interpreters have thought that Plato may be referring to the dialogue entitled *The Philosopher*, which was planned but not written. In fact, the reference is not to a dialogue which remained unwritten for contingent reasons, but to the Unwritten Doctrines.

## 2. *The Underlying Metaphysical Text of the Statesman*

Let us begin, therefore with what the *Statesman* says in a fundamental passage:

29. *Protagoras* 357B5ff.

30. The scholarly literature published in our century on the *Statesman* is listed in Praechter, *Die Philosophie des Altertums*, 84; Totok, *Handbuch*, 203ff.; Cherniss, *Lustrum* (1959): 146-49; and Brisson, *Lustrum* (1977): 278 and *Lustrum* (1983): 290.

*Stranger:* If a man refuses to admit the possibility of a greater except in relation to a lesser he will rule out the possibility of relating it to a due measure, will he not? —*Young Socrates:* He will.

*Stranger:* Are we really prepared for the consequences of this refusal? Are we going to abolish the arts and all their products? In particular, shall we deprive statecraft, which we are trying to define, and weaving, which we have just defined, of their very existence? For it seems clear to me that all such arts guard against exceeding the due measure or falling short of it. Certainly they do not discuss such excess or defect as meaningless—on the contrary, they shun it as a very real peril. In fact it is precisely by this effort they make to maintain the due measure that they achieve effectiveness and beauty in all that they produce.

*Young Socrates:* That is very true.

*Stranger:* But you must admit that if we dismiss statecraft as unreal, we shall have blocked all means of approach to any subsequent study of the science of kingly rule?

*Young Socrates:* Obviously.

*Stranger:* Must we not do now what we had to do when discussing the Sophist? We had to insist then on the admission of an additional postulate, that what is not-x nevertheless exists. We had to introduce this postulate because the only alternative to asserting it which our argument left us was to allow the Sophist to escape definition altogether. In our present discussion too there is an additional postulate on which we must insist, and it is this. Excess and deficiency are measurable not only in relative terms but also in respect of attainment of a norm or due measure. For if we cannot first gain assent to this postulate, we are bound to fail if we advance the claim that a man possesses statecraft, or indeed that a man possesses any other of the special forms of knowledge that function in human society.

*Young Socrates:* In that case we must certainly follow the precedent and admit the additional postulate in our present discussion.

*Stranger:* Our present task is greater than the previous one, Socrates, and we can hardly have forgotten what a very long time that took us. However, while discussing these problems, there is one thing to be said at the outset that it is perfectly right and proper to say.

*Young Socrates:* What is that?

*Stranger:* That when one day we come to give a full exposition of true accuracy in dialectic method, we shall find the need of this postulate concerning the due measure which we have just enunciated. However, the statement in the form that we have made it and with the demonstration—adequate for present purposes—which we have given it, is a very great help to us, or so it seems to me. For it shows that two propositions stand or fall together. The first is that the arts exist; the second is that excess and defect are measurable not only relatively but in terms of the realization of a norm or due measure. Thus if measure in this second sense exists, so do the arts, and, . . . if there are arts, then there is a second kind of measurement. To deny either is to deny both.

*Young Socrates:* So much is fully established, but what follows?

*Stranger:* Clearly we should divide the art of measurement into two on the principle enunciated by dividing it at this point. One section will comprise all arts of measuring number, length, depth, breadth, or velocity of objects by relative standards. The other section comprises arts concerned with due occa-

sion, due time, due performance, and all such standards as have removed their abode from the extremes and are now settled about the mean.<sup>31</sup>

This distinction, says Plato, has a precise ontological and epistemological foundation, that is, its roots are grounded in the very structure of Being.

The first type of relationship is quantitative or mathematical, while the second is qualitative or axiological. It is by means of this latter kind of relationship that we have the measure of Being necessary for generation, for the ontological structure of reality. And this is how men distinguish good from evil become good or evil and acquire virtues or vices.

All the arts and their productions (including, of course, the art of statecraft) depend on the second kind of measurement, and, by relating to due measure, produce beautiful and good things and avoid what is excessive or deficient of the mean.

### 3. *Revolutionizing the Way of Thinking of the Pythagoreans*

The foregoing admission of a precise art, measuring the more and the less by reference to the due mean, revolutionizes the way of thinking begun and worked out by the Pythagoreans, according to which the more and less are only measurable against each other (in the mathematical sense). This is similar to the revolution achieved in the *Sophist* concerning the mode of thinking set up by the Eleatics with the admission of nonbeing in the sense of Otherness. Plato was fully aware of having raised himself above the thought of the Pythagoreans, just as he was aware of having raised himself above that of Eleatic discourse.<sup>32</sup>

The founding of the art of ontological-axiological measurement is, however, said to be a task still greater than the other, and as such is put off to another time and hence to the Unwritten Doctrines.<sup>33</sup>

Clearly, Plato follows his usual pattern of maximum economy by reasoning in the following way. It is impossible to deny the existence of a measurement in relation to the due mean. Indeed, the arts undeniably exist; but the arts exist insofar as they are based on that type of measure. Hence, in order to deny the axiological measure it would be necessary to reject the arts, which is clearly impossible.<sup>34</sup>

31. *Statesman* 284A1–E8.

32. It is evident that if, instead of assuming the mask of the Stranger from Elea, Plato had taken on the mask of a Pythagorean, he would have had to speak of a *parricide of Pythagoras*, because the introduction of the axiological art of measuring overturns the doctrines of the Pythagoreans, as can be clearly seen from the passage quoted above.

33. It calls for the entire map of the protological problems of the Unwritten Doctrines.

34. By basing himself on art, Plato avoids making an appeal to the protological foundation; note, however, how, with the economy of the dialogue, this partial grounding is sufficient to solve the problem of the definition of the statesman.

#### 4. *The Good as the Most Perfect Measure*

The protological foundation of the issue would imply a discussion of the whole categorical division and the related reduction to the Principles. As we know, the value of things derives from the order which unity imposes on plurality. Now, the due measure, that is, the mean between the extremes of defect and excess, consists precisely in a limitation of the too little and the too much, and it is therefore a kind of unity-in-multiplicity, as we can see from the general protological framework.<sup>35</sup>

As to the demonstration of absolute accuracy, to which Plato refers in our dialogue, it is clear that the definition of the absolutely primary Principle is the issue. It is the One, as measure or the most accurate measure, which is the bulk of the iceberg of which the discussion in the *Statesman* of the due measure and the due mean is the visible tip.

The discussion of the Good in the *Republic* began with an emblematic and very significant hint at perfect measure.<sup>36</sup>

In a dialogue which is unfortunately lost, except for fragments, entitled *Statesman* and hence inspired by this Platonic dialogue, Aristotle says the following: "the Good is the most perfect measure of all things."<sup>37</sup> Again, in the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle says that the One (bearing in mind that the One corresponds to the Good) is Principle and Measure.<sup>38</sup>

The One is the principle and measure, first of the Ideal numbers, hence of the Ideas, and, at various levels, of all the rest. The positive encountered on various levels is constituted by unity-in-multiplicity. And this holds for the moral life of man, for political life and the life of the state, and the entire cosmos and for all the things contained in it.

And it is this capacity for producing unity-in-multiplicity which permits the statesman to bring about the great fabric of society, mixing the extremes, and tying them up in bonds, in relation to the Good and the Beautiful, in relation to due measure, and, therefore, in terms of the most perfect measure. And it is this message that closes the dialogue.

### III. THE PROGRAMMED DISCUSSION OF THE *PHILOSOPHER* AND WHY IT COULD NOT BE COMMITTED TO WRITING BUT TO ORAL DIALECTIC

#### 1. *The Prologue of the Sophist and the Program for Discussing the Sophist, the Statesman, and the Philosopher*

The *Sophist* opens with some important statements about the person who is to be central to the dialogue and about the issues to be discussed.

35. See Chapters 7, 8, and 9.

36. See Chapter 11, section III, 204-9.

37. Aristotle, *Politics* frag. 2 Ross.

38. See the full documentation presented in Krämer, *Über den Zusammenhang*, 63.

The person is a stranger who comes from Elea. He is presented as connected to the circle of the followers of Parmenides and Zeno, and is characterized as a man who is totally committed to philosophy and divine like all philosophers.

The connection between that dialogue and the *Parmenides*, in which Parmenides himself and Zeno play an essential role, is made clear by the reference to their names and by the close connection of the main character of the *Sophist* with the Eleatic School. Nevertheless, in the *Sophist*, the protagonist is presented as connected to the Eleatics, but is not given a name, because it is Plato himself hiding under the mask of the Eleatic Stranger, insofar as (a) he wishes to acknowledge his own links with Eleaticism; and at the same time, (b) he wishes to set out clearly and unmistakably the differences that separate him from Eleaticism, executing with extraordinary artistic effectiveness the famous paricide of Parmenides.

The topic under consideration concerns the three figures of the sophist, the statesman, and the philosopher, whose precise nature is to be discovered. The dialogue with which the discussion begins considers the sophist and bears that title; the dialogue immediately following it treats the statesman, and bears that title. But why, having so precisely programmed an examination of the philosopher, did Plato not write a dialogue with that title?

Scholars have tormented themselves to give a solution to this vexing problem.<sup>39</sup> However, within the old paradigm no one has succeeded, while it seems to us that, within the conceptual space provided by the new paradigm, the solution is quite simple, and even rather obvious.

Let us first look at the important prologue to the *Sophist*:

*Theodorus*: Here we are, Socrates, faithful to our appointment of yesterday, and, what is more, we have brought a Stranger with us. Our friend here is a native of Elea; he belongs to the school of Parmenides and Zeno, and is devoted to philosophy.

*Socrates*: Perhaps, Theodorus, it is no ordinary stranger but some god that you have brought us unawares. Homer tells us that gods attend upon the goings of men of mercy and justice, and not least among them the god of strangers comes to mark the orderly or lawless doings of mankind. Your companion may be one of those higher powers, who intends to observe and expose our weakness in philosophical discourse, like a very spirit of refutation.

*Theodorus*: That is not our friend's way, Socrates; he is more reasonable than the devotees of verbal dispute. I should not call him a god by any means, but there is something divine about him. I would say that of any philosopher.

*Socrates*: And rightly, my friend, but one might almost say that the type you mention is hardly easier to discern than the god. Such men—the genuine, not

39. Recent studies on the problem are to be found in Cherniss, *Lustrum* (1959): 146; and in Brisson, *Lustrum* (1977): 278 and *Lustrum* (1983): 289.

the sham philosophers—as they go from city to city surveying from a height the life beneath them, appear, owing to the world's blindness, to wear all sorts of shapes. To some they seem of no account, to others above all worth; now they wear the guise of statesmen, now of sophists, and sometimes they may give the impression of simply being mad. But if our guest will allow me, I should like to ask him what his countrymen thought and how they used these names.

*Theodorus*: What names?

*Socrates*: Sophist, Statesman, Philosopher.

*Theodorus*: What is your question exactly? What sort of difficulty about these names have you in mind?

*Socrates*: . . . Did they think of all these as a single type, or as two, or did they distinguish three types and attach . . . three corresponding names to each?

*Theodorus*: I imagine you are quite welcome to the information. Is not that so, sir?

*Stranger*: Yes, Theodorus, perfectly welcome, and the answer is not difficult. They thought of them as three different types, but it is not so short and easy a task to define each one of them clearly.

*Theodorus*: . . . Socrates, you have hit upon a subject closely allied to one on which we were pressing him with questions before we came here. He tried to put us off with the same excuse he has just made to you, though he admits he has been thoroughly instructed and has not forgotten what he heard.<sup>40</sup>

## 2. *The Reproposal of the Discussion of the Philosopher in the Prologue of the Statesman*

As can be easily seen, all the necessary formal conditions are fulfilled for a complete treatment of this problem: indeed, the protagonist is an authentic philosopher, and hence is perfectly aware of what a philosopher is; in addition, the questioners, who are concerned with mathematics and geometry, are up to the task of receiving the message. And Plato wrote the *Statesman* immediately after the *Sophist*, using the same Eleatic Stranger as the main character with the same circle of hearers; moreover we find the following at the beginning of the *Statesman*:

*Socrates*: Theodorus, I am really very much indebted to you for my introduction to Theaetetus and to our guest from Elea.

*Theodorus*: Good, but you are likely to be three times as much in my debt, Socrates, when they have done their task and defined the Statesman and the Philosopher as well as the Sophist for you.

*Socrates*: Three times as much? Really my dear Theodorus, must it go on record that we heard our greatest mathematician and geometer say that?

*Theodorus*: What do you mean, Socrates?

*Socrates*: Are we to say that we heard you reckoning all these three as of equal value when their real values differ to an extent that defies all your mathematical expressions of proportion?

*Theodorus*: By Ammon, god of Libya, well said, Socrates, and a fair hit! Your dropping on my blunder in calculation like this show that you have really

40. See *Sophist* 216A1–217B8 and Movia, *Apparenze*, 38–49.

remembered your mathematics! But I will have my revenge for this some other time. Now, . . . Pray do not tire of favoring us with your assistance but go on to define the statesman or the philosopher, whichever you prefer to seek.

*Stranger*: Yes, we must do that, Theodorus. We have set ourselves to the task and now we must not withdraw from it till all our definitions are complete.<sup>41</sup>

The dialogue then proceeds to the replacement of the interlocutor. Socrates chooses a school companion of Theaetetus himself, a youth by the name of Socrates, and he explains that while Theaetetus is like him in some traits, the young Socrates has instead a certain family bond with him through his name (and perhaps Plato chose a young Socrates, because the *Statesman* will touch on the question of the Good, which is the central theme that Socrates himself introduced into philosophy).

The Stranger, after having defined the sophist, chooses to consider the statesman: "*Stranger*: . . . Therefore, after the sophist, it seems to me, it is necessary that we seek the statesman."<sup>42</sup>

But why are we not given the third treatment, when everything would lead us to believe that there must be one, all the more so given that the Stranger says that it is necessary to get to the end?

### 3. *The Essence of the Philosopher Can Be Fully Grasped Only in Oral Dialectic*

There is no discussion of the philosopher in writing because there could not be such a thing on the grounds that to be adequate such a discussion would call not for the realm of writing, but rather for the realm of oral dialectic.

Here is how all the indications, given by Plato himself in the writings preceding the *Sophist*, point unmistakably to this conclusion.

(a) In the *Phaedo*, in giving the metaphysical outline where the Second Voyage is discussed, Plato writes all that is necessary about the theory of Ideas; but he only makes hints at the theory of the Principles, and he explains as follows: "But, if you are a philosopher, I imagine you will follow the course which I describe. And from this it clearly follows that Plato is referring to a realm different from the written for the enquiry which leads to the highest Principles, that, when reached, leave nothing more besides to be sought."<sup>43</sup>

(b) In the *Republic*, the metaphysical outline is taken up again and explained in detail from the end of Book 5 and through Books 6 and 7, which are concerned with the nature of the philosopher. Nevertheless, once more, the ultimate object of the philosopher, and the method by

41. *Statesman* 257A1–C4.

42. *Ibid.*, 258B2ff.

43. See Chapter 5, *passim*.



which he achieves it, is broadly hinted at but not spelt out. The discussion is presented as interest paid on an account to be settled at some other time, in the sphere of oral dialectic. We may observe that not only the highest knowledge and its object are represented as interest, but also “the long way” itself, the method, which brings us to them, is presented in the same way, without reaching any ultimate conclusions.

The philosopher is defined as essentially a dialectician, as someone who knows how to pass from hypotheses to what lies beyond them. But exactly how this passage ought to take place is not explained, but is only alluded to, in terms with a strong conceptual charge. For example, it is referred to as *synopsis*—the procedure which can systematically bring multiplicity into unity—and as *aphairesis* or *diairesis*—the separation or abstraction, by means of which one can separate or abstract the idea of the Good from all the others, according to a determinate procedure, and hence arrive at a definition of the essence of the Good itself.<sup>44</sup>

(c) The *Parmenides* contains the most esoteric written treatment that Plato left insofar as it offers a discussion conducted among a few individuals within a circle of great philosophers, who present us with a magnificent dialectical exercise. In this dialogue, the discussion remains closed within a partial vision, as we explained above.<sup>45</sup>

(d) Finally, in the great self-testimonies contained in the *Phaedrus*, Plato says that the philosopher is only he who “possesses things of greatest value” relative to what he has composed and written. And he explains how more beautiful than a commitment to writing is the commitment which employs the art of dialectic, and with it selects a soul of the right type, and in it plants and sows his words founded on knowledge, words that can defend both themselves and him who planted them.<sup>46</sup>

Clearly, this must be kept in mind to understand the passages quoted from the *Sophist* and the *Statesman*: the philosopher is he who fully possesses the science of dialectic, the highest science and which allows him to reach the truth. However, it is impossible to learn this science from writing. It is only possible to acquire it through oral discussion. And it is just for this reason that it cannot be put wholly into writing.<sup>47</sup>

4. *The Passage of the Sophist in Which Plato Defines the Philosopher as a Dialectician, with Strong Allusions to the Unwritten Doctrines*

We must admit, therefore, the existence of a discussion of the philosopher, similar to those written about the sophist and the statesman, but

44. See Chapter 11, *passim*.

45. See Chapter 12, *passim*.

46. *Phaedrus* 276E5ff.; see above pp. 54–59.

47. See Chapter 3, *passim*.

it could not and ought not to be put in writing, but presented only in oral discussion.

For those who could understand (and for those, who, in the light of the new paradigm, can understand), Plato says, by means of a splendid artistic fiction, that the philosopher was discovered while the sophist was being sought. We are offered an allusive and emblematic picture of the philosopher, which may be the fullest which can be put into writing:

*Stranger:* Well, now that we have agreed that the kinds stand toward one another in the same way as regards blending, is not some science needed as a guide on the voyage of discourse, if one is to succeed in pointing out which kinds are consonant, and which are incompatible with one another—also, whether there are certain kinds that pervade them all and connect them so that they can blend, and again, where there are divisions, whether there are certain others that traverse wholes and are responsible for the division?

*Theaetetus:* Surely some science is needed—perhaps the most important of all.

*Stranger:* And what name shall we give to this science? Or—good gracious, Theaetetus, have we stumbled unawares upon the free man's knowledge and, in seeking for the sophist, chanced to find the philosopher first?

*Theaetetus:* How do you mean?

*Stranger:* Dividing according to kinds, not taking the same form for a different one or a different one for the same—is not that the task of the science of dialectic? —*Theaetetus:* Yes.

*Stranger:* And the man who can do that discerns clearly one form everywhere extended throughout many, where each one lies apart, and many forms, different from one another, embraced from without by one form, . . . again one form connected in a unity through many wholes, and many forms, entirely marked off apart. That means knowing how to distinguish, kind by kind, in what ways the several kinds can or cannot combine. —*Theaetetus:* Most certainly.

*Stranger:* And the only person, I imagine, to whom you would allow this mastery of dialectic is the pure and rightful lover of wisdom.

*Theaetetus:* To whom else could it be allowed?

*Stranger:* It is, then, in some such region as this that we shall find the philosopher now or later, if we should look for him. He may be difficult to see clearly, but the difficulty in his case is not the same as in the sophists'.

*Theaetetus:* What is the difference?

*Stranger:* The sophist takes refuge in the darkness of non-being, where he is at home and has the knack of feeling his way, and it is the darkness of the place that makes him so hard to perceive.

*Theaetetus:* That may well be.

*Stranger:* Whereas the philosopher, whose thoughts constantly dwell upon the nature of reality, is difficult to see because his region is so bright, for the eye of the vulgar soul cannot endure to keep its gaze fixed on the divine.

*Theaetetus:* That may well be no less true.

*Stranger:* Then we will look more closely at the philosopher presently, if we are still in the mind to do so; . . .<sup>48</sup>

48. See *Sophist* 253B8–254B4 and Movia, *Apparenze*, 299–327.

As the reader will have noticed, this passage contains the remarks on dialectical method which, together with a parallel passage in the *Statesman*, we have already had occasion to consider, remembering that it has inspired considerable debate and that scholars have expended much energy in trying to understand it.<sup>49</sup> In fact, it gives a shorthand summary of the remarkable dialectical method, which is the procedure that, according to Plato, brings us to a perfect understanding of the relations between the One and the Many, and that, as such, carries with it the knowledge of the real in its totality and essential structure. The central point in our passage remains obscure, because it merely alludes to a whole set of complex problems, and hence is far from being exhaustive.

But if *synopsis* and *diairesis* are understood as connected with the method of generalization and reduction, then the text becomes much clearer. And if it is read against the background of the numerical character of metaphysical structure, taken as *logos*-number, then it is clearer still, as Plato himself will say still more explicitly in the *Philebus*.<sup>50</sup>

Consequently, the way in which the *Sophist* and the *Statesman* were read in the past, as dialectical dialogues in the full sense, has to be utterly rethought. They are undoubtedly dialectical dialogues in a very strong sense; nevertheless, they present only a partial and incomplete view of Platonic dialectic, and not his entire vision, except by way of hints; for the entirety of this vision is kept back for oral discussion.

##### 5. *Partial Dialectic and Total Dialectic*

The reader may have the impression that these conclusions can only be drawn within the new paradigm and that they in some way compromise and devalue these dialogues which, since Hegel, have been given pride of place because of the dialectic which they discuss, and which has attracted the attention of many scholars. To limit this impression we may refer to a passage by A. Levi, who, working within the old paradigm, fully understood that the *Sophist* and the dialectical dialogues tell only half the story, and leave many things undecided. Two of the passages which we have already cited in part are repeated in these pages from Levi. But it does no harm to see them again because they demonstrate how a scholar who devoted all his life to Plato began to depart, albeit partially, from the terms that the traditional paradigm imposed on these dialogues, while hanging onto much of that paradigm:

In order to eliminate error it is necessary to use dialectic, which must justify and ground judgment on the ideal realities on which it depends and then

49. See above pp. 137ff.

50. In the next chapter we shall try to make good on this claim.

progressively derive it from them. In the *Sophist* there is no mention of the unconditioned principle of the *Republic*, and there is no attempt even to apply the procedure of division to the highest genera of being that are given specific attention (it cannot be said that the five genera mentioned are the only ones, because it is clear at least that two others, unity and multiplicity, have a right to the same status). The dialogue in question aims to define the activity of the sophist; and in order to show how we must proceed in this search, it begins with an example of a commonly experienced object, the angler, whose genera are dichotomously divided into species. Since his is certainly an art, we begin with the division of art in general (a) into two species (b and c) which exclude each other, and we include this art in one of the species (c); then we go on in the same way, until we achieve a complete determination of his activity.

So the angling is defined by putting together the successive subdivisions of art in general; it is the art of acquiring with stealthy capture living things, which live in a fluid, not birds but fish, it is a capture by striking which is done in daylight by means of a blow given from below (*Sophist* 218C–221E). Then, using this dichotomous model, the definition of the art of the sophist is attempted, from which six definitions are displayed (*Sophist* 221C–231E); one of them is then taken and developed and finally is allowed to be sufficient. The dichotomous division follows the general procedure of eliminating progressively everything that the object studied has in common with other similar things, until we are left with only its own nature (*Sophist* 264E).

It is clear that both the genera and the species and sub-species have already to be known by the inductive-intuitive procedure frequently spoken of, so that the division does not function in the abstract but makes use of empirical data, which are the condition for intuiting Form or Idea, and which must be repeated in distinguishing the species within a genus, by participations of species in that genus. There is the further requirement of an intuitive act to recognize at the beginning that the ultimate species to be defined (which presents difficulties because of its complex nature) belongs to a certain genus, or participates in it. Someone who has grasped all the relations of participation into which the Ideas can enter and those which they exclude, will never fall into error, because he would never put together incompatible Ideas. It is when the task is to establish relations between terms separated by a long series of intermediates that error becomes possible. . . .

Although it offers an addition which may be said to be permanent in the development of Plato's thought about the problem of error and the account of Non-Being as the different, and although it determines more fully the mutual participations of the Ideas, it is undeniable that the *Sophist* presents, alongside notions more hinted at than stated, obscurities and difficulties which cannot be overlooked. Too little is said about error concerning empirical objects, and the nature and function of the imagination are scarcely referred to. The *Philebus* will return to these points with greater specificity. In addition, as we have observed, it does not mention a first principle of the Ideas; since the Ideas are said to be insofar as they partake of Being, it seems that the view of the *Republic* according to which being and essence derive from the Idea of the Good has been abandoned. It is unacceptable to think that Plato gives up viewing the Idea of the Good as the first principle, because it reappears in the *Philebus* and in the theory of Idea-Numbers; but it is hard to see how, when he wrote the *Sophist*, he could relate it to the Idea of Being. Moreover, by placing it on the

same level as the other four studied, by not alluding to the relations which holds between them and the Ideas of the One and Plurality, and by not showing how we ought to think about the relations between them and the lower Ideas, Plato raises difficulties whose solution it is hard to see. . . .<sup>51</sup>

Anyone following us so far will have understood how in the new paradigm all the problems which Levi raises are completely resolved by setting them against the background of the Unwritten Doctrines.

We wish to point out another very important element, which needs to be properly understood.

The dichotomous dialectic, on which the argument of the *Sophist* and the *Statesman* largely hinges, must be placed within a context wider than is usually supposed. In particular, the following must be borne in mind.

First, the method of diairetic-reduction to the elements is the constant counterpoint of the method of synoptic-generalization, as Plato frequently repeats.

The dyadic division is linked in two ways to the first Principles, that is, (i) to their bipolar structure, and (ii), at least in part, to the important role of the principle antithetical to the One, namely, the Dyad, and consequently to the dyadic function which can be derived from it.

The dyadic division is a basic but not absolutely exclusive model of dialectic. Plato tells us clearly in the *Statesman* that in some cases it is impossible to make a division into two, and in such cases it is necessary to divide so far as possible into the number closest to two,<sup>52</sup> and this obviously broadens the range of dialectic.

On the basis of Gaiser's research, *diairesis* is explained by relations similar to the division of surfaces and lines, and consequently it can likewise be represented in a geometrical-arithmetic manner.<sup>53</sup>

This helps us to understand how the complex diairetic web (of which in the passage cited above from Levi is only a partial illustration, and, in any case, one offered by Plato with at least a pinch of irony, given that he is aiming at defining the sophist), ought to be considered an articulation of the complex metaphysical-numerical web of reality. And here, as Gaiser has again correctly pointed out, what counts is not so much the enumeration of parts, as the individuation of the relations of the Ideas among themselves and to their highest genus: it is precisely this that makes the position of a part within the whole understandable.<sup>54</sup>

51. A. Levi, *Il problema*, 100-103.

52. *Statesman* 287C.

53. K. Gaiser, *Platons*, 126-31. See in particular the useful figures with which Gaiser illustrates his interpretations (pp. 127, 129, 130). We may recall the analogical relation which holds between these mathematico-geometrical representations and the dialectic-metaphysical plane. See also Movia, *Apparenze*, 54-179, 189-200, 318-22, 461-71.

54. See Gaiser, *Platons*, 125ff.

In this way, the *logos*-number structure of every Idea is the key to the whole of dialectic. We can see, therefore, how a dialectic of this kind (which is the art or science that defines the philosopher and his role) could be truly explained only in oral discourse.

### 6. *Conclusions on the Philosopher*

The trilogy of the *Sophist*, *Statesman*, and *Philosopher* was promised by Plato, and has been carried out: *Sophist* and *Statesman* are two written *logoi*; the *Philosopher* remains instead a *logos* reserved for oral discussion.

In other words, the first two dialogues are written on paper; but the third Plato wanted to write in the soul.<sup>55</sup> The following summary may dispel any remaining doubts.

1. Plato sets the treatment in the *Sophist* (and the *Statesman* which immediately follows) after a discussion already begun between the Eleatic Stranger and Theodorus, before meeting Socrates, on similar themes; hence the *Sophist* presupposes a preliminary oral preparation.<sup>56</sup>

Socrates asks the Stranger what his friends from Elea think about the issue of distinguishing the sophist-statesman-philosopher, and whether they are one or three. The Stranger replies that there are three distinct figures. Nevertheless, he explains that to define them clearly is not so short and easy a task.<sup>57</sup> And Theodorus says that similar excuses had been given to them earlier; all the same the Stranger had said that he was thoroughly instructed in the views of the Eleatic philosophers and furthermore had not forgotten what he had heard.<sup>58</sup>

It is clear that the references to orality, to hearing, and to not forgetting are strongly suggestive.

2. The definition of the philosopher applies to him who possesses and practices dialectic, which is the most important science of all.<sup>59</sup> And this definition is presented in a very telling fashion: "have we stumbled unawares upon the free man's knowledge and, in seeking for the sophist, chanced to find the philosopher first?"<sup>60</sup>

3. This is followed by the definition of dialectic in terms of its twofold method of synoptic-generalization and diaretic-reduction and of the importance of the relations, positive and negative, which hold among the genera by combination and separation, and hence stress the structural relations within the whole realm of being.<sup>61</sup>

55. Cf. *Phaedrus* 276A.5ff; 276E5-277A4; 278A2-B2.

56. Cf. *Sophist* 217B3ff.

57. *Ibid.*, B1-3.

58. *Ibid.*, B7ff; cf. Movia, *Apparenze*, 38-49.

59. *Ibid.*, 253C4ff.

60. *Ibid.*, 7-9; cf. Movia, *Apparenze*, 307.

61. *Ibid.*, D5ff.

4. It is difficult to find the philosopher in this place;<sup>62</sup> but the difficulty is the opposite of that involved in finding the sophist.

Indeed, the sophist is difficult to specify because he is knee-deep in appearances, which are nonbeing; therefore it is difficult to see him by reason of the darkness proper to nonbeing. On the other hand, the philosopher is linked to the Idea of Being; and he is difficult to discern not because he is dark, but because he is light; thus the philosopher is difficult to grasp because of the brightness of the place in which he moves. And the eyes of the greater part of mankind, says Plato, cannot endure to keep their gaze fixed on the divine.<sup>63</sup> This is an astonishing image which Aristotle takes up and applies to truth in order to explain the most important reason why it causes difficulties. The eyes of mankind, says the Stagirite, are like those of bats, who do not see when there is daylight by reason of the brightness.<sup>64</sup> Plato does not, however, extend the image to all mankind considered as such, but to the majority: only a few men look at the light and can stand it; most people are capable neither of looking at it nor of standing it.

But this is what one must do if one is to understand and explain the nature of the philosopher himself. To Plato's way of thinking, this cannot be done in writing nor be offered to the many, but only in oral dialogue and to the few who are capable of it, as the *Phaedrus* says.

5. Concerning the philosopher, concludes Plato, "we will look more closely at the philosopher presently, if we are still of a mind to do so."<sup>65</sup> But the entrance to the unwritten lies just here, in the willingness to accept the conditions, the desire to tackle the difficulties, that learning about the first Principles implies. Nevertheless, it is only in this way that research will be properly executed.

6. And if that does not suffice, Plato refers to Theodorus's declaration at the beginning of the *Statesman*, that Socrates ought to be grateful three times over to the Stranger when he has been presented with the definitions of the sophist, the statesman, and the philosopher. Through Socrates, Plato reproaches Theodorus for his error of calculation, saying that Socrates ought to be three times more grateful if the Stranger will speak of the sophist, the statesman, and the philosopher. Plato is indicating that Theodorus's reasoning implies giving equal value to the

62. *Ibid.*, E8.

63. *Ibid.*, 254A1ff; cf. Movia, *Apparenze*, 317.

64. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* a1.993b6ff: "The fact that we can have a whole truth and not the particular part we aim at shows the difficulty of it. Perhaps, too, as difficulties are of two kinds, the cause of the present difficulty is not in the facts but in us. For as the eyes of bats are to the blaze of day, so is the reason in our soul to the things which are by nature most evident of all." This image is taken up again by Theophrastus, *Metaphysics* 9b11-13.

65. *Sophist* 254B3-5.

three figures, while in reality the three figures are not of equal value, but their real values differ more widely than any mathematical expression of proportion.<sup>66</sup>

Hence, there is no geometrical proportion (*ἀναλογία*) between the sophist, the statesman, and the philosopher; between the first pair and the last there is a much greater distance than that.

For the first two the written *logos* in geometrical proportion will be sufficient, while for the third, the *logos* cannot be in a simple geometrical proportion to them; hence the realm of the unwritten is required to correspond to the value of the object

Thus, the trilogy *Sophist*, *Statesman*, and *Philosopher* involves written *logoi* in correct proportion, and a third *logos*, which cannot stand to them in a simple geometrical proportion because of the difference in value of its object, and which therefore can be spelt out only in oral dialectic. Hence, this *logos* must not be written on scrolls of paper, but must be written directly on the souls of men, because it is in such writing on souls through oral discussion that the *logos* achieves the correct proportion with its object.

66. *Statesman* 257A6–8.



## 14 Protological Themes in the *Philebus* concerning the General Structure of Reality

### I. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE *PHILEBUS* AS SEEN BY THE EARLY COMMENTATORS AND AS CONNECTED TO THE UNWRITTEN DOCTRINES

The *Philebus*<sup>1</sup> is a dialogue which does not pose any particular problems for the new paradigm, for two basic reasons. In the first place, as we are told by Simplicius, Porphyry had closely connected this dialogue with Plato's lectures *On the Good*, and had used the Unwritten Doctrines in his commentary on the *Philebus*. In the second place, the various attempts to adjust and restructure the traditional paradigm, and especially those which brought about the distortions described in Chapter 2 (section IV), were prompted by consideration of the *Philebus* itself. Here are the important testimonies of Porphyry and Simplicius:

... Porphyry, expounding their reports, has this to say about them [by Plato in his lectures *On the Good*] in his writing on the *Philebus*: Plato made the more and the less, and the strong and the weak, of the nature of the infinite. For, wherever they are present, and become intensified or reduced, they do not stand still nor set bounds to what shares in them, but progress into the indefinitely infinite. The same is true of the greater and the smaller, or, as Plato calls them, the great and small. Let us take a limited magnitude like a cubit and divide it into two parts, leaving the one half-cubit undivided, and dividing the other and adding it bit by bit to the undivided portion: we shall then have two parts of the cubit, one proceeding infinitely towards increased smallness, and one towards increased bigness. For we shall never reach the indivisible by such partial division, since a cubit is continuous, and a continuum always divides into divisibles. This gapless segmentation reveals a certain infinite nature locked up in the cubit, or rather more than one such nature, the one proceeding towards the great, the other towards the small. In these the indefinite dyad shows up as constituted by a factor which tends towards the great and a factor which tends towards the small.

These properties are found both in continuous bodies and in numbers. The first number is the even number two, and in the nature of the even both double and half are embraced, the double being in excess and the half in defect. Excess and defect are therefore present in the *eide*. The Dyad is the first among even numbers, but in itself is indefinite, and receives bounds by partici-

1. A bibliography of the literature published in our century on the *Philebus* can be found in Praechter, *Die Philosophie des Altertums*, 84ff.; Totok, *Handbuch*, 204; Cherniss, *Lustrum* (1959): 141-45; and Brisson, *Lustrum* (1977): 277ff. and *Lustrum* (1983): 289.

pating in unity. For the Dyad is limited in so far as it becomes a single *eidos*. Unity and the Dyad are therefore the elements of number, the one limiting and formative, the other indefinite in its excess and defect.

This is more or less what Porphyry says in the cited work, setting forth in order the enigmatic utterances made [by Plato] at the seminar (*συνουσία*) *On the Good*, and maintaining that these were perhaps in accord with what was written down in the *Philebus*.<sup>2</sup>

A whole book would be needed to account for the adjustments which have been made within the Schleiermacherian paradigm. For present purposes, it will be sufficient to record the outstanding contributions of Stenzel to demonstrate that the numerical structure of the Ideal world and hence the theory of Idea-Numbers, can be found in no small measure also in Plato's writings.<sup>3</sup>

We may here bring out three fundamental notions to be found in the *Philebus*. (1) The first of these regards the general bipolar structure of the real explained chiefly on the basis of the Meta-Ideas of limit and unlimited (which are, moreover, closely connected to the issue of the One and the Many). (2) The second consists in unpacking the implications of that structure for cosmology and anthropology, as well as for ontology; and, in connection with this, Plato makes significant use of the theory of the Demiurge. (3) The third involves returning to the question of the definition of the Good and determining the scale of values with Measure at the summit.

In this chapter we shall discuss the first and the third of these notions, while we shall make only brief remarks about the second, putting off explanations to later chapters (see Part 4), in which we tackle the issue of the Demiurge head-on.

## II. THE METAPHYSICAL-NUMERICAL STRUCTURE OF REALITY

Once he has asserted the importance of the question of the relations between the One and the Many, and has clearly emphasized that the connection between the One and the Many established by that argument is found always and everywhere in everything we can speak about, Plato explains that, to get over the difficulties which this involves, we must follow the same path which led to all the discoveries of the arts.

This knowledge of the relations between the One and the many, says Plato, is, in effect, a divine revelation,<sup>4</sup> which the ancients have handed down to us and according to which all the things which are said "always

2. Simplicius, *In Arist. Phys.* 453.30-454.19 [Gaiser, 23B; Krämer, III.11; Findlay 418-19.7].

3. Stenzel presented important contributions in the first edition of his *Studien* (1917).

4. *Philebus* 16Cff.

to be" are always constituted of the One and the Many, and contain in themselves limit and unlimitedness.<sup>5</sup>

This is what the revelation or rather this gift of the Gods to mankind consists in: being as such contains within itself the limit and the unlimited (the *peras* and the *apeiron*), as equally essential ingredients. This statement holds for every being, beginning with the Ideas themselves, as follows from the context and as careful scholars now agree.

Nevertheless, Plato does not develop the theoretical implications of these claims, which would bring him directly to the treatment of the first Principles, reserved for oral discussion. Instead, he moves to the dialectical consequences which interest him for the purposes of providing a theoretical grounding for the methodology employed in the dialogue, although he allows some significant glimpses of the metaphysical-numerical structure of reality. Indeed, Plato explains that, in view of the foregoing, dialectic should be understood in the following way.

Whatever might be the object of inquiry, it is necessary to find in it the unity of the Idea; we must carefully examine this Idea, to see whether it contains, in turn, two or more Ideas, and then, further, if each of these Ideas is subdivided into other Ideas, until we reach Ideas that are not further divisible. So long as we are dealing with Ideas, the number of the Ideas contained in a given general Idea is always determinate. But when we reach the Ideas that are no longer divisible we can go no further with dialectical division, and then we encounter the indeterminate plurality of individuals.

Thus, the division of an Idea always gives rise to a limited number of Ideas included within it. The task specific to dialectic is that of establishing which and how many these are.

And the most outstanding innovation in the *Philebus* has been clearly seen, since the work of Stenzel, to be the connection of the diairetic structure of the Ideas with number. The doctrine of the Idea-Numbers thus emerges as we explained it above. It is possible to establish the structure of every general Idea by separating the subdivisions into which the Idea breaks up, and thus transposing this diairetic structure into a number; this adds up to establishing which and how many Ideas are contained in a Idea-genus.

Finally, after this procedure, it will be possible to go on to the indeterminate plurality of individuals. This means it is not possible to move immediately from a general Idea (unity) to the multiplicity of empirical individuals, which form an indeterminate plurality, except by means of the ontological and logical decomposition of the Idea into the various

5. Ibid., C-D.

Ideas of which it is constituted, and the determination of their number and nature. Once the indivisible Ideas are reached will the move to the corresponding innumerable empirical individuals be possible.

As Stenzel has pointed out, the following thought unexpressed, but clearly implied: "The final Idea is conceived by *logos*, the sensible object is the object of *doxa* which can become true only by reference to this *eidōs*. Insofar, . . . as the sensible individual is not conceived in the Idea, it is an *apeiron*, and therefore is non-being in the sense explained above. . . ."<sup>6</sup> Below the lowest Idea, which is not further divisible, is the sensible *apeiron*. Hence, as we shall see, the Idea, in its turn, has a determinative function of unity with respect to the sensibles.

Before moving on, we will present an important passage, in which Plato sets out concisely but boldly the concepts we are discussing:

*Socrates*: Very well. Now what is to be our first move in the great battle of all arms that rages on this issue? Here's a suggestion.

*Protarchus*: Yes?

*Socrates*: Well put the thing like this. We get this identity of the one and the many cropping up everywhere as the result of the sentences we utter; in every single sentence ever uttered, in the past and in the present, there it is. What we are dealing with is a problem that will assuredly never cease to exist; this is not its first appearance. Rather it is, in my view, something incidental to sentences themselves, never to pass, never to fade. As soon as a young man gets wind of it, he is as delighted as if he had discovered an intellectual gold mine; he is beside himself with delight, and loves to try every move in the game. First he rolls the stuff to one side and jumbles it into one; then he undoes it again and takes it to pieces, to the confusion first and foremost of himself, next of his neighbors at the moment, whether they be younger or older or of his own age. He has no mercy on his father or mother or anyone else listening to him—a little more and he would victimize even animals, and not just human beings, including foreigners, to whom of course he would never show mercy provided he could get hold of an interpreter.

*Protarchus*: Let me call your attention, Socrates, to the fact that there are plenty of us here, all young people. Aren't you afraid that we shall join with Philebus in an assault on you, if you keep abusing us? Well, well, we realize what you mean. Perhaps there is some way, some device for getting this bothersome business to oblige us by removing itself from our discussion, and we might discover some more attractive method of approach to the subject; if so, pray do your best about it, and we will keep you company—to the best of our power, that is, for we have a big subject in front of us, Socrates.

*Socrates*: Big indeed, my boys, if I may adopt Philebus' style of addressing you. Nevertheless there is not, and cannot be, a more attractive method than that to which I have always been devoted, though often in the past it has eluded me so that I was left desolate and helpless.

*Protarchus*: Do tell us what it is.

*Socrates*: It is a method quite easy to indicate, but very far from easy to employ. It is . . . the instrumentation through which every discovery ever made

6. Stenzel, *Studien*, 105.

in the sphere of the arts and sciences has been brought to light. Let me describe it for your consideration.

*Protarchus*: Please do.

*Socrates*: There is a gift of the Gods—so at least it seems evident to me—which they let fall from their abode, and it was through Prometheus, or one like him, that it reached mankind, together with a fire exceeding bright. The men of old, who were better than ourselves and dwelt nearer the Gods, passed on this gift in the form of a saying. All things, so it ran, that are ever said to be consist of a one and a many, and have in their nature a conjunction of limit and unlimitedness. This then being the ordering of things, we ought, they said, whatever it be that we are dealing with, to assume a single form and search for it, for we shall find it there contained; then, if we have laid hold of that, we must go on from one form to look for two, if the case admits of there being two, otherwise for three or some other number of forms. And we must do the same again with each of the ones thus reached, until we come to see not merely that the one that we started with is a one and an unlimited many, but also just how many it is. But we are not to apply the character of unlimitedness to our plurality until we have discerned the total number of forms the thing in question has intermediate between its one and its unlimited number. It is only then, when we have done that, that we may let each one of all these intermediate forms pass away into the unlimited and cease bothering about them. There, then, that is how the Gods, as I told you, have committed to us the task of inquiry, of learning, and of teaching one another, but your clever modern man, while making his one—or his many, as the case may be—more quickly or more slowly than is proper, when he has got his one proceeds to his unlimited number straightaway, allowing the intermediates to escape him, whereas it is the recognition of those intermediates that makes all the difference between a philosophical and a contentious discussion.<sup>7</sup>

In order to clarify the very difficult concept of the One's being conceived in relation to the unlimited, not immediately, but through the mediation of number, Plato brings forward two admirable examples borrowed from the arts, since, as he says, these are based on the dialectical method.

Sound is a single Idea, but it is also an unlimited plurality in all its single cases. So, the mediation between the unity of the Idea and the unlimited plurality of sounds comes about through the distinction of the quality and quantity of sounds, which are low, high, and intermediate; and then through the further distinction of the quality and number of the intervals of the voice and of low and high pitch, as well as their combinations, namely, their accords and harmonies. We thus arrive at a logical-ontological system, expressible numerically, which permits us to move, then, to the individual sensible sounds.

The example drawn from grammar may be clearer still. The sounds of the voice are distinguished into vowels and consonants, and these, in

7. *Philebus* 15D1–17A5.

turn, into voiced and unvoiced. Then, the individual vowels can be distinguished and the individual unvoiced consonants and the individual voiced consonants. In this way, the enumeration of all the letters of the alphabet is obtained. It is not possible to proceed in the division beyond this point, and from the indivisible Idea of the letter *a* or *b* (and so on) we may move to the individual sensible sounds, that is, to the individual letters *a* and *b* (and so on) pronounced by each and every individual, which are unlimited in number.<sup>8</sup>

The numerical structure of reality, in the strongly metaphysical sense, is clear, and could not be understood except in connection with the Unwritten Doctrines and specifically with the theory of Idea-Numbers.

Between giving the two examples set out above, Plato adds a further point to make himself fully understood:

*Socrates*: . . . When you have got your one, you remember, whatever it may be, you must not immediately turn your eyes to the unlimited, but to a number; now the same applies when it is the unlimited that you are compelled to start with. You must not immediately turn your eyes to the one, but must discern this or that number embracing the multitude, whatever it may be; reaching the one must be the last step of all.<sup>9</sup>

### III. THE BROADENING OF THE METAPHYSICAL ACCOUNT TO A VARIETY OF LEVELS

After first applying these concepts to the main subject of the dialogue, Plato takes up these metaphysical arguments and from them draws conclusions of great importance. The concepts of (1) unlimited and (2) limited are taken under their ontological-cosmological aspects. The claim is made that what exists in the universe systematically involves just these two factors. But it is pointed out that in order to take in the ontological structure of physical reality, we need to add to these two genera: (3) the mixture of limit and unlimited, as a third genus; and finally (4), most importantly, the further cause of mixture. To summarize:

1. The unlimited in sensible things is everything that appears, from many points of view, to vary in respect of the more and less, and in this sense is indeterminate.

2. The limit consists, on the other hand, in everything that implies number, numerical relation, measure, and determination.

3. The mixture is a product of limit acting on the unlimited, producing completion, proportion, order, and regularity.

8. *Ibid.*, C-18D.

9. *Ibid.*, 18A7-B3.

4. But, in the case of the sensible world, which is in becoming, we need an efficient or productive cause of the mixture. This cause is explicitly identified with intelligence. The particular mixtures related to the arts and to human activities involve human intelligence, but the mixtures of the cosmos in general and of the particular things of the cosmos, which do not depend on the intelligence of man, involve a cosmic intelligence: the Demiurge.

The Demiurge does not appear in the first metaphysical discussion, while he is involved in the second. There is a precise reason for this. In the first discussion the Demiurge is not mentioned on purpose, because what is at issue is the reality of the eternal Ideas, which, as such, are not generated and do not change. On the other hand, physical beings are generated and do come into being, and the Demiurge is the necessary cause to explain beings which come into being. Therefore, the cosmos and the things of the cosmos (that is, all sensible beings) are unaccountable without the Demiurge, that is, without Mind.<sup>10</sup>

This is an issue to which we shall return and of which we give a fuller account in Part 4.

#### IV. THREE TRANSCENDENTAL ASPECTS OF THE GOOD, AND ITS ESSENCE AS ONE AND MEASURE

The general conclusion about the human good, which the dialogue was aimed at finding, can be picked out in terms of the metaphysical, ontological, and cosmological framework, of which the driving notion is that of the mixture of limited and unlimited. According to Plato, the human good must have a structure similar to that of reality in general; it must be a mixture of knowledge and pleasure. This mixture must be based on the measure and on the proportion between too much and too little, or on the limitation of the unlimited (which is a kind of unity-in-multiplicity).

Toward the end of the dialogue, Plato describes the Good as an Idea which breaks up into three, explaining that, at the anthropological level in the life of mankind, it reflects that fabric which, at the ontological level, involves Being, Truth, and Beauty (order, harmony). Thus we find again a clear sign of those transcendental aspects by which, as we explained above,<sup>11</sup> the One is unpacked under a variety of guises.

*Socrates:* But there is still a certain thing we must have, and nothing in the world could come into being without it.

10. *Ibid.*, 23C–31A.

11. See also pp. 167ff. above, and Krämer, *Platone*, 206ff. [Am. ed., 109ff.].

*Protarchus:* What is that?

*Socrates:* Reality, for a thing with which we don't mean to mix reality will never really come into being, and if it ever did it wouldn't continue in being.

*Protarchus:* No, of course not.

*Socrates:* No indeed. And now you and Philebus should tell me if there are any additional ingredients required. To me it appears that in our present discussion we have created what might be called an incorporeal ordered system for the rightful control of a corporeal subject in which dwells a soul.

*Protarchus:* You may assure yourself . . . that my own conclusion is the same.

*Socrates:* Then perhaps we should be more or less right in saying that we now stand upon the threshold of the good and of that habitation where all that is like thereto resides?

*Protarchus:* I at least think so.

*Socrates:* And what, may I ask, shall we regard as the most valuable thing in our mixture, that which makes an arrangement of this sort commend itself to us all? If we discover that, we can go on to consider whether this factor in the whole scheme of things is closer and more akin to pleasure, or to reason.

*Protarchus:* Very good, what you propose will do much to help us toward our decision.

*Socrates:* As a matter of fact, it is easy enough to see the cause that makes any mixture, be it what it may, possess high value or no value whatever.

*Protarchus:* How so?

*Socrates:* Surely anyone in the world can recognize that.

*Protarchus:* Recognize what?

*Socrates:* That any compound, whatever it be, that does not by some means or other exhibit measure and proportion, is the ruin both of its ingredients and, first and foremost, of itself; what you are bound to get in such cases is no real mixture, but literally a miserable mass of unmixed messiness.

*Protarchus:* Very true.

*Socrates:* So now we find that the good has taken refuge in the character of the beautiful, for the qualities of measure and proportion invariably, I imagine, constitute beauty and excellence.

*Protarchus:* Yes, indeed.

*Socrates:* And of course we said that truth was included along with these qualities in the mixture. —*Protarchus:* Quite so.

*Socrates:* Then if we cannot hunt down the Good under a single form, let us secure it by the conjunction of three, Beauty, Proportion, and Truth, and then, regarding these three as one, let us assert that they may most properly be held to determine the qualities of the mixture, and the mixture as being Good by reason of the infusion of them.

*Protarchus:* Yes that is quite proper.<sup>12</sup>

It is superfluous to repeat what we have already said about the three transcendental dimensions because the present text is perfectly clear. On the other hand, it is worth pursuing some thoughts which this passage, if read between the lines, clearly reveals as its background and which are startling references to the underlying claims of the Unwritten Doctrines.

12. *Philebus* 64A7–65A6.



To begin with, note the extraordinary liveliness of the unveiled irony with which Plato sets his message before us. What sense can we make of his saying that the Good has taken refuge in the character of the Beautiful?

With great playfulness, Plato is trying to tell us what is of the greatest importance to him while pretending to say the opposite. Indeed, the Good and the Beautiful are the very same thing, as we shall show in greater detail below.<sup>13</sup> When he tells us that the Beautiful is measure and proportion, he is indicating, as we shall shortly argue, that it has the same nature as the One, and therefore as the Good.<sup>14</sup> Thus, far from being made to take refuge and to be hidden in the Beautiful, the Good is offered as understandable in terms of the Beautiful. For Plato, the Beautiful does not hide the Good, but displays it.

So, we can well understand how, in the guise of an ironic game of pretending to hide so as to reveal, Plato expresses the highest truths of his protology, in a way he has never before done in writing.

Immediately after saying that he is at the threshold of the habitation of the Good, Plato refers to the principal cause which makes every mixture dear to all, using the term with which we are familiar, *τιμιώτατον*,<sup>15</sup> the “thing of greatest value,” the very term with which, in the *Phaedrus*, he indicated those things which the philosopher must not put into writing. Near the end of the discussion, he plays on the claim that we cannot seize the Good with a single Idea (*μῖα ἰδέα*),<sup>16</sup> and says that we can grasp it with three (*σὺν τρισί*),<sup>17</sup> that is, as beauty, proportion, and truth. Then Plato has his biggest surprise in store for us, with the claim that the Good, simply considered as a one (*ὡς τοῦτο οἷον ἓν*)<sup>18</sup>; is correctly thought to be cause of the mixture, that is, the cause which he had earlier referred to as the thing of greatest value (*τιμιώτατον*).<sup>19</sup> Moreover, he says flatly that it is because of it, insofar as it is good (*ὡς ἀγαθόν*),<sup>20</sup> that the mixture becomes such.

Therefore, the passages tell us as clearly as could be (from a Plato who is writing about the unwritten) that the thing of greatest value is the One insofar as it is the Good: *τὸ τιμιώτατον = ἀγαθόν = ἓν*.

Moreover, Plato calls on the concepts of measure and proportion (*μετρίότης καὶ συμμετρία*), and, as we shall see, finds that the greatest value resides in measure (*μέτρον*), since the connections among the

13. See Chapter 15, section VII, 299–302.

14. See 274–76, below.

15. *Philebus* 64C5.

16. *Ibid.*, 65A1.

17. *Ibid.*, A2.

18. *Ibid.*, A3.

19. *Ibid.*, 64C5.

20. *Ibid.*, 65A4.

concepts of the Good, the One, and Measure go to the very heart of the Unwritten Doctrines. It is quite extraordinary to find these daring claims made by Plato in his writings, and they can only be fully understood if we abandon the old paradigm and embrace the new.

#### V. THE HIERARCHY OF VALUES SET OUT BY PLATO AT THE END OF THE *PHILEBUS* AND MEASURE AS ITS SUMMIT

The basic theme of the *Philebus* is the issue of pleasure, which is discussed in order to establish whether or not it can be considered a good and to what degree.

We might take Plato's discussion of it further and consider the importance of his solution on the basis of the bipolar structure of the whole of reality, and show how that is the ground on which Plato based his marvelous solution of the problem. Man does not achieve happiness by aiming exclusively and one-sidedly at one component (the intelligence and its correlates) and less so by aiming at the opposite component to which pleasure is bound (which is unlimited and disordered) but by a synthesis of the two polar opposites and by respecting the dominant and determining role of the intelligence.

But instead of giving such ethical and anthropological explanations, we prefer to quote a passage from Max Pohlenz, who has glimpsed the correct solution, and who arrived at the conclusion that for Plato the measure is the Absolute:

So, what is the nature of this *eudaimonia* and the sense of joyousness which man experiences? The ancient problem of the relation between the good and pleasure here arises again. In his early *Protagoras*, recognizing that the good and pleasure are distinguished by common opinion, Plato contested this and looked for a way to unite them, so that the highest good would be constituted by the pleasure arising from moral behavior. But he soon had to give up this attempt, and when, in the embittered climate of the *Gorgias*, he faced man with the alternatives of aiming with the brutal egoism of the superman towards external success, power, and wealth, and of being a member of the community and exercising justice and morality, placing the health of the soul above external things, he exacerbated the terms of the discussion, showing that in the one case we take pleasure to be the ultimate goal and in the other, the good, and thus treating pleasure and the good as two antithetical principles of life between which man must choose. Between the two terms there is an irreducible opposition: the first style of life, despite its glittering attractiveness, brings both the individual and the collectivity to ruin; the other, even when it is accompanied by apparent suffering, leads to *eudaimonia*. Plato cleaved to this opinion for a long time. Nevertheless, in the *Republic*, the sensuous pleasures of lower parts of the soul, which arise from the satisfaction of a want and hence presuppose pain, are opposed to the pure pleasure, genuine and veracious, which arises from inquiry and knowledge. When the morally irrefragable

astronomer Eudoxus entered the Academy and concluded from the fact that all living beings aim at pleasure that pleasure must be recognized as the supreme good, lively debates sprang up in the school on the nature and value of pleasure. These debates inspired Plato to review his position and to expound the results he had reached in a work designed just for that purpose, the *Philebus*. Although he holds unconditionally to the principle that pleasure cannot represent the true goal of human life, Plato admits that a complete life cannot be made up only of thought and knowledge, but also of some sensations of pleasure. These are the sensations produced by learning and by knowing, but also by the perception of beauty: therefore, in the list of values proposed by Plato at the end of the work, we find these pure sensations of pleasure placed after thought and the sciences. But because what counts above all is the exact mixture, the former and the latter are preceded by a higher value, proportion, the beautiful, and this in turn is founded on absolute measure, which governs all and establishes the exact limits of everything. This measure rises . . . to the place of the supreme value. Hence for Plato the perfect *eudaimonia* now consists also in pure pleasure: the joys taken in sensible beauty, first among which he places the geometric forms (whereas the works of Phidias or Polygnotus mean almost nothing) and the enjoyment which comes from spiritual activity. If, . . . the actual practice of morality is passed over in silence, the reason for this can be traced both to the way in which Plato sets up the problem in the *Philebus*, offering spirit and pleasure as straight alternatives, and to the personal proclivities of the author, who found more satisfaction in scientific inquiries than in practical activity. To us, the importance given to measure, as heading the scale of values, may seem strange: but, in fact, Plato meant by measure the absolute, and chose this name because the absolute includes not only the good understood in the sense of purpose but as the beautiful, and hence a principle of order and proportion, and constituting the first cause of their concrete existence and the regulation of their exact mixture.<sup>21</sup>

It is noteworthy that even operating within the old paradigm, Pohlenz succeeded in specifying this point so well, because it is a basic claim of the Unwritten Doctrines that the Good is the most perfect measure, as we have seen from reading between the lines of a famous passage of the *Republic*.<sup>22</sup> It is a claim which emerges in various ways also in the writings, but which the traditional paradigm tended to obscure, or at the least treat as of marginal interest.

Here is the table of values, subdivided into five levels, which Plato presents at the end of the dialogue:

1. measure, the measured, and fitness,<sup>23</sup>
2. proportion and beauty, completeness and sufficiency,<sup>24</sup>
3. intelligence and wisdom,<sup>25</sup>

21. M. Pohlenz, *Der hellenische Mensch* (Gottingen, 1947).

22. Cf. pp. 196–99ff. and 203–4ff. above.

23. *Philebus* 66A6ff.

24. *Ibid.*, B 13.

25. *Ibid.*, B5ff.

4. the sciences and arts and true beliefs,<sup>26</sup>
5. the pure pleasures.<sup>27</sup>

As we can see, just by a rapid reading of the terms which make up this table, not only is measure the absolutely first of the values, but also all those that follow, including pure pleasures, are intimately linked to measure.

And we know that measure is the very essence of the One.<sup>28</sup>

What is more, Aristotle himself took over this claim when he writes, as we have already quoted: "to be one means to be indivisible . . . but especially to be the first measure [ . . . ]."<sup>29</sup> And, as he says in the *Politics*, "the Good is the most exact measure of all things" (πάντων γὰρ ἀκριβέστατον μέτρον τὰγαθόν ἐστιν).<sup>30</sup> And this helps us understand how Plato arrived, in the *Laws*, at the claim that "God, for us, is above all things the measure."<sup>31</sup>

We have reached a point from which it might be appropriate to consider what Plato has to say about the Demiurge, which is his God. For it is he who perfectly knows and brings about measure, and he who is the ideal to which man ought to aspire. But, in order to round off the issue we have been considering, it is worth first exploring the question of Platonic love and its connections with the protology.

26. *Ibid.*, B9.

27. *Ibid.*, C4ff.

28. See pp. 249–53ff. and 203–4ff., above.

29. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* I.1.1052b15–18. Also see the following: *Metaphysics* Δ 6.1016b17ff.; Γ 1021a12; I 1.1.1052b15ff.; I 1053b4ff.; Λ 7.1072a33; M 1.1087b33; N 1.1088a4.

30. See the passage cited in Chapter 13, 253 note 37 above.

31. Plato, *Laws*, 4.716C4ff.

## 15 Eros and the Protology in the *Lysis*, *Symposium*, and *Phaedrus*

### I. MOTIVATIONS FOR DISCUSSING *PHILIA* AND *EROS*

Some readers of earlier Italian editions of this book, although convinced by the greater coherence and depth to be found in Plato's thought in the light of the new paradigm, raised a doubt about the possibility of finding a place for the puzzle about the doctrine of *Philia* and *Eros* within this framework.

The impression that had been made is the following: whereas the doctrine of the primary and highest Principles seems to be very effective at clarifying problems in metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, and politics, on account of its ontological, cognitive, and axiological intent, it does not seem to play an important role in Plato's account of *Eros*. Rather, if the protology takes Plato's rationalism to its extreme consequences, his account of *Eros* would seem to go in the opposite direction. So, if the protology tends in the direction of *logos*, then the erotic would seem to move in an alogical realm, with all its implications.

As a matter of fact, we shall see that the truth is exactly the contrary.

For our part, we have always been very interested in the conception of Platonic love, as well as its connection with the Christian notion of *agape*. Though we have not published any specific studies on this issue, we sponsored and edited the Italian translation of L. Robin's book on the doctrine of *Eros*,<sup>1</sup> and we have recently translated two of the dialogues which are specifically concerned with Plato's doctrine of *Eros*, the *Symposium* and the *Phaedrus*.<sup>2</sup>

It seems worthwhile to include a chapter on this problem, which will attempt to settle the doubts we have mentioned, and, to round off the theme of our third part, to illustrate one of its important implications.

1. See L. Robin, *La Théorie platonicienne de l'amour* (1908; reprinted, 1933; and edited afresh by P. M. Schuhl, 1964). Robin also wrote a substantial introductory essay for his edition and translation of the *Symposium*, in the "Belles Lettres" series (Paris, 1929; reedited by P. Vicaire, 1989); as he did likewise with the *Phaedrus* (1933; reprinted, 1985). For a bibliography, see Cherniss, *Lustrum* (1960): 377-82; and Brisson, *Lustrum* (1977): 292 and *Lustrum* (1983): 299ff.

2. Our translations appear in our collection *Tutti gli scritti* (Milan, 1991).

In line with the aims of our book, we shall not discuss the full complexity of *Philia* and *Eros*, but only those points and specific implications which bear directly on the theory of the Principles. These, however, add up to the basic outline of Plato's account of *Eros*.

## II. FIRST INDICATION OF THE STRUCTURAL CONNECTION BETWEEN FRIENDSHIP (*PHILIA*) AND THE PRIMARY PRINCIPLE IN THE *LYSIS*

The question of *friendship* (*φιλία*) is discussed for the first time by Plato in the *Lysis*, where he explicitly points to its ultimate explanation by the primary and highest Principle of the Good, with clear allusions to the Unwritten Doctrines or, at least, with anticipations of them. In the *Lysis*, Plato wants to go decisively beyond two opposed doctrines held by his predecessors and contemporaries. Some thought that the foundation of friendship is similarity, so that like always seeks like (a claim to be found in Empedocles). Others held instead that friendship is based on the reciprocal attraction of opposites (a claim to be found in Heraclitus). Friendship, according to Plato, arises always in a subject who is intermediate between opposed extremes, that is, who is neither entirely good nor entirely bad. In particular, we humans, who are midway between good and bad, love the good in order to eliminate evil.

Nevertheless, despite the dialectical function of evil, understood as part of the bipolar structure, it is clearly a mistake to say that we love because of evil. So much so that if every evil were entirely to vanish, nothing which is loved would vanish, in that the goods, as such, would remain dear.

The motivating reason for friendship and love is desire, and desire is always directed at what is lacking. Hence, what is lacking is dear to him who lacks it.<sup>3</sup> Whatever we lack is always a good, and, at each level, it is an ever higher good. But the details and development of this tendency of friendship to move toward a good at a higher level can be explained only by supposing a first friend, a first and highest Good from which all other goods derive and of which they are only images.

The search for the Good is what underlies every friendship; it is the true source and foundation of love. And the desire of the primary loved thing, which is the highest Good, is that for the sake of which one loves all particular things. The aim of Plato's whole discussion has been identified by various scholars. In particular, it is worthwhile rereading the apposite remarks of W. Jaeger, who, though working outside the new paradigm, was moving in the right direction. "That idea of the Good

3. *Lysis* 221E1.

which appears, in the other Socratic dialogues, as a secure point of reference, turns out to be the absolute measure and final issue also with respect to the problem of friendship."<sup>4</sup>

But let us read the following passage which contains the core of Plato's argument, with the marked allusion to the first loved object, the highest Good:

. . . Medicine, as we were saying, is a friend, or dear to one for the sake of health?

Yes.

And health is also dear?

Certainly.

And if dear, then dear for the sake of something?

Yes.

And surely this object must also be dear, as is implied in our previous argument?

Yes.

And that something dear involves something else dear?

Yes.

But then, must we not either continue in this way until we are weary, or arrive at some first principle of friendship which is not capable of being referred to any other, for which, as we maintain, all other things are dear?

We must.

My fear is that all those other things, which, as we say, are for the sake of another, are illusions and deceptions only because of that first principle, which is the true ideal of friendship.<sup>5</sup>

. . . And may not the same be said of the friend? That which is dear to us for the sake of something else is improperly dear, but the truly dear is that in which all these friendships terminate.<sup>6</sup>

Krämer was the first to detect in this well-known passage the presence of terminology typical of the Unwritten Doctrines.<sup>7</sup> Rather than speak of the Idea of the first friend (the Idea of the Good) it speaks straightforwardly of "Principle" (*ἀρχή*),<sup>8</sup> as we have seen in the *Phaedo* and in the *Republic*. In addition, it expressly refers the highest "first," using the term *πρῶτον*,<sup>9</sup> which recalls those "highest and first realities" (*τὰ ἄκρα καὶ πρῶτα*) referred to in the *Seventh Letter*,<sup>10</sup> which was our basis for coining the term "protology" to indicate as suggestively as possible the Unwritten Doctrines.<sup>11</sup>

4. Jaeger, *Paideia*, 2:302.

5. *Lysis* 219C1–D5.

6. *Ibid.*, 220A7–B3.

7. Cf. Krämer, *Arete*, 499ff.

8. *Lysis* 219C6.

9. *Ibid.*, D1.

10. *Seventh Letter* 344D4–5.

11. The term is based on Plato's own usage.

Krämer is right, therefore, in concluding that "in the central point of the *Lysis* (218C–220B) there is no reference, as has been thought hitherto, to the theory of Ideas, but to the foundation of being,"<sup>12</sup> that is, to the primary Principle of the protology. In this way, Jaeger's references to absolute Measure lead to precise consequences within the protology.

Hence, this first or primary friend is the highest Good, which is the One as highest Measure. But in the *Lysis*, we are not given explicit and clear directions to this enological meaning; but, surprisingly, they are given in just those words in the *Symposium*.

### III. THE COSMIC ASPECT OF FRIENDSHIP (Φιλία) AND EROS IS PRESENT IN THE *LYSIS* AND THE *GORGIAS*, AND IS CENTRAL TO THE *SYMPOSIUM*

We would miss the overall meaning of the connection between, on the one hand, Philia and Eros, and on the other, the primary and highest Principle, which is the Good and the absolute Measure, if we were to limit the meaning of friendship and love to the human realm. In fact, from the first occasion when he speaks about Philia and Eros, Plato imparts to it a radically cosmic aspect, and only if we view it in this light will we understand his thought on this subject.

Jaeger pointed out that the first or primary friend, of which Plato speaks in the *Lysis*, and which is the Good and the supreme value or highest Measure, refers to the norm or law that not only connects men to each other and regulates their behavior, but that holds everything and the whole world together. Jaeger writes: "Already in the *Lysis* . . . the force of the first principle of every love extends beyond the human world: it is the good to which all things tend and which all things desire, not only us. Similarly, also in the *Gorgias*, the problem of human society is inserted, through an energetic rejection of the law of the strongest, within a picture of a supreme cosmic order, that is to say, in the harmony of all things with an ultimate measure whose essence and whose value, however, are not in that dialogue, very precisely determined."<sup>13</sup>

Jaeger is absolutely correct, except in the last claim, since in the *Gorgias* Plato refers to geometrical or proportional equality. And this proposes the most fruitful way of bringing order out of disorder, and hence of producing unity in multiplicity. This is clearly connected to the highest measure, which is the One, that by binding the multiplicity and unfolding itself in it grounds the cosmic order.

After showing that to live in the best way, happily, man must avoid *dissoluteness* (πλεονεξία) and exercise *temperance* (σωφροσύνη) Plato writes:

12. Krämer, *Arete*, 500.

13. Jaeger, *Paideia*, 2:302.



This appears to me to be the aim which a man ought to have and towards which he ought to direct all the energies of himself and of the state, acting so that he may have temperance and justice present with him and be happy, not allowing himself to be dissolute and in the never-ending desire to satisfy leading a robber's life. Such a one is friend neither to god nor man, for he is incapable of communion, and he who is incapable of communion is also incapable of friendship. And philosophers, Callicles, state that communion and friendship, and order and temperance and justice, bind together heaven and earth and Gods and men, and that this universe is therefore called cosmos or order, not disorder or misrule, my friend. But for all your cleverness you seem to me never to notice this: you have perceived the power of geometrical equality, both among Gods and men; you think that you ought to cultivate geometrical inequality because you do not care about geometry.<sup>14</sup>

It is hardly necessary to recall some of the reactions aroused by Plato's public lecture *Concerning the Good*, in which, in order to define the Good, he talked about mathematical objects, numbers, geometry (περὶ μαθημάτων καὶ ἀριθμῶν καὶ γεωμετρίας), to conclude finally with the characterization of the Good as unity (ἕν).<sup>15</sup>

And the passage quoted from the *Gorgias* is, in many ways, the first explicit reference to the mathematical sphere offering a way into the Unwritten Doctrines. The passage's reference to *geometrical equality* presupposes a theoretical background that Plato either had already sketched or was in the process of filling in. Human friendship and, by extension, love are nothing but reflections, on the human level, of the metaphysical structure of all reality and its grounding interconnections.

Our topic leads us to the discussions in the *Symposium*, and to the speech of the physician Eryximachus.<sup>16</sup> Following on from what Pausanias has said, he distinguishes two forms of Eros, one good, founded on order, harmony, and temperance, and one evil, founded on excess and disorder. Thus, positive Eros is the ground of the positive things in the whole universe, as is shown by the various arts, from medicine to gymnastics, from agriculture to music, from astronomy to prophecy. Just as medicine, for example, mediates and harmonizes opposed elements in the human body and produces health, and just as music makes opposed sounds consonant and produces harmony, so, likewise, well-disposed love, including temperance and concord in all things, general and particular, produces a mediation between contraries and harmonizes them.

14. *Gorgias* 507D6–508A8.

15. See the passage from Aristoxenus's *Elements of Harmony* quoted in Chapter 7, section II, 147 and note 15 (Findlay p. 413, 2).

16. *Symposium* 185E6–188E4. For a bibliography concerning this dialogue, see Cherniss, *Lustrum* (1959): 189–97, and Brisson, *Lustrum* (1977): 284ff. and *Lustrum* (1983): 294ff. We would like to draw special attention to G. Krüger's *Einsicht und Leidenschaft. Das Wesen des platonischen Denkens* (Frankfort-am-Main, 1939).

The opening and closing passages of Eryximachus's speech express programmatically the conception of the cosmic dimension of Eros:

His [Pausanias's] division of Eros into two kinds seems a good one; but the art of medicine has taught me that Eros is not just that which impels human souls towards beautiful men, but that which drives all things towards all manner of others and which operates on all animals, on all things growing on earth, and on virtually everything that is; and I have learned how great, wonderful and all-embracing is the power of this god over all affairs human and divine.<sup>17</sup>

Thus Eros, taken as a whole, has a broad and great, even total, power; but that which is directed at the good by means of temperance and justice, both among us and among the gods, has the greatest power of all and provides us with a perfect happiness, so that we may commune and be friends with each other and with the gods who are above us.<sup>18</sup>

Of course, the cosmic conception of Eros goes back to Hesiod,<sup>19</sup> and as well as Parmenides<sup>20</sup> and Empedocles.<sup>21</sup> But with Plato it takes on a wholly new metaphysical significance and the statements of these earlier authors, to whom Plato himself refers in the *Symposium*,<sup>22</sup> are nothing but embryonic flashes of it. Nor ought we to be distracted by echoes of Heraclitean thought in the speech of Eryximachus. Robin writes:

. . . [I]t was through the influence of Heraclitus that, by using his theory of contraries, without infringing the principle of non-contradiction, Plato softened his teacher's intransigent intellectualism. It is no surprise, then, that a trace of the Heraclitean theory appears in the Platonic theory of Love. Undoubtedly, he had in the *Lysis* (215C–216B) turned away from the Heraclitean conception of friendship. Undoubtedly, the speech of Eryximachus, which no more represents Plato's views than do the others, is inspired, . . . by the ideas of Heraclitus: it is not enough to say that Love is, in a universal sense, the harmony of contraries; we must also define the nature and function of this harmony; we must say what Love is love of; we must indicate in what way Love will achieve its object. It is therefore true that Heraclitus' view on Love is superficial and incomplete.<sup>23</sup>

Now, if Eryximachus's speech does not represent Plato's own thought, it does not simply present Heraclitus either. Eryximachus's speech takes a few small steps toward Plato's view; in any case in the speech, Heraclitus is cited, his mistakes are pointed out, and

17. *Symposium* 186A2–B2.

18. *Ibid.*, D4–9.

19. Hesiod, *Theogony* 116ff.

20. Parmenides, DK frag. 13.

21. Cf. Empedocles, DK frags. 17 and 27, as well as 19, 20, 21, 35, 58, and 59, from which it emerges that Eros understood as φιλότης (as opposed to νεῖκος) is basic.

22. Hesiod and Parmenides are cited in *Symposium* 178B.

23. Cf. Robin, *La Théorie platonicienne*.

indications are offered as to how to give a global sense to the doctrine of Love by making limited reference to the One (τὸ ἓν).<sup>24</sup> Indeed, Plato, with exquisite artistry, makes Eryximachus voice a rather clumsy criticism of Heraclitus, thus reminding us that, as a physician, Eryximachus certainly could not, on his own, reach the decisive point concerning the One; nevertheless, allusions to it are put in his mouth:

Not only is all medicine governed, as I say, by this god [Eros], but so are gymnastics and agriculture. Music, also, as is obvious to the cursorial observer, is in just the same position as they are; perhaps this is what Heraclitus means by his saying, for all that the words are perplexed, that the One agrees with itself by being at variance, as in the stringing of a bow or lyre. It is, of course, quite illogical to speak of a harmony being in discord, or of its arising from factors which are still at variance. But probably what he meant to say was that harmony arises from factors which were previously in discord, namely the treble and the bass, but which were subsequently in concord.<sup>25</sup>

Plato employs an unexpected quotation that goes beyond Heraclitus's text and is addressed to those readers capable of understanding it, to tell us that by making harmony out of discord, the producer of harmony, and hence also Eros, must be a Principle, namely, the One, which mediates and founds the synthesis of Dyadically divided contraries. The conclusion to be drawn would be this: there can never be a synthetic mediation of contraries without a higher term of reference.

Though Eryximachus is the uncomprehending mouthpiece of a view addressed to those in the know, Plato reinforces the ultimate foundation of Eros in the next speech of the *Symposium* with a splendid jeu d'esprit by the great Aristophanes. Before considering that speech, it is a good idea to examine the core of the problem and get clear about the nature of Eros, which Plato discusses fully in the form of a well-known myth.

#### IV. MYTHIC PRESENTATION OF THE PROTOLOGICAL NATURE OF SOCRATIC EROS IN THE *SYMPOSIUM*

The theoretical heights of the *Symposium* are reached by Plato in Socrates' speech,<sup>26</sup> which, to distinguish it from the others, is presented by Socrates himself as a teaching received from Diotima of Mantinea.<sup>27</sup>

24. *Symposium* 187A4–5.

25. *Ibid.*, 186E4–187A2. See DK frag. 51 and Bywater frag. 45.

26. *Ibid.*, 198A–212C. Socrates' report of his conversation with Diotima begins at 201D. [On whether Diotima is an invention, consult *A History of Women Philosophers*, ed. Mary Ellen Waithe (Dordrecht/Boston/Lancaster: Martinus Nijhoff, 1987), 1:83–116.]

27. For a philosophical analysis of Socrates' speech, see J. Wippert, "Eros and Unsterblichkeit in der Diotima-Rede des Symposions," in *Synusia, Festgabe für W. Schadewaldt* (Pfullingen, 1965), 123–59.

The near-perfect logical structure of the speech is as follows.

Eros is always desire for what is felt to be lacking. This desire, and the lack which is essential to it, refers to beautiful and good things. But if Eros is the absence of beautiful and good things, it cannot of itself be beautiful and good, nor can it be ugly and evil, since if it were such it could not desire the good and the beautiful. Eros is an intermediate between beautiful and ugly, between good and evil.

Plato develops this intermediate characteristic in two directions, using two explanatory images, one vertical, the other horizontal.

Eros is intermediate in the former sense insofar as it is not identifiable with an immortal god, with the purely intelligible, or with what is totally metaempirical, and even less so with anything purely mortal and sensible; but as a mediator between the two realities, it completes the whole of reality in such a way that the whole is connected with itself.<sup>28</sup> In this sense, Eros is a *daimon*, an intermediary and mediator between God and man. On the other hand, it is horizontally intermediate in a variety of respects insofar as it unifies in itself and synthesizes contrary traits: privation and acquisition, want and resourcefulness, poverty and wealth; for this purpose, Plato presents Eros as born of Penia [Want], goddess of Lack, and Poros [Plenty], god of resourcefulness.

Eros is like the lover-of-wisdom (*philo-sophos*), intermediate between ignorance and wisdom; never wholly ignorant nor wholly wise, but always in search of an increase of learning and of knowledge.

Thus, like Eryximachus in his speech, Socrates clearly refers to the cosmic aspect of Eros, presenting the concept of Eros as what connects all things to itself, as the bond of being. But here Plato goes further, exhibiting an extraordinary reflection of the universality of Eros also in the human dimension, so as to include every human activity under the rule of Eros. Indeed, he says that everything that man does, he does to reach the Good and to satisfy his essential and structural tendency toward it. Plato points out that it is only because of a linguistic restriction that only the tendency to the Good with respect to the love of the beautiful is called Eros. But this is an improper restriction of the meaning of Eros, just as has happened with poetry. The term *poiesis*, meaning "creation," can be applied to all forms of production both human and divine; but, because of a linguistic restriction, he wants to call poetry a *poiesis*, which is only one particular form of literary creation.<sup>29</sup> But the limitation of the meaning of a term to only a part of the whole does not change the truth of the matter.

28. *Symposium* 202E6ff.

29. See Chapter 16, section IV, 322-25.

Hence, Eros, understood in its widest sense, is the tendency to the Good, and, indeed, the tendency to possess the Good forever.

In particular, then, Eros realizes its tendency toward the Good largely through *procreation in Beauty* (which itself is nothing but an aspect of the Good), by which it is always attracted. Beauty excites the desire to procreate; and, thus, mortal nature tries to make itself immortal, always replacing by procreation an old being with a new one. And this goes not only for bodies, but also for souls. It is, in fact, Beauty itself which brings the soul to activate its greatest virtues and perform its best works. Initiation into matters of love proceeds on an ascending scale, by degrees. Eros moves from the visible beauty of one body, passing to the beauty that is realized in other bodies, thence to understanding how there is a single identical beauty that shines through all bodies.<sup>30</sup> But from this beauty the way of Eros leads to the higher beauty of souls, and it teaches how to love them more than the beauty of bodies. And, moving from this beauty, the way of love, proceeding aright, will reach the beauty of human activities and ways of living and that of the laws, as well as the beauty of the sciences, and, finally the science of beauty-itself, in which the Beautiful will be manifest in itself, for itself, with itself as a single eternal Form.<sup>31</sup>

This is the concluding passage of the speech of Socrates-Diotima:

He who setting out from these earthly things passes through the love of young boys in the right way and begins to perceive that beauty, is not far from the end. And the true order of going, or being led by another, to the things of love is to begin from the beauties of the earth and to mount upwards for the sake of that other beauty, using these as steps, and from one going on to two, and from two to all fair bodily forms, and from fair bodily forms to fair practices, and from fair practices to fair sciences, until from fair sciences he arrives at the science of which I have spoken, the science which has no other object than absolute beauty, and at last knows that which is beautiful by itself alone. This, my dear Socrates, said the stranger of Mantinea, is that state of life above all others which man should live, in the contemplation of absolute beauty. . . .

But what if a man chances to see the true beauty, I mean, pure and clear and unalloyed, not infected with the flesh and all the colors and vanities of mortal life and could contemplate the true beauty simple and divine? Do you think it a sorry life for a man to lead, to look on and to contemplate that beauty through that which makes it accessible, and to have it always with him?

Or perhaps you suppose, she said, that, by looking at the beautiful through that which makes it visible, such a man will give birth not to mere images of virtue but to true virtue since he is in contact not with an image of the beautiful but with the truly beautiful? By giving birth to and raising true virtue, he will be loved by the gods and he will be, if any man was, immortal.<sup>32</sup>

30. *Symposium* 210B3ff.

31. *Ibid.*, 211B1ff.

32. *Ibid.*, B5-212A7.

This is the nub of the speech of Socrates-Diotima, which offers a set of elements of especial interest for the understanding of Platonic thought as a whole. But, for the specific metaphysical themes of this book, we must limit ourselves to a few essential points, and in particular to the specific connections with the protology. Earlier, in the speech of Eryximachus, Eros was presented as a harmony of opposed forces, with hints taken from Heraclitus's thought, which is nevertheless found to be incomplete and therefore needs to be surpassed. In Socrates' speech, the concept of Eros as mediation and synthesis of opposed forces becomes central, setting out all the implications and foundations that were absent from the speech of Eryximachus.

The two opposed forces are represented metaphorically by Penia (Lack), poverty, and by Poros (Resourcefulness), who is rich in possibilities and who always finds a way to acquire and get what he seeks. On Aphrodite's birthday on which the gods sit down to celebrate, Penia is at the door begging. And she lies with Poros (who, drunk on nectar, goes to sleep in the Gardens of Zeus) and has a son by him, Eros. So there is unified in Eros the double nature of his mother and father. From the mother he takes the trait of being always accompanied by poverty and need. From his father he takes instead inexhaustible energy and resources which continually drive him to pursue, plot, and possess. And since he was conceived on the birthday of Aphrodite, he is a follower of Aphrodite herself and a lover of beauty, because Aphrodite is beautiful. Let us read this beautiful passage of Plato:

On the day when Aphrodite was born there was a feast of all the gods, among them the God Poros or Plenty, son of Metis or Cunning. When the feast was over, Penia or Poverty, as her custom is on such occasions, came about the doors to beg. Now Plenty, who was the worse for nectar (there was no wine in those days), went into the garden of Zeus and fell into a deep sleep; and Poverty considering that for her there was no plenty, plotted to have a child by him, and accordingly lay down at his side and conceived Eros, who partly because he is naturally a lover of the beautiful, and because Aphrodite is herself beautiful, and also because he was begotten during her birthday feast, is her follower and attendant. And as his parentage is, so also are his fortunes.

In the first place he is always poor, and anything but tender and fair, as most imagine him; rather, he is rough and squalid, and has no shoes, nor a house to dwell in, but takes his rest in the streets, or at the doors of houses; and like his mother he is always in distress. Like his father too, whom he also resembles, he is always plotting against the fair and good; he is bold, enterprising, strong, a mighty hunter, always weaving some intrigue or other, keen in the pursuit of wisdom, fertile in resources; a philosopher at all times, terrible as an enchanter, sorcerer, sophist.

He is by nature neither mortal nor immortal, but alive and flourishing at one moment when he is in plenty, and dead at another moment in the same day, and again alive by reason of his father's nature. But that which is always

flowing into him is always flowing out, and so he is never in want and never in wealth.<sup>33</sup>

Plato could not have expressed more beautifully, in mythical form, what we have been calling the bipolar structure of all reality. But the conception of Eros that is expressed in this myth brings out clearly the specific and defining characteristic which distinguishes the bipolar structure of Eros, namely, its dynamism.

Bipolar nature, understood dynamically, expresses the tendency of the material principle to receive the formal principle, and thus fertilized to rise toward the first Principle and the highest Good. Both in its perennial self-reproduction, and in its continual realization at various levels, in this dynamic-bipolar dimension, Eros guarantees the stability of the permanence of being. What then do Penia and Poros mean?

Penia symbolizes the material Principle; Poros (son of Metis, Cunning) symbolizes the principle antithetical to matter, not in itself and for itself, but in one of its typical workings-out, as the power to attract to itself, which is stamped on all reality. As we shall see fully later,<sup>34</sup> this point picks out the essence of Plato's thought: the conception of the primary Principles turns out to be structurally bipolar, insofar as they, while opposed to each other, imply one another, and their functions cannot be explicated without each other. In the *Timaeus*, the material Principle is presented as having in itself traces of the intelligible world, and because of that, as allowing itself to be ruled, persuaded, or convinced by the Intelligence.<sup>35</sup> And Aristotle, inspired by Plato, says explicitly that although matter is contrary to the divine and to the Good, it aspires and stretches toward it, by its very nature.<sup>36</sup> And this expresses conceptually what, in mythical form, with the metaphor of Penia who seeks Poros and is impregnated by him, Plato tells us in the *Symposium*.

Therefore, these two Principles are the Dyad and a particular aspect of the One, or rather the power deriving from the One and leading to the One. But it is Plato who makes unmistakable reference to them, with great artistic effectiveness, in Aristophanes' speech.

#### V. THE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN EROS AND THE PRIMARY PRINCIPLES ALLUDED TO IN THE HUMOR OF ARISTOPHANES' SPEECH

For reasons we have already seen, references in the dialogues to the key points of the Unwritten Doctrines are always made in the sometimes

33. *Ibid.*, 203B2-E5.

34. See Chapter 19, section II, 373-76.

35. See *Timaeus* 47E3-48B3, discussed in Chapter 19, section I, 369-73.

36. Aristotle, *Physics* A 9.192a16-9.

extreme form of play which, for Plato, is typical of writing. And this is precisely what we find at its starkest in the *Symposium*. Repeatedly throughout his speech, and especially toward the end, Plato puts in the mouth of the greatest Greek writer of comedies, in the construction of a wonderful jeu d'esprit, the strongest allusions to the primary Principles, by means of images that continually refer to the Two and the dyadic cutting or division, as well as to the One, unity, and the whole.<sup>37</sup>

According to Aristophanes, humans were, in the beginning, of a spherical shape, with four arms and four legs, and they moved by rolling very rapidly. But their strength induced them to challenge the gods, attempting to scale the heavens and assault them. Zeus, in council with the other gods, decided to put a stop to humans in a drastic way, by radically limiting their strength and their arrogance. He judged that the best way to obtain this result would be to cut them in half, by dividing into two the original unity. Eros, therefore, is that metaphysical power that drives the two halves to rejoin each other into the original unity, returning them to their ancient nature as wholes; and for this reason it tries to make of the two one,<sup>38</sup> so healing human nature.<sup>39</sup> Therefore, Eros is that radical desire that pushes each of us to seek out the other half that corresponds to us, to achieve wholeness we have lost.

But let us read the page that contains the philosophical kernel of Aristophanes' speech, which presents important allusions to the One and the Dyad:

When one of them meets his other half, the actual half of himself, whether he be a lover of youth or a lover of another sort, the pair are lost in amazement of love and friendship and intimacy, and one will not be out of the other's sight, as we say, even for a moment: these are the people who pass their whole lives together, and yet they could not explain what they desire of one another. For the intense yearning which each of them has towards the other does not appear to be the desire of lover's intercourse, but of something else which the soul of either evidently desires and cannot tell, only divining and darkly hinting at what it wishes.

Suppose Hephaestus, . . . to come to the pair who are lying side by side and to say to them, What do you mortals want of one another? they would be unable to explain. And suppose further, that when he saw their perplexity he said: Do you desire to be wholly one; always day and night in one another's company? For if this is what you desire, I am ready to mold and fuse you together, so that from being two you shall become one, and while you live you may share a common life as if you were a single man, and after your death in

37. Cf. *Symposium* 189D2–193C5; note the insistent use of the terminology of the Unwritten Doctrines at 189E2, 190A2–3, 190E3–7, 191A5–6, 191B2, and 191D2–5, as well as in the text next cited at length (192B5–193B2).

38. *Ibid.*, 191D2.

39. *Symposium* 191D3.



the world below still be one departed soul, instead of two—I ask whether this is what you lovingly desire and whether you would be satisfied to attain this?

Neither of them, when he had heard this proposal, would deny or would not acknowledge that this joining and melting into one another, this becoming one instead of two, was the very expression of his ancient need.

And the reason is that human nature was originally one and we were a whole, and the desire and pursuit of the whole is called love. There was a time, I say, when we were one, but now because of the wickedness of mankind God has dispersed us, as the Arcadians were dispersed into villages by the Lacedaemonians. And if we are not obedient to the Gods, there is a danger that we shall be split up again and go about in bas-relief, like the profile figures on tombs, showing only one half the nose, and that we shall be like tallies. Wherefore let us exhort all men to piety in all things, that we may avoid evil and obtain the good, taking Eros for our leader and commander.<sup>40</sup>

Plato could not express better, in a humorous vein, his esoteric conception that evil is dyadic division or separation, while good is unity, and hence Eros is the overcoming of every division and separation.

But there was the danger that an amusement, although thus loaded with allusions to the Unwritten Doctrines, could mislead. In particular, there was the danger that the beautiful and effective images would overwhelm the concept they express. So Plato himself made appropriate references to help the readers who had acquired in his School the tools and the ability to understand the concept expressed not to make such a mistake.

In the first place, we should note the diversion with which Plato introduces the speech of Aristophanes. According to the order that has been established among the participants, the comic writer would have spoken and pronounced his eulogy of Eros *before* Eryximachus; instead, he is presented as suddenly overcome by a strong hiccough that stops him from speaking.<sup>41</sup> As it turns out, Eryximachus, who precedes him, speaks of Eros as a harmonic composition of opposites, presenting a basic concept, but in a very generic way and without arriving at the crux because the vague hint at the One is extraneous and not fully grasped.<sup>42</sup>

Aristophanes, on the other hand, hits the nail on the head; Plato puts into his mouth all the elements for resolving the question, with a marked use of the relevant terminology.<sup>43</sup> Accordingly, the speech of Aristophanes had to come *after* that of Eryximachus for conceptual reasons. Plato brings this to our attention by inverting the formal order which the participants fixed on the basis of the places they occupied at the banquet, so that the reader should understand that the new order is

40. *Ibid.*, 192B5–193B2.

41. Compare *Symposium* 177D with 185C–186A.

42. See section III, above.

43. See note 37, above.

the true conceptual order to be followed, or the order of determination of the question.

It should also be noted that the figure of Aristophanes lends itself perfectly to the humor with which Plato allows himself to speak in this work about the Unwritten Doctrines which resolve the problem under discussion. Therefore, the words of Aristophanes are to be taken as metaphorical allusions, over and above the mere images they present. Truly here Plato speaks-and-does-not-speak, just like the oracle at Delphi in her responses, speaking exclusively by allusion or, better still, he acts in accordance with what Aeschylus puts in the mouth of the character who opens his *Agamemnon*:

. . . my lips will open  
 With my good will, only to those who know.  
 To those who do not, I shall nothing show.<sup>44</sup>

It is to be noted that the overcoming of duality is not accomplished by simply searching at the anthropological level for our other half, that is, for another individual like ourselves, but by seeking out something higher, namely, the Good in itself. Therefore, since what each seeks in the other is the Good, it follows that seeking to possess the other forever means seeking to have the Good forever.

At the beginning of the very beautiful passage just quoted Plato makes Aristophanes observe, in the form of an intentionally generic and vague presentiment, that lovers cannot tell what they wish to gain from each other. Indeed, this something cannot be simply the pleasures of love, but is something else. The soul of each of the lovers does not know what to say, only divining and darkly hinting at what it wishes.<sup>45</sup>

And later Plato puts into Socrates' mouth an explicit reference to Aristophanes' speech (and this is the only one of the other speeches referred to in a definite way), reminding his readers of the things about which we have spoken above. Here is the text:

You hear people say that lovers are seeking for their other half; but I say that they are seeking neither for the half of themselves, nor for the whole, unless these happen also to be a good; men will allow their own hands and feet to be cut off, if they think them harmful. They do not, I imagine, each cling to what

44. Gaiser observes that, with Plato's dialogues in general, the reader has to make an effort to grasp "the truth, no differently from the way he makes an effort to understand the oracles. What Heraclitus says of the Delphic Oracle can be applied to the Platonic dialogues: 'it neither asserts, nor hides, but allows itself to be understood through hints'" (*Platone come scrittore*, 89; cf. Heraclitus, DK frag 93). The lines of Aeschylus's *Agamemnon* (38ff.) seem to us to make just the same point even more strikingly, and we quote them as one of this book's epigraphs.

45. *Symposium* 129D1ff.

is his own, unless there be someone who calls what belongs to him the good, and what belongs to another the harmful; for there is nothing which men love but the good.<sup>46</sup>

And what is here called Good is called One in Aristophanes' speech with splendid metaphorical play that reminds us of the terminology of the Unwritten Doctrines.

And for anyone who is receptive to his thought, Plato makes a final reference to Aristophanes immediately after Socrates' speech:

When Socrates had done speaking, the company applauded, while Aristophanes was trying to say something in answer to the allusion which Socrates had made to his own speech. But suddenly there was a great knocking at the door of the house, as of revellers, and the sound of a flute-girl was heard . . .<sup>47</sup>

Among the revellers is Alcibiades, already drunk. Plato cleverly presents the resulting confusion as preventing Aristophanes from speaking. As a matter of fact, Alcibiades will be the next to speak but not to present an eulogy of Eros, but of his beloved Socrates.<sup>48</sup> Plato's meaning is very clear. Aristophanes does not have anything else to say or to add on his own behalf. His words are to be understood in terms of Socrates' speech reflecting the Unwritten Doctrines, which the terms cleverly put in Aristophanes' mouth might suggest, and which the reader who, by other means, is aware of this doctrinal background could then (and can now) understand and fill in.

What is manifested in human love is the aspiration to Unity of Duality, division and separation. Consequently, love is a longing for the One and a desire to seek it out, which is explicated on various levels up to the highest.

## VI. THE ONTOLOGICAL STRUCTURE OF THE SOUL CONNECTED TO THE DOCTRINE OF EROS SEEN IN PROTOLOGICAL TERMS

Embracing the whole of reality both particular and general, manifesting itself as that bond joining men to the gods, the sensible to the supersensible, and the cosmos in its totality, Eros has its focal point in the soul. The ontological, metaphysical status of the soul corresponds well to that of Eros, as Robin pointed out more clearly than anyone else.

In fact, just as Eros has a synthesizing nature, unifying contraries, serving as an intermediary and mediator between the sensible and the supersensible, so the same is true of the soul, as we shall see more fully

46. *Ibid.*, 205D10–206A1.

47. *Ibid.*, 212C4–8.

48. Cf. *Symposium* 215A–222B.

when we discuss the *Timaeus*. We shall see the complex synthetic structure of the soul, and how it has an intermediary function, just like that of the mathematical objects.<sup>49</sup>

In this chapter, however, we shall discuss the issue of the soul by reconsidering in terms of the new hermeneutic paradigm the famous Myth of the Winged Chariot, by means of which it is presented in the *Phaedrus* and connected with the question of Eros.<sup>50</sup>

As is well known, in this myth Plato portrays the soul as a winged chariot drawn by two horses, one white and of good stock, and the other black and of opposed stock, and driven by a charioteer.<sup>51</sup>

The souls of both the gods and of men are represented in this way, with the sole difference that the horses and the charioteers of the gods are wholly good, while those of men are mixed.<sup>52</sup>

The arrival of souls into physical bodies comes about because of the loss of the wings that support the souls of men. But here is what Plato says about the wings and the things that nourish and make them grow:

The wing is, among corporeal things, that which is most akin to the divine, and which by nature tends to soar aloft and to carry that which gravitates downwards up to the habitation of the Gods. The divine is what is beautiful, wise, good, and everything of that sort; and by these the wings of the soul are nourished, and they grow apace; but, when fed upon evil and foulness and the opposite of good, they waste and fall away.<sup>53</sup>

In the beyond, the winged chariots of human souls follow, in a heavenly journey, which takes place cyclically, twelve ordered ranks of gods with Zeus at the head. And as they rise up to the vault of heaven to achieve the vision and contemplation of unconditioned reality in the *hyperouranios* ("the above the heavens"), the souls of the gods proceed with ease in the difficult ascent because they have balanced chariots which are easy to drive; on the other hand, the winged chariots of human souls proceed with labor, because the horse of bad stock tends to be attracted to the earth, putting the charioteer who has not trained it well in severe difficulties.

The souls that follow most closely and imitate the god who guides them, albeit with difficulty, because they are all to some extent troubled by the horses, succeed in seeing the true realities. Others can sometimes lift their heads and sometimes fall short because of the violence of

49. See Chapter 20, section VIII, 405-13.

50. Although we are here concerned specifically with *Phaedrus* 245C-256E, more general bibliography can be found in Cherniss, *Lustrum* (1959): 133-41, and Brisson, *Lustrum* (1977): 276ff. and *Lustrum* (1983): 288ff.

51. Cf. *Phaedrus* 246A-D, taken up again at 253C-254B.

52. *Ibid.*, 246A7-B1.

53. *Ibid.*, D6-E4.

the horses; on this account, they succeed in seeing only some realities. Other souls do not succeed in seeing any. Despite aspiring to the vision of the true realities, some souls do not achieve it at all, since they collide with one another in their attempts to overtake each other, and pile-ups result. Consequently, some are crippled, many feathers of their wings are spoiled, and in this way they do not enjoy the contemplation of being,<sup>54</sup> and thus they go away and feed upon opinion.<sup>55</sup> Plato explains the aims of this journey and the souls' commitment to it as follows:

The reason why the souls exhibit such eagerness to behold the Plain of Truth is that pasturage is found there, which is suited to the highest part of the soul; and the wing with which the soul flies is nourished with this.<sup>56</sup>

These, then, are the consequences which the human soul encounters. Those who, in the great journey in the heavens, succeed in contemplating the Truth or at least some of the true realities in the *hyperouranios*, remain undamaged until the journey of the next cycle. And if they succeed in the following journey in seeing some truths, they will remain undamaged until the next. If, on the other hand, it so happens that a soul does not follow the gods and does not succeed in seeing some truths, "it becomes heavy, filled with a load of forgetfulness and vice, its wings fall from it, and it drops to the ground."<sup>57</sup>

The types of human life in which the fallen souls are embodied depend on the number of the Ideas and Truths that they have seen before falling. The soul that has contemplated a great many Truths will be superior to all, and will give life to a type of man who is a lover of knowledge, of beauty, and of the Muse. The other souls can be hierarchically ordered from the moral viewpoint, according to the increasingly small degree of their vision of the Truth, as follows: second will come the soul which gives life to a king who is respectful of the laws or to a man capable of correct rule; third, the soul which gives life to a statesman or to a financier or to a trader; fourth, the soul which cares for the body with gymnastics or a physician; fifth, the soul of a soothsayer or of an initiator into the mysteries; sixth, the soul of a poet or of one who is dedicated to the imitative arts; seventh, the soul of a craftsman or of a farmer; eighth, the soul of a sophist or of a demagogue or flatterer of the people; and, lastly, ninth, the soul of a tyrant.

Each soul does not return to live close to the gods except after ten thousand years, that is, after ten cycles of reincarnation in terrestrial

54. *Ibid.*, 248B4.

55. *Ibid.*, 248B5.

56. *Ibid.*, B5-C2.

57. *Ibid.*, C7-8.

lives, with the corresponding rewards or punishments according to the types of life led, each of which lasts in total one thousand years. An exception is made for souls who have philosophized and followed Eros philosophically. After the third cycle of one thousand years, and if for three times consecutively they have practiced philosophy and philosophical Eros, these souls regain their wings, fly away,<sup>58</sup> and return to live with the gods. The soul's means for thus significantly shortening the cycles of terrestrial life and, throughout the time that it remains on earth, of maintaining a connection with the "hyperouranian" world of Truth, is *anamnesis*. This is the recollection which one may have—if one follows the philosophical method—of the realities originally seen in the *hyperouranios*. It is by the activation of recollection of the Beautiful, that through Eros the wings in the soul grow anew.

For a man must have intelligence in accordance with what is called an Idea, passing by the use of reason from the many particulars of sense to a unity. This is the recollection of the things which our soul once saw while following a God—when seeing from above what we now call being it raised its head up towards what truly is. And therefore it is just that the mind of the philosopher alone has wings, for so far as he is able he is always clinging in recollection to those things in which God abides, the beholding of which also makes a God divine. And he who makes proper use of these memories is always being initiated into perfect mysteries and alone becomes truly perfect. But, as he leaves behind earthly interests and turns toward the divine, the vulgar accuse him of being mad, they do not see that he has been taken over by a God.

Thus far I have been speaking of the fourth and last kind of madness [in which Eros shows himself] by which one who sees the beauty of earth, and, with the recollection of the true beauty puts on wings anew; with his new wings he would like to fly away, but he cannot; he is like a bird fluttering and looking upward and careless of the world below; and he is therefore thought to be mad. And I have shown this to be the best sort of inspiration to derive from the highest things.<sup>59</sup>

The well-known metaphysical interpretation that Plato gives of Beauty, to which Eros is structurally connected by the capacity that it has to make the wings of the soul grow again, consists in the privilege that it has to be perceptible also by the sensible, physical eyes, and hence to constitute a powerful intimation of the intelligible in the sensible. Plato here carries to its extreme consequences the high value that ancient Greek spirituality gave to sight and to beauty:

Let this much, then, have been said in praise of reminiscence, of which, because of our longing for things past, we have now spoken at sufficient length. As for beauty, it shone as we have said among the things of true being

58. *Ibid.*, 249A4ff.

59. *Ibid.*, B6-E2.

and, when we come here below, we find it with the sharpest of our senses because it shines most brightly. Indeed, for us, sight is the sharpest of the bodily senses, but we do not see wisdom by means of it. Wisdom would inspire a terrible love if it offered some visible image of itself to sight. And we do not see all the other things which are worthy of love by means of sight. But only beauty has this role, to be the most clearly visible and the most lovely.<sup>60</sup>

Just as the soul falls from the *hyperouranios* into the sphere of the sensible because of the ill-bred horse and because of the incapacity of the charioteer to rein in and to balance the chariot, so it risks falling also when it is in the here and now, likewise because of the ill-bred horse.

At the vision of the beautiful every soul is inflamed with desire. And while the well-bred horse is restrained by the whip, the other horse stamps its feet, is violently dragged toward the loved object, and, overcoming the brakes, it drags the other horse and the charioteer to that carnal love which strikes strongest roots in what is terrestrial and mortal. But the charioteer, with the recollection of Beauty and Temperance which he has seen in the *hyperouranios*, falls back, pulls on the reins with great force, and thus undertakes a hard struggle, which may in the end bring about the submission of the evil horse and take command of it. Plato offers us a wonderful passage in which this struggle between two loves is sketched with great artistry.<sup>61</sup>

We have come to the crux of the question that we set: can we continue to interpret the charioteer and the two horses as symbols of the three kinds of soul, the intellective, the concupiscible, and the irascible, discussed in the *Republic* and, later, in the *Timaeus*?

This is the consensual interpretation offered in our century. But it raises serious difficulties. First of all, the concupiscible and the irascible souls are presented in the *Timaeus* as mortal souls bound only to the physical dimension of man; on the other hand, the *Phaedrus* speaks of the soul as immortal and supersensible. As a logical consequence, this would exclude, or at least place in serious doubt, the notion that the two horses represent the concupiscible and the irascible parts of the soul. Furthermore, there is an equally decisive fact to undermine the consensual view. In one of the passages quoted above, Plato tells us clearly that the souls of the gods also are not simple, but are structured in the same way as the souls of men; they are metaphorically represented with the same image of the winged chariot, with the difference that both the horses of the gods' winged chariots are well bred, while those of the souls of men are mixed. This means that the horses of the gods

60. *Ibid.*, 250C7-E1.

61. *Ibid.*, 253E-256D.

are perfectly submissive, while those of human souls are not, given their mixed character. Clearly, the gods cannot have correlates, however much purer and better bred they may be, of what in humans represents the concupiscible and irascible soul, because the gods do not have the tendencies, the needs, and the goals these parts determine.

Finally, if the concupiscible soul explains moral shortcomings of this world, it is hard to see how to explain the shortcomings of the other world. The causes of the winged chariot's losing its wings have very little to do with the activity of the concupiscible soul in this world.

Therefore, the winged chariot symbolizes the rational soul or, at least, the Idea of soul as a composite and unified nature in terms of the doctrine of the Principles. This turns out to be the most coherent and consistent interpretation.

At the beginning of our century, Robin raised this problem, and also indicated a way to solve it, which, in our view, ought to be taken up again today and set out systematically. Robin writes:

. . . [E]very difficulty disappears if we see in the two horses of the *Phaedrus* the image of Difference and Necessity. Difference is the divisible essence. It is therefore a multiplicity, and as Plato will say later, a Dyad of the great and the small, or . . . an inequality and a dissimilarity, a multiplicity constituted by the opposition of the more and the less. We have here a principle which defies the same, but which the same can put in order, just as number imposes harmony and proportion, which belong to the nature of the finite, or the contraries that make up the infinite: it is necessity, the principle of the opposition of the contraries, that causes what is disorderly and evil in things and is the foundation of the constitution of the mortal soul. . . . the chariot of the soul, according to the *Phaedrus*, always has two horses, including divine souls (246A–B); but this duality is not in itself a danger, so long as the inequality is subject to order: it does not become dangerous except in the souls in which this subordination is destroyed, and that is, in mythic terms, when the charioteer no longer is in control of his horses; the fall of the horses is therefore an effect of necessity, insofar as necessity is a principle of disorder. Thus the two horses of the *Phaedrus* seem to represent exactly the essence of difference and the necessary cause, sometimes dominated by reason, sometimes defiant of it.<sup>62</sup>

Naturally, Robin's sketch would need to be filled in and corrected in various ways. But it would take us too far afield to do so here. But we can make some brief remarks. Certainly, it is excessive to interpret the two horses as direct images of the Dyad; nevertheless, they do undoubtedly express relations that go back to the Principles.

Also in the *Timaeus*, the Soul of the universe, like every soul, has a bipolar structure with a triadic conformation, as the image of the winged chariot with two horses and a charioteer clearly suggests.<sup>63</sup>

62. Robin, *La Théorie platonicienne*, 184ff.

63. See below Chapter 20, section VIII, 405–13.



In the *Timaeus*, between the Soul of the universe and the souls of men there is, even within the underlying identity, a precise difference, as Plato points out expressly:

He [the Demiurge] said these things once again into the hollow in which he had previously mingled the soul of the universe, he poured the remains of the elements, and mingled them in much the same manner; but they were not pure as before, but diluted to the second and third degree.<sup>64</sup>

Whereas, in the *Phaedrus*, he says:

Now the horses and the charioteers of the Gods are all of them noble and of noble descent, but those of other races are mixed. First, in us the charioteer drives a pair, and one of his horses is noble and of noble breed, and the other is ignoble and of ignoble breed.<sup>65</sup>

We must bear in mind that, in the *Phaedrus*, Plato says he is using "myth" in the strongest sense of the term, and so is presenting mostly pure metaphor, whereas in the *Timaeus*, though he is operating on the plane of a "credible story" (and of myth, like all the writings), he goes a long way in the direction of the Unwritten Doctrines. Since this is a very delicate point, we should look also at the passage of the *Timaeus* which speaks of the irascible and concupiscible souls as mortal souls in order to show how, despite certain similarities, they cannot be identified with the two horses of the winged chariot.

After the Demiurge had created the imperishable beings, he set the gods the task of creating the mortal beings, among which were the irascible and concupiscible souls. Here is the text:

And he himself was the creator of the divine things, but the creation of the mortal he committed to his creatures. And they, imitating him, received from him the immortal principle of the soul; and around this they proceeded to fashion a mortal body, and gave the soul the body as its vehicle, and constructed within the body a soul of another nature which was mortal, subject to terrible and irresistible affections—first of all, pleasure the greatest incitement to evil; then pain, which deters from good; also rashness and fear, two foolish counsellors; anger which is hard to appease, and hope which is easily led astray;—these they mingled with sensation, which is without reason, and with love which will dare anything. Thus they put together, in accordance with necessity, the human race. On account of all these features, and fearing to pollute the divine any more than was absolutely unavoidable, they put the mortal nature [soul] in a separate seat in another part of the body, placing the neck between them to be the isthmus and boundary, which they constructed between the head and breast, to keep them apart. Thus, in the breast, and in what is termed the thorax, they bound up the mortal type of soul.

64. *Timaeus* 41D4ff.

65. *Phaedrus* 246A7–B3.

And as the one part of this was superior and the other inferior they divided the cavity of the thorax into houses, as men's quarters are divided from women's and placed the diaphragm between them.

That part of the soul which is endowed with courage and passion and loves glory they settled nearer the head, midway between the diaphragm and the neck, so that being able to hear reason, it might join with it in restraining the desires when they are no longer willing of their own accord to obey the command of reason issuing from the Acropolis. . . .<sup>66</sup>

The part of the soul that desires food and drink and the other things that bodily nature requires, they placed between the diaphragm and the boundary of the navel, designing all this region as a sort of manger for feeding the body; and there they bound it down like a wild animal which was chained up with man, and must be nourished if man was to exist. They appointed this lower creation its place here in order that it might be always feeding at the manger, and have its dwelling as far as possible from the council-chamber, making as little disturbance as possible, and permitting the best part to deliberate in place for the good of the whole. But knowing that this lower principle in man would not have understood reason, and that even if to some degree it was capable of perception, it would never naturally care for rational notions, but would be led by phantoms and visions at night and by images during the day, planning to make this very weakness serve a purpose, the Gods combined with it the liver, and placed it in the house of the lower nature.<sup>67</sup>

In conclusion, we can find some similarities between the function of the horses of the winged chariot and the concupiscible and sensible souls, but the gulf between them is clear and, to some extent, unbridgeable: the horses of the winged chariot are immortal, while the concupiscible and irascible soul of which the *Timaeus* speaks are the mortal part of the soul. Therefore, the similarities are indirect and not essential.

Further, the two horses in the metaphor of the winged chariot would propose a paradigmatic structure in which the mortal parts of the soul figure. But to explain the composite structure of the eternal soul itself, that is, the structure of the model, we would need to refer to the Unwritten Doctrines, and, without these, the account would not add up. The trichotomy of the soul which is found in the *Republic* has complex implications that go far beyond what is said in that dialogue.<sup>68</sup>

Also, with regard to the soul, Plato has not committed all his thought to writing.

To round off this point, we may add what seems to be an important further detail. Not only does the complexity of the rational soul's struc-

66. *Timaeus* 69C3-70A7.

67. *Ibid.*, D7-71B1.

68. See the account offered by T. Szlezák in "Unsterblichkeit und trichotomie der Seele im zehnten Buch der *Politeia*," in *Phronesis* 21 (1976): 31-58. Plato's soul doctrine deserves a full analytic and systematic reevaluation, especially with regard to its protological aspects. After all, Plato clearly says that a full explanation of the idea of the soul would, like the soul itself, be in every way divine, as well as long (cf. *Phaedrus* 246A4ff.).

ture as presented in the later dialogue, the *Timaeus*, bear certain similarities to the metaphorical image of the soul as a winged chariot presented in the *Phaedrus*, but it is also allusively anticipated in the earlier work, the *Republic*. We have already in part indicated that the doctrine of the soul presented in this work, if reread in the light of the new paradigm, discloses some essential ideas. As we can see from some precise allusions, at the time of the *Republic* Plato already had a clear conception of the rational soul, that is, of the soul "in its true nature" (τῆ ἀληθεστάτῃ φύσει), as a mixture, that is, as "composed of many" (συνθετόν τε ἐκ πολλῶν), and, in particular, as a composite made up of "a most beautiful synthesis" (τῆ καλλίστῃ συνθέσει). And, at that stage, he must have thought that only under this aspect of rationality (and not the concupiscible and irascible soul), the soul was immortal, since it is this that he considers as having a divine nature.<sup>69</sup>

In conclusion, the new paradigm can make more coherent and consistent sense also of this very important point of Plato's thought. It is no longer possible to follow the traditional interpretation of the metaphor of the winged chariot as an emblematic expression of the soul.

#### VII. BEAUTY THE AROUSER OF EROS AND ITS RELATIONS WITH THE PROTOLOGY

There remains a question to which we wish to draw attention, in order to show how the Platonic doctrine of Eros is of a piece with the Unwritten Doctrines. This concerns the relation between Beauty, from which Eros is generated, and the highest and primary Principles.

As is now widely agreed, Beauty is identical with the Good, or at least it is in the highest degree akin to it, and it differs only in its mode of presentation. In any case, this was the basic conviction of Hellenic culture and is expressed in the Greek term *kalokagathia*, "beauty-goodness," which is in every way a keyword of that type of culture. We have already seen what the essence of Beauty, in the strict sense, amounts to. In the *Hippias Major*, Plato had pointed out the definitional attributes of the Beautiful as appropriateness or suitability (τὸ πρέπον)<sup>70</sup> to a thing's proper function, and this is a correct but still partial account. In the *Philebus* he goes further and specifies, in relation to the issue of the Good, that the Beautiful is measure and proportion:

And now the power of the Good [ἡ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ δύναμις] has taken refuge in the nature of the beautiful [εἰς τὴν τοῦ καλοῦ φύσιν]; for *measure* and *symme-*

69. We have in mind here *Republic* 10.611B1, B5-6; 10.589C-D; and 590C-D.

70. Cf. *Hippias Major* 288C-E, 290D-291B, 293D-E.

try [μετρίότης καὶ συμμετρία] are beauty and virtue [κάλλος καὶ ἀρετή] all the world over.<sup>71</sup>

And again in the *Timaeus* he writes: "Everything that is good is beautiful, and beauty does not lack proportion."<sup>72</sup>

But we have already seen how in the *Philebus*, with extraordinary artistic ability and within the game of writing, Plato shows us the identity of the Good and the Beautiful and the One:

Then, if we can not catch the good with one [οἷον ἓν] idea only, we may hunt it with three: beauty, symmetry, truth; and we may regard these taken together as the greatest single factor in mixture, and the mixture as being good [ὡς ἀγαθὸν ὄν] by reason of them.<sup>73</sup>

Therefore, the Beautiful to which Eros brings us is the primary and highest Principle. Like that highest Beauty which shines in the sensible world to give the soul back its wings and to return it to the world of the intelligibles, the summit of the scale of love of the *Symposium* is not one particular Idea among others, but is the very same highest Idea of the Good we find in the *Republic*, that is, the primary and highest Principle, and therefore the One which is the highest and most perfect Measure.<sup>74</sup>

This explains why intelligible Beauty shines also in the sensible world. For a long time Platonic Beauty has been characterized as a kind of splendor or a sparkling brilliance with which the Good is seen and by which it attracts us. And this is the way we have read the claim in the *Phaedrus* that only the Beautiful (which is an aspect of the Good) has the privilege of being visible to the eyes in the physical sense. Gadamer has pointed this out, in the important concluding pages of his most important work, claiming that Beauty as "a brilliance of something superterrestrial . . . present in the visible, turns out to be that which is of itself the most manifest (τὸ ἐκφανέστατον)."<sup>75</sup> On the basis of this, Gadamer draws the following conclusions:

[T]he luminosity of the apparent is . . . not just one of the properties of the beautiful, but it constitutes its true and proper essence. The characteristic of beauty, by which it attracts immediately of itself the desire of the human soul, is founded on its very being. Insofar as it is structured according to a measure, the entity is not only that which it is, but allows to appear within itself a totality in itself measured and harmonic. It is this unveiling (ἀλήθεια) of which Plato speaks in the *Philebus*, which belongs to the essence of beauty. Beauty is not simply symmetry, but the appearance itself of that on which it is founded. It

71. *Philebus* 64E5-7; see also Chapter 14, section IV, 271-74.

72. *Timaeus* 87C4-5.

73. *Philebus* 65A1-5.

74. See Robin, *La Théorie platonicienne*, 253, and Findlay, *Plato*, 149.

75. H. G. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*.

has the nature of the resplendent. To be radiant means therefore to irradiate something, as the sun, and hence to appear in its own way in that on which light falls. Beauty has the same mode of being as light.<sup>76</sup>

We can make these already fairly distinct claims still more coherent and consistent by placing them in the context of Plato's thought as expressed in the Unwritten Doctrines. Beauty is a mode of the self-unfolding of the One in the sphere of being, or an unfolding of the highest Measure, by means of multifarious and multicolored refraction of Measure and Order into the different forms of the measured and the ordered, and, in this respect, it is the One made visible. In other words, Beauty makes us see the One in the proportional and numerical relations by which it unfolds in the physical dimension of the visible as well as at the level of the intelligible. Therefore, it is the One which always attracts us by making us see order and harmony in the relations of proportion which are to be formed at various levels, starting from the corporeal relations up to the highest vision of Beauty itself.

This makes it even clearer why Plato set up a gradation of Beauty and Love which may seem surprising today: from the beauty of bodies to that of souls, from that of the laws and human activities to that of the sciences and the highest knowledge. Thus, according to Plato, we arrive at the vision of the beautiful-in-itself after the vision of the highest knowledge and sciences, and hence of mathematics, which is intermediate between the sensible world and the intelligible. And on this point Aristotle himself, underwriting Plato's thoughts, offers us a fine piece of evidence in the *Metaphysics*:

... they are in error who assert that the mathematical sciences say nothing of the beautiful or the good. For these sciences discuss them and show them in the highest degree even if they do not expressly mention them, but prove attributes which are their results or principles, it does not follow that they tell us nothing about them. The chief forms of beauty are order and proportion and definiteness, which the mathematical sciences exhibit in a unique degree. And since these [for example, order and definiteness] are obviously causes of many things, evidently these sciences must treat this sort of cause also which, as the beautiful, is a cause.<sup>77</sup>

It should by now be clear in what sense the Platonic Eros, which is nourished and watered by Beauty, is far from irrational and alogical, as some seem to believe, and why a psychoanalytic inquiry into this Platonic issue only touches its margins and not its foundations.

76. Ibid.

77. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* M 3. 1078a33-1078b5. For a fuller account of the Platonists' accounts of the relation between the "beautiful" and the "mathematicals," see P. Merlan's *From Platonism to Neoplatonism* (Leiden, 1968<sup>3</sup>), 107ff.

Robin had fully understood the profoundly rational and intellectual nature of the Platonic doctrine on Love and Beauty. In addition to affirming the rational character of Plato's conception of Eros, Robin correctly explains in what respect the Ideas are in themselves beautiful and the whole intelligible cosmos is beautiful in the highest sense, in virtue of its globally unified and bipolar structure:

. . . [S]ince intelligence is the thing most similar to Measure, the cause of Beauty, we ought not to be surprised at the intellectual character of Platonic Love, whose goal is the contemplation of Beauty, nor at the parallels Plato frequently draws between the Idea of Love and that of order and measure (*Gorgias*, 507E; *Symposium*, 202E). On the other hand, the composite of which measure is the cause itself possesses proportion, beauty, and truth; but these are nothing but various aspects of the single Beauty, which is the ultimate principle and highest cause of the composite (*Philebus*, 64D–65A). It seems therefore that this composite, which being superior to intelligence is self-sufficient, could not be other than each Idea taken individually, and above all, the totality of Ideas, insofar as that totality makes up the intelligible world. Indeed, each Idea taken by itself is a composite, since it is a synthesis of the Same and the Other. The totality of these syntheses is in turn itself a synthesis of relations and of an ordered cosmos; reuniting in itself the totality of possible syntheses, it alone is absolutely perfect and absolutely capable of grounding self-sufficiency."<sup>78</sup>

Thus, in the light of the developments that have grown out of some of his basic ideas and led to the formulation of the new interpretive paradigm, the observations with which Robin ends his work on Platonic love seem all the more vivid: "Love is therefore an expression of the dynamic and compositive character of Plato's doctrines, as well as of its intellectualistic and mathematical tendencies."<sup>79</sup>

And we would add that Eros is thus a truly emblematic expression of the ultimate protological concepts.<sup>80</sup>

78. Robin, *La Théorie platonicienne*, 248ff.

79. *Ibid.*, 255.

80. As we have now reached the level of the protology, we may again recommend Krüger's *Einsicht und Leidenschaft*, cited above in note 16, in which Eros figures as the essence of Plato's philosophical enterprise.

## PART 4

### The Doctrine of the Demiurgic Intelligence and Its Relations with the Protology

All that becomes necessarily becomes by the agency of some cause; for without a cause nothing can come to be.

Plato, *Timaeus* 28A

But again, that which becomes, we say, must necessarily become by the agency of some cause. The maker and father of this universe is hard to find, and it is impossible to discuss him with all mankind.

Plato, *Timaeus* 28C





## 16 The Account of the Demiurge in the *Phaedo*, *Republic*, *Sophist*, and *Statesman*, and Its Protological Consequences

### I. SETTING UP THE ISSUE OF THE DEMIURGE IN TERMS OF THE NEW PARADIGM

In the fourth part of this book, we raise one of the most complex issues in Plato's thought and seek to go beyond not just the traditional paradigm, but also the work of the Tübingen School. It is therefore worthwhile to begin with some preliminary clarifications.

The Tübingen School has not taken special notice of the doctrine of the Demiurge because its principal work has been the reconstruction of the Unwritten Doctrines. Since the theory of the Demiurge appears in Plato's writings, some scholars have been misled into thinking that it would have to be inconsistent with the Platonic protology uncovered by Krämer and Gaiser. For the deductive format of that protology, with its close connection with so-called German metaphysics, seems to lead to a form of immanentism which is quite at odds with the transcendentalism of the doctrine of the Demiurge. Thus, it seems that the Tübingen School reduces the Demiurge to a purely or principally symbolic role.

Yet this reading of the situation is wholly unfounded; and, as we shall now try to show, it involves an epistemological mistake.

First, most scholars have believed that the interpretation proposed by the Tübingen School should be, or at least could be, discussed and judged on the same level as that on which earlier views were founded, that is, in terms of the traditional paradigm; they have not understood that the interpretation falls within a new scientific paradigm. And, as such, it cannot be reduced to a lowest common denominator with the traditional one, and it would be arbitrary to subsume it under the hermeneutic categories of the traditional paradigm.<sup>1</sup>

Consequently, many have not grasped the fact that insofar as we are dealing with a new scientific paradigm, we must distinguish the matters that concern the paradigmatic schema from those that concern the complex reconstructions that can be made within the paradigm itself,

1. See Chapter 2, section V, 47-49.

that is, those having to do with the problems arising from solutions to the various puzzles within the paradigm.<sup>2</sup>

Thus, the doctrine of the Demiurge does not concern matters fundamental to the interpretation proposed by the School of Tübingen (which consists in the overall relations between the written and the unwritten, and between the direct tradition and the indirect tradition).<sup>3</sup> Hence it does not affect the interpretive paradigm. Rather, since Plato put the doctrine of the Demiurge into writing, and the indirect tradition which gives us the Unwritten Doctrines does not speak of it, that doctrine is concerned with only one, albeit an important one, of the various issues which arise within that paradigm, and which therefore are susceptible, as they stand, of solutions that can be set out in different ways even by scholars working within the new paradigm.

Such differences as there might be between our attempts to solve this problem and the Tübingen School's attempts to solve it would not involve any essential restructuring of the paradigm itself, or at least would not involve any conflict over the basic framework of the paradigm, insofar as the various solutions concern structurings only of details of the design within the overall picture.

In any case, we have already said that, for the unprejudiced reader, the new paradigm opens a new epoch for Plato studies, posing "among other things" a number of problems that can be given various solutions within the new framework, which, as such, uncovers new and different possibilities for research on Plato.

These methodological and epistemological remarks are directed chiefly against the objection that since the foregoing interpretation of Plato depends on the theory of transcendence (arrived at by the Second Voyage) and points to the Demiurge as essential to the theory, it cannot be consistent with the views of the Tübingen School. As we shall see, the interpretation of Krämer and Gaiser is far from being immanentistic, and hence is far from excluding the figure of the Demiurge.

It has been said, for example, that the reconstruction of the Unwritten Doctrines given by the Tübingen School is deeply rooted in German metaphysics, and that it reduces Platonic metaphysics to a rigorously deductive system, to an *Ableitungssystem*: to a form of sophisticated emanationism.

This is what Krämer has to say in this regard, wholly denying this inaccurate and unfounded conjecture. After discussing Plato's view of the graduated structure of reality which includes some principal grad-

2. See Chapter 1, section IV, 10-13.

3. See Chapter 2, 48ff.

tions, each of them further distinguished and differentiated into successive steps in accordance with precise hierarchical relations as Krämer clearly explains:

In general, what is at issue is an ontological relation of derivation whereby the higher degree always possesses an ontological priority over what is below it (πρότερον-ὑστερον φύσει) and whereby, in Plato's terms, the former can be or can be conceived without the latter, but not vice versa the latter without the former (συναναιγεῖν καὶ μὴ συναναιγεῖσθαι). There is, therefore, an irreversible asymmetrical relation of dependence in which, however, the higher level is the necessary but not the sufficient condition of the next level down. Indeed, the Dyad of the great-and-the-small is foundational to all levels as their material principle, but without its differentiation being further grounded; therefore the categorical novelty remains unexplained."<sup>4</sup>

Denying the presence in Plato of an immanentistic *Ableitungssystem*, Krämer clearly states the following: Plato's philosophy is a type of system which we can define more closely. "It is a type of system which spells out hierarchically arranged and differentiated explanatory structures and so is expressed in metaphors of generation. Nevertheless, we cannot describe it, in this regard, as involving a strictly deductive method or derivation (in particular, we cannot describe it as involving emanation). This is because the dependence relation is not conceived in the radical way needed for such a purpose; instead of furnishing necessary and sufficient conditions, it gives only necessary conditions."<sup>5</sup> Without doubt, such statements necessarily exclude any form of immanentism.

Thus, this interpretation, which has been successful in explaining the extant documents on the Unwritten Doctrines, leaves plenty of room for the figure of the Demiurge. Indeed, the Demiurge has the role of mediator between the intelligible level and the sensible level, since the intelligible is necessary but not sufficient to generate the sensible. But more of this later.<sup>6</sup>

Gaiser is also quite explicit on this matter. The Demiurge is not, as some had thought, the Idea of the Good, nor is it, as others suppose, to be confused with the intellect which the Soul of the world possesses. The Demiurge is to be understood, Gaiser properly observes, as "a transcendent *Nous*."<sup>7</sup> In particular, he explains, it is clear that the Demiurge "acts like the Idea of the Good, but is nevertheless subordinated to it, and that, on the other hand, he is above the Soul of the world, which he originally produced."<sup>8</sup>

4. Krämer, *Platone*, 164 [Am. ed., 83].

5. *Ibid.*, 176ff. [Am. ed., 89ff.].

6. See the following chapters.

7. Gaiser, *Platons*, 389, note 166.

8. *Ibid.*, 194.

## II. THE DOCTRINES OF THE UNIVERSAL INTELLIGENCE PRESENTED IN THE *PHAEDO*

### 1. *The Demiurge Was Not a Late Addition to Plato's Thought*

A first advantage for the theory of the Demiurge within the new paradigm derives from the radical reappraisal of the evolution of Plato's thought, as discussed above.<sup>9</sup> The writings that Plato made public at successive stages do not outline his evolutionary progress as a *thinker*, but as a *writer*. The moment of Plato's putting a doctrine, within specified limits, into writing is not identical with the moment of his discovery and assimilation of that doctrine. And we may recall with Gadamer that "this type of naive chronological evaluation of the dialogues of Plato . . . must be definitively abandoned."<sup>10</sup>

But we are even better off in the present issue, because, from the moment when Plato decided to give hints about the Demiurge in his writings, he makes that conception clear, even though he discusses it at length only in the *Timaeus*. This has misled many scholars into thinking that the Demiurge is a late development, and therefore into neglecting passages of dialogues earlier than the *Timaeus* in which he discusses it.

The first time that Plato speaks openly and fully about the cosmic intelligence is in the passage about the Second Voyage contained in the *Phaedo*, the crucial point of the great metaphysical map discussed above, and which it is worth taking up again, in order to complete our examination of it and to understand its twofold significance.<sup>11</sup>

Plato's reasoning can be divided into the following four maneuvers:

a. First, he considers the effect of Anaxagoras's claim that Intelligence (Νοῦς) orders all things, and explains the fundamental significance that this claim has for all things and for mankind in particular.

b. Second, he specifies what consequences we would expect to follow from the Intelligence as cause of all things, in particular as regards the explanation of the structure of the cosmos and cosmological phenomena (with which Anaxagoras was particularly concerned).

c. Next comes the demonstration of the failure of Anaxagoras's attempt. Indeed, in Plato's view, he did not know how to use the Intelligence coherently to explain the various phenomena (nor would he have been able to since he remained on the naturalistic level), as is proved by some cosmo-ontological and ethico-axiological examples.

9. See Chapter 4, section V, 84–88.

10. H. G. Gadamer, *Die Idee des Guten zwischen Plato und Aristoteles* (Heidelberg, 1978) [*The Idea of the Good in Platonic-Aristotelian Philosophy*, trans. P. Christopher Smith (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1986)].

11. See Chapter 5.

d. Finally, employing a distinction between physical explanation and metaphysical explanation, and showing that the doctrine of the Intelligence is necessarily of the latter sort, Plato draws his conclusion.

2. *The Doctrine of the Cosmic Intelligence and Its Implications*

We ought to assume the general correctness and great importance of Anaxagoras's claim that Intelligence is the ordering principle of things and hence their cause.

But there is another claim that must be connected to this: Intelligence acts and works in virtue of the Good, that is to say, by disposing and ordering each thing in the best way, both overall and in particular. Proposing Intelligence as the principle of order and as cause means therefore bringing to the fore the paradigmatic criterion of the best, namely, the concept of the Good in the primary and absolute sense, both with regard to things in general and to mankind in particular.

Plato goes further, specifying that knowledge must include, in addition to the best, its contrary, namely, the worst, because there is one science of both of them. This is a cross-reference to the first Principles's bipolar structure, which Plato here presents for the first time so openly in his writings.<sup>12</sup>

It is clear what basic claim Plato is driving at: Intelligence acquires its full and proper meaning only if it is structurally connected with the Good; or, rather, with the Best and the Worst, that is, in the terms of the Unwritten Doctrines, with the two Principles. Here is the text:

However, I once heard someone reading from a book, as he said, by Anaxagoras, and asserting that it is mind that produces order and is the cause of everything. This explanation pleased me. Somehow it seemed right that mind should be the cause of everything, and I reflected that if this is so, mind in producing order sets everything in order and arranges each individual thing in the way that is best for it. Therefore if anyone wished to discover the reason why any given thing came or ceased or continued to be, he must find out how it was best for that thing to be, or to act or be acted upon in any other way. On this view there was only one thing for a man to consider, with regard both to himself and to anything else, namely the best and the highest good, although this would necessarily imply knowing what is less good, since both were covered by the same knowledge.<sup>13</sup>

3. *The Structural Connection between Intelligence and the Good*

Anyone who introduces Intelligence as the cause of things must proceed on the basis of this structural connection between the doctrine of Intelligence and the Principle of the Good. This is what Anaxagoras

12. See Chapter 5, section III, 99–100.

13. *Phaedo* 97B8–D5.

ought to have done in citing Intelligence as the cause of things. In particular, he ought to have established whether the earth is flat or round and where it is placed not in terms of other causes, but solely in terms of the Good, showing that its shape and place are the best possible. Anaxagoras ought to have offered similar explanations of the sun, moon, and stars and of their movements and speeds: he ought to have supplied a reason by employing the criterion of the best.

In short, the introduction of Intelligence to explain the full range of phenomena requires us to explain the Good which is common to all things, and, more specifically, the best which is in each of them and the ways in which the Good is made concrete. Therefore, Anaxagoras ought to have aimed at knowledge of the Good or rather, as Plato says, hinting at the Principles, the knowledge of the best and the worst, which are the first Principles. Here is the text:

These reflections made me suppose, to my delight, that in Anaxagoras I had found an authority on causation who was after my own heart. I assumed that he would begin by informing us whether the earth is flat or round, and would then proceed to explain in detail the reason and logical necessity for this by stating how and why it was better that it should be so. I thought that if he asserted that the earth was in the center, he would explain in detail that it was better for it to be there; and if he made this clear, I was prepared to give up hankering after any other kind of cause. I was prepared also in the same way to receive instruction about the sun and moon and the other heavenly bodies, about their relative velocities and their orbits and all the other phenomena connected with them in what way it is better for each one of them to act or to be acted upon as it is. It never entered my head that a man who asserted that the ordering of things is due to Mind would offer any other explanation for them than that it is best for them to be as they are. I thought that by assigning a cause to each phenomenon separately and to the universe as a whole he would make perfectly clear what is best for each and what is the universal good. I would not have parted with my hopes for a great sum of money. I lost no time in procuring the books, and began to read them as quickly as I possibly could so that I might know as soon as possible about the best and the less good.<sup>14</sup>

4. *Intelligence and Physical Factors Are Insufficient to Explain Reality Unless They Are Connected to the Good*

Anaxagoras's book shows that he utterly failed to grasp this fundamental connection. To explain the arrangement of things, he does not appeal to what is structurally connected to Intelligence, that is, to the Good; he appeals rather to what of itself is, at least in the Physicists' view of it, foreign to Intelligence; that is, he continually refers to physical elements, to corporeal realities.

14. Ibid., D5–98B6.

Instead of getting into cosmo-ontological questions, Plato chooses more effective examples to show the inadequacy of merely physical explanation. He takes them from the sphere of ethical and axiological reality, focusing on Socrates' specific predicament, as we said earlier.<sup>15</sup>

If we restrict ourselves to physical factors, we can correctly explain only the manner and the means by which Socrates went to prison and remains there, in terms of his organs of locomotion (bones, nerves, joints, etc.) and their functioning; but this completely fails to give the reason why he went to prison and remains there despite the real possibilities that he had not to go to prison or to have fled from it. But reason is "the true cause," which consists not simply in the functions of the organs of the body, but in the values of justice and beauty—in the moral Good. Therefore, we cannot say that it is in virtue of his organs that Socrates acts with Intelligence, but in virtue of his choice of the best; therefore, his organs served only as instruments for putting into effect the choice of the best, but not as a true cause.

It was a wonderful hope, my friend, but it was quickly dashed. As I read on I discovered that the fellow made no use of Mind and assigned to it no causality for the order of the world, but adduced causes like air and aither and water and many other absurdities. It seemed to me that he was just about as inconsistent as if someone were to say, The cause of everything that Socrates does is Mind—and then, in trying to account for my several actions, said first that the reason why I am lying here now is that my body is composed of bones and sinews, and that the bones are rigid and separated at the joints, but the sinews are capable of contraction and relaxation, and form an envelope for the bones with the help of the flesh and skin, and with the latter holding all together, and since the bones move freely in their joints the sinews by relaxing and contracting enable me somehow to bend my limbs, and that is the cause of my sitting here in a bent position. Or . . . if he tried to account in the same way for my conversing with you, adducing causes such as sound and air and hearing and a thousand others, and never troubled to mention the real reasons, which are that since Athens has thought it better to condemn me, therefore I for my part have thought it better to sit here, and more right to stay and submit to whatever penalty she orders. Because, . . . I fancy that these sinews and bones would have been in the neighborhood of Megara or Boeotia long ago—impelled by a conviction of what is best!—if I did not think that it was more right and honorable to submit to whatever penalty my country orders rather than take to my heels and run away. But to call things like that causes is too absurd. If it were said that without such bones and sinews and all the rest of them I should not be able to do what I think is right, it would be true. But to say that it is because of them that I do what I am doing, and not through choice of what is best "although my actions are controlled by Mind" would be a very lax and inaccurate form of expression.<sup>16</sup>

15. See Chapter 5, section III, 99–100.

16. *Phaedo* 98B7–99B2.

### 5. *Primary Cause and Auxiliary Causes*

All this implies the distinction between the cause and that through which the cause is put into effect or the means necessary to realize it, the latter of which we can call the subordinate causes or co-causes.

This holds not only for the explanation of Socrates' case and of all moral realities, but also for the explanation at all cosmological and ontological levels. The heaven and earth occupy the positions they do not because they are held together by physical forces, but because they are held together by the divine force of the Good and the suitable.

Therefore, in the various ways in which it unfolds at different levels, it is the Good that binds and holds all things together.

Those who seek the true cause must look for exactly this because it is on the basis of it that Intelligence operates, as we can see from a passage we have already cited:

Fancy being unable to distinguish between the cause of a thing and the condition without which it could not be a cause! It is this latter, as it seems to me, that most people, groping in the dark, call a cause, attaching to it a name to which it has no right. That is why one person surrounds the earth with a vortex, and so keeps it in place by means of the heavens, and another props it up on a pedestal of air, as though it were a wide platter. As for a power which keeps things disposed at any given moment in the best possible way, they neither look for it nor believe that it has any supernatural force. They imagine that they will someday find a more mighty and immortal and all-sustaining Atlas, and they do not think that anything is really bound and held together by goodness or moral suitability. For my part, I should be delighted to learn about the workings of such a cause from anyone, but since I have been denied knowledge of it, and have been unable either to discover it myself or to learn about it from another, I have worked out my own makeshift approach to the problem of causation. Would you like me to give you a demonstration of it, Cebes? —I should like that very much.<sup>17</sup>

And here is a passage from the *Timaeus* in which Plato again takes up this concept of the twofold order of causes, that of the true cause (the Good) and that of the secondary or subordinate causes (the means for the fulfillment of the true cause); it is a text of particular interest because, besides clarifying what is said in the *Phaedo*, it shows the systematic character of Plato's thought:

Now all these things are among the accessory causes which the God uses as subservient in achieving the best result that is possible. But the great mass of mankind regard them, not as accessories, but as the sole causes of all things, producing effects by cooling and heating, compacting or rarefying, and all such processes. But such things are incapable of any plan or intelligence for any purpose. For we must declare that the only existing thing which properly

17. *Ibid.*, B2-D3.



possesses intelligence is soul, and this is an invisible thing, whereas fire, water, earth, and air are all visible bodies; and a lover of intelligence and knowledge must necessarily seek first for the causation that belongs to the intelligent nature, and only in the second place for that which belongs to things that are moved by others and of necessity set yet others in motion. We too, then, must proceed on this principle: we must speak of both kinds of cause, but distinguish causes that work with intelligence to produce what is good and desirable, from those which, being destitute of reason, produce their sundry effects at random and without order.<sup>18</sup>

6. *Conclusions on the Doctrine of the Demiurgic Intelligence as Set out in the Phaedo*

From the passages of the *Phaedo* we have analyzed we can draw the following three conclusions:

a. The doctrine of Intelligence as a cause of things does not hold only on the physical level, that is, simply placing Intelligence alongside the factors and forces of physical nature;

b. intelligence is structurally connected to the Good and it is in the Good that we find an indispensable reference point for explaining the generation, becoming, and being of things;

c. as the end of the final passage from the *Phaedo* indicates, it is necessary if we are to reach this viewpoint to embark on the Second Voyage, that is, to reach the plane of the intelligible, whose summit is the Good; indeed, Plato says clearly that we must acquire the knowledge of the best and the worst, that is, the knowledge of the bipolar structure of the Principles.

In other words, it is very clear that the theory of the intelligible culminating in the Good is the crucial point for the understanding of Intelligence and its functions.

We may observe, in particular, how in the three passages Plato makes sixteen references to the Good or to its direct consequences, which is more than twice as many as the number of references to Intelligence. He does so in order to emphasize as clearly as possible the structural connection that indissolubly binds Intelligence to the Good.

Thus, the underlying message can be summarized: the Physicists too had arrived at the discovery of Intelligence as the cause of things; however, so long as it remained on the purely sensible plane, the causal role of Intelligence was deprived of its usefulness; only with the realization of the metaphysical pyramid and its pinnacle (the Good) can Intelligence come to have its meaning and its ontological importance.

18. *Timaeus* 46C7–E6.

### III. REFERENCES TO THE THEORY OF THE DEMIURGE IN THE *REPUBLIC* AND ITS RELATIONS WITH THE ARTS

#### 1. *Hints at the Demiurge in Books 6 and 7 of the Republic*

In most of the dialogues after the *Phaedo*, beginning with the *Republic*, the theory of the cosmic Intelligence and the Demiurge reemerges according to the needs of the various contexts.

In the earliest passage in which he figures, in a context discussed above, the Demiurge appears incidentally as "Craftsman of the senses," who has made the faculty of seeing and being seen as the most valued.<sup>19</sup>

He is then mentioned more distinctly as the arranger of celestial bodies, in relation to the consideration of astronomy as one of the sciences necessary for preparing the philosopher, the state's proper ruler, for dialectic. Here too, however, we see it only in an incidental, but quite interesting, role, because it shows that Plato had already conceived the Demiurge in full as "Him who ordered the heavens and the celestial bodies in the best manner possible."<sup>20</sup>

#### 2. *The Demiurge in Book 10 of the Republic*

But it is above all in the tenth book of the *Republic* that Plato focuses on some features of the Demiurge to which he does not return in his later writings, and which, as we shall see, are of the greatest interest.

Our philosopher is trying to solve the problem of the arts and their ethico-political and educative function, and in order to do this he must specify what place they have in an overall vision of reality, and, in particular, at what ontological level of being and truth art objects are to be placed.

In order to achieve these objectives, he tackles the great problem of the metaphysical structure of reality from a viewpoint which permits him to solve the question as set.

True being, that is, being at its highest level, is the Idea; and, because *techne* is here the subject of discussion, Plato refers to the Ideas which are connected to the human arts in general, and in particular to the Ideas of artifacts, that is, to the Ideas of things produced by human arts.

The things man constructs and produces have being at a lower level similar to that of the Ideas, but not true being like the Ideas.

But there is an even lower level with respect to true being, which is that of the reproduction of mere appearances of things, such as the reproduction which the painter makes of things.

19. *Republic* 6.507C5-8.

20. *Ibid.*, 7.530A3-B4.

Here is the hierarchical scale of being viewed from this perspective:

- a. there is a being which is such by nature, that is, as truth;
- b. there is a weak being, which is a reproduction of true being;
- c. there is a being of mere appearance, which is the third level down from true being, because it is a copy of a copy, an imitation of an imitation, a reproduction of a reproduction.

### 3. *The Human Craftsman and How He Creates*

Following the method of the earlier books of the *Republic* mentioned above, Plato appeals to the synoptic procedure, which is the dialectical reduction of a sensible plurality to the unity of an Idea. Using this method, many tables and many beds are reduced to the unity of an Idea. But in this case there are two Ideas not one, namely, the Idea of bed and that of table.

It is scarcely necessary to repeat the motifs on which Plato insists in the earlier books of the *Republic*,<sup>21</sup> that is to say, the play based on one and on two, clearly alluding to the protology of the Unwritten Doctrines, to remind us that each of the Ideas is a unity, but that there are more than one of them. And the two which is mentioned here is chosen to recall metaphorically the Dyad which is the Principle that explains the plurality of the Ideas themselves, and in general their numerical structure. Hitherto, no interpretation has been found to explain the play on one/two on which Plato insists.<sup>22</sup>

So the craftsman produces beds and tables, looking to the Ideas in themselves, and he tries to realize them in full. But what the craftsman creates is a copy of the Idea, not the Idea itself, which, in order to be able to work, he has to presuppose as such.

Here is the text:

Shall we, then, start the inquiry at this point by our customary procedure? We are in the habit, I take it, of positing a single idea or form in the case of the various multiplicities to which we give the same name. Do you understand?

I do.

In the present case, then, let us take any multiplicity you please; for example, there are many beds and tables.

Of course.

But these implements imply, I suppose, only two ideas or forms, one of a bed and one of a table.

Yes.

And are we not also in the habit of saying that the craftsman who produces either of them fixes his eyes on the idea or form, and so makes in the one case

21. Cf. above pp. 214ff., note 89; also see pp. 124–25 and 131–32.

22. See the citations from Gadamer in Chapter 11, section V, 212–16.

beds and in the other case tables that we use, and similarly of other things? For surely no craftsman makes the idea itself. How could he?

By no means.<sup>23</sup>

This passage takes up a concept more fully discussed in a passage in the *Cratylus*, which is it is worth recalling because it throws a very general light on the figure of the Demiurge and on his function; and it is well to keep it in mind in order to avoid misunderstanding Plato's concept of this figure, which he exploits in his theoretical construction.

The passage of the *Republic* refers to examples of furniture; in the aforementioned passage of the *Cratylus* examples of tools or instruments are used to illustrate analogies with language, which is understood as an instrument for grasping and communicating things. When we wish to weave something, we make use of a shuttle, which has the capacity to separate and weave the threads. And when we wish to pierce something, we use an awl. Likewise, if we want to distinguish things and communicate them and teach them to others, we must use an instrument, a name, that separates and communicates the essences of things. In addition, Plato explains, in order for the shuttle to function properly and hence to be used properly, it must be constructed by someone who possesses the art of making these things, namely, a joiner. And the same is true for the awl, for the same reasons, must be constructed by one who possesses the relevant art, namely, a blacksmith. The same thing holds for names: to be suitable, these must be coined by those who possess the art of names, and these are the rarest of *craftsmen* (δημιουργοί) and the most difficult to find among mankind.

Where do the craftsmen (δημιουργοί) find the criteria they use in making the instruments they produce? (a) First, they must look to the corresponding Idea, to that which is in itself, and is the nature itself of the thing at which they aim. (b) Also, they must carefully attend to the consideration of the material they need to use to make the instrument and to choose what is suitable for the job: suitable wood for the shuttle, suitable iron for the awl, appropriate syllables for the coining of names which must express the nature of things most suitably.

*Socrates*: Let us consider where the legislator looks when making names. Think about it in the light of the previous instances. Where does the carpenter look in making the shuttle? Does he not look to what is naturally fitted to weave? —*Hermogenes*: Certainly.

*Socrates*: And suppose the shuttle is broken in the making. Will he make another, looking to the broken one? Or will he look to the Idea which he was looking at when he made the other?

23. *Republic* 10.596A5–B11.

*Hermogenes*: To the latter, I should imagine.

*Socrates*: Might not that be justly said to be what it is to be a shuttle?

*Hermogenes*: I think so.

*Socrates*: And whatever shuttles need to be made, for the manufacture of garments, thin or thick, of linen, wool, or other material, ought all of them to involve the Idea of shuttle, and whatever is the shuttle best adapted to each kind of work, that ought to be the form which the maker produces in each case?

*Hermogenes*: Yes.

*Socrates*: And the same holds of other instruments. When a man has discovered the instrument which is naturally adapted to each task, he must express its natural form, and not others which he fancies, in the material, whatever it may be, which he employs. For example, he ought to know how to make an awl of iron, which is adapted by nature to the particular purpose?

*Hermogenes*: Certainly.

*Socrates*: And how to make a shuttle of wood, which is adapted by nature to the purpose?

*Hermogenes*: True.

*Socrates*: For the several forms of shuttles naturally answer to the various kinds of weaves, and this is true of instruments in general.

*Hermogenes*: Yes.<sup>24</sup>

Since we are not directly interested in the complex question of the demiurge of language, we shall leave it aside here. Nor are we interested in the question of the suitable material that each craftsman must use. But we are concerned to fix our attention on the role that the Ideas have in the activity of the craftsmen (demiurges): craftsmen create by reference to the Idea as a model; they do not, however, create the Idea, but presuppose its being.

#### 4. *The Pseudocraftsman as a Reproducer of Mere Appearances*

We may turn to the passage of the tenth book of the *Republic* from which we started, and pursue our previous line of thought. Plato wants to lead us to a precise hierarchical distinction of the demiurges, and to this end he employs an approach which is in one way provocative, beginning with the lowest level, and not with the craftsman at the highest level nor with the craftsman at a lower level, but with the craftsman who is a mere imitator (a kind of pseudodemiurge).

Plato's provocation begins by presenting this pseudodemiurge as the craftsman of everything. He knows how to present all the things which the other craftsmen produce, and also vegetables, animals, and himself, as well as everything that is in heaven and in Hades.

He can very easily be imitated by anyone: all you need is to take a mirror and turn it around, so that it takes in and reflects everything; in this way you can reproduce everything in the mirror.

24. *Cratylus* 389A5–D3.

Now, he who can so easily reproduce everything has not really produced anything at all, but merely reproduced appearances or images. Here is the text:

But now consider what name you would give to this craftsman.  
What one?

Him who makes all the things that all craftsman severally produce.

A truly clever and wondrous man you tell of.

Ah, but wait, and you say so, indeed, for this same artisan is not only able to make all implements, but he produces all plants and animals, including himself, and thereto earth and heaven and the Gods and all things in heaven and in Hades under the earth.

A most marvelously wise man, he said.

Are you incredulous? said I, Tell me, do you deny altogether the possibility of such a craftsman, or do you admit that in a sense there could be such a creator of all these things, and in another sense not? Or do you not perceive that you yourself would be able to make all these things in a way?

There is no difficulty, said I, but it is something the craftsman can make everywhere and quickly. You could do it most quickly if you should choose to take a mirror and carry it about everywhere. You will quickly produce the sun and all the things in the sky, and quickly the earth and yourself and the other animals and implements and plants and all the objects of which we just spoke.

Yes, he said, the appearance of them, but not the reality and the truth.

Excellent, said I, and you come to the aid of the argument opportunely. For I take it that the painter too belongs to this class of producers, does he not?

Of course.

But you will say, I suppose, that his creations are not real and true. And yet, after a fashion, the painter too makes a bed, does he not?

Yes, he said, the appearance of one, he too.<sup>25</sup>

##### 5. *The Divine Craftsman or Phutourgos as Producer of the Ideas of Artifacts*

In the first passage it was said that a joiner makes a bed, but not the Idea of a bed; the second discussed him who produces a mere appearance of a bed, a mere image of one.

Consequently, we may distinguish three different ontological levels:

- a. that of the Idea, which is the level of being itself;
- b. that of the objects produced by the various arts which do not constitute being itself, but resemble being, and have a weak sort of being compared with true being;
- c. that of mere imitation by images (pictorial or poetical), which is a mere appearance of being.

If we take as our example a bed, we can understand the three levels and the roles of those who operate on each of them, as follows:

25. *Republic* 10.596B12-E11

- a. at first level, there is the bed which is by nature produced by God;
- b. at second level there is the ordinary bed, produced by the joiner;
- c. at third level there is the bed as image, produced by the work of the painter or poet.

Let us read Plato's text:

What of the joiner? Were you not just now saying that he does not make the idea or form which we say is the real bed, the bed in itself, but only some particular bed?

Yes I was.

Then if he does not make that which really is, he could not be said to make real being but something that resembles real being but is not that. But if anyone should say that being in the complete sense belongs to the work of the joiner or to that of any other artisan, it seems that he would say what is not true.

That would be the view, he said, of those who are versed in this kind of reasoning.

We must not be surprised, then, if this too is only a dim adumbration in comparison with reality.

No we must not.

Shall we, then, use these very examples in our quest for the true nature of this imitator?

If you please, he said.

We get, then, these three beds, one, that in nature, which, I take it, we would say that God produces, or who else?

No one, I think.

And then there is the one the joiner made.

Yes, he said.

And one which the painter. Is not that so?

So be it.

The painter, then, the joiner, and God, there are these three presiding over three kinds of beds.

Yes, three.<sup>26</sup>

The point in this passage which needs most delicate handling is that in which Plato claims in no uncertain terms that a bed by nature, or the Idea itself of bed, is produced by God. This claim raises complex problems that most scholars have preferred to slide over or at least not to give serious attention.

But Plato insists on this very clearly.

First, he picks up the issue of the One and the Many, claiming that for every class of objects to which we give a particular name, God has created a single Idea: one and not more than one. Indeed, he offers an argument deriving from the issue arising in the *Parmenides*, which there sets on foot a series of complex and lively debates.<sup>27</sup>

26. Ibid., 597A1–B15.

27. See what we said in this regard in Chapter 12, section III, 227–28.

God made one bed in nature, and thus it will be forever. Indeed, if there had been two, a third would have been necessary, for those two to refer to; but in that case, the true bed by nature would be this third one.

If, instead of taking this argument in its ontological sense, we were to read it henologically, it would be fairly straightforward: to explain always means to unify; so the supposition of two divinely made ideal beds would imply a third to unify the two which had been supposed. Indeed, the two beds, if they were to be understood as such, would imply not an irreducible duality, but a single and identical thing which was contained in each of them, even if differentiated from one another.

But for someone who has trouble understanding what Plato means by a productive God (a Demiurge) of the bed which is by nature (the Idea of Bed), our philosopher makes use of the term *phutourgos* (φουτουργός), which in ordinary Greek means a planter (also father, or begetter), but is chosen for its specific reference to φύσις (nature) to express the concept of the Producer of nature, and to claim that He not only produced the nature of bed, but also made, in accordance with their nature, all the other things He created. Here is the relevant text:

Now God, whether because he so willed it or because some compulsion was laid upon him not to make more than one bed in nature, so wrought and created one only, the bed which really and in itself is. But two or more such were never created by God and never will come into being.

How so, I said.

Because, said I, if he should make only two, there would again appear one of which they both would possess the form or idea, and that would be the bed that really is in and of itself, and not the other two.

Right, he said.

God, then, I take it, knowing this and wishing to be the real author of the bed that has real being and not of some particular bed, nor yet a particular joiner, produced it in nature unique.

So it seems.

Shall we, then, call him its true and natural begetter, or something of the kind?

That would certainly be right, he said, since it is by and in nature that he has made this and all other things.<sup>28</sup>

### 6. *The Hierarchy of the Demiurges*

The hierarchy of the demiurges should by now be clear: at the summit there is the Demiurge or divine Craftsman, who is also called *Phutourgos*, the begetter of things in their true nature and true being; after him there follow the demiurges or human craftsmen, the producers of all the objects of the human skills; in order to produce the things they produce, the human craftsmen need what the divine Craftsman has

28. *Republic* 10.597C1–D8.



created; on the third level, finally, there are not any genuine craftsmen, but only those who produce images, mere imitators or pseudocraftsmen. Here are Plato's conclusions:

And what of the joiner? Shall we not call him the creator of a bed? By no means. What will you say he is in relation to the bed?

This, said he, seems to me the reasonable designation for him, that he is the imitator of the thing which those others produce.

Very good, said I. The producer of the product, at three removes from nature, you call the imitator?

By all means, he said.<sup>29</sup>

7. *God as the True Good and the Reference to the Bipolarity of the Principles to Explain Goods and Evils*

We shall return to the theoretical implications of this issue at the end of the chapter. Let us record a final passage in which Plato tells us what are the characteristics of God, who is the very God-Craftsman or *Phutourgos*, and should not be confused with the Idea of the Good.

In this dialogue, Plato affirms what is spelt out in the *Timaeus*, that God is the good (*ἀγαθός*) (in modern terms, we would say the good in the *personal* sense), not Goodness (*τὸ ἀγαθόν*) in the *impersonal* sense:

Something like this, I said. The true quality of God we must always surely attribute to him whether we compose in epic, lyric, or tragic verse.

We must.

And is not God of course good in reality and always to be spoken of as such?

Certainly.

But further, no good thing is harmful is it?

I think not.

Can what is not harmful harm?

By no means.

Can that which does not harm do any evil?

Not that either.

But that which does no evil would not be the cause of any evil either?

How could it?

Once more, is the good beneficent?

Yes.

Then the good is not the cause of all things, but of things that are well it is the cause—of things that are ill it is blameless.

Entirely so, he said.

Neither, then, could God, said I, since he is good, be, as the multitude say, the cause of all things, but for mankind he is the cause of few things, but of many things not the cause. For good things are far fewer with us than evil, and for the good we must assume no other cause than God, but we must look for the cause of evil in other things and not in God.<sup>30</sup>

29. Ibid., D9–E5.

30. Ibid., 2.379A7–C7.

Evidently, just as God is the cause of good things, because he is the Intelligence that actualizes the various forms of the Good to the highest possible degree and the Good is the principle of every form of good, the Principle of evil is the Principle antithetical to the Good, especially in its sensible form, as can be seen clearly from this parallel passage of the *Theaetetus*:

*Socrates*: Evils, Theodorus, can never be done away with, for the good must always have its contrary; nor have they any place in the divine world, but they must haunt this region of our mortal nature. This is why we should try to escape from this world . . . , and that means becoming like the divine so far as we can, and that again is to become just and holy with the help of wisdom.<sup>31</sup>

This is a very telling reference to the bipolar Principles in order to explain goods and evils, that is, to the Principle of the Good and to the Principle opposed to the Good. We shall return to this issue at the end of the chapter.

#### IV. THE FIGURE AND ACTIVITY OF THE DEMIURGE IN THE *SOPIHIST*

##### 1. *Divine Arts and Human Arts*

Plato gives further important information about the Demiurge toward the end of the *Sophist*. But most scholars have preferred to skip this material, or at least to put it wholly or partially in brackets, and not to give it the overall structural importance it deserves.

In seeking an account of the sophist and of the ontological status of the sophist's concerns, Plato traces a general outline of productive activities (the arts), following the diairetic-dichotomous framework, which, as we have seen, is one of the master themes of the dialogue. In the dichotomizing, Plato follows a twofold arrangement: one which we may call vertical, and the other horizontal. In the vertical, *diairesis* brings to the fore the difference between (1) the divine productive arts and (2) the human productive arts; and, for each of these, it also brings out (1) the production of real things and (2) the production of images.

It is necessary to stress, however, that this arrangement could be reconstructed also mathematically and geometrically; of course, such a reconstruction would be analogical, as Plato himself explicitly indicates, and as Gaiser has tried to show very clearly.<sup>32</sup>

To try to illustrate this arrangement in full would bring in matters irrelevant to our present purpose; therefore we shall concentrate only

31. *Theaetetus* 176A5-B3.

32. See Gaiser, *Platons*, 127, who provides vastly better graphic figures than have previously been offered; see also Movia, *Apparenze*, 464-48.

on the central point, which concerns the art of divine production in creation.

2. *The Productive Arts and Demiurgic Creation as Bringing Nonbeing into Being*

In the *Symposium* Plato is very definite about the concept of the productive arts (ποίησις). "Poiesis" is a term that embraces every form of productive activity which is able to bring forth "being from nonbeing" (ἐκ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος εἰς τὸ ὄν).

Yet, remarks Plato, it is customary to call poets (ποιηταί) or creators only those concerned with poetry and music, even if in reality the term *poiesis* applies to all the productive arts. In ordinary language, the term is applied to only some of them: the word is used for a part of the whole.

We may bear in mind that the passage of the *Symposium* cannot be translated while retaining all the lexical polyvalence of the term *poiesis*: English has no word to cover the entire semantic field which is included in the Greek word. Philologically, "poetry" renders the term *ποίησις* fairly well; but, for the modern English reader, the term "poetry" calls to mind only a limited range of things; specifically, the term has lost its connection with the verb *poiein*, "to do or make," and generally to produce. It is less inadequate to translate *poiesis* by creativity, because, also for us moderns, poetry is creative; and every kind of productive activity is commonly considered a form of creativity: even in economics and commerce, creativity has this sense today.

Nevertheless, translating the term *poiesis* (ποίησις) as "creativity" becomes rather problematic for philosophical purposes because of the general definition Plato gives to it: as a bringing into being from nonbeing, a definition which to the modern ear sounds like something biblical or religious, and echoes with the doctrine of creation from nothing, though this is not its exact meaning for Plato. In fact, Plato goes much further on this matter than any other ancient Greek thinker, either before or after him, while remaining Hellenic (how could he not?).

The Platonic doctrine of *poiesis* is the most advanced notion of creationism to be found in Hellenic thought; yet it remains a quasi-creationism if it is measured against the concept of creation at which Western thought arrived under the influence of the Bible.

Having got that straight, we may now present the relevant passage of the *Symposium* by translating the term *poiesis* as "creation," which is the only one that gives it a plausible sense. On the other hand, in translating passages of the *Sophist* we shall render cognate terms chiefly by "production," both because this appropriately reflects Plato's thought and because the *Sophist* does not involve the difficulties that are present

in the *Symposium* by reason of the latter's specific reference to poets. Here is the text of the *Symposium*:

. . . You know that creation [poetry] is something multiple. In fact, the whole cause by which anything passes from non-being to being is always creation [poetry]; so that the productions which depend on all the arts are creations, and all the craftsmen [demiurges] of these are creators. —True, he said.

All the same, you know that they are not called creators [poets], but they have other names, and that a distinct part within the whole of creativity [poetry], concerning music and verses, comes to be given the name of the whole. Only this is said to be creation [poetry] and those who possess this part of creation [poetry] are said to be creators [poets]. —That is true, I said.<sup>33</sup>

Therefore, the productive arts (creation) are all activities involving a bringing forth of being from nonbeing (ἐκ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος εἰς τὸ ὄν).

This is the concept which Plato takes up at the beginning of the *Sophist*:

*Stranger*: He who brings into being something that did not exist before is said to be the producer, and that which is brought into being is said to be the produced. —*Theaetetus*: True.<sup>34</sup>

### 3. *The Divine Demiurge, Producer of All Natural Objects*

The whole of the closing sequence of the *Sophist* revolves around the concept of bringing forth being from nonbeing. We now proceed to examine this more closely.

Productive (creative) arts, then, are all the powers and capacities that can ontologically generate things which previously were not (τὰ μὴ πρότερον ὄντα ὕστερον γίγνεσθαι).<sup>35</sup> But we have seen that some of these arts are divine and some human, and in particular that there is a divine art that produces real things and one which is human that produces real things but on a different level.

The real objects produced by the divine demiurgic activity are the following: all animals, plants, and inanimate bodies to be found on Earth. In short, the divine Demiurge produces the whole realm of natural objects.

Therefore, Plato points out, it is an error to hold that all these objects are generated spontaneously, and that they are not produced by an Intelligence and by God's knowledge.

All natural objects and the very elements from which they are derived (water, air, earth, and fire) are produced by art and by the divine Intelli-

33. *Symposium* 205B8–C10.

34. *Sophist* 219B4–7.

35. *Ibid.*, 265B1off.

gence; on the other hand, everything which is obtained using these objects, by combining and working on them in various ways, is produced by human art.

*Stranger:* Production to recall what we said at the outset we defined as any power that can bring into being what did not exist before.

*Theaetetus:* We remember.

*Stranger:* Now take all animals and also all plants that grow above the earth from seeds and roots, and lifeless bodies formed within the earth, whether fusible or not fusible. Shall we say that their coming-into-being, when they were not before, came about by divine craftsmanship and nothing else? Or shall we hold the belief that is commonly expressed?

*Theaetetus:* What belief do you mean?

*Stranger:* That nature gives birth to them as a result of some spontaneous cause that generates without intelligence. Or shall we say that they come from a cause which, working with reason and art, is divine and proceeds from God?

*Theaetetus:* Perhaps because I am young, I often shift from one belief to the other, but at this moment, looking at your face and believing you to hold that these things have a divine origin, I too am convinced.

*Stranger:* Well said, Theaetetus. If I thought you were the sort of person that might believe otherwise in the future, I should now try by force of persuasion to make you accept that account. . . . without any arguments of mine, your nature will come of itself to the conclusion which you tell me attracts you at this moment. So I will let that pass; I should be wasting time. I will only lay it down that the products of nature . . . are works of divine art, whereas things made out of them by man are works of human art. Accordingly there are two kinds of productions, one human, the other divine.

*Theaetetus:* Right.<sup>36</sup>

And here is the conclusion:

*Stranger:* We can be sure that we ourselves, and all other animals, and the elements of natural things, fire, water, and their like, are all the offspring and creations of God, can we not?

*Theaetetus:* Yes.<sup>37</sup>

## V. REFERENCES TO THE DOCTRINE OF THE DEMIURGE IN THE *STATESMAN*

The first part of the *Statesman* presents a myth, meant to shed light on the history of the cosmos and of man. It depends on the idea that in alternating periods the world turns in opposing directions, and it develops the mythical working-out of this idea.<sup>38</sup> The myth is not merely a plausible story like that in the *Timaeus*; rather, it offers the genuine features of a fable<sup>39</sup> taken from various sources and bearing allegorical

36. *Ibid.*, B8-E7.

37. *Ibid.*, 266B2-5

38. See *Statesman* 268D-274D.

39. Note that Plato himself says as much in the *Statesman* 269B3-7.

meanings. To understand what Plato says, we must distinguish two sets of features: those that provide the conceptual supporting structure and those that are poetic-imaginative and purely mythical.

Gaiser's close study of this issue has produced some useful results for establishing contact with the Unwritten Doctrines, and these far outstrip the interpretations which had hitherto been given.<sup>40</sup> We cannot here go into this interpretation of the great myth of the *Statesman*; but it is useful now to draw attention to the supporting structure of the myth, focusing on the Demiurge and his works.

Throughout his retelling of the myth, Plato refers to the Demiurge, using terms and allusions which very closely echo the *Timaeus*:

(a) The cosmos is a living thing (and being endowed with life, it is endowed with soul) and it has intelligence, which is given to it by him who put it together in the beginning.<sup>41</sup>

(b) The cosmos has received many and worthy things from him who generated it;<sup>42</sup> indeed, from the one who generated it, it received all the beautiful things<sup>43</sup> it possesses.

(c) The cosmos has immortality given to it by the Demiurge.<sup>44</sup>

(d) The Demiurge is the helmsman of the universe,<sup>45</sup> insofar as it is he who put it in order.<sup>46</sup>

(e) Finally, as in the *Timaeus*, the Demiurge is said to be Father<sup>47</sup> of the world.

When we come to present and interpret the *Timaeus*, we shall see how and to what extent these expressions anticipate, albeit by hints, almost the whole of the doctrine of the Demiurge in that dialogue.<sup>48</sup>

But it is worth looking more closely at the reference to the bipolar structure which, just as it explains the sphere of intelligible being, likewise explains cosmic reality in its totality and the history of the cosmos and of man. Plato insists many times on this bipolar structure, and it is in

40. Gaiser, *Platons*, passim. Gaiser discusses the problem in the volume *Platon und die Geschichte* (Stuttgart, 1961). For an outline of the interpretations of the great myth of the *Statesman*, see the discussion by Isnardi Parente, "Il mito del *Politico*," in Zeller and Isnardi Parente, 228-37. Interesting developments of the concepts connected with this theme are found in V. Hölsle, *Wahrheit und Geschichte* (Stuttgart and Bad Cannstatt, 1984) in relation to the new interpretive paradigm of the Tübingen School; see esp. 489ff.

41. *Statesman* 269D1ff.

42. *Ibid.*, 8ff.

43. *Ibid.*, 273B6ff.

44. *Ibid.*, 270A3-5.

45. *Ibid.*, 272E3ff.

46. *Ibid.*, 273D4.

47. *Ibid.*, 273B1ff.

48. Cf. Chapter 18, section 1, 359-61.

terms of it that he presents the inversion of the movement of the world and the two movements which it executes at different times in opposing directions.<sup>49</sup> But the most interesting and most beautiful reference is at the end of the myth, where the cosmos is compared to a ship that proceeds flounderingly across “the unbounded sea of diversity” (εἰς τὸν τῆς ἀνομοιότητος ἄπειρον ὄντα πόντον) in which it would risk being sunk and racked by confusion, if the God who made it did not retake the helm and save it, and did not restore it to order, and thus prevented it from following the opposed tendency and being broken up. Here the great unbounded sea of diversity is a splendid metaphor for the indefinite Dyad (in its sensible manifestation); and the God’s works and his ordering of things, the intervention by which he restores order and takes the rudder again, express the great demiurgic work which overrules disorder with order, structuring both in general and in particular the indefinite Dyadic Principle by reference to the intelligible world and its nature, which depends on the Good (or the One and Measure, as is revealed in the conclusion of the same dialogue).

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Here is the admirable conclusion of the great myth, where the bipolar structure of reality is put in the limelight:

*Stranger:* . . . It remembered the teachings of the Demiurge and Father at first more clearly, but, as time went, more dimly. The material element in its constitution was responsible for this because it belonged to it [the world] in its most primeval nature, for, before it came into its present order, it was party to the chaos of disorder. It is from God who composed it that the world received all the good things it possesses, while it is from the previous chaotic condition that it retained all the wrongs and injustices in it and it engendered them in turn in living creatures. So long as it was guided by the divine pilot, it produced much good and little evil in the creatures it raises and sustains. When it was separated from him, things go well enough in the period immediately after he abandoned control, but as time went on and forgetfulness grew, the ancient condition of chaos also began to prevail. At a certain point this disorder comes to a head. And the universe mingles little good with much of its opposite and hovers on the brink of destruction, both of itself and of the creatures in it. The God who had first set it in order looked upon it again and perceived it in its

49. Cf. *Statesman* 26gEff.

troubles: and, anxious that it might sink racked by storms of confusion, and flounder in the unbounded sea of diversity, he took control of the helm once more, reversing the things that had gone to wrack and ruin in the preceding period, restoring order and making it immortal and ageless.<sup>50</sup>

This ordering of the ancient condition of chaos which is party to much disorder, and from which the cosmos arises, is carried out by the Demiurge by referring to the One; and it is from the One that immunity to old age and sickness derives, as Plato shows at length in the *Timaeus*.

## VI. SOME IMPLICATIONS OF THESE DOCTRINES

The texts we have cited above and the explanations that we have given have philosophical implications which we have already in part pointed out, and which we wish now to summarize and complete.

1. If we reread the *Phaedo* highlighting Plato's claims in the great metaphysical map of the Second Voyage, it emerges that the Good (the better, the best) and Intelligence are not ontologically identical, and that the former is hierarchically superior to the latter, because it lays down rules for it. And the *Republic* very clearly confirms this result.

One widespread interpretation was defended by Zeller in his work *Die Philosophie der Griechen*. Zeller held that the unity of Plato's system could be defended only by admitting that he did not distinguish, but rather identified, God with the Idea of the Good, the efficient cause with the formal cause.<sup>51</sup> But this interpretation does not stand up because it has all the texts against it. As a matter of fact, the Idea of the Good is τὸ θεῖον, that is, the Divine, not ὁ θεός, that is, the God or Divinity who is identical with Intelligence.

In order to understand this doctrine, which can be the cause of serious difficulties or interpretive embarrassments for a philosopher of the Christian period, we must refer to two key points of ancient Greek spirituality and thought.

First, we must remember that for the Greeks a rule, that is, a norm or a law, was not thought of as dependent on God and subordinate to him; it was not held to be promulgated by him. For the ancient Greeks, God was not a lawgiver. Consequently, the law was considered as a point of reference which God himself has to obey and thus as something hierarchically superior to him. When transferred from the generically religious level to the properly philosophical level, this conviction became the precise conception expressed by Plato from the *Phaedo* onward and

50. *Ibid.*, 273B1-E4.

51. Cf. E. Zeller, *Die Philosophie der Griechen*, 1.2:709-18, esp. 712.



emphatically in the *Republic* and the *Timaeus*; to say nothing of the dialogues, such as the *Euthyphro*, which express the same view, albeit partially, with the thesis that the pious is not such because it is pleasing to the gods; on the contrary, the pious is pleasing to the gods because it is pious (it is imposed on the gods by reason of its ontological nature).

Second, and perhaps of greater theoretical importance, we must identify in the background of this Platonic doctrine the Parmenidean conception, that in many ways formed the basis of the Greek mentality, namely, the exact relation between thought and underlying condition for thinking, the indissoluble relation between Intelligence and Being.

Only that which is can be thought; and hence thinking is connected to being ("that which it is possible to think is the same as that which can be").<sup>52</sup> Thinking has its own importance within being, in the sense that being is the foundation of thinking, the cause and the *sine qua non* of thinking ("Thinking and the condition of thinking are the same").<sup>53</sup> Thinking is expressed always and only in being ("for you will not find thinking without [that which] is").<sup>54</sup> Thus, being is the condition of thinking, it is the determining and founding reason for thinking.

Bearing all this in mind, the unity of Platonic thought in its Hellenic context becomes clear within the new paradigm. The Good, the supreme Principle, together with its antithetical Principle and the whole structure of the ideal world, are the object to which the divine Intelligence is directed. And so far as it is capable, by means of philosophy and its core, dialectic, the intelligence of man must aim at this object.

2. The Platonic God, therefore, is not the impersonal Good, but Intelligence which grasps it and replicates it in the most perfect fashion. And it is in this way that God is the cause of all good things.

The Principle opposed to the Good (the indefinite Dyad) acts on God (Intelligence) only by differentiating it from all other beings, of which, as we shall see from the *Timaeus*, God is the summit.

This broaches a complex question, which we shall be able to resolve only after having read the *Timaeus*. Nevertheless, to a large extent the passage of the *Republic* we cited, with the passage from the *Theaetetus*, already offer what we need. God is the cause of every good thing and is

52. Parmenides, frag. 3 DK. On the different readings, see our "Nota sulle interpretazione del fr. 3 e dei versi 34 sgg. del fr. 8," in E. Zeller and R. Mondolfo, *La filosofia dei Greci nel suo sviluppo storico Parte prima*, Vol. 3: *Eleati*, ed. G. Reale (Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1967), 218ff. (We will indicate this work in the following notes with the abbreviation Zeller-Reale. [The translation of the fragment is that of J. Owens, *A History of Ancient Greek Philosophy* (New York, 1959), 61, note 9.]

53. Parmenides, frag. 8, v. 34 DK. On the different readings, see our "Nota sulle interpretazione" in Zeller-Reale, 224ff.

54. *Ibid.*, v. 35ff. DK. On the different readings, see our "Nota sulle interpretazione" in Zeller-Reale, 224-31.

the highest expression of the Good; on the other hand, something else causes evil, something set against the Good. The indirect tradition tells us that Plato found in the Dyad the source of Evil. Nevertheless, it would be inaccurate, for reasons to which we shall return, to claim that at all levels the Dyad had that role for Plato. Indeed, the principle opposed to the One manifests itself at different levels; and if at the highest levels the Dyad operates as the condition of plurality, of difference, and of the degrees of being, it is only at the sensible level, the hierarchically lowest level, that it becomes a genuine Principle of Evil. In the *Theaetetus*, Plato says that it is impossible that evil have a place near the gods, that is, in the ideal realm, insofar as they haunt this region of our mortal nature. This is a point to which we shall return in discussing the *Timaeus*.

3. We can also respond to the two main questions raised by the passages from the tenth book of the *Republic* on the Ideas of artifacts.

(a) The first question arises from the fact that Plato makes the God-Craftsman the creator of the Idea of bed, and hence of the Ideas of things produced by the arts, but not of all Ideas.

(b) The second derives from the indirect tradition which informs us that Plato (or at least many Platonists) admitted Ideas of natural kinds, but not Ideas of things produced by the arts.<sup>55</sup> Hence the indirect tradition would be in some kind of opposition to the texts we have read.

These two problems have received the most widely varying responses within the traditional paradigm. For example, Platonic irony has been appealed to in order to explain the first;<sup>56</sup> and, in order to explain the second, reference has been made to the interpretive ploy of the evolution of Plato's thought and a genetic hypothesis, for which there is no foundation in the Platonic texts.<sup>57</sup>

The thesis that Plato posits a hierarchical structure at different levels of reality offers the best chance of solving these two serious problems.

(a) Clearly Plato did not place the Ideas of things produced by the arts among the genuine Ideas (the Meta-Ideas and the Ideas of natural kinds), but rather among the intermediates, where we find also the mathematical objects, the Soul of the world, and the various rational

55. Cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* A 9.991b3-7, H 3.1043b18ff., and A 3.1070a13ff. Also see Proclus, *In Plat. Parm.* 691, Stallbaum (Xenocrates frag. 30 Heinze; frag. 94 Isnardi Parente).

56. See, to cite only one example, the baffling argument of P. Natorp, *Platons Ideenlehre* (Leipzig, 1903), 212ff. Natorp maintains that the hypothesis of the creation of the Ideas is "just an ironic conclusion" ["nur ironisches Eingehen"] in opposition to his adversary's line of thought, which raised such objections to the theory of Ideas as the "third man," which in the text of the *Republic* in question is refuted by appeal to the creator God.

57. See note 60, below.

souls. In the *Timaeus*, Plato says that the Demiurge created the world-Soul and rational souls, and he explains the mathematical forms the Demiurge consulted in this activity. It is certainly not difficult to bring together these two theses: the Demiurge created the Ideas of artifacts following a similar model to what he consulted in creating the soul, even if, it was a simpler one. It is not difficult to conclude that these Ideas are located in the same realm as the soul (if not in the soul). Moreover, the Demiurge has some productive relation with mathematical objects, as we shall see in discussing the *Timaeus*. In short: the Demiurge has a major role in the production of the intermediates, as he has in the sensible realm.

Hence we agree broadly with the interpretation of Gaiser, who writes: "Now, as to the soul, it is reasonable to suppose that the Ideas produced by means of [human] art have their ontological place in the soul, and that they are therefore of the same sort as the soul. This is an understandable feature of Plato's ontology, once it has been shown that he saw the objects of mathematics as objectivizations of the soul. It is plausible that, for Plato, these artistic-productive Ideas are mathematical structures, produced in the soul. . . ."58

In any case, if we see both (a) that the Ideas of artifacts are to be located at the same ontological level as the soul (if not actually in the soul); and (b) that their structure is of a mathematical and geometrical nature (the Ideas of bed and of table referred to in the *Republic* involve exact structural relations with geometrical figures and mathematical ratios); then we have a much better explanation than was hitherto available. For it is the only one which solves all the difficulties; and it also makes it understandable why an explicit connection of the Ideas of artifacts with the soul was widespread among Platonists.<sup>59</sup>

(b) Also the second problem can be nicely solved in this way. Plato did not believe in Ideas of artifacts only at a certain stage of his thought, but he always admitted them; indeed he mentions them in the late *Seventh Letter* and hints at them in the *Laws*.<sup>60</sup> But these are Ideas on a much lower level than the Ideas of natural kinds, and they cannot be located within their same sphere. We can thus easily explain what has been handed down by the indirect tradition, insofar as there are no absolute Ideas of artifacts, but only Ideas of them produced by the

58. Gaiser, *Platons*, 105.

59. See in this regard F. Steckerl's "On the Problem: Artefacta and Idea," in *Classical Philology* 37 (1942): 288-98, which cites interesting passages of Albinus and Syrianus.

60. *Seventh Letter* 342D5: καὶ περὶ σώματος ἅπαντος σκευαστοῦ . . .; also *Laws* 12.965B7-16, where it is said that the craftsman must tend toward the one, thus taking the Idea in a henological sense. In speaking of the craftsman as he who exercises an art, Plato is obviously referring also to artifacts.

Demiurge; they therefore are not Ideas in the primary sense, which is that of the natural kinds, though they have precise relations with them. Consequently, it is understandable why many Platonists assume a negative position toward them, and why the matter provoked differences of opinion.<sup>61</sup>

Here we have an ontological foundation for the ancient Greek distinction between *physis* and *techne*, with all its ramifications.

4. We come, then, to the conclusions to be drawn from what we looked at from the *Sophist* and the *Statesman*: that Plato had arrived at the most advanced expression of creationism in the Hellenic world.

Here it seems the new paradigm solves the problem better than old.

This problem has produced and still produces strong reactions and prejudices in many interpreters, who are in various ways conditioned against the issue of divine creation. These prejudices have generated plenty of confusions, or at least they have led to a bracketing or marginalizing of the issue. We may take as an example what Wilamowitz-Möllendorff himself wrote on the problem of creation in general in relation to the ancient Greek mode of thought. Discussing Xenophon's *Memorabilia* 1.4, which speaks of the demiurgic Intelligence's creating men, he writes: "From this we cannot deduce a Zeus creator of men and the earth, nor this God creator, nor the concept of a creation of heaven and earth. Even in jest the Hellenes rarely said anything of this kind. The crude representation (*plumpe Vorstellung*) of a creation from nothing clashes with ancient traditional pieties, which never saw nature as the uncreated revelation of God, and hence the divinity in it, so long as they remained true Hellenes."<sup>62</sup>

Thus, for some scholars, it is not possible to speak of creation in any sense, in reference to Greek authors, unless by going against the very mode of thought characteristic of the Hellenes.

Nevertheless, Plato speaks of a demiurgic activity in the sense of bringing forth being from nonbeing (ἐκ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος εἰς τὸ ὄν)<sup>63</sup> and, as we have seen,<sup>64</sup> he says quite clearly that the Demiurge produces the universe, living things, vegetables, minerals, and not only the things which are generated, but also the things from which the things which

61. On this issue, see M. Isnardi Parente, *Techne. Momenti del pensiero greco da Platone, a Epicuro* (Florence, 1966), esp. 7-96; this book is an essential point of reference within the traditional paradigm.

62. U. von Wilamowitz-Möllendorff, *Der Glaube der Hellenen* (Darmstadt, 1959<sup>3</sup>), 1:342ff.

63. See *Symposium* 205B8ff. (cf., above, note 33) and *Sophist* 219B4-7 (cf., above, note 34), 265B8-E7 (cf., above, note 36), and 266B2-5 (cf., above, note 37). These passages have already been discussed in this chapter.

64. See section IV. 2 in this chapter, 323-24.

are generated are derived,<sup>65</sup> that is, the elements (water, air, earth, and fire).

The conception of being that is opened up by the new paradigm, in our opinion, solves all the difficulties.

Being for Plato is a mixture, and consequently the creation of the Demiurge is the creation of a mixture, that is, a passage from disorder to order, because being is this ordering of disorder, a unification of unlimited plurality.

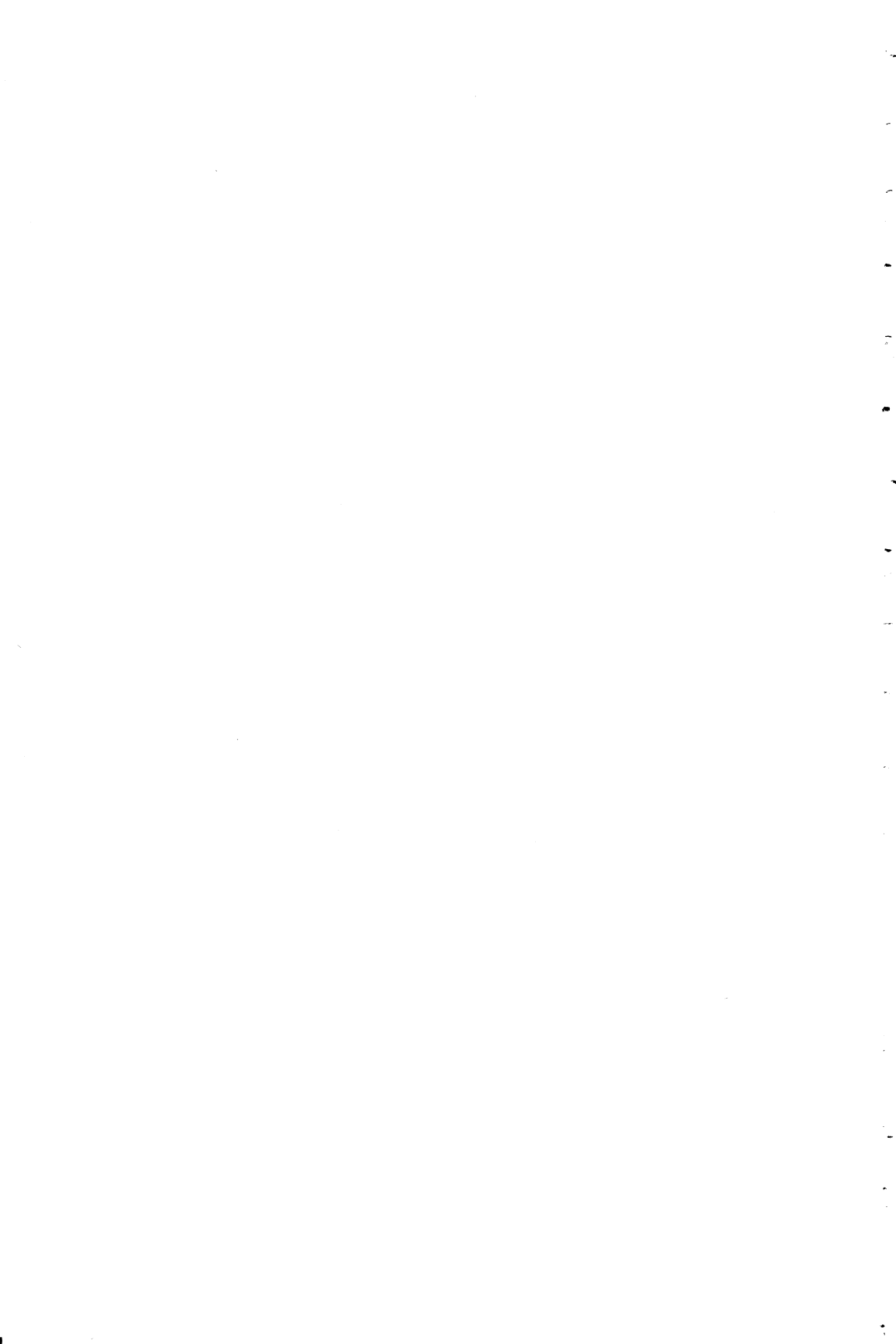
Plato pursues this line of thought to an astonishing extent. He advances to a position far ahead of all the Greeks before and after him, while remaining a Hellenic thinker.

In fact, he does not restrict himself to saying that the Demiurge combines in the mixture preconstituted elements; he even claims in no uncertain terms that he makes those very elements. In other words, the Demiurge produces both the material elements from which things are derived, and the formal elements which permit the realization in the sensible world of the ideal world, and thus the actualization of the Good (the One) in all possible forms, specifically, by means of numbers, mathematical, and geometrical structures.

In order to understand these complex doctrines fully, we must now tackle the key texts of the *Philebus* and the *Timaeus*, which confront and explore these fundamental issues.<sup>66</sup>

65. *Sophist* 266B2-5 (cf., above, note 37).

66. In the *Symposium*, Erixymachus explains Eros in terms of demiurgic activity (cf. Krämer, *Arete*, 233ff.).



## 17 The Four Highest Kinds of Reality: The Unlimited, the Limit, the Mixture, and the Demiurgic Intelligent Cause of the Mixture (*Philebus* 23C–31A)

### I. THE FOUR HIGHEST KINDS OF REALITY

We pointed out above in regard to the three metaphysical passages of the *Philebus* (a) that the first concerns the whole of reality, explicitly indicating reference to beings which always are, namely, all the Ideas; (b) that the second includes cosmic reality; and (c) that the third takes up issues of value.<sup>1</sup>

Plato says eternal beings arise from unity and plurality, and therefore are structured in terms of the limit and the unlimited. If the eternal beings necessarily presuppose the limit and the unlimited, then they are a mixture of them. Recall that this is not a thesis exclusive to the new paradigm, because careful scholars had already grasped the point and tried to modify the traditional paradigm so as to solve some anomalies and counter-instances that the dialectical dialogues presented.

However, Plato speaks openly of mixture only in the second metaphysical passage, where he introduces it as a third kind, as unity which is derived from the union of the limited and the unlimited.<sup>2</sup>

Two reasons can be given to explain this. (a) First, ontological mixture is cosmologically quite comprehensible, as we saw from the examples Plato adduces to clarify this doctrine. (b) Second, simply by mobilizing the concept of mixture, which gives rise to all realities, especially to cosmological and anthropological realities (both physical and those connected with the soul), Plato makes room for the introduction of a fourth kind, which is the cause of the mixture, namely, Intelligence.

Therefore, the highest kinds are the following four:

1. unlimited;
2. limit;

1. See Chapter 14.

2. Within the traditional interpretive paradigm, N. I. Boussoulas's *L'être et la composition des mixtes dans le Philèbe de Platon* (Paris, 1952) is the classic account. It is a very accurate book, but would need to be restructured to take on board the new paradigm. For the scholarly literature concerning the *Philebus*, see Chapter 13, note 1.

3. mixture of the unlimited and the limit;
4. cause of the mixture.

Indeed, being at all levels is a mixture of unlimited and limit, which in modern terms we could describe as a synthesis of limit delimiting the unlimited; on the level of the Ideas it is a form of *a priori* synthesis (in the metaphysical sense); on the other hand, with all other forms of being which are not pure Ideas, it is a synthesis produced by the Intelligence on different levels. It is precisely for this latter type of synthesis that a cause of the mixture is called for, that is, a fourth kind.

Since this point is not very clear to many of the followers of the traditional paradigm, or is even contested by some of them, we provide some explanations. In the first decades of our century Levi wrote: "It is then necessary to stress that between the *peras* and the *apeiron* of the Ideas and those of the sensible things there can only be an analogy of function, not an identity of nature."<sup>3</sup> Levi later underscored this concept and, in his major work in the forties, he wrote: ". . . the *peras* and the *apeiron* of things in their primitive nature . . . have a nature which is not identical, but only similar to that of the Ideas."<sup>4</sup> And he stressed this point: "The general theory of *peras* (πέρας) and *apeiron* (ἄπειρον) as factors of every reality, which is a *mixture* (μικτόν), has an exact scientific value, because it is grounded on the certitude of the intelligible world, which the world of becoming reflects. But the study of the latter has a different character, since the treatment of it is, as the *Timaeus* says, following the same line of thought, an *εἰκῶς μῦθος*, a plausible story, which does not go beyond probability or *doxa*. Because we are dealing with the world of becoming, the mixture, which is the product of the first two kinds, is called a coming-into-being of reality (γένεσις εἰς οὐσίαν), a generated reality (γεγενημένη οὐσίαν): these expressions designate the process by which becoming, subject to the determining action of the *peras*, that related reality of which it is capable. . . ."<sup>5</sup>

We have quoted these passages from Levi not only for their objective importance, but also because, as a matter of the present author's personal history, it was the concepts they express which long ago persuaded us that, unless we take the Unwritten Doctrines as its background, the *Philebus* cannot be properly understood.

It might be objected that the view in which we follow Levi does not agree with the interpretation proposed by the Tübingen School. For the latter presents the metaphysics of Plato in terms of an *Ableitungssys-*

3. A. Levi, *Il concetto del tempo nei suoi rapporti coi problemi del divenire e dell'essere nella filosofia di Platone* (Turin, 1920), 79.

4. A. Levi, *Il problema dell'errore*, 118.

5. *Ibid.*, 119.



tem, a deductive system, which implies identity and not analogy. We have already offered some explanation on this issue.<sup>6</sup> We may recall that even if we suppose (which we do not concede) that the scholars of the Tübingen School would reject analogy, such a thesis would not in any case affect the paradigmatic categories, but only the views which are up for grabs within the paradigm.

Let us read the text in which Plato presents the four kinds:

*Socrates:* Let us try to be very careful what starting point we take.

*Protarchus:* Starting point?

*Socrates:* Of all that now exists in the universe, let us make a twofold division, or rather, if you don't mind, a threefold.

*Protarchus:* On what principle, may I ask?

*Socrates:* We might use some of what we were saying a while ago.

*Protarchus:* Which?

*Socrates:* We said, did we not, that God has revealed two elements of things, the unlimited and the limit.

*Protarchus:* Certainly.

*Socrates:* Then let us take these as two of our classes, and, as the third, something arising out of the mixture of them both, though I make myself a ridiculous sort of person with my sortings of things into classes and my enumerations.

*Protarchus:* What do you mean, my good sir?

*Socrates:* It appears to me that I now need a fourth kind as well.

*Protarchus:* Tell me what it is.

*Socrates:* Consider the cause of the mixing of the first two with each other, and treat that, please, as a fourth to be added to the other three.

*Protarchus:* Are you sure you won't need a fifth to effect separation?

*Socrates:* Possibly, but not, I think, at the moment. But should the need arise, I expect you will forgive me if I go chasing after a fifth.

*Protarchus:* Yes, to be sure.<sup>7</sup>

## II. THE GENUS OF THE UNLIMITED AND ITS UNITY AND PLURALITY

The first of the genera of which the *Philebus* offers a conceptual characterization is the unlimited (*ἄπειρον*). Unless the reader bears in mind both that dialectic has two moments or directions (the synoptic-generalizing and the diairetic-reductive), and the use of analogy among the relations, he will fall into insoluble problems from the very outset.

Plato begins from the first two kinds, the unlimited and the limit, saying that each of these needs to be divided into many (diagnosis) and then brought back to unity (synopsis).<sup>8</sup>

6. See Chapter 16, section I, 305–6.

7. *Philebus* 23C1–E2.

8. See what we said on this issue above in Chapter 9, section V, 174–77 and in Chapter 16, *passim*.

1. Plato is particularly insistent about the double procedure necessary to understand these kinds, especially unlimited and limit. We must split each of them into many<sup>9</sup> and then collect them into a unity,<sup>10</sup> thus trying to understand in what way each was one and many.<sup>11</sup> As to the unlimited, Plato first explains the sense in which it is many using examples; and second, he stresses the kind of unlimited as unity,<sup>12</sup> claiming that we ought to collect all such dispersed kinds, and do our best to stamp a single character on them,<sup>13</sup> a point to which he returns many times.

2. Perhaps surprisingly Plato refers to a concept, source of the unlimited's unity.

The bipolar structure of Platonic ontology radically centered on the One-Many would seem to indicate that by its nature the unlimited implies plurality (indeterminate and unlimited), opposed to limit, which implies unity. But here is how the new paradigm solves this difficulty.

The Principle of the Dyad of the great-and-small, antithetical to the One in all its differentiations, implies a certain determination. Hence, we must go on into various subdivisions in order to grasp its different particular manifestations. The table of the Meta-Ideas, traced above according to relations of opposition,<sup>14</sup> places in the righthand column Meta-Ideas in which there prevails the Dyadic Principle opposed to the One, and to some extent determined by the One, despite its prevalence. In the lefthand column instead, in which the One prevails, the differentiations, gradations, and graduations of the Meta-Ideas also imply the opposite Principle. Here, in the *Philebus*, Plato does not bring into play (except implicitly) the supreme Meta-Ideas that refer to the opposed Principle. Rather he calls chiefly on its cosmological manifestations, which are more closely related to the theme of the dialogue.

But the question which at first glance arouses widespread embarrassment is the following: When Plato asserts the unlimited as a unity, how is this unity to be understood?

Here, Plato is clearly speaking of unity in the sense of the unity of a Principle: the unity of the Principle opposite to the absolute One, or the Principle considered as a unit, which we must admit in order to explain the multiplicity, in fact, he is speaking of a single nature<sup>15</sup> in the sense of a class that unites the more and the less.<sup>16</sup>

9. *Philebus* 23E4.

10. *Ibid.*, E5.

11. *Ibid.*, E6.

12. *Ibid.*, 25A1.

13. *Ibid.*, 1-4.

14. See Chapter 13, section I, 237-49.

15. *Philebus* 25A4.

16. *Ibid.*, C10ff.

But Plato is almost overgenerous in this text with hints and references to the Unwritten Doctrines, despite saying that he wants to avoid going over all the details.<sup>17</sup>

All the same, *apeiron* is a term of art insofar as it means indeterminate, indefinite, unlimited, and thus expresses the absence of unity. So it is clear that unity of this antithetical Principle is precisely nonunity at the level of the Principles.

This indeterminate or indefinite or unlimited consists in a procedure always advancing in the two opposed directions, and not remaining still,<sup>18</sup> as can be seen from the example of the hot and cold, involving an unceasing change toward the hotter, and an unceasing change toward the colder in the opposite direction. But the choice of more and less as the distinctive characteristic of the unlimited is particularly telling: Plato understands a ceaseless change toward the more and a ceaseless change (in the opposite direction) toward the less, that is, an unending process toward the two opposed extremes, taken Dyadically.

This is a clear reference to the principle of the Dyad of the great-and-small of the Unwritten Doctrines; it expresses unlimitedness in the twofold sense of a progress toward an indefinite greatness and toward an indefinite smallness.

In any case, among the many other hints in this passage, Plato explicitly uses the greater and the smaller as the final illustrative example, clearly referring to the indefinite Dyad of the greater-and-smaller.<sup>19</sup>

There is a further interesting point. In the passage we are accounting for, Plato makes a very strong allusion to the cosmologico-sensible doctrine of the antithetical Principle by using the terms “abode” (ἔδρα)<sup>20</sup> and “place” (χῶρα),<sup>21</sup> which he discusses at length in the *Timaeus*. The purpose of this is to remind those who are initiated that they will be able to follow his reasonings about the overall function of the antithetical Principle at various levels.<sup>22</sup>

Finally, Plato points out that the Principle of the more and the less is the antithesis of quantity and of the due measure, and that these latter, if they entered into more or less in the abode of the more and the less, would banish it from the place (χῶρα) in which it resides; this means that they would determine and delimit the more and the less because quantity stays still and puts an end to process.

17. Ibid., E5.

18. Ibid., 24D4-5.

19. Ibid., 25C9ff.

20. Ibid., 24D1.

21. Ibid., D2.

22. See Chapter 19.

This is the text in which Plato develops this line of reasoning:

*Socrates:* Well then, let us confine our attention in the first place to three out of these four, and let us take two of these three, observing how each of them is split into many and scattered, and then collecting each of them into one again, and so try to discern in what possible way each of them is in fact both a one and a many.

*Protarchus:* Could you make it all a little clearer still? If so, I dare say I could follow you.

*Socrates:* Well, in putting forward two of the three I mean just what I mentioned a while ago, the unlimited, and that which has limit. I shall try to explain that in a sense the unlimited is many; the limited may await our later attention.

*Protarchus:* It will.

*Socrates:* Your attention now, please. The matter which I ask you to attend to is difficult and controversial, but I ask you nonetheless. Take hotter and colder to begin with, and consider whether you can ever observe any sort of limit attaching to them, or whether these kinds of thing have more and less actually resident in them, so that for the period of that residence there can be no question of suffering any bounds to be set. Set a term, and it means the term of their own existence.

*Protarchus:* That is perfectly true.

*Socrates:* And in point of fact more and less are always, we may assert, found in hotter and colder.

*Protarchus:* To be sure.

*Socrates:* Our argument then demonstrates that this pair is always without bounds, and being boundless means . . . that they must be absolutely unlimited.

*Protarchus:* I feel that strongly, Socrates.

*Socrates:* Ah yes, a good answer, my dear Protarchus, which reminds me that this strongly that you have just mentioned, and slightly too, have the same property as more and less. When they are present in a thing they never permit it to be of a definite quantity, but introduced into anything we do the character of being strongly so-and-so as compared with mildly so-and-so, or the other way round. They bring about a more or a less, and obliterate definite quantity. For, as we were saying just now, if they didn't obliterate definite quantity, but permitted definite and measured quantity to find an abode where more and less and strongly and slightly reside, these latter would find themselves turned out of their own quarters. Once you give definite quantity to hotter and colder they cease to be; hotter never stops where it is but is always going a point further, and the same applies to colder, whereas definite quantity is something that has stopped going on and is fixed. It follows therefore from what I say that hotter, and its opposite with it, must be unlimited.

*Protarchus:* It certainly looks like it, Socrates, though, as you said, these matters are not easy to follow. Still, if things are said again and yet again, there is some prospect of the two parties to a discussion being brought to a tolerable agreement.

*Socrates:* Quite right. That's what we must try to do. However, for the present, to avoid going over into detail, see whether we can accept what I shall say as a mark of the nature of the unlimited.

*Protarchus:* What is it then?

*Socrates*: When we find things becoming more or less so-and-so, or admitting of terms like strongly, slightly, very, and so forth, we ought to reckon them all as belonging to a single kind, namely that of the unlimited; that will conform to our previous statement, which was, if you remember, that we ought to do our best to collect all such kinds as are torn or split apart, and stamp a single character on them.

*Protarchus*: I remember.<sup>23</sup>

After saying that he will explain how the unlimited is many, Plato refers only to three of these "many": hot and cold, strong and gentle, and excess. Thus, he pays little attention to the diairetic-reductive procedure; on the other hand, right from the beginning, he insists on the procedure in the synoptic-generalizing direction so as to clarify the hallmark of the nature of the unlimited.

It seems that Plato has done this on purpose, playing on two senses of the many; he means to point out not so much the plurality of the ways in which the *apeiron* is manifested, as indeterminate plurality, or the plurality which is the very nature of the antithetical Principle. So much so that Plato turns the same move round, to arrive at the opposite conclusion about *peras*. Plato refers to just as many types of the unlimited a little further on, when he introduces the third kind (the mixture): dry and wet, more or less numerous, faster and slower, and then ends with a reference to the greater and the smaller,<sup>24</sup> and in the subsequent pages he also mentions the treble and the bass.<sup>25</sup>

In short, the more and less, which is the distinctive mark of the nature of the unlimited, is manifested in the following forms:

1. hot and cold
2. strong and gentle
3. excess (too much and too little)
4. dry and wet
5. more and less numerous
6. fast and slow
7. treble and bass
8. larger and smaller.

### III. THE FUNDAMENTAL FEATURE OF LIMIT

We have seen the play by which Plato links the *apeiron* with the plural (the principle of plurality) and with the Dyad of the great-and-small; and we said that a similar move is executed with regard to *peras*, this

23. *Ibid.*, 23E3-25A5.

24. *Ibid.*, C8-10.

25. *Ibid.*, 26A2.

time, predictably enough, to connect it with the One. But, whereas for the *apeiron* he made us see, by referring to unity, that the issue was the unity of the nature of the more and the less and of what is connected to it, Plato makes a complicated maneuver relative to the *peras*, so as to introduce the One after building up a calculated tension, resolving it only at the end after teasing interruptions and elaborate delays.

First, Plato tackles the genus of the *pera*, giving us only a very brief and compressed characterization, without coming to its definition. Here is the text:

*Socrates:* Then things that don't admit of these terms, but admit of all their opposites like equal and equality in the first place, and then double and any term expressing a ratio of one number to another or one unit of measurement to another, all these things we may set apart and reckon—I think properly—as coming under the limit. What do you say?

*Protarchus:* Excellent, Socrates.<sup>26</sup>

Presumably, Plato wants to provoke those readers who are already acquainted with his doctrines some other way, and to force them to concentrate on the things that are going to be stressed. It is to be noted how, in presenting the *apeiron* he went straight to the heart of the problem, which was that of explaining how the *apeiron* is many, as well as showing how this plurality reduces to a unity of nature; he did not insist on the plurality of the forms of the *apeiron* in order to arrive at the unity of nature of such kinds which consist in the more and the less.

But, we can see how in the passage we have just read, he proceeds in exactly the opposite way and insists on the many manifestations of the *peras*—on the things which are contrary to the various forms of the *apeiron*, specifically on the equal, on the double, on number, and on measure—and he does not explicitly say what the nature of the *peras* is.

What is Plato aiming at here?

He is aiming to put the reader's mind in check to force him to understand that the unity of nature of the *peras* just is the One, the explanation of which has to be waited for, since he clearly thinks it is necessary to do this with regard to his much maligned and disputed doctrine.

But here is how, by placing his claims in the context of the discussion of the third kind (mixture), Plato unveils much of his game. The third kind is born of the mixture of, on the one hand, the unlimited or the things which are stamped with nature, which accepts the more and less, with, on the other hand, the limit, or rather with everything that belongs to that "Breed" (γέννα),<sup>27</sup> to the family of the limit:

26. Ibid., A6-B4.

27. Ibid., 25D3.

*Socrates*: Yes, and now, as the next step, mix with the latter [the nature of the more and the less or the unlimited] the Breed of the limit.

*Protarchus*: What is that?

*Socrates*: The one we omitted to collect into unity just now; just as we collected the family of the unlimited together, so we ought to have collected that family which shows the character of limit, but did not. Perhaps it will still come to the same thing if in collecting these two kinds, the family we have spoken of will become plain to view.<sup>28</sup>

And immediately afterward, going back and developing the initial move in the passage cited, Plato explains that it is the nature of the limit to accept the equal, the double, to put an end to the conflict of opposites<sup>29</sup> characteristic of contraries, and to make them well proportioned and harmonious by introducing number;<sup>30</sup> in addition, he explains that it removes what is excessive and unlimited, and creates measure and proportion.<sup>31</sup>

After ending his discussion of the third kind, he also mentions the second, the *peras*: the unlimited is one in the sense of the unity of a kind; One is limit; and a unit is mixture of these two kinds. The *apeiron* includes many types, which are nevertheless reducible to unity insofar as they bear the distinguishing mark of the more and the less; mixture too includes many species, but all are a unity, insofar as they result from unions (of various sorts) of the *apeiron* and the *peras*. In what does the unity of the *peras* consist? Here is Plato's reply: "Then again we were not worried about the limit, neither that it does not have many [many kinds in which it is manifested], nor that it was a real unity."<sup>32</sup>

We can say that this is the most that Plato could put in writing on this issue, together with frequent references to the One (ἓν) which he scatters throughout this discussion, though these refer to the One in various senses and at various levels. This is done in such a way that anyone who can understand will succeed in grasping what Plato wanted to say.<sup>33</sup>

To quell any remaining doubts, we may refer to the ironic playfulness in which our philosopher indulges in the last passage quoted, where, carrying his joke to extremes, he says that, while the unlimited has many kinds, the limit does not have many, and that for this reason it is difficult to understand how it was a real unity.<sup>34</sup>

28. *Ibid.*, D2–9.

29. *Ibid.*, D11ff.

30. *Ibid.*, 25E1ff.

31. *Ibid.*, 26A7ff.

32. *Ibid.*, D4–5.

33. See, for example, *Ibid.*, 23E5, 6; 25A1; C11; D6; 26C5, 6; D2, 5, 7; E8.

34. *Ibid.*, 25E7ff. It is hardly necessary to repeat that we do not have in mind any simple, and therefore static, identification of the πέρας with the One (or of the ἄπειρον with the Dyad). We hope already to have made it clear that the intended relation is

In fact, Plato refers to at least as many forms or ways of explicating the *peras* as he does for the *apeiron*.

Here is a list, which sets out what we claim about his way of explicating the *peras*:

1. quantity;
2. due measure;
3. equality;
4. double;
5. numbers in relation to numbers;
6. measure in relation to a measure;
7. what removes the relations of contrariety by introducing number, and making them well-proportioned and harmonious;
8. what eliminates excess and creates measure and proportion.

And what is manifested in all these forms is the nature of the One. Unless we remember the relations between these claims and the Unwritten Doctrines, it is hard to see how all these forms of *peras* can be real unities. But, if we read the text in view of the Unwritten Doctrines, and in terms of Plato's distinction between writing and oral discussion, we can see no difficulty in understanding how *peras* is a real unity.

In conclusion, the nature of the *peras* is in the One and in the various ways in which at different levels the One performs its regulative, determining, and grounding function.

#### IV. THE MIXTURE OF UNLIMITED AND LIMIT AT DIFFERENT LEVELS

We have already had something to say about the third kind, the mixture of the limit with the unlimited because, for the reasons given, Plato runs together his explanation of the mixture with that of *peras*. The scheme Plato follows is again the same. The basic characteristic of the mixture is referred to at the beginning and at the end of the passage in which it is discussed, while in the middle we are given cosmological, physico-anthropological, and ontological examples of it.

The distinctive mark of the mixture of *peras* and *apeiron* consists in the synthetic composition of the contraries by means of number, and thus in the measure and the proportion which derive from it.

The examples given are those of health and of physical strength (which involve harmonious composition of contraries and of excesses), music (a proportional composition of treble and bass, and of slow and

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dynamic. In this respect, Ferber has misunderstood our view (cf. *Platos*, 292), since he appears to be opposed to any esoteric reading.



fast tempi), the seasons (which derive from the proportional composition of excesses of hot and cold), and in general all beautiful things (which are measure and proportion), as well as the positive states of souls (forms of harmonious overcoming of excesses and of opposites).

Here Plato also moves with great skill to direct us to what, in the context, needs to be highlighted, to wit, generation. Indeed everything generated and every kind of generation is a form of mixture.

At the beginning, Socrates says clearly that the mixture produces specific generations.<sup>35</sup> At the end, in order to stress generation, he jokingly says to his interlocutor that he is confused by the multiplicity which springs up in that third kind.<sup>36</sup> It is clear that this multiplicity of generation to which he refers was not to be found in the explanation or exemplifications he gives, since these are about as multiple as those given of the other two kinds. Hence, this reference is made to provoke and carry the reader to see for himself what Plato wants to draw his attention to, and which a few lines further on he emphasizes with the expression “generation toward being” (γένεσις εἰς οὐσίαν).<sup>37</sup>

Here is a list of the connotations and the examples which Plato used to illustrate the mixture:

1. what is well proportioned and harmonious;
2. health;
3. physical strength;
4. music;
5. the seasons;
6. all things beautiful to us;
7. the many and beautiful things which are in the soul;
8. the generation toward being which derives from the coming together of the limit and the unlimited.

The distinctive mark of the mixture is the synthetic unity generated by the limit and the unlimited. Here is the text:

*Socrates:* All right. Now what description are we going to give of number three, the mixture of these two.

*Protarchus:* That, I think, will be for you to tell me.

*Socrates:* Or rather for a God to tell us, if one comes to listen to my prayer.

*Protarchus:* Then offer your prayer, and look to see if he does.

*Socrates:* I am looking, and I fancy, Protarchus, that one of them has befriended us for some little time.

*Protarchus:* Really? What makes you believe that?

35. *Ibid.*, 25E4.

36. *Ibid.*, 26C8ff.

37. *Ibid.*, D8 to p. 368.

*Socrates:* I'll explain, of course. Please follow what I say.

*Protarchus:* Go on.

*Socrates:* We spoke just now, I believe, of hotter and colder, did we not?

*Protarchus:* Yes.

*Socrates:* Now add to these drier and wetter, more and less numerous, quicker and slower, greater and smaller, and everything we brought together a while ago as belonging to that kind of being which admits of the more and the less.

*Protarchus:* You mean the kind that is unlimited?

*Socrates:* Yes. And now, as the next step, mix with it the breed of the limit.

*Protarchus:* What is that?

*Socrates:* The one we omitted to collect just now; just as we collected the family of the unlimited together, so we ought to have collected that family which shows the character of limit, but we didn't. Still perhaps it will come to the same thing in spite of that, if in the process of collecting these two kinds the family we have spoken of is going to become plain to view.

*Protarchus:* What family? Please explain.

*Socrates:* That of equal and double, and any other that puts an end to the conflict of opposites with one another, making them well proportioned and harmonious by the introduction of number.

*Protarchus:* I see. By mixing in these you mean, apparently, that we find various products arising as they are respectively mixed.

*Socrates:* You take my meaning aright.

*Protarchus:* Then continue.

*Socrates:* In cases of sickness does not the right association of these factors bring about health?

*Protarchus:* Unquestionably.

*Socrates:* And in the case of treble and bass, or of swift and slow, which are unlimited, does not the introduction of these same elements at once produce limit and establish the whole art of music in its full perfection?

*Protarchus:* Admirably put.

*Socrates:* And then again, if they are introduced where there is severe cold and stifling heat, they remove all that is excessive and unlimited, and create measure and balance.

*Protarchus:* Certainly.

*Socrates:* Then it is here that we find the source of fair weather and all other beautiful things, namely in a mixture of the unlimited with that which has limit.

*Protarchus:* Of course.

*Socrates:* And indeed there are countless more things which I may omit to enumerate, such as beauty and strength along with health, besides a whole host of fair things found in our souls. For this Goddess of ours, fair Philebus, must have observed the lawlessness and utter wickedness of mankind due to an absence of limit in men's pleasures and appetites, and therefore established among them a law and order that are marked by limit. You maintain that she thereby did harm. I assert that on the contrary she performed a service. What do you think about it, Protarchus?

*Protarchus:* I am thoroughly satisfied, Socrates.

*Socrates:* Well, there are the three things I have spoken of, if you follow me.

*Protarchus:* Yes, I think I see what you mean. I think you are saying that one is the unlimited one, and the second is the limit of things. But I can't altogether grasp what you mean by the third thing that you mention.

*Socrates:* The reason for that, my dear good sir, is that you are confused by the multiplicity which springs up in the third kind. And yet a plurality of forms was presented by the unlimited too, and in spite of having stamped on them the distinguishing mark of the more and its opposite, we saw them as a unity.

*Protarchus:* True.

*Socrates:* Then again we were not worried about the limit, neither that it does not have many, nor that it is a real unity.

*Protarchus:* No, there was no reason to do so.

*Socrates:* None whatever. And now as to the third kind, I am reckoning all this progeny of our two factors as a unity, and you may mean a generation toward being resulting from those measures that are achieved with the aid of limit. —

*Protarchus:* I understand.<sup>38</sup>

The expression “generation toward being” (γένεσις εἰς οὐσίαν) with which Plato ends this passage, has confused many scholars. But it is fully clarified if we connect it with the unity spoken of in the preceding line. Therefore, Krämer’s interpretation seems right: “. . . the meaning of the world, in the infinite enrichment through a γένεσις εἰς οὐσίαν . . . is a tendency of plurality toward unity.”<sup>39</sup>

#### V. THE FOURTH HIGHEST KIND: THE CAUSE OF THE MIXTURE

Plato insists on the term and the concept of generation because he uses it to introduce the fourth highest kind, the cause of the mixture. Everything that is generated necessarily requires a cause. Plato immediately makes five points, as follows:

- a. what produces and the cause are the same thing;
- b. what is produced and caused and what is generated are the same thing;
- c. what produces, or is the cause, always precedes what is produced or is the effect, and what is produced always follows the cause;
- d. the cause is quite distinct and different from the things that it uses for generation;
- e. what produces and what functions as a cause is posited as a fourth kind, because it is structurally differentiated from the other three.

The passage is very compressed, because it aims merely to introduce the cause as a fourth kind, whereas Plato will take up the issue of its nature immediately afterward.

*Socrates:* And now to continue. We said that besides the three kinds there is a fourth kind into which we should inquire together. Now I expect you to regard

38. *Ibid.*, 25B5–26D10.

39. Krämer, *Arete*, 144.

it as necessary that all things that come to be should come to be because of some cause.

*Protarchus:* Yes, I do. Without that how could they come to be?

*Socrates:* Well, is there anything more than a verbal difference between a cause and a creator? Wouldn't it be proper to call that which creates things and that which causes them one and the same thing?

*Protarchus:* Quite proper.

*Socrates:* And further, shall we find that between that which is created and that which comes to be there is, once again, a mere verbal difference?

*Protarchus:* Yes.

*Socrates:* And isn't it natural that the creator should lead while the creation follows it in coming into being?

*Protarchus:* Certainly.

*Socrates:* Hence a cause and that which subserves the cause of creation are not the same.

*Protarchus:* Of course.

*Socrates:* Now our three kinds gave us all things that come to be, and the constituents from which they come to be, did they not?

*Protarchus:* Quite so.

*Socrates:* And this fourth kind that we are speaking of, which fashions all these things, this cause, is pretty clearly different from them?

*Protarchus:* Yes, different certainly.

*Socrates:* But now that the four kinds have been discriminated it will do no harm to enumerate them in order, so that we may remember each of them.

*Protarchus:* I agree.

*Socrates:* The first, then, I call the unlimited, the second the limit, and the third what is generated by the mixture of these two; as to the fourth, I hope I shall not be misled in calling it the cause of the mixture and of generation.<sup>40</sup>

## VI. THE DETERMINATION OF THE NATURE OF THE FOURTH KIND

Plato goes further in discussing the fourth kind than he does with the first three because, in the *Philebus*, he aims to establish the clear superiority of Intelligence and wisdom over pleasure, and to give a place to pleasure (although at a lower level) in a mixed life, one based on a mixture of intelligence and pleasure. Thus, we ought to explain not only mixture in general, but also highlight the overall role of the Intelligence. We are helped in this direction by the argument for the claim that Intelligence is the essential characteristic of the fourth kind, as the cause of every generation.

The discussion of the fourth kind is the hardest to understand, for the following reasons. Plato refers to complex doctrines, but only so far as is necessary for solving the problems he is considering. He operates with his usual theoretical economy, according to which he only appeals in his writings to those indispensable metaphysical concepts that are re-

40. *Philebus* 26E1-27C2.

quired for the matter in hand and only so far as they are strictly necessary.

But, in our case, the problem is made even more complex, since Plato touches on a fundamental issue which had occupied much of the history of philosophy which preceded him: Is everything, the whole universe, produced by an irrational and wholly random power, or must we admit Intelligence and Wisdom as a productive and ordering cause?

Plato clearly recognizes that this is the basic problem which man must confront when he is faced with the issue of the whole of what exists. Tackling the parallel metaphysical question of the existence or nonexistence of supersensible beings in addition to the corporeal in the *Sophist*, he describes the great struggle of the Giants, using a splendid mythical metaphor.<sup>41</sup> Here, in the *Philebus*, he reuses very similar concepts, but transfers them from the battle of the Giants to a touching image which affects not only men of his day, but those of all times.

He says that his predecessors had fully grasped that there is an Intelligence who rules the cosmos; but it is inadequate to merely pick up what they say, which, if repeated parrot-fashion, would remain the opinions of others. Rather, we must run the same risk as them, and share the blame with them. Plato is referring to the risk of being refuted and derided by the learned and the experts, that is, by the clever persons, who reject the cosmic Intelligence and the order which depends on it, because they maintain an opposed thesis. Here is the text:

*Socrates:* I must do as you say, Protarchus; as a matter of fact it is not a difficult task. But did I really cause you alarm as Philebus said, by my playful glorification when I asked you to which kind mind and knowledge belong?

*Protarchus:* Very much so, Socrates.

*Socrates:* But really it's an easy question. For all the wise agree, thereby really glorifying themselves, that mind is the king of heaven and earth. And I fancy they are right. But I should like us, if you don't mind, to make a longer inquiry into the kind in question.

*Protarchus:* Proceed as you like, Socrates, and please feel no concern about being lengthy; we shan't quarrel with you.

*Socrates:* Thank you. Then let us begin, shall we, by putting the following question.

*Protarchus:* What is it?

*Socrates:* Are we to say, Protarchus, that the sum of things and what we call this universe is controlled by a power that is irrational and blind, and by mere chance, or on the contrary to follow our predecessors in saying that it is governed by mind and a wondrous regulating intelligence?

*Protarchus:* A very different matter, my dear good Socrates. What you are suggesting now seems to me sheer blasphemy. To maintain that mind orders it all does justice to the spectacle of the ordered universe, of the sun, the moon,

41. See Chapter 13, section I.5, 246-49.

the stars, and the revolution of the whole heaven, and for myself I should never express nor conceive any contrary view on the matter.

*Socrates*: Then are you willing that we should assent to what earlier thinkers agree upon, that this is the truth? And ought we not merely to repeat the opinions of other people without any risk to ourselves, but to share in the risk and the blame if some clever person asserts that the world is not as we think it, but is without order? —*Protarchus*: I am certainly willing to do so.

*Socrates*: Come then, and direct your attention to the point that confronts us next. —*Protarchus*: What is it, please.<sup>42</sup>

One might ask, who are the predecessors to whom Plato is referring? Chiefly, he is referring to Anaxagoras,<sup>43</sup> as we know from what is said in the *Phaedo*.<sup>44</sup> And besides Anaxagoras, he is surely alluding to Diogenes of Apollonia,<sup>45</sup> who on this point is a close follower of Anaxagoras and combines him eclectically with Anaximenes. This is well-known to scholars. However, they too often forget that Plato is speaking here through Socrates' mouth, and that the historical Socrates maintained this view;<sup>46</sup> so much so that Xenophon attributes an argument to Socrates that is taken up in detail in the *Philebus*. After putting into Socrates' mouth the great thesis that living things and all things which tend to a goal are not produced by chance (τύχη), but by knowledge (ἀπὸ γνώμης), Xenophon makes him say the following, in conversation with Aristodemus:

Do you think you have any wisdom yourself?

Oh! Ask me a question and judge from my answer.

And do you suppose that wisdom is nowhere else to be found, although you know that you have a mere speck of all the earth in your body and a mere drop of all the water, and that of all the other mighty elements you received, just a tiny portion for the fashioning of your body? But as for intelligence, do you think that you snapped it up by a lucky accident, that it alone is to be found nowhere else and that the orderly ranks of all these huge masses, infinite in number, are due, to a sort of absurdity?

Yes; for I don't see the ruler of it whereas I see the makers of things in this world.

Neither do you see your own soul, which rules your body; so that . . . you may say that you do nothing by design, but everything by chance.<sup>47</sup>

This is the key point from which Plato develops his own argument, adding to and deepening it, and setting it in a cosmic and metaphysical context. The amplification of Plato's argument centrally concerns the cosmic soul in line with the cosmological turn of the discussion.

42. *Philebus* 28C1–29A8.

43. On this theme, see Reale, *The History*, 1:113–15.

44. See Chapter 5, section III, and Chapter 16, section II.

45. Reale, *The History*, 1:128–30.

46. On this important issue, see what we said in Reale, *The History*, 1:225–37, and the documents and references there.

47. Xenophon, *Memorabilia*, 1.4.8ff.

Each of the four elements of which we are made up is only present in each of us in a tiny dose and has scarcely any power relative to the whole which makes up the universe. It follows that the elements in us derive from those spread through the universe, and can be replaced from that store and not vice versa.

The elements which make us up are coordinated and fixed in a unit to form our body. So, the elements as a whole, coordinated in the universe, likewise make up a body, a large body.

As tiny quantities of elements in us derive from and can be replaced by those in the cosmos, so our body, a unitary aggregate of those elements, must be derived from and nourished by the body of the cosmos.

So, because the salient characteristic of our bodies is its possession of a soul, the same characteristic must be found also in the body of the universe: indeed, in the same way that we cannot explain the beautiful things that are in us without reference to the soul, so it would be even more difficult to explain the much more beautiful properties present in the cosmos, if it were inanimate.

In particular, it would be inexplicable how the fourth kind, the cause of every mixture, could have furnished human bodies with souls, and not have done the same for the cosmos, which as a whole is more valuable. Here is the text:

*Socrates:* We can discern certain constituents of the corporeal nature of all living beings, namely, fire, water, breath, and earth too as storm-tossed sailors say; these are all present in their composition.

*Protarchus:* Quite so, and storm-tossed in truth we are by difficulty in our present discussion.

*Socrates:* Well now, let me point out to you something that applies to each of these elements in our make-up.

*Protarchus:* What?

*Socrates:* In each case it is only an inconsiderable fragment that is in us, and that too very far from being pure in quality or possessing a power worthy of its nature. Let me explain to you in one instance, which you must regard as applying to them all. There is fire, is there not, within ourselves, and also fire in the universe?

*Protarchus:* Of course.

*Socrates:* And isn't the fire that belongs to ourselves small in quantity and weak and inconsiderable, whereas the fire in the universe is wonderful in respect of its mass, its beauty, and all the powers that belong to fire?

*Protarchus:* What you say is perfectly true.

*Socrates:* Well, is the universal fire sustained and produced and increased by the fire that belongs to us, or is the opposite true, that my fire and yours and that of all other creatures owe all this to that other?

*Protarchus:* That question doesn't even merit an answer.

*Socrates:* You are right; indeed I imagine you will say the same about the earth that we have here in creatures and the earth in the universe, and in fact

about all the elements that I mentioned in my question a moment ago. Will your answer be as I suppose?

*Protarchus*: Could anyone giving a different answer be thought right in his head?

*Socrates*: I hardly think anyone could. But let's move to the next point. If we regard all these elements that I have been speaking of as gathered into a unit we call them a body, don't we? —*Protarchus*: Of course.

*Socrates*: Well, let me point out that the same holds good of what we call the ordered universe; on the same showing it will be a body, will it not, since it is composed of the same elements?

*Protarchus*: You are quite right.

*Socrates*: Then, to put it generally, is the body that belongs to us sustained by the body of the universe, has it derived and obtained therefrom all that I referred to just now, or is the converse true?

*Protarchus*: That is another question, Socrates, that doesn't deserve to be put.

*Socrates*: Well, does this one then? I wonder what you will say.

*Protarchus*: Tell me what it is.

*Socrates*: Shall we not admit that the body belonging to us has a soul?

*Protarchus*: Plainly we shall.

*Socrates*: And where, dear Protarchus, could it have got it from, unless the body of the universe, which has elements the same as our own though is superior in every respect, had a soul?

*Protarchus*: Plainly there can be no other source, Socrates.

*Socrates*: No, for surely we cannot suppose . . . that those four kinds, limit, unlimited, mixture, and the cause which is present in all things as a fourth kind—we cannot suppose that this last-named, while on the one hand it furnishes our bodies with soul, maintains our physique and cures a diseased body and provides all sorts of arrangements and remedial measures, in virtue of all which we recognize it as the sum of wisdom, has nevertheless failed in the case of the elements of the universe—although they are these same elements that pervade the whole heaven on a great scale, and are, moreover fair and pure—failed, I say, to ensure that these include what is fairest and most precious.

*Protarchus*: No, to suppose that would be utterly unreasonable.<sup>48</sup>

Clearly, Plato is speaking about the Intelligence of the Demiurge, that he will treat directly in the *Timaeus*, about the intelligence of the cosmic soul, also discussed at length in the *Timaeus*, and about the intelligence of human souls, which is widely discussed in his writings.

This is not surprising, because the discussion of all four kinds is carried out by embracing all the types of things that enter into each of them, that is, everything that belongs to each breed or family.<sup>49</sup>

Moreover, in our text we find not only γέννα, discussed above, but γένος (genus), and as a few scholars have properly pointed out, it is taken in the ordinary sense of "parental group" or "family."<sup>50</sup>

48. *Philebus* 29A9–30C1.

49. *Ibid.*, 25D3.

50. C. Diano, "Il problema della materia in Platone dal Parmenide al Filebo," in *Giornale critico della filosofia italiana* 49 (970): 29.



Evidently, Plato plays on the broad sense of “kind” for all it is worth. And what he has already said several times about the other kinds, that they include a plurality, unmistakably goes also for the fourth kind.

Starting with the supreme intelligence, from which the cosmic soul’s intelligence is derived and to which human intelligence is related, all forms of intelligence are to be located in the fourth kind.

The passage which we are looking at concludes by making reference above all to the soul of the world, to which, very probably, the “nature of Zeus” alludes in which is found “royal soul and royal person.” Naturally, the image of Zeus endowed with kingly soul and intelligence could very well refer also to the highest demiurgic Intellect. Nevertheless, in our context, placed as he is among the other gods, it seems to represent the first and highest generated God, which is the soul of the cosmos.

In any case, the general conclusion at which Plato is aiming is the thesis that Intellect belongs to the genus of cause, which is called the cause of all things.

Here is the text:

*Socrates:* If that is not so, then, we should do better to follow the other view and say, as we have said many times already, that there exist in the universe plenty of unlimited and enough limit, and a cause of no mean power, which orders and regulates the years, the seasons, and the months, and can properly be called wisdom and mind.

*Protarchus:* Quite properly.

*Socrates:* But wisdom and mind cannot come into existence without soul.

*Protarchus:* They cannot.

*Socrates:* Hence you will say that in the nature of Zeus a royal soul and a royal reason come to dwell by virtue of the power of the cause, while in other Gods other perfections dwell, according to which they get the names by which they are pleased to be called.

*Protarchus:* Quite so.

*Socrates:* Now don’t suppose, Protarchus, that we have spoken of this matter purposelessly; on the contrary it supports those ancient thinkers who declared that mind always rules the universe.

*Protarchus:* Yes indeed it does.

*Socrates:* And what’s more, it has provided an answer to my inquiry, to the effect that mind belongs to the family of what we called the cause of all things. By this time, I imagine, you have our answer.

*Protarchus:* Yes, I have it and it is complete, and yet I could not tell that you were giving it.

*Socrates:* Well, Protarchus, playfulness is sometimes a relief from seriousness.

*Protarchus:* You are right.

*Socrates:* I think, my friend, that we have now arrived at a fairly satisfactory demonstration of what kind reason belongs to, and what function it possesses.

*Protarchus:* I am sure of it.<sup>51</sup>

51. *Philebus* 30C2–31A4.

This complex discussion, to us, is one of the clearest examples of how Plato's writing calls for assistance. The assistance-structure, which Szlezák has shown to be indispensable in interpreting the dialogues of Plato's early and the middle periods,<sup>52</sup> is not merely confirmed, but actually broadened when we consider the dialectical dialogues.

The discussion which we have been commenting on could not be properly understood without appeal to the assistance provided by the other dialogues, particularly the *Timaeus*; but we would misunderstand it even worse without the assistance of the Unwritten Doctrines.

In this case, it is Plato himself who reminds us of this fact.

As we have seen, in the *Phaedrus*, he presents a defense of oral dialectic and a reconsideration of the value of writing. These are based on his concepts of seriousness and playfulness, and he tells us that the philosopher keeps the most serious things for oral dialectic, while what is entrusted to writing are not the most serious issues, because writing is an amusement, even if a very beautiful one. In the *Philebus*, bringing to an end the great discussion of the four kinds and especially of the fourth, he says that he has given the answer for which the dialogue was looking. And Plato reminds his interlocutor Protarchus (and hence the reader), who admits that this response had escaped him, of the relation between seriousness and playfulness in a surprising way, Socrates says, "Well, Protarchus, playfulness is sometimes a relief from seriousness."<sup>53</sup>

We proceed to reconstruct the realm of seriousness, from which Plato takes relief in the game we have been reading.

## VII. CONNECTIONS BETWEEN THE DOCTRINE OF THE FOUR KINDS AND THE UNWRITTEN DOCTRINES

We have already had occasion to refer to the relations which run between the metaphysical vistas of the *Philebus* and the Unwritten Doctrines and here we shall limit ourselves to recalling some of the things said, in order to focus on a final point which we must still clarify.

In the first metaphysical vista of the structure of all beings, and specifically of the Ideas, there is a correspondence between the claim that they are derived from mixture of the limit with the unlimited and the theses of the Unwritten Doctrines, according to which they result from the mixture of the One with the indefinite Dyad.

In this way, the Ideas each turn out to be a mixture of limit and unlimited; but Plato prefers to use this term for sensible things, con-

52. Szlezák, *Plato*, passim.

53. *Philebus* 30E6ff.

necting it with the concepts of generation, generated, and cause of generation. It is hardly necessary to recall that the Ideas can be said to be produced by the first Principles and so are generated from them; but, in this case, talk of generation and production is only metaphorical, since what is at issue is a sphere of being wholly outside time and becoming. So, the metaphor here indicates simply their metaphysical structure as conditioned beings or derivative of the two highest Principles.<sup>54</sup> In the *Philebus*, Plato states that the third kind, taken as a whole, is not any mixture of things, but is constituted by all the “unlimiteds” bound by limits: it is constituted by the Dyad in all its manifestations and at all levels, limited by the One.<sup>55</sup> It is because the metaphysical structure of the Ideas is not the result of a process that there is no need for a specific cause to determine the connection of limit and unlimited which constitutes it. It is the nature of the highest Principles, we have often called polar or bipolar, that implies their structural connection.

This bipolar combinatorial relation of limit-unlimited (One-Many) involves by its very nature a metaphysical, numerical reading. It is this metaphysical number that not only expresses the structure of the Ideas, but offers as a consequence the possibility of mediating between the intelligible and the sensible, that is, of molding the unlimited Principle into conformity with the intelligible world also at the sensible level.

The second metaphysical vista in the *Philebus* opens onto the ontological structure of the sensible realm. If the introduction of the genus of mixture in addition to the limit and the unlimited is only the explanation of something that, of itself, holds also for the intelligible world, but which Plato did not need to introduce into the dialogue, then the fourth genus, the productive or demiurgic cause, constitutes a novelty necessarily required by the realm of sensible reality.

We may observe that the text of the *Philebus* tells us only that, to explain reality at this level, we need this fourth kind. The reason is not explained, but can be clearly understood from the allusions.

The genus of the indeterminate has many forms: involving different levels in which the more and less, or too much and too little, or excess and deficiency are manifested. If we stick to the metaphysical distinction, we shall be able to speak of the more and less at the level of the intelligible and of the more and less at the sensible level. Thus, the more and less at the sensible level involves a sort of thickening that requires an Intelligence as the mediator and producer of the synthesis of the limit and unlimited, that the unlimited will accept limits.

54. See Krämer, *Platone*, 156 [Am. ed., 78].

55. *Philebus* 27D7-11.

Likewise, number functions as an intermediary. As the numerical-metaphysical schema characterizes the world of the Ideas, by mediating the One and the Indefinite, so also in the sensible realm, number resolves the relation of opposition of contraries, and it is by means of number that the contraries can be made commensurable.

The most important point arising from the introduction of the fourth kind is this: the demiurgic cause or Intelligence brings about this numerical mediation, by producing in this way the mixture of (intelligible) limit and the (sensible) unlimited and thus constitutes the cosmos.

It is clear that even at the highest level, Intelligence does not, for Plato, create *ex nihilo* as we pointed out above; but it is creative in the Hellenic sense of molding a formless reality in accordance with numerical relations. Plato's claims are therefore to be understood in this way.

Here are the four principal ones:

1. A cause is not only distinct from the effect, but always precedes it.<sup>56</sup>
2. A cause is different from what it uses to produce the generation.<sup>57</sup>
3. Whatever is used subserves the cause (τὸ δουλεῖον).<sup>58</sup>
4. The cause produces all these things, not only the things which are generated, but also those from which they are generated.<sup>59</sup>

The first is obvious as it stands and has no need of comment. We have already discussed the second and third, relative to Plato's views as expressed both in the *Phaedo*, and in a parallel passage in the *Timaeus*.<sup>60</sup>

The fourth is the most delicate point; and it can easily be misunderstood if taken out of context. In one sense, the cause of the mixture and of generation produces also the things it mixes, insofar as it works demiurgically (δημιουργεῖ) on them. Nevertheless, this does not mean that it creates from nothing, but only that it works on them with a view to obtaining what it aims at. And this sort of activity indicates that the activity of the demiurgic Intelligence is far from being a purely mechanical combinational activity. Indeed, the demiurgic Intelligence must work as much on the unlimited as on the limit so far as is necessary, so as to be able to bring about the synthesis or "generation toward being." But this issue is discussed fully in the *Timaeus*.

The goal the demiurgic Intelligence constantly pursues is that of drawing determinate unity from unlimited plurality. If anyone should

56. *Ibid.*, 27A5ff.

57. *Ibid.*, A8ff.

58. *Ibid.*

59. *Ibid.*, B1-2: τὸ δὲ δὴ πάντα ταῦτα (sc., τὰ μὲν γινόμενα καὶ ἐξ ὧν γίγνεται πάντα, of which he speaks at line 27A11) δημιουργοῦν λέγομεν τέταρτον, τὴν αἰτίαν.

60. See Chapter 16, section II.5.

think that our conclusions are a mere product of the new paradigm and not supported by the texts, it is worth citing a passage from Levi, who uses only the kind of terminology available in the old paradigm to say the same thing:

Because of the quantitative determinations that the *peras* introduces into the unlimited, generated reality can itself reflect the qualitative variations of the *apeiron*; and because of the action of a cause, which is the Demiurge acting to make its work as perfect as its nature allows and including in itself the unlimited a factor of irregularity and disorder, generated reality can itself reflect the order of the ideal world. The Demiurge, as his name suggests, is a craftsman, who acts like every craftsman, regulating his work by reference to a model, which is the higher reality of the Ideas. And this higher reality in turn must find its foundation in an ultimate principle, the Good. This is just what the end of the dialogue discusses, and the few hints that are given there allow us to understand why the perfection of generated reality follows from the quantitative determination of the unlimited.<sup>61</sup>

We have already discussed the finale of the *Philebus* at length, showing how it touches on the summit of Plato's thought, referring to the supreme Measure as the absolute value; but we have also seen that the whole discussion of the four highest kinds of the real revolves around the essence of the Good, that is, the One.

Therefore, what Levi said turns out right if we use the Unwritten Doctrines as its background and interpret the Good as One and Measure (the Good is the One, and the One is the Measure of all things), as Plato meant them in oral dialectic, and as continually crops up in the *Philebus*.

And the conclusion of the discussion of mixture (which is the point of departure for understanding the fourth genus) is truly emblematic: mixture is "generation toward being" (*γένεσις εἰς οὐσίαν*) and it is a one (*ἓν*) which derives from measures (*ἐκ μέτρων*).<sup>62</sup> This is the supreme task of the Intelligence: to bring about unity wherever and however possible by means of measure; and this means to bring about the Good.

61. A. Levi, *Il problema dell'errore*, 120ff.

62. *Philebus* 26D7-9.



## 18 The Metaphysical Basis of the *Timaeus*: The Creative Intelligence That Explains the World of Becoming; and Methodological Features of the Account's Presentation

### I. THE STRUCTURE OF THE *TIMEAEUS* AND HOW THE NEW PARADIGM REREADS IT

We have reached the *Timaeus*, the most read of Plato's dialogues and in many respects the most influential in the history of Western philosophical and theological thought.<sup>1</sup> Aristotle, generally, rarely quotes Platonic dialogues, makes frequent reference to it.<sup>2</sup> Within the ancient Academy this work was the focus of heated discussions and the subject of far-reaching theoretical interpretations; the Middle Platonists drew from it the essential structures for summing up Plato's thought; and the Neoplatonists also gave it great prominence,<sup>3</sup> so much so that Proclus thought of it, along with the *Chaldean Oracles*, as the basic text of Hellenism.<sup>4</sup> Philo of Alexandria used it for a philosophical account of *Genesis*.<sup>5</sup> With the Fathers of the Church it became a reference point and, as is well known, the *Timaeus*, which remained for many centuries the only available text of classical philosophy, provided medieval thinkers with their image of Platonic philosophy and with some fundamental theoretical insights,<sup>6</sup> until at least the twelfth century, when Aristotelian texts began to be translated and put into circulation.<sup>7</sup> During the

1. All the significant modern literature on the *Timaeus* is listed in Praechter, *Die Philosophie des Altertums*, 84ff.\*; Totok, *Handbuch*, 205–7; Cherniss, *Lustrum* (1960): 208–27; and Brisson, *Lustrum* (1979): 286ff. and *Lustrum* (1983): 295ff. Isnardi Parente presents the *status quaestionis* of many of the specific problems in the *Timaeus*, in Zeller and Isnardi Parente, *La filosofia dei greci*, 3:1, passim.

2. Cf. H. Bonitz, *Index Aristotelicus*, 761b55–60. See in addition G. S. Claghorn, *Aristotle's Criticism of Plato's Timaeus* (The Hague, 1954).

3. M. Baltes, *Die Weltentstehung des platonischen Timaios nach den Antiken Interpretationen* (Leiden: Brill, 1976–1978), 2 vols. [the first volume includes the ancient Academy and the Neoplatonists Syrianus and Hierocles; the second is concerned entirely with Proclus].

4. Marinus, *Life of Proclus*, 38.

5. Cf. D. T. Ruina, *Philo of Alexandria and the Timaeus of Plato* (Amsterdam, 1983; Leiden, 1986<sup>2</sup>).

6. Mostly based on the translation and commentary of Chalcidius; see Chapter 2, section III.3.

7. Cf. A. E. Taylor, *Plato: The Man and His Work*, 436.

Renaissance, it still occupied a very prominent position, so much so that, in his emblematic School of Athens, Raphael expresses pictorially the thought of the philosophers and the learned of his own times, by depicting the *Timaeus* under Plato's arm, as the text containing his most important message.

In modern times, it has been more thoroughly translated and commented upon than any of the other dialogues and many individual critical studies of it have been published.<sup>8</sup>

In 1918, Robin began a reconstruction of the central points of the dialogue making systematic use of the Unwritten Doctrines.<sup>9</sup> By beginning his book with an account of how the Demiurge creates the soul, in the light of the Unwritten Doctrines, Gaiser gave this line of thought a major step forward.<sup>10</sup> In 1970, H. Happ presented the most interesting and perspicuous interpretation of the doctrine of the material Principle in the *Timaeus*, succeeding in picking out its relations with the theory of the Dyad referred to by the Unwritten Doctrines.<sup>11</sup>

In view of these summary indications, however, it is easy to see how complex the interpretation is of a text that has behind it a perhaps unrivalled tradition. Given the specific subject matter of the *Timaeus*, we can offer a particularly rich and articulated interpretation today with the new paradigm, since the metaphysical teachings entrusted by Plato to the written works and those reserved to the unwritten are here more intertwined than in earlier dialogues. We may distinguish two major metaphysical currents in the *Timaeus*.

One concerns the issue of the Demiurge (and its implications), which leads to a set of conclusions already foreshadowed in the preceding dialogues starting with the *Phaedo*; this being so, Plato makes no further references to the unwritten teachings on this matter, on the supposition that he has set out in writing everything that he had to say about it.

The other concerns the material Principle, which at least from the cosmological viewpoint, is more prominent in the *Timaeus* than in any of the other writings, simply because it is called for by the cosmological problem under consideration; nevertheless, this issue is not taken to its ultimate conclusions; consequently Plato explicitly refers to the Unwritten Doctrines by the same means as in other dialogues and, as we shall

8. The most useful commentaries on the *Timaeus* are those written by A. E. Taylor, *Commentary on Plato's Timaeus* (Oxford, 1928) and F. M. Cornford, *Plato's Cosmology: On the Timaeus of Plato, Translated with a Running Commentary* (London, 1937).

9. L. Robin, *Études sur la signification et la place de la physique dans la philosophie de Platon*; Chapter 2, section IV.3, 41-47 esp. 43 and note 56.

10. K. Gaiser, *Platons*, 41-106.

11. H. Happ, *Hyle. Studien zum aristotelischen Materie-Begriff* (Berlin and New York, 1971), 82-277.



see, with some even more telling indications. The question of the standing of mathematics is more fully connected with this current of thought than in any other writing.

An adequate interpretive procedure, thus, must follow each current with the logic appropriate to them without suppressing either one.

Fortunately, the *Timaeus* is Plato's most systematic work, insofar as we can speak of systematicity consistent with the restrictions we have already reviewed; and the strength of its basic structure can easily be seen.

Naturally, a summary would emphasize the general outline and essential metaphysical moves. But it would be easy to show how the various specific themes are distributed and orchestrated with great precision. In the first part of *Timaeus's* speech, issues concerning the realm of the Intelligence come to the fore: the reasons for the beauty and unity of the cosmos, the generation and structure of the soul and its various harmonic movements, time, the planets and the stars, animals and man. In the second part, which is given over to the material Principle, there are explanations concerning the origin of the four elements and of their various forms and characteristics; and there is an account of the various impressions and sensations, and of the causes which produce them. In the third part, various problems of an anatomical, physiological, and medical character are discussed; this part concludes by highlighting the rational soul placed in man by God as tutelary spirit, with some hints of an eschatological character.

Only the great metaphysical themes and their relations with the Unwritten Doctrines can be taken into account here. We shall analyze the metaphysical prelude, whose every sentence is of great theoretical importance.<sup>12</sup> We shall then discuss the material Principle and the complex issues connected to it.<sup>13</sup> Next we shall take up the creative activity of the Demiurge in general, with specific reference to the production of the four material elements and the soul.<sup>14</sup> Finally, we shall consider the Demiurge and the way this important figure is connected—in our view, consistently—with the first Principles of the Unwritten Doctrines.<sup>15</sup>

## II. THE METAPHYSICAL AXIOMS POSITED BY PLATO IN THE *TIMAEUS* AS FOUNDATIONS OF THE WHOLE COSMOLOGICAL DISCUSSION

The cosmological account which Plato puts in the mouth of the Pythagorean *Timaeus* begins with a solemn "prelude"; it is given this

12. See the remainder of the present chapter. Cf. pp. 361-67.

13. See Chapter 19.

14. See Chapter 20.

15. See Chapter 21.

title in an intervention from Socrates,<sup>16</sup> who, in this way, aims at giving it the greatest prominence.

The prelude is purely theoretical and clarifies some of the metaphysical and epistemological axioms which serve as the foundations of the whole discussion of the dialogue. It has been rightly observed that the axioms in this prelude provide premises which are perfectly intelligible in the sense of the *logos*.<sup>17</sup> Hence, these are not doctrines to be taken at the level of plausibility, as we find in much of the dialogue, but at the level of absolute truth. Rather, the justification of the very possibility of a plausible story and the metaphysical foundations of that sort of plausibility are contained in this splendid theoretical prelude.

Four metaphysical axioms are put forward. They give an exact and effective summary of the doctrines spread through numerous dialogues prior to the *Timaeus*.

The first two axioms concern the structural differences between being and becoming, and the different forms of knowledge by which they are grasped and defined; these are matters on which many other dialogues, especially the *Phaedo* and the *Republic*, insist.

1. Being, which is always (intelligible being) is not subject to generation and becoming, because it remains always the same; it is grasped by the intelligence with reasoning.

2. Becoming, which is continually generated, is never true being, because it is continually changing; it is the object of opinion, that is, it is grasped by sensory perception which is distinct from reason.

On the other hand, the other two axioms concern the cause required by becoming, that is, the demiurgic Intelligence, and that to which Intelligence makes reference.

3. Everything that is subject to the process of generation requires a cause, because in order to be generated every thing needs a cause that brings about its generation. This cause is a Demiurge or Craftsman: an efficient cause.

4. The Craftsman produces something, always by having already looked to something as a point of reference, taking it as a model.

The Craftsman could refer to either of two different kinds of models: (a) to what exists always and in the same way, to the type of being referred to in the first axiom; or (b) to a thing that is subject to generation, the type of object with which the second axiom is concerned.

If the Craftsman takes eternal being as a model, what he produces is beautiful; if, instead, he takes something generated as a model, what he produces is not beautiful.

16. *Timaeus* 29D.

17. Gadamer, "Idea und Wirklichkeit in Platos *Timaios*," in *Studi platonici*, 2:93.

The object of the Demiurge's prior consideration is, therefore, the determining condition. Gadamer properly says of the Craftsman's consideration that on it depends whether what is produced "is or is not beautiful, permanent or perishable. . . . If what comes to be is beautiful, the prior consideration must also have been directed at the beautiful. And obviously, the beautiful always implies constancy as well."<sup>18</sup>

We must, then, in my judgment, first make the following distinctions:

[1] what is that which is always real and has no becoming, and

[2] what is that which is always becoming and is never real?

[1] That which is graspable by thought with a rational account is the thing that is always unchangeably real,

[2] whereas what is the object of belief together with unreasoning sensation is the thing that comes to be and passes away, but never has real being.

[3] Again, all that comes to be must come to be by the agency of some cause, for without a cause nothing can come to be.

[4] Now whenever the maker of anything looks to that which is always unchanging and uses a model of that description is fashioning the form and quality of his work, all that he thus accomplishes must be beautiful. If he looks to something that has come to be and uses a generated model, it will not be beautiful.<sup>19</sup>

On the basis of these four axioms, Plato constructs the metaphysical and cosmo-ontological groundwork of the entire discussion of the dialogue, and, at the same time, sets out the epistemological structure and the justification of the methodology he adopts.

Because the object under discussion in the dialogue is the heaven and the earth, that is, the cosmos, it is necessary first to establish whether it is a being which is always, and a being of the first type, or if it is a generated object, and of the second type.

Everything that makes up this world is graspable by the senses. But everything graspable by the senses is an object of opinion, as the second axiom establishes, and in its nature is generated and comes to be.

Moreover, on the basis of the third axiom, this world, insofar as it is generated, must be generated by a cause. But it is hard to find this cause of the universe, and when it is found, it is hard to understand it.

Finally, on the basis of the fourth axiom, we can determine what sort of model the Demiurge looked to when he constructed this world. If this world is beautiful, the Demiurge must have looked to an eternal model in constructing it; on the other hand, if (and only if) it were not beautiful, the Demiurge would have used a generated model.<sup>20</sup> But it is

18. *Ibid.*, 2:92.

19. *Timaeus* 27D5-28B2.

20. It clearly makes no sense to ask, as some have done, what, in the concrete, would be the "generated being" to which the Demiurge could look, if everything that is generat-

clearly demonstrable that the world is beautiful; hence the Demiurge must have looked to an eternal model.

Rather, since the world is the most beautiful of generated objects, its Demiurge is consequently the best of craftsmen, or the Craftsman who has imitated and realized the Good in the greatest possible degree. Here is the text of Plato:

It has come to be; for it can be seen and touched and it has body, and all such things are sensible; and, as we saw, sensible things, that are to be apprehended by opinion together with sensation, are things that become and can be generated. But again, that which becomes, we say, must necessarily become by the agency of some cause. The maker and father of this universe it is a hard task to find, and having found him it would be impossible to declare him to all mankind. . . . [W]e must go back to this question about the world: After which of the two models did its builder frame it—after that which is always in the same unchanging state, or after that which has come to be? Now if this world is good and its maker is good, clearly he looked to the eternal; on the contrary supposition (which cannot be spoken without blasphemy), to that which has come to be. Everyone, then, must see that he looked to the eternal; for the world is the best of things that have become, and he is the best of causes.<sup>21</sup>

Hence, there is a pure being graspable only by intelligence, and it is to this that the Demiurge looks for a model, so as to bring about the sensible and changing world. Therefore, the sensible cosmos is an image executed by the Demiurge of a metasensible reality. This is the cardinal point of Plato's metaphysics. Here is the text:

Having come to be, then, in this way, the world has been fashioned on the model of that which is comprehensible by rational discourse and understanding and is always in the same state.

Again, these things being so, our world must necessarily be an image of something.<sup>22</sup>

This conception of pure being as the model and of becoming as the image of that model and the need for an efficient cause (the Demiurge or Craftsman) to ground and justify this relation, is the core of Plato's written doctrine, which is given its most mature and complete expression in the *Timaeus*.

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ed depends on the divine Demiurge. Here Plato gives an absolutely general argument which can be fully understood if we bear in mind everything we said in Chapter 16. Plato here is speaking in an abstract structural sense about the Artificer and his mode of activity, and hence of the abstract possibilities that an Artificer can have. It is obvious that only a human craftsman can look to a generated model (and, in fact, a human craftsman of a lower grade). The aim of the argument here is simply to exclude this possibility for the divine Demiurge.

21. *Timaeus* 28B2–29A6.

22. *Ibid.*, A6–B2.

The epistemological groundwork of the entire cosmological treatment is based on this metaphysical system, as we shall see now.

### III. THE EPISTEMOLOGICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL FEATURES OF THE WHOLE ACCOUNT SET OUT IN THE PRELUDE

The cosmos, insofar as it is continually generated or perpetually becoming, is not knowable by pure intelligence or pure reasoning, but is graspable by sensory perception and cognizable by opinion.

Plato further explains that there is a structural affinity between knowledge and the things of which we have knowledge. Arguments and lines of thought that concern abiding and stable being are likewise abiding and stable and grasp the unvarnished pure truth; on the other hand, arguments and lines of thought that concern realities which are generated are only probable and grounded on belief.

This is the point that demands proper attention: in the respect that the cosmos of changing things is an image of pure being, which is its original model, it is knowable; and it is on the fact of its being an image that its epistemological difference from the model is founded.

The proportions which Plato establishes are the following:

$$\textit{being} : \textit{generation} = \textit{truth} : \textit{opinion}$$

Here is the text, which is of fundamental importance:

Now in every matter it is of great moment to start with what is naturally prior. Concerning a likeness, then, and its model we must make this distinction: an account has an affinity with the things which it sets forth—an account of that what is abiding and stable and discoverable by the aid of reason will itself be abiding and unchangeable (so far as it is possible and it lies in the nature of an account to be incontrovertible and irrefutable, there must be no falling short of that); while an account of what is made in the image of that other, but is only a likeness, will itself be but plausible, standing to accounts of the former kind in a proportion: as being is to becoming, so is truth to belief.<sup>23</sup>

Plato's conclusions are therefore the following: it is not possible to give a true account in the absolute sense about the origin of the universe; it is only possible to give some "plausible accounts." In these matters, human nature must be satisfied with myth, understood as a plausible story, because we cannot go further in virtue of the nature of the object of inquiry.

If then, Socrates, after saying many things about the gods and the generation of the universe, we prove unable to render an account at all points entirely consistent with itself and exact, you must not be surprised. If we can furnish

23. Ibid., B2-C3.

accounts no less plausible than any other, we must be satisfied, remembering that I who speak and you my judges are only human, and consequently it is fitting that we should in the matter accept the plausible story and look for nothing further.<sup>24</sup>

Gadamer sums up Plato's doctrine frequently misunderstood by mistaking myth of which Plato here speaks for a pure fable.

[T]he possibility of knowing something about the world as an ordered whole is dependent on the structure of becoming, on its being referred to a stable noetic order. Indeed, the universe as a whole and characterized by becoming is in itself accessible only to the sensible experience of seeing. However, given that, since it is becoming, it must be understood in the light of . . . its cause, and given that, in view of the beauty of the cosmic order, there is no doubt that the constructor of the world looks to the permanent and the identical, it follows that what we perceive, far from being a mere gignovmenon, that is, an always-other from itself, is the copy of something determinate. Therefore, the possibility of our really knowing something about the world of becoming depends on the structure of the copy. Naturally this knowledge of what is in becoming can have the status only of probable hypotheses (28C8), which have a certain plausibility. The cosmic order revealed to the senses can be reproduced only by a plausible story or account. A knowledge, which goes beyond this story, would be in conflict with human nature (29D1).<sup>25</sup>

Plato does not at all say, as many believe, that the doctrine of the Demiurge is a myth in the sense of a probable story. On the contrary, the thesis of the necessary existence of a demiurgic Intelligence is one of the four great metaphysical axioms which are incontrovertibly true. He claims, rather, that it is the very nature of becoming which requires a kind of account that cannot be necessary or incontrovertible, unlike the account to be given of eternal beings.

Plato says exactly the opposite of what has long been thought as a consequence of the scientific revolution of the modern age, before the epistemologists began to question anew the very structure of science. In other words, for our philosopher, only a metaphysical argument can be necessary; by contrast, a physical-scientific argument can only be plausible given the different structures of the beings that each is about.

With pungent irony, Plato returns later in the *Timaeus* to claim that physical phenomena are explained plausibly. He goes so far as to say that physical discussions are like recreation that one can take as a pastime, temporarily, laying aside *the consideration of eternal things*.

It would be no intricate task to enumerate the other substances of this kind [the particular physical elements and their structure, as discussed in the pas-

24. Ibid., C4-D3.

25. H.-G. Gadamer, "Idee und Wirklichkeit," 2:93.

sage's context] following the method of a plausible account. When a man, for the sake of recreation, sets aside discourse about eternal things and gets innocent pleasure from the consideration of such plausible accounts of becoming, he will add to his life a sober and reasonable pastime.<sup>26</sup>

Contrary to what many continue to believe on this point, perhaps misled by Jaeger's interpretation which is at odds with the texts,<sup>27</sup> Aristotle says the same thing in *Metaphysics* Λ 8.

In our volume on *Theophrastus* we have shown that Aristotle maintained that physical-astronomical discussions, and hence astronomy itself, were pursued "for the sake of an idea in general" (ἐννοίας χάριν); and he thought "reasonable" (εὐλογον) also those discussions which were based on them. By contrast, he maintained that discussions of the metaphysical principles were necessary (ἀναγκαῖον), as he claims many times in *Metaphysics* Λ 8.<sup>28</sup>

We have recalled this not only to point out once again the enormous general influence of Plato on Aristotle, which is much more substantial than many wish to admit, but for the purpose of recalling the reader's attention to the theoretical or epistemological support which underlies the *Timaeus*, and which turns out to be also the basic framework within Plato's own School. Unfortunately, many modern scholars have forgotten much of this; but it is necessary to recover it if one wishes to understand the meaning of the great masterpiece which the *Timaeus* is, and to recover it from among the materials he put into the dialogue, while he taking his recreation and incorporating into his life a sober and reasonable pastime.

26. *Timaeus* 59C5-D2.

27. Cf. Jaeger, *Aristotle*, 350ff.

28. Reale, *Theophrasto*, 116ff. This part of the volume is now to be found in the fourth edition of our *Il Concetto*, 440ff., as well as in the American edition, *The Concept*, 373ff. There [p. 374] the reader can find (a) specific documentation for the insistence with which, in a single sentence (Λ 8. 1073a23-b1), Aristotle four times uses the terms ἀνάγκη and ἀναγκαῖον to assert the necessary structure of the argument concerning metaphysical Principles; as well as (b) the demonstration of how the expression ἐννοίας χάριν is limited to astronomical demonstrations and to their conclusions, while the term εὐλογον is referred both to the astronomical argument itself and to the philosophical reasoning which is based on the astronomical. In the very formulation of the two metaphysical axioms which concern the Demiurge and the demiurgic Intelligence, Plato uses exactly the expression ἐξ ἀνάγκης to underline the incontrovertible nature of the claim (cf. *Timaeus*, 28A4ff., 8, quoted at 19, above).





## 19 The Cosmological Principle of Matter on Which the Demiurge of the *Timaeus* Acts and Its Relation to the Indefinite Dyad of the Unwritten Doctrines

### I. HOW TO TACKLE THE PROBLEM OF THE MATERIAL PRINCIPLE PRESENTED IN THE *TIMAEUS*

The cosmos, says the *Timaeus*, is a mixture, as is every being at every level, as we have seen from the *Philebus*; consequently, in its nature it requires a principle that is the polar opposite of the Intelligible and Intelligence, which Plato introduces under the name of "necessity," taking this term in the sense of the absence of order and the absence of everything involved in Intelligence, and so in the sense of a disteleological Principle or errant cause.<sup>1</sup> This Principle is subordinate to Intelligence, by which it is "persuaded" and profoundly dominated. The mixture which derives from it consists in the bending of necessity to the supreme rule of Intelligence, that is to say, to the Good and the best.

Here is the text with which Plato opens the second section of *Timaeus*'s great speech, which is entirely devoted to this Principle:

Now our foregoing discourse, save for a few matters, has set forth the works produced by the craftsman of Reason; but we must now set beside them the things that come about of Necessity.

For the generation of this universe was a mixed result by combination of Necessity and Reason. Reason overruled Necessity by persuading her to guide the greatest part of the things that become towards what is best; in that way and on that principle this universe was fashioned in the beginning by the victory of reasonable persuasion over Necessity.

If, then, we are really to tell how it came into being on this principle, we must mix in also the Errant Cause—in that its nature is to cause motion. So we must return upon our steps, and taking, in its turn, a second principle con-

1. On the various aspects of this problem M. Isnardi Parente gives a very full *status quaestionis* in Zeller and Isnardi Parente, *La filosofia dei greci*. The reader should read it in parallel with our discussion in the following order: "I problemi della materia nel *Timeo*," in Zeller and Isnardi Parente, *ibid.*, 55-75; "I principi e la diade indefinita," in Zeller and Isnardi Parente, 109-31; "Il ragionamento bastardo," in Zeller and Isnardi Parente, *ibid.*, 84-86; "L'interpretazione di *Timeo* 49Cff.," in Zeller and Isnardi Parente, *ibid.*, 19-24; and "La causa del male," in Zeller and Isnardi Parente, *ibid.*, 171-79. A full and detailed treatment of this theme from within the traditional paradigm can be found in D. J. Schulz, *Das Problem der Materie in Platons "Timaios"* (Bonn, 1966). It will be useful to

cerned in the origin of these same things, start once more upon our present theme of our earlier discourses.<sup>2</sup>

This is, of course, the Principle which the naturalist philosophers identified with one of the material elements, and which Empedocles, in accordance with the common view, specifically identified with the four elements (water, air, earth, and fire).

Plato brought about one of his most remarkable theoretical revolutions on this matter: water, air, earth, and fire are not primary elements, comparable, for example, with the letters of the alphabet which are primary and to which Greek refers with the term στοιχεῖα, "elements." Instead, they are not even primary composites, and hence are comparable neither with letters nor even with syllables.

In short: they are not Principles, but are themselves subject to the Principles; nor are they subjects at the first level of derivation.

We shall return to this problem. What we are here interested in highlighting are Plato's warnings about the handling of this issue. We are told that the procedure is one of "plausible reasoning" which underlies the whole dialogue. In addition, with an explicit reference to the general theory of the Principles (the Unwritten Doctrines), Plato claims that "for now," in the written work, it ought not to be spoken about because, with the method adopted, he cannot express his thought in full. The ultimate determination of the Principles and in particular of the material Principle here at issue is again put off to another realm or dimension which cannot be any thing but oral dialectic.

Underlying this reference, there is the conception of writing Plato had set out in the *Phaedrus*. He is telling us that, for now, he will stick to plausible reasonings which, at the beginning of the *Timaeus*, are called myth (a plausible account) in the sense that we find operative in the *Republic* itself, and in all the Platonic writings. Here is the crucial text:

We must . . . consider in itself the nature of fire and water, air and earth, before the generation of the Heaven, and their condition before the Heaven was. For to this day no one has explained their generation, but we speak as if men knew what fire and each of the others is, positing them as principles, elements as it were, letters of the universe; whereas one who has ever so little intelligence should not rank them in this analogy on the same level as syllables. On this occasion, however, our contribution is to be limited as follows. We are not for now to speak of the first principle or principles—or whatever name men choose to employ—of all things, if only on account of the difficulty of explaining what we think by our present method of exposition. You, then, must

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refer to the volume cited earlier, H. Happ, *Hyle*, 88–277, which accepts the new paradigm and draws from it important consequences with which we are in large measure in agreement.

2. *Timaeus* 47E3–48B3.

not demand the explanation from me; nor could I persuade myself that I should be right in taking upon myself so great a task; but holding fast to what I said at the outset—the worth of a probable account—I will try to give an explanation of all these matters in detail, no less plausible than another, but more so, starting from the beginning in the same manner as before. So now once again at the outset of our discourse let us call upon a protecting deity to grant us safe passage through a strange and unfamiliar exposition to the conclusion that plausibility dictates; and so let us begin once more.<sup>3</sup>

This basic text has often been neglected, consequently, it is claimed that from the following plausible discourse, for all its rich complexity, Plato's ultimate concepts on this matter are to be garnered. But by making this claim, many scholars have fallen into a series of mistakes by arbitrarily isolating some claims in *Timaeus's* speech, and even calling on concepts from modern science to clarify what he says.

Following the procedure of plausible reasoning, Plato characterizes the material Principle in terms of its epistemological and ontological connotations and he adds a set of analogical images, some of which are very beautiful; but he does not reach final conclusions. Following Plato's basic line of reasoning we can distinguish at least twenty-six usages of which ten are similes:

a. First Group of Connotations:

1. necessity;<sup>4</sup>
2. errant (or wandering) cause.<sup>5</sup>

b. Second Group of Connotations:

3. receptacle of everything which is generated;<sup>6</sup>
4. that in which is generated everything which is generated;<sup>7</sup>
5. power which is not exhausted in the reception of the various things which it receives;<sup>8</sup>
6. nature always identical with itself in its foundation;<sup>9</sup>
7. the amorphous;<sup>10</sup>
8. what participates in a complex way with the intelligible;<sup>11</sup>
9. what is hard to understand, obscure, incomprehensible;<sup>12</sup>

3. *Ibid.*, 48B3–E1.

4. ἀνάγκη; cf. *Timaeus* 47E5, 68E1ff.

5. πλανωμένης εἶδος αἰτίας cf. *Timaeus* 48A7ff.

6. ὑποδοχή γενέσεως, φύσις τὰ πάντα δεχομένη σώματα, τὸ τὰ πάντα ἐκδεξόμενον, πανδεχές; cf. *Timaeus* 49A6, 50B6ff., 50E5, 51A5, 51A7ff., etc.

7. τὸ ἐν ᾧ; cf. *Timaeus* 49E7, 50D1, 50D6.

8. *Timaeus* 50B6ff.: ταῦτὸν αὐτὴν αἰεὶ προσρητέον ἐκ γὰρ τῆς αὐτῆς τὸ παράπαν οὐκ ἐξίσταται δυνάμεως.

9. *Timaeus* 50B6; also 49E5.

10. ἄμορφον; cf. *Timaeus* 50B8ff., 50D7, 51A1–7; πάντων ἐκτὸς εἰδῶν, *Timaeus* 50E4ff.

11. μεταλαμβάνον δὲ ἀπορώτατά πη τοῦ νοητοῦ, *Timaeus* 51A7–B1.

12. χαλεπὸν καὶ ἀμυδρὸν εἶδος, *Timaeus* 49A3ff.; δυσαλωτότατον, *Timaeus* 51B1.

10. that which is in itself invisible, but visible in its effects;<sup>13</sup>
  11. that which is comparable to a nurse;<sup>14</sup>
  12. that which is comparable to a mother;<sup>15</sup>
  13. that which is a recipient of impressions;<sup>16</sup>
  14. that which is comparable to gold in being ductile into various shapes;<sup>17</sup>
  15. that which is comparable to a soft malleable material;<sup>18</sup>
  16. that which is comparable to an odorless liquid which receives various odors.<sup>19</sup>
- c. Third Group of Connotations:
17. space;<sup>20</sup>
  18. place;<sup>21</sup>
  19. place but understood as that in which the things that are generated are generated;<sup>22</sup>
  20. that which is eternal and indestructible;<sup>23</sup>
  21. that which is graspable without sense perception, but with a bastard or spurious reasoning;<sup>24</sup>
  22. that which it is hard to believe.<sup>25</sup>
- d. Fourth Group of Connotations:
23. principle of generation;<sup>26</sup>
  24. a chaotic bundle of rudimentary shapes and powers;<sup>27</sup>
  25. a totally disordered movement;<sup>28</sup>
  26. a sieve or instrument for shaking.<sup>29</sup>

Let us try, then, to clarify these very complex connotations of the material Principle, which Plato has entrusted to writing.

By way of preliminaries, we ought to remember that the term "matter," which can be used to indicate this Principle, becomes technical

13. ἀνόρατον εἶδος, *Timaeus* 51A7; but consult 30A, 46D-E, 52D.
14. τιθήνη, *Timaeus* 49A6, 52D5; τροφὸς καὶ τιθήνη τοῦ παντός, *Timaeus* 88D6.
15. μήτηρ, *Timaeus* 51A4ff.
16. ἔκμαγεῖον, *Timaeus* 50C2.
17. χρυσός, *Timaeus* 50A6ff.
18. τὸ μαλακόν, *Timaeus* 50E8ff.
19. . . . ὅτι μάλιστα ἀώδη τὰ δεξόμενα ὑγρὰ τὰς ὀσμὰς, *Timaeus* 50E7.
20. χώρα, *Timaeus* 52A8ff.
21. τόπος, *Timaeus* 52B4.
22. ἔδρα, *Timaeus* 52B1.
23. ὄν . . . αἰί, φθοράν οὐ προσδεχόμενον, *Timaeus* 52A8ff.
24. μετ' ἀναισθησίας ἀπτὸν λογισμῶ τι νόθῳ, *Timaeus* 52B2.
25. μόγις πιστόν, *Timaeus* 52B2.
26. γένεσις, *Timaeus* 52D3.
27. μορφαί, δυνάμεις, *Timaeus* 52D-E.
28. See *Timaeus* 30A, and 52D-53B, *passim*.
29. ὥσπερ τὰ ὑπὸ τῶν πλοκάνων τε καὶ ὀργάνων τῶν περὶ τὴν τοῦ σίτου κάθαρσιν σειόμενα . . . *Timaeus* 52E6ff.

only with Aristotle, who makes use of *hyle* as a basic ontological doctrine.<sup>30</sup> At the beginning of the third section of the *Timaeus*, Plato does indeed use this term, but in the generic sense which it had in Greek to mean the wood with which woodcutters deal (in Greek ὕλη commonly means forest, timber, lumber, firewood). Therefore, we too shall use the noun "matter"; but when necessary we shall also use the adjective "material" to summarize the Principle which has this function.<sup>31</sup>

## II. THE FIRST SPECIFICATIONS OF THE MATERIAL PRINCIPLE AS NECESSITY AND AS ERRANT CAUSE

The determinations of the Principle first as necessity and then as errant cause are certainly among the most difficult to understand. "Necessity" is a term which carries a variety of meanings; and at first glance, the modern reader would be inclined to give it a meaning connected with that of the necessity of natural law, and hence to connect it to the rational order. The expression "errant cause" is just as obscure; in order to understand it, we shall have to appeal to an image which the Greek term draws from astronomy.

Taylor refuted some errors which arise unless the term "necessity" is given the sense that it takes on in this context; but he too is mistaken in the opposite way to the one which he refuted, but at the same level. He understood necessity as a sort of residue that is bound to be left over from the process of rationalization of the natural world. It is worth quoting the passage in which he summarizes his interpretation:

We must be careful not to confuse the necessity of which Plato is speaking with the principle of order and law. Law and order are precisely the features of the world which he assigns to intelligence as their source; we are carefully told that necessity is something disorderly and irregular, the *πλανομένη αίτία*, a name probably derived, . . . from the use of the disrespectful name *πλανήται*, tramps, vagabonds, for the heavenly bodies which seem at first sight to roam about the sky with no settled abode. Thus the Necessity of the *Timaeus* is something quite different from the Necessity of the myth of Er, or of the Stoics, which are personifications of the principle of rational law and order. On the other hand, Necessity is plainly not meant to be an independent, evil principle, for it is plastic to intelligence; mind for the most part is said to persuade it; its function is to be instrumental to the purposes of νοῦς. The reason for introducing it into the story seems to be simply that it is impossible in science to resolve physical reality into a complex of rational laws without remainder. In

30. On this issue Happ's *Hyle* is fundamental.

31. In general, it is possible to use the word "matter," which has become indispensable, so long as it is separated from its Aristotelian overtones. Nevertheless, given the variety and richness of the Platonic doctrine in this regard, it is worthwhile being cautious about choice of words. The passage in which Plato uses ὕλη is *Timaeus* 69A6.

the real world there is always, over and above law, a factor of the simply given or brute fact, not accounted for and to be accepted simply as given. It is the business of science never to acquiesce in the merely given, to seek to explain it as the consequence, in virtue of rational law, of some simpler initial given. But, however far science may carry this procedure, it is always forced to retain some element of brute fact, a given, in its account of things. It is the presence in nature of this element of the given, this surd or irrational as it has sometimes been called, which Timaeus appears to be personifying in his language about Necessity. That mind persuades necessity is just an imaginative way of saying that by the analysis of the given datum we always can rationalize it further; we never come to a point at which the possibility of explanation actually ceases."<sup>32</sup>

But it is evident that a sophisticated modern conception of science has been slipped in here which is not present in Plato.

Cornford, on the other hand, specified the meaning of necessity in the *Timaeus* as the contrary of finality; in support of which he correctly referred to a parallel passage of Aristotle, where he speaks of nature's acting of necessity, meaning by this action without goal and not in view of the best, and hence as the antithesis of finality and the Good.<sup>33</sup> Cornford concludes with an interesting reference to Grote, who had already well grasped this idea:

That Necessity in Plato was the very antithesis of natural law was clearly seen by Grote. This word [necessity], "he wrote," is now usually understood as denoting what is fixed, permanent, unalterable, knowable beforehand. In the Platonic *Timaeus* it means the very reverse: the indeterminate, the inconstant, the anomalous, that which can be neither understood nor predicted. . . ."<sup>34</sup>

It is Plato himself who associates necessity or the material Principle of which he speaks in our dialogue with chance or lack of order:

And a lover of intelligence and knowledge must necessarily seek first for the causation that belongs to the intelligent nature, and in the second place for that which belongs to things that are moved by others and of necessity (ἐξ ἀνάγκης) set yet others in motion. We too, then, must proceed on this principle and speak of both kinds of cause, but distinguish causes that work with intelligence to produce what is good and desirable, from those which, being destitute of reason, produce their various effects at random and without order.<sup>35</sup>

Further on, he says that God brought the things which were in disorder into due proportion, both with themselves and with each other, so

32. A. E. Taylor, *Plato*, 454-55ff.; see also his *Commentary*, 299.

33. Aristotle, *Physics* B 8.198b16-32.

34. Cornford, *Plato's Cosmology*, 171ff. (The work of Grote which Cornford cites is the classic *Plato and the Other Companions of Sokrates* [London, 1865], vol. 3, chap. 36). See also Happ, *Hyle*, 107 and 135ff.

35. *Timaeus* 46D7-E6.

as to render them symmetrical and proportionate whereas previously they had been "by chance" (τύχη).<sup>36</sup>

Necessity is not mere disteleology, or absolute chance and irrationality, understood as the total contradiction of rationality in an almost Manichean way; for in that case, necessity could not properly accept rationality. But by its nature, necessity allows itself to be dominated and "persuaded" by Intelligence, and therefore, to a considerable extent, it allows itself to be convinced by Intelligence.<sup>37</sup>

The bipolar structure of the Principles is hereby fully represented. H. Happ puts in the light what we have been saying as follows: ". . . only he who, notwithstanding many differences with his partner, is nevertheless to some extent in agreement with him can be persuaded. Here, therefore, is manifestly an allusion to the fact that both the Principles (νοῦς-ἀνάγκη), while being in fundamental opposition, can nevertheless be referred to each other, if in general they are to act together."<sup>38</sup>

Probably this bipolar commonality resides in the fact that the Principle of necessity has some tendency toward order, even if it is a mere and very partial tendency; or, rather it possesses a capacity or possibility or readiness to accept order, so much so that Plato speaks of a trace (ἵχνι) of form and power included in the material Principle.<sup>39</sup>

Therefore, the disteleological Principle has some potential tendency to allow itself to be convinced by Intelligence to collaborate, as one of a bipolar pair, in the formation of the cosmos.<sup>40</sup>

Aristotle started with this conception in formulating his famous claim which definitely confirms our explanation of the problem:

[F]or if we admitted that there is something divine, good, and desirable, we might hold that on the one hand [matter] is contrary to it, and on the other, such as of its own nature to desire and yearn for it.<sup>41</sup>

We must still clarify the meaning of the expression "errant cause" (πλανωμένη αἰτία). Some scholars have suggested the hypothesis, in our opinion the most plausible hitherto offered, that here Plato is metaphorically recalling the image of the planets, in Greek, πλανῆται, meaning wanderers or vagabonds, because to all appearances they wandered and roamed across the heavens, without any clear regularity.

We may quote Burnet, who is quite helpful in this regard:

36. Ibid., 69B, in particular line 6.

37. Cf. *Timaeus* 48A2.

38. Happ, *Hyle*, 107.

39. See *Timaeus* 53B; discussed by Happ, *Hyle*, 107, note 141.

40. See Happ, *Hyle*, 756.

41. Aristotle, *Physics* A 9.192a16-19.

The great problem of the day was that of the planetary motions. For the senses these are hopelessly irregular, and that is probably why we hear in the *Timaeus* of the errant cause (πλανομένη αίτία). In the first place, since the paths of the planets are oblique to the equator, their apparent courses are spirals (λίκες), not circles. In the next place, Mercury and Venus at one time travel faster than the Sun, so that they get in front of it and appear as morning stars; at another time they lag behind it and appear as evening stars. In fact, these three bodies are always overtaking and being overtaken by one another (38D). The other planets behave even more strangely. Sometimes they seem to accelerate their velocity so as to appear stationary among the fixed stars or even to get some way ahead of them; at other times, they are retarded and seem to have a retrograde motion. There is further irregularity in the Sun's annual course. The solstices and equinoxes do not divide it into four equal segments as we should expect them to do.<sup>42</sup>

What we have here is a sort of cosmological expression which Plato puts into the mouth of Timaeus vividly to illustrate the irregularity of the necessary cause.

### III. THE SECOND GROUP OF CONNOTATIONS OF THE MATERIAL PRINCIPLE FOCUSED ON THE NOTION OF THE RECEPTACLE

The second group of conceptual connotations and analogical similes concerning our Principle focus on the underlying notion of "receptacle" (ὑποδοχή, πανδεχές) which is very hard to interpret because it lends itself to opposite interpretations.

Some scholars have understood the receptacle in a sense analogous to Aristotle's notion of matter (*hyle*); others have contested this interpretation, pointing out that Plato did not mean the receptacle as that out of which things are made (and hence as *hyle*, which is precisely that out of which things are made), but as that in which they are made or generated. Hence there is no justification for calling the receptacle "matter," a term which is not used by Plato.<sup>43</sup>

It is easy to be misled unless we bear in mind that Plato sets out his doctrine in accordance with "plausible reasoning," that is, in a manner which does not arrive at the ultimate foundation by means of the most rigorous dialectical method. Therefore it is necessary to guard against confusing the two standards.

To try to understand what Plato writes on this issue, we must concentrate on what, by its nature, the receptacle is meant to accept. The things which the receptacle receives are the "images of things which are

42. J. Burnet, *Greek Philosophy* (London, 1914), 345ff.; also see Cornford, *Plato's Cosmology*, 161ff., and Taylor, *Plato*, 455 and note 1.

43. See, for example, Cornford, *Plato's Cosmology*, 181.



always,"<sup>44</sup> "imitations of eternal beings,"<sup>45</sup> and hence images or "appearances of other things,"<sup>46</sup> that is to say, of the Ideas. Consequently, the receptacle is the ontological component of the mixture, which Plato discusses not only in the *Philebus*, but to which he draws our attention at the beginning of the treatment of this Principle.<sup>47</sup>

The two passages which make up the beginning and the end of the speech in which Plato presents the receptacle liken it to the relation of imitation between Ideas and sensible objects. These passages introduce the receptacle to give a metaphysical explanation of this imitation as a necessary move in the ontological grounding of imitation. Let us begin with the first of these passages:

Our new starting-point in describing the universe must, however, be a fuller classification than we made before. We then distinguished two things; but now a third must be pointed out. For our earlier discourse the two were sufficient: one postulated as model, intelligible and always unchangingly real; second, a copy of this model, which becomes and is visible. A third we did not then distinguish, thinking that the two would suffice; but now, it seems, the argument compels us to attempt to bring to light and describe a kind which is difficult and obscure.

What nature must we, then, conceive it to possess and what part does it play?

This, more than anything else: that it is the Receptacle—as it were, the nurse—of all Becoming.<sup>48</sup>

To explain the ontological importance of the receptacle, Plato again recalls water, air, earth, and fire, to show that these things are not ontologically permanent elements and realities, but phenomenal beings dragged into the flux of becoming. They alter from one state to another, continually changing like all sensible phenomena. Consequently, we cannot definitely claim that "this" is fire, or "this" is water, and so on; but we can only say such a thing is fire, such a thing is water, and so on. Therefore, to be exact, we should use each name not for a single phenomenon, but only for the characteristics that always remain in the same way in such phenomena, characteristics which are reflections in the sensible world of the Ideas.

In the phenomenal world, in a strong sense, what picks out something ontologically substantial, can be used only to refer to the "that in which" each of these mutable things generated appears and from which it then disappears. This entails that in the sensible world, the "this," in a sense involving ontological stability, can refer only to the receptacle.

44. *Timaeus* 50C4-5.

45. *Ibid.*, 51A1-8.

46. *Ibid.*, 52C.

47. *Ibid.*, 47E5-48A2.

48. *Ibid.*, 48E2-49A6.

We may conclude by saying with Cherniss that "[I]f at any time anywhere one tries to distinguish any phase of the phenomenal flux from any other by saying this, one always in fact points to the permanent, unchanging, and characterless receptacle in which are constantly occurring transient and indeterminable manifestations of the determinate characteristics just mentioned [the characteristics which reproduce the Ideas in the sensible world]." <sup>49</sup>

The example Plato uses to illustrate this thought is very clear. Suppose that someone molds some gold into a variety of shapes and gradually changes each into the other, and that an observer, pointing to one of the shapes, asks: What is it? In such a case, the right answer would certainly not be to say that the thing is a triangle, or that it is some other shape the gold has been molded into because all these shapes are not but are becoming: while they are molded, they change. Therefore we ought to say not that they are "this" or "that," but rather that they are "thus and such," that they have certain characteristics. The correct answer to the question "What is it?" would be to say "This is gold."

An argument of this kind holds also for the receptacle, which remains always identical with itself. It receives all things and is malleable and capable of being formed variously, because it is amorphous, lacking a formal structure of its own, and does not take on definitely the forms it assumes at various times.

It is comparable to a plastic material, which can take on different shapes at different times and appears in those shapes. The things that enter and leave the receptacle are images of eternal realities, imitations of the paradigms of the Ideas. When they enter it they form it and impress a mark on it just as the gold and the impressionable material are molded by the shapes they receive. Here is Plato's text:

Suppose a man had molded figures of all sorts out of gold, and were unceasingly to remold each into all the rest: then, if you should point to one of them and ask what it was, much the safest answer in respect of truth would be to say gold, and never to speak of a triangle or any of the other figures that were coming to be in it as things that have being, since they are changing even while one is asserting their existence. Rather one should be content if they so much as consent to accept the description what is of such and such a quality with any certainty. Now the same thing must be said of that nature which receives all bodies. It must be called always the same; for it never departs at all from its own character; since it is always receiving all things, and never in any way whatsoever takes on any character that is like any of the things that enter it: by nature it is there as a matrix for everything, changed and diversified by the things that

49. H. Cherniss, "A Much Misread Passage of the *Timaeus* (*Timaeus* 49C7-B5)," *American Journal of Philology* 75 (1954): 113-30; also in H. Cherniss, *Selected Papers* (Leiden, 1977), 346-63; the passage quoted is at 128 and 361, respectively.

enter it, and on their account it appears to have different qualities at different times; while the things that pass in and out are to be called copies of the eternal things, impressions taken from them in a strange manner that is hard to express: we will follow it up on another occasion.<sup>50</sup>

To get to his conclusions about the receptacle, Plato adduces a further set of specifications and similes as follows.

In the first passage we have cited he distinguishes three kinds of realities: (a) eternal exemplars, (b) generated things which imitate the exemplars, and (c) the receptacle. He now reposes this distinction in other terms and illustrates it with a telling simile: (a) there is that by similarity to which what is generated is generated; (b) there is that which is generated; and (c) there is that in which what is generated is generated. (a) The first kind is comparable to a father; (b) the second kind is comparable to an offspring; (c) the third kind is comparable to a mother.

It has long been recognized that the comparison with the mother reflects the ancient Greek way of understanding her function, as the field which gives birth and nourishment to the seed sown in it. Likewise, the nurse has the function of accepting in her arms and bringing up, and hence of receiving and feeding the child.

But what Plato insists on is the unformedness of the receptacle. What receives the imprint, the receptacle, is suitably prepared only if it lacks every form, because if it had any form, it could not wholly receive and reproduce forms opposite to those which it had. So as to be able fully to accept any form whatever, the receptacle must be devoid of all.

Plato presents two more examples to clarify his thought.

When perfumes are produced, the perfume makers try to prepare an inert base, a liquid which is as free as possible of odor and which can accept the desired scents. So also, when figures are to be imprinted on a soft substance, one tries to eliminate from it all forms whatever, by making the surface as smooth as possible, so that it can receive the figures which one wishes to impress on it:

Be that as it may, for the present we must conceive three things: that which becomes; that in which it becomes; and the model in whose likeness that which becomes is born. Indeed we may fittingly compare the Recipient to a mother, the model to a father, and the nature that arises between them to their offspring. Further we must observe that, if there is to be an impress presenting all diversities of aspect, the thing itself in which the impress comes to be situated cannot have been duly prepared unless it is free from all those characters which it is to receive from elsewhere. For if it were like any one of the things that come in upon it, then, when things of contrary or entirely different nature

50. *Timaeus* 50A5–C6.

came, in receiving them it would reproduce them badly, intruding its own features alongside. Hence that which is to receive in itself all kinds must be free from all characters; just like the base which the makers of scented ointments skillfully contrive to start with: they make the liquids that are to receive the scents as odorless as possible. . . . [A]nyone who sets about taking impressions of shapes in some soft substance, allows no shape to show itself there beforehand, but begins by making the surface as smooth and level as he can.<sup>51</sup>

Therefore, if it is to receive any of the forms, the receptacle must be extraneous in its own nature to all of them; it must be unformed; and hence it has the capacity to accept all forms and not to be worn out by receiving them all over time. But exactly because it is unformed, it is obscure, difficult to understand and to grasp, for comprehensibility presupposes formal determination.

Moreover, the receptacle participates "in a very complicated way" (ἀπορώτατά πη) in the intelligible, because this participation, which consists in the reception of the imprint of the images of the Ideas, takes place "in a way which is ineffable and marvelous" (τρόπον τινὰ δύσφραστον καὶ θαυμαστόν), by means of complex numerical and geometrical mediation, as Plato later explains in connection with the constitution of the four elements. This complex participation implies the intermediate realm of mathematical entities and the soul and all that that involves. Finally, it is invisible because of its lack of form, since that which does not have form cannot be seen, because what can be seen is in some way determined and formed. Nevertheless, it continually makes itself visible under the appearance of the things which it from time to time receives.<sup>52</sup> This is the text in which Plato draws these conclusions:

In the same way, that which is duly to receive over its whole extent and many times over all the likenesses of the intelligible and eternal things ought in its own nature to be free of all the characters. For this reason, then, the mother and Receptacle of what has come to be visible and otherwise sensible must not be called earth or air or fire or water, nor any of their compounds or components; but we shall not be deceived if we call it a nature invisible and characterless, all-receiving, partaking in some very puzzling way of the intelligible and very hard to apprehend. So far as its nature can be arrived at from what has already been said, the most correct account of it would be this: that part of it which has been made fiery appears at any time as fire; the part that is liquefied as water; and as earth or air such parts as receive likenesses of these.<sup>53</sup>

51. *Ibid.*, C7-51A1.

52. It is a mistake to find blatant contradiction between *Timaeus* 30A3, which specifies the material Principle as ὄρατόν, and 51A7, which specifies it as ἀνόρατον. As Happ has properly pointed out, there is no contradiction for the following reason: "[T]he material Principle 'shows' itself outwardly in many ways . . . , but 'in itself' it is invisible" (*Hyle*, 104, note 118).

53. *Timaeus* 51A1-B6.

#### IV. THE THIRD GROUP OF CHARACTERIZATIONS OF THE MATERIAL PRINCIPLE, FOCUSED ON THE NOTION OF SPACE

As represented by Plato, as the nature that receives bodies, the receptacle involves two distinguishable aspects: (a) that which highlights its function as the material that, acting as a substrate, receives impressions; and (b) that which highlights its function as the inert spatial base in which are generated the things that are generated. The third group of characterizations are meant to illustrate the second aspect.

To explain the necessity of introducing the receptacle, Plato appeals to the models of the Ideas and to their images (the sensible things), and he notes that to explain the image of a model we need the recipient of the image which reflects the model. He proceeds in just the same way in setting out the spatial aspect of the material Principle.

There are two different kinds of beings, the intelligible beings and the sensible beings (similar to the former and bearing corresponding names), as seen from the two opposed forms of knowledge we have: the intelligible and the sensible. In the *Timaeus* Plato makes this claim, summarizing what he says in other dialogues in a passage we have quoted with a view to illustrating the distinction between two kinds of reality (the so-called Platonic dualism).<sup>54</sup> Plato emphasizes that intelligible being, which because of its ontological structure is always the same, ungenerated, and imperishable, does not receive anything else into itself from elsewhere, nor itself passes into anything else anywhere. And conversely he claims that sensible beings, generated and in continuous movement, come to be in a certain place and again pass out of it. Consequently, we have to allow another kind of reality: spatiality or *chora*, which furnishes the place or the seat to all the beings which are born and perish, because what is born and perishes is born in some place, in which it then perishes. Here is Plato's text:

This being so, we must agree that there is, first, the unchanging Form, ungenerated and indestructible, which neither receives anything else into itself from elsewhere nor itself enters into anything else anywhere, invisible and otherwise imperceptible; . . . which only thinking has for its object.

Second is that which bears the same name and is like that Form; is sensible; is brought into existence; is perpetually in motion, coming to be in a certain place [τόπος] and again passing away out of it; and is to be apprehended by belief involving perception.

Third is Space [χωρα], which is everlasting, indestructible; providing a place [εδδα] for all things that come into being, but itself apprehended without the senses by a sort of bastard reasoning, and hardly an object of belief.<sup>55</sup>

54. See Chapter 6, section VI, 127-32.

55. *Timaeus* 51E6-52B2.

Plato further asserts that we tend to give this third being greater importance, applying it to all beings and mistakenly attributing to it an all-inclusive role. Indeed, we are apt to think that to be a thing must be in some place,<sup>56</sup> and that what is not on earth or in some place in heaven is nothing.<sup>57</sup>

We have already discussed this point at length; and Plato here makes a mere reference to what he has shown in full in his earlier writings; and he also says clearly that he does not wish to digress, as would be inevitable if he were to go further into the issue. What he does explain with greater clarity than in the earlier dialogues is as follows.

The things that occupy space are only the generated sensible things, and so not intelligible realities in and of themselves. Therefore, the things that occupy space are only the imitations or images of the Ideas, not the Ideas themselves.

Therefore, the ontological status of the images is identical with that of the mixture discussed in the *Philebus*, to which Plato also refers in the *Timaeus*. This involves a two-fold relation: (a) with that of which it is an image and (b) with that in which it is realized. Thus, an image involves (a) that of which it is the appearance or manifestation and to which it is referred as a model; and (b) a substrate on which it is supported, which is the spatiality of which we are speaking, and which is necessary as the place of what comes to be. As such, the *chora* is always and is not subject to corruption, insofar as it is the necessary condition of the being of every generated thing: without it all generation would be eliminated.<sup>58</sup>

It is clear also why Plato says that this Principle is not grasped by the senses, nor genuinely by the intellect, but only by specious account (a "bastard reasoning"), and that it is scarcely a subject of persuasion.

Insofar as it is formless, it is not perceptible to the senses nor is it intelligible: thus the senses and the intelligence grasp only what implies determination. But the *chora* can be understood by bastard reasoning since, on the basis of the reasoning which we have exhibited, it can to some extent be grasped, despite its lack of determination, as that which is necessary for shape to be realized for sensation; therefore, we can be persuaded about it with some effort, by means of a complex procedure of abstraction.<sup>59</sup>

56. *Ibid.*, 52B4.

57. *Ibid.*, B5.

58. See *Timaeus* 52C. On this passage of our dialogue the contribution of H. Cherniss is fundamental; see his "*Timaeus* 52C2-5," in *Mélanges de Philosophie Grecque offerts à Mgr. Diès* (Paris, 1956), 49-60 (now also available in Cherniss, *Selected Papers*, 364-75); cf. also Taylor, *Commentary*, 345ff.

59. On this point, see Cornford, *Plato's Cosmology*, 194.

V. THE FOURTH GROUP OF CHARACTERIZATIONS OF THE MATERIAL PRINCIPLE FOCUSED ON THE NOTION OF DISORDERED AND UNREGULATED MOVEMENT

We said the notion of the receptacle involves, in addition to being inert spatial substance, that of a material which receives impressions, and, before moving on to the constitution of the four elements, Plato concludes his discussion of the material Principle in general by explaining some features of this latter function. This is the text:

Let this, then, be given as the account summed up according to my judgment: that there were Being, Space, Becoming—three distinct things—even before the Heaven came into being.

Now the nurse of Becoming, being made watery and fiery and receiving the characters of earth and air, and qualified by all the other affections that go with these, had every sort of diverse appearance to the sight; but because it was filled with powers that were neither alike nor evenly balanced, there was no equipoise in any region of it; but it was everywhere swayed unevenly and shaken by those things, and by its motion it shook them in turn. And they, being thus moved, were perpetually being separated and carried in different directions; just as when things are shaken and winnowed by means of winnowing-baskets and other instruments for cleaning corn, the dense and heavy things go one way, while the rare and light are carried to another place and settle there. In the same way at the same time the four kinds were shaken by the Recipient, which itself was in motion like an instrument for shaking, and it separated the most unlike kinds farthest apart from one another, and thrust the most alike closest together; whereby the different kinds came to have different regions, even before the ordered whole consisting of them became.

Before that, all these things were without proportion or measure. Fire, water, earth, and air possessed indeed some traces [ $\iota\chi\upsilon\eta$ ] of their own nature, but were altogether in such a condition as we should expect for anything when deity is absent from it. . . .<sup>60</sup>

It has been recognized that Plato is spelling out what he put in the mouth of Timaeus at the beginning of the discussion, claiming that what God acted on in producing the universe, was (a) what was visible; and (b) what was moved and in a disordered and unregulated way.

(a) In the passage just cited it is said that the principle of generation, which is what is contained in the primitive space, bore rudimentary characteristics of water, fire, air, and earth, or traces of them, and hence the powers and dispositions connected to them, but without any order or balance. These are visible and perceptible characteristics only from the viewpoint of a hypothetical observer, as Cornford correctly observes.<sup>61</sup> But they are such by their very nature.

60. *Timaeus* 52D2-53B4.

61. See Cornford, *Plato's Cosmology*, 199.

(b) In addition, Plato says that these things oscillate unevenly and shake the receptacle which contains them; and, since the receptacle moves, as well as receiving, it inflicts blows on them too.<sup>62</sup>

The image of the winnowing baskets Plato uses is a telling one. The receptacle moves and the movement of what it contains is compared with basket-sieves which are shaken and the movements of what they contain, insofar as the movement separates the dense and heavy parts from the rare and light ones.<sup>63</sup>

Therefore even in the primitive state, movement, the dense and the rare, the heavy and the light involved a determination of some trace of the elements, but wholly without order or reason.

Scholars have long sought parallels between this conception and what we find in some Presocratics, who offer similar pictures of the derivation of the universe.<sup>64</sup> But for all their intrinsic interest, they clarify only a marginal point, and are far from offering a solution to the fundamental problem which we have been considering.

The problem is this: What is the underlying conception, which Plato indicates that he does not wish to set out openly, given the standard of plausible reasoning here adopted? Can we find it out and, if so, how?

## VI. THE MATERIAL PRINCIPLE OF THE *TIMAEUS* AND THE INDEFINITE DYAD OF THE UNWRITTEN DOCTRINES

From what we have seen, it will be apparent that Plato was not joking when he said that he would not speak about the Principle of all things, or about the Principles, "for now," "meaning" in writing—because with the present mode of inquiry, with the form of "plausible reasoning," it

62. On the connection between movement and the material Principle of the *Timaeus*, see H. Herter, "Bewegung der Materie bei Platon," *Rheinisches Museum* 100 (1957): 327–47. It is well wide of the mark to deny the credibility of this connection between *chora* and movement on the grounds that movement (as we shall see) is imposed by the soul. Indeed, the soul does not produce movement absolutely, but determines it, orders it, and hence makes it rational (or, rather, the Demiurge makes it rational by means of the soul).

63. This simile is likely to be alien to the modern reader, so much so that some have mistaken the basket for a sieve. By chance, the present author, when very young, played with these instruments at our grandparents' home; they were soon replaced by mechanical and subsequently electrical machines. Cornford helpfully provides a picture (*Plato's Cosmology*, 201), and describes it well. We ought to bear in mind that Plato's image is only partial, because in shaking the seeds, those who do the shaking work with intelligence and shrewdness, and thus introduce a rational component. Nevertheless, also by moving the seeds by chance and without order, the movement of the basket provokes a mass movement of light things in one direction and of heavy things in the other.

64. Taylor, for example, writes correctly: "[I]ts general character is exactly that of the boundary of Anaximander, agitated by *eternal motion* before the *opposites* had been *sifted out* and a *kósmos* formed. This is, in fact, pretty clearly the historical starting point from which Pythagorean cosmology takes its departure" (*Plato*, 457). Anaxagoras also main-



would not be possible to present his convictions. Indeed, the account in the *Timaeus* is one of the richest and most wide-ranging of his writings devoted to a specific theme; all the same, he does not reach his ultimate conclusions and he clearly says that he will not.

Plato certainly means to refer to the Unwritten Doctrines which, by means of the appropriate scientific method of pure dialectic, could reach the Principle of all things and the primary Principles.

The four great concepts that are shorthand for the twenty-six connotations listed above point to various aspects and different manifestations of the material Principle, no one of which gives its overall meaning:

1. necessity (diteleology);
2. receptacle;
3. spatiality;
4. movement and chaotic powers.

It is arbitrary to concentrate on one or the other of these concepts as many interpreters have done. Any attempts of this kind run counter to Plato's explicit warnings that he will not here reach the Principle and the first Principles, and will not express his ultimate thought.

Fortunately, the indirect tradition has handed down some documents that, despite being somewhat skimpy, furnish us with some essential information.

The three basic texts are by Aristotle. Here is what he says in two important passages from the *Physics*:

For this reason Plato identified matter and space in the *Timaeus*. For the participating principle and space were one and the same. He talked in a different manner regarding the participating principle in the so-called Unwritten Doctrines, but none the less identified place and space. For all philosophers say that place is something, but what it is he alone understood to say.<sup>65</sup>

Plato, of course, . . . ought to tell us why the Ideas and the Numbers are not in place, if the participant is place—whether what participates is the Great and the Small or matter, as he called it in writing in the *Timaeus*.<sup>66</sup>

Scholars have taken these texts in a variety of ways and some have used them to attack the reliability of Aristotle, who, as we shall see, is reporting accurately. The receptacle is identical with spatiality, and does participate (in a complex way) in the intelligible world. Aristotle, who had presumably heard it with his own ears, points out that Plato said so, in different terms, in the Unwritten Doctrines. In the second text, he

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tained that originally all things were mixed together (consult Taylor, *Commentary*, 357; consult also Cornford, *Plato's Cosmology*, 202).

65. Aristotle, *Physics* Δ 2.209b11-17 (Gaiser, 54A; Krämer, III.4).

66. *Ibid.*, b33-210a2 (Krämer, III).

claims that in the Unwritten Doctrines Plato clearly calls the great and small “the participating principle,” whereas in the *Timaeus* he calls it “matter.”

As we explained above, “matter” is a term used by Plato in the *Timaeus*, but not as a technical term. However, it would be absurd to grasp at this fact as a way of discrediting the testimony of Aristotle, since he was—with good reason—perfectly convinced that what he called matter was exactly what, in the final analysis, Plato meant in the *Timaeus*. After all, since Aristotle, everyone has used the term “matter” (ὕλη). In the *Metaphysics* Aristotle says:

It is plain from what has been said that he made use of only two causes, the cause of essential nature and the cause which is material—for the Ideas cause the essential natures of other things, and the One causes the Ideas. And as to the nature of the underlying matter of which the Ideas are predicated in the case of sensible things, but of which the One is predicated in the case of the Ideas, it is plain that this is a Dyad, the Great and Small.<sup>67</sup>

Another important text is offered by Theophrastus who speaks generically of the Platonists, evidently meaning to include Plato, who is referred to by name shortly afterward, as party to their line of thought:

But now, most philosophers only go to a certain point, and there they halt; as do those who set up the One and the indefinite Dyad. For, after generating numbers, surfaces, and solids, they neglect almost everything else and they make an effort to make clear only this: that some things arise from the indefinite Dyad—for example, place, the void, the infinite—and that others arise from numbers and the One,—for example, soul and certain other things—; and they generate simultaneously time, the heavens, and many other things, but of the heavens and the remaining things in the universe, then, they make no further mention.<sup>68</sup>

The details of Theophrastus’s text do not interest us, but only the underlying idea of it. In particular, we are interested in his saying, by way of example, of the role of the indefinite or indeterminate Dyad, that it is place, the void, the infinite.

It is undeniable that Plato used the terms Dyad of the great-and-small or Indefinite Dyad for the Principle antithetical to the One at all levels and that he thus revealed the highest level of esoteric abstraction.

The passages we have cited mostly betray some connection with the *Timaeus*. But there is a text of Hermodorus, friend of Plato, which was handed down via Dercyllidas and is quoted by Simplicius; it connects the great-and-small (that is, the Dyad) also with the concepts which, in

67. Ibid., *Metaphysics* A 6.988a8–14 (Gaiser, 22A; Krämer, III.9; Findlay, 416.4).

68. Theophrastus, *Metaphysics* 6a23–b5 Ross and Fobes (Gaiser, 30; Krämer, III.8; Findlay, 441.31).

the *Philebus*, are related to the material Principle (the unlimited or infinite), and which, among other things, include the chaotic movement of the *Timaeus*. Here is this important text:

He [Hermodorus] continues: the things that are called great in comparison with the small, all involve the more and the less. For it is possible to be yet greater and yet smaller in infinitum. In the same way being broader or narrower, or heavier and lighter, and all such comparatives will go on infinitely. But what is said to be equal and abiding and harmonized has nothing of the more and the less in it, but rather their opposites. For one case of inequality is more unequal than another, one case of motion more mobility than another, one case of discord more discordant than another, so that all, with the exception of one element, that falls on either side of such relations, admits of the more and the less. All this, in virtue of a negation of being, can be said to be unstable, shapeless, boundless, and unreal. For such negativity there is neither principle nor essence, but it rushes about in a certain unjudgable condition. . . .<sup>69</sup>

The most significant connection between the Dyad of the great-and-small and the chaotic movement to which the *Timaeus* refers is fully testified to by Eudemus, by Alexander, and by Simplicius who, in his *Commentary on Aristotle's Physics*, refers to the claim of those who understand movement as alterity or "otherness" (ἑτερότητα), inequality (ἀνισότητα), and nonbeing (τὸ μὴ ὄν); and Simplicius cites Eudemus (as well as Alexander) to explain that this is Plato's claim. Here is the text of Simplicius quoting the very valuable fragment of Eudemus:

Eudemus, before Alexander, examining Plato's opinion about movement, and opposing it writes: Plato says that movement is the great-and-small, non-being, the anomalous and everything which amounts to the same as these. But to say that this is movement, seems absurd: indeed, when there is movement, it seems that that in which there is movement moves. But it is ridiculous to say that, given the unequal and the anomalous, it is necessary that they move. Indeed, it is better to say that these things are causes, as Archytas says. And a little after he adds: the Pythagoreans and Plato trace movement back, with good reason, to the indefinite (in fact, no one else has spoken of this). . . .<sup>70</sup>

If, in the light of these testimonies, we read what Porphyry says in his commentary on the *Philebus*,<sup>71</sup> the doctrine of the indefinite Dyad of the great-and-small as a concise expression of the nature of the material Principle becomes very clear. The great-and-small, or the more and less, in every sense tends to move toward infinity. This holds for everything,

69. Simplicius, *In Arist. Phys.* 248.5–16 Diels (Gaiser, 31; Krämer, III.13; Findlay, 425.16).

70. The passage of Aristotle is *Physics* Γ 2.201b16–26; that of Simplicius which discusses this specific point is *In Arist. Phys.* 430.34–431.16 Diels, quoted in Gaiser, *Test. Plat.* 55A–B (Findlay, 441–2, secs., 35–86, respectively.) Also see *Eudemus*, frag. 60 Wehrli.

71. See Porphyry, *In Arist. Phys.* 453.30ff. (Gaiser, 23B; Krämer, III.11; Findlay, 418–419.7).

at all levels, that tends to the more and to the less, to excess and to defect, and to disorder in opposite directions.

Thus, the *chora* of the *Timaeus*, and everything said in that dialogue about the material Principle, represents only a part or aspect of the Dyad, or, to speak more accurately, its lowest level. The *chora* enters into the Dyad, but does not exhaust its meaning or function.

Evidently, the theory we find in the *Timaeus* must have occupied an important place also in Plato's lectures, perhaps with all four of the traits we have examined. Nevertheless, it was restricted to dealing with sensible phenomena, and hence must have been only a part of the overall picture. The Dyad embraces a much broader framework, since it figures in the explanation of the whole of reality at all levels. In conclusion, we can safely say that what Plato tells us about the material Principle, in the *Timaeus* and elsewhere, is not exhaustive, and that, therefore, we must seek the heights of metaphysical abstraction reached in the Unwritten Doctrines, whose essential features are conserved by the indirect tradition. Happ properly observes: "The things which Plato expresses in individual dialogues cannot be regarded as absolute, but they are aspects which, each in its own way, directs us to an overall unity, whose fundamental traits appear in the *De Bono* [*On the Good*]. Seen in this way, the *πανδεχέες* of the *Timaeus* [the recipient of all] is a particularization of the second Principle in the realm of (physical) spatiality. . . ."<sup>72</sup>

It is now not news that the Principle antithetical to the One, namely, the great-and-small, is differentiated at the various levels of being. Here we are attending to the differentiation into which it enters in the three great realms: (1) ideal, (2) the intermediate, and (3) sensible (the other planes and levels of being are distributed among these realms).

The Dyad presents a *novum* from realm to realm. But, for our purposes, it is most worth emphasizing the *novum* of the Dyad in the cosmological realm, namely, its significant difference relative to the role of the Dyad in the first and second realms. This *novum* consists in the dimension of the sensible, compared with the dimensions of the intelligible which characterize the Dyad in the other two realms.

Here, again, it is Aristotle who denies to the upholders of the traditional paradigm any possibility of rejecting this view. In the *Metaphysics* he frequently mentions the problem of the existence of intelligible matter in addition to sensible matter, and he associates intelligible matter with the Ideas and with mathematical objects. Clearly, this essential point of the Unwritten Doctrines had a remarkable impact on him, to

72. Happ, *Hyle*, 130. See the two schemata presented on pp. 185 and 193 of Happ. See also Höfle, *Wahrheit und Geschichte*, 453ff.

such an extent that he felt called on to discuss it more than once.<sup>73</sup> Here are the passages:

But matter is unknowable in itself. And some matter is perceptible and some intelligible, perceptible matter being for instance bronze and wood and all matter that is changeable, and intelligible matter being that which is present in perceptible things not qua perceptible, i.e., the mathematical objects.<sup>74</sup>

It is clear also that the soul is the primary substance and the body is matter, and man or animal is the compound of both taken universally; and Socrates or Coriscus, if even the soul of Socrates may be called Socrates, has two meanings (for some mean by such a term the soul, and others mean the concrete thing), but if Socrates or Coriscus means simply this particular soul and this particular body, the individual is analogous to the universal in its composition. Whether there is, apart from the matter of such substances, another kind of matter, and one should look for some substance other than these, e.g., numbers or something of the sort, must be considered later.<sup>75</sup>

Of matter some is intelligible, some perceptible, and in a formula there is always an element of matter as well as one of actuality; e.g., the circle is a plane figure.<sup>76</sup>

In general one might raise the question, to what kind of science it belongs to discuss the difficulties about the matter of the objects of mathematics. Neither to physics (because the whole inquiry of the physicist is about the things that have in themselves a principle of movement and rest), nor yet to the science which inquires into demonstration and science; for this is just the subject which it investigates. It remains then that it is the philosophy which we have set before ourselves that treats of those subjects.<sup>77</sup>

In the second of the passages cited, Aristotle clearly tells us that it is necessary to ask whether, besides sensible matter, there is also intelligible matter, which is referred to numbers and to other realities, which are presumably the Ideas. If the material Dyad, both in the realm of the Ideas and in that of the mathematical objects, were intelligible, the Dyad of the objects of the senses would be sensible too and in just this respect it would be differentiated from them. Thus, the various modes and explications of the Dyad are matters of analogy and not of identity.

It seems possible to draw another conclusion, as follows. The indirect tradition tells us that Plato traced the cause of the Good to the One and that of Evil to the Dyad. However, we are not told that the Dyad is regarded in this way at all levels. After all, it would be hard to explain how it could be a cause of evil on the intelligible level, where the Dyad acts as principle of plurality, of difference, and gradation; what kind of evil would this be? Rather, the only way in which the Dyad can be

73. The fullest treatment of this issue is Happ, *Hyle*, 581-615.

74. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* Z 10.1036a9-12.

75. *Ibid.*, Z 11.1037a5-13.

76. *Ibid.*, H 6.1045a33-35.

77. *Ibid.*, K 1.1059b14-21.

considered as the cause of evil in the realm of the intelligible is thoroughly general, insofar as the negative Ideas of the various pairs of contraries depend on it. In this realm, the Dyad is the cause of the Ideas listed in the right-hand column of the synoptic table of the principal pairs of Meta-Ideas; it is predominant in these, relative to the One, which is predominant in all the Meta-Ideas of the left-hand column. Therefore, at the intelligible level, the Dyad is the cause of what is negative (and in this sense of evil) only in the paradigmatic and abstract sense of the term.

On the other hand, it is easy to understand how the sensible Dyad must be considered the cause of concrete evil, as Plato explains in the *Timaeus*. Now what he says in the *Theaetetus* is made plain, namely, that evil cannot have a place near the gods (that is, in the realm of the intelligible) but rather it roams around in mortal nature, in this world.<sup>78</sup>

Thus, the Principle antithetical to the One-Good is cause of specific and concrete evil only at its lowest level,<sup>79</sup> that is, as sensible Dyad. In this way, Plato's thought becomes absolutely clear: at the sensible level, the Dyad is not totally dominated by the intelligible and the rational, and so it leaves open gaps for disorder and lack of measure which are much wider than those to be found at the level of the intelligible, where the Dyad is the cause chiefly of difference, plurality, and the metaphysical declension of levels. In the sensible realm, the Dyad holds open the negative consequences of becoming: ontological shortfall, epistemological inadequacy, and axiological uncertainty.

78. *Theaetetus* 176A–B. See also above, p. 322, note 31

79. On the complex problem of the cause of evil, see Isnardi Parente's *status quaestionis: La causa del male*, in Zeller and Isnardi Parente, *La filosofia dei greci*, 171–79.

## 20 The Activity of the Demiurge: The Production of Unity-in-Multiplicity and the Creation of the Elements and Souls in the *Timaeus*

### I. THE ROLE OF THE DEMIURGIC INTELLIGENCE

It should by now be clear what, for Plato, is the role of the demiurgic Intelligence.<sup>1</sup> The Ideas are formal but not efficient causes of the sensible world, and, in general, of all things connected with generation and becoming. If the formal cause is the Intelligible, the efficient cause is Intelligence, with all the dynamic functions connected to it, and in particular with the structuring and rational coordination of movement.

As we saw from the passage quoted at the beginning of the preceding chapter, the Demiurge works on the sensible material Principle, which of itself shakes in an unregulated, disorderly way; and his work consists in bringing this unformed mass from disorder to order.

Now, the most delicate point to understand is the leading from disorder to order, the conducting of the unformed to form, or of guiding sensible matter to accept structure from the intelligible, and so the producing of a copy, a sensible image of the intelligible reality. Understanding this will help us to grasp what Plato means by bringing nonbeing into being, by bringing what was not into being, into *ousia*. Plato reminds us that the participation of the sensible Principle in the intelligible is difficult, problematic, and complex. He tells us that sensible things, considered ontologically as images of the intelligible, are the imprints of eternal realities (namely, the paradigms of the Ideas), which come about in a difficult and marvelous way.<sup>2</sup>

This mediation, so difficult, ineffable, and marvelous, comes about through mathematical and geometrical dimensions and operations, thanks to the connections of the intermediate mathematical with the Idea-Numbers and the primary Principles. Thus, the passage from disorder to order comes about in virtue of the structures of the forms and the numbers.<sup>3</sup> And the indirect tradition sums up Plato's thought about

1. For the issues at stake, see Isnardi Parente, "Il problema del Demiurgo," in Zeller and Isnardi Parente, *La filosofia dei greci*, 94–106.

2. *Timaeus* 50C; Cf. above, p. 379, note 50.

3. *Ibid.*, 53B4ff.

the operation of the demiurgic Intelligence, by telling us that Plato claimed that God always does geometry (ἀεὶ γεωμετροεῖν τὸν θεόν).<sup>4</sup> After all, the *Timaeus* says that the absence of God and of the Intelligence implies that the material Principle remains in disorder and unmeasured; his presence implies order and measure, through the forms and numbers. And this involves beauty and goodness, insofar as beauty and goodness are order and measure. This is Plato's text:

Before that, all these kinds were without proportion or measure. Fire, water, earth, and air possessed indeed some traces of their natures, but were altogether in such a condition as we should expect for anything when God is absent from it. Such being their nature at the time when the ordering of the universe was taken in hand, God then began by giving them a distinct configuration by means of shapes and numbers.

That God framed them with the greatest possible perfection, which they had not before, must be taken, above all, as a principle we constantly assert.<sup>5</sup>

## II. THE DEMIURGE PRODUCES THE FOUR ELEMENTS (WATER, AIR, EARTH, AND FIRE) BY MEANS OF GEOMETRIC FORMS AND NUMBERS, WHICH DEPEND ON THE FIRST PRINCIPLES

Plato says clearly in the *Sophist* that all Living Things and all things that are generated and also all the things derived from the things that are generated, namely, fire, water, and the other things related to these, are produced by the demiurgic Intelligence, and which hence are works of God.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, in the *Laws* he flatly condemns the opposite claim of those who say that fire, water, earth, and air are all derived by nature and by chance and that none of these things arise from art.<sup>7</sup>

In the *Timaeus*, Plato explains how the four elements are produced by the demiurgic Intelligence. At the beginning of the discussion about the material Principle, he has already said that no earlier thinker had explained this matter. Everyone had made use of water, of air, of fire, and of earth as if they were the primary Principles or elements, as if they were, for example, like the letters of the alphabet, while they are not only not like letters (elements), but not even like syllables. In other words, they are not Principles, but rather subject to principle and not even at the first level of derivation.<sup>8</sup> What, then, is their origin?

The text of the *Timaeus* on this point is tightly packed and has been made very complicated by the wide variety of views that interpreters

4. Plutarch, *Quaest. conv.*, 8.2.

5. *Timaeus* 53A7-B7.

6. See pp. 324-25.

7. *Laws* 10.889B1-3.

8. See pp. 369-73.



have offered of it. In our opinion, Plato's view can be clarified if we start with his overall conception of the bipolarity of the whole of reality, the conception of every sort of being, at all levels, as a form of mixture. His view becomes clear if we bear in mind that sensible reality is not reducible to a simple deduction from intelligible reality in a pure *Ableitungssystem*. The two spheres of reality have an analogical structure; in the sensible realm the material Principle is an addition, which is not always merely deducible from the dyadic Principle at the level above it.

Viewed this way, Plato's meaning becomes clear when he speaks of water, air, earth, and fire "before the production of the world arose from them."<sup>9</sup> In the beginning, water, air, earth, and fire have only some traces of their nature within the tangle of the material Principle, and are in total disorder. God produces them, creates them, in the Hellenic sense, and constitutes them beautifully and well, working through forms and numbers.

The elements presuppose a bipolar structure and so are mixtures. In addition to a formal Principle, they have a material Principle similar to but not identical with the corresponding material Principle of the level above. If this is so, there can be no doubt that the activity of the demiurgic Intelligence consists in producing this mixture of the material Principle through numbers and geometrical figures.

Faced with the need to tackle an argument about the geometrical forms and numbers, Plato goes further than the "plausible account," which is the dominant mode of the dialogue, except in the prelude to Timaeus's speech and the frequent references which are made to it. Rather, he puts himself in a position near, but just one step down from, the protological level of the Unwritten Doctrines. And he says straight out that he will tackle an "unusual" argument, meaning unusual for the writings, which requires appropriate knowledge of the scientific method, even if we cannot here arrive at the first and highest Principles:

What I must now attempt to explain to you is the distinct formation of each and their origin. The account will be unusual; but you know the methods of learning which my explanations require, and so will follow me. In the first place, then, it is of course obvious to anyone that fire, earth, water, and air are bodies; and all body has depth. Depth, moreover, must be bounded by surface; and every surface that is rectilinear is composed of triangles. Now all triangles are derived from two, each having one right angle and the other angles acute. Of these triangles, one has on either side the half of a right angle, the division of which is determined by equal sides (the right-angled isosceles); the other has unequal parts of a right angle allotted to unequal sides (the right-angled scalene). Let us then assume this as the first beginning of fire and of the other bodies, following the account which combines

9. *Timaeus* 53A7. Cf. also 48B3-5.

plausibility with necessity; the higher principles than these are known to Heaven and to such men as Heaven favors.<sup>10</sup>

Therefore, in explaining the production (the creation) of the elements by the Demiurge, Plato stops short at the level of the intermediate Principles, of triangles, numbers, and regular geometrical solids.

He starts with the two most beautiful forms of triangle: the right-angled isosceles triangle and the one obtained by dividing into two an equilateral triangle with a perpendicular, or by dividing the same triangle into six triangles, tracing a perpendicular from each pinnacle to the opposite side. Here is the famous text:

Now, the question to be determined is this: What are the most perfect bodies that can be constructed, four in number, unlike one another, but such that some can be generated out of one another by resolution? If we can hit upon the answer to this, we have the truth concerning the generation of earth and fire and of the bodies which stand as proportionals between them. For we shall concede to no one that there are visible bodies more perfect than these, each corresponding to a single type. We must do our best, then, to construct the four types of body that are most perfect and declare that we have grasped the constitution of these things sufficiently for our purpose.

Now, of the two triangles, the isosceles is of one type only; the scalene, of an endless number. Of this unlimited multitude we must choose the best, if we are to make a beginning on our own principles. Accordingly, if anyone can tell us of a better kind that he has chosen for the construction of these bodies, his will be the victory, not of an enemy, but of a friend. For ourselves, however, we postulate as the best of these many triangles one kind, passing over all the other; namely, a pair of which compose the equilateral triangle. The reason is too long a story; but if anyone should put the matter to the test and discover that it is not so, he shall have our friendship as a reward. So much, then, for the choice of the two triangles, of which the bodies of fire and of the rest have been wrought: the one isosceles (the half-square), the other having the greater side triple in square of the lesser (the half-equilateral).<sup>11</sup>

By combining six triangles of the second type, we obtain an equilateral triangle, which, appropriately multiplied and combined (in a way to which Plato refers, but of which we cannot here give the details), gives rise (a) to the tetrahedron (a regular pyramid on a equilateral base), which constitutes the structure of fire; (b) to the octahedron, which constitutes the structure of the air; and (c) to the icosahedron, which constitutes the structure of water.

On the other hand, using the isosceles triangle, the Demiurge makes only one of the four elements. Coordinating four right-angle isosceles triangles, joined about a center, we obtain a square; and appropriately

10. *Ibid.*, B7-D7.

11. *Ibid.*, 53D7-54B5.

combining six squares we produce a cube; and this constitutes the atomic structure of earth.

Plato hints at a fifth regular solid: the dodecahedron and its corresponding element, the ether, of which little further is said. On this theory, the earth cannot be transformed into the other elements, whereas they can transform into each other because they are structured out of regular geometrical solids which derive from the same triangles.

Plato was working with concepts that had been elaborated within the Academy. Cornford reminds us that "[T]he theoretical construction of the regular solids had been completed by Theaetetus at the Academy. So far as we know, the assignment of these figures to the primary bodies is due to Plato, and had not been anticipated by any earlier thinker."<sup>12</sup>

Here is the text of the *Timaeus* which gives Plato's reason the correspondence of each material element with a regular geometrical body:

Let us next distribute the figures whose formation we have now described, among fire, earth, water, and air.

To earth let us assign the cubical figure; for of the four kinds it is the most immobile and the most plastic of bodies. The figure whose bases are the most stable must best answer that description; . . . if we take the triangles we assumed at the outset, the face of the triangle with equal sides is by nature more stable than that of the triangle whose sides are unequal; . . . of the two equilateral surfaces respectively composed of the two triangles, the square is necessarily a more stable base than the triangle, both in its parts and as a whole. . . . [W]e shall preserve the plausibility of our account, if we assign this figure to earth; and of the remainder the least mobile to water, the most mobile to fire, and the intermediate figure to air. . . . [W]e shall assign the smallest body to fire, the largest to water, and the intermediate to air; and again the body with the sharpest angles to fire, the next to air, the third to water.

Now, taking all these figures, the one with the fewest faces (tetrahedron) must be the most mobile, since it has the sharpest cutting edges and the sharpest points in every direction, and moreover the lightest, as being composed of the smallest number of similar parts; the second (octahedron) must stand second in these respects, the third (icosahedron), third. Hence, in accordance with genuine reasoning as well as plausibility, among the solid figures we have constructed, we may take the pyramid as the element or seed of fire; the second in order of generation (octahedron) as that of air; the third (icosahedron) as that of water.<sup>13</sup>

Clearly, these regular geometrical solids constituting the four elements are not of themselves visible because they are too small, but they become visible when they join together in large numbers.

12. Cornford, *Plato's Cosmology*, 210. See also the very clear geometrical explanation of how the four elements (except the third) transform each into the others (210–39) Cf. Taylor, *Commentary*, 358ff. Within the traditional paradigm, E. Sachs's *Die fünf platonischen Körper* (Berlin, 1914) is still fundamental on this issue.

13. *Timaeus* 55D6–56B6.

Now we must think of all these bodies as so small that a single body of any one of these kinds is invisible to us because of its smallness; though when a number are aggregated the masses of them can be seen.<sup>14</sup>

From the foregoing it should be clear that in producing the four elements, the Demiurge mediates between the unformed Principle and geometrical form.

For the sake of clarity, Plato begins his discussion by saying explicitly that God modeled the things that were previously in total disorder (the unformed Principle and the traces of the four elements which it contained) with forms and numbers; and then he explains that these forms and numbers are the triangles and that their making up regular solids comes about in precise numerical relations.

He then firmly restates the concept: the constitution of the four elements is identical with the "persuasion" of necessity (of the disteleological sensible Principle) so far as possible in accordance with the Intelligible, fixing in it proportion and harmony (unity in plurality, unification of the disordered plurality):

And with regard to their numbers, their motions, and their powers in general, we must suppose that God adjusted them in due proportion, when he had brought them in every detail to the most exact perfection permitted by Necessity willingly complying with persuasion.<sup>15</sup>

At the beginning of the third passage, Plato puts this concept into Timaeus's mouth:

As was said at the outset, these things were in disorder and God introduced into them all every kind of measure in every respect in which it was possible for each one to be in harmonious proportion both with itself and with all the rest. For at first they were without any such proportion, save by mere chance, nor was there anything deserving to be called by the names we now use—fire, water, and the rest; but all these he first set in order, and then framed out of them this universe, a single living creature containing within itself all living creatures, mortal and immortal.<sup>16</sup>

The rationality of sensible bodies and sensible corporeality in general depends on their geometrical and mathematical structures. Physical-sensible bodiliness reflects the structure of the geometrically intelligible bodiliness, being "the mixture of a combination of necessity and intelligence."<sup>17</sup> Points, lines, surfaces, and three-dimensional structures are purely intelligible at the level of the intermediate and ideal entities;

14. *Ibid.*, B7-C3.

15. *Ibid.*, 3-7.

16. *Ibid.*, 69B2-C3.

17. *Ibid.*, 47E5-48A2.

on the other hand, when they are combined or mixed with the sensible material Principle, they give rise to the bodies we see and touch, as a result of a subtle capillary penetration which channels the intrinsically chaotic sensible material Principle down to the smallest details in accordance with the atomic structure given by the regular geometrical solids.

Some scholars have thought that the two triangles we have referred to and from which the regular geometrical bodies are derived are the ultimate elements in the *Timaeus*. But this claim, literally, can lead to a serious mistake. Plato says that there are higher Principles,<sup>18</sup> and that here in the *Timaeus* he stops at a certain limit. Moreover, he says that water, air, earth, and fire not only are not letters (elements), but are not even syllables, as we have already noted.<sup>19</sup> The syllables are the triangles and the geometrical bodies derived from them; stretching the image, water, air, earth, and fire would be words built out of the syllables.

What, then, are the ultimate elements, the higher Principles?

We have already said that these are the protological principles of the Unwritten Doctrines, with the One at the summit: and it is precisely this that God knows as do the men favored by him.<sup>20</sup>

Some scholars within the traditional paradigm had begun to head in this direction. Cornford, for example, properly notes that, as the surface contained in the minimum number of lines, the triangle is not ultimate, for all that it is an element of all the figures: "Plato indicates that there is something arbitrary in starting from this assumption. If lines can be constructed of triangles, triangles themselves can be constructed of lines, and lines can be expressed as numbers. We have already had a hint of this in the phrase giving them a distinct configuration by means of geometrical shapes and number. This suggests that the remoter principles, known to mathematicians, are lines and numbers."<sup>21</sup> Some have thought of indivisible lines: points, as Plato interpreted them. But, clearly, the Demiurge is not a mere mathematician; he rises to the primary and highest Principles, from which the mathematical entities themselves are derived, and thence to the One.

Happ has picked out this issue clearly, observing that the limit and therefore the delimitation of bodies in terms of elementary surfaces requires a further reduction, which can be performed "certainly as far as the numbers (considered as πέρατα) and to the One (ἓν), which is the highest limit (πέρας)." <sup>22</sup> And in any case, we saw above the respect in

18. *Ibid.*, 53D6.

19. See above, 369–70ff, and 392–93ff.

20. *Ibid.*, 53D6ff.

21. Cornford, *Plato's Cosmology*, 212.

22. Happ, *Hyle*, 118.

which the geometrical and mathematical entities derive from the first and highest Principles.

Therefore, the Principles that are “further above” the triangles point to various Principles, which carry the Ideal numbers from the realm of the intermediate mathematical entities dialectically upward to reach, in the end, the One and the Dyad.

But here we have touched on the most delicate doctrines, which we must now confirm by showing how the demiurgic Intelligence aims all its activity at the One, at that Good whose essence is the One as supreme Measure of all things. Here, of course, we must take the One in all its most important senses at the various levels: absolute unity, identity, unitariness, and uniqueness.

### III. THE WORLD WAS PRODUCED BY THE DEMIURGE AS ONE AND UNIQUE

In his desire to construct the best and most beautiful thing, and guiding himself by the intelligible Model, which is the Living Thing itself, which is one and encompasses the totality of ideal Living Things, the Demiurge creates a single and unique universe, endowed with life and intelligence, which encompasses unitarily all sensible Living Things, which reflect the intelligibles. Here is the text:

Taking thought, therefore, he found that, among things that are by nature visible, no work that is without intelligence will ever be better than one that has intelligence, . . . and moreover that intelligence cannot be present in anything apart from soul. In virtue of this reasoning, when he framed the universe, he fashioned reason within soul and soul within body, so that the work he accomplished might be by nature as excellent and perfect as possible. This, then, is how we must say, according to the plausible account, that this world came to be, by God’s providence, a living creature with soul.

This being premised, we have now to state what follows next: What was the living creature in whose likeness he framed the world? We must not suppose that it was any creature that ranks only as a species; for no copy of that which is incomplete can ever be good. Let us rather say that the world is like, above all things, to that Living Creature of which all other living creatures, severally and in their families, are parts. For that embraces and contains within itself all the intelligible living creatures, just as this world contains ourselves and all other creatures that have been formed as things visible. For God, wishing to make this world most nearly like the intelligible thing which is best and in every way complete, fashioned it as a single visible living creature, containing within itself all Living Things whose nature is of the same order.<sup>23</sup>

This is how the issue of the One is brought to the fore.

23. *Timaeus* 30B1–31A1.

Is it correct to say that the world is one and unique? Could those who say that there are infinitely many worlds not be correct?

Plato's reply is based on the type of argument we recognize from the *Republic* and the *Parmenides*, and which has passed into history, chiefly because of the disputes it prompted, like the Third Man Argument. It is scarcely necessary to remember that the disputes to which the Third Man Argument has given rise have been misunderstandings of Plato's henology; we have thought it worthwhile to recall them only for the purposes of noting the importance that this outlook had for Plato and the lively interest which it has aroused pro and contra.<sup>24</sup>

If the world is made in accordance with one ideal model, then it is only one because its model is only one. Two models are not possible because, within the henological perspective, the supposition that there were two models would involve their necessary unification, that is, the existence of a third Living-thing-itself which would contain (unify) the alleged duality. But, in that case, the world would have been created by the Demiurge, on this third model.

Therefore, the supreme model is one. And the Demiurge, to produce the Living Thing as similar as possible to the perfect Living Thing (Idea of Living), could not make two or an infinite number of worlds, but had to make only one alone, because only one alone can be perfectly similar to the perfect Living Thing (to the Idea of world) which is one:

Have we, then, been right to call it one Universe, or would it have been true rather to speak of many and indeed of an indefinite number? One we must call it, if we are to hold that it was made according to its pattern. For that which embraces all the intelligible living creatures that there are, cannot be one of a pair; for then there would have to be yet another Living Creature embracing those two, and they would be parts of it; and thus our world would be more truly described as a likeness, not of them, but of that other which would embrace them. Accordingly, to the end that this world may be like the complete Living Creature in respect of its uniqueness, for that reason its maker did not make two worlds nor yet an indefinite number; but this Universe has come to be and is and shall be hereafter one and unique.<sup>25</sup>

Moreover, Aristotle, referring to the Unwritten Doctrines of Plato, says:

. . . the Living Thing itself is derived from the Idea itself of the One, with the primary Length, Breadth, and Depth, and other things similarly constituted.<sup>26</sup>

It has long been recognized that the Living Thing in itself referred to here is the Living Thing itself of the *Timaeus*, that is, the Idea of living

24. See above, 227–28ff.; 319.

25. *Timaeus* 31A2–B3.

26. Aristotle, *De anima* A 2.404b20ff. (Gaiser, 25A; Findlay 421.10.).

or perfect Living Thing; likewise, it has been recognized that the One is the summit. A. Levi, for example, wrote:

The αὐτὸ τὸ ζῶον must be identified with the αὐτὸ ὃ ἔστι ζῶον of the *Timaeus*, the perfect and intelligible Living Thing, which includes all the intelligibles, just as our universe contains all visible things and constitutes the model the Demiurge contemplates when forming the sensible world, which is likewise a living being. We are dealing, therefore, not with the Ideal World as a complete system of ideal realities, in the usual sense, but with the Idea of world constituted, according to Aristotle, by ideal spatiality and by a formal principle. The Idea of the One of which he speaks must be understood as a formal principle of the Ideal Shapes; that is, it must be identified with the principle of the line, which, by determining the material principle of spatiality (the extended great and small), generates these quantities.<sup>27</sup>

And again Levi remarks:

It must be noted that the living-in-itself does not include soul [which, as we shall see, is created by the Demiurge, by reference to this model], and in fact Plato does not speak of it in the *Timaeus* and Aristotle is silent in this report; consequently, since the intellect can exist only in the soul, the *autozoön* can be only the object, and not the subject of knowledge. As for the "other things" (τὰ ἄλλα) constituted in the same way, we may suppose that they are the Living intelligibles included in that totality, which thus appear as particular determinations of the intelligible spatiality: thus they will be constituted by Ideal dimensions.<sup>28</sup>

The Idea of the One as a formal principle of the line is dependent on the highest One; therefore, in the final analysis, the Idea that the world (including the sensible world) is one, depends on the highest One.

#### IV. THE DEMIURGE BROUGHT TOGETHER THE SENSIBLE CORPOREAL ELEMENTS WITH A BOND THAT MAKES ITSELF AND THE THINGS CONNECTED BY IT INTO A UNITY OF THE HIGHEST ORDER

The generated world is not a purely intelligible body, but a sensible corporeal body (a mixture of the corporeal intelligible which is mathematico-geometrical and the sensible material Principle). The sensible corporeal is (a) visible and (b) tangible. But (a) being visible depends on fire, while (b) being tangible depends on the solidity of the earth. In general, two things, if they are to be connected, imply a third which acts as a mediator, in such a way that the mediator stands to the final term, as

27. A. Levi, *Il problema dell'errore*, 145ff. In note 96 Levi adds: "The living Creature itself, because it is constituted by Ideal space, does not include more than some of the Ideas; suffice it to observe that not even the Idea—Number can be found in it, although some penetrate it mediately, insofar as they make up the model of the Ideal Shapes."

28. *Ibid.*, 146.



the first stands to the mediator; and the mediator stands to the first as the final stands to the middle.

The proportion Plato is referring to is geometrical, such as this:

$$2 : 4 = 4 : 8$$

This proportion implies that by multiplying the extremes ( $2 \times 8 = 16$ ) and the mediator ( $4 \times 4 = 16$ ) we obtain equal products; consequently the middle can take the place of the extremes, and maintain the same proportion:

$$4 : 2 = 8 : 4$$

In this way, Plato says, all proportions become the same, and therefore all the things become a unity.

But since the world had to have the three dimensions of a solid body, only one mediator is not enough, but two are required, which stand to each other in an appropriate proportion, so that the following equation can be formed:

$$\text{fire} : \text{air} = \text{air} : \text{water} = \text{water} : \text{earth}$$

This is not the place to enter into the mathematical complications of this issue;<sup>29</sup> yet we may note the way in which Plato based the highest unity of the cosmos on proportion, that is, on the friendship which unites the cosmos with itself, and in this way he bound it in indissoluble unity. Here is how, in the *Gorgias*, Plato had earlier expressed this:

Wise men, Callicles, say that the heavens, the earth, gods and men, are bound together by fellowship and friendship, and order and temperance and justice, and for this reason they call the sum of things the cosmos, my friend, not the world of disorder or riot. But it seems to me that you pay no attention to these things in spite of your wisdom, but you are unaware that geometric equality is of greatest importance among gods and men alike.<sup>30</sup>

Geometrical equality is proportional equalization. But here is the text of the *Timaeus*:

Now that which comes to be must be bodily, and so visible and tangible; and nothing can be visible without fire, or tangible without something solid, and nothing is solid without earth. Hence God, when he began to put together the body of the universe, set about making it of fire and earth.

But two things alone cannot be satisfactorily united without a third; for there must be some bond between them drawing them together. And of all bonds the best is that which makes itself and the terms it connects a unity in the fullest sense; and it is of the nature of a continued geometrical proportion to effect this most perfectly. For whenever, of three numbers, the middle one between any two that are either solids or squares is such that, as the first is to it, so is it to the last, and conversely as the last is to the middle, so is the middle to the first, then since the middle becomes first and last, and again the last and

29. See in this regard Taylor, *Commentary*, 95ff., and Cornford, *Plato's Cosmology*, 45ff.

30. *Gorgias* 507E6–508A7.

first become middle, in that way all will necessarily come to play the same part towards one another, and by so doing they will all make a unity.

Now if it had been required that the body of the universe should be a plane surface with no depth, a single mean would have been enough to connect its companions and itself; but in fact the world was to be solid in form, and solids are always conjoined, not by one mean, but by two. Accordingly the god set water and air between fire and earth, and made them, so far as was possible, proportional to one another, so that as fire is to air, so is air to water, and as air is to water, so is water to earth, and thus he bound together the frame of a world visible and tangible.

For these reasons and from such constituents, four in number, the body of the universe was brought into being, coming into concord by means of proportion, and from these it acquired Amity, so that coming into unity with itself it became indissoluble by any other save him who bound it together.<sup>31</sup>

#### V. THE DEMIURGE CONTRIVED THE COSMOS AS A UNIQUE WHOLE MADE OF THE TOTALITY OF NATURAL THINGS

So as fully to realize the One in the cosmos, the Demiurge absorbed everything in it, not leaving any material over, for two reasons.

(a) First, he did not leave any residual material, lest there remain the possibility that another world similar to the first could be generated from it. In other words, the Demiurge dominated all the sensible material and employed the whole of it to construct the cosmos; this is a further guarantee of its unity.

(b) Second, he did not leave any residual material to eliminate all possibility that the forces and powers remaining in it might act negatively, producing sickness and dissolution in the cosmos.

In this way, the One guarantees the goodness of the cosmos, insofar as he makes it a perfect whole immune to decomposition, precisely by reducing all the forces to unity and harmonizing them. Here is the text:

Now the frame of the world took up the whole of each of these four; he who put it together made it consist of all the fire and water and air and earth, leaving no part or power of any one of them outside. This was his intent: first, that it might be in the fullest measure a living being whole and complete, of complete parts; next, that it might be single, nothing being left over, out of which such another might come into being; and moreover that it might be free from age and sickness. For he perceived that, if a body be composite, when hot things and cold and all things that have strong powers beset that body and attack it from without, they bring it to untimely dissolution and cause it to waste away by bringing upon it sickness and age. For this reason and so considering, he fashioned it as a single whole consisting of all these wholes, complete and free from age and sickness.<sup>32</sup>

31. *Timaeus* 31B4-32C4.

32. *Ibid.*, C5-33B1.

VI. THE DEMIURGE STRUCTURED THE COSMOS IN ACCORDANCE WITH A SINGLE FORM WHICH INCLUDES IN ITSELF ALL THE FORMS AND GUARANTEES UNITY

The Demiurge brings about unity by the overall physico-geometrical form which he gives to the cosmos, the sphere, a form containing all the forms, in which the extremes are all equally distant from the center. It is the form most similar to itself and the most symmetrical.

And for shape he gave it that which is fitting and akin to its nature. For the living creature that was to embrace all living creatures within itself, the fitting shape would be the figure that comprehends in itself all the figures there are; accordingly, he turned its shape rounded and spherical, equidistant every way from center to extremity—a figure the most perfect and uniform of all; for he judged uniformity to be immeasurably better than its opposite.<sup>33</sup>

Finally, the cosmos instantiates unity also in its movement since it rotates in place but it is immobile in every other way.

And all round on the outside he made it perfectly smooth, for several reasons. It had no need of eyes, for nothing visible was left outside; nor of hearing, for there was nothing outside to be heard. There was no surrounding air to require breathing, nor yet was it in need of any organ by which to receive food into itself or to discharge it again when drained of its juices. For nothing went out or came into it from anywhere, since there was nothing: it was designed to feed itself on its own waste and to act and be acted upon entirely by itself and within itself; because its framer thought that it would be better self-sufficient, rather than dependent upon anything else.

It had no need of hands to grasp with or to defend itself, nor yet of feet or anything that would serve to stand upon; so he saw no need to attach to it these limbs to no purpose. For he assigned to it the motion proper to its bodily form, namely that one of the seven which above all belongs to reason and intelligence; accordingly, he caused it to turn about uniformly in the same place and within its own limits and made it revolve round and round; he took from it all the other six motions and gave it no part in their wanderings. And since for this revolution it needed no feet, he made it without feet or legs.<sup>34</sup>

VII. THE DEMIURGE CREATED TIME AS AN IMAGE THAT ELAPSES IN ACCORDANCE WITH NUMBER, IMITATING ETERNITY, WHICH REMAINS IN UNITY

Plato underlines the determining role of the One in the creative activity of the demiurgic Intelligence as well as in the creation of time.<sup>35</sup>

33. Ibid., 33B1-7.

34. Ibid., B7-34A7.

35. For an overview of the main interpretations which have been given to this problem, see Isnardi Parente, "La concezione del tempo nel *Timeo*," in Zeller and Isnardi Parente, *La filosofia dei greci*, 318-22.

The exemplar to which the Demiurge refers in the creation of the cosmos is eternal. The eternal is a permanence in unity (ἐν ἐνί). How, then, can it imitate this permanence in unity, which is the essential trait of eternity?

Once again, the mediation of number makes an answer possible. The image of eternity is the flow of eternity, that is, the flow of unity articulated by numbers, and actualized by day and night, by month and year; and it moves cyclically by number. From this numerically specified cyclical movement there arise the “was” and the “will be” of time. And this is why the “was” and the “will be” do not really refer to eternal beings, of which it can only be said that they “are”; for “was” and “will be” are nothing but the numbered and moving copy of the eternal “is,” which is in the One. Here is the text:

When the Father who had begotten it saw it set in motion and alive, a shrine brought into being for the everlasting gods, he rejoiced and being well pleased he took thought to make it yet more like its pattern. So as that pattern is the Living Being that is for ever existent, he sought to make this universe also like it, so far as might be, in that respect. Now the nature of that Living Being was eternal, and this character it was impossible to confer in full completeness on the generated thing. But he took thought to make, as it were, a moving likeness of eternity; and, at the same time that he ordered the Heaven, he made, of eternity that abides in unity, an everlasting likeness moving according to number—that to which we have given the name Time.

For there were no days and nights, months and years, before the Heaven came into being; but he planned that they should now come to be at the same time that the Heaven was framed. All these are parts of Time, and was and will be are forms of time that have come to be; we are wrong to transfer them unthinkingly to eternal being. We say that it was and is and will be; but is alone really belongs to it and describes it truly; was and will be are properly used of becoming which proceeds in time, for they are motions. But that which is for ever in the same state immovably cannot be becoming older or younger by lapse of time, nor can it ever become so; neither can it now have been, nor will it be in the future; and in general nothing belongs to it of all that becoming attaches to the moving things of sense; but these have come into being as forms of time, which images eternity and revolves according to number.<sup>36</sup>

Thus, for Plato, time was “generated together with the heaven,” and “according to a model”;<sup>37</sup> and by reproducing this model, time and the heaven, being made together, are and will be always (time would cease with the heaven, if the heaven were to cease to be and vice versa).

In this, Plato proposes a very upsetting view, one which his own followers did not know how to handle, taking it as allegorical or rejecting it, as Aristotle did. The sharp distinction between the eternal and the

36. *Timaeus* 37C6–38A8.

37. *Ibid.*, B6–8. “Χρόνος . . . μετ’ οὐρανοῦ γέγονεν . . . κατὰ τὸ παράδειγμα.”

temporal, and the claim that it is wrong to use "was" and "will be" of eternity, solve from the outset difficulties, which have arisen in various ways and at various times throughout subsequent Western thought.

Plato explains the making of the sun, moon, and other stars connected with the creation of time, to guarantee the numerical distinction and the conservation of the numbers of time, and he concludes as follows:

Thus and for these reasons day and night came into being, the period of the single and most intelligent revolution.

The month is out when the Moon completes her own circle and overtakes the Sun; the year, when the Sun has gone round his own circle. The periods of the rest have not been observed by men, save for a few; and men have no names for them, nor do they measure one against another by numerical reckoning. They barely know that the wanderings of these others are time at all, bewildering as they are in number and of surprisingly intricate pattern. Nonetheless it is possible to grasp that the perfect number of time fulfills the perfect year at the moment when the relative speeds of all the eight revolutions have accomplished their courses together and reached their consummation, as measured by the circle of the Same and uniformly moving.

In this way, then, and for these ends were brought into being all those stars that have turnings on their journey through the Heaven; in order that this world may be as like as possible to the perfect and intelligent living creature, in respect of imitating its ever-enduring nature.<sup>38</sup>

But the way in which the Demiurge brings about the unity-in-multiplicity through the mediation of number is most fully expressed in the creation of the soul, to which we now briefly turn.

## VIII. THE DEMIURGE AND CREATION OF THE SOUL IN ACCORDANCE WITH A GEOMETRICAL AND NUMERICAL STRUCTURE

### 1. *The Soul as Mixture*

As to the crucial and complex question of the creation of the soul,<sup>39</sup> the Demiurge produces it by mixing three types of things, and by making one single Idea (εἰς μίαν ἰδέαν). This way, the Demiurge creates the most important thing in the realm of the intermediates, standing between the Intelligibles and the sensibles. As we shall see, its role is to be synthetic and mediating. Let us begin with the most important passage:

Now God did not make the soul after the body, although we are speaking of them in this order, for when he put them together he would not have allowed that the elder should be ruled by the younger. But this is a random manner of speaking which we have, because somehow we too are very much under the

38. Ibid., 39C1–E2.

39. For an account of the *status questionis*, see Isnardi Parente, "L'interpretazione di *Timeo* 35 Aff.," in Zeller and Isnardi Parente, *La filosofia dei greci*, 197–203.

dominion of chance. Whereas he made the soul by birth and excellence prior to and older than the body, to be the ruler and mistress, of whom the body was to be the subject.

And he made her out of the following elements and in this say.

He put together out of the indivisible being which is always the same and the divisible which comes to be in bodies, a third sort of being between them both. And again he made out of the natures of the same and the other a kind in the middle of the indivisible and of that which is divided among the bodies. And taking all three, he mixed them so as to make a single idea, bringing together the nature of the other, against its desire not to mix, with that of the same, and mixing them both with being. After making the three into one, he divided again this unity into as many parts as were needed each of which was made up of the same, the other and being.<sup>40</sup>

The first part of this passage does not present serious difficulties. The priority of the creation of the soul relative to the body obviously is not to be interpreted in a chronological sense, since time is created together with the sensible body, and hence is born with it. The soul is prior and more ancient (προτέρα καὶ πρεσβύτερα) because it rules (ἄρχει) the body, and therefore is hierarchically prior in terms of its ontological status.

The second part of the passage does, however, present serious difficulties, and has been the subject of much misunderstanding; and only a few experts in the traditional paradigm got the point; while, as we shall see, the new paradigm affords a fuller and more satisfying account.

G. M. A. Grube made the first steps,<sup>41</sup> which Cornford took over and developed in his commentary on the *Timaeus*,<sup>42</sup> and which scholars like Cherniss then made acceptable, at least among specialists.<sup>43</sup> In rendering the passage cited, we have tried to take account of these scholars' contributions.

The mixture from which the soul derives is not just one, but in two stages and at different levels: (1) first, the Demiurge produces three intermediates between three pairs of extremes; (2) then, he performs a mixture of these three intermediates to create the soul. Here is how Cherniss read the text:

Correctly construed, the passage assumes, . . . an indivisible same and an indivisible other parallel to the indivisible being and, . . . a divisible same and a divisible other parallel to the divisible being. The first three are clearly the ideas of sameness, otherness, and being which figure in the discussion of the intercommunication of ideas at *Sophist* 254D–259D; the second three are the

40. *Ibid.*, 34B10–35B3.

41. G. M. A. Grube, "The Composition of the World-Soul in *Timaeus* 35 A–B," *Classical Philology* 27 (1932): 80–82.

42. Cornford, *Plato's Cosmology*, 6off.

43. H. Cherniss, *Aristotle's Criticism of Plato and the Academy*, 408ff.

dispersions or, in other words, the *μμήματα* of these ideas in space (cf. *Ti-maeus* 52A–C). Between each of these three pairs the demiurge constructs an intermediate, a third kind of being, sameness, and otherness; and it is these three intermediates which are blended into a unity to form the soul. It should be observed, moreover, that the preliminary blending of a third kind of being (τρίτον οὐσίας εἶδος) between the indivisible and divisible being—and so of a third kind of sameness and difference between their indivisible and divisible kinds—is simply the Platonic figure expressing the construction of a mean between two extremes. . . . Grube (op. cit., p. 81) remarks that the first components are not used up in the mixing, whereas the whole of the intermediates go to make the soul of the world. This really means that neither of the extremes is in the composition but the soul is a unity of various factors, each . . . a mean between the extremes of the ideal and the phenomenal.<sup>44</sup>

### 2. *The Intermediate Status of the Soul and Its Analogical Structure*

Therefore, (1) the first mixture gives rise to three intermediates: (a) a Being intermediate between indivisible Being and divisible Being, (b) a Same intermediate between indivisible Same and divisible Same, and (c) an Other intermediate between indivisible Other and divisible Other. (2) The second mixture takes place among the three intermediates—intermediate Being, intermediate Same, and intermediate Other—so as to form a unity of three components which will be appropriately mathematically structured.

As can readily be seen, two pairs of opposites meet in the mixture, so to speak, vertically and horizontally, and so are unified. The pair of the Indivisible and the Divisible, which stand for the supersensible and the sensible, respectively, show the two vertical levels which enter into the structuring of the soul; and the composition of the same, the other, and being, being already vertically mediated, stand for the horizontal mixture and the harmony of opposites. Plato wanted to use this to express fully the intermediate aspect of the soul, which in some way reflects the whole of reality.

This twofold crossed mixture helps us to understand the overall metaphysical arrangement of Plato's system. There are three great realms of reality that include all the further subdivisions: ideal, intermediate, and sensible. The being (οὐσία) that the Demiurge composes by mixing indivisible Being and divisible Being, provides the structure of intermediate Being, which, by being synthesized, mediates indivisible Being (the Being of the first realm) and divisible Being (the Being of the lower realm).

This explains very well what Aristotle tells us about the intermediates in general, which are such precisely because they differ from the sensi-

44. *Ibid.*, 409, note 337.

bles insofar as they are immobile and eternal, and from the Ideas because they are many alike, while each Idea is one and individual. In fact, the soul of the world is single (μία ἰδέα, ἔν), but as an intermediate, insofar as it is out of the same components and a very similar mixture that the Demiurge draws all rational souls, those of the stars and celestial bodies as well as of men, and so many souls alike.

It is true that Aristotle speaks of intermediate mathematical entities; but the soul is closely connected to mathematical entities and has an essentially geometrical and mathematical structure. Moreover, it has intelligence, and as such it is more perfect; it is possible that the entire realm of mathematical entities is contained in some way (at least in part) within the realm of the soul. But this is an issue into which we cannot delve further here.

Thus, the third form of being is an intermediate synthesis of the other two forms of being. And, as every other form of being involves a bipolar structure, so the soul has a bipolar structure, which is the result of a cross, and from this derives its intermediate structure.

But what we wish to focus on is what is involved in the fact that the Demiurge does not mix the primary components, but only the intermediate ones resulting from the first mixture.

From this we can infer that the structure of the three realms of being is not a matter of identity, but of analogy. Hence, we are not confronted with a pure deductive system. Even if the various forms of the One (and so of the same at various levels) can be deduced by way of explication of the first One at different stages, as unifications of plurality which gradually broadens out, this cannot be done for multiplicity (the Dyad), the Principle opposite to the One. Indeed, just as in other dialogues, in the *Timaeus*, Plato demonstrates the existence of a Principle opposed to the sensible, which has an ontological solidity that does not depend in any way on the opposite intelligible Principle.

In short, all the forms of the One are derivable from the primary One; but the various forms of the material Principle are not deducible from the Primary intelligible material Principle. Specifically, the sensible material Principle cannot be derived from it by mere deduction because the two are related only analogically. Plato uses every means to tell us that the sensible world is not born simply from a differentiated gradation of the unification and determination of the opposite Principle, which remains qualitatively unchanged, but takes on only differentiated quantitative solidity. On the contrary, the sensible world arises from a Principle which has its own (sensible) nature that shows itself in a variety of ways, and that refers back to the Dyad analogically.



To return to the original issue, it would seem that most of the realm of intermediate reality is the work of the Demiurge and that he produced it in order to bring the intelligible world down to the sensible, and to shape the material sensible Principle in accordance with the intelligible Ideas. The Demiurge interposes not only numbers and numerical relations in the intermediate stage but also the dimensions and the dimensional relations, which are the conditions of passage from the intelligible to the sensible and hence they ground the rational structure which the sensible must have.

3. *The Geometrical Structure of the Soul, Its Numerical Determination, and Its Capacity to Move Itself*

As we said above, the soul has special geometrical features.

Robin, who was the first to study our dialogue systematically in the light of the indirect tradition, stressed this point: "The terms of Indivisible and Divisible and the very representation of the soul as a geometric configuration suggest the idea, offered intentionally to baffle, that the soul, for Plato, is a magnitude. In fact, after placing the soul of the world at the center of the spherical body of the world, God stretches it in all directions out to the edges of this body, and wholly covers it. Now, Aristotle clearly says that the soul is interlaced with the body and that it is a magnitude."<sup>45</sup> Here is what Plato writes in the *Timaeus*:

All this, then, was the plan of the God who is for ever for the God who was sometime to be. According to this plan he made a smooth and uniform body, everywhere equidistant from its center, whole and complete, with complete bodies for its parts. And in the center he set a soul and caused it to extend throughout the whole and also covered its body round with soul on the outside; and so he established one world alone, round and revolving in a circle, solitary but able by reason of its excellence to keep itself company, needing no other acquaintance or friend but sufficient to itself. On all these accounts the world which he brought into being was a blessed God.<sup>46</sup>

And a little further on he writes:

When the whole fabric of the soul had been finished to its maker's mind, he next began to fashion within the soul all that is bodily, and brought the two together, fitting them center to center. And the soul, being everywhere inwoven from the center to the outermost heaven and enveloping the heaven all round on the outside, revolving within its own limit, made a divine beginning of ceaseless and intelligent life for all time.<sup>47</sup>

His followers, led by Speusippus, pursued this thought as follows:

45. Robin, *Études sur la signification et la place de la physique*, 312.

46. *Timaeus* 34A8-B9.

47. *Ibid.*, 36D8-E5.

After these things he treated of those who extend mathematical substance to the substance of the soul. . . . [S]hape is its genus, being a limit of extension, and it is itself extension. Among themselves, the Platonist Severus and Speusippus would use the formula "Idea of extension in all directions."<sup>48</sup>

Plato stresses not only the dimensional structure of the soul, but also its numerically complex structure, and he is unequivocal that the numerical structure is identical with the soul's musical structure, and thus that the movements the soul imprints on the world are harmonious.

The text, which is very important for all that it is very complex, in which Plato explains how the Demiurge divided the mixture by endowing the soul with self-movement and a numerical structure:

And he began the division as follows. First he took one part (1) from the whole, and then a portion (2) the double of the first; the third (3) half as much again as the second, and three times the first; the fourth (4) double of the second; the fifth (9) three times the third; the sixth (8) eight times the first; and the seventh (27) twenty-seven times the first.

Next, he went on to fill up both the double and the triple intervals, cutting off yet more parts from the original mixture and placing them between the terms, so that within each interval there were two means, the one (harmonic) exceeding the one extreme and being exceeded by the other by the same fraction of the extremes, the other (arithmetic) exceeding the one extreme by the same number whereby it was exceeded by the other.

These relations gave rise to intervals of  $3/2$  and  $4/3$  and  $9/8$  within the original intervals. And he filled up all the intervals of  $4/3$  (that is, fourths) with the interval  $9/8$  (the tone), leaving over in each a fraction. This remaining interval of the fraction had its terms in the numerical proportion of 256 to 243 (semitone).

By this time the mixture from which he was excising these parts was used up.

This whole fabric, then, he split lengthwise into two halves; and making the two cross one another at their centers in the form of the letter X, he bent each round into a circle and joined it up, making each meet itself and the other at a point opposite to that where they had been brought into contact.

He then encircled them with the motion that is carried round uniformly in the same place, and made the one the outer, the other the inner circle. The outer movement he named the movement of the same; the inner, the movement of the other. The movement of the same he caused to revolve to the right by way of the side; the movement of the other to the left by way of the diagonal.

And he gave the supremacy to the revolution of the same and uniform; for he left that single and undivided; but the inner revolution he split in six places into seven unequal circles, severally corresponding with the double and triple intervals, of each of which there were three. And he appointed that the circles should move in opposite senses to one another; while in speed three should be similar, but the other four should differ in speed from one another and from the three, though moving according to ratio.<sup>49</sup>

48. Iamblichus apud Stobaeus, *Ecl.* 1.49, 363.26ff. Wachsmuth; *Speusippus* frag. 40 Lang; frag. 96 Isnardi Parente.

49. *Timaeus* 35B4-36D7.

Plato's disciples took this line further, and Xenocrates would even call the soul a self-moving number.<sup>50</sup>

#### 4. Aristotle's Comments on This Matter and the Unwritten Doctrines

Scholars have for sometime recognized the complex numerical outline traced here by Plato, and the reader can find it well presented in Cornford's commentary to the *Timaeus*, which sets out the correspondence with the musical intervals.<sup>51</sup>

But this is not the point that most interests us here. We want to specify some of the fundamental relations between this passage and the Unwritten Doctrines, which to a small but significant extent Aristotle records for us in the following passage.<sup>52</sup> After stating that Empedocles held that the soul is made up of all the elements, Aristotle writes:

In the same way Plato in the *Timaeus* makes the soul out of the elements. For like is known by like, and things arise from their principles. In the same way in the discourse *On Philosophy* it was laid down that the living creature itself came from the idea of One together with the first length, breadth, and depth, and other things in similar fashion. And in yet another fashion they make mind or intuition be the One, knowledge the Dyad (since it proceeds in a single line to one point), opinion the number of the surface, and sensation the number of the solid. For numbers are said to be the Ideas themselves and the Principles and arise out of these elements. Things are judged by intuition, knowledge, opinion, and sensation, and these numbers are the forms of things.<sup>53</sup>

So the elements of the soul are connected with those of the Living Creature itself, of which we have spoken above: unity, length, breadth, and depth. As for the Living Creature itself, so also for the soul, this dimensional structure represents the model, which, being actualized in the sensible, gives them bodily form. The soul is therefore the dimension of line and surface which molds and shapes the body. It is what limits and determines, and therefore has the role of *peras*, or limit.

Gaiser provides the most advanced results of research into this issue and his conclusions are essential points of reference.<sup>54</sup> In particular, he underlines the exact parallelism and analogical intersections among (a) the (ideal) Numbers: 1, 2, 3, 4; (b) the spatial dimensions: point, line, surface, solidity; and (c) the cognitive capacities: intellect, science, opinion, sensation; which notably clarifies the text of Aristotle.<sup>55</sup>

50. Cf. *Xenocrates*, frag. 60 Heinze; frags. 165–87 Isnardi Parente.

51. Cornford, *Plato's Cosmology*, 67ff.

52. For the *status quaestionis* aroused by this fact, Isnardi Parente, "La testimonianza di Aristotele in *De Anima* 404b18ff.," in Zeller–Isnardi Parente, *La filosofia dei greci*, 153–64.

53. Aristotle, *De Anima* A 2.404b16–27 (Gaiser, 25A; Findlay, 421.10).

54. See Gaiser, *Platons*, 41–66.

55. *Ibid.*, 46–47 for Gaiser's diagrams.

These correspondences between the cognitive faculties and the metaphysical and mathematico-geometrical dimensions can be explained as follows.

(a) Intellective intuition is said to be One, because it is a kind of unification with the object intuited. The synoptic-unifying process is characteristic of intellective intuition, and leads to the grasping of the unity of the Idea, by making itself one with it (as we saw from the *Republic*).

(b) Knowledge is the Dyad (two), the number of the straight line (which has a dyadic structure), in that it begins from premises and arrives linearly at a unitary conclusion (the unity of the object), by proceeding straightaway from a point of departure to a point of arrival.

(c) Opinion is the Triad, that is, the number three, characteristic of surfaces (which have a triadic structure), insofar as, being able to be either true or false, it deviates from a linear trajectory, moving toward a third point away from the straight line that unites the points of departure and arrival and unifies pure knowledge.

(d) Finally, sensation is the number four and hence the number of the solid which has a cubic structure, because it has to do with solids and so possesses by analogy a similar structure.

This much has long been clear. As a whole, the Aristotle passage indicates that the first four numbers determine the whole of reality, and by analogy, the soul and knowledge. As to knowledge, we could define the analogical numerical-mathematical conception as an abstract, esoteric way of expressing the underlying concept that like knows like.

We must remember that on this rereading of Plato, these relations are analogies and not of identity. Here is how Gaiser makes this point:

Plato's basic thought seems to consist in this, that the same structure is present everywhere in an analogical manner: it determines the construction of the world of the Ideas, the compounding of the soul and the connection of all things in general. Thus, we can explain how the soul can take in and distinguish all things in itself. The various workings-out of the underlying structure probably ought to be separated in their ordered stages just as we find in the corresponding spheres of being. In the world of the Ideas, the dimensions appear, according to Aristotle, wholly ideal and generative; in the soul, they probably appear in wholly subordinate form and secondary rank; and among bodies, they appear concretely and visibly.<sup>56</sup>

Gaiser further clarifies this point:

Thus, for Plato, the composition of being . . . both in particular and in general, is determined by a single structure, a structure which can be fully articulated in geometrico-mathematical terms. We turn now to see more

56. *Ibid.*, 45.

clearly how the soul stands in relation with every being and how it brings together within itself everything analogically: the internal structure of the soul corresponds to the overall structure of reality as a whole. So often does the geometrico-mathematical sequence appear in the testimonies about Plato's doctrine that we here must accept it as a part of his esoteric ontology. The coordination of the dimensional sequence (number-line-surface-body) with the realm of being (Ideas-soul-phenomena) was a way for Plato to make clear the *methexis* [participation] and *chorismos* [separation] obtaining between the world of Ideas and the world of sensible perceptible and bodily things. Nevertheless the testimonies also show clearly that Plato took the dimensional sequence not only formally, but also as ontologically real.<sup>57</sup>

The reader who wishes to pursue these issues further should consult Gaiser's book.<sup>58</sup>

The soul considered as geometrical extension (line-surface), numerically determined and structured, is the intermediary par excellence: it is the link joining the metaphysical world with the physical world. Only the Unwritten Doctrines allow us fully to see all this, because only they give us the overall sense of the importance of this joining link. In the Renaissance, soul came to be called *copula mundi* [world joiner]. And the expression renders the conception that Plato had invented.

#### IX. THE ONE AS THE FIGURE OF THE ACTIVITY AND WORKS OF THE DEMIURGIC INTELLIGENCE

From what we have seen, Plato himself revealed the structural relation between the demiurgic Intelligence and the One, and, using this relation, he fully explained how the Demiurge brings about the Good and the Best in all senses.

At the beginning and in the middle of each of the three sections of Timaeus's great speech of Plato insists on just this point.

(a) Being good and actualizing the Good and the Best both consist in bringing order out of disorder, because the former is wholly better than the latter. And he who is best cannot but do what is most admirable, that is, produce perfect order. And in this is rooted the will that moves the demiurgic Intelligence and motivates him to make all things become as like himself as possible: to want to make all things orderly.<sup>59</sup>

(b) This is what the mixture that produces the generation of things amounts to. The mixture is the combination of necessity and intelligence, the "persuasion" of necessity; bringing order out of disorder.<sup>60</sup>

57. Ibid., 47.

58. Cf. note 54, above.

59. Cf. *Timaeus* 30A.

60. Cf. *ibid.*, 48A-B, 53A-B, 69A-B.

(c) But Plato is still more definite: without the intervention of God, all things which fall under the material Principle are “without order and without measure” (ἀλόγως καὶ ἀμέτρως). And the ordering of the universe consists in the production of the *logoi*, the numerical relations, and measure, and hence in molding and modeling “in accordance with forms and number” (εἶδεσι καὶ ἀριθμοῖς). It is this which produces “the most beautiful and best things” (κάλλιστα καὶ ἄριστα). Persuasion exercised on necessity is a good which is infused into it “numerical proportion” (ἀναλογία), and through “the proportioning of disorderly things in accordance with numerical proportion” (συνηροῦσθαι ταῦτα ἀναλόγον). As Plato clearly says, the activity of the God-Demiurge consists in bringing to the things which are “disorderly” (ἀτάκτως) measure or “commensuration” (συμμετρία), and in bringing order and proportion, both general and particular, to them, so as “to set them in an appropriate relation with measure” (ὅπη δυνατόν ἦν ἀνάλογα καὶ σύμμετρα εἶναι). And a few lines before Plato says that the knowledge and power of God consist in mixing “the many into one” (τὰ πολλὰ εἰς ἓν) and in separating “the one into many” (ἕξ ἑνὸς εἰς πολλὰ).<sup>61</sup>

But it is exactly by reference to the One that Plato characterizes in general and particular the activity and works of the Demiurge.

We may summarize Plato’s insistence on the One as characteristic of the activity and works of the demiurgic Intelligence.

1. The world is perfect, because it is one (ἓν). And to be perfect it must be one, because the model is one as such; and the cosmos is the copy of this model (one copy of one model).<sup>62</sup>

2. The unity of the cosmos is guaranteed by the particular relation that the Demiurge has set up among the four elements, which makes the relata into a “unit of a higher level” (ὅτι μάλιστα ἓν). The Demiurge establishes “friendship” (φιλία) or the communion of all things, on this numerical proportion (ἀναλογία), which brings all things to unity (ἓν πάντα).<sup>63</sup>

3. The cosmos is constituted as a “one-whole” (ἓν ὅλον), because it is based on a numerical calculation, which encompasses in a one-whole the totality of whole things, and does not leave anything out.<sup>64</sup>

4. The spherical shape of the cosmos is also a perfectly realized unity, because the sphere is a “shape that includes in itself all shapes” (σχῆμα τὸ περιειληφὸς ἐν αὐτῷ πάντα ὅποσα σχήματα), producing the maximum similarity. And the same goes for the circular movement in the

61. Cf. *Ibid.*, 53A–B, 56C, 69A–B.

62. See above, pp. 397–98.

63. See above, pp. 400–401.

64. See above, pp. 401–2.

same place and in the same direction, which is imposed on it. And this holds also for the self-sufficiency that makes the world one, insofar as it has no need of anything else.<sup>65</sup>

5. Time, which was created together with the cosmos, instantiates a unity as it flows, insofar as time imitates eternity which is a permanence of unity (ἐν ἐνί). And this imitation of the unity of eternity comes about through number (κατ' ἀριθμόν).<sup>66</sup>

6. But in creating (producing) the four sensible material elements to make the image of the ideal models actual, the Demiurge makes use of a complex articulation of "forms and numbers" (εἴδεσι καὶ ἀριθμοῖς) which delimit the sensible material Principle. And this is a perfect way of making unity-in-multiplicity actual. Here, as we have seen, Plato makes explicit reference to the first and highest Principles.<sup>67</sup>

7. Finally the soul itself, which the demiurgic Intelligence creates fully to realize the model of the intelligible in the sensible, is one, one Idea (μία ἰδέα) more specifically, it is "a unity made up of three individuals" (ἐκ τριῶν ἕν), and is "a whole" (ὅλον) structured in accordance with geometrical dimensions and harmonic numerals, which fully realize the Good, Unity, the Measure, and Order.<sup>68</sup>

At this point, having seen how Plato uses the One as central to the activity and works of the demiurgic Intelligence, we could bring our discussion to a close. All the same, it seems worthwhile to add a sort of bird's-eye view of the fourth part of the book, to bring together and finish off some of the difficult matters which may have caused most problems.

65. See above, p. 402.

66. See above, p. 403.

67. See above, pp. 392–98.

68. See above, pp. 405–11.





## 21 Conclusions about the Figure of the Demiurge and Its Relations to the Protology

### I. THE CENTRALITY OF THE DEMIURGE TO THE PLATONIC SYSTEM

To set out on our rereading of the most significant passages of Plato's main dialogues, we will begin with a reinterpretation of the metaphysical map of the *Phaedo*. With its far-reaching metaphor of the Second Voyage, this map presents the whole journey of Plato's speculative inquiry into the reasons and the causes of the generation, becoming, and being of things, so as to arrive at an understanding of the supreme Principles.

We have shown that this map draws a very precise division between the realm of physical reality and that of metaphysical reality. All maneuvers in the physical realm make up the First Voyage, which is connected with the senses and to the sensible. The overcoming and transcending of this realm is the great enterprise of the Second Voyage.

Within the Second Voyage Plato distinguishes two levels and two paths. The first level consists in discovering the theory of Ideas; the second level in discovering the highest Principles, that are beyond the Ideas, and that ground and justify postulates that lead us to the Ideas. The first path shows the way that leads from physical things to the Ideas and from the Ideas to the Principles. The second path, which is parallel to the first and structurally connected to it, consists of the doctrine of the Intelligence and specifically of the doctrine of the cosmic Intelligence, or of demiurgic activity as the cause of everything in the world of becoming.

In the third part of this work we followed the steps of the first path; and hitherto in this final part, we have followed the second, which has often been neglected by scholars, or, at least, has not been connected with the first, as is called for not only by the metaphysical map of the *Phaedo*, but by the whole of Plato's thought in the light of the documents which we have reported. Having now reached the end of the latter path, it remains for us to draw our conclusions about it, especially about its close connection with the first path and about the protological portion of it. In this way, we can round off our discussion of the whole of Plato's thought.

This inquiry is also more important than the earlier ones, insofar as solving the problems the Demiurge raises requires us to consider two deeply conflicting views; and some have thought that matters are made more complex by the interpretive strategy of the Tübingen School, for reasons we have already given.

The first view goes back to Fathers of the Church (and, to some limited extent, also to the Middle Platonists), who placed the Demiurge at the summit of the Platonic system, interpreting the Ideas as his Thoughts, and understanding the activity of the Demiurge in the creationistic sense offered by the Bible. The Platonic Demiurge was understood largely as a God who is omnipotent, absolute, and the creator at all levels.

The second view has been widespread in modern times, as a clear antithesis of the foregoing. Various attempts have been made to reduce the Demiurge to a wholly or mainly mythological figure and hence to empty it of any large-scale function and theoretical importance. The description offered by Wilamowitz-Möllendorff of Plato's creationism as a *plumpe Vorstellung* (crude representation) is just one example, which could be supported by numerous others from many sources, frequently linked to idealism or immanentism.

In short, Plato's thought about the Demiurge has been either over- or underestimated by many scholars as a result of their idiosyncratic predispositions. But the modern views have had more damaging effects, because they come from scholars whose research tools and philological techniques were wholly unknown in the past. Thus they have created and sustained objectively mistaken judgments that have seemed to be well-founded and supported.

Without doubt, Patristic and, later, Scholastic philosophy loaded the figure of the Demiurge with significances not present in Plato's texts; but the immanentistic views of many modern writers have fallen into the exactly opposite but more serious mistake, since many scholars have tried either to eliminate almost all of what Plato unequivocally and repeatedly says about the Demiurge, or at least drastically to limit its significance.

It seems that we can find in the new paradigm a solid basis for a more balanced and satisfactory solution to this issue, one which lies in the correct mean relative to the extremes into which earlier attempts fell. It seems to us, in other words, that, far from denying all importance to the figure of the Demiurge, the new paradigm offers the most powerful and effective instruments for the theoretical rehabilitation of the figure of the Demiurge in the most adequate way.

Let us try to summarize in brief some basic concepts.

## II. THE DEMIURGE AS SUPREME INTELLIGENCE AND SUPREME GOD

Plato says repeatedly, and not only in the *Timaeus*, that the Demiurge is identical with the supreme God, as the texts we have quoted show. Therefore, the denial of this matter of fact runs against all the documents, as well as against the overall Platonic system. Moreover, this denial is inspired by various implicit or explicit forms of atheism, as well as by the widespread and insidious supposition that the problem of God has no place in scientific inquiries, and consequently falls outside the competence of the scholar in his professional capacity. This supposition has led to the relegation of the figure of the Demiurge to the sphere of the mythical, bringing with it a dismembering of the Platonic system.

In fact, Plato clearly distinguishes the Ideas and the Principles from the Demiurge, that is, from the Intelligence that based the construction of the world on them. After writing his excellent commentary on the *Timaeus* and with his profound understanding of the dialogues of Plato, A. E. Taylor observed:

It may naturally be asked how much of this can be conceived to be serious Platonic teaching and how much is mere imaginative symbolism? No one, of course, could answer the question precisely; possibly Plato himself could not have made a hard-and-fast distinction between philosophical content and mythical form. But one or two points are important. It would stultify the whole story to follow the example of some interpreters, who wish to find something like the philosophy of Spinoza in Plato, by making the artisan a mythical symbol of his model, the νοητὸν ζῆον. This may or may not be good philosophy and theology, but it is not the thought of Plato. . . . God and the forms have to be kept distinct in Plato for the reason that the activity of God as producing a world like the forms is the one explanation Plato ever offers of the way in which the participation of things in forms is effected. If God simply meant the same thing as the forms, or as a supreme form, it would remain a mystery why there should be anything but the forms, why there should be any becoming at all.<sup>1</sup>

In our view, these claims are just; but we think that the interpretive paradigm of the Tübingen School allows us to go much further and to ascertain much better how Plato understood the relations between God and the Ideas: what the relations are between the highest Intelligence, God, and the Idea of the Good, which is the first and highest Principle.

## III. THE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE DEMIURGIC INTELLIGENCE AND THE GOOD

We may again recall that the point from which we must begin to solve this problem is the *Phaedo*, in which Plato attributes to Anaxagoras the

1. Taylor, *Plato*, 442.

great merit of having introduced Intelligence to explain the cosmos. But he criticizes him for not having been able to apply this great discovery in the concrete, because he did not know how to supply the basis on which what is above it can stand up, namely, the fundamental structural connection between Intelligence and the Good. The Intelligence and its work cannot be explained without the Good.

In the *Republic*, where he speaks most fully about the Good, Plato not only does not call the Good God, but he clearly distinguishes God from the Good, saying that God is good essentially; and so distinguishing the impersonal Good (τὸ θεῖον) from Him who is good in the personal sense and in the highest degree (ὁ θεός).

We may recall, finally, that two essential components of ancient Greek thought have given us the exact general context in which alone Plato's thought can be understood.

(a) For the Greeks, God has above him in the hierarchy a supreme rule or rules, to which he must refer and which he must obey. In this sense, Plato's God too, who is the supreme Intelligence, has hierarchically above him a rule or some rules which he must obey and by which he must regulate his activity. In this way, the Good is the supreme rule (and the world of the Ideas as a whole makes up the set of rules) by which God is regulated and which he obeys in his every action. For this reason He is Good and Best in the highest degree by being the entity closest to the Good.

(b) Parmenides introduced into Greek thought the conception that the Intelligence is possible only if it is based on being and is expressed in and through being. Thus, for the ancient Greeks, even a supreme Intelligence, qua intelligence, does not produce its own basis, but presupposes it. Also for Plato, the supreme Intelligence involves the Good as its basis (and, more generally, the existence of the Ideas and the first and highest Principles).

So even those who in the past gave some importance to the Demiurge did not sufficiently explain in what sense the Demiurge is in the highest degree the Good and in what sense or way He actualizes the Good for the greatest possible good.

In our view, the new paradigm offers a clear and full response to the problem in all its details. As we now know from the Unwritten Doctrines and from what can be gathered about them from the dialogues, the Good is the supreme One and Measure.

Therefore, God is Good in the highest degree because he operates by virtue of the One and the supreme Measure, actualizing them as perfectly as possible.

Hence, the Intelligence acts in the best way by ordering and commen-

surating the disorder that arises from the antithetical material Principle, within the bipolar structure with which we are now familiar: he acts by unifying the multiple. This too is a quintessentially Greek conception, which is also found in Greek nonphilosophical religious thought and in pre-Platonic philosophy. The great answer which Anaxagoras was unable to give but which is needed is this: we can explain how and why everything is generated, becomes, and is by reference to the One and to the way it unpacks itself, bringing disorder into order, which is unity-in-multiplicity.

God wills that all things should become as similar to him as possible, impressing on them unity, measure, and order. Thus the fundamental systematic relation in Plato's thought becomes clear: the demiurgic Intelligence and its structural relations with the Good, the One, and the supreme Measure form the foundation for grasping how reality is constituted at all levels below the Ideas, which make up the first level above the realm of the sensible.

In this, we are obviously far from pure mythology.

But what is the meaning of Plato's claim that the demiurgic Intelligence creates some entities in the realm of the intermediates and all the entities in the realm of the sensible cosmos?

#### IV. THE ACTIVITY OF PLATO'S DEMIURGE IS A SEMI-CREATIONISM: THE HIGHEST FORM OF CREATIONISM IN HELLENIC THOUGHT

The question of creation that the figure of the Demiurge raises is one which has aroused the most conflicting interpretations and the greatest disagreements, so that many scholars have preferred to put the issue on hold, or at least to recast it in a strongly reductive fashion.

To understand Plato on this we must have a proper understanding of the meaning of nonbeing and of being in this context. By "being" Plato means a mixture, anything indeterminate that comes to be determined, a commensurated excess, a harmonized more-and-less, an ordered disorder, all in accord with the familiar bipolar structure. At all levels being is a mixture in the sense given in the *Philebus* and the *Timaeus* and which we can fully grasp in the light of the Unwritten Doctrines.

Nonbeing is not, for Plato, absolute, but the material Principle of excess, of the more-and-less, and of disorder; and this needs an opposed Principle with which to mix itself, so as to become being in the sense just given. In any case, speaking in the *Sophist* of nonbeing as different (in his particular sense of it), Plato says he had already said good-bye to nonbeing in the sense of absolute nothingness.<sup>2</sup>

2. Cf. *Sophist*, 258Eff.

Moreover, we must give proper prominence to the fourth kind, that is, the intelligent demiurgic cause, which Plato describes as necessary for explaining any mixture outside of the realm of the eternal beings, to wit, all the mixtures in the cosmological realm as well as those in the anthropological realm, and especially everything having to do with the soul. This claim is central in the *Timaeus* and is presented in one of the four metaphysical axioms with which Timaeus's great speech begins: "[A]ll that becomes must become by the agency of some cause, for without a cause nothing can come to be."<sup>3</sup>

Thus, the passage from nonbeing to being is a passage from an unformed subsistence to a structuring of reality by reference to an eternal model. But this passage cannot be explained without an intelligent cause which acts.

The "semicreationism" of which we have spoken, creationism within the Hellenic worldview, involves this: the productive Intelligence presupposes, in order to produce, the existence of two realities which are related in a metaphysical bipolarity: (1) what is eternally the same in every respect, and functions as an exemplar; and (2) the material Principle characterized by more-and-less, by disorder, and excess. The bringing of this disorderly reality into order is the bringing of nonbeing to being, or the creating of a generated thing, which sensibly actualizes ungenerated being in the best possible way.

But if we were to stop short with these considerations, which many scholars have recognized, albeit in slightly differing ways, we would lose sight of many important points.

First, we must bring to the fore the creative role of the demiurgic Intelligence in the realm of the intermediates: of the soul, the mathematical entities (at least to some degree), and the Ideas of the artifacts. The mediation between the realm of eternal being and sensible things and hence creation (the passage from nonbeing to being), involves, according to Plato, a complex numerical and geometrical articulation, because only through this is it possible to bring the intelligible down into the sensible.

But this very complex play of numerical and geometrical articulations would be incomprehensible unless we bore in mind the metaphysical-numerical structure of the Platonic Ideas and the numerical relations (ἀριθμοί, λόγοι) that connect each Idea with all the others. This is the complex issue of the Idea-Numbers, which the new interpretive paradigm has brought into the limelight and has fully clarified. As a matter of pure theory, this complex metaphysical-numerical system involves an intermediate mediating realm. The mathematical entities,

3. *Timaeus* 28A.

together with the numerical and geometrical system they reproduce, make up the mediating structure (and so are intermediates) between the Ideal numbers, the Ideas or eternal Forms, and, on the other, sensible things. Aristotle's testimony becomes even clearer now:

In addition he [Plato] placed the objects of mathematics beyond sensibles and Ideas, and in between them, differing from sensibles in being eternal and immovable, and from Ideas in being many alike, whereas each Idea is one alone.<sup>4</sup>

The mathematical objects are the necessary mediation between each Form or Idea, which is a single one (ἐν ἑκάστων μόνον), and the multiplication of it in a plurality. For just this reason, the intermediate mathematical objects are immobile and eternal like the Forms; but there are many alike of them. The passage from the Ideas to the corresponding things, a passage from One (ἓν) to Many (πολλά), is explained by introducing many eternal things alike among themselves (αἰετὰ καὶ ἀκίνητα—πολλὰ ἅττα ὅμοια), in such a way that between, on the one hand, the ungenerated and incorruptible One-Idea and, on the other, the corresponding generated and corruptible many-alike, there are set as intermediates the ungenerated and eternal many-alike, namely, the mathematical objects.

This is what explains the unpacking of the bipolar structure of the real in general, including the complex foundational relations that hold between the transcendent world of Ideas and the sensible world, and the participation of the latter in the former.

We may again appeal to the ancient Greek notion of a "canon" in the arts as the geometrical and mathematical measure of forms. As follows from what we have already said, it becomes in Plato a supremely metaphysical canon in the full sense.

We may also round off what we have said about the mathematical-geometrical structure of the soul and its intermediate function. If the mathematical structure of the ideal entities and mathematical intermediates is formally and ontologically necessary for the bipolar mediation of the One-Many, it is not sufficient as an efficient cause: it is insufficient for the realization and the actualization of the mediation. For this, the demiurgic Intelligence is necessary. Just as the demiurgic Intelligence is often given inadequate importance, likewise no emphasis is given to the hierarchy of the Intelligences that Plato introduces. Indeed, just as in the case of the Intelligible, in this case too Plato echoes the hierarchical structure of reality, which is so basic a theme in his thought.

Since He is supreme, and with a view to leading what is shaken in an

4. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* A 6.987b14–18 [Gaiser, 22A; Krämer, III.9; Findlay, 415.4].

unregulated fashion (the material Principle) from disorder to order, so as to produce a very beautiful thing, according to a precise plan (λογισάμενος), the Demiurge found (ἠύρισκεν) that the most beautiful thing, in order to be so, must have intelligence and so he produced the intelligence of the world. He produced it in the soul of the world, because, to have intelligence, a thing must also have a soul. And so He created the best and most beautiful thing. Here is central text again.

Taking thought, therefore, he found that, among things that are by nature visible, no work that is without intelligence will ever be better than one that has intelligence, when each is taken as a whole, and moreover that intelligence cannot be present in anything without soul. In virtue of this reasoning, when he framed the universe, he fashioned reason within soul and soul within body, so that the work he accomplished might be by nature as excellent and perfect as possible. This, then, is how we must say, according to the plausible account, that this world came to be, by God's providence, in very truth a living creature endowed with intelligence.<sup>5</sup>

The intelligence of the world-soul has the function of concretely realizing the Demiurge's great design, and through the Demiurge it participates in the ideal world.

Therefore, the world-soul is the most beautiful of generated things<sup>6</sup> and it has been generated by the Intelligence of Him who produced it, who is the most perfect of intelligible entities,<sup>7</sup> and so the highest of intelligible beings.

The Demiurge creates also all the stars and the heavenly bodies as divine and eternal living creatures, with spherical bodies mostly made of fire, all endowed with intelligent souls and closely connected to the intelligence of the world soul. Here is the text in which Plato speaks of the visible and generated Gods:

He made the greater part of the Idea of the divine out of fire, so that it might be very bright and very beautiful to behold, and he rendered it the universe round in shape and set it in the intelligence of the supreme circuit and he distributed it over the whole circumference of heaven, so that it would be an ornament to it and multifarious as a whole.

And he gave to each two movements—the first, a movement in its own place and in the same way, whereby each thinks always the same thoughts about the same things; the second, a forward movement, in which they are controlled by the circular motion of the same and the like. Relative to the other five motions he left them unmoved, so that each might attain the highest perfection. And by this cause the unwandering stars were made, to be divine and eternal living beings, who stay ever revolving in the same way and in the same place. But

5. *Timaeus* 30B1–C1.

6. *Ibid.*, 37A2: ἀρίστη γενομένη τῶν γεννηθέντων.

7. *Ibid.*, A1: . . . τῶν νοητῶν ἀεί τε ὄντων ὑπὸ τοῦ ἀρίστου.



those which revolve and follow a wondering path were produced in the way already described.<sup>8</sup>

In addition to the intelligent souls of the stars and the heavenly bodies, the Demiurge creates the rational souls of men in a closely similar way. Into the bowl (the poetic image for the container of the mixture with which he had composed the soul of the Universe), the Demiurge places what remained of the elements with which he had made the soul of the Universe, and mixes them almost in the same way.

Hence, the first mixture is identical with that from which the Demiurge produces the intermediate Same, Other, and Being (as the intermediates between their respective Indivisible and Divisible), since He employs what remains after having made the soul of the Universe and the celestial souls. The second mixture, then, is made in almost the same way, but of the second and third grade of purity: the second for men and the third for women. (It is curious that, after the great victories for absolute equality of the sexes in the *Republic*, Plato returns in the *Timaeus* to the traditional view of his time.) Here is the relevant text:

Thus he spoke, and again into the bowl in which he had previously mixed the soul of the universe he poured the remains of the elements, and mixed them in much the same way; but they were not as pure as before, but of the second and third grade of purity. And having made it he divided the whole mixture into souls equal in number to the stars and assigned each soul to a star, and having placed them there as in a chariot he showed them the nature of the universe and declared to them the laws of destiny, according to which the first generation would be one and the same for all so that none should be at a disadvantage because of him; and being distributed in each of the organs of time as was adapted to each, they ought to have produced the most religious of animals.<sup>9</sup>

It is rare to find in books on Plato's metaphysics a fair account of this doctrine, although very important not only for a proper understanding of Plato but also of Aristotle, who took over much of it despite not admitting the demiurgic side of the creative activity of the highest Intelligence.

In fact, Aristotle did not accept the hierarchical structure of the intelligible because he treated the structure of the intelligible as inherent in the sensible; nevertheless, he did admit the existence of the Intelligences as transcendent substances, and he accepted the hierarchy of the Intelligences and the underlying conception supporting it.

It is a point of scholarly knowledge that in the *De Caelo*, Aristotle clearly admits the animateness of the heavens, stating openly that the

8. *Ibid.*, 40A2-B8.

9. *Ibid.*, 41D4-42A1.

heaven is animated (ἐμψυχος) and possesses a principle of movement.<sup>10</sup> He notes, moreover, that some astronomical difficulties can be best explained by admitting that the stars participate in activity and life (πρόξις καὶ ζωή),<sup>11</sup> and he likens the activity of the stars to that of animals and plants.<sup>12</sup>

In the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle does not discuss the celestial souls, nor does he deny them. Yet, given the logic presupposed in his argument, since he admits the Intelligences which move the heavens, celestial souls would seem to be necessary to explain why and how the heavens can be inspired to move by the Intelligences.

Here, then, is the hierarchy which follows from Aristotle's account:

1. the highest Intelligence, prime Mover;
2. the fifty-five moving intelligences of the fifty-five celestial spheres;
3. the celestial souls of the various spheres and stars;
4. the rational souls of men.

We can now see how important is the issue of the ontological hierarchy of the Intelligences as it appears in Plato, not only to understand the Neoplatonists and their extraordinary elaboration of this hierarchical structure, but also to understand Plato's own followers, beginning with Aristotle.

The feature that distinguishes Plato's hierarchical conception of the Intelligences from those of the other Greek thinkers is the creative activity of the supreme Intelligence or Demiurge relative to all the other Intelligences. This conception would never again be proposed in Hellenic culture.

To conclude our discussion of Plato's creationism, we ought to make two further points.

First, the creationism of the Platonic Demiurge is operative also on the Ideas of artifacts, as we saw from the passage from the *Republic*. These particular Ideas are to be found in the realm of the intermediates, and therefore remain distinct from the Ideas of the first realm.

If this location of the Ideas of the artifacts is accepted, which is possible if we also accept the new interpretive paradigm, we can explain how and why the indirect tradition tells us about disagreements among the Platonists on this matter, and how some, such as Aristotle, maintained that Plato admitted only Ideas of natural things and not of artifacts.

Gaiser has offered the very plausible conjecture "that not only the

10. Aristotle, *De caelo* B 2.285a27-31.

11. *Ibid.*, B 12.292a20-21.

12. Cf. Aristotle, *De caelo* B 12.292b1-2. See also Reale, *Teofrasto*, 46ff., where we show how this issue was important also in Theophrastus's *Metaphysics*.

specific mathematical numbers and figures are born in the soul . . . but also the Ideas of the things produced by *techne* have their place in this intermediate psycho-mathematical realm."<sup>13</sup> We can thus explain the fact that Aristotle held that Plato admitted only Ideas of natural things, though in his dialogues Plato clearly and repeatedly claims that there are also Ideas of artifacts. What we have, then, are Ideas at two different levels; and the Ideas of artifacts found among the intermediates are not natural Ideas like those found in the first realm; therefore, they are not genuine (or absolute) Ideas.

Finally, Platonic creationism is at its fullest in the claim about, and the attempted demonstration of, the Demiurge's production of the four elements (water, air, fire, and earth) from the mixture from which every form of being originates. In this way, the Demiurge produces the that-out-of-which things are made by the geometrical means we examined above. The creative activity of the Demiurge acts only partially on the mathematical. But we do not have sufficient information to be certain about this.<sup>14</sup>

#### V. THE PLATONIC CONCEPTION OF THE DEMIURGE AS SHOWING THE DRIVE TOWARD MONOTHEISM WITHIN ANCIENT GREEK THOUGHT

We have often seen that Plato calls the Intelligence the supreme God; but he also says that many other beings are gods. How are we to understand this theological pluralism? Diès makes the following observations:

A reading of the dialogues almost inevitably leaves one in a certain uneasiness. Everything is God or Divine in this too divine Plato: the Ideas or intelligible Forms—the Idea of the Good—the Idea of the Beautiful—the Intellect—the Soul—the World—the stars—our intellect and our soul to say nothing of the mythological gods which the *Timaeus* mentions immediately after the heavenly bodies, with undisguised irony. We are led to ask with a little impatience: which among all these is Plato's God? <sup>15</sup>

Diès states the problem but does not use the right method to solve it.

As we have often seen, God should not be confused with the divine nor with the first Principle (the Good, the One, and the supreme Mea-

13. Gaiser, *Platons*, 26.

14. Certainly the Demiurge greatly multiplies the mathematical entities; for example, in the constitution of the material elements, he must produce triangles and regular geometrical bodies in great quantities to mix them with the material Principle. Likewise, he works on the mixture with which he produces the World-Soul and the various souls of stars and of celestial bodies as well as of human beings. And the examples could be multiplied.

15. A. Diès, *Autour du Platon. Essais du critique et d'histoire*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1927), 2: 555.

sure), which is the rule and that to which the Intelligence refers. Nor should he ever be confused with the whole of being. Plato conceives his God as personal, attributing to Him both supreme Intelligence and also will. The activity of Plato's God is not simply that of Intelligence on the Intelligible, but rather a willing of the realization of the Intelligible. And Plato tells us so absolutely clearly, so that only someone who refuses the text could misunderstand. He writes:

He was good; and in the good no jealousy can ever arise. So, being without jealousy, He desired that all things should come as near as possible to being like Himself.<sup>16</sup>

And the other Gods?

Given what we have already said, there cannot be any doubt as to how to respond to this question. If we take seriously the concept of creation, even as semicreation, the other gods all depend on the first.

This was a revolution for Greek polytheism, one which expresses a deep drive in Plato's style of thought, although at a distance, toward a monotheistic conception of God. A. E. Taylor is largely right to say: "Thus, in the scheme of the *Timaeus*, we see that the efficient cause of the world is thought of definitely as a personal God, and this creator or maker is, strictly speaking, the only God, in our sense of the word, the dialogue recognizes."<sup>17</sup>

If Plato also used the name God for the world and for parts of the world or the things found in them, this ought not to mislead us. Indeed, "These θεοί are all "created"; their *raison d' être* is the will of the δημιουργός (29e, 41b), who is thus distinguished from them as God is from "creatures in Christian theology."<sup>18</sup>

Undoubtedly Taylor goes too far in claiming that in Plato God is distinct from creatures as in Christian theology. To be exact, one ought to speak of no more than an analogy, because the creation in the Hellenic sense which Plato supports is different from that of Christian theology. Nevertheless, with this caveat, what Taylor says is sound and the discussions that it has aroused are motivated by ideological prejudices which are not based on the facts. Here are the famous words the Demiurge addresses to the created gods:

Gods, children of Gods, I am the artificer and father of works, which, by my efforts are indissoluble, unless I wish it. Everything which is put together may be undone, but it would be evil to wish to undo what is harmoniously and happily put together. For this reason, and because you are but creatures, you

16. *Timaeus* 29E1-3.

17. Taylor, *Plato*, 441-42.

18. *Ibid.*, 442.

are not wholly indissoluble, but you will not be dissolved, nor undergo the fate of death, because you have my will on your side, a greater and mightier bond than those with which you were put together when you were born. . . . Three types of mortal beings remain to be produced. If they are not produced, the universe will be incomplete, for it will not contain all living kinds. Yet it ought to contain them, if it is to be perfect. But if they were created by me and received life through my work, they would be equal to the gods. So that they may be mortal, and this universe may be truly complete, you are to undertake the formation of these living beings, in accordance with nature, imitating the power which I used in creating you. The part of them worthy of the name immortal, which is called divine and is the guiding principle of those who are willing to follow justice and you—of that divine part I will myself sow the seed, and having made a beginning, I will hand the work over to you. . . . [Y]ou shall interweave the mortal with the immortal and produce and beget them and bring them up giving them food and when they die receive them again.<sup>19</sup>

## VI. THE DEMIURGE AND THE PROTOLOGY

If the Demiurge is the supreme Intelligence, which has hierarchically above it the rule according to which it acts, and on which it depends; if this supreme rule is the Good, the One and supreme Measure; if this, through the bipolar structure of the real, involves a system of dialectical relations in accordance with numerical distinctions, and in this way maps out the entire realm of the intelligible: then, it is clear that since the sphere of the intelligible is that in and through which the Intelligence is grounded, the protology offers an exact reconstruction of the intelligible world to which the divine Intelligence essentially refers.

The thesis that the world of the Ideas is the noetic cosmos, created by the divine Intelligence itself in its thinking, is a thesis to which Plato himself did not subscribe. Moves in this direction were beginning to develop, very probably, already within the Academy;<sup>20</sup> nevertheless, it is only in Philo of Alexandria and to some extent also in the *Didaskalikos* of Albinus that we find a real spelling out of this thesis.

Consequently, the protology is paradigmatically and primarily the knowledge of the divine things, which the divine Intellect possesses in the highest degree, and which the philosopher must try to reach.

Here is the text of the *Timaeus*, which we have already quoted:

The Principles yet more remote than these [above the geometric principles from which the four elements are derived] are known to Heaven and to such men as Heaven favors.<sup>21</sup>

19. *Timaeus* 41A7–D3.

20. See H. Krämer's groundbreaking *Der Ursprung der Geistmetaphysik. Untersuchungen zur Geschichte des Platonismus zwischen Platon und Plotin* (Amsterdam, 1964, 1967<sup>2</sup>).

21. *Timaeus* 53D6ff.

This concept is also set out by Aristotle at the beginning of his *Metaphysics*; for him first philosophy is the science of divine things, and it is likewise the kind of science which God possesses either exclusively or in the highest degree.<sup>22</sup> Therefore, we now fully grasp what Plato means by the phrase “the assimilation to God,” to which many dialogues refer.

In the *Republic*, for example, Plato says that man must practice justice and the virtues, so far as it is possible for a man to make himself like God (ὁμοιοῦσθαι θεῷ).<sup>23</sup> In the *Theaetetus*, he refers to the same concept, in affirming that the “flight from the world” (from the evil of the world) consists in an assimilation to God (ὁμοίωσις θεῷ) so far as this is possible, and that the assimilation to God is justice and sanctity in accordance with wisdom.<sup>24</sup> And in the *Laws*, Plato indicates by “the right measure” the condition of being dear to God, whereas the things which “lack right measure” (ἄμετρα) are friends neither among themselves nor to Him who preserves them; and hence:

God is the measure of all things for us, much more than any man is, as some people think. And he who would be dear to God must, as far as possible, become like Him.<sup>25</sup>

Within the new interpretive paradigm, the highest Measure of all things is the One, and therefore the Good, and this, however, is not God, but is divine, the supreme rule to which God (the Demiurge) conforms. God is He who perfectly realizes the Measure and the One, and in this sense, He is also Measure, so to say, in the personal sense.

And God (who is the best of eternal beings and the best of causes), insofar as He brings about the highest Measure, brings about unity-multiplicity, that is, He perfectly binds the One to the Many and the Many to the One. Indeed, the *Timaeus* repeatedly tells us so and openly states the conceptual point very fully in a passage that we have already quoted, but which serves as a final flourish:

God has sufficient knowledge and also power to be able to combine many things into one and again to resolve the one into many. But no man either is or ever will be able to accomplish either the one or the other operation.<sup>26</sup>

Naturally there is no human being who, on his own, taking man as the measure of all things (in the maxim of Protagoras), knows how or is able to do (even in a different way) anything remotely close to what God does.

22. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* A 2.983a1–10.

23. *Republic* 10.613B1.

24. *Theaetetus* 167B1–3.

25. *Laws* 4.716C4–6.

26. *Timaeus* 68D4–7.

Men, therefore, if they wish to act well, must do what, after creating the gods, God illustrated to them as a model, namely, to imitate this power in the creation of things, and to bring about unity-in-multiplicity, thus to produce harmony and order.

To try to bring about the just measure, and so to act as He who brings about the Measure of all things perfectly, and thus to try to assimilate oneself to God insofar as is possible for a man, means to bring the unity-into-multiplicity and so to bring order and produce harmony in all things that depend on man in ethics, and in politics (in private and public life), as well as in all technical and artistic works.<sup>27</sup>

And this is the way in which Plato understood justice and virtue, as manifestations of that metaphysical connection that unifies the whole of reality. Within ancient Greek culture, it is the highest interpretation of what binds together all things.

It is a message that still has much to recommend it to modern man.

27. See above, 215–16.





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## Bibliography

We list here only the works cited in the course of our main discussion. For the criteria we followed in citing the critical literature on Plato, we refer the reader to what we said in the Preface. A richer bibliography on Plato can be created from the many works which we have mentioned in our Notes.

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