PREFACE

Animus in this its fourth volume continues the general policy of the earlier volumes which has by now gained the interest of a considerable readership -- at the same time to encourage interpretations of older philosophical and literary works as far as possible free of current assumptions and then to consider how in this objective consideration they may clarify a contemporary culture which finds itself in an abstract and uncertain relation to what it values most. The articles on Platonism published in this volume fall into three groups. Those of the first group treat very differently of relations between contemporary thought and the older or original Platonism. Then several are about that Platonism, commenting on particular Dialogues or on Aristotle's criticism of it. In the articles of a third group, one looks to Augustine's reaction to ancient scepticism, two of them to Neoplatonism, the one considering its various forms simply in their ancient setting, the other its renewal in this departing century as enlightening contemporary culture.

I

F.L. Jackson brings together the flight in contemporary philosophy from conceptual thought to language as more primordial and the opposite movement in Plato from the ambiguity of language to the clarity and stability of thought. His article shows Cratylus as undermining the assumption that language is the 'house of being' and not rather itself housed in being.

Neil Robertson regards the Platonism of Leo Strauss and an influential school, through which they would effect a purgation of the destructive subjectivity of Machiavelli, Hobbes and their progeny. Plato, set in the perspective of a rejected modernity, is not equivalent to the Plato of the Dialogues, but has an interest of its own.

II

Paul Epstein writes on Symposium. The first three speeches on the nature of 'eros' bring loved, lover and the good of their relation to the radical division between a tragic and a comic unification of these elements. Socrates, inspired by Diotima, then raises the argument from poetry to philosophy, in which the elements are seen to belong to an undivided movement. Socrates returned to himself from this inspiration can at the end discourse with Aristophanes whether the same poet can be master of the tragic and the comic art. How far is the philosophical unification of the opposed arts adequate to either of them?

Vernon Provencal shows how the contest between Socrates and Protagoras as to the meaning of a few verses of Simonides is central to an understanding of the whole argument of Protagoras. Through the 'agon' the division between a rhetorical use of myth and an abstract unity of thought is broken through, and Socrates can show Protagoras how the two are engaged in a common work uniting the rational good and the immediate good of pleasure.
Kyle Fraser writes on relations between 'separate' ideas of Plato and Aristotle's concept of substance, which he argues involves also a certain 'separation' of substance from accidents and a containment of substance in the divine thinking.

An article by James Doull comments on the Parmenides as far as the 'hypotheses' - the first part of a study of the whole dialogue and its relation to Sophist, Philebus and the crisis in the Academy which had its resolution in the Aristotelian philosophy.

III

A paper by Bernard Wills examines closely the logic of Augustine's response to ancient scepticism in his Contra Academicos.

Another paper by James Doull outlines the history of Neoplatonism, showing the stages of a logical development leading eventually to a point where a new philosophical beginning was seen to be necessary -- in the revised Augustinianism of Descartes.

Wayne Hankey follows meticulously the intricate history of Neo-neoplatonism, especially in France, from Henri Bergson, Bréhéier and others who in the earlier twentieth century broke from the tradition of Modern Philosophy to the clerical and lay philosophers of more recent years, who with many variations are in common persuaded that that philosophy responds better to contemporary spiritual interests than the modern deviation which seemed for a time to have replaced it.
The Post-Modern Attack On Plato

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Plato's true speculative greatness, that in virtue of which he constitutes an epoch in the history of philosophy and hence in world history generally, lies in the more precise identification of the idea, a recognition which, a few centuries later, was in general to form the basic element in the ferment of world history and a new configuration of the human spirit.

Hegel, Lectures on the History of Philosophy

1. Beyond Plato And Hegel

For Hegel, the 'idea' is far more than a mere Platonic invention, one among many technical terms to gain currency in philosophy. On the contrary, it is the proper and essential object of thought, and as such its development forms the principal theme of philosophical history. The initial identification of the idea thus coincides with the advent of a thinking which for the first time knows what its true content is, which in the idea has the unity of thinking and being clearly before it, and Plato is rightly seen as the founder of this knowledge of the idea to which he gave the name 'philosophy'. The subsequent career of this science Hegel represents as the "labour of the concept" whereby, over two millennia and more, this ideal knowledge is further deepened and widened. Over centuries of Christian culture the speculative spirit initiated among the Greeks was to become a matter of inward and outward habit, and, as the spirit of modernity, is born again in the self-consciousness of freedom. Modern philosophy proceeds from the principle of freedom as an intellectual and moral certainty toward the systematic comprehension of it as the basis of all scientific and ethical truth; a labour consummated in the Hegelian science in which the enterprise Plato inaugurated finds a certain

1 Die wahrhaft spekulative Grösses Platons, das, wodurch er Epoche macht in der Geschichte der Philosophy und damit in der Weltgeschichte überhaupt, ist die nähere Bestimmung der Idee, eine Erkenntnis, welche denn einige Jahrhunderte später überhaupt das Grundelement in der Gärung der Weltgeschichte und der neuen Gestaltung des menschlichen Geistes ausmacht. (Werke, Moldenhauer/Michel, Frankfurt am Main, 1971, v19, p.66)
completion.² "The goal that I set myself" declares Hegel in his Phenomenology of Spirit, "is that Philosophy more closely approach the form of science -- that it reach the point where it can set aside its title as the love of knowing [Liebe zum Wissen, philo-sophia] and become an actual knowing [wirkliches Wissen]."³

It is this view of philosophical history as having in some sense reached its term that the ultra-modernist critics of Hegel immediately take up, though their understanding of that consummation and his do not simply differ: rather, they are notoriously at odds.⁴ Notorious also is the fact that it is not Hegel's view of philosophical history, the appreciation of which is rare enough, that has profoundly shaped how the matter is seen today, but rather the views of these his 19th-20th century critics. In Feuerbach or Nietzsche, in Russell or Heidegger, in Rorty or Derrida we not only find Western philosophy represented as a completed history but also this completion set forth as the negative major premise of their own peculiar account of the bankruptcy of that tradition, whether seen as springing from intellectual fallacies at long last exposed and refuted, or as the long-standing corruption of an original human wisdom now standing in need of radical reconstitution. The critique of a putative 'Hegelian' account of the upshot of philosophical history becomes the springboard for an attack on the tradition as a whole and an attempt to delineate an entirely post-philosophical way of thinking.

The meaning of this post-modern rebellion against philosophy is not easily assessed. Where Hegel saw in the modern affirmation of freedom the triumph of the philosophical idea, his successors, standing already in and beyond that event, take their freedom as given and seek only to resolve it to some more immediate, political or existential, form. In relation to such resolution a philosophically comprehended freedom appears as a limiting obstacle: freedom as idea becomes the enemy of freedom as actual life. Hegel's successors could not (and still cannot) imagine how a freedom brought to consciousness through the exercise of reason and mediated by some definite ethical and historical culture could ever be an absolute freedom, in the (questionable) sense of a this-worldly, here-and-now freedom a human freedom. From this perspective, accordingly, the philosophical tradition appears as having achieved no more than to have nurtured and brought to completeness an ideal freedom only, the mere ought-to-be of moral conscience. It thus appears to the heirs of this legacy above all necessary to be liberated decisively from that tradition, precisely and paradoxically in order that the all-important principle which it had engendered and brought to light might be transformed into actuality.

It is in accordance with some such extreme hostility toward philosophy and its history that the counter-Hegelian revolution began and is still pursued. For the generation for whom a strictly human freedom became an absolute premise and fact it seemed

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² "This movement, which is philosophy, finds itself already completed when in the end it grasps its own concept, i.e., simply looks back on its knowledge." (Hegel, Encyclopedia; Werke 10. s.573) See also the conclusion to his Lectures on the History of Philosophy (Werke, 20, p.460).
imperative that the commitment to ideas, 'idealism', upon which Western culture as a whole is founded, be finally identified, exposed and abandoned. For the history of philosophy is seen as the history of the abstraction of freedom only, of its merely 'spiritual', i.e., moral-intellectual expression. It will be argued that actual freedom, freedom as a palpable human self-experience and a principle of concrete political and material relations, had been wrenched from the context of real life and installed somewhere in the sky, there afforded a holy-ghostly existence accessible only in the otherworldly intuitions of art, religion and philosophy. Various hypotheses are advanced to account for this fatal turn to idealism. Typical (the version with which we will here primarily be concerned) is the hypothesis of a cultural catastrophe in which an original harmony between Nature and Spirit is somehow broken and the original priority of the former over the latter is reversed. The real is then made subordinate to Thought, the truth of Being is obscured or forgotten, State and Technology become master over Individuality and Life. So deprived of his natural freedom man is dehumanized; Theology, Metaphysics and Morality become the universal opiates through which this alienated condition is sustained. Though the various forms of this 19th-20th century metaphor are in content often contradictory (Marx is no Kierkegaard) they all have the same objective: to liberate life from the domination of reason, to affirm freedom as preeminent human nature, to declare the world-for-thought as utterly incompatible with a human world of freedom. To this end it becomes especially necessary above all to undermine the whole cult and culture of the idea; to repudiate 'philosophy' as Plato initiated it and Hegel completed it.

The task to which post-Hegelian thinking thus enthusiastically applied itself was the discovery of the adequate critique of the Western spiritual and intellectual tradition, such as could lay the basis for a new ultra-spiritual standpoint both comprehensive of it and liberated from it. The common metaphor is a 'return to nature' in some fashion, whether through the romanticist invocation of an ante-historical spirit the preeminence of culture or the substitution of natural science for metaphysics as absolute knowledge. The former seeks to disclose and rehabilitate a pristine life and wisdom alleged to have been suppressed and corrupted by a domineering modern intellect which "murders to dissect". The latter opposes any such great leap backward and proposes a revolutionary emancipation from everything past, appealing to a new theology and psychology of the natural, Darwinian man. But the wish common to both is altogether to have done with the reason-ridden, idea-world of philosophy and to rediscuss (or open up) entirely aboriginal (or entirely new) territories beyond the realm of the rational and a merely moral good and evil.

This ultra-modernist program is of course ambiguous at its core. It is one thing simply to abandon thought as empty and useless activity. But how could it ever be possible to demonstrate the invalidity of philosophical reason; by what new standard and in what other form of discourse could the case be made against it? It is our limited purpose here to survey how Nietzsche and Heidegger generally answered this question; how they reconstructed, indeed inverted, the spiritual history of the West to tell of a virginal Greek wisdom become sullied and perverted through the encroachments of a life-denying, otherworldly mentality; how Plato formalized this Socratic falsification in his theory of
ideas; how he founded thereby a regimen of self-deception called 'philosophy' which provided the seedbed for a vast cultural growth devoted to the sustaining of this life-repressive mentality; how this spiritual cancer spread and grew, reaching its deadly finale in and as Modernity.

In spite of its prima facie implausibility, this tragic, high-operatic account of the intellectual history of the West still exercises enormous influence upon contemporary thinking; the more recent heroes of continental philosophy still perpetuate it. With both Nietzsche and Heidegger the beginning is typically made with a claim to an epoch-making insight into the essential 'nihilism' of modernity as the final embodiment of a legacy of spiritual degeneration going back in time. The root cause of this cultural decay, or at least its crucial symptomatic expression, is declared to be epitomized in the historical cult of philosophy which as a matter of course elevates thought above life, plays down the sensible world as 'mere appearance', and seeks to comprehend and subordinate living reality under intellectual principles, the so-called ideas. The history of philosophy is thus, as Nietzsche puts it, the history of a lie whose consequence is just nihilism, the culture-negative culture of modernity.

The radical deconstruction and reconstruction of the history of philosophy thus becomes a chief means of defending 'philosophically' a romanticoist insight into the decadence of modernity that would otherwise remain aesthetic or dogmatic only. For since the very nature of the thesis in hand the 'lie' underlying philosophy precludes any directly philosophical explication or defence, it can appear possible to justify it only through a radical reinterpretation of the history of that discipline itself with a view to exposing its real burden and intent as quite the opposite of what had ever been supposed. There will be required a radical rereading of original texts in order to ferret out and define the alleged fundamental misapprehension upon which Plato founded his idea world, this then to form the basis of a complete retelling of the tale of European cultural history recast as the progressive compounding of this misapprehension until it reaches its apotheosis in modern humanism. The traditional-Hegelian spiritual history of the West is utterly and deliberately turned on its head.

So established and refined has this post-philosophical narrative become since Nietzsche's time that appreciation for the original sense of traditional philosophical texts is now rare enough, an indifference reinforced by a new conviction that respect for manifest argument is in any case no longer obligatory; one must rather look for (or invent?) a surreptitious, unconscious, and usually contradictory meaning lurking behind

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5 See postscript on Derrida in section 5, this essay.
6 Ambivalence with respect to terms like 'spirit' or 'spiritual' pervades the whole tradition represented by Nietzsche and Heidegger. Like most post-Hegelians they were generally loath to use the word except disparagingly; yet they were equally clear the crisis they would describe and address was a 'spiritual' one, in the sense it was at once intellectual, moral, political, aesthetic, religious i.e., 'cultural'. The new worldliness to which they would lead the return is not a materialism but wholly presupposes a concrete freedom: 'spirit' in the distinctively Hegelian sense. Heidegger himself will declare "World is always the world of spirit", but see Derrida's revealing account as to how he continually vacillated over whether or how to use the term: whether negatively, positively, figuratively etc.: Of Spirit, Heidegger and the Question, tr. Bennington/Bowlby (Chicago, 1989).
what is obviously and overtly reasoned. Counter-textual hypotheses of this kind have accordingly come to be taken as gospel: with respect to Plato and Parmenides on the relation of being and thought, for example, Heidegger is taken much at his word, as is Nietzsche on the perversity of morality or Derrida on identity. Yet even the most superficial inspection will show that the interpretations of classical texts upon which such claims are based are often conspicuously cavalier, clearly bent and amended to serve a distinctly post-modern outlook.

Much has been written as to whether Nietzsche's or Heidegger's specific accounts of the classical legacy are valid in literary or scholarly terms; however, more thought needs to be directed to the question of the philosophical motives which inspired these. The interpretative liberties taken were certainly extreme and cannot be attributed to wrongheadedness or an invidious will to distort and deceive we are dealing, after all, with the best minds of recent centuries. But there is need to examine the limits of the very task they set themselves, namely to formulate a deliberately 'post-philosophical' standpoint, one which could claim at once to have liberated itself from all the historical mediations of philosophy while justifying and sustaining this independence precisely by appeal to that same history. Such a thinking is radically divided in itself; exempting itself in principle from any appeal to a legacy of rational argument, it would sustain itself nonetheless through endlessly worrying that same legacy, exploiting by means of extreme and oblique interpretations the very literature from whose substance and upshot it declares itself already free. In so assuming what it negates in order to negate what it assumes, it will inevitably taint everything it finds with its own ambiguity in that literature.

2. Nietzsche's Plato.

The iconoclastic rhetoric of the 19th century ultra-modernists was driven by the extremity of what they attempted. Schopenhauer and Comte, Kierkegaard and Feuerbach, Marx and Nietzsche took similar recourse to violent polarizations and epochistic history, the positions articulated not meant to be understood merely as discontinuous with the Western moral and intellectual tradition but as consciously subversive of it. Their radical counter-histories were not constructed on behalf of some new philosophical standpoint; on the contrary, they were meant to undermine and deconstruct the philosophical tradition as a whole, a step they saw to be prerequisite to the maintenance of positions that could not otherwise even be rendered intelligible. Accordingly we find the history of Western philosophy represented, not simply as riddled with misapprehensions regarding logical or living truths, but as a dark legacy of deliberate falsification and corruption of the very truth itself. Metaphysics, morality and theology are singled out as prime villains in a fallacy-driven melodrama of cultural descent into moral and intellectual decadence. The need to expose their nihilistic essence and to loosen their grip on the human spirit poses the principal challenge. An entirely new kind of thinking is proposed such as will presuppose, as its own essential premise, the very speculative legacy it seeks at the same time to undermine.
As Western philosophy traces its own roots to the Greeks, it is with the Greeks that the deconstruction of the tradition must also begin. It will seek to show how and where, long ago, a wrong turning was made, initiating developments whose final issue is nihilistic modernity. This whole undertaking entails, of course, a key presumption: that there actually was an ancient wisdom from which the advent of philosophy represented a turning-away and to which return must now somehow be made. It is required of the romanticist argument, not only that it declare what the great evil of modernity is, but also that it identify the pristine cultural outlook it is alleged to have corrupted: the two factors are entirely reciprocal. Kierkegaard found an instance of a pre-Socratic wisdom in the faith of Abraham; Schopenhauer praised Vedantic pessimism as more 'honest' than Greek philosophy; Heidegger proclaimed Parmenides the real unsung hero of Greek thought; and Nietzsche offers Zarathustra, the first divinity to overvalue the otherworldly, the poetic opportunity to correct his error.

In all cases it is with Socrates and Plato that the rot sets in and a vision of truth opposed to being and life firmly established. Nietzsche is everywhere blunt about this: they are co-authors of a world- and life-denying moralism which was to become constitutive of European culture; consolidated over two Christian millennia (and Christianity is but "Plato for the people") and attaining world-domination in modern enlightened humanism. The first articulation of this sinister outlook with Socrates coincides, Nietzsche claims, with the collapse of authentic Greek virtue, a heroic condition he describes as rooted in a profound sense of the priority of Life over Thought the former as ungrounded, self-expressive, spontaneous existence and the corresponding priority of the natural over the moral will. "Will-to-power" is Nietzsche's shorthand for this remarkable fusion of freedom with instinct, a view that has since become common enough in the general culture. Socrates is depicted as harbinger of a perverse will-to-power, a will turned destructively against itself and against instinctual life, a 'spiritual' or moral will hostile in principle to everything natural and spontaneous; thus unfree in Nietzsche's sense. The philosopher is the supreme epitome of this 'new' human type:

The appearance of the Greek philosophers from Socrates onwards is a symptom of decadence... (WP 427). Socrates represents a moment of the profoundest perversity in the history of values (WP 430). [Plato] severed the instincts from the polis, from contest, from military efficiency, from art and beauty, from the mysteries, from belief in tradition and ancestors. He was the seducer of the nobility... He negated all the presuppositions of the 'noble Greek' of the old stamp, made dialectic an everyday practice, conspired with tyrants, pursued politics of the future and provided the example of the most complete severance of the instincts from the past. He is profound, passionate in everything anti-Hellenic (WP 35).

So Socrates really was the corrupter of Greek youth and Plato the despoiler of Greek ethical life rather than the first to discern its principle. Plato's appeal to a universal good

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7 Nietzsche, The Will to Power, Tr. Kaufmann/Hollingsdale (NY, 1968), [Hereafter 'WP']. "... freedom understood, that is, as positive power, as will to power ...(WP 770)" "The most fearful and fundamental desire in man, his drive for power this drive is called 'freedom'" (WP 720).
delivers the kiss of death to a uniquely Greek ethos still alive in Milesian and Ionian speculation and preserved, though already in decline, even among the Sophists whom Plato so persistently maligns.

The real philosophers of Greece are those before Socrates with Socrates something changes. They are all noble persons, setting themselves apart from people and state... They anticipate all the great conceptions of things: they themselves represent these conceptions, they bring themselves into a system (WP 437). The 'Sophist' including Anaxagoras, Democritus, the great Ionians is still completely Hellenic, though as a transitional form.... The 'philosopher', on the other hand is the reaction (WP 427). The Greek culture of the Sophists had developed out of all the Greek instincts; it belongs to the culture of the Periclean age as necessarily as Plato does not (WP 428).

And what is it that uniquely belongs to the noble Greek outlook which Plato debased?

In the Greek philosophers I see a decline of the instincts: otherwise they could not have blundered so far as to posit the conscious state as more valuable. We must in fact seek life where it has become least conscious, i.e., least aware of its logic, its reasons, its means and intentions, its utility (WP 480). [For] there exists neither 'spirit', nor reason, nor thinking, nor consciousness, nor soul, nor will, nor truth: all are fictions that are of no use.... Belief in the body is always a stronger belief than belief in the spirit; and whoever desires to undermine it, also undermines at the same time most thoroughly belief in the authority of the spirit! (WP 659) Plato [is] the great viaduct of corruption, who first refused to see nature in morality, who had already debased the Greek gods with his concept 'good', who was already marked by Jewish bigotry (WP 202).

Startling and dramatic though this relentlessly anti-spiritual tirade may be, is there much that is really plausible in it? Where in the ancient chronicle or literature does one find anything resembling Nietzsche's descriptions of an original Greek 'virtue' expressing itself as an unqualified affirmation of the priority of nature over spirit, instinct over morality, body over mind, the unconscious over consciousness, individuality against "people and state". Almost everything we know of ancient peoples suggests rather the contrary: that far from having brought such distinctions body/soul for example to such clarity of dichotomy as would allow of choosing to 'value' one over the other, we typically find the converse: a marked in-distinctness of divisions between human and divine, aesthetic and intellectual, or spiritual and natural. Indeed, the bringing to light of just such categories and the working out of both their distinctness and their unity was precisely the work Plato began; an historic work whose result Nietzsche entirely presupposes.
Indeed, it is only against the background of the whole Western-Platonic development that such ultra-modernist conjurings of a pre-rational consciousness, a morality based on instinct and other such romanticist notions can even be meaningful. Nietzsche's account of pre-Platonic Greek culture and its putative Socratic subversion does not, in short, derive from any first order survey of that culture itself but is the product of quite contemporary notions and conflicts foisted in. Appeals to para-historical narrative were common enough in the great age of the opera and the novel; but romanticism's interest was never in history itself so much as in dramatising certain of its more exotic episodes in order to make its own reactionary case against that particular form of modernity which saw in history only the endless improvement of social and material conditions. To Nietzsche's generation this newly dominant scientific, technocratic and political idealism threatened to subordinate to its vision of progress the actual freedom of living individuals, a freedom immediately possessed and borne witness to 'existentially', i.e., psychologically and aesthetically.

It is this post-Hegelian controversy over the meaning and consequences of modern freedom which Nietzsche would read back into the Greek context, there to create a point of departure for a critical 'genealogy' of the whole of Western culture. But a genealogy of moral types in epochal confrontation is not really 'history' at all but a kind of psycho-cultural absolutism crudely grafted upon the actual record.  Like Wagner, Nietzsche would recoil from the humanistic optimism of post-Hegelian times into a reconstructed Teutonic paganism where freedom becomes a primitive affect and the natural individual, so empowered, the archetype of the 'noble races', prior to the encroachment of the so-called moral type in whom the instinct to freedom is corrupted, i.e., become unnatural, ascetic, set against itself and against life. In short, Nietzsche's heroic narrative of a Greek age of virtue falling into decay and supplanted by a vulgar emphasis on a universal good is nothing more than a metaphor for a conflict actually raging in his own time: the war between freedom as existential individualism and freedom as socio-technological humanism.

When it comes to specifics there are many conspicuous incongruities in Nietzsche's account of the Platonic argument itself. Apart from "meddling in reasons" and displacing the gods with the "vulgarity" of an ideal good, Plato is accused of promoting certain metaphysical fallacies which demonstrate his fundamental "anti-Greek prejudice". One example:

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8 It is important to emphasize that for Nietzsche, as for Schopenhauer, 'Will' is a decidedly not a practical category ('volition') but a psychological one. Freedom is "above all an affect" (Beyond Good and Evil [BGE] 19). In expressionist metaphysics generally, affect acquires the value of existence feeling is being on which view psychology, not philosophy, becomes queen of the sciences (BGE 20). Existential philosophy may be styled 'absolute psychology', i.e., psychology no longer concerned with a separated mind or soul, but which makes the identity of being and self-consciousness its principle. This identity comes to be variously characterized as *Wille*, will-to-power, the unconscious, the unknowable, Life, *Existenz*, *Dasein* and so forth.

[Plato] reversed the concept "reality" and said: "What you take for the real is an error, and the nearer we approach the 'Idea', the nearer we approach 'truth'." ... It was the greatest of rebaptisms; and because it has been adopted by Christianity we do not recognize how astonishing it is. Fundamentally, Plato, as the artist he was, preferred appearance to being! Lie and invention to truth! The unreal to the actual! He was so convinced of the value of appearance that he gave it the attributes 'being', 'causality', 'goodness' and 'truth', in short everything ['moral'] men value.

Even the most unsympathetic reader of Plato might well be "astonished" though hardly as Nietzsche would intend at how utterly unrecognizable is any such account of what Plato actually wrote, said or preferred. How ever is it possible to understand Plato's intent as that of conferring upon the appearance the rank of absolute being, and how is the idea, of all things, possibly to be construed as the crucial metaphor for such a preferential valuation of the apparent over the real? How can such a view of the Platonic philosophy be other than gratuitously contentious, given that it is precisely the very opposite case that is pressed on every page of the dialogues? Are we to understand that Plato lied to us or to himself; that he meant or believed the opposite of what his arguments overtly contend? Does Nietzsche believe he has 'exposed' a Plato hidden not only from us but also from himself: an unconscious perversity concealed in his thinking of which even the philosopher was unaware?

Or is the "reversal" which Nietzsche would force upon an unwilling text simply his own? Clearly the Nietzschean individual (cum 'noble Greek') will have only contempt for the universals of Plato; after all, 'reality' is what he wills, 'good' what he values, 'truth' a function of his perspective etc. From the standpoint of the absolute subject, any appeal to a universal must appear as the very converse of 'reality' or 'truth' in the special sense implied by Nietzsche's telling quotation marks. Indeed, the opposition and inversion to which Nietzsche alludes are conceivable only in terms of a much later, modern conception of the relation of thinking to being, clearly instanced in the Kantian scheme wherein everything falls within a relation between the being-in-and-for-consciousness of the world and its being-in-self between 'representation' (Vorstellung) and 'thing-itself' a relation which, since comprehended entirely within the sphere of subjectivity, is decidedly un-Platonic and even un-Greek.

Schopenhauer, Nietzsche's teacher, takes his cue entirely from this debate, proposing in opposition to the equation of the real with the phenomenal, represented world a position precisely articulated in Comtean positivism, for example a radical realism of the in-itself, wherein the world-for-consciousness is reduced to but a moment of a self-expressive, preconscious and pre-representational life, Wille, a reality that cannot in principle be represented in intellectual or moral consciousness but is encountered only aesthetically, in the immediacy of self-feeling. This Schopenhauerian absolute is the birth-parent of the Nietzschean will-to-power and grandparent to what Heidegger will.

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10 WP 572
11 Nietzsche's opens Beyond Good and Evil with this challenge to philosophy: "Suppose we want truth: why not rather untruth?" (BGE 1)
more abstractly call 'being'. From the standpoint of a radical subjective realism, 'reason', 'thought', 'idea' and such terms acquire a specifically altered meaning; their universal logical and ontological sense is abandoned and their meaning restricted to mere forms and contents of consciousness. To advocate the rule of reason is thus to identify consciousness with being; to appeal to the truth of ideas is to declare the measure of the reality of things to lie in their representation, how they are given in consciousness.

It is on the basis of this thoroughly modern polarization between consciousness and the in-itself that Nietzsche (following Schopenhauer and prefiguring Heidegger) takes the extreme liberty of equating 'idea' with 'representation', then to levelling against Plato the charge, astonishing in its turn, that in identifying truth with the idea he betrayed a preference for the appearances over the real, the polar opposite of what Plato everywhere and persistently argues: that what the idea precisely is not, is a representation. Notwithstanding, Nietzsche construes the subsequent preoccupation of Western philosophy with the ideas as the culturally extended elaboration of the 'prejudice' of Plato's. On this account, philosophy is in principle a nihilism, a specifically world-negative spirit contemptuous of living reality from which it withdraws into a netherworld of pure thinking, there to generate non-entities of its own, the representations or 'ideas', which then are constituted as another world transcendent to this one which is demoted to the status of an illusion. It is this momentous 'inversion', springing out of the corruption and suppression of an instinctive will-to-life by a contrary will-to-think that Nietzsche presents, even as early as his Birth of Tragedy, as the essential leitmotif of Western moral and cultural history.

It is in terms of this extreme and deliberately anti-rationalist account of Western culture that Nietzsche mounts his attack on philosophy's founding father, Plato, the first logocentrist: the first to 'forget' being, to detach it from its appearances and to hold fast to the latter by seeking to ground them in thought-constructed, logical essences. The terms of a 19th century debate are in this manner read back verbatim into the classical record; the resulting 'fit' is not only awkward or implausible, however, but does clear and vivid violence to both Plato's text and time. To speak of his reference to ideas as a flight from reality to the appearances, the latter understood as only the subjective representations of the former, is to speak from within a phenomenological and a distinctively post-Greek schema wherein 'appearance' has come to denote mere being-for-a-subject as opposed to subjectivity itself as the truth of being. To the extent Plato might be said to treat of an analogous position, it is with regard to the Sophist argument from subjective relativity which he challenges with relentless thoroughness on every page. But even this analogy is only partly apt; it is only within the context of a romanticist identification of being and subjectivity that it can make any sense to speak of the appearances as subjective representations only and of the ideas as mere fabrications designed to sustain these in

12 This confusion of 'idea' with 'representation' has long been a fixation in English-speaking philosophy. For many years the best-known translation of Schopenhauer's main work (Haldane and Kemp, London, 1883) had its title as "World as Will and as Idea", though the German has Vorstellung, representation, not Idee. A newer version by E.F.J. Payne (New York, 1966) has corrects this, yet the bias persists: Rorty's Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature (Princeton 1979) argues that Western philosophy, in its traditional appeal to ideas, is rooted in a prejudicial grounding of reality in representation, i.e., a 'reflection' of nature in mind.
dissociation from their true being. Such an account seems wilfully to controvert both the spirit and the letter of the actual Platonic writings.

For if Plato can be said to make a case in favour of the appearances, it is certainly not to afford them a being of their own; such an identification of the apparent as the real is, if anything, the view Nietzsche himself will ultimately espouse (as, in another way, do the Sophists). With Plato the issue of the appearances was much more straightforward. The question had been passed down to him whether, with Parmenides, we must distinguish the being of things from their non-being absolutely, on the principle that things cannot both be and not be, or whether, with Heraclitus, we must afford due recognition to a world of becoming in which things both are and are not and in which being and non-being are in some sense the same. Plato's whole interest was to bring these thoughts together: to discover in the instability and changeability of things a stable principle of their actuality and correspondingly to recognize, contra Parmenides, that there can be an understanding of the changeable which is more than mere ignorance. It is within this context that the relation between the appearances, phainomena, and a principle of actuality, idea, became important for him.

There is no withdrawal here into a netherworld of pure thought. Plato was no platonist. The interest is to show how the truth of the actual world might be brought to light and the abstractions of the earlier logicians and metaphysicians resolved into a more concrete wisdom. Nor has Plato's idea to do with representations in subjective consciousness for the simple reason 'the subject' had yet to be invented. Nor can it make sense to say that he prejudices thought against being. The idea is nothing other than the unity of thinking and being, concept and thing: no less the principle of the latter's animation the very being-dog of the dog, the being-just of just actions as of its comprehension. We find the most unambiguous summary of all this in the well-known figure of Republic (509d), where differing classes of reality are correlated with types of knowledge appropriate to them. There is here no notion whatever of appearances as the representations of things in thought; the term is applied strictly 'ontically' to things so far as they are mutable existences, both are and are not, are beings in time. Nor are ideas spoken of as mere thought-forms a view explicitly denied in the Parmenides dialogue (132b-d) as elsewhere. Rather, as principles of the actuality of things, the ideas are known on the analogy of the way ordinary visible things are seen.

There is no notion in Plato, in short, of any radical dissociation of apparent and real or of thought and being in the sense such distinctions acquire in modern philosophy. Plato everywhere is concerned

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13 The absence of any difference between being and appearance or being and becoming is a theme pursued throughout Nietzsche's philosophy. The "supreme will to power" is described as imposing the stamp of being upon becoming. "The closest approximation of a world of becoming to a world of being" is the metaphor of eternal recurrence (WP 617). Put pre-socratically: "The world exists; it is not something that becomes .. or passes away. Or rather, it passes away, but it has never begun to become and never ceased from passing away ... It lives on itself: its excrements are its food" (WP 1066). This thought is discussed approvingly by Heidegger in Nietzsche, (San Francisco, 1987, ed. D. Krell) v.III, Pt.3, ss.4.


15 Republic 507d-509b: the idea is neither a thing, nor is it the mere thought; it is the principle through which these are related in knowledge. Plato's figure cannot be squared with any such sharp division between thinking and being as Nietzsche would impute to him.
with showing, not how thinking and being are opposed, but how they might be reconciled in an actual and true knowledge. Whether it can be said he achieved this aim in his theory of 'participation' remains of course open to question, but Nietzsche's account of stark oppositions of Life to Reason and an outright intent of subverting the former through a retreat into an intellectual and moral vacuum is simply glaringly inappropriate to the Platonic context. Only from a 19th century standpoint could anything of the kind be even imagined.

3. Heidegger's Development Of The Nietzschean Theme

(a) Heidegger's 'History' of Being.

Heidegger's ontology belongs to the same romanticist quest for a counter-intellectual absolutism that preoccupied Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, though he brings the argument to a higher plane of refinement. Their common presumption is the modern axiom of self-conscious freedom, the identity of existence and thought, a principle implicit from the outset of philosophy but which reaches its fullest, most definitive articulation in Hegelian philosophy. This unity Heidegger and others wholly assume, but would seek to resolve to immediacy, thus to the primacy of its existential moment. This one-sided resolution sustains itself through the renunciation of the opposite notion, namely that the unity is generated from the side of thinking, a unity only in idea. As it is a question of the unity of being and thinking, however, the latter cannot simply be downplayed in favour of some dumb ontic absolute. The moment of self-conscious freedom must thus somehow be shown to 'belong to being', as Heidegger obscurely puts it; being will have to be newly defined as the absolute ground both of the existent and of the reflexive apprehension thereof.

The key problematic then becomes: how is one to think that which in principle is before thinking; how rationally to demonstrate the grounding of the rational itself in the pre-rational, or consciousness in the unconscious? More generally, how is it possible to defend philosophically a standpoint that is on its own account pre-philosophical or (which is really the same) post-philosophical. Heidegger conceives this task as one of showing how all that appertains to thinking to consciousness, representation, idea, reason, indeed thought itself can be reconstituted as modes and distinctions within being as more radically understood. Secondly, he would show how any alternative understanding inevitably leads to the converse corruption of the unity of being and

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16 Heidegger recognizes this in his Introduction to Metaphysics (NY 1961, tr. Manheim, [hereinafter IM], p.158): "The philosophy of the Greeks conquered the Western world not in its original beginning but in the incipient end, which in Hegel assumed great and definitive form."

17 Heidegger's ontology supersedes and assimilated Husserl's phenomenological standpoint just in this sense that consciousness, pivotal for the latter, is recast as an ontic category, turning up as Dasein, the "being for whom being is a question".

18 "The differentiation springs from an initial inner union between thinking and being itself. The formula 'being and thinking' designates a differentiation that is demanded as it were by being itself" (IM 101).
thought, reducing it to a mere relation within thinking: the essence, for Heidegger, of historical rationalism.¹⁹

Following Nietzsche, Heidegger will extend this otherwise wholly contemporary conflict to make it the theme of a vast historico-philosophical drama. An ancient Greek sense of the virginal harmony of thinking with being is adulterated, the victim of a tyrannical misapprehension which divides reason from being, divinizing the former to establish it as the successor to being. This then becomes the essential gospel of Western theology and metaphysics under whose influence over two millennia the original truth of being has been suppressed and all but forgotten. Plato is the first of the 'metaphysicians' to promote the ascendancy of logos over ousia;²⁰ the last is Hegel whose system completes the Platonic assimilation of being to the idea. Heidegger is quite literal in his commitment to this curiously melodramatic account:

This differentiation [between 'being and thinking'] is a name for the fundamental attitude of the Western spirit. In accordance with this attitude, being is defined from the standpoint of thinking and reason... The maxim [that thinking and being are the same] became the guiding principle of Western philosophy only when it ceased to be understood because its original truth could not be held fast. The falling away from the truth of this maxim began with the Greeks themselves, immediately after Parmenides (IM 122). In the seemingly unimportant distinction between being and thinking we must discern the fundamental position of the Western spirit against which our central attack is directed. It can be overcome only by a return to its origins, i.e., we must place its initial truth within its own limits and so put it on a new foundation (IM 99).

Heidegger thus relies directly upon a para-historical narrative of the origins of Western philosophy, serving as premise and prelude to his own 20th century ontology. It might appear, ironically, that in this a certain Hegelian reason-in-history is assumed: an incipient principle becomes a realized end. But Heidegger's interest was clearly never in the history of philosophy as such, in the treatment of which he is notoriously selective

¹⁹ This existential interpretation of the modern principle Heidegger opposes to modern revolutionary humanism which, appealing to the same unity, presents it from the other side in terms of a radical freedom which subdues existence, thus conforming it to itself.. For Engels, the cherry tree in the garden 'exists' only relative to human practical interests; indeed Nature itself is but a 'resource', i.e., a disappearing moment in technical self-activity,. For Heidegger, it is rather being, not freedom which is primary, with individuality itself an inexorable 'being-there'. That this human being-there be reducible to a mere being-for technocratic freedom Heidegger considered a perverse and destructive fiction grounded in a gross misapprehension of the "truth of being" and wholly inimical to a real, existential freedom.

²⁰ There are any number of Heidegger's writings dealing directly or indirectly with Plato's "doctrine of truth", including the essay so named. But though nuance and focus change, his thesis remains virtually unchanged from what is argued in An Introduction to Metaphysics (IM) to which, for convenience's sake, all further references will apply. For a closer account of the consistency of Heidegger's view of Plato see R.J. Dostal, "Beyond Being: Heidegger's Plato", in C. Macann, ed., Martin Heidegger: Critical Assessments, (London, 1992).
and even cavalier. His principal interest was only in showing that, and how, Christian-European modernity should be seen to rest on, thus originate in, an 'historical' fallacy.

Heidegger's call for a "deconstruction" of the Western metaphysical tradition as prerequisite to a 20th century reawakening to the truth of being is thus, in reality, an a-historical, or better, an ultra-historical exercise. Nietzsche similarly offers, not a history, but a 'genealogy' of nihilism, that is, a purported ancestry of modern decadence. Their aim in common is not to review the history of philosophy as such, but to expose the philosophical spirit itself as symptomatic of cultural degeneracy. Nietzsche calls it a sickness to which they claim to bear witness in their own time. The appeal to reconstructed history only serves to reinforce the main thesis, which springs from a wholly contemporary perception of modern culture as corrupted by a predominating rational-spiritual outlook, intrinsically repressive of what is presumed as the original, natural freedom of the existing individual. What passes as history is a romanticist fable of the fall from this 'authentic' freedom, the subsequent centuries of wandering in the desert, and the possibility of recovering it anew in an ultra-modern return to nature which would reunite post-history with pre-history.

The relation of such a standpoint to the actual history of thought is highly ambiguous. It addresses that tradition with the explicit intent of undermining it, since it is chiefly in contraposing itself with it that it defines itself. In this manner, however, it remains dependent on the very tradition it would undermine, assumes and negatively conserves it, even remains obsessively tied to it. Appeal is made to an elemental natural freedom spoken of as at once originary and radically new; an ancient freedom that comes once again to light with the flight of Minerva's owl as a philosophy-dominated European history draws to a close. It would transcend that history through a return to what are perceived as primordial, pre-European insights. This is the general procedure respecting the treatment of the history of philosophy followed by all the continental critics from Nietzsche to Derrida, issuing themselves thereby a powerful license to rewrite that presupposed history as a means of affecting a liberation from it. All have recourse to the Greeks, for where Philosophy begins there also must its insipient limit be found. Thus Heidegger:

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21 See IM 130 for Heidegger's remarkable view that history is always and essentially decline rather than progress. This flows necessarily from an existential standpoint for which there neither is nor can be an objective, historical world. If he can say "world is always the world of Spirit" (IM 37), 'world' is here meant in an entirely onto-psychological, i.e., existential sense. History likewise becomes for Heidegger an existential moment in Dasein, 'historicity', rendered in accordance with a curiously para-Hegelian view of temporality: "History is not synonymous with the past; for the past is precisely what is no longer happening ... [nor with] the merely contemporary, which never happens but merely 'passes'... It is precisely the present that vanishes in happening" (IM 38). Hegel observed that in this ever-vanishing present, time also vanishes, but Heidegger will hold the line at this point.

22 Heidegger and Nietzsche are certainly not alone in the celebration of everything primitive, primordial, original, natural-cultural as against what is developed, constituted, mediated and historical. The same remains one of the most powerful themes in contemporary culture, but it was they who had a great deal to do with garnering philosophical respectability for this extreme polarization in which, in Nietzsche's formula, spirit again becomes nature and freedom instinct.
We shall only master Greek philosophy as the beginning of Western philosophy if we also understand this beginning in the beginning of its end. For the ensuing period it was only this end that became the 'beginning'. So much so that it concealed the original beginning. But this beginning of the end of the great beginning, the philosophy of Plato and Aristotle, remains great even if we totally discount the greatness of its Western consequences (HM 150)

In Heidegger's account, Plato's introduction of 'philosophy' marks the turning point when a profound insight into the meaning of being to which the early Greeks had uninhibited access is displaced by another, contrary apprehension. A rupture occurs; dynamics intrinsic to a 'natural' consciousness which knows itself as 'belonging to being', are separated from their source and given a life of their own. There is generated a spurious order of emasculated categories, presided over by a similarly denatured reason which only calculates the meaning and value of appearances in accordance with these intellectual categories. The provision of a discourse appropriate to the pursuit and defence of this spurious 'ideal' world is the import of Plato's teaching, and upon it the whole of European intellectual and moral culture was founded.

Latent in this unusual narrative, however, is a much more contemporary interest: to confute the reigning Kantian cum-phenomenological view, the legacy of German idealism, in which everything whatever, in its most extreme statement even the so-called thing-itself, stands in relation to consciousness. Heidegger's ontological absolutism seeks to be more than another critique of this idealism carried out on its terms, that is, in terms of relations and oppositions of consciousness. He would seek to transcend this whole context through a meta-ontology of existence so described as already comprehensive of the phenomenological relation, an ontology thus radically preemptive of the standpoint of subjective consciousness which forms the very basis of idealism in both its theoretical and practical forms. It is with this in mind that Heidegger attempts to rewrite the history of philosophy as a history of idealism so defined, tracing its flaw to an alleged fatal severing of the bond between existence and appearance, leading to a pseudo-ontology of the representations of consciousness 'appearances' in the Kantian sense which Plato, apparently a Kantian before his time, was the first to articulate.

It was in the Sophists and in Plato that appearance was declared to be mere appearance and thus degraded. At the same time being, as idea, was exalted to a suprasensory realm. A chasm ... was created between the merely apparent existent here below and real being somewhere on high. In that chasm Christianity settled down ... [turned] these refashioned weapons against antiquity (as paganism) and so disfigured it. Nietzsche was right in saying that Christianity is Platonism for the people. Distinct from all this, the great age of Greece was a single creative self-assertion amid the confused, intricate struggle between the powers of being and appearance... For the thinking of the early Greek thinkers the

23 Heidegger's critique of practical reason likewise traces the roots of modern morality and technocracy to an alleged Platonic confusion of doing with making.
unity and conflict of being and appearances preserved their original power
(IM 89-90).

Heidegger here echoes, virtually word for word, Nietzsche's apocalyptic narrative of a present European crisis retraceable to a cultural catastrophe occurring at the end of the "great age of Greece", a rupture epitomized in Plato's philosophical world-view and sowing the poisoned seed of modern humanism. This 'exalting' of ideas and 'degrading' of appearances springs from a misapprehension of a unity of physis and logos which, according to Heidegger, Plato's predecessors already well knew, a unity wherein nature comprehends reason as a difference grounded wholly in itself. This relation Plato turns quite on its head, inaugurating thereby a legacy of 'logo-centrism' which reaches its apex in the system of Hegel where ideas in thought are explicitly equated, on Heidegger's account, with "the reality of the real".24

In defending these astonishing assertions Heidegger does not, since he cannot, make appeal to reasoned argument, such appeal being precisely the essence of the Socratic-Platonic vice he wishes to call into question. This presents him with a unique dilemma, typical of all post-philosophical critique: if the authority of speculative thought is to be in principle denied, then no reason can be given why 'Being' should have been sundered, revealing itself to later Greeks in such a paradoxically self-negative way. (Nietzsche's earlier formulation of this dilemma: "How is the will-not-to-will even possible?") Nor can there be any rational accounting for why 'Being' then withdrew behind a curtain of forgetfulness, waiting for two thousand years for modern Germany and Heidegger. Absent reasoned historico-philosophical argument, then, to what other evidence or authority can Heidegger appeal to authenticate this strange narrative, to define its terms, and convincingly describe for us the before-and-after of the crucial Platonic turn supposed to have given birth to Europe?

(b) Philosophy as Etymology.

Heidegger's well-known recourse is to language, based on the presumption that reality as it is for particular times and peoples has its primary expression in linguistic culture, the way words are generated and commonly understood. If it is in language that the spirit foundational of a given people finds its first embodiment, then to discover the original sense of their language is to rediscover their original and defining spirit. Not thought, not philosophy, but the disclosure of the primitive roots of key speculative terms thus becomes the chief access to the way "being" appears to a particular age and culture;25 moreover, the degree to which a culture conserves or corrupts its original language is the measure of its 'greatness' or 'decadence'. With Heidegger, words replace concepts as the official lingua franca of philosophy, semiotics becomes the pilgrim's path back to a forgotten wisdom, and metaphysics is pursued anew under cover of etymology.

24 This view of the Hegelian idea as the reduction of reality to its mental representation has become a commonplace, even though nothing could be more alien to either the language or the logic of Hegel's philosophy.

25 "Language is the primordial poetry in which a people speaks being." (IM 144)
The notion of 'original meaning' is, of course, fraught with ambiguity. Clearly related to other romantic notions of return to a pristine, pre-intellectual and instinctive life and wisdom, it prizes the aboriginal over the civilized, feeling over thought, myth over history and an aesthetical view of nature as opposed to science's meddling intellect. It is no startling revelation of contemporary hermeneutics to observe, however, that a fatal circularity plagues any attempt to identify such a thing as an 'original' meaning; the search for a linguistic source of the Nile is bound to degenerate, as the romanticist mentality itself, into a sort of unrequited longing. For one thing, only a divine etymologist could avoid introducing into any such research much that belongs to her own derivative linguistic context. More important for philosophy, when substituted for reasoned argument the etymological method provides its practitioners with unlimited license, a license bound to be abused, to introduce and promote all manner of assumptions and convictions by the linguistic back door. Plato himself deals specifically with these issues in the Cratylus;

This is certainly the case with Heidegger who sets many such traps for his readers. In accepting his version of the sense of certain Greek terms, one unwittingly commits to an ultra-modernist account of the world put into the mouths of ancient thinker-heroes who are assigned various roles, as in a Verdi opera, in a contrived metaphysical melodrama. How plausible, really, are Heidegger's etymological exercises? How much is Greek original insight and how much late German ontology? It is not easy to know, and it is a question whether all the classical scholarship in the world could ever tell us, for reasons which Plato, again, spells out clearly in Cratylus. But aside from all learned appeals to philology, it is instructive simply to compare Heidegger's overt account of the meaning of certain key Greek terms with the account Plato himself gives of the same, sticking strictly to the philosophical import of any difference.

Heidegger's typical tactic is to inform us, without much ado, as to how the Greeks of the golden age purportedly understood certain words. This he contrasts with later, post-Socratic uses, reading into any divergence, not just the common variability witnessed in all growing languages, but the weightiest metaphysical implications such as tax the most generous credulity. His basic thesis is familiar: the ordinary Greek view of being, he says, is expressed in the word physis ('nature'), whose meaning he variously gives as the appearing, manifest presence or standing-forth of the existent as such and on the whole. Moreover, he says, the Greeks "called the appearance of a thing eidos or idea", a term which, since it suggests a visual context, implies the "coming to light of the existent."  

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26 See IM 84. Romanticism has its philosophical form in 19th century metaphysical expressionism for which all that occurs in nature, history or experience is construed as utterly 'phenomenal' in the distinct sense of being but the outward self-manifestation of an Absolute that remains in itself hidden; whose 'reasons' are therefore entirely incalculable or encountered only aesthetically, mystically or in feeling. Heidegger is fully in this tradition. See my "The Beginning of the End of Metaphysics", Dionysius v.15, pp.113-123.

27 Here again Heidegger assumes an equivalence of idea and representation with Plato, discordant with Plato's own view which always equates the idea with the principle of a thing, never its 'representation', which latter term in any case belongs to another era. The alleged degenerate meaning of idea attributed to Plato is a fiction of Heidegger's construction, as is the whole idea of an original identification of logos with physis among the ancients.
Here Heidegger has already afforded being precedence over thought: the existent is first, and the significance of *eidos* shifted bodily, and un-Platonically, to suggest the being-seen of the existent rather than what belongs to the act of seeing. Furthermore, granting a certain ambiguity inheres in the concept of appearance which allows distinction to be made between the appearing of being ("unconcealment") of what appears and that appearance as such (as what has "come on the scene"), Heidegger will insist the difference is no difference, that appearance "belongs" wholly to being, that being is the "essence" of the appearance, that being and appearing are thus the same, and that this indeed is how pre-Socratic Greeks understood the term *idea*: as the apprehension of the apparent as grounded in *physis* and one with it.

It amounts to the same to say that 'being' really *is* nothing else but what appears; that what appears *is* the thing itself, that the distinction between reality and appearance is no distinction. Nietzsche everywhere makes this point and it has Heidegger's express approval. "Appearing is not something subsequent that sometimes happens to being," he writes, "appearing is the very essence of being" (*IM* 83ff; also 92, 93). He grants one may differentiate between the appearing of being as such and appearances existing things and events as such. But he insists that the existent entails nothing else beyond being itself; that it is being's very own unconcealment, its "coming upon the scene". Thus the distinction 'being-appearance' itself belongs entirely to being.

It is striking how exactly this very stressed view of the matter accords with the general tenets of modern romanticist ontology. In Heidegger's narrative, Plato really meant to use the idea-word as any Greek would to refer to the way being appears, but he fell into the error of viewing the matter from his own human standpoint which had the effect of driving a wedge between things and appearances, between *physis* and *eidos*, whereby the former becomes "degraded" and the latter "exalted". So detached from what it is that appears, the appearances achieve a seeming reality of their own; by falsely construing *eidos* as the "essence of the existent" the latter is afforded a prominence sustained only by abstract thought. In such a scheme even 'being' becomes a mere universal, an empty word, and nature or *physis* a problematical reality subordinated to the new 'ideal world' of ideas.

What does it mean that *physis* should have been interpreted as *idea* in Plato?... The word *idea* means that which is seen in the visible, the aspect it offers. What is offered is the appearance, *eidos*, of what confronts us. The appearance of a thing is that wherein, as we say, it presents, introduces itself to us, places itself before us ... i.e., in the Greek sense *is*. A consequence is exalted to the level of the essence itself and takes the place of the essence... We then have a falling-off, which must in turn produced strange consequences. The crux of the matter is not that *physis* should have been characterized as *idea* but that the *idea* should have become the sole and decisive interpretation of being (*IM* 151-2).

With Plato nature is no longer the ground of appearance, rather the appearance (for Heidegger = the idea) has become the basis for the interpretation of nature. But all this
has an extreme and quite unfamiliar ring. How can Plato be thought to have had any such inversion of things in mind? How far does the significance Heidegger assigns to Platonic terminology actually accord with what is expressly to be found in Plato's own writings? Could Heidegger be guilty of thrusting 20th century paradigms inappropriately upon an ancient text and context? The everyday reader of the dialogues will certainly be astonished to learn that Plato was not at all interested in the truth of being but only in the appearances; that he introduced the idea only as a device for rendering the latter absolute, referring them, not to their proper ground, but to their own abstract nature. No such account of things can be found in Plato's own express arguments, nor could it explain his tireless war against the Sophists whose arguments he saw as predicated precisely on some such Parmenidean dissociation of real and apparent, reconciled only by a Protagorean reduction of being to its mere apprehension. On Heidegger's account it turns out that Plato is supreme among Sophists, carrying their argument to its extreme by extending the relativism of Gorgias, for whom being can neither be known nor said, into a more radical idealism where being is expressly identified with its representation. Heidegger would appear to have turned Plato's thought into a parody on German idealism, a caricature of a caricature.

Heidegger performs the same etymological rearguard action with respect to two related issues where Plato is again implicated as the perverter of an original Greek understanding. First Heidegger charges Plato and Aristotle with corrupting the original Heraclitean sense of *logos*, whereby it becomes the foundation of 'logic', a purely epistemic technique addressed to the calculation of relations among representations. Second, he accuses Plato of perpetrating a fatal misunderstanding of the famous Parmenidean aphorism on the sameness of thinking and being, an original Greek insight, in Heidegger's view, which now at last needs to be rescued from the Platonic distortion.

We go back to the two decisive thinkers, Parmenides and Heraclitus, and attempt once more to gain admittance into the Greek world, whose foundations, even though distorted and transposed, covered and concealed, still sustain our world. *Precisely because we have embarked on the great venture of demolishing a world that has grown old and of rebuilding it authentically anew ... we must know the tradition.*

Of all the early Greek thinkers it is Heraclitus who, in the course of Western philosophy, has suffered the most transformation along un-Greek lines... Christianity was responsible for the misinterpretation of Heraclitus. It was begun by the Old Church Fathers. Hegel was still in this tradition...*(IM 106-7)*

According to Heidegger's reconstruction, the original sense of *logos* is 'to gather together, to collect'. Such a use can certainly be verified by reference to any college

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28 "[Logic] began when Greek philosophy was drawing to an end and becoming an affair of schools, organization, and technique. It began when eon, the being of the essent, was represented as idea and as such became the 'object' of episteme." *(IM 102)*

29 Italics added. The statement epitomizes the romanticist project. Derrida has given a similarly negative rationale for continuing the study of the tradition to become free of it.
lexicon, but Heidegger according to his typical regressive method deliberately downplays more developed meanings such as 'reasoned account' meanings which in fact fit far more readily into the flow of the Heraclitean argument to look for more 'original' senses which better accord with his own intent. The alternative 'gathering' better suits Heidegger's purpose since it allows him to cite the 'original' sense of logos as the "the intrinsic togetherness of the existing thing", even though no lexicon could possibly support any such complex extension. But Heidegger is driven by the wish to maintain that logos and physis are the same; that logos is just being itself in its aspect of an all-pervasive power binding together a multifarious phenomenality. (IM 109-110) But to conscript Heraclitus in defence of such an improbable rendering is overtly to ignore what he himself actually says, which is not that everyday things and events are "disparate and antagonistic" yet unified through their "intrinsic togetherness" in being, as Heidegger puts it, but that they are utterly and intrinsically unstable, self-divided, their being just as much a non-being and vice versa. What alone remains stable is the logos itself, specifically defined as the immanent identity of opposites, most tellingly the opposition of being and non-being which everywhere rules in the finite world.

This hardly accords with Heidegger's account; nonetheless it is Plato once more who is accused of misunderstanding Heraclitus, of distorting his alleged pristine encounter with logos as the togetherness that belongs to physis, setting it over against being as something independent. Yet in any discussion one might care to mention, Plato never (mis)represents Heraclitus in any such way; on the contrary, he shares with his contemporaries the plainer understanding of the logos as a stable principle of the unity-of-opposites immanent in an otherwise meaningless welter of the changeable. The logos is never represented as something apart from or beyond the way things appear, but as their own inward and animating principle.

To describe the logos merely as the "togetherness" of beings in being is to say something far more banal than Heraclitus, by his own account, clearly intended. Does this dilution of his powerful principle represent Heidegger's best effort to enlist him in support of his own radically onto-centric interpretation of pre-Platonic Greek thought? Is it not rather Heidegger who corrupts the Heraclitean argument in support of his own expressionist view of the immediate relation of the absolute to the finite with the logos signifying nothing more nothing higher or deeper than the mere togetherness of one in the other? So to place the logos at the level of appearances as expressing (all too vaguely) a certain togetherness implied by a common groundedness in what it is that appears; then to present this account as an 'original' Greek understanding in relation to which all other interpretations, including Plato's, are to be rejected as un-Greek; such an account, if plausible at all, is at least nowhere to be verified in anything Heraclitus is known to have said.

Heidegger pursues a similar stratagem with regard to the famous "word" of Parmenides which he claims has been subject to "a misinterpretation no less un-Greek than the falsification of the Heraclitean doctrine of the logos." (HM 115) The relevant

30 He also avoids the obvious implication that 'to grasp or gather together' might equally be well rendered by the all-too-logical term 'con-cept'.
fragments seem straightforward enough: *to gar auton noein estin te kai einai* (frag. 5) and *tauton d'esti noein te kai houneken esti noema* (frag. 8). The first is typically rendered by something like 'thinking and being are the same', the second as 'thinking and what is for thought are the same', both broadly suggesting the principle that 'thinking is always and only of what is', or negatively, 'what is not is unthinkable'. This is consistent with what Parmenides and his disciplines such as Zeno directly argue. The reading Heidegger comes up with, however, is mediated by a host of strained and elaborate etymological interpretations. For example, regarding *noein*, a word routinely translated in most languages as 'thinking' or some variant, Heidegger chooses to translate it as 'apprehension' (*Vernehmen*). If 'thinking' has a distinctly active connotation, 'apprehension' suggests passive awareness, as of something already given and merely borne witness to. Here again, by an exercise in etymological legerdemain, the matter has already been biased in favour of a view of thinking as a moment in being, as 'belonging to' it. Heidegger further explains in the following neologistic definition: "Apprehension (*noien*) is the receptive bringing-to-stand of the intrinsically permanent that manifests itself." *(IM 117)*

Regarding *einai*, Heidegger is again concerned that we first understand 'being' in his way, which he has decided is also the way the Greeks of the great age understood it: namely as *unconcealment*, the manifesting of the unmanifest. Finally the phrase *te kai*, is not to be understood in the conventional sense of 'the same as', but as 'belonging to', this more oblique translation allowing Heidegger to avoid any suggestion of identity of thinking and being and to say no more than that they somehow 'belong together'. The end result of all these labourious lexical machinations is that it can now be declared on behalf of Parmenides that *noein*, while distinguishable within *physis*, is not different than it; that thinking is in no way autonomous but belongs to being; it is being itself that calls apprehension into play. 31 Given these etymological premises, Heidegger can provide his own final, if staggeringly convoluted, translation of Frag. 5: "Where being prevails, apprehension prevails and happens with it; the two belong together" or again, more abstrusely, "Being dominates, but because and insofar as it dominates and appears, appearing and with it apprehension must also occur." Frag. 8 gets similar treatment: "The same is apprehension and that for the sake of which apprehension occurs" or "There is an inherent bond between apprehension and that for the sake of which apprehension occurs." *(IM 117)*

Such cumbersome transpositions of simple Greek statements into 20th century expressionist jargon do great violence to the simple wisdom of the Parmenidean principle. Could Parmenides ever have thought any such thing? It is clear that Plato, at least, understood this principle in its literal, unadulterated sense: being alone is conceivable; of what is not, of non-being there can only be ignorance. But his was nonetheless far from an unqualified acceptance of Parmenides' proviso: there is another, ambiguous world of things that both are and are not, a knowledge of which the abstract Parmenidean identity of being and thinking will not allow. Contrary to his traditional

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31 Heidegger's well-known essay *Was heisst Denken?* tortures the ordinary German way of asking the a question like "What is 'x'?' (or, What do we mean by 'x'?), until he finally forces the expression to read: "what is it that calls forth thinking?".
caricature, which Heidegger further reinforces, Plato was always and ever concerned with how there could be a concrete knowledge of the finite and changeable world, the world of 'appearances'; with how the One might be known in the Many and the Many as participating the One. In this he parts company with both Heraclitus and Parmenides; in the Parmenides dialogue, Zeno's celebrated deconstruction of any knowledge deriving from the finite, showing it to fall inevitably into contradictions, is matched by an equally cogent demonstration by Socrates showing how a knowledge commencing from the strict standpoint of the Parmenidean disjunction leads also to many absurdities. At no point does Plato suggest a solution to lie in any dissociation of thinking from being, the source of unity to lie subjectively in the knower's representations. In Parmenides that solution is clearly and explicitly repudiated. (Parmenides 132b)

The idea is Plato's deeper rendering of the unity of thinking and being. It is uniformly spoken of as the objective principle of beings the comprehension of which constitutes a true knowledge of them. The idea is neither thing nor thought but being and essence at once; though itself neither plant nor eye, the sun is both the source of the living thing and the light that makes the sight of it possible (Repub. 580). There is never any suggestion in Plato that ideas belong to the realm of appearances, as no more than the latter's abstract representation, as Heidegger and Nietzsche perversely construe his position. Nothing, indeed, could be more at odds with what Plato consistently maintains; the idea is never associated with how things appear to us that he clearly defines as a Sophist position. Nor does he locate them in a sort of Pythagorean thought-world away and beyond what is immediately evident. Even if Aristotle thought he never adequately answered it, for Plato the question of the ideas had nothing to do with how a changeful world might be bypassed en route to some metaphysical heaven, nor with rendering the appearances as such absolute, as on Heidegger's account, by fixing them in their abstract essences. It had to do with whether and how the actual, mutable world might be somewhat comprehended if only its own immanent intelligible principles could be discerned.

In his criticism of Plato, Heidegger places an inordinate burden on the interpretation of ancient Greek terms and texts. There is already an extensive scholarly literature dealing with the legitimacy or otherwise of his strained transliterations which characteristically tend to revert to peripheral or pre-philosophical usages with which to confront their later philosophical sense. Applied generally, such a method would reduce most developed terms to perplexing banality: a cause would be a confession of guilt, to make lace to fashion a noose, a lady is a bread-maker and so on. Not only that, but where only the 'original' sense of words is considered meaningful, effective translation from one tongue to another tongue would be rendered virtually impossible, which Heidegger and his followers are often tempted to argue anyway.33

32 See James Doull on these matters, to appear in this number of Animus.
33 Heidegger makes much of the superiority of Greek and German languages as alone capable of expressing spiritual truth. (IM 47) Where there is no appeal beyond language to thought the result is linguistic fascism, instantiated in the Heideggerean argument that, while German-speakers intuitively can appreciate the Greek sense of ousia, English-speakers cannot, hearing only techne.
Plato presses many ordinary words into service as philosophical concepts which acquire thereby another and distinctive sense that may or may not accord with simpler or more common usages. The same is true of most words one can think of: is a soul (pneuma), for example, really no more than a breath? The prima facie instance is Heidegger's treatment of eidos and idea which in common ancient usage did indeed connote the way something is seen, how it looks. It is clear on every page of his writings, however, that Plato did not intend eidos or idea to be understood in any such commonplace way but that he had deliberately altered and upgraded the term for an original and sophisticated philosophical use. Yet Heidegger, on the basis of nothing more than an appeal to a literal, everyday use of these words, accuses him of dire metaphysical mischief, specifically of confusing the being of things with their mere representation in thought, even though there is hardly a page where Plato does not argue exactly the converse. Heidegger turns language into a prison-house; he denies to Plato a freedom expressively to mould language which he himself profusely indulges. When we, on the other hand, read that language is the "house of being" in which "man dwells" we do not ask Heidegger if reference is being made to some inn in the Schwarzwald into which one might move bag and baggage.

4. Plato's Response: Language As Prison-House

Without joining these etymological wars, it is instructive to ask what Plato himself would think of Heidegger's method. Something of a fair answer is available in the Cratylus, a dialogue which specifically addresses the limits of etymology as a means of deciding philosophical matters. There Plato considers the two principal alternatives regarding the origin of linguistic meaning which still confound semiotic theory today: is the attachment of particular meanings to particular words purely arbitrary, conventional in the radical sense of a pure matter of chance? Or must we suppose that linguistic conventions are for the most part derivative and their meaning disclosed only by referring back to original meaning the faith of the etymologist? In the dialogue the contradiction stemming immediately from the first option is quickly recognized and agreed upon strict conventionalism would mean anything anyone says will be 'true'; it would be impossible to judge of a right or a wrong use of words. The remainder of the argument then focuses on the second hypothesis, the possibility that linguistic conventions can be traced back to some original source of meaning, that is, to some sort of authentic bond between language and reality, word and thing.

How is such an original bond between language and being to be imagined? One typical image is that of a primeval people gifted with immediate and immaculate insight into their own reality and condition, a reality directly embodied and expressed in their language and culture. In such an 'original' condition, merely to speak at all is to speak the truth, and this provides a standard against which the sense of derivative languages can be measured. To such an image Heidegger appeals when he looks to the linguistic usages of the "Greeks of the great age" as the prime standard of metaphysical meaning.
In the *Cratylus* Socrates and his interlocutors make use of a similar metaphor by imagining an ancient "legislator" or "giver of names" whose business was appropriately to discover and assign words to things. This figure is no less legitimate than Heidegger's fiction of a pristine linguistic culture whose authority he demands we simply accept. But it does more obviously beg the question as to what reasons a name-giver might adduce to justify his choosing just this sound or squiggle over some other as most appropriate to naming a particular entity or event. The search for linguistic originality is in this way driven back to the vain attempt to find a direct link between verbal structures and the natural events and sensations they are employed to signify.

Plato points to a number of glaring pitfalls to which the etymological search for an original, unadulterated vocabulary is in principle prone. Can it literally expect to arrive at its goal, or is the search by nature an endless one? If the former, then it is a matter of some amazement why this original language was ever given up, why so hopelessly masked by derivatives as to be rendered virtually indiscernible, or why indeed there could have ever been any other language but this original one. But if the latter is true and the etymological road is open-ended, then how, without the standard of the original sense being known, can that of *any* derivative term be determined? As Plato puts it:

> ... any sort of ignorance of first or primitive names involves an ignorance of secondary words, for they can only be explained by the primary. Clearly then the professor of languages should be able to give a very lucid explanation of first names or let him be assured he will only talk nonsense about the rest.\(^\text{34}\)

A further problem: if meaning is inevitably imprisoned in language and as etymologists we are working from within our own derivative culture and language, how could we hope to recognize an underived meaning even if we encountered one? Unless we could leap out of our own cultural-linguistic skins, any such determination will be bound to be prejudiced, colored by the linguistic perspective from which it is carried out. For instance, how could a 20\(^\text{th}\) century German academic, however well educated in the classics, mediaeval philosophy and Schopenhauer, be so confident of his reading of certain ancient Greek terms as to declare they give evidence of an aboriginal and authentic encounter with the very truth of being?

Even if one assumes the legitimacy of etymological inquiry in general, there is still a host of practical obstacles to frustrate the search for the original sources of particular words. Plato provides some examples:

> ... the original forms of words may have been lost in the lapse of ages [and] names so twisted in all manner of ways that I should not be surprised if the older language when compared with that now in use would appear to us to be a barbarous tongue (*CR 421d*).
Moreover, there is no way we can know whether, how, why or by whom particular words may have been significantly altered along the way, and for reasons extraneous to what they are meant to signify:

... you know that the original names have been long ago buried and disguised by people sticking on and stripping off letters for the sake of euphony, and twisting and bedizening them in all sorts of ways; and time too may have had a share in the change (CR 414c).

Much of the Cratylus is devoted to exhibiting the utter arbitrariness with which the words and their meanings change and develop. Socrates and his friends nonetheless try their hand at a few etymological conjectures, for example, as to why the ancients named their gods and virtues as they did. The tone is throughout tongue-in-cheek for Plato is all too aware of the limits of such inquiry. He does acknowledge that some terms do have a 'natural' origin in the limited sense that words originally designating natural phenomena are often borrowed and modified to express more sophisticated notions. That the word for 'runners', theous, came into use as a general name for the gods, for example, may derive from the fact that the earliest divinities were associated with the celestial bodies, ever on the move (CR 397d). Similarly, it is noted anthropos actually suggests an animal, though one who looks up and reflects on what he sees; and psyche borrows on the breath that sustains the body to suggest the power which sustains nature itself (CR399c-e). This familiar feature of the ordinary development of language, which Plato accepts, where natural images and analogies are exploited to generate terms with a more complex and abstract meaning, stands in contrast with Heidegger's deconstructive use of etymology, employed to force the reverse assimilation of a developed meaning to an undeveloped one, as a means of getting at the former's 'real truth'. Such is his claim that because psyche has etymological roots in physis a claim Plato explicitly rejects we are to conclude that spirit belongs to nature, which of course is to destroy the whole sense of the term; or because eidos has the common meaning in Greek of something seen that Plato is to be denied the luxury of adopting the term to express a purely intellectual intuition.

In the Cratylus Plato includes in his ironic survey some of the philosophical terms that are the subject of Heidegger's earnest pronouncements. This is interesting since it is fair to assume that Plato, uncluttered by two millennia of speculative metaphysics and actually living and breathing the linguistic tradition in question, might certainly be as reliable an etymological witness as Heidegger. A key example: Heidegger's ontological absolutism requires the conversion of all cognitive relations into modalities of being. It is thus especially important for him to claim that even the word 'truth' initially had an ontic sense. To this end he gives the original meaning of the ordinary Greek term for truth, aletheia, as 'unconcealedness', based on an analysis of this word into the elements a- (not) and lethe (forgetfulness, oblivion). Truth is thus being as a "standing out from oblivion". Plato has an entirely different take on the word, however; his analysis yields

35 The Cratylus is often described as indulging overmuch in aimless, even frivolous conjecturing about the origins of words. But it is surely Plato's point to demonstrate the indeterminability that is bound to attach to any attempt to 'explain' language in terms of itself, as Derrida, which is to say un-philosophically, without reference to thought.
instead *ale* and *theia*, thus something like "the divine movement of existence" (*CR 421b*). On this account the truth of being lies in the divine element latent in it, its intelligible moment, its 'idea'.

Some further contrasts: Plato tells us that *legein* originally suggests questioning; possibly also the art of speechifying and dissembling. The term *logos* accordingly comes later to mean making a case, giving reasons or grounds, and with Heraclitus is used still more specifically to signify a universal principle of a unity-in-opposition underlying the manifest impermanence of the finite. Heidegger however, as earlier noted, insists on reverting to a more prosaic form of the same stem, 'gather together'. By so restricting its meaning he is enabled to insist that in its 'original' sense *logos* refers to an aspect of being being as the 'togetherness' of beings a suggestion nowhere to be found in Heraclitus and which indeed contradicts how he does actually speak of the matter. By completely ignoring the overt argument of the fragments and their explicit reference to the term *logos* to suggest an immanent reason or cause, Heidegger would seek to enlist Heraclitus on behalf of his own attack on the Platonic philosophy.

One last contrast: as also noted earlier, Heidegger insists on translating *noein* as *Vernehmen*, 'apprehension' or 'bearing witness', his interest again being to make thought over into a modality of being. So to limit thinking to passive apprehension preempts any notion of thought as spontaneous or constitutive; just as describing being as 'self-presenting' precludes any notion of thinking as an active 'representation', which Heidegger regards as a corruption. Yet Plato's analysis of the same word yields an entirely different thought. *Noein* is broken down into *neou* and *esis*: 'desire of the new', implying a "world always in process of creation" toward which "the giver of the name wanted to express his longing of the soul...", an analysis far more consistent with other typical constructions.  

Apart from the striking differences with respect to the roots of specific terms it is clear Plato had far less faith than did Heidegger in the fruitfulness of etymological method, on which point he makes a number of telling comments. For one thing, as with analysis generally, there is the difficulty of ever bringing the process to completion:

... if a person goes on analyzing names into words, and inquiring also into the elements out of which the words are formed, and keeps on always repeating this process, he who has to answer him must at last give up the inquiry in despair (*CR 421e*).

Further, there is a danger in supposing any so-called root meaning to be any more authentic or enlightened than its derivative:

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36 For instance Socrates speculates that the name 'Athena' might stem from a combination of *theou* and *noesis*, thus 'divine mind', or from *ethei* and *noesin*, thus 'moral intelligence'. (407b) It would be impossible to make sense of this or many other constructions from *noein* (the closing words of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, for example) using Heidegger's 'apprehension'.
He who follows names in the search after things, and analyzes their meaning, is in great danger of being deceived ... [for] clearly he who first gave names gave them according to his own conception of things ... and if his conception was erroneous ... in what position shall we who are his followers find ourselves? (436a-b).

There is thus a dogmatic quality to any claim that a word as used in an earlier time, among the Greeks of the great age for example, expressed the truth of things more authentically than does our use of it. We have reason to be wary of those who speak of 'original meanings', especially of philosophical terms.

Finally, the search for a primitive bond between language and reality inevitably tends to some version of psycho-semiotics (in our time, 'analytic philosophy') based on the doctrine that language imitates nature, that words denote facts and ultimately that letters, syllables and words mirror sensory phenomena.37

That objects should be imitated in letters and syllables, and so find expression, may appear ridiculous, Hermogenes, but it cannot be avoided (CR 425d).

To follow this path is to become inevitably entangled in onomatopoeic speculations as to how various things and occurrences are appropriately expressed in verbal clicks, grunts, swooshes, whines and glottal stops, a procedure Plato mercilessly lampoons. But the very idea of a direct, causal relation between words and sensory experience begs a great number of questions, among them: why, if literally rooted in a universal experience of nature, would not all languages be the same? Why would such a first-order form be abandoned and languages become so various and complex? Could what derives from a strict imitation of the sensory provide a linguistic resource sufficient to cover the whole breadth and depth of human experience? (CR 434.ff) Clearly, attempts to disclose any such direct and literal causal relation between words and world go nowhere; they must be motivated by something more than themselves.

What could it be, Plato finally asks, that makes the idea of archetypical meaning, a direct relation of language to reality, so powerful and attractive? He offers an answer: we are rightly convinced that when we know the word we somehow also know the thing. But it is illegitimate to conclude that words literally imitate reality, express it bodily, or "house" it. For inevitably, when we attempt to find our way back to some such original bond between word and thing we are led down one garden path after another:

[in this] battle of names, some asserting that they are like the truth, others contending that they are, how or by what criterion are we to decide between them? ... Obviously recourse must be had to another standard

37 Wittgenstein's proposal that words are "pictures" of facts now seems astonishing in its sheer literalism, but it electrified a whole generation which produced mountains of now largely useless research dedicated to discovering what "is" or "of" are pictures of, or how Russell's "cat on the mat" exactly corresponds with an actual cat actually on an actual mat.
which, without employing names, will make clear which of the two is right, and this must be standard which shows the truth of things (CR 438d).

The real question then is what this "other standard" might be: what is it that names name; to what do words, however arbitrary or conventional their composition and origin, actually refer? The answer for Plato cannot be found by looking for their 'ontic' meanings, i.e., how being is domiciled in them. What words capture and express is not the being of the existent in its immediacy, but rather the principle of the existent, the logos, and it is with this in view that the representative imagination fashions words, creatively borrowing for the purpose whatever images and suggestions experience and imagination might offer. The "nobler and clearer" approach, Plato says, is that we learn the truth of things from themselves, irrespective of the contingency and relativity of linguistic figures, and this means nothing else but getting hold of their concept, their idea:

Let us suppose that to any extent you please you can learn things through the medium of names, and suppose also that you can learn them from the things themselves. Which is likely to be the nobler and clearer way to learn of the image, whether the image and the truth of which the image is the expression have been rightly conceived, or to learn of the truth whether the truth and the image of it have been duly executed? ... How real existence is to be studied or discovered is, I suspect, beyond you and me. But we may admit so much, that the knowledge of things is not to be derived from names. No, they must be studied and investigated in themselves (CR 439a).

Here Plato directly confutes Heidegger's charge that his 'doctrine of truth' has only to do with the ordering of representations or the correctness of their correspondence with things. He directly declares the measure of truth to be, not whether the relation of image to truth is "rightly conceived", but the truth of the thing itself, the idea, which goes beyond the mere 'fit' of language to being.

Indeed, it is evident, at times embarrassingly so, that it is Heidegger who indulges in much linguistic gerrymandering in defence of positions that are very much his own and very questionably 'Greek'. That 'world' is 'unconcealment', the revelation of being otherwise concealed; that being is at once absolute and yet radically temporal, that logos 'belongs to' physis, that in this sense spirit reverts to nature, thinking to being and so on: these are not Greek propositions but those of a modern romanticist ontology of which Parmenides or Plato could have made little sense. They belong to a post-modern reaction to the Hegelian doctrine of spirit, of self-conscious freedom, which they both presume and yet seek to restate in more earthy, existential terms. This Heidegger thinks to achieve by constructing an inverted history of the Western philosophical tradition, construed (and certainly misconstrued) as promoting an otherworldly freedom radically inimical to the concept of freedom as concrete, aboriginal and prehistorical, the pristine paradigm of which he imagines he has unearthed in his philosophical archaeology of early Greek fragments. It is for Dasein, the being for whom being itself is a question, he declares, to
recover the ancient encounter with being the pre-Platonic Greeks enjoyed, so that Western thinking, which is only a thinking of thinking, can become again a thinking beginning and ending with being itself in its manifest temporality as "that for the sake of which thinking occurs."

To say Plato in the *Cratylus* counters this Heideggerian vision point for point would of course go too far. Trans-historical arguments generally tend to distort things, and the more ambitious post-modern attempt to rewrite the whole history of philosophy from a standpoint purporting to be liberated from it is even more disfiguring. But at least two points are clear: first, there is no evidence in Plato's own writings that he committed the crimes of which he stands accused, of deliberately mistaking and corrupting ancient Greek doctrines, of sundering thinking from being and of confusing the apparent with the real. On their own face, his actual arguments lead to quite other conclusions. Second, there is overwhelming evidence that Plato was anything but naive concerning the relation between language, truth and being; his dialogues extensively address this very issue. But he is far less optimistic than Heidegger as to the virtue of hermeneutics as a means to philosophical insight, and he is inclined to view language as as much a prison-house as a dwelling house of the truth of being. His arguments in this connection are far too clear, too open and plain to support the belief he only advanced them to promote some impossible retreat from reality or to advance some unimaginable desire to corrupt an extant intuition into the very truth of things on the part of his predecessors.

5. Conclusion - A Postscript On Derrida

The post-philosophical attack on Plato's legacy relies principally on the doctrine, now virtually a universal belief, that thought is really no more than language and philosophical discourse no more than a certain type of language-use. Heidegger's generation would insist philosophy turn to semiotics as a means of resolving ontological and other issues. Derrida would go even further toward a strict identification of philosophy with language. "Philosophy is first and foremost writing", he declares, though a peculiar kind of writing whose effect is to isolate the signified from its sensory verbal signifier, thereby to generate an illusory realm of meaning independent of language, the so-called world of spirit, thought and ideas. On this hyper-linguistic account, thought does not create and enlighten language; it is language that incorporates and generates thought. Accordingly, words have their meaning only within the endlessly inter-referential context of some linguistic system or text, referring to nothing whatever beyond that even the house of Heidegger is a hall of mirrors. As thus never transcending writing, meaning is always, as such and intrinsically "undecideable".

According to Derrida, philosophy is a kind of writing that seeks to arrest this absolute ambiguity of meanings by sorting them artificially into oppositions (spirit-nature, intelligible-sensible, concept-intuition and so on), then affirming one to the exclusion of the other (surely itself a banal and artificial account of what philosophy has been about).

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38 See his essay on "Différence" in Margins of Philosophy (tr. Bass, Chicago, 1982), p. 6ff.
As it is in the present tense of speech that it seems somewhat possible to fix meanings in the sheer verbal affirmation of them, philosophy, according to Derrida's odd thesis, favours speech and is intrinsically hostile to writing. Again it is Plato who is credited with embarking (in *Phaedrus*) upon a diatribe against writing, of initiating the practice of deliberately transgressing the limits of written language, of extracting meanings from words and setting them up on their own as a separate realm of ideas; in short, Plato invented 'thought'. Through a deconstruction of traditional texts, showing how in every case and in spite of themselves they inevitably run afoul of some ambiguity in their own linguistic constructions, we can at last hope to liberate ourselves from the lure of philosophical writing.

Certainly, literally to restrict meaning to language is to render the latter soulless; nothing is left but words themselves in their thought-less indeterminacy, dead lexical husks ruled only by "différence" and incapable of supporting any stable apprehension. Derrida's method relies chiefly on the endless opportunities for deconstructive plays on words which such a literal identification of meaning with linguistic entities allows. Plato, however, had a familiar name for it -- Sophism -- and his dialogues are indeed largely devoted to its critique. It is a piece of supreme irony that the super-sophistry of 20th century hermeneutics should now pretend dismissively to interpret these famous writings as subject to the very limits they were meant to break through. For the great aim of the Platonic philosophy was surely nothing else but the subduing of this linguistic Medusa, the breaking free from the despotism of words and their endless Protean mutations: from "différence". The advent of Philosophy was coincident with the triumph of nous over language wherein the latter is rendered thoroughly fluid and ideational, 'ideal' in Hegel's sense that it no longer poses an obstacle to thinking but becomes its own expressive and willing agent.

Plato's art distilled the proper object of thinking, the concept, out of the rhetorical-mythopoetic primal soup of the Greek linguistic tradition. It is to this latter, pre-platonic standpoint that philosophy, now in its post-philosophical dotage, would have us revert: back beyond Protagoras and Thrasymachus, beyond even Parmenides and Heraclitus, into some ancient semiotic chaos of pre-rational utterance. The Platonic dialogues also make much ado about language, though not as mere hermeneutic exercises themselves, as some have averred, but because Plato well knew that language is as much the enemy as the friend of thought, just as the body is as much the prison-house as the instrument of the

39 In "Plato's Pharmacy" (Dissemination (tr. B. Johnson, Chicago, 1981) Derrida interprets the Phaedrus as an attack upon writing. This he bases chiefly on a mythical tale late in the dialogue wherein the inventor of writing offers the art to the king describing it as a "remedy" for the enhancement of wisdom; only to be reminded by the king that the inscription of intelligence in writing can also have a fossilizing effect that can actually serve and further ignorance. Through multiple plays on words (pharmakon can mean a drug or poison as well as a remedy), references to the hiding of books under cloaks, the alleged 'repressive' significance of the king's fatherly negation of writing and so on, Derrida manages completely to corrupt the plain sense of the Phaedrus into a diatribe against writing, when on a plainer reading it is clearly not so much about any conflict between speaking and writing as about the proper and improper (i.e., sophistic) uses of both spoken and written language.
soul. Philosophy, the discipline of the idea, was conceived and explicitly described by him as devoted to the overcoming of this bondage, to the liberation of thought from the tyranny of words. Thus the Socratic daemon refused to allow the soul's insight into its higher life its essential freedom to become entangled in nets of metaphor and sophistry, of customary meaning and mere asseveration. Plato likewise called every linguistic appearance into account, subjecting it to the standard of a dynamic logos present in but not captive to language, knowing language itself as nothing else but the soul's own free creation.
Leo Strauss's Platonism

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For Platonists are not concerned with the historical (accidental) truth, since they are exclusively interested in the philosophic (essential) truth. Only because public speech demands a mixture of seriousness and playfulness, can a true Platonist present the serious teaching, the philosophic teaching, in a historical, and hence playful, garb.

Leo Strauss, “Farabi’s Plato”

Leo Strauss, the historian of political philosophy, is especially noted for seeking to revive the quarrel between the ancients and the moderns. In a number of books Strauss calls for a return to and a renewal of ancient political philosophy, and in particular that of Plato. Yet Strauss's actual interpretations of Platonic texts have often been regarded by non-Straussians as idiosyncratic, perverse or simply bizarre. Strauss, for his part, argues that he has recovered the original Plato lost sight of by the tradition of Neo-Platonic and Christian interpretation. In this paper I wish, on the one hand, to agree with critics of Strauss that his is not the original Plato, but, on the other hand, to try to discern the logic underlying Strauss's reading of Plato. My paper concludes by suggesting that Strauss's discussion of Plato can be seen to be of the greatest interest if it is read less as providing an interpretation of the original Plato and more as a contribution to contemporary thought. What underlies Strauss's interpretation of Plato is a one-sided, but nonetheless significant, consideration of the contemporary.

Strauss explains the basis of his return to antiquity in the introduction to The City and Man:

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1 "Farabi's Plato" in Louis Ginzberg : Jubilee Volume (New York, 1945) 376-7. The following abbreviations will be used for Strauss's various texts: The City and Man (1964), CM; The Rebirth of Classical Political Rationalism (1989), CR; Natural Right and History (1953), NRH; On Tyranny (1991), OT; Persecution and the Art of Writing (1952), PAW; Studies in Platonic Political Philosophy (1983), SPPP; What is Political Philosophy (1959), WIPP; The Political Philosophy of Hobbes (1952), PPH; Philosophy and Law (1995), PL; Thoughts on Machiavelli (1958), TM; Spinoza's Critique of Religion (1965), SCR; Liberalism Ancient and Modern (1968), LAM; History of Political Philosophy (1972), HPP; Jewish Philosophy and the Crisis of Modernity (1997), JP.


3 See Catherine Zuckert Postmodem Platos (Chicago, 1996), 5.
It is not self-forgetting and pain-loving antiquarianism nor self-forgetting and intoxicating romanticism which induces us to turn with passionate interest, with unqualified willingness to learn, toward the political thought of classical antiquity. We are impelled to do so by the crisis of our time, the crisis of the West.4

Strauss follows Nietzsche and Heidegger in seeing a crisis of nihilism at the heart of modernity which opens up the possibility of a return to a principle forgotten or lost sight of within modernity. Again, like Nietzsche and Heidegger, Strauss would see that the recovery of this lost principle involves a return to the ancients who are now able to speak to us free from the distorting effects of modern assumptions. However, in striking contrast to Nietzsche and Heidegger, Strauss turns not to the pre-Socratics, but to Plato and Aristotle—precisely those thinkers who for Nietzsche and Heidegger are the architects of Western metaphysics and thus fully implicated in modernity and its nihilism.5 This different assessment of the ancients has its roots in a different conception of the character of modernity's crisis. For Strauss, the problem of modernity is not so readily captured by phrases like "the death of God" or "the forgetting of Being" as by "relativism" or "the rejection of natural right".6 In short, Strauss characterizes the crisis of modernity as primarily moral and political rather than existential. It is more fundamentally about the Good than about Being.7

Strauss has recently been accused of being a closet Nietzschean or Heideggerian, so it is important to be clear about how Strauss's position is to be distinguished from theirs.8 Strauss's critique of existentialism is that rather than escaping from modernity, it forms modernity's third and most radical "wave." Strauss argues that Nietzsche and Heidegger have misdiagnosed the character of contemporary nihilism. For Strauss, nihilism resides not in the loss of an originary or authentic encounter with Being or the abyss, but in the loss of contact with nature in our moral and political lives—the discovery for moderns that

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4 CM 1.
5 Strauss criticizes Heidegger in a way comparable to Heidegger's critique of Nietzsche. See "Nietzsche's Word: God is Dead" in Martin Heidegger The Question Concerning Technology (New York, 1977) 53-112. In other words, Strauss like Derrida argues that Heidegger has not sufficiently freed himself from the tradition he critiques. For Derrida Heidegger still shows a continuing relation to presence or, in Strauss's terms, nature. For Strauss, Heidegger rather shares in the modern oblivion of nature. In this respect Strauss, who did not live to encounter deconstruction, would surely have seen it as a hyper-modernism. Consider the discussions of Derrida in Stanley Rosen Hermeneutics and Politics (Oxford, 1987) 50-86 and Zuckert, 201-53.
6 See "Relativism" in CR, 13-26; NRH, 5.
7 See OT, 212. Stewart Umphrey "Natural Right and Philosophy" in Kenneth L. Deutsch and Walter Niggorski eds. Leo Strauss: Political Philosopher and Jewish Thinker (Lanham, 1994) 287. Umphrey points out that Strauss's notion of Natural Right can be seen to parallel Heidegger's notion of Being.
no particular way of life has inherent worth.\textsuperscript{10} The pursuit of authenticity, far from being a road to release from modernity, is a symptom of modernity bereft of all connection with nature.\textsuperscript{11} The release from modernity, for Strauss, will involve a release from the hermeneutic or self-interpreting self, from \textit{dasein}, as the most extreme, and therefore truest, form of modernity. Instead of the self-interpreting exister, Strauss points to the human being engaged in and structured by civic life, standards, laws.\textsuperscript{12} He sees that the crisis of modernity is not centrally at the level of meaning or significance for the individual exister, but about our capacity to engage in a moral and political life that connects citizens to a structure of human excellence.\textsuperscript{13} The "originary" encounter is, for Strauss, not for the human as \textit{dasein}, but for the human as citizen, as a certain "type" structured by a shared moral and political life.\textsuperscript{14} To recover this form of the "originary," one turns not to the poetic musings of pre-Socratic poets and philosophers, but to the dialectical rationalism of the dialogues of Plato.\textsuperscript{15}

For Strauss the need to return to the Platonic and other ancient texts in order to recover the nature of political life arises from the particular character of modernity. Modernity originated in the transformation of political philosophy effected by Machiavelli, who redirected political philosophy from an essentially contemplative or theoretical consideration of political things to the active transformation of those things.\textsuperscript{16} Strauss describes the change in political philosophy effected by Machiavelli in various ways: as a lowering of horizons, as a new conception of nature, and as a replacement of

\begin{footnotes}
\item[10] Strauss builds on Carl Schmitt's insight that the crisis of modernity can be seen as the loss of the "political". See \textit{SCR}, 331-51. For an account of the limitations of Strauss's understanding of Heidegger see Ian Lodeman "Historical Sickness: Heidegger and the Role of History in Political Thought" (unpublished, 1998) 1-28.
\item[11] Strauss clearly distinguishes himself from existentialism on a number of occasions: see his letter to Eric Voeglin December 17, 1949 in Peter Emberley and Barry Cooper, eds. \textit{Faith and Philosophy: The Correspondence Between Leo Strauss and Eric Voeglin, 1934-1964} (University Park,1993) 62-3. To the extent that existentialism is identifiable with Heidegger and Sartre, Strauss is certainly correct. Strauss would not agree that existence precedes essence or that language is the House of Being. In a broader sense, however, where existentialism is identified as a contemporary phenomenalism in reaction to technological humanism, Strauss can certainly be identified as existentialist.
\item[12] Strauss tries to develop a middle ground between modern objectivity and existential engagement--what could be called the sphere of objective engagement, the sphere of institutions and roles. Strauss makes this critique of existentialist terminology: "When speaking about someone with whom I have a close relation I call him my friend. I do not call him my Thou. Adequate 'speaking about' in analytical or objective speech must be grounded in and continue the manner of "speaking about" which is inherent in human life." \textit{WIPP}, 29.
\item[13] The "secret" teaching of Strauss is that in fact only the life of the philosopher has inherent worth or is good by nature. The city derives its worth a) hiddenly but truly, as the condition for philosophy; b)openly but falsely, by convincing it citizens that partial or conditional virtues, are intrinsically good. See Zuckert, 111-115.
\item[14] For Strauss, the philosophers encounter with nature is more primordial or fundamental than that of the citizen., but in this it parallels the relation of authenticity to everydayness in Heideggers account of \textit{dasein}.
\item[15] Strauss does not see language as the House of Being; rather he sees opinion as the place of contact with nature. Strauss's writings are, then, a testing or interplay of opinions that seeks out of this interplay or dialectic to bring forth the nature of things, or at least the fundamental alternatives. As shall be suggested below, Strauss's rationalism and anti-existentialism do not mean that his position is not deeply rooted in a phenomenology that could be called existential in a broader sense of the term.
\item[16] \textit{WIPP}, 40.
\end{footnotes}
human will for nature as the source of standards. In all of these characterizations, it is clear that, for Strauss, modernity is founded upon the internalizing of the sources of morality within human subjectivity, and, as the necessary correlative of this, results in the oblivion of nature and total historicization of all moral and political standards.¹⁷

Historicism arises in modernity because modernity is premised on a "conquest of nature"--namely, the conception that human activity can transform nature, that it can produce a reality that is other than and superior to the natural condition of man. The radical historicism and relativism that belongs to Nietzsche and Heidegger is simply the most complete "conquest" of nature, the final result of Machiavelli's transformation of political philosophy. However, the nature to which Strauss would have us return is not the "other" that modernity has conquered, but rather "another conception of nature."¹⁸ The "nature" that modernity "conquered" was itself an interpretation posited by modernity.¹⁹ The escape from modernity, for Strauss, occurs not through a return to the "other" posited within modernity, but through an appearance of a nature prior to all modernizing interpretation.²⁰ Strauss puts this sense of a return to nature through a return to the ancients with particular clarity in one of his earliest writings, Philosophy and Law:

The natural foundation which the Enlightenment aimed for but itself overthrew becomes accessible only if the battle of the Enlightenment against "prejudices,"--which has been pursued principally by empiricism and by modern history--is accordingly brought to a conclusion: only if the Enlightenment critique of the tradition is radicalized, as it was by Nietzsche, into a critique of the principles of the tradition (both the Greek and the Biblical), so that an original understanding of these principles again becomes possible. To that end and only to that end is the "historicizing" of philosophy justified and necessary: only the history of philosophy makes possible the ascent from the second, "unnatural" cave, into which we have fallen less because of the tradition itself than because of the tradition of polemics against the tradition, into that first, "natural" cave which Plato's image depicts, to emerge from which into the light is the original meaning of philosophizing.²¹

The difficulty in emerging from out of the crisis of modernity lies in the character of modernity as a constructed reality, a second cave. It is a reality built out of a desire to humanize nature, or--more accurately--to construct a human world in place of nature. This specifically human world is the realm of culture or history.²² At the heart of modernity is a nihilism of nature. The crisis of the West is the bringing to light of this nihilism, that in the very triumph of modernity the West discovers that humanity cannot

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¹⁷ See "Three Waves", 96.
¹⁸ PPH 170
¹⁹ SCR 336 and CM 43-4.
²⁰ PL 135-6.
²¹ PL 136.
²² SCR , 336.
inwardly generate what Charles Taylor helpfully calls "constitutive goods." The "second cave" of modernity, Strauss argues, is human history understood as a self-constituting reality. To be free of modernity is to dissolve the notion of human history, by regaining contact with a nature untouched by history, and, even in modernity's nihilism, implicitly constitutive of human life. But how is this rise above history not to be a Nietzschean turn to the abyss, to the dissolution of humanity and nature altogether?

It is in response to this question that Strauss calls for a return to ancient philosophy, and particularly to Plato, as the necessary way to regain an understanding of nature in its pre-modern sense. Strauss is therefore uniting two projects: a correction of the contemporary crisis in political philosophy, and a re-reading of Plato. What allows Strauss the confidence that his re-reading of Plato can be illuminating for contemporary concerns is that Strauss has located an ahistorical nature as both the subject matter of Platonic philosophy and the needful response to contemporary nihilism. However, the Platonism known to the western tradition would ill serve Strauss's purposes. This Platonism, centred on the doctrine of the Ideas, appears implicated in Heidegger's critique of western metaphysics. Traditional Platonism, if not directly implicated in modernity, at least cannot be the starting point of a return to nature as envisioned by Strauss—it seems to transform nature too directly into thought. In his commentary on *The Republic*, Strauss writes:

The doctrine of ideas which Socrates expounds to his interlocutors is very hard to undersand; to begin with, it is utterly incredible, not to say that it appears to be fantastic…No one has ever succeeded in giving a satisfactory or clear account of this doctrine of ideas.

To return to nature or rationalism, but in such a way as not to be open to Heidegger's critique, Strauss had to "discover" a Plato without a doctrine of ideas or immortality of the soul, without metaphysics. A number of commentators on Strauss have pointed out that he came to read Plato in this apparently perverse fashion from his reading of Farabi's commentary on Plato. It was also from reading Farabi and other medieval Islamic and Jewish commentators that Strauss stumbled upon the tradition of esoteric/exoteric writing. While of course Farabi nowhere states the esoteric view that Plato's doctrine of the ideas and the immortality of the soul are merely exoteric teachings, this can be "discovered" by careful reading premised on the esoteric/exoteric distinction which

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24 Robert Pippin "The Modern World of Leo Strauss" in P.G. Kielmansegg, Horst Mewes and Elizabeth Glaser-Schmidt eds. *Hannah Arendt and Leo Strauss* (Cambridge, 1995) 139-60, 152 points out that Strauss's turn to the ancient Greek polity as somehow originary in a way that parallels Heidegger's turn to *pragmata* is problematic at best.

25 See NRH 30-1.

26 Strauss's critique of the doctrine of Ideas is primarily of their "separateness": see CM 119-20 and OT 292.

27 CM 119.

28 Zuckert 5 and *FP* 364, 371, 376.

29 *PAW*, 8,JP 463.
Strauss also "discovers" in Farabi's writings. Strauss has uncovered a Plato that perfectly meets the need of contemporary humanity to regain contact with a phenomenological nature able to be a constitutive source of moral and political life. The difficulties of directly refuting Strauss's hermeneutic may be compared to the difficulties of refuting psychoanalysis; both point to an object only available to those who practice an art which requires as a premise the prior acceptance of the existence of that object--the hidden text or the unconscious mind. However, by Strauss's own principles, his interpretation of Plato cannot be premised upon a supposed tradition of interpretation, but must be grounded in the texts themselves. At this level, however, Strauss can hardly be said to have demonstrated the exoteric character of the Platonic ideas: rather, he asserts that as a metaphysical standpoint, it is simply incredible.32

This is not to say that for Strauss Plato's ideas have no reference at all. By contrast, they refer to the "fundamental and permanent problems." Strauss's ahistoricism is an ahistoricism of the permanent problems that structure "the whole" as this appears to the philosopher, and in particular the human part of the whole, "the city." Philosophy, in its turn, emerges as an ahistorical pursuit relative to the ideas understood in this sense:

philosophy is knowledge that one does not know; that is to say, it is knowledge of what one does not know, or awareness of the fundamental problems, and, therewith, of the fundamental alternatives regarding their solution that are coeval with human thought.35

The philosophic life, according to Strauss, is fundamentally zetetic, a quest for an understanding of the fundamental problems. But Strauss warns us that to resolve those problems by coming to a determinate solution is necessarily to collapse into dogmatism. The search for wisdom can never become wisdom but only dogmatism:

Yet as long as there is no wisdom but only quest for wisdom, the evidence of all solutions is necessarily smaller than the evidence of the problems. Therefore the philosopher ceases to be a philosopher at the moment at

30 Alfons Sölner "Leo Strauss: German Origin and American Impact" in Kielmansegg et al. 121-137, 126 points to Strauss's use of the esoteric/exoteric distinction as a parallel to Heidegger's use of etymology. Both methods allow the interpreter to "discover" a contemporary concern in ancient texts. Strauss reads every text as "dialogic", involving both argument and action.
31 One could readily build up a set of parallels between Freudian psychoanalysis and Straussian careful reading, with this difference: that the hidden object in Strauss is a conscious construction, whereas in Freud it is an unconscious construction.
32 See HPP, 44.
33 WIPP 39.
34 See WIPP 229; NRH 24, 32-3. Because for Strauss the ideas are "problems" they are necessarily understood as being for the philosopher (they are surely not problems in themselves) and not as self-subsisting realities or causes in a metaphysical sense. In short, Strauss sees the ideas as phenomenological realities for the philosopher who encounters them. See HPP, 50-1.
35 NRH 32
The moment that the thinking of the philosopher becomes determinate—that is, becomes one with being—the philosopher collapses into opinion. As we shall see, this problematic belongs to Strauss's whole conception of Platonism. In a preliminary way here it can be seen in Strauss's very formulation of philosophy as the movement between alternatives that determinate thought is opinion: these alternatives are necessarily exclusive, one-sided and given. Metaphysics, and in particular the Platonic ideas as self-constituting realities or as a mediated activity of thinking and being premised on a unity beyond their distinction, is not even allowed to appear. Strauss presents, as the true Platonism, a Platonism without metaphysics.

In what, then, does Platonism consist for Strauss? Strauss sees the need to turn to classical political philosophy as a whole to be integral to recovering an understanding of nature. Nature, in a pre-modern sense, emerges when the governing opinions of the city come to be questioned and the need arises to come to know the relation of those opinions to an abiding reality, nature. Strauss's return to the ancients is premised upon the need for a contemporary recovery of a phenomenological or pre-philosophic awareness. That awareness is the necessary beginning point of philosophy if it is to recover a rationalism that is non-technological. In the rise from opinion to knowledge, the philosopher does not emerge as a subjectivity disengaged from nature. Indeed, precisely because the ideas are not metaphysical, causal realities but rather permanent problems, the philosopher can only seek for a knowing he can never attain or master. The method of the philosopher, embodied for Strauss in the life of Socrates, is to ask the "What is…?" questions about human and non-human things. In the dialectic of enquiry the natures or essences of these things emerge—not as metaphysical causes, but as phenomenological realities. Out of the questioning of philosophy, nature emerges as a heterogeneity of various natures; the whole consists of different parts. However, the nature of these natures or parts is itself fundamentally problematic. The philosopher can never grasp the whole in all of its parts; nature can never be a pure object of thought. The Socratic philosopher is defined by knowledge of ignorance.

But it is here that Strauss brings out the fundamental problematic of philosophy and the fundamental subject matter of the Platonic dialogues: the relation of the philosopher to the city. For Strauss, the enquiry that looks to human ends, to the question of the good, is an activity destructive of the good of the city. Strauss takes up the Nietzschean view that what holds together forms of human life (cities or cultures) is a certain horizon or opinion that gives significance and moral direction to people's lives. In Strauss's terms,
the city is, and must be, closed. Here lies the ambivalence in Strauss's concept of nature. The city, the natural community of humans, is sustained by the engagement of its citizens. This engagement is premised upon a belief that the laws of the city are legitimate. For cities that have come to question their foundation and tradition, this legitimacy is premised on notions of justice and right, ultimately grounded in nature. But, for Strauss, no actual city can be just or be in accord with nature. Every city must be conventional, structured by determinate opinions, and thus not open to "the whole." Each city must have decided among the various alternatives and in order to retain the engagement of its citizens must by force and persuasion (even to the point of a noble lie), instill the engagement of its citizenry. There is an irresolvable conflict between the philosopher, the highest type of man who would live in openness to nature as a whole, and the city, which by nature must be closed to nature as a whole. The conflict between the philosopher and the city is at the heart of Strauss's position, and at the heart of his reading of Plato. For Strauss, the Platonic dialogues are not metaphysical but a "psychological" and "sociological" phenomenology of the relation between the philosopher and the city.

In his published writings, Strauss has provided us with analyses of eight Platonic dialogues: The Apology, Crito, Euthydemus, Euthyphron, Republic, Statesman, Minos, and Laws. In each of these commentaries Strauss's procedure is the same: he seeks by a close reading of the text to bring out the content of the dialogue as an exploration of the vexed relation of philosophy to other aspects of human, and in particular civic, life. So the dialogues explore the relation of philosophy to religion, poetry, rhetoric, sophistry,
legislation, art (techne) and so on. Strauss above all focusses on the figure of Socrates whose life embodies the opposition between civic life and the life of the philosopher, the life dedicated to thought.\textsuperscript{48} Strauss seeks to illuminate the inherently political character of the relation of the various aspects of the city to one another and to philosophy. For Strauss the heterogeneity of nature, most readily evidenced by the heterogeneity of the human, is irreducible and immune to synthesis.\textsuperscript{49} Nonetheless these heterogeneous ends must co-exist in the city--hence the irreducibly "political" character of human existence, the ever-present need to mix force and persuasion, nature and necessity, convention and natural right. Modernity, in its internalizing of the Good, reduces and synthezises the given ends and so loses sight of Nature as the mysterious source of human aspiration for the Good and an inherent limit to the humanization of that Good. For Strauss, each Platonic dialogue is a necessarily incomplete or abstracted consideration of Nature as it emerges in the interaction of the philosopher with various types of citizens.\textsuperscript{50} The Socratic or Platonic character of the Dialogues for Strauss is revealed in philosophy's turning to a consideration of its conditions in political life: thought knows itself to be beyond political life, beyond opinion, but always connected to political life. In Strauss's reading of Plato this comes out in his distinction between the argument and action of the dialogues. As both dramatic and theoretical, the dialogues present an interplay between thought and life. What distinguishes Strauss's use of this often noted feature of the Dialogues is that he seeks to bring out the conflict between, not the mutual relation of, "deeds" and "speeches."\textsuperscript{51} In this sense, the "teachings" of the dialogues are never directly present in the "arguments" of the dialogue, but rather are intimated to the careful reader. The Dialogues are not works of metaphysical theory, but of the central problematic of human life: that human excellence in general demands a determinate community to sustain the phenomenological activity of moral and political life and yet truth and the pursuit of truth shows this given realm of moral and political activity to be mere opinion. For Strauss, the city is and must remain a "cave" of opinion, in contrast to philosophy's rise above all particular caves into the realm of fundamental problems. Aside from the life of the philosopher, there can be no synthesis of truth and life: modernity's nihilistic result evidences this.

Strauss's reading of Plato as the articulation of philosophy and as an openness to a Nature prior to modernity, has a rather ironic result. In the terms of the traditional, exoteric Plato of the "ideas", this view of Philosophy, far from being an escape from the cave of opinion (to say nothing of the cave below, the cave of modernity) is at best an escape from "images" to a zetetic or skeptical consideration of "things."\textsuperscript{52} Strauss's philosopher may have loosed his chains, but he remains wandering about the back of the cave. Precisely because for Strauss philosophy is never the attainment of knowledge, but remains searching among alternative teachings, among the permanent problems, there can never be a rise from opinion to knowledge. Certainly "images"--the pre-philosophic

\textsuperscript{48} Strauss explores the figure of Socrates not only as he is presented by Plato, but also by Aristophanes and Xenephon. A good beginning point for gaining a sense of Strauss's view of Socrates in this wider context is "The Problem of Socrates: Five Lectures" in \textit{CR}, 103-183.

\textsuperscript{49} \textit{WIPP}, 39-40.

\textsuperscript{50} \textit{CM}, 50-63

\textsuperscript{51} \textit{CM}, 61-2.

\textsuperscript{52} See \textit{Republic}, 509d-510b.
opinions of citizens, the phenomena--are resolved into teachings or fundamental alternatives. But because, for Strauss, philosophy is simply the movement between alternatives it can have no content which is not opinion. Thus it belongs to Strauss's vision of philosophy that all determinate thinking is dogmatic. Philosophy as zetetic points to the need for a movement beyond the cave, but Strauss declares dogmatically that this is unattainable. For Strauss the actual uniting of thinking and being in a realm beyond opinion remains impossible. This certainly prevents a rise to "metaphysics" and so leaves the phenomenological in its integrity, thus avoiding exposure to a Heideggerian critique of metaphysics. However, from a Platonic standpoint, what is remarkable is the capacity of the Straussian philosopher to resist the movement of the thinking of appearance (phenomena) to the thinking of the principle that is the reality of appearance. What explains this resistance to a rise to a thinking and being beyond appearance is that Strauss both assumes and requires of his Plato a thoroughly contemporary phenomenological concreteness. Strauss's ahistorical esoteric hermeneutic appears not so much as a respectful reading of philosophers of the past as they understood themselves, but more as the importing-into ancient texts of contemporary assumptions and concerns. The permanent problems then seem to be thoroughly contemporary problems about the place of the good in the face of modern technological subjectivity.

Seen in these terms, Strauss's Platonism appears no longer as a bizarre reading of the Dialogues, but as a reflection on moral and political phenomenology that can readily be connected to considerations by thinkers such as Hans-Georg Gadamer, Alasdair MacIntyre and Charles Taylor. While Strauss's position is neither existentialist nor Nietzschean in crucial aspects, nonetheless Strauss does emerge as a contributor to the contemporary phenomenological critique of modernity. Strauss's reading of Plato is rendered systematically distorting by too directly connecting a contemporary problematic to the Platonic texts. Yet, while Strauss's readings cannot be definitive, precisely because they are systematically distorting, they can provide a way into the reading of Plato in a Platonic manner.

53 This is, of course, contrary to Strauss's intention: see "On a New Interpretation of Plato's Political Philosophy" Social Research 13:3 (1946) 326-67.
The Treatment Of Poetry In The Symposium Of Plato

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The Symposium of Plato presents the demythologizing of the god Eros, that is, the rational clarification of his nature. At a dinner to celebrate the victory of the tragic poet Agathon in the Theatre, the guests all give speeches in honour of the god. Of the initial speakers, neither the comic poet Aristophanes nor the tragic poet Agathon can give more than a partial account of his nature, and it remains for Socrates, who has himself been taught the doctrine, to define it as the human desire for the eternal possession of the Beautiful. This done, the speech of Alcibiades shows the limits of Socrates' personal realization of this teaching and compels him to indicate the necessity of a new poetry, at once tragic and comic, that can more effectually present this philosophical view to the City.

The views of the two poets express dividedly what Socrates, as taught by a certain Diotima, can bring into one view. While Aristophanes sees in eros an impetus toward a restored human wholeness, Agathon identifies it with the universal Beauty. The view of each poet is meant by Plato to represent, moreover, the general tendency of his genre; independently of philosophy, then, both Tragedy and Comedy have gathered up the many gods and heroes of the poetical religion of the Greeks into a single view of divinity and humanity, respectively.

Thus the philosophical treatment of eros both arises in relation to poetry and is at once the correction and completion of poetry. Any division, therefore, of the dialogue into a philosophical centre and a poetical and historical husk, is not true to the purpose of Plato. The dialogue falls into five main divisions, of unequal length. The first shows Apollodorus agreeing to the request of his friend that he narrate the speeches about eros given on the occasion of Agathon's first tragic victory. In the second, Apollodorus begins his repetition of the account of Aristodemus, who with Socrates attended the famous dinner. The third part presents the actual speeches, concluding with that of Socrates. The fourth relates the arrival of Alcibiades and his account of Socrates. The fifth shows Socrates' reflections on the unification of the writing of Comedy and Tragedy.
The dialogue begins (172-4) with a discussion between a certain Apollodorus and an unnamed friend, who wishes to know about the speeches given on the subject of *eros* at the house of Agathon. This conversation anticipates the argument of the whole. Apollodorus is a friend of Socrates; he regards philosophizing as the most important activity in the world and thinks everyone wretched except Socrates. He pities those who devote themselves to wealth and moneymaking, such as his current companion. The companion does not wish to dispute with Apollodorus but to hear an accurate account of the speeches on *Eros*. Together with his practical interests, he has a real, but indistinct, desire to know about *eros*, and thus in the context of the whole dialogue, to know the Beautiful as well. Apollodorus agrees to oblige him, and since he was not present, he will repeat the account that he heard from a then disciple of Socrates and subsequently checked with Socrates himself. The sharp division between Apollodorus and his friend presages the division between Socrates and Alcibiades at the end of the dialogue.

The first part of the dialogue shows the reader through a directly presented conversation that he will learn about the speeches on *Eros* through an indirect narration. This is necessary in order to present the speeches universally, as possibilities of thought, and not as merely contingent conversation. In so doing, Plato follows the example of the drama, where the very existence of a theatre, the realities of staging, and the solemnity of the occasion, make of the drama something existing in its own right, which the spectators attend. Because he is writing a dialogue, conversation between characters has a directness that only narration of a past occurrence can correct.

II.

As the second part of the dialogue (174a2-178a5) begins, Apollodorus retells Aristodemus' account of what happened. Socrates appears here as a man oriented toward the *kalon* (the Beautiful). When Aristodemus first encounters him, he sees Socrates freshly bathed and wearing sandals, which latter he rarely did. When asked, Socrates replies that he wishes to go as a beautiful man to a beautiful man. Here is seen the most eternal and sensible manifestation of that *kalon* which is the subject of the dialogue. Before reaching Agathon's house, moreover, Socrates shows his deeper relation to it when he falls into a meditative trance on a neighbouring porch; in light of the whole dialogue, Socrates presumably is contemplating the universal *kalon*.

Socrates' developing relation to the *kalon* also permits him to invite his friend Aristodemus to the dinner. Modifying an old proverb, he says, the good (*agathoi*) go unbidden to the house of Agathon for dinner (174b4-5). Socrates observes as well that Homer has not respected the proverb, by presenting Menelaos, the lesser warrior, as going uninvited to the feast of his brother Agamemnon, the better warrior. This invitation and the discussion accompanying it indicate in an anticipatory way the relation between poetry and philosophy that the dialogue will develop. Agathon is a poet, and the dialogue will identify the *agathon* with the *kalon*. Since Aristodemus and Socrates spend their time in philosophy, their more comprehensive relation to the *agathon* give them a certain

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1 All parenthetical references are to the pagination of *Symposium* in the Oxford Classical Text of Plato.
precedence over a poet. Socrates even permits himself a criticism of Homer and a modification of the proverb. Philosophy will appear later in the dialogue as the true measure of poetry.

When Aristodemus arrives at the house of Agathon, he notices that Socrates is no longer with him but stands on a neighbour's porch, absorbed in intellectual reflection. Agathon welcomes Aristodemus with great urbanity, saying that he had tried to find him in order to invite him but without success. Aristodemus takes his place at the feast, and he prevents Agathon from sending a servant to rouse Socrates from his contemplation. When Socrates finally arrives, Agathon requests that he sit by him. Agathon hopes, he says, that by touching Socrates he might benefit from the wisdom that he has just acquired in his contemplation. The poet seems to hold a physical view of wisdom, as is brought out by Socrates' reply: if wisdom could flow from the fuller to the emptier, he says, then he would benefit greatly from that of Agathon, which manifested itself before so many Greeks at the tragic festival the day before.

Agathon tells Socrates that he is insolent and that the two shall be judged by Dionysus as juror (175e7-9). Agathon realizes that Socrates' seeming praise of his wisdom is more likely a sharp disparagement of it. His thought that Dionysus will judge between them is an extension of the Greek idea of the god. Both Tragedy and Comedy were presented and judged under the auspices of Dionysus. Agathon suggests that the same god will judge between the two of them, one a poet and the other a philosopher. After dinner, this extension of the Dionysiac spirit more clearly presents itself when the guests consider how they are to spend the rest of the evening. They decide unanimously against heavy drinking, the least intellectual expression of that spirit. Instead, in wonder at the lack of speeches in honour of the god Eros, they agree each to give a speech to proclaim his excellence.

Like every Greek god, this one has a two-fold reality. On the one hand, he is depicted in human form as having his own subjectivity and individuality. On the other, he represents a tendency of the human soul. For example, in the first book of the Iliad, Athena appears to Achilles, to prevent his drawing his sword to kill Agamemnon. According to the poet, the goddess appears in propria persona, yet it is also clear from the fact of Athena's appearing, and not Aphrodite, or Apollo, that she also represents his exercise of his own prudence. This duality is even more manifest in eros, which is at once the proper name of a god and also a common noun meaning love or desire. Thus a full definition of eros would have to give an account of this duality. In so doing, philosophy will develop a tendency already present in poetry, since it belonged to both Tragedy and Comedy to clarify this duality in the gods.

In Tragedy this occurs on the side of the gods, and in Comedy from the side of humanity. Tragedy tends to unify the unclear division between divine individuality and human reality by moving toward the presentation of a unified divinity and a human subjectivity which recedes, as it were, into this one god. This occurs when the human hero's action attempts to bring everything under the measure of his own pathos, that is, the aspect of life in the polis that he regards as uniquely central. In so doing, he collides
with a *pathos* of equal weight. The result of this collision is the revelation of Zeus as what underlies this division, and the hero's finding in that discovery the limit of his own subjectivity. At the end of the *Women of Trachis*, for example, it is declared that nothing we have seen is not Zeus. When Heracles proposes to remake the family by introducing his mistress into his household, his previously passive wife hopes by magic to re-direct his desire to her. When the magic proves instead the destruction of her husband, she kills herself in heroic restitution. Conversely, the great hero, accustomed to activity, accepts the fatality of the magic-turned-poison, and has himself burnt by his own son, as an offering. Each character has experienced the whole range of passivity and activity, and this is Zeus. Each perishes at the moment of completion, and in their perishing, the one reality underlying all things is manifested.

In Comedy, however, the emphasis lies in the gathering together of the various divinities by the individual subject, with the result that he can unite the various moments of the divine world more thoroughly than any particular god. In the *Birds* of Aristophanes, for example, the hero through his flight from the city of Athens to a natural religion and *polis* of his own devising, has an experience of that realm more directly than any Olympian god, with his fixed rational superiority to the natural order, can have. Then when the hero returns from this nature religion to a human city and the Olympian religion, he has a total experience of the moments, both natural and spiritual, of that religion. Neither Zeus, nor Prometheus nor Heracles can have an experience of equal universality. Thus the play ends with the proclamation of the hero as the highest of divinities.

**III.**

The third part of the dialogue then relates the five speeches, each of which attempts to clarify the nature of *eros*. The first two assume the homosexual *eros* of upper-class Athens, while the third offers a scientific-philosophical account. The last two present the views of the comic and tragic poets. The first is that of Phaedrus (178a6-180b8), who had suggested the idea of the speeches. His account does little to illuminate the nature of the god. He first indicates the excellence of *eros* by citing the authority of Hesiod in *Theogony* for his being among the eldest of the gods, This does not go far in showing the greatness of the god, since in Hesiod the earlier gods are the least in honour, and the later the greater. The Titanic powers are born first, and the Olympians, the gods who most describe the realm of intelligence and spirit, come later. Phaedrus' limited beginning is matched also by the account he gives of what human relation the god encourages. He says that for a young man nothing is better than a good lover, and for a lover nothing better than a beloved. In this he follows the homosexual custom of the upper classes at Athens.² A lover, he says, would be ashamed to do something cowardly for fear of his

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² A sharp division must be drawn between contemporary male homosexuality in North America and the love of men for other men in ancient Athens. North American homosexuality is an alternative to family life, while amongst the Athenians it was a subjective friendship in addition to the objective institutions of the family and state. It arose primarily because friendship between a man and a woman was generally not possible, and it rarely precluded a man's eventually marrying. It often involved a liaison between a youth and an older man; those such as Agathon, who did not marry and continued with their (older) male lovers,
beloved's bad opinion. He argues, moreover, that no relationship encourages courage so much as does this homosexual *eros*, and historically this kind of bond did obtain at Thebes.³

In this speech, the relation of the good aimed at to the means proposed is not at all clear. The good that *eros* is said to induce is courage or military valour, but this bears no real relation to the sensuous love of a handsome young man, except a perhaps somewhat accidental one. Fearing the disapproval of such a young man might move one to valour, but courage is not dependent on such a love, nor need such a love give rise to valour. While only the merest of beginnings, nevertheless the speech is an anticipation of a fuller development in the subsequent speeches, which will give a deeper account of the nature of a lover and what he loves.

The next speech, that of Pausanias (180c4-185c3), stays within the ambit of homosexual love between a man and a youth, while making some distinction between natural and intelligible goods. He distinguishes, at the divine level, between the *Eros* who is the son of Aphrodite Pandemos, and another who is the son of the "heavenly Aphrodite." Each *eros* is worshipped by a different class of men, one class which pursues the young and even women only from physical desire, and the other that looks to a deeper friendship with the object of its *eros*. Pausanias thinks that this second class only is worthy of the name *eros*. In this case, a man is attracted to a youth who is not only handsome but also capable of mental development. An exchange develops between the two, in which the youth 'gratifies' the man and the latter, who is already virtuous, educates the youth in virtue and wisdom. The goods of virtue and physical pleasure are very imperfectly unified here, and the relation a very peculiar kind of prostitution. The older partner has presumably acquired virtue in some more rigorous school and is willing to barter it for the lesser good. The younger will submit himself to the older in exchange for education.

The next speech, that of Eryximachus (180c4-185c3), removes *eros* from the realm of the love of two persons and praises it instead as a general cosmic principle. *Eros* is that harmony that obtains in the right ordering of the whole cosmos, whether the domain of nature, man or the relation of men and gods. In each of these realms, the work of *eros* is to reconcile opposite forces or tendencies. From the standpoint of the whole, then, there is not a proper distinction amongst the realms of nature, men, and the gods, if one *eros* can univocally be said to govern them all. Thus the predominantly human character of *eros* is thereby lost sight of. Nevertheless, by making *eros* a cosmic as well as human principle, the speech raises the discussion beyond the pedestrian level assumed by those speakers who limit themselves to the current Athenian social order.

³ One band of Theban soldiers in the 4th c. was composed entirely of pairs of lovers.
With the next two speakers, the argument presents accounts of *eros* from both a comic and a tragic poet. In the context of the whole dialogue, they express views that stand on ground more similar to that of philosophy than any of the views heretofore expressed. Both present a total, comprehensive view of *eros*, and dividedly the two poets express what Diotima will presently unite. The two poets express their views in prose, of course; they are thus presented as indicating in speeches the same outlook that their plays had expressed as poetry. Whether it is historically possible for poets thus to explicate their ideas need not detain us. What is indicated here is that this transformation of poetry is possible as part of the expression of a philosophical idea. Thus it belongs to the dialogue to show not only that poetry is less comprehensive than philosophy in content, but that this is so in form and manner of expression as well.\(^4\)

The speech of Aristophanes (189-193d5) comes after that of Eryximachus, and it locates *eros* in the attempt of men and women to restore the human wholeness lost in a rebellion against the gods. This Platonic Aristophanes posits three genera of humans, one composed of two men joined together, another of two women joined together, and a third of a man and woman joined together.\(^5\) When these attempted to lead a rebellion against the Olympian gods, Zeus punished all three kinds by dividing them into two. Ever since, each half has been trying to find its other half, and from this has arisen the current division of mankind into those men who love other men, those women who love other women, and those men and women who love members of the opposite sex. This yearning, says Aristophanes, together with due reverence toward the gods, can lead through *eros* to a restoration of his original wholeness for everyone. This speech of Aristophanes marks a significant advance on the previous speeches. It has a deep sense of the incompleteness of human nature. It further ties the overcoming of that incompleteness to a subjective completeness connected to reverence for the gods.

This Platonic Aristophanes, however, is not an adequate portrait of the comic poet whose dramas we have. Plato is accurate in depicting the poet as one who looks to see the overcoming of man's dividedness within and against himself. Yet it is very difficult to see that this lies in the mythical dividedness of the genera that Plato's Aristophanes begins with. Rather, each play begins with the ruin of the good order of the *polis*, as this has shown itself in one of the essential spheres of the *polis*. The search for human wholeness goes beyond what would normally be regarded as 'reverence for the gods.' In *Birds* explicitly, and all the plays thereafter, humanity is seen as capable of a deeper union of

\(^4\) A philosophical examination of the limits of poetry is not the first occasion amongst the Greeks on which one form of knowing seeks to examine another. The whole of Greek poetry is in one way a discussion and amplification of the whole system of myths and cults belonging to the Greek religion. Perhaps, however, it is in Comedy par excellence that one form of poetry examines another. *Frogs* shows the god Dionysus journeying to the underworld, to bring back his favourite poet, Euripides. Once in Hades he is faced with the deeper task of determining who is the better tragedian, Euripides or Aeschylus. A comic poet has thus devoted an entire play to considering the nature of Tragedy, and in doing so he helps to indicate the nature of Comedy as well the comic poet has not restricted himself to a critique of Tragedy. In *Clouds*, Socrates is treated as a sophist, and in exposing the effects of Socrates on a representative Athenian family, Aristophanes poetically considers the nature of sophism.

\(^5\) Why Plato thinks it reasonable to ascribe this view to Aristophanes is not at all clear. Nothing in the extant plays justifies it.
rational and natural elements than even the gods themselves. What Plato perhaps has in mind is the earlier play *Clouds*, where the limit to sophism is a necessary reverence for the gods.  

After the speech of Aristophanes comes that of Agathon, the tragic poet (194e3-197e8) whose victory in Tragedy the evening is celebrating. He gives a long rhetorical speech, the burden of which is that *Eros* is that god who, being most beautiful and best, is the cause of beauty and goodness for all others possessing them. This is, of course, the opposite standpoint to that of Aristophanes, who saw the origin of *eros* rather in the need to restore a lost human wholeness.

All the necessary elements of the philosophical analysis are now present. The idea of a universal cause of the beautiful and good has appeared, although wrongly identified with *eros*. The idea of a yearning for wholeness has also appeared, although identified with a mythological sense of what defines personhood. In the total view of the dialogue, two things are necessary at this stage: the general elements of the comprehensive philosophical view must appear here and they must appear dividedly, that is, between Tragedy and Comedy, and obscured somewhat by the poetical form in which they appear. While this division is necessary to the argument of the dialogue, it is no clearer that Plato has a more accurate view of Tragedy than he does of Aristophanic Comedy. Since we do not have a complete play of Agathon, it is difficult to say whether Plato has an accurate view of him in particular. For the argument of the dialogue to show a right relation between the realms of philosophy and poetry, however, Agathon must in some way represent Tragedy as a whole.

In the view of the dialogue as a whole, Agathon (and thus Tragedy) has confounded the human desire for what it does not have with that very Beauty and Good that it desires. To the extent that every tragic hero in a certain way identifies his *pathos* with the highest Good, this is true. For example, Agamemnon, the generalissimo of the Greeks at Troy has imagined that he can sacrifice the rights of his own family by offering his daughter Iphigeneia to the gods. He renews his excess by trying to introduce Cassandra into his household and by walking on purple, which is reserved for Zeus. In *Oedipus the King*, Oedipus acts as if he were not only the saviour of the city at an earlier time but again will be its saviour, arrogating to himself thereby what belongs to the gods. However, while Tragedy might begin with the assertion of an identity between a particular human being and the highest good, it most certainly does not end there. As in the examples given, both Agamemnon and Oedipus eventually fall and their dependence on the gods is rather revealed, so in Tragedy generally.

When the point has been reached where Agathon confuses *eros* with the very Beauty that it seeks, Socrates can begin that questioning of Agathon which is the beginning of the full Platonic exposition. When Socrates asks Agathon if in fact *eros* is the *eros* of

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6 A certain Strepsiades wishes to escape his debts by sending his son to learn sophistry at Socrates' 'Thinking Shop.' The son not only confounds his creditors with what he has learned there, he proposes to beat his father and mother as well. Strepsiades repents of what he has done and acknowledges that lack of reverence for the gods has led him to sophistry in the first place.
something (199d1-2) he has simultaneously demythologized *eros* and shown that it cannot be complete in itself. In the first instance *eros* is not a god but human desire, in the broad sense. And as desire it cannot possess what it in fact desires. Thus the whole elaborate rhetorical edifice of Agathon falls, and the simple elements of the philosophical analysis have their first statement: a true analysis of *eros* involves human desire and its objects.

Since *eros* is of something and does not possess what it desires, it is neither beautiful nor good. Having established this point, Socrates can narrate to them an account of *eros* told him by a certain wise woman, Diotima. Socrates says that when she began to instruct him, he held a view similar to Agathon's, that *eros* was a great god and was himself something beautiful. She questioned him, just as he has Agathon, and a dialogue about the nature of *eros* ensued.

While Diotima is, historically speaking, a fiction, her presence indicates Socrates' relation to philosophy. He does not know the truth about *eros* until she has taught him. Moreover, through her Plato wishes to show the objective truth of what Socrates teaches the others. Philosophical truth, like poetry, is not the opining of an individual but an inspired knowledge granted the philosopher. In this, Socrates stands on similar ground with the poets.

Socrates reports that he was very surprised to learn that *eros* was not beautiful and imagined that it must therefore be ugly (201e8-9). Diotima replied that in this case, as many other cases of opposites, such as wisdom and ignorance, there is an in-between, and that *eros* is of this class of beings, neither good nor bad but between the two. This distinction then allows Diotima to specify further its status when Socrates repeats the common opinion that *eros* is a great god (202b6-203a8). Since a god of necessity is both blessed and beautiful, *eros* cannot be a god. Rather, in accord with its intermediary status, it is a *daimon*. This class of being communicates the things of god to men, and vice-versa; it thus makes possible prayers, sacrifice and prophecy. Since god does not mix with men, it makes possible all association and dialogue between gods and men. Thus the earlier account of *eros* as intermediate given by Eryximachus has now been given its proper form.

Socrates at this point asked Diotima from what mother and father *eros* has come. She answers, in a philosophical myth, that *eros* is the child of Poverty and Providing (203b1-204a1). This myth is both a necessary conclusion to the argument heretofore and adds little to the purely philosophical discussion. Because Socrates (and earlier Agathon) had wrongly thought that *eros* was a great god, Diotima had to define 'god' in order to show Socrates' error. In defining 'god' as that which possesses the beautiful which *eros* was said to lack, she offered a rational and philosophical clarification of the poetical theology. Her definition of a *daimon* is a similar clarification. Having established *eros* as an intermediary between gods and men, Diotima now puts into mythical form the arguments she has already made. According to the nature of his mother, *eros* lacks the good, but according to the nature of his father, he always possesses it.
This intermediate character means that *eros* is between ignorance and wisdom and is thus a philosopher or 'lover of wisdom.' Neither a god nor any one else who is wise is a lover of wisdom, for he already is wise. On the other hand, the ignorant man does not know that he lacks knowledge and thus cannot desire what he is ignorant of. Since there is a wisdom of the most beautiful, and *eros* desires the beautiful, *eros* is a philosopher. This intermediate character has arisen from his parents, Poros ("Providing") and Penia ("Poverty"). Ignorance of this intermediate character arose, Diotima says (204c1-6), because Socrates identified *eros* with the object of love and not the one loving. In reality, the object loved is beautiful and complete, while the one loving is lacking.

Diotima's argument heretofore has corrected the wrong assumption of Agathon (and Socrates) that *eros* is a great god. This clarification made, Diotima asks Socrates to define more clearly what one means by the desire of the Beautiful. In desiring beautiful and good things, Socrates says, one desires that they exist for one and that one is blessed as a result. Diotima then concludes that it belongs to all men that they desire good things for themselves always (205a5-7). If *eros* thus defines human happiness, it defines the nature of human life. This view, however, contradicts every-day use of language, whereby we speak of some men as loving and others as not. Usage, however, in the case of the word *poiesis* ["making"] as well, applies a generic name to one particular species: while all crafts are properly called *poieseis*, its name has been applied to only those who concern themselves with music and metre.

Diotima then emphasizes her view that *eros* is of the good by contrasting it with the view, earlier expressed by Aristophanes, that it is of the whole (205d10-e5). She indicates the limits of this view by saying that men are often willing to cut off their hands and feet if they regard them as wicked. Diotima also refutes another possible interpretation of Aristophanes' view, that men are seeking for their original subjective wholeness. This is possible, she says, only if the good be defined as one's own, and another's as evil. This first statement, that men love the good, is not, continues Diotima, a sufficient statement of the matter. Since they desire it for themselves, the manner in which they pursue it must next be investigated. They desire the good to be for themselves always. The work by which they pursue it is a 'begetting' in the beautiful both according to the body and the soul (206b7-8).

Socrates replies to Diotima that he finds what she has said bewildering, and she agrees to explain further (206c1-207a4). All human beings conceive both in body and soul. They can give birth only in the beautiful and not in the ugly. Thus *eros* is not simply of the beautiful but rather of 'begetting and offspring in the beautiful.' This begetting gives man a share in immortality, and this sharing is necessary to *eros* if, as was agreed, it is the desire of the good's always being for oneself.

Diotima then asks what the cause of 'this *eros* and this desire' is (207a5-6). She indicates the depth of the question by showing how even animals are moved by a desire for immortality. Not only do they mate, but will suffer everything for the sake of their offspring. Reasoning, she says, would be a sufficient explanation to make sense of this phenomenon in men but is not sufficient for animals. When Socrates replies that he
cannot explain it, she recalls him to the view of *eros* earlier agreed to. Every mortal nature seeks as much as it can to be always and deathless. This seeking of immortality arises out of the essential changeableness of mortal natures, both in the body and the soul. Mortal natures do not possess sameness in the way that divine natures do. Divine natures are simply the same. In mortal natures, however, sameness results in one part of the body perishing, such as hair, for example, and new hair coming to be. This is true even of knowledge, which both vanishes and is recalled in memory. So while divine sameness is true sameness, mortal natures partake in this sameness by the constant dying and replacement of their several parts. Mortal natures thus partake in the eternal.

To Socrates in his wonderment at such a view, Diotima replies that an analysis of the human love of honour will show its truth (208c1–208e1). To secure deathless glory, men are willing to spend their money and even to die on behalf of those to whom they are attached. She instances both the willingness of Achilles to die for Patroclus and Alcestis for Admetus. The first speech of all had given these as examples of the virtue induced by an *eros* for a beloved. Diotima has now shown that this kind of devotion can arise only from a love of the deathless. She then expands the argument to say that all men do all things on behalf of a deathless virtue and a 'famous reputation.' There is as well a hierarchy of what various men will do. The primary division is between those who look for immortality according to the body, and those who seek it according to a begetting in their souls. The first class is erotic primarily in relation to women, and find in the begetting of children a means of perpetuating themselves. Another class of men conceives and begets rather in the soul than the body (209a1–209d6); this class begets all that belongs to virtue, the prudence by which an individual is governed, and that moderation and justice which order families and cities. When a man well-disposed to virtue comes of age, he seeks a man of noble soul, and associating together they speak of virtue and what a man should do and be. In the formation of this friendship the friends have a friendship deeper than that of physical children, having in common more beautiful and more deathless children. Historically, the poets, who are begetters of individual virtue, have had greater than human children, as in the cases of Homer and Hesiod. Similarly, the great law-givers who have preserved great cities have proven to be greater than usual fathers.

Diotima says that even Socrates can understand the two kinds of begetting in the beautiful, one of the body and the other of the soul, as the two means whereby men aim at immortality. But the final 'mysteries' for the sake of which these exist, are more difficult. Diotima presents the final ascent of a man to the Beautiful, beginning with the love of a beautiful body, and ending with the love of the Beautiful itself (210a4–212a7). In the love of a beautiful body, one begets 'beautiful words' and moves to the love of the beauty that is present in all bodies. From this, one ascends to the love of soul as more beautiful than bodies and is moved to discourse about what will make the young better. This necessarily leads to one's looking at the beauty present in institutions, and to see this beauty as deeper than that in bodies. From this, one ascends to the beauty of the various 'sciences,' which enables one to look at not this or that particular which is beautiful, but at the whole sea of beauty and thereby to beget noble philosophical discourse. From here, he proceeds to the remarkable knowledge of Beauty itself, unchangeable, eternal, and invariable, not as
present in any particular, whether sensible or intelligible, but as it is in itself, and in which all particular examples participate according to their being subject both to coming to be and being destroyed. This knowledge of the Beautiful then, is the true goal of a 'paederasty' rightly undertaken, in which one rises from the love of beautiful bodies, to beautiful institutions, and thence to beautiful forms of knowing to a vision of the beautiful itself. If ever this last is attained, it will no longer seem reasonable to be amazed at the handsome youths who occupy men's attention.

Diotima concludes by saying how excellent is the life of him who sees the Beautiful, and that to this man it belongs to beget not images of virtue but virtue itself. To the attainment of this end, says Socrates, no one could find a better helper than eros. For this reason, he says, he both practices 'the erotic' and commends it to other men.

IV.

To Socrates, it has been granted to know the true nature of eros by an inspiration that has exceeded his own knowledge. The remainder of the dialogue then considers how this knowledge can become real in men so that they might both conceive and bear in the Beautiful. A speech by the newly arrived Alcibiades indicates the conditions that would make this possible. Neither the abstraction of Socrates from all particular involvement nor the frenzied involvement of Alcibiades, which ends in a yearning for indifference, provides the necessary solution; the sharp division, however, points to a resolution. Thus the last 'scene' of the dialogue shows Socrates arguing with Agathon and Aristophanes that the same person should be able to write Tragedy as well as Comedy. Such a person would both know and teach the grounding of human activity in the Beautiful. His art would be the true paideia of mankind.

The occasion for this encounter with Alcibiades is the sudden arrival of the latter shortly after the speech of Socrates has ended (212d3). That he is both clearly drunk and wearing the headbands of a devotee of Dionysus recall us to the religious and poetical setting of the entire discussion. Agathon has just been triumphant in the tragic part of the festival just ended, and Alcibiades has come to crown him for his victory. The speeches just concluded have shown that only philosophy can know truly the role of the god Dionysus, the communication of divine life to men, and this as mediated through eros.

As soon, however, as Alcibiades discovers that Socrates is present, his whole purpose is changed. Having already crowned Agathon as victor, he crowns Socrates as well, who he says can conquer everyone in logoi (213d8-e5). It is then agreed that as Alcibiades' part in the evening's discussions, he will praise Socrates, and he practically dares Socrates to find any part of his recital false. In fact, Socrates sits silent through the whole of it.

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7 Alcibiades (450-404) was an Athenian general and statesman. Raised in the family of Pericles, he persuaded the Athenians to undertake their most expansive operation of the Peloponnesian War, the Syracusan Expedition, and was put in command of it. A charge of impiety recalled him from the field, and he fled to Sparta. Although he did return to Athens, the machinations of his enemies caused him to seek sanctuary with the Persians. He was killed there with the connivance of both Athens and Sparta.
Alcibiades says initially of Socrates that while his exterior offers nothing remarkable, inside he possesses divine treasure, and that he has a power in words and argument possessed by no one else, not even the great orators of the day such as Pericles. His power of words awakens in Alcibiades a sense that his life is not worth living, that rather than devote himself to the care of his soul, instead he devotes himself to the affairs of the Athenians. The power of Socrates has alone been able, says Alcibiades, to make him feel shame before anyone. A discussion with Socrates in which he has agreed to surrender his devotion to the merely external will then be followed by his being seduced by the honour offered by the many; and in the face of this contradiction, Alcibiades feels shame (216b3-b6).

Alcibiades locates Socrates’ power in his indifference to things prized by the many, such as possessions and wealth, and in considering his fellow citizens to be worth nothing (216d7-e4). The remainder of his speech is devoted to detailing his own dealings with Socrates, with the end in mind of revealing the remarkable self-possession of Socrates, which Alcibiades can only marvel at. Their association began when Alcibiades was still a youth, much admired, he says, for his personal beauty, and the object of that eros outlined in the first of the speeches above. Although Socrates talked with him, even wrestled with him, he never behaved toward him as a lover to his beloved. Alcibiades then undertook what can only be described as a campaign to gain the attentions of Socrates. Intimate dinners, sleeping in the same bed with him, all failed. Even when Alcibiades made an explicit offer of his charms in exchange for Socrates’ educating him, he was refused. Socrates even went so far as to say that if he had in himself the kind of beauty that Alcibiades imagined he had, he (Socrates) would suffer from the exchange of something noble for something far more common. Thus Socrates is altogether free of that confusion which marked the speech of Pausanias.

At this point was formed the attitude that seems to have moved Alcibiades henceforward. Although he felt that he had been dishonoured by Socrates, nevertheless it was impossible for him not to admire his courage and self-possession (219d3-7). Of the latter, Alcibiades then gives several instances, which he himself witnessed while they were fighting together during Athenian military campaigns. Twice he observed Socrates’ absolute coolness under fire, and always Socrates seemed completely indifferent to the hardships soldiers must endure. He could out-drink everyone and yet never be drunk. On one occasion when Socrates had saved a wounded Alcibiades, and the generals wished to honour Alcibiades, despite his efforts to see Socrates honoured, Socrates was more desirous that Alcibiades should receive the award. Alcibiades was also a witness to Socrates’ celebrated contemplative abstractions, which enabled him, despite the weather, to stand lost in thought for long period of time.

Alcibiades concludes his praise of Socrates by declaring his absolute originality amongst men, both now and before. No one can equal him either in his self-possession or in his discourses. Finally, he adds that in relation to the youth, rather than his pursuing them, as a lover does his beloved, they become the lovers. He thus advises Agathon to beware lest he suffer what Alcibiades and many others have suffered.
V.

The speech of Alcibiades brings out an extreme division between him and Socrates, in the context of the "begetting in the beautiful" which had concluded Diotima's account of eros. Neither Socrates nor Alcibiades has achieved this begetting, but the opposing ways in which they have failed to do so indicates to Socrates how it would be possible. Neither Socrates' abstracted self-possession in the midst of his activity nor Alcibiades' confused devotion to certain goods followed by a shamed wish to renounce them, defines the begetting in the beautiful. In neither is there a love of the beautiful that brings forth beauties in its train.

Only in a reformed poetry written by a poet of philosophical insight can Socrates see the true begetter in the beautiful. Thus, shortly after the speech of Alcibiades and the entry of further revelers, Socrates tries to compel both Agathon and Aristophanes to agree that one poet ought to be capable of both Tragedy- and Comedy-making (223d3-6). Since the Platonic Aristophanes and Agathon, in their speeches above, only dividedly taught the doctrine that Diotima taught, the reformed poetry would supposedly teach that whole doctrine. Thus it would indicate the individual's discovery of the Beautiful as the ground of an activity that subsisted together with it. This would at once correct Agathon's collapsing of the distinction between the individual and the Beautiful and Aristophanes' attempt to show an individuality not entirely grounded in the Beautiful, but yet dependent on it in its search for wholeness.

This reformed poetry would exist for the education of the City, as both the Tragic and Comic Festivals, in their divided teaching, already did. It would thus teach all the citizens a complete account of their human nature, in its true ground. Poetry, as thus purified by philosophical teaching, would finally attain its true goal.

Socrates has achieved this last view not directly through Diotima but in his own reflection on it. It thus represents that 'begetting in the beautiful' which has heretofore eluded him. It completes that tendency which marked the beginning of the dialogue, where Socrates had attained the Beautiful in its external form, as made beautiful for a beautiful man. Through the teaching of Diotima, he has learned the nature of the begetting in the beautiful, and in his attempt to persuade the poets of the need for a reformed poetry, he has himself begotten in the Beautiful.

Therefore, this final scene of the dialogue is at once the logical conclusion of the dialogue, and its limit. It completes the development of Socrates' relation to the beautiful, with which it had begun; it thereby shows the potential re-making, on a philosophical basis, of that poetry whose limits were the occasion for the arising of a philosophical view of eros. This transformation of poetry begins by its being restated in the form of logoi by the comic and tragic poets. Comedy and Tragedy can then appear as dividedly presenting the elements that form the view of eros presented by Diotima. When she has defined the goal of eros as a 'begetting in the beautiful,' then the necessity for transforming the content itself of poetry concludes the dialogue.
However, the reformed poetry that the dialogue says must exist, does not yet exist, and if the above remarks questioning Plato's view of both Tragedy and Comedy be true, cannot exist. It was argued above that Tragedy and Comedy present radically opposite views, the one emphasizing the divine as that to which all things return, the other declaring that humanity is far more capable than any divinity of unifying the moments of the Greek religion. Diotima's account of eros does not fully contain either the tragic or the comic idea. Her account of the Beautiful does not so radically unite humanity with it as does god in Tragedy. Nor does her human individual so thoroughly make himself master of the divine moments as does the individual of Comedy. Thus Plato's inability to fully comprehend Tragedy and Comedy is the limit of Symposium.
The 'Simonides Agon' As A Pivotal Discourse In Plato's 
*Protagoras*

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The sophistic debate between Socrates and Protagoras over Simonides' merit as a poet has generally been dismissed as an interruption in the main argument on whether arete can be taught. The agon might be allowed a thematic or dramatic role, but it is not thought to contribute anything that advances the main argument. I hope to show that it does.

In terms of the dramatic narrative, Protagoras' introduction of an agon on Simonides enables Socrates to grasp the essential opposition between his own position as 'philosopher' and that of Protagoras as 'sophist', which has caused their argument concerning the nature of arete to break down. Socrates cleverly parlays his exegesis of Simonides into a discourse that introduces the Platonic distinction between 'becoming' and 'being'. The recognition of this distinction constitutes the ground of philosophy; the ignorance or confusion of this distinction provides a platform for sophistry. The introduction of the Platonic doctrine of becoming enables the main argument on arete to be renewed, on different ground than before, and with a new direction. The Simonides agon thus functions as a pivotal discourse in the *Protagoras*. This is not to deny that it is an interruption or a digression from the main argument on arete; rather, it is to see the

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1 The Simonides fragment embedded in the debate has received considerable attention in its own right. See the bibliography of Hugh Parry (1965) for earlier work, of which most useful is Woodbury (1953). Thayer (1975) offers an interesting comment on Plato's use of Simonides in the *Republic* and *Protagoras*. See the appendix for my own transliteration and translation of the Simonides text in the dialogue. The Greek text of the *Protagoras* is the OCT of Burnet.

2 For example, the agon is dismissed outright by Guthrie (1975) for doing "nothing to advance the main argument," by Weingartner (1973) as an "entertaining digression into 'comic relief," and by Grube (1958) as simply where Socrates "outsophisticates the Sophists". Friedlander (1964) finds a "thematic" connection between the "substance" of the Socratic moral doctrine, which appears in the agon, and that of the main argument. But the connection is tenuous, since the agon remains an inconsequential interruption to the main argument. This remains true even for the more attentive reading of Rutherford (1992), and the detailed analyses of the argument by Adam and Adam (1962), Taylor (1976) and Coby (1987). Adam and Adam, and Taylor comprehend the agon within the more general thematic context of education; Rutherford and Coby emphasise Socrates' concern with the form of argument. Coby's analysis particularly demonstrates the liberty Socrates takes with Simonides' text.
agon as an utterly necessary interruption without which the argument on arete could not be renewed.

The function of the Simonides agon becomes apparent when its philosophic doctrine is brought to bear on the aporia which Socrates' argument for the unity of arete met in Protagoras' assertion that the good is relative. It becomes evident that the necessary hypothesis of Socrates' argument for the unity of arete is the Platonic hypothesis of an objective and absolute idea of good as the principle of being and not-being. Being is thought relative to the absolute self-identity of the good, as is not-being. Protagoras' idea of good is subjective and relative; being and not-being are relative to human determination. In other words, 'man is the measure of all things, both of what is, that it is, and of what is not, that it is not.' For the Platonic Socrates, man knows himself as measured by the good.

In Protagoras' demonstration of the relativity of the good, there is present an indeterminacy that is the ground of the Protagorean measure. In his example of the uses of olive oil, the oil may be something good, not-good, or indifferent. The possibility of indifference reveals the indeterminate nature of the thing itself that is measured. Oil in itself is neither good nor not-good; it is an indeterminate nature which is indifferent to man's measuring. Just as Socrates must assume the absolutely self-determinate nature of the good, so must Protagoras' doctrine of the relativity of being and not-being assume the underlying existence of the indeterminate, a kind of absolute not-being, which is yet thought to be there.

In the immediacy of their confrontation, the Socratic absolute and the Protagorean relative and indeterminate mutually negate one another as universal first principles. Dialectic is no longer possible until one side comprehends the other. In their dispute on method, Plato makes clear the need for a withdrawal from the main argument and the digression into a mediating content that will serve to bring out the logic of their confrontation. That mediating content is the debate on poetry, an unconstraining content that suits the purpose Plato has in mind for the Simonides agon.

The initial arguments of the Simonides agon serve to bring out the cause of the aporia which has collapsed the dialectic on arete into a sophistic debate on poetry. It will suffice to sum up briefly the argument to where Socrates begins his exegesis.

Protagoras has accused Simonides of contradicting himself when he censures Pittacus in one passage for saying the same thing as he says himself in another passage. In effect, the poet is found guilty of saying it both is and is not hard to be good. On their agreement that a poem is not composed well if a poet contradicts himself in it, Protagoras refutes Socrates' opinion of the poem as well-composed.

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Invoking the aid of Prodicus, Socrates defends himself and Simonides by establishing a semantic distinction between Simondes' use of the word *genesthai* and Pittacus' use of the word *emmenai*. On the basis of the difference in meaning of becoming and being, Simonides is not guilty of self-contradiction. The poet said initially that it is hard for a man to *become* good; when he censured Pittacus afterward it was for saying something quite different, namely, that it is hard for a man to *be* good. Socrates then goes on, however, to dismiss Prodicus' science of meanings as really have no objective ground.

The purpose of these semantic arguments is to bring before Socrates an interesting ignorance on the part of Protagoras. It is difficult to say whether Socrates himself had a prior grasp of the ontological implications of the distinction between being and becoming. It would seem more likely that it is here, because of the prior assertion of the Protagorean indeterminate and relative good against the Socratic absolute, self-determinate good, that Socrates is seen to give birth to the Platonic doctrine of becoming.

The *agon* now passes over into Socrates' exegesis of Simonides' poem, which Socrates presents as a defence of his thesis that the poem is a composition by Simonides contra Pittacus. The thesis conveniently represents the opposition between his own position and that of Protagoras. For Socrates, the 'being' of Pittacus is equivalent to the relative 'being' of Protagoras. What Protagoras-Pittacus hold to as 'being', Socrates-Simonides know to be really a 'becoming'.

Socrates attempts to establish his thesis in the text by correcting what he considers a possible misreading of the first passage. Socrates could not allow for Simonides to say that "it is hard indeed to become truly good." To read the text that way would imply the possibility of either a becoming "truly good" or "good but not truly". He then reads the verse so that Simonides is saying, "indeed it is truly hard for a man to become good." This reading places the emphasis on the distinction between the position of Simonides and Pittacus so that it appears that the poem is introduced with the purpose of refutation clearly declared.

The emphasis on the distinction between a 'becoming' that belongs to man and a 'being' that belongs only to a god serves to lay down the primary distinction in the doctrine of becoming - that it is a different state from an absolute being, yet has some kind of reality to it. Becoming is a permanent state that can be described neither as a state of being nor as a state of not-being; rather, as the argument will show, it is an intermediate state between being and not-being.

Socrates' initial ruling out of "truly good" and "good but not truly" as the contraries of becoming is a necessary assumption from which he is able to develop in his exegesis the doctrine of becoming. The notion of a "good but not truly" belongs to the Protagorean indeterminate underlying the relative good. Oil is good relative to whatever it is good for, but to itself it is neither good nor not-good; therefore, as relatively good, it is "good but not truly." "Truly good" and "good but not truly" take on the significance of a contrariety between a Socratic absolute as 'being' and a Protagorean indeterminate which is equally absolute as 'not-being.' If these were allowed to be contraries of becoming, contrariety...
would be the essential character of things, and one would have an intolerable dualism. Such an absolute contrariety could never permit a 'becoming' since, as primary, equal and contrary absolutes, being and not-being negate the possibility of one another.

So far as it belongs to the original Socratic position in the dialogue to hold to the good as an absolute principle and universal measure of being and not-being to which there can be allowed no contrary, to that position belongs the development of the Platonic doctrine of becoming which assumes the nature of the Socratic good as its first principle. At the same time, it is understood that the Protagorean position develops into an impossible dualism of contraries so far as it permits the existence of the indeterminate; or, to look at it another way, so far as it permits the non-existent an ontological status equal, yet contrary, to the existent. It therefore becomes a real concern of Socrates' exegesis to rule out the indeterminate even as he develops a doctrine of an otherness to the single absolute which is yet not its contrary.

Commenting on a mere five verses of Simondes' poem, Socrates outlines the nature of becoming in three stages of reflection on the text and its image of an amechanos sumphora or "irresistible misfortune", treated here as a poetic image of becoming. The Simonides text thus gives rise to three orders of questions that are logical steps in Socrates' account of becoming.

The first stage of Socrates' reflection on the Simonides text gives rise to the question of whom, in the command of a ship, could misfortune throw down. Neither man simply, nor man fallen could be overthrown; rather, it must be man standing. The order of his reflection is to lay down the inner structure of becoming as a motion or change constituted out of contraries. In the image of the contrariety between man standing and man fallen as subject to misfortune, Socrates presents being and not-being as the stabilising elements of a constant motion. The idea is that change or motion can only take place between contraries.

To rule out fallen man is to rule out of becoming the possibility of a change which does not contain, and is not contained within, contrariety. There can be no change between being and being or not-being and not-being, for since there is no difference or division, no change is possible. Ruled out with simply man is the possibility of the indifferent, the element of indifference which co-existed alongside the Protagorean being and not-being. The indifferent, the indeterminate, cannot assume the status of a terminus for change.

The implication of the first stage of reflection prepares one for the second stage. The moments of being and not-being which Protagoras holds as separate and mutually negating one another, are to be understood as contained within a becoming which by its very nature, properly understood, reveals their underlying connection. As the elements or contrary extremes of a single becoming, being and not-being are no longer understood as separate moments unto themselves, but moments of one another as moments of a becoming of each other. Stabilised in contrariety, becoming takes on the appearance of being, for it is ever constant in the nature of its change.
In his second stage of reflection, the text allows Socrates to wonder what sort of man may be caused by misfortune to fall from good to bad. The man who is already bad cannot become bad, he must remain as he is; rather, it is, to quote another poet says Socrates, "the good man who is at one time good, at another time bad." Whereas the first order of question was about the inner structure of becoming, the second order of question is about the relation of that structure to the principle which it necessarily assumes to lie outside it.

The ruling out of the bad man who cannot become bad because he already is bad is the ruling out of the indeterminate as the possible underlying principle of becoming. For Protagoras, there is ever present the indeterminate not-being of the thing itself which lies beyond and is yet necessarily assumed by the man who measures relative to himself. The indeterminate is an absolute otherness to the relative being and not-being out of which he constructs a reality for himself. Yet, because he knows this reality as relative only to himself, with no relation to the object of his measuring, this reality, this world, is ultimately the reality which belongs to a Heraclitean concept of change as endlessly indeterminate. For Heraclitus, the reality of all things is an indiscriminate flux. What Heraclitus measures as changing, Protagoras measures as unchanging; namely, the indeterminate as the underlying reality. The indeterminate is not allowed by Socrates just because he has hold of the determinate principle of reality as absolute rather than as relative. To allow the indeterminate would admit an intolerable dualism between an absolute being and absolute not-being which yet somehow is. Human thinking would be ever caught in the constant assertion and negation of one over the other. Taken separately, they represent the opposition of the Heraclitean indeterminate to the Parmenidean absolutely self-determinate. Where Protagoras has an affinity with Heraclitus, Socrates has an affinity with Parmenides.

It is not then the bad man but the good man who is capable of becoming both good and bad. There is of course an assumed distinction between the good of the man as fundamentally good, and the good of becoming good and bad. That is the initial distinction made between becoming and being. Now, however, the distinction reappears not as absolute; becoming is not absolutely something other than being, but the otherness of being to itself. The good that the man becomes, as the contrary of bad, is neither identical with the absolute good which underlies his becoming, nor contrary to it. Rather, it is a likeness or image of it.

Laid down in the second order of question, then, is that the underlying reality which informs and determines becoming is the absolute and universal being, which is yet distinct from becoming as its principle. There is no way to explain further how being is the being of becoming, and how becoming is the becoming of being, that would not seem endlessly repetitive. The third stage of reflection takes up the last two in its completion of the account of becoming.

Quoting Simonides' conclusion that, given man's state, any man who fares well is good, while he who fares ill is bad, Socrates raises the question of who it is that is able to fare well, and who ill. Ruled out is the possibility of the common, or in this case the
ignorant man; rather, it must be the man who already is a this or a that, doctor or lawyer, that may then become a good or bad doctor or lawyer. Becoming is here considered as the image of human knowing. At the beginning of the dialogue, one had Socrates asserting that the true life of the soul was its rational life, a man being what he knows, and becoming what he learns. Here, however, knowing is an image of becoming.

The order of the question in this third stage is a reflection upon becoming as the becoming of being, which is shown to be the state of being in becoming. Ruled out in the ignorant man is once again the indeterminate, only here most explicitly as the impossible state of absolute not-being. Here is made explicit the doctrine of becoming as eliminating the possibility of something coming from nothing. There is neither a beginning nor an end to becoming. Rather, it is an ever present state, the image of the unchanging in the changing, of the eternal in time.

In terms of a mathesis and steresis of episteme, Socrates presents a final image of the intelligible structure he has uncovered in the world. Becoming is regarded here as the whole self-contained cycle of generation and corruption in which change is ever present in that which as a whole never changes, but is always a becoming what it somehow already is, yet is not.

Turning to the conclusion of the agon, one finds Socrates imposing his doctrine that 'no one does wrong willingly' upon the Simonides text. Simonides may be abused, but it serves to point out the significance of the whole agon.

What is now possible is to think one's way from the contariety of being and not-being to a becoming, the nature of which points to a first principle. A self-knowledge such as Socrates is seeking is now possible. The soul does not know itself directly but only through a knowledge of what is other to it. In effect, Socrates is now able to set forth a way for the soul to find its way home to its principle, through a knowledge of the world to a knowledge of itself as the otherness of the good. That this is the greater implication of the Simonides agon, as realised more fully in the Republic and Phaedo, is made evident from the structure of the concluding arguments of the Protagoras on the nature of arete.

Possessing a clear understanding of Protagoras' position, Socrates constructs an initial argument that forces the underlying indeterminate essential to the doctrine of relativity out into the open. Protagoras is seen to withdraw into a definition of courage that asserts the indeterminacy of phusis as the true life of the soul. Socrates is able to overcome Protagoras' destruction of the soul as rational precisely by creating an argument by which the natural, as the life of the soul, is demonstrated to be a structured reality, a reality in which its moments of pain and pleasure are brought into a determinate relation to an absolute good.

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APPENDIX
Simonides text in *Protagoras* 339b-346d.
[Translation is my own.]

andr' agathon men alathews genesthai chalepon
chersin te kai posi kai nowi tetragnwnon,
aneu psogou tetugmenon:

Hard it is, on the one hand, a good man truly to become,
Perfectly squared both in hands and feet and in mind,
Well-made without fault.

oude moi emmelews to Pittakeion nemetai,
kaitoi sophou para phwtos eirhmenon:
    chalepon phat' esthlon emmenai.

Nor does this proverb of Pittacus sit well with me,
Though pronounced by a wise man:
"Hard it is to be noble."

theos an monos tout' echoi geras,

Only a god could attain this honor

andra d' ouk esti mh ou kakon emmenai,
hon [an] amchanos sumphora kathelhi.

It is not for a man not to be bad
Whom irresistible misfortune would cast down.

praxas men gar eu pas anhr agathos,
kakos d' ei kaksw.

For faring well every man is good,
But bad if he fares badly,

touneken ou pot' egw to mh genesthai dunaton
dizhmenos kenean es aprakton elpida moiran aiwnos balew,
panamwmon anthrwpon, euruedous hosoi karpon
ainumetha chthonos:
epi th' humin heurwn apaggelew,

Wherefore never shall I vainly throw away
My allotted share of life on an impossible dream,
Seeking that which cannot come to be,
An all-blameless man,
Where so many of us feed upon the fruit of the broad-seated earth:
I'll send you word if I find him.

pantas d' epainhmi kai philew
hekwn hostis erdhi
mhden aischron: anagkhi d' oude theoi machontai:

But all those,
Whoever does nothing disgraceful willingly
I love and praise:
Not even a god makes war upon necessity.

emoig' exarkei hos an mh kakos hi
mhd' agan apalamnos, eidws t' onhsipolin dikan hugihs
anhr:
ou min eg mmsomai

For me at least any man suffices
Who is neither bad nor utterly useless,
A healthy man knowing justice,
The good of the city:
Him shall I find blameless.

twn garh lithin apeirwn genethla
For the race of fools is endless

panta toi kala, toisi t' aischra mh memeiktai.

All that is noble, whatever is not mixed with the disgraceful.

Select Bibliography

PROVENCAL: THE 'SIMONIDES AGON' AS A PIVOTAL DISCOURSE IN PLATO'S PROTAGORAS

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Aristotle On The Separation Of Species-Form

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"Whereas Plato separates the Formal cause from its materiate participants, and posits a One over the Many, Aristotle insists that the universal species-form must reside in its singular members." This is the kind of simplistic and formulaic account of the difference between the Platonic and Aristotelian metaphysics that one might expect to discover in any standard textbook on the history of philosophy. For the purposes of a general introduction to the subject it is perhaps adequate; but for the serious scholar it represents, at best, only one side of the truth. Separation (chwrismos) for Aristotle, as for Plato, is one of the chief attributes of the primary substance. Aristotle does not reject the idea of separate forms; he clarifies and develops it, so as to purge it of certain paradoxical implications which are attendant upon its more traditional formulations. This paper is an exploration of two central aspects of the Aristotelian development of the Platonic concept of separation:

(1) Aristotle, we will argue, reinterprets the Platonic separation as a noetic separation, a separation in definition (twi logwi chwriston), thus circumventing the various paradoxes connected with the idea of a quasi-physical separation from sensibles. Commentators, anxious to avoid Platonizing implications, have misconstrued this idea of definitional separation as a merely conceptual separation, akin to the conceptual separation of the objects of mathematics. Aristotle's real meaning, however, is that the species-forms are grounded in an objective and eternal thinking, viz. the self-thinking thought of the divine mind. The separation of the divine mind affords the species-forms a kind of transcendence that is fully compatible with their immanence in the species-members.

(2) The Aristotelian categorial framework narrows significantly the range of the Platonic chwrismos. Whereas Plato, at times, envisions separate Forms for all classes of entity, Aristotle reserves formal separation for the substantial species-forms. Non-substantial forms (e.g. qualities, quantities, relations, etc) and artificial forms (e.g. the form of a house) all exhibit modes of inherence and ontic dependency in concrete substances. The species-form, however, is not an inherent attribute of the concrete substance. It is the cause which makes the concrete substance the kind of substance that it is. Thus the species-form is prior in being to the various species-members, and must be grounded in the transcendent mind of God.
Before turning to the elaboration and defence of these specific theses, some general remarks about the state of contemporary scholarship are in order.

I. Is Aristotelian Metaphysics Apodeictic Science Or Conceptual Analysis?

The aforementioned tendency to interpret the primacy and separation of the species-forms as a merely conceptual separation, can be regarded as part and parcel of a general interpretative shift in the Aristotelian scholarship. There is a well-entrenched view of the *Metaphysics*, associated in particular with the writings of G.E.L. Owen, according to which the methods and concerns of the Aristotelian 'first philosophy' are entirely distinct from those demonstrative, or 'apodeictic', methods of inquiry which are pursued in the empirical sciences and painstakingly outlined in the *Posterior Analytics*. On Owen's influential view, first philosophy is construed rather as a dialectical science, in the vein of the *Topics*, focused especially on the clarification and analysis of reputable opinions (*endoxa*) and linguistic usage (*legomena*). A similar position has been advocated on the continent by P. Aubenque, W. Leszl, and J. Moreau. All of these scholars regard first philosophy as an introspective inquiry into the human conceptual apparatus--into the first principles of human thought and communication.

On the face it, this perspective has a certain plausibility. After all, Aristotle is primarily concerned in the *Metaphysics* with the analysis of certain homonymous or multivocal principles, like being, unity, substance, sameness, actuality, etc.; and this interest in homonymy can be construed, quite readily, as an interest in defining the multiple senses of the words, 'being', 'one', 'same', 'substance', 'actual', as those words are employed in ordinary language. Thus, for Owen, the science of being *qua* being is not a strict demonstrative science, which seeks to deduce theorems about the objective structure of beings; it is a semantic inquiry that aims at the clarification of the language of 'being' and cognate expressions. The various ways in which being is spoken of correspond to the categories, viz. substance, quality, quantity, relation, etc., which, on Owen's view, represent the ultimate meanings of 'being' as presupposed in ordinary discourse. Despite their homonymy, or diversity of definition, the categorial meanings are nonetheless unified, in virtue of their various connections to substance, the foundational principle of the inquiry. For Owen, these connections between categories are semantic

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1 Owen's seminal work on the science of being, which first introduces the notion of 'focal meaning', is his "Logic and Metaphysics in Some Earlier Works of Aristotle" [in Plato and Aristotle in the mid-fourth Century, ed. Owen and During (Goteborg, 1960)]; see also "The Platonism of Aristotle", *Proceedings of the British Academy* 51 (1965).

connections, linking the various nominal definitions of the word 'being; they are not essential and causal connections, linking objective genera of beings to their common source and principle; thus they cannot be analysed according to Aristotle's normal demonstrative practice. These semantic connections constitute what Owen calls a doctrine of 'focal meaning', a terminology that has since gained a wide acceptance, even though its underlying interpretative bias has not always received adequate attention.  

Many objections can be brought to bear against such a view of Aristotle's purposes and methods in the *Metaphysics*. To begin with, the notion that Aristotle's interest in homonymy is an interest in the multiple meanings of words is a serious distortion. The correction of this view has recently been accomplished by way of a detailed analysis of the concept of 'signification' (*to shmainein*). Put simply, when Aristotle says that a word, like 'being', has multiple significations he is saying not that it has many senses, but that it has many potential referents, that there are many essential natures to which it can correctly be applied. The homonyms (*homwnuma*) are not words with many senses, but entities with diverse essences. Aristotle does not even have a word for 'concept'; in general his view of language presupposes only words and their objective referents, without the mediation of any intensional level of analysis. Moreover, the notion that metaphysics is an introspective form of inquiry, an analysis of the human conceptual and linguistic framework, introduces a notion of self-reflection that is alien to Aristotle's psychology. The mind, as Aristotle tells us explicitly at *De An.*III 4-5, has no intrinsic content or structure, but is a pure potentiality for knowing; it is itself knowable only mediately, through the objective essences which enform it and make it actual. There is no possibility here of a self-enclosed inquiry into conceptual first principles.

Even if metaphysics were primarily a dialectical science, i.e. an inquiry that takes reputable opinions as its basis (i.e. opinions of the wise, or common opinions), still this would not imply that metaphysics is a conceptual science. The scientific application of dialectical methods is, for Aristotle, merely a starting point in the pursuit of objective truths about the world: one must consider what other philosophers have said about the nature of things as a preliminary to one's own investigations. The search for truth is, to this extent only, a work of collaboration, which is historically conditioned; but it is not limited to an analysis of what others have said, in detachment from the objective structure of the world. There is only one area of Aristotelian inquiry that can reasonably be construed as constituting a properly conceptual form of inquiry: and that is mathematics. For in mathematics and geometry, as Aristotle explains in *M.*2, one conceives as primary that which in reality is posterior, viz. number or dimensionality. In mathematics there is an inversion of the true structure of the world, in which what is primary for thought diverges from what is primary for being. But this divergence does not occur, and must

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not occur, in metaphysics: for here we are searching for what is primary both in being and in definition. The formal conditions for definability that Aristotle sets out, e.g., in Zeta 4-6 are based upon ontological relations of priority and posteriority; that which is fully and properly definable, must be ontologically basic, such that it does not presuppose in its explanatory account any dependence on an underlying substrate [Cf. note 11]. It is this demand--which is a demand both for thinking and being--that leads Aristotle ultimately to the conclusion that the species-form is primary substance (prwth ousia): the cause of the being of sensible substance, and thus indirectly of the non-substantial forms of being, i.e. the categories, that inhere in sensible substance. The relations of priority in question here are neither semantic nor conceptual relations, such as would arise from an introspective analysis of human thought and language; they are the objective causal connections that constitute the structure of being and substance. In stressing the objective character of the priority and 'separation' of the species-forms, and a fundamental continuity with Platonic metaphysics, we are insisting that the difficulties surrounding the relation of form, matter and composite, especially as developed in Metaphysics Zeta, must be faced directly, and not reduced to a bit of linguistic or conceptual tidy-mindedness.

II. Textual Interpretation

Aristotle's criticisms of the Platonic Forms center especially around the notion of separation (chwrismos), which is clearly defined by Aristotle at Delta 11:

Some things are spoken of as prior and posterior in the preceding sense, others are so called according to nature and substance (kata physin kai ousian), wherever one class of items can exist apart from another (einaia ne aneu allwn), but the other cannot exist apart from it-- a distinction which Plato employs (1019a1-4)

The concept of separation is logically embedded in the idea of ontological priority: A is prior in being to B just in case A can exist apart from B, while B cannot exist apart from A. Aristotle indicates that it is this notion of ontic priority and separation that Plato envisions for his Forms. But-- as Aristotle constantly complains-- if the Forms exist apart

5 How precisely the investigation of this structure of relations can be regarded as a project for demonstrative science, in the sense of the Posterior Analytics, is a problem explored at length in my forthcoming PhD dissertation, The Demonstrative Structure and Methodology of the Aristotelian Science of Being qua Being. I hope to share the results of that inquiry in the near future. This dissertation is part of a larger movement in the recent scholarship to recover the scientific or 'demonstrative' character of metaphysics. I note especially A. Code's "Owen on the Development of Aristotle's Metaphysics," in Aristotle's Philosophical Development, ed. W. Wians (Rowan and Littlefield Publishers, 1996): 305-325; R. Bolton's "Science and the Science of Substance in Aristotle's Metaphysics Z," in Form, Matter and Mixture, ed. F. Lewis and R. Bolton (Oxford 1996): 231-280; and M. Frede, "The Unity of General and Special Metaphysics," in Essays in Ancient Philosophy (Oxford 1987). In general there is a growing discontentment with that picture of Aristotle as an 'ordinary language philosopher' that so dominated the scholarship of the 60's and 70's.
from their instances then they cannot function as causes of their being and becoming. In order for a Form X to function as the cause of the X-ness of its members it must reside in them as an immanent formative principle.  

The cause of the substantiality of the concrete particulars must function from within, as a biological and generative principle, which forms and determines the menstruum, transforming it from an indeterminate heap into a 'this' (tode ti,). This principle of determination is not transcendent: it is contained in the semen of the progenitor and transmitted to his progeny, and so on ad infinitum.

From the side of biological generation this picture appears coherent and unproblematic: the eternality of the formal cause is maintained through the eternal process of generation and corruption in the sub-lunar world. The form is not separate, but neither does it come to be and pass away (1033b5ff); it is somehow transmitted eternally from one individual species-member to the next. It is prior to the composite only in this temporal sense: just as the material menstruum must pre-exist in the mother's womb, so the form must pre-exist in the progenitor, so that it can be passed on the progeny (aei gar dei prouparchein thn hylhn kai to eidos, 1034b12-13).

But there is another perspective on the formal cause that does not sit easily with the generative model just described. In this divergent perspective, which I will call the 'ontological', form is viewed not diachronically, as the cause of coming-into-being, but synchronically, as the cause of being and actuality. As soon as one takes seriously the fact that the organic body of the composite substance is formally and functionally defined--i.e. that no formless matter can be identified in its actual composition--the idea that the biological substance is a composite of form in matter becomes suspect. In what sense can the species-form properly be said to reside in the material body, or to be transmitted from one individual to another, if the individual substance cannot even be identified as an actual substance except through the determination of the species-form?

This ontological perspective on form, in which form is viewed as cause of actual being, yields conclusions that are incompatible with the generative perspective, in which the form is viewed merely as cause of coming-into-being and is afforded a diachronic eternality only. The generative model makes no attempt to work through the deeper problems of ontological priority that surround the relation of form, matter and composite; it simply asserts that the generator is adequate to the transmission of the form and the causing of the form in the matter. But the generator does not own the form; it is not a possession that he can pass on, like a piece of antique furniture. In this regard, Aristotle's frequent employment of artistic and biological analogies can be misleading. To be sure there is a ready sense in which the craftsman, say a sculptor, causes the form in the marble with which he works. Here the formal cause, the idea in the mind of the sculptor (to eidos en thi psychhi, 1032b1), is clearly subordinated to the efficient causality of the artist. But to infer that a father, in the same way, causes the form of humanity in the

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6 "Further it would seem to be impossible for the substance to be separate from that of which it is the substance ( eti doxeien an adunaton einai choris thn ousian kai hou h ousia, 991b1-2)."
7 For species-form as cause of the determination or 'thisness' of the matter see esp. Z.17 1041b4-9.
8 Aristotle's account of the containment of the form in the semen is discussed in Bk.1 of Generation of Animals.
menstruum is misleading to say the least.\footnote{9} In the biological case the formal cause is not contained in, and subordinated to the generator. The form is the cause of the actual being of the generator, just as it is the cause of the being and becoming of his offspring. The progenitor is formally identical (\textit{homoeidhs}, 1032a24) to the progeny. Within the ontological perspective, as developed especially in the middle books of the \textit{Metaphysics},\footnote{10} Aristotle is led to the inevitable conclusion that the formal cause is ontologically prior to the matter and the composite (1029a29-32; 1050b2-6). It is primary substance (\textit{prwth ousia}, 1037a27-29) and the cause of being and substantiality (\textit{aitia tou einai}, 1043a2)

The priority of the formal cause is explored aporetically in chapters 10-11 of Book Zeta. There Aristotle distinguishes clearly between the definition (logos) of the form and the definition of the composite. In the first mode of definition the matter is not present. The form as such is defined without reference to any external conditions of instantiation. It is \textit{auto kath' auto} (1037a21). The definition of the composite, by contrast, has a predicative or 'this in that' (\textit{tode en twde}) structure, expressing the inherence of the form in a suitable matter, i.e. a matter fitted to perform the vital functions specified in the essence of the form. Thus the form of the human, viewed per se, is prior in definition to the flesh and bones of the composite human, from which the latter comes to be, and into which it is resolved after death. These material parts are part of the what-is-being (\textit{to ti hn einai}) of the composite, but not of the form (1037a24-26). The composite is a derivative entity, and its derivative status is reflected in the predicational structure of its essence or what-is-being. By contrast the formal cause is primary entity, an indivisible whole of parts, and thus it is defined without reference to any underlying substrate.\footnote{11} The form, as an organic complex of functions, can be defined without reference to the ultimate matter, or \textit{eschath hyle}, of the composite.\footnote{12}

\footnote{9} The analogy between artistic production and natural generation is pressed hard at Z.7-9, in the context of an anti-Platonic polemic. Just as the artist is adequate to the causing of the artificial form in the matter, so the progenitor is adequate to the causing of the biological form in the menstruum (\textit{alla hikanon to gennwn poihai kai tou eidous aition einai en thi hyli}, 1034a4-5). Thus there is no need to posit separate Forms to explain coming-into-being. But this move completely overlooks issues of ontological priority between form and composite. See infra note 10.

\footnote{10} Z.7-9 are exceptional, since they move for the most part within the terms of the generative model, and do not touch on the question of the ontic priority of the formal cause. In general these chapters seem to interrupt the flow of the argument between Z.4-6 and Z.10-11. At Z.4-6 certain formal criteria of definability are set out, which are then brought to bear in Z.10-11 on the definitions of form and composite. Whereas Z.7-9 seem to suppress the question of the ontic priority of form (in favour of a temporal priority and a diachronic eternality), Z.4-6, and 10-11 move inexorably towards the view that primary substance must be prior in being an therefore (in some sense) separate.

\footnote{11} According to the formal criteria for definability set out in Z.4-6 there will be a definition expressing an essence (\textit{to ti hn einai}) whenever we are dealing with a determinate kind (\textit{tode ti}) and a primary entity (\textit{prwt\ion}), but not in those cases where a thing's nature is expressed by predicating one thing of another (1030a3-11). These formal criteria are applied in Z.10-11 to the definitions of form and composite: the form alone is strictly definable, while the composite has an essence and definition in a secondary way.

\footnote{12} The identity of the ultimate matter is a confused issue in Z.10-11. Sometimes Aristotle speaks as though the homoiomerous parts, e.g. flesh and bone, are ultimate constituents into which the composite is resolved. His more usual view, however, is that flesh and bone are inseparable from the living substance, to the extent that they are functionally defined. The flesh and bone of a dead man are flesh and bone only
If the formal cause is prior in being and definition to matter and the composite, then how will this square with Aristotle's anti-Platonic polemic? Priority in being, according to the lights of Delta 11, implies separation, the capacity to exist apart. And this ontic priority seems to be required for Aristotle's formal causes if they are to function as causes of the being and substantiality of the species-members. Now, the standard way of resolving this difficulty is to construe the priority of the Aristotelian formal cause as a priority in definition only, i.e. as a conceptual and not an ontological priority. It is Aristotle's express view, e.g. at De An. III 4-5, that human thinking is identical, in actual being, to the forms that it thinks. So it might appear that the actuality of form is fully realized in human consciousness, by way of a conceptual abstraction from its material basis. This conclusion is often inferred from the following passage in Eta 2:

The substratum is substance...and in another way the definition and shape which, since it is a this (tode ti), is separate in definition (twi logwi chwriston); and thirdly, that which is composed of these is substance, which alone undergoes generation and destruction, and is separate without qualification (chwriston haplws) (1042a26-31).

Here the separation of the formal cause is described as a separation in definition, in contrast with the unqualified separation of the concrete particular. It seems evident that Aristotle has in mind for the formal cause a separation in thinking, and not in concrete, physical existence. To this extent he resists falling back into the naive version of Platonism that he elsewhere vehemently critiques, viz. the view according to which the Forms seem to enjoy a quasi-physical separation from their instances. But it is a serious homonymously. Flesh and bone, viewed functionally, are therefore parts of the species-form. However, if we view the flesh and bone in terms of their matter, viz. the elements, they are no longer species-specific. The elemental matter is not functionally defined in terms of any specific nature. Thus the elements have a claim to the title of eschat hylh. Whether there is a prime matter that further underlies the elemental transmutations is a vexed issue in the scholarship (for a summary of the debate see Bostock, Aristotle: Metaphysics Z and H, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994): 76-85)

13 "A substantial form does not exist in the world as a separate entity, but as an entity that can be separated out from a concrete substance by abstraction." [T. Scaltas, Substance and Universals in Aristotle's Metaphysics (Ithaca: Cornell University Press 1994): 193]. M.L. Gill [Aristotle on Substance (Princeton, N.J. 1989)] makes the same point: "Separation in account apparently concerns an entity's conceptual independence from other more basic entities..." (p.36). For the same view, see also: W.K.C. Guthrie, A History of Greek Philosophy, Vol. VI (Cambridge University Press, 1988): 219-20; Donald Morrison, 'Separation in Aristotle's Metaphysics,' Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy, vol. 3 (1985): 156-57; Michael Loux, Primary Ousia (Cornell University Press, 1991): 261-64. This widespread view of Aristotle's formalism is far too simplistic. Clearly there must be some sense in which the species-form exists apart, while at the same time functioning as immanent cause. If the species-form were strictly immanent, in a way that precludes transcendence, then it would cease to be a universal. Those who argue that the species-forms are numerically distinct, though specifically identical, may object that no problem of separation arises on their view. If each species-member has its own, numerically unique formal principle then the question of separation perhaps does not arise. But the idea of singular forms has little textual basis. The 'thisness' of the species-form can adequately be accounted for in terms of a concrete universality in distinction from the abstract universality of the genus. For a summary of the terms of the debate see Bostock (1994): 185ff. For a view opposed to the orthodoxy, and close to our own, see Jonathan Lear, The Desire to Understand, (Cambridge, 1988). Daniel Graham, in his Aristotle's Two Systems, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987) also treats the separation of form as a serious ontological issue (see pp.268-75), though his claims about the incompatibility of the Categories ontology and the Metaphysics do not convince
error indeed to construe this definitional separation as a merely conceptual and subjective separation, with no ontological implications. Such a move makes nonsense of the causal function of the form, and its claim to the title of primary substance.

The objection can be put still more precisely. The orthodox claim that the definitional priority and separation of the formal cause is purely conceptual would put the formal cause on the same level, ontologically speaking, as the objects of mathematics. Aristotle regards the objects of mathematics and geometry as prior in definition, to the extent that our understanding of bodily substances implies an understanding of lines, planes and solids. Body, viewed abstractly, is defined as that which is divisible in three dimensions (1016b27-28). But this conceptual priority does not imply a priority in substance:

Let us grant that they [sc. the mathematicals] are prior in definition. Still not everything that is prior in definition is also prior in substance (ou panta hosa twi logwi protera kai thi ou siai protera). For those things are prior in substance which, being separate from others (chwridsomena), surpass them in being (1077a36-77b3)...

The objects of mathematics are prior to concrete substances in definition, but not in the order of being and substantiality. They cannot exist apart from concrete substances. The mathematician and geometer arrive at their proper objects of study by treating what is not separate as if it were separate (ei tis to mh kechwrismenon theih chwrisas, hoper ho arithmhtikos poiei kai ho gewmetrhs, 1078a21-23), i.e., they regard concrete substances qua indivisible or qua solid, as if these attributes were primary, while abstracting those more fundamental and essential attributes of substances which are studied in the natural sciences.14

It is a characteristic feature of the methodology of the mathematical sciences that they define their subject genera by way of an abstraction that inverts objective relations of ontic priority and posteriority.

It should be obvious that the definitional separation of the formal cause cannot be identified with the abstractive separation of the mathematicals. When we define a formal cause there is no need to abstract the matter and to consider the form as though it were separate. The form in its very mode of ‘what-is-being’ is objectively separate from the external material constituents of the composite: it is auto kath’ auto. The definitional priority of the formal cause follows from--is a direct consequence of--its ontological priority.

Aristotle's arguments in M.2. concerning the derivative status of mathematical attributes constitute an effective and coherent line of objection to the Platonist tenet that

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14 Abstraction (aphairesews) in Aristotle's terminology is the removal of the attributes which are irrelevant to the level of investigation, as this is designated by the ‘qua’ operator, e.g. the mathematician abstracts all attributes of substances that do not inhere in them qua indivisible. Abstraction has as its consequence the conceptual 'separation', or freeing up of the attributes which form the subject matter of the mathematical sciences. See, e.g., 1077b9-11
mathematics represent a species of transcendent Form or Idea. Here Platonist separation is effectively and decisively countered as soon as the posterior status of the category of quantity is disclosed. The same line of anti-Platonic argument can be applied to forms from the other non-substance categories. Indeed, the Aristotelian categorial framework can be regarded as a direct response to Plato's Formalism, to the extent that it seeks to ground forms, from all non-substance categories, in the underlying substantial substrate. The non-substances are regarded collectively as the class of entities inhering in a substantial substrate (*ta en hypokeimenwi*); and by 'inherence', or being in a subject, Aristotle means precisely a non-separability, an incapacity to exist apart (Cat. 1a24-25). Thus qualitative forms like 'whiteness', forms of relation, etc, as well as the formal quantitative dimensions studied in mathematics, are deprived of the transcendent status they enjoy in traditional Platonism. Artificial forms, like the form of a house, are also easily dealt with; for in these cases the form inheres in the soul of the artist just as, analogously, a non-substantial attribute like 'pallor' inheres in a substance. In all of these cases there is an inherence, and an ontological dependence, that stands opposed to Platonic separation. But there is a definite limit to this line of argument.

When one turns to identify the nature of the underlying substantial substrate, which so effectively holds together the Aristotelian categorial framework, one is forced to move directly from the preliminary ontology of the *Categories* to the more developed metaphysics of substantial form and matter pursued in Zeta, Eta, Theta.\(^{15}\) What is it that makes the concrete substance a determinate and intelligible subject of predication, a subject that can be identified over time as the same 'such and such'? It is, of course, the biological species-form. The per se attributes which constitute the species-form are not 'inherent' attributes in the *Categories* sense. They are the attributes which make the concrete substance the definite kind or species of substance that it is. The species-form provides the composite with the core identity that allows it to function as a metaphysical and predicative subject at all. Strictly speaking, essential attributes are not attributes of the composite, since the composite cannot be identified as a determinate subject except through their mediation. They are, more properly, to be regarded as attributes or differentiae of the *hylh*. And thus Aristotle indicates at various points in the *Metaphysics* that the species-form is predicated of the matter, whereas the species term, e.g. 'man', 'horse', 'gadfly', is predicated of the composite and denotes the universal concept of the composite (e.g. 1029a20-24; 1035b27-30).

Thus while the question of separation is quite easily dealt with in the non-substantial categories, and in the case of artificial forms, within the category of substance an aporia

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\(^{15}\) The ontology of the *Categories* deals only with the unanalysed singular substances, i.e. substances not yet analysed into their constitutive form and matter. The *eide* of the *Categories* are not to be confused with the constitutive species-forms of the *Metaphysics*. The *eids* of the *Categories* are the species, like man and horse, which are 'said of' the singular substances. In the *Metaphysics* this notion of species is further analysed into two aspects, species-form and species-matter. The term *eidos* is used in the *Metaphysics* to denote both the species as such, i.e. the universal composite (1035b27-30), and the species-form. The species-form, unlike the species as such, is not predicated of the composite; it is predicated of the matter. The predicative relation of form and matter underlies and explains the predicative relation of species and individual, i.e. the formal determination of the matter is what makes the singular substance the specific kind of substance that it is.
remains. Aristotle has managed radically to depopulate Plato's intelligible world: qualities, numbers, relations, forms of artefacts have all been tied down to entities in the first category. But the truly substantial form--i.e. the biological species-form--as cause of the substantiality of the composite, still has a claim to separation. The issue remains unresolved:

But if the substances of perishable entities are separable is not yet clear (*ei d' eisi twn phthartwn hai ousiai chwristai,ouden pw dhlon*), except that this is clearly not possible in some cases, e.g. in the case of those substances that cannot exist apart from the particulars, like 'house' or 'utensil' (1043b18-21).

The question of separation has, in this passage, been narrowed to a sharp focus: it is now precisely a question about the ontological status of biological species-forms. How can Aristotle maintain the causal primacy of the species-form over the composite without reverting to a Platonic style separation? The key would seem to lie in the much-misunderstood claim that the species-form is 'separate in definition'. If, as we have shown, this phrase does not imply a merely subjective and conceptual separation, akin to the abstractive separation of mathematicals, then what does it mean?

The full and adequate explication of its meaning would require a re-thinking of Aristotle's conception of God as self-thinking thought. In claiming that species-form is definitionally separate, Aristotle is indicating that it is essentially an object of thought. But he does not mean that these forms are separate merely in our subjective human thinking of them. This, again, would be wholly inadequate. Aristotle needs to establish an objective ground for the species-forms above and beyond the endless cycle of becoming--without resorting to the sort of literal or quasi-physical separation that would inevitably transform his formal causes into higher-order particulars. The literal understanding of separation precludes an immanence in the species-members, and leads to the various paradoxes connected with the reifying of the Forms, e.g. the paradox of self-predication and the third-man regress. What Aristotle requires to circumvent these difficulties (I contend) is an objective and transcendent mind that is adequate to the contemplation of the formal structure of the cosmos. This mind would allow for a definitional separation of the species-form, which is distinct from the unqualified physical separation of the concrete substances, but which is nonetheless objective and ontological in its implications.

The explanation of the activity of God as a self-thinking thought, as presented in Lambda 9, provides the solution to the problem of the noetic separation of the biological forms. There Aristotle argues that God, as the perfect being, must think only the most perfect thoughts: thus he must think Himself. But there seems to be a difficulty attached to this idea of a self-thinking. According to the principles of Aristotelian psychology, thinking is always of a distinct object, and only bears upon itself mediately (*en parergw*, 1074b36). In others words, as already mentioned above, actual thinking is identical with some formal object, and in itself is a merely potential existent with no innate character. Now, commentators disagree vehemently on the import of these lines. The orthodox view
is that this reference to the psychology of the *De Anima* is merely intended as an analogy, to show that thinking can be formally identical to itself where there is no external matter intervening. Just as the thinking of the scientist is identical to the matterless forms it thinks, so the thinking of God, being matterless, is identical to itself. The self-thinking of God is therefore a form of pure self-reference But if this is Aristotle's meaning he has not expressed it at all clearly. The reference to the doctrine of the *De Anima* suggests that God's thinking bears, in the first instance, upon a distinct formal object, and only mediately on Himself, i.e. to the extent that there is a structural identity or isomorphism between His actual thinking and the formal objects that it thinks. These lines suggest, in other words, that God's self-thinking is inclusive of lower forms of substance.\(^{16}\)

The self-thinking of God is, like human thinking, a form of mediated self-reference. But it is timeless and indivisible: God comprehends all of the substantial forms of things as a single and indivisible whole (1075a5-10). The self-thinking of God provides a transcendent grounding for the species-forms which is still fully compatible with their causal immanence in the sub-lunar world. The separation of the divine mind is not a physical separation, but a separation between two orders or grades of being: between the order of pure noetic formality, and the order of materiate instantiation.

An inclusive interpretation of God's self-thinking bears with it at least two important implications, one for the coherence of Aristotle's metaphysics, the other for our understanding of its fundamentally Platonic character. First, it establishes a precise sense in which theology, as first philosophy, can be viewed as the culmination and perfection of natural or second philosophy, according to the indications of E.1., a point that has traditionally proven a source of difficulty for commentators. The treatment of natural form will, on this view, be taken up and completed in the theological consideration of the divine actuality; the immanent teleology of natural forms will be shown to be fully compatible with a transcendent teleology that posits God as final and formal cause of nature. Secondly, this interpretation of God's self-thinking reveals Aristotle as a reformed Platonist, who has maintained the original Platonist insistence on the One over the Many, while fundamentally rethinking the meaning of this formal separation and considerably narrowing its range of application. It may well be that Aristotle in this regard is developing suggestions implied by Plato himself in the *Sophist*, where it seems to be argued that life and intelligence (*nous*) belong to the intelligible world (*to pantelws on*). But this point will have to wait for another occasion.

Neoplatonism And The Origin Of The Cartesian Subject

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Introduction

Hegel, beginning his lectures on the history of the older modern philosophy, observed that that philosophy began where the ancient had ended: the new philosophy had its origin in a completion of the old. This completion he found in Neoplatonism: the divine self-consciousness which was for Aristotle the first among substances became in the full development of Neoplatonism the one comprehensive substance which, going into the division of an ideal and a sensible world, was at once the origin of that division and the end to which it returned. The appropriation of being by thought which began with Parmenides was complete. The present paper would clarify the development of Neoplatonism to that completion and the transition at that point to another philosophy.

The difference of the old philosophy from the new was that the one was about the Idea the divine actuality on which all things depended the other about Spirit the revelation of the absolute unity itself.

The absolute freedom of the Idea is not merely that it passes over into life nor as finite knowledge lets that difference appear in itself, but in the absolute truth of itself [that is, as returned to itself out of this division] freely releases the moment of its otherness as nature. ¹

The rational individual in this relation to the divine freedom and to a nature opposed to itself is the subject which comprises its difference in its self-relation.

The primary structure of Neoplatonism is transformed in this transition. Being and thinking (noeton and noesis) are not mediated by this procession and sensible appearance of the orders of nature, but thinking mediates the relation of a creative divine freedom with a created world to which was imparted in the medium of time and extension an apparent independence. With this altered relation of the primary moments it is no longer true, as for Proclus, that "every manifold is posterior to the One." The knowledge beyond

¹ Hegel, Enzyklopädie der philosophischen wissenschaften (1830), 44. Hegel speaks of the transition from the return of all finitude to the freedom of the One to where the finite is for a free Cartesian (or Augustinian) subject from the standpoint of a logic which has taken into itself also this older modern relation. Descartes (or Augustine) rather finds himself in this new philosophical beginning than has hold of the logic of the transition.
knowledge of the One and the discursive knowledge of a plurality this side of the One have no longer a gulf between them but are elements of a knowledge at once immediate and mediated.

Man in this new philosophy is a self-consciousness which knows the division of the finite as its own.² Radically opposed to an extended world, its inner freedom externalized, it is also drawn to that apparently alien world and finds a realization of its freedom in discovering its hidden ideality. Hence an insatiable scientific and technical interest, which while it may distract from the knowledge of God and freedom, is also a way to that knowledge.

The difference of the Neoplatonic from the older modern world is evident where individual freedom and a unified objective end meet in a political community. The highest political realization of a Neoplatonic thought is the unified state of the ending Middle Age. Individual freedom is ordered under a sovereign will. In relation to the sovereignty individuals have an intuition of their primary freedom. The ordered relation of their finite interests to this primary end is sustained by the opposition of an aristocratic or universal class to the class of those in commerce and the trades, however much the interests of the two may interpenetrate. The ruinous consequences when the sovereign fails to maintain his priority or when private persons would usurp the monarchy, where the relation of commoner to aristocrat degenerates into unbounded hatred can nowhere be studied better than in well known Shakespearean tragedies. The most complete breakdown of the ordered elements is perhaps where Hamlet has the obligation to restore a corrupted monarchy, is destroyed with many in the contradiction of being at once sovereign and subordinate.³

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² The Neoplatonic noetic thought knows the finite as belonging to self-consciousness, but to a self-consciousness itself composite of the divided and the undivided, and having its freedom beyond this relation. For the Cartesian subject a true knowledge of the finite is consequent on its relation to the divine freedom. Descartes, *Meditationes de prima philosophiae*, V: "Etsi enim ejus sim naturae ut, quamdiu aliquid valde clare et distincte percipio, non possim non credere verum esse, quia tamen ejus etiam sum naturae ut non possim obtutum mentis in eandem rem semper defigere ad illam clare percipiemdam, recurratque saepe memoria judicii ante facti, cum non amplius attendo ad rationes propter quas tale quid judicavi, rationes aliae afferi possunt quae me, si Deum ignorarem, facile ab opinione deicerent, atque ita de nulla un quam re veram & certam scientiam, se vagas tantum & mutabiles opiniones, haberem." (AT, vii, 69). Augustine's criticism of a Porphyrian Neoplatonism, from which he has received great enlightenment, is that it does not in this way stabilize his relation to the sensible world: "...invisibilia tua per ea quae sunt intellecta conspexi, sed aciem figere non evalu et repercussa infirmitate redditus solitis non mecum ferebam nisi amantem memoriam [i.e. not 'scientiam'] ... " *Conf.*, VII, xvii.

³ Aquinas proposed to define the relation of individuals to the state through the virtues of the *Nicomachian Ethics*. The virtues, as belonging to the free individual or person, could however only hold their ground against evil passions within a Roman structure of hell and purgatory and subjected thus to an ideal unity of interests in a sovereign will a structure elaborated in the *Divina Commedia* and other works of the poet. In the Renaissance state the virtuous and the self-seeking will are harmonized in relation to the sovereign: the virtuous knight has become the 'conquistador' or the like. When this harmony is destroyed, as by the murder of a king, the attempted restoration by particular wills exposes their nullity and that the state is in truth the one sovereign will. That the state is the sovereign is at the historical level the completed demonstration of the Neoplatonic principle: the unity is not only before the division, but contains within it the division and the negation of the division in the recognized supremacy of the monarchy.
The free subject of the older modern age, as having the division within his freedom, is himself sovereign and with other constitutes a civil society a state within the state. The external state of Locke or Rousseau has not for its end to replace the state but to make the unified end of the state also the end of all its members.4

It can be useful to the argument to notice the difference of both the Neoplatonic and the older modern freedom from the contemporary freedom where individuals in their particularity would found all authority and institutional order on their prior rights. Communities acceptable to this freedom are either rooted in language and other natural particularities linguistic and cultural communities or must satisfy the boundless passions of individuals through a global economy. In this contemporary freedom the eternal appears to be more deeply historicized than ever in previous ages. Being is declared to be time, and time whose moments are concretized, fortified thus against a resurgent eternity. This temporalized freedom was however menaced for Heidegger by the abstract logic of the global economy which broke through a natural basis of thought in language. Its stability depends in truth, as analogously in the Hellenistic age, on a division into opposed dogmas.5

So much at this point for the moderns. The immediate antecedent of Neoplatonism was of course the Hellenistic world, where individuals thought to find freedom within the bounds of time and change. Plato and Aristotle, bringing to light the intelligible world on which the polis rested, had discovered in thought a coincidence of the objective good and individual freedom. Then, as for us in recent times, this result appeared to be the immediate possession of individuals and the objective pole a Heraclitean or Democritean world of change. In a clarified relation of self-consciousness to the totality of 'becoming' or 'becoming atomized' individuals thought to have an untroubled freedom (ataraxia). On the basis of that primary relation they thought also to have as truly their own the finite content of their world.

The free individual or person appropriated his world either in the immediacy of pleasure or universally in a comprehended imagination. Against these dogmatic haireseis, which have analogies in concreter form in our world, the Sceptic sought freedom in an undivided relation to the world of becoming. In that total view the opposed dogmas of the Stoic and Epicurean collapsed and the individual was virtually freed from his temporal cave. That being is time is the view of a divided self-consciousness, and the division once shown to be without truth, the individual goes into himself and would find a true consciousness of his freedom in an intelligible world.

The individual in this way returns to the origin of his freedom as set forth in the writings of Plato and Aristotle. His relation to those philosophies is not that of those who

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4 An end which of course was clear neither to Locke nor Rousseau who remained with a subjective liberation. The relation of such an individual freedom to a unified political end is only partially disclosed in the 'enlightened' institutions of the United States.
5 Without a criticism of the divided philosophical culture of the present time Neoplatonism can appear deceptively close to the contemporary spirit: P. Hadot, Porphyre et Victorinus, 1, 492-3; J. Combès, Études Néoplatoniciennes, 35-60. For want of a sufficient criticism J. N. Findlay, having escaped the contemporary 'Cave' to Neoplatonism, fell into the more difficult 'Cave' of Hinduism.
sought to bring the sensible world within the grasp of thought and then discerned beyond it a realm of separate spirits. Already in his superseded dogmas the free individual thought to have the categorized sensible world within his primary self-relation. Returned to the intelligible realm he found the ideas within thought. Plato was read as having this knowledge and as desiring beyond it relation to an absolute One. The One as self-consciousness beyond the division of noeton and noesis and as absolute good beyond finite relations was Aristotelian and not Platonic, the Aristotelian God as the point of unity before division, where the individual had contact with the ground of his freedom. The unified temporal world which had gone over to an eternal world had now the status of a derivative image.6

The three hypostases or totalities which made up the Neoplatonic world were at first only loosely articulated. If one suppose the complete articulation to be that found in Eriugena, where the ideal and sensible worlds have the simple structure of a division and return of the One, Plotinus by this measure is only at the beginning of a development. It was contained in the conversion from a unified sensible world to the intelligible, that the relation of the two worlds should not be abstract, as where the individual remains in the ideal world and only some part of himself descends reluctantly to a sensible embodiment. For the descent to be concrete the intelligible world must first be unified, the moment of division and difference in it made adequate to the 'noetic' and 'noeric' poles and they to each other. The One, as the origin of what comes after it, while remaining free of finite division must have that status for thought as comprehensive of the intelligible and sensible totalities.

The history of Neoplatonism is not of the different interests of one philosopher from another, that one is more purely philosophical, another more pious and devoted to the gods, but is the logical development of the one systematic structure. The development can only come to rest where the integrated individual knows his freedom as resting on a unified relation of the two worlds to the One.7

The Neoplatonists had themselves an objective measure of the progressive movement of their thought in the Parmenides of Plato, as in their commentaries they succeeded one farther than another in explaining the order and connection of its 'hypotheses'. It is no great matter that the dialogue was diverted from its original intention of showing how the relation of sensibles and separate ideas depended on a synthesis of the one and the indefinite dyad regarded affirmatively and then negatively. The dialogue taken to be about the One and the noetic world and their sensible image could not be fully explicated until the relation of these totalities had been given the form of a unified divine self-thinking. The history is near to completion when Damascius, extending his commentary

6 Unless through composition with the Dyad the Platonic 'One' is an abstraction and not properly the 'good': Philebus 65a-67b. The 'demiourgos' who fashions an image of the ideal world is mythical and not conceptually defined in Timaeus. If after Aristotle's destruction of the assumption that the concrete and actual can be from a composition of contraries (Met., N,2), Neoplatonists speak of what is after the One as 'composite' this Platonic language serves, if inappropriately, to speak of principles concrete and actual drawn from Aristotle.

7 On the deepening understanding of Neoplatonism after Plotinus, Dodds, Proclus, Elements of Theology (1932), XVIII-XXVI, compared with Trouillard on Proclus in Combès, Ét. Néopl. (1989), 308ff.
to the negative hypotheses, discovers a unified relation of the sensible world to the intelligible, as already when the second hypothesis in his comment is found hardly other than the incomprehensible division of the One itself.\(^8\)

One further point in this preliminary statement: something of the Aristotelian noesis noeseos eludes this return to it from the temporal freedom of the Hellenistic sects. Aristotle speaks of a divine thinking where what is divine is not so much divine because it is absolutely one as because it is the active nous which having all the intelligible in its possession is the actuality of that unity itself. There is in this concept, to speak theologially, an equality of persons and not a primacy of the paternal or substantial. Thus if Neoplatonism is for Hegel a realization of the Aristotelian idea it prepares also for the disclosure in another philosophy of what more that idea contains.\(^9\)

It remains to follow the course of this argument more precisely. Its natural division is the following:

(a) The origin of the free individual and the temporalized Hellenistic world.

(b) The logic of the conversion of this temporal freedom to the eternal.

(c) The logical development of Neoplatonism.

(d) The origin in it of the older modern philosophy.

A) The Hellenic Origin Of The Hellenistic Philosophy

Hegel's history of Neoplatonism as the process by which all finitude is known to have its truth in the Aristotelian noesis noeseos is difficult from the comprehensiveness of its view. It looks back not only to the Hellenistic schools as the immediate antecedent of Neoplatonism but to the origin of that subjective culture in the older Greek world. The free individual or person, emerging from the substantial life of the polis and its gods, found first a temporal realization of its freedom in relation to a temporalized and materialized logos and then from an apparent and contradictory freedom sought and discovered its ground in an eternal logos.\(^10\)

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\(^8\) See 'Damascius', infra.

\(^9\) The One of the Neoplatonists as also the Good is pure act. This concept is presupposed without insight into its structure. What Aristotle says at Met XII, 7, of the divine activity is taken to be true at the noetic level. How Aristotle could speak more definitely but not mythically also of the first god can be explained historically and is more evident to the standpoint of the older modern philosophy which knows the undivided and the divided as complementary.

\(^10\) This circuitous route corrects a tendency to find too direct a kinship between contemporary subjective freedom and Neoplatonism. The freedom which finds its substantial end in Neoplatonism is that of the 'person' or rational individual of Hellenistic-Roman culture, who is free from his world but does not expect, as in all contemporary doctrine of rights, that it serve and satisfy him in his particularity. The intelligible
In this return the Neoplatonists read Plato and Aristotle as though containing already the subjective freedom of the following age. The problems of the previous age and its philosophies fell outside their interest. This longer perspective has the advantage that it permits not only a comprehensive view of Neoplatonism and its intrinsic movement but also its limit, if there is that in Plato and Aristotle which Neoplatonism does not contain but became the interest of later philosophy.\footnote{In particular there occurred in the discovery of the categories of a finite reflection in Plato and Aristotle a dialectical relation of affirmative and negative moments for which there was hardly place in a Neoplatonic separation of divided and undivided, a relation which could again become of interest when in the older modern philosophy divided and undivided were regarded as complementary.}

The subjective spirit of the Sophists and of the Socratic schools for Plato and Aristotle could either be contained within the qualified freedom of the political community or directed to its true development in a 'theoretic life'. The 'virtuous' relation of the individual to the state was a practical freedom which harmonized the passions to the common good. It belonged to the 'theoretic life' to discover a radical unity of life and thought. The free individual of the Hellenistic schools had supposedly brought all division and particularity to rest in an untroubled self-relation (ataraxia).\footnote{The principles of the Hellenistic philosophies were anticipated by the Socratics, but within the polis could not attain their later universality. The following paragraphs indicate how this universal self-consciousness could emerge from the objective authority of the political community and its gods.}

The reader of Eumenides knows that the stability of the polis rested on a harmony between the gods of the state and those of the family or natural community. The individual stood in a divided relation to the underworld and to the Olympians. The unconscious potentiality of the one was his end as mortal. In relation to the Olympians he participated in the immortal life of the gods, in whom for a poetical vision life and self-conscious freedom were united. An ordered human life was made possible by a reason which could hold in check the latent conflict of these opposed ends.

The virtuous balance is easily destroyed by war "which mostly assimilates the disposition of men to their immediate circumstances."\footnote{Thucydides III, 82.} The resolution of this division at its extreme point also became the interest of tragedy. Oedipus is shown as learning the blindness of political reason in relation to natural particularity. He is then shown also as liberated from the vengeful passions of the natural will, and in relation to his sons and daughter from the opposed ends of family and state. The unity of these ends which is brought into view in these and other Sophoclean tragedies is not that of the Aristophanic comedy where the individual is raised to a self-conscious freedom in relation to the opposed ends of family and state and their gods. The tragic unification is rather that of the Aristotelian god for whom life is the actuality of self-conscious freedom, not in the basis of this freedom is to be sought not only in Neoplatonism but also in the older modern philosophy. Both philosophies are necessary to a correction of contemporary dogmas.
medium of poetical language but for that inmost unity of the soul which is the actuality of the potential *nous*.\(^\text{14}\)

Aristophanes when in *Symposium* he defines the primary movement and end in humans describes it mythically as the liberation from a divided relation to the gods. The comedies present variously through divided and ridiculous characters the divided relation of individuals to their institutions and their gods, and then dissolves these divisions. The spectator is awakened to a knowledge of this content as his own. There is in that awakening the beginning of a new relation of individuals to their institutions. The poet himself in Plutus writes not for citizens of the *polis* but for a society of free individuals.

At this point of transition the individual through the comic art has a free relation to that same world, human and divine, as the Neoplatonist will regain for himself when the new society into which the *polis* has fallen has come to an understanding of itself. In this return Proclus has still not quite attained that freedom from a plurality of finite gods which is there in *Birds* and others of the later comedies of Aristophanes. Only perhaps in the last flowering of Neoplatonism in the Renaissance does a like completeness recur in aesthetic form.

The logic of this transition from the old substantial world to the world of free individuals is more transparent in the history of Greek philosophy. The movement there is to discover an *arche* in which thinking and being are one, the contrarieties of the many being united in that relation. In this development emerge the categories through which the finite is more adequately grasped, until in Aristotle's 'substance' and 'causes' the world of things is concretely related to thought. But the most comprehensive of divisions remained, that of the *nous* itself in the structure of the *polis* and its gods. In that division, if one speak teleologically of the history with Aristotle, lay the original provocation to philosophical thought, and the inquiry only came to rest with its resolution in the *noesis noeseos* which has life and nature as its own.

This *arche* is for Aristotle the object of a *theoria* in which the divided and laborious life of men finds freedom in relation to a divine thinking comprehensive of this division.\(^\text{15}\)

\(^{14}\) The difference of tragic and comic poetry as ways of self-understanding within the *polis* illustrates the difference of the Platonic and Aristotelian philosophies from the Hellenistic philosophies which have as their principle the rational individual or person and the origin of that concept. The logic of the transition is to be seen most clearly in the Aristotelian philosophy. Tragedy in its fullest development (*Trachiniae*, *Oedipus Coloneus*) raises human mortality to a participation in the immortal self-consciousness of the gods. Comedy, attending to the mixture of human and divine in the gods (which Plato would eliminate), awakens a subjective freedom on the human side more complete than that of the gods.

The Platonic and Aristotelian philosophies give conceptual form to the noetic. The principal difference between the philosophies in this regard is whether what is first is the One or Good or this principle as having the dyad within its self-knowledge. In neither case does the human individual take this elevation and inner unification to be his own independently of the divine or as a person. In this free individual the elevation of the human is the divine life, which for Aristotle as a temporary state is stabilized, but this stabilization is abstract: the finite is an otherness for the individual who maintains his freedom by negating this otherness, by subordinating it to a prior unity. This relation did not and could not occur within the older philosophy. The Socratics who anticipated in a manner the Hellenistic schools could not maintain their subjective principles against the objectivity of the Platonic and Aristotelian philosophies.
There is not yet here the free individual of the Hellenistic schools nor the Neoplatonic *nous* in which this individual comes to a true concept of itself. Nor is there the relation of the *nous* to a primary One, the unknowable end and interest of all knowledge.

The new standpoint of post-Aristotelian philosophy is the result of all the previous development. The world as brought within categorial form belongs to the comprehensive category of self-conscious thought; the ideas and their sensible derivatives are within the *nous*. But this unified thought is also divided: the immediate unity of the *nous* in the One is also a divided relation to all that is other than the One. The primary interest of this post-Aristotelian thought is therefore to overcome this division, that the *nous* should so unify its knowledge of the many that in the end its difference from the One will be known as without truth. Philosophical thought would in this way have found its way back to the original Aristotelian concept of the *nous* for which division and plurality was not through a transition to another standpoint but intrinsic to the One.

The Aristotelian philosophy in its original and proper sense responded to the primary desire and need of the older Hellenic world. The undeveloped concept in it of a movement not to the One but from it had however a continuing interest in the ancient world not philosophical, but as the receptivity and expectation of the Christian revelation. That revelation is unintelligible from a Neoplatonic standpoint as contradicting the primacy of the One over all plurality. But if that presupposition is undone in the completed development of Neoplatonism there may be thought room for a philosophical thought to which that division is intrinsic.\(^\text{16}\)

**B) The Hellenistic Schools And Origin Of Neoplatonism**

The world of the Hellenistic schools, if one consider it from the side of Neoplatonism, is a temporal image of the intelligible world. That image emerges at the point of coincidence between the undivided and divided in the intelligible. The image is an immediate existence of the ideal. The noetic self-consciousness of the ideal world is dispersed in that immediacy into a multitude of souls having knowledge of sensible individuals and abstract universals. The individuals who have taken the division of life and thought of the *polis* and its religion into their selfRelation find themselves in the immediacy of this result in that sensible world. This temporalized freedom is the antecedent and condition of the conversion from it to the noetic world of Neoplatonism. The individuals of this Hellenistic world bring with them from their earlier formation the assumption that they are free, that the sensible multiplicity and their own contingent relations are not alien but stand in a true relation to their self-consciousness. The Stoic

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\(^{15}\) *Metaphy.* A, 983a29ff.

\(^{16}\) The Aristotelian god, knowing only itself, has also life in it. It knows life therefore as its own *logos* or is self-revelatory. The One of the Neoplatonists is assumed to be productive of all things, but not through its own *logos*, unless as this appears dividedly, e.g. as the *praedestinationes* of Eriugena. This implication of the Aristotelian divine idea has its further philosophical development in Augustine and then in the older modern philosophy, where one does not have fully the Aristotelian relation but a knowledge at least that the divided and the undivided are complementary.
would show this assumption to be true for the individual as universal or thinking, the Epicurean for him in his sensuous immediacy. The Sceptic regards this fixed assertion of opposed dogmas as reason to question whether there is any truth for self-consciousness. He goes on to show that if one assume a unity of these opposed dogmas reason itself destroys this supposed truth and reduces it to a knowledge of appearances, which can suffice for daily life but is without truth. All three have in common a self-conscious freedom which rests untroubled in itself. The Sceptic has disclosed a world which contradicts this assumed freedom.¹⁷

Scepticism is thus a disintegration of philosophy and of that world of which it is the comprehensive thought. The 'deconstruction' which nibbles at opposed contemporary dogmas is in comparison frivolous, in that behind a radical subjective freedom and its temporalized world an older Christian order remains. For this ancient scepticism there is nothing but the contradiction of an assumed subjective freedom and an unfree world. The logic of this disintegration is of the greatest importance to a knowledge of Neoplatonism. Through it one knows Neoplatonism not as an extravagant aberration but as a necessary turning of thought. This turning also contains implicitly the subsequent course of Neoplatonism not simply to go over to an intelligible world but also to know the contradiction of the sensible as resolved in that relation.

The ataraxia of the Stoic appeared to be absolutely stabilized against the world: "Justum et tenacem propositi virum, si fractus illabatur orbis, impavidum ferient ruinae."¹⁸ The unstable content of sense and imagination was appropriated to the self-identity of thought in the kataleptike phantasia, the Stoic criterion of truth. The Stoics thought also that they could advance from that abstract universality, which is indeed the beginning of science, to a demonstrated unity of sensible particularity with it. They would thus have established an unshakeable relation of thinking self-consciousness to its objects. The defect in this relation was that it contained the syllogistic mediation only as negated in the relation of individual to universal. The mediation belonged to a subjective reflection and not to the structure of its objects.¹⁹

Although the Stoics appeared to have gone beyond Aristotle in detaching the categories from sensible substance and making logic fully the possession of self-conscious thought, in the immediacy of this result they had only an abbreviated and formal relation of thinking to the forms of reasoning. So also at the same time as the logoi of nature were taken to be comprehensive of finite categories, the Stoics had hold of sensible objects only through abstract categories of Presocratic thought somethings, their qualities and relations through which an objective unity of 'somethings' with their determinations is not discovered.

¹⁷ The following succinct statement of the essential structure of the three principal Hellenistic philosophies attempts to extract the intrinsic logos of each from the texts of the Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta, Usener's Epicurea and Sextus Empiricus (R.G.Bury). That is the harder to do in that analogies of that culture to the subjective culture of the present time invite us to read the texts in the light of imported Logoi. The best defense against anachronistic interpretations is ever Hegel's Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie, 'Dogmatismus und Skepticismus' (Michelet, 1840, 377-517).
¹⁸ Horace, Carm., lib III, III,1 ff.
The Epicurean sought to bind together infallibly the inner security of his self-conscious freedom with the passing good of pleasure. The mediation between the two fell to a discriminating judgment which should relate momentary pleasures to the whole content of a cultivated life. But, as with the Stoic, this mediation was lost in the untroubled self-relation of the individual. In that abstract freedom he is indifferent to the world: "Nil igitur mors est ad nos neque pertinet hilum."20 Similarly the categories in which he thought his sensible world were shifting qualities and atoms having only the most formal differences and properly, as pure objects of thought, only their difference from the void.

The opposition of the Stoic to the Epicurean philosophy cancels itself out no doubt, in that beginning with opposed assumptions each maintains itself so far as it can appropriate the assumption of the other. For themselves the opposition remains, but the Sceptic rightly calls them 'dogmatists' and takes their one-sided assumptions into one view. This comprehensive view leads to the inevitable conclusion that the free individual who is certain the world is not alien to him finds himself in an alien world which has for him no essential and moving interest.21 The student of Neoplatonism at least is unlikely to confuse this with the so-called scepticism of Hume or Schultze. That scepticism would be called by the ancient Sceptic an empirical dogmatism.

Ancient scepticism is beyond the opposition of rational and empirical positions but can get hold of itself only negatively by demolishing both. The 'tropes' or 'turnings' by which it effects this complete 'deconstruction' are finally reduced to five.22 (1) If there are only dogmatic positions, then there is no philosophy, that is, unified discourse. (2) If there is philosophical discourse, every mean between universal and individual demands another to ground it, and this another ad infinitum. (3) For a perception which relates this regress to itself, everything is an endless relativity. (4) "The 'trope' from hypothesis is when the Dogmatists being compelled to recede ad infinitum take as their beginning something which ... they demand to assume as granted without demonstration."23 But why one hypothesis rather than its opposite? The ground for preferring one to the other lies in the matter of inquiry, which has thus an equal claim to be assumed without proof. (5) The relativity of universal to sensible which emerges from the fourth 'trope' cannot be circumvented by demonstration. The demonstrations the Dogmatists would give of their positions conceal a regressive negativity in their premises and in their conclusions, so that demonstrative reasoning is endlessly circular.

These 'tropes' effect an 'epoche' or suspension of judgment in all inquiries. Regarding the 'tropes' themselves in this suspense the Sceptic both speaks of them empirically as an indefinite plurality, and knows the five as complete.24 In truth they are complete unless for a thinking which knows endless division as a moment in itself and in its objects. That

20 Lucretius, III, 830
21 On the sceptical life, St. Augustine, Confessions, VI, vi ff. The oppressive demands of the contemporary scholarly life are different as having, however obscurely, an underlying concept of scientific truth.
23 Ibid.
24 Ibid., 135 and 169ff.
knowledge Plato sought in his concept of an 'otherness' which was not infinite only but a moment in the definite structure of genera and species and their relation to individuals.\textsuperscript{25} Aristotle regarded Zeno's problems of the infinite, which still perplex logicians, as belonging to an abstract and undeveloped thought.\textsuperscript{26} In his concept of substance they were resolved. That knowledge was however for a thinking which could contemplate universally the formation of increasingly concrete unities of being and thinking. The Sceptic and the Dogmatists, whose positions he would unite, have possession of this development in their self-conscious freedom. But this is a divided self-consciousness, at once universal and as individuals in changing relation to ever changing things. For the Sceptic this division has the form on the one side of a freedom from finite relations resting in itself, on the other of an endless empirical involvement with his world. He is impotent to bring these relations into that unity which is presupposed in the sense of his freedom.

The Sceptical criticism not only destroys the opposed 'dogmas' of the Stoics and the Epicureans but virtually also its own standpoint. There is a progression in the five later tropes in which the endless division from falling in a subjective reflection on the relation of universals to sensible individuals passes into the objective relation of the terms. The fifth 'trope' on the circularity of the relation has all but brought the object into the form of a \textit{logos} comprehending division. Such was the original relation for the Stoics, of their self-conscious freedom to the universal \textit{logos} and its genera as \textit{spermatikoi logoi}. In that relation the divided moments of self-consciousness, as universal and immediate, are united. This unity itself as immediate is the instant (\textit{to exaiphnes}) in which the divided moments of 'becoming' are one. In this unified relation to the sensible world the free individual is released from the bonds of his temporal cave and reverts to his original concept as a thinking which in its self-relation knows as its own the division of life and the ideal world. Such is the origin of Neoplatonism.\textsuperscript{27}

C). Neoplatonism

Introduction

For one who looks back to the origin of the self-conscious freedom which foundered in Scepticism, the configuration of the world this self-consciousness finds when it has collected itself out of its division and temporal dispersion is evident. Its freedom rests in the unity of the ideal and the sensible world; life and the attendant division of immediate and universal self-consciousness is a manifestation of that unchanging unity.

For the self-consciousness itself which has collected itself out of the division and contradiction of Scepticism, its world is not at first so clearly articulated. The \textit{ataraxia} or

\textsuperscript{25} \textit{Sophist}, 254b ff.
\textsuperscript{26} \textit{Physics} VI, 9.
\textsuperscript{27} "Die nächste Stufe, welche das Sebstbewusstsein erreicht, ist, dass es ein Bewusstsein über das erhält, was es so geworden, oder ihm sein wesen zum Gegenande wird." Hegel, \textit{Gesch. der Phil.}, 516.
rest which the free individual had against the division and fluctuation of his world is now
the One, his end as unified. The individual finitude of the Sceptic has sunk for a unified
thought into that unity. All the sensible has been absorbed into the externalized identity
of matter.

In this relation the division the Sceptic could not make his own has been transcended.
Self-consciousness is constituted in relation to the One by a division from it and the
negation of this division. The division occurs and is negated; the resultant self-
consciousness has hold of the moments of its formation as a transition, not at first as a
stable knowledge of their relation.

For the self-consciousness thus constituted all finitude falls within its self-relation. It
comes to a knowledge of this finitude as its own by dividing what is immediately
identical with itself and then by appropriating what has been completely divided. For to
know its objects as its own is to impart to them its own logical structure
of division and
return to the undivided. The knowledge of its objects and of itself in this universal
thought has thus the form of a procession and return. But this grasp of its objects and of
its own freedom is not at first complete. Just as in its constitution and resulting self-
relation it did not have hold of its moments, so their relation is not fully articulated in the
knowledge of its objects.

Again, when this unified thought itself and its world pass over into temporal
manifestation, the sensible world is not fully articulated. The divided self-consciousness
of the Dogmatic schools recurs and their unification through Scepticism is lost from
sight.

The movement and history of Neoplatonism is from this first incomplete knowledge
of itself to an adequate knowledge of its underlying concept, that is, of the sensible world
as manifestation of a unified Idea. The development of this systematic thought can only
be intrinsic and of the system as a whole, that is, of its elements and primary logical
structure. The principal Neoplatonists differ no doubt in their interests. Iamblichus, for
example, has a religious interest, which, by the measure of a Plotinian or Porphyrian
Neoplatonism might appear unphilosophical. But in this interest lies the need to discover
better the relation of the individual to the ideal world than is found in those philosophers.
In him, as in Proclus and Damascius, there is a continuing articulation of the system. In
that lies their importance and their interest to a phil-
osophical mind.28

It is alien to the systematic form of this philosophy that the source of its movement
and development should be sought in extraneous and contingent causes. The historical
development here is also not that of Greek philosophy before Aristotle, where one

28 Dodds (E.T., xix) can write of Plotinus that "he stands not at the point of origin but at the culminating
crest of the wave...within two generations the dialectical tension of opposites which is the nerve of the
Plotinian system was threatening to sink into a meaningless affirmation of incompatibles." And at xxv,
"Proclus ... is not a creative thinker even in the degree of Iamblichus, but a systematizer who carried to its
utmost limits the ideal of one comprehensive philosophy that should embrace all the garnered wisdom of
the ancient world." As if there were less a system in Plotinus than in Proclus! The question, as was clear to
the Neoplatonists after Plotinus, was of the logic of the same system.
philosophy followed another it might seem randomly. The inner logical connection which revealed itself to Aristotle was concealed from his predecessors. There was there an inarticulate movement to systematic form. The development here is within the system.\textsuperscript{29}

The knowledge the noetic self-consciousness has of itself and of its world as its own is abstract so far as the moment of division or mediation is transitional only and lost in the return. Its identity with itself is the prevalent moment in its knowledge. The development is towards an adequation of the moments, where each has in it the others: and Being, Life and Thought are complementary forms of the same totality, differing only as centred successively on each.\textsuperscript{30} The One remains transcendent over a more and more unified noetic world until the separation becomes problematical.\textsuperscript{31}

The philosophers in the course of this development are attracted by cosmogonic systems which appear to integrate the One and the noetic world. Porphyry would admit such an integration, but at the price of importing finite relations into the infinite One. Others accordingly incorporate these cosmogonies, which serve a religious interest, only at a second level. The intrinsic development of Neoplatonism itself finally passes into a Trinitarian form, as with Maximus Confessor and that great Irishman John Scotus Eriugena.

A further development is still necessary. The subject which contemplates the ‘
\textit{divisio naturae}’ stands outside the movement itself and can well take from its result a merely formal concept of the divine actuality. That he in his particularity should be comprehended in the movement it was necessary first that a human order should be established, and then this order taken into the infinite Neoplatonic form. This human order was defined by Aquinas through a finite Aristotelian logic. This logic was expanded particularly by Duns Scotus and dissolved in the nominalism of Ockham. That development permitted a return to the standpoint of Eriugena with the difference that the ascent to the universal and the return to worldly interests were harmonized in one divine Idea.\textsuperscript{32} That completion of Neoplatonism was then the turning point to another philosophy.

\textit{1. Plotinus}

Of all forms of Neoplatonism there is in the Plotinian the greatest distance between the underlying concept and the form of its disclosure in the intelligible and sensible worlds. In all that comes after the One there is no concretion of the undivided and the divided, but only a difference which passes into an abstract self-relation. The \textit{nous}, as it originates in turning to the One out of division, is an undistinguished unity of being and thinking.\textsuperscript{33} The primary forms through which a determinate thought is constituted are the

\textsuperscript{29} Aristotle, \textit{Met.} I, 984b17ff; 993a11ff.
\textsuperscript{30} Proclus, infra.
\textsuperscript{31} Damascius, infra.
\textsuperscript{32} Cusanus, infra.
\textsuperscript{33} \textit{Enneads} VI, 2, 6, 18-20. That the \textit{megista gene} of \textit{Sophist}, and they alone, are the primary distinctions of thought, \textit{En.} VI, 2, 6-9.
megista gene of Plato's Sophist: being, motion and rest, same and different. In these forms Plato found a response to the Parmenides of his dialogue, who appeared to have shown that there was no true finitude. But of the 'otherness' which thought had through these irreducible distinctions within itself Aristotle had long before observed that it was an 'otherness' of true and false of the relation of thought to being but not a complete determination of either.  

In the first treatise of the sixth Ennead Plotinus carries through a detailed criticism of the Aristotelian and the Stoic categories. The criticism is that of an infinite thinking which has in itself its own finitude and that of its objects. It is thus beyond the Aristotelian gene tou ontos which only in relation to 'first substance' have that unity of their moments in a manner. The Stoic categories, as modes of an infinite logos, are closer to Plotinus. But in relation to both, Plotinus' criticism is extraneous and superficial.  

It is not that Plotinus might on further reflection have entered the doctrines examined and criticised them on their own ground. The impediment lay in his concept of the nous as immediately unifying endless division in its self-relation. Its actual thinking contains first this indeterminate difference and its need is to limit this indeterminacy. Through the Platonic gene the nous brings its difference into the stability of its self-relation. In this relation it falls into another duality between the result and the way to it: it stands in an abstract relation to its difference.  

The Aristotelian categories originated in a profound criticism of the Platonic doctrine that all things were a composition of the One and the indeterminate Dyad. In the Aristotelian categories the Dyad has passed into the moment of 'privation' in a concrete object. For Plotinus only the One is beyond composition out of elements. Aristotle was in error, so the criticism repeats with all the categories, in supposing his categories to have a unity unthinkable from the standpoint of the critic.  

The Stoic categories appear to Plotinus as a nest of contradictions, which no doubt they are, in that through them the positivity of the 'some thing' and all difference are objectively united. It reveals a complete shift in the Neoplatonism of Porphyry that he can receive into his thought both the Aristotelian and the Stoic logic.

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34 Aristotle, Met. 1089a15-31.  
35 Plotinus is often praised as nearer to experience than later Neoplatonism. But the relevant experience here is that of the Hellenistic age. In that regard if Porphyry is Stoicism thought, Plotinism might be spoken of as a thinking of Epicureanism.  
36 The logical gene are to the unity of thought as parts to the whole: En. VI 2, 3, 20ff. Proclus E.T. 73 on the finitude of this relation.  
37 En. VI 1. The examination of Aristotle's concept of sensible substance in Chap. 2 and 3 illustrates the method applied in the rest to the other categories.  
38 Plotinus comes to his categories through a certain interpretation of the second hypothesis of Parmenides. The Stoics look for the primary distinctions in an externalized thought in which the absolute negativity of the first hypothesis and the relative of the second are conflated. Of this it can be said at least that the relation of the two hypotheses is not in a subjective reflection only, as for Plotinus, but more objective.
After examining the Aristotelian categories, which, as he regards them, have neither unity severally nor do they together constitute one genus, and the Stoics who cannot without contradiction distinguish four categories within a generic unity, Plotinus asks for his part how there can be a limited multiplicity in thought. The nous is different from the One as distinguishing being and unity. For Plotinus the second hypothesis of Parmenides teaches the primary stations in a corresponding formation of being and the negative unity of thinking. The thinking which all but coincides with being is an image of the absolute One. The perfect coincidence of being and activity is the One itself. There appears in their relation as distinguished an indefinite plurality. This plurality is encircled in that as from the One both terms are the whole. The activity of thinking is on the side of the object a timeless motion. The stability of being is the self-identity or rest of thinking. A reflection on the difference of these three terms adds sameness and difference to their number. Plotinus is satisfied that there can be no further primary distinctions or categories. The successive contraries treated in the second hypothesis give rise to derivative distinctions quality, quantity and the other so-called categories.39

The primary genera are distinct only as the movement of thought to itself is distinguished from its original and restored identity. The beginning does not have the division in it nor does the division remain in the end, nor again does the difference have that from which it is different. The noetic world as founded on these distinctions cannot have the triadic form Porphyry sought to give it.

The structure of Plotinus' noetic world is of a universal thought in which differences are implicit; then a multiplication of beings and intelligences in the genera or ideas of a natural order and intelligences particularized in relation to them; then this activity returned to rest in the original identity. The unified and the pluralized thought are exclusive of each other.40

The same abstract relation of unified and divided moments recurs in the psychic 'hypostasis'. Intelligences in going over to soul both retain their universality and fall into the multiplicity of nature even to embodiment and to the pure dividedness which is matter. Nature is ambiguously good and evil, according as souls have descended into it or in their intellectual part remain undescended.41 Souls may order and unify their relations to an external world through the Platonic virtues. But this order assumes and cannot comprehend the primary division of the undescended and the descended soul. In the sensible world the soul does not have that unity which, if abstractly, the Stoic and Epicurean knew.

The ecstatic unity of the individual and the One, in which Neoplatonism has its beginning, is not mediated and confirmed in the explication of the system. The desired freedom appears to be lost unless through a deeper integration of the divided and the undivided.

39 En. VI, 2, 6-9; on the relation of the 'Platonic categories' to Aristotle's gene, chap.13-19.
40 Ibid., chap.20-22.
41 En. VI 4, 13-16, among many places.
2. Porphyry

If Plotinism be taken as the measure of Neoplatonism, Aemilius and Prophry will be seen as falling back to Numenius and a middle Platonism which did not yet know fully the primacy of the One and the ecstatic relation of the individual to it beyond all division. But the division which occurred first at the noetic level became at the psychic level an unbridged duality in the individual. A return to the One must be to the One as the source of this division. This step, which occurs immediately to a reflection on the whole Plotinian system, was taken by both his principal disciples.

With Aemilius and Porphyry there begins the series of Neoplatonic commentaries on Parmenides which reveal a progressive integration of the system. In Plotinism the One was too abstractly related to permit more than a rudimentary exegesis, which found the three 'hypostases' in the first three hypotheses. Porphyry's exposition differs principally from that of Aemilius in that it denies a difference of principle between rational and irrational souls, and before that has apparently unified more strongly the intelligible and intellective moments of the nous. In this he has carried through more fully the same revision of Plotinism. Porphyry's whole exposition is the surest confirmation of that interpretation of his whole philosophy as Stoicism completely Platonized which Pierre Hadot put together from many sources. There is an abstract unity of soul with itself from which negativity has been excluded. Sensible beings appear first as ordered then as unordered, so also matter. The contemplation of the material world relates all finitude first to the identity of the substrate then considers it as a pure detached otherness.

The formation of the noetic world through division of an absolutely unified thought has here a like structure to the mythical generation in Numenius and the Chaldaean Oracles of a triadic intelligence. The moments of an undistinguished 'paternal' identity are first distinguished and opposed, then the difference is taken into a thinking turned to its origin. This trinity in which the movement and spiritual connection falls between the 'father' and the 'son' Hadot finds in the writings of Marius Victorinus, as also a conceptual exposition of the same doctrine which can only be thought Porphyrian.

As constituted by this relation to the One which contains the division in it, the self-conscious intelligence likewise unites its 'noetic' and 'noeric' aspects not through an immediate unification of positive and negative moments ('sameness' and 'difference') but as these have been categorically articulated. There is room for the Aristotelian logic through which, as in Stoicism, thought maintains its self-identity. The primary distinctions for this noetic self-consciousness are, however, the categories of the Stoic physics through which thought found relation to the infinite logos: the 'something', the 'not-something', the positive as 'quality', the negativity of 'state' and 'relative state'.

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42 Porphyry and Numenius: summary of their relation in des Places, Numenius, Fragments, 26-28; "Par-dessus Plotin, après la mort du maître, son évolution religieuse a de plus en plus rapproché Porphyre de Numenius"; Wallis, Neoplatonism, 114-17, lists points on which the fragments of the commentary on Parmenides "mark a return from Plotinus towards Middle Platonism."

43 Proclus, In Platonis Parmenide, Cousin, 1052, 31 - 1053, 9 on Aemelius; 1053, 38- 1054, 10 on Porphyry. Analysis in Proclus, Theologie Platonicienne, Saffrey et Westerink, I, lxxx - lxxxii [henceforth TP]; and on the attribution of the text to Aemelius and Porphyry, lxxx, n.2 and lxxxii, n.1.
distinctions can just as well define the relation of thought to the transcendent One as it brings its content into the contradictory relation of being and not-being. Thinking and thought are united in the exclusion of the contradictory in the constitution of 'beings' and 'non-beings' and the transcendent unity of this opposition in a principle beyond both. This principle is pure act as uniting immediately being and the negative self-relation of thinking. In the self-identical activity of this relation the difference of the noetic level from the One vanishes.\textsuperscript{44}

The limit of the standpoint becomes evident when this intellectualized Stoicism has passed over into soul and the sensible world. It is the limit of the Stoic 'dogmatism' which unites individual and universal abstractly on the side of the universal. It is an advance no doubt over Plotinus that souls in their multiplicity and embodiment are inwardly united. But what the opposed Epicurean 'dogma' would save has no place in this relation. Still less is there any understanding of that concreteness which the Sceptic sought and could not find.\textsuperscript{45}

Because the opposition of universal soul to particular individual souls has been sharpened, as against Plotinus Porphyry is interested more than his teacher in the 'theurgic' arts. They are useful, however, only to souls in their particularity. The soul as thinking needs no extraneous means to its salvation. Porphyry's Neoplatonism leads to a divided relation of humans to the One and is thus an inadequate explication of its concept.

Plotinus had spoken of the One and what came after it according to a Presocratic logic which unites contraries only in the moment. According to the Stoic logic of Porphyry the divided was one with the undivided at the point where its positive and negative moments had the form of contradiction. The unity was abstract and exclusive of the negative, and this abstractness appears in a divided relation of the soul to the One.\textsuperscript{46}

The inescapable demand for the Neoplatonist was not to revert to Plotinism but to find a comprehensive relation of the One to the divided. Towards this the first step was to set the One beyond all finite relations to what was other than itself.

3. Later Neoplatonism

\textsuperscript{44} On 'beings', 'not-beings', 'not-being' beyond beings, Hadot I, chap.iii. On the relation of the One to the Triad of Being, Life and Thought, on the identification of Being and the One, chap iv, esp. 264-72, 310-330.
\textsuperscript{45} The different structure of the soul in Porphyry and Plotinus is well stated in Hadot I, 336ff. "Chez Plotin, il n'y a d'opposition qu'entre l'acte de l'essence et l'acte qui dérive d'elle: le premier Un est act immobile en lui-même; le second Un est un acte dérive de cet act immobile... [In Porphyry] il faut distinguer l'acte tourné vers soi, qui pose l'être, l'acte tourné vers l'extérieur, qui détermine cet être et le définit, et enfin l'acte dérivé." The soul as reflecting the intelligible Triad is triadic. The moment of difference in this triadic structure is transitional to the identity of the moments, not an equal moment, as for Proclus.
\textsuperscript{46} Both in the Triad and in Soul the 'divided' is implicit in the moment of identity and actually in the return, but in both moments abstractly, as in Stoicism.
Although it is true that one would look in vain in Neoplatonism for the logic of a movement from the undivided to the divided and multiple, Iamblichus and after him Proclus and Damascius brought the argument finally to the form where only the limits of human discourse obstructed a knowledge of their equality in a trinitarian relation. In all these philosophers the soul that finds rest in the One is itself unified, its particularity contained without abstract reduction in the relation of individual to universal. The One which is the interest of this unified soul has a like relation to division and to the completed division which is the individual. This concrete relation on the one side and on the other is clarified by degrees in the thought of these three philosophers.

(i) Iamblichus

Iamblichus distinguished before the noetic realm a One without division and a One uniting 'limit' and 'unlimited'. The plurality belonging to this second One is itself unified, that is, it is not subject to the opposition of its constituent moments. It is the plurality of gods through whom the individual in his particular relations to the world is unified and awakened to a sense of the primary One. Thus Proclus reports of Iamblichus' exegesis of Parmenides that the first hypothesis was found to be about the One and the gods.48

There is in this relation a unification of the second with the first One, as also of the individual with the universal soul. But in the one case as in the other the unification is on the side of the universal moment. The henads of Proclus effect, or are intended to effect, a more concrete relation of the many gods to the One, and Damascius' criticism of Proclus moves farther in the same direction.

The difficulties of Iamblichus' formulation come to light more distinctly in the further course of his comment on Parmenides. The self-conscious intelligence, while it knows the triad of being, life and thought as its own, has this knowledge variously in its moments: the noetic intelligence contains the three monads in their undivided totality; in its division and negative return it knows the particular ideas and not their comprehension in the monads.49 A consequence of this incompleteness of the noetic realm is that the transition to soul and the sensible world is divided: before soul the many gods in the guise in which they appear in the lower world as 'angels', 'demons' and 'heroes' constitute an intermediate hypothesis. From the same defect stems also the interpretation of the last two hypotheses as about the celestial and sublunary worlds. Proclus objected rightly that these as not for thought total objects are not properly 'hypotheses'.50

47 "Die Selbstentwickelung dieses Einheit aber wird bei Proclus nicht eben mehr zur Notwendigkeit des Begriffs gemacht, als bei Plotin; diese Mussen wir ein für allemal aufgeben, den Begriff der Entzweigung hier zu suchen." Hegel, Gesch. Phil., vol. xv, 64. In the development from Plotinus to Damascius the structure of the moments of rest, procession and return becomes ever more concrete, as each contains more explicitly and completely the others. This development is to the concreteness of subjectivity but this expression through the categories of unity and multiplicity, between which the transition is for a reflection extraneous to both and is not known as the development of the object itself.
49 Dillon, Iamblichus Fragmenta, In Philebum, Fr.4, and commentary thereto.
50 Proclus' criticism of Iamblichus' exposition of Parmenides, o.c., 1055, 17-25; Saff.- West. TP, I, lxxxiii.
The soul for Iamblichus is at an extreme remove from the Plotinian soul untouched by the sufferings of its mortal part. The individual soul, though an inner freedom belongs to it, can attain to that freedom not of itself but only as the gods are moved through the theurgic arts.51

(ii) Proclus

The principal division for Proclus of all that is after the One is of gods or *henads* and beings composite of the undivided and the divided. There is the One, and after the One the whole noetic realm. The relation of the two is that the same total content is in the One without division and contrariety, in the noetic as divided and opposed.52

The division in the noetic between the 'ontic' and the 'henadic' is that with the one the moment of self-relation or being is first, then procession, then reversion to being; while the 'henadic', though divided according to the division of being, remains primarily in an undivided relation to the One. The three monads being, life and thought through which the ideal procession and return takes place are the same totality, each having the others in it, and distinguished only by the moments of 'rest', 'procession' and 'reversion'. That these moments are divided and timelessly successive results from the original constitution of the noetic: before the concretion of 'being' as the first 'monad' are its abstract elements, 'measure' and the 'unmeasured', which are unified through their relation to the One. For the thought which considers this unification the first product is 'being'; 'life' and 'thought' then follow as the division and reunification through which the noetic self-consciousness actually knows all things as its own. The realization of self-consciousness in the three 'monadic' totalities, should it be complete, would cancel the assumed priority of the abstract moments and know the derivation from the One as not a composition but through a primary unity of the abstract elements and their product.

Hegel rightly observed that the noetic self-consciousness as realized through the relation of the three monads, each having in its manner the other moments in it, was virtually one idea. Proclus himself, though he speaks similarly of the unity of the monads, is not yet at the point where it can be fully evident.53 Where the unity of the monads comes most nearly into view is in the reversion of the 'noeric' to the 'noetic' intelligence. That completion of self-conscious thought is also the point of transition to the psychic 'hypostasis' in the language of Timaeus to the demiurgic construction of the soul.

51 Texts on Iamblichus' concept of the individual soul in its difference from earlier Platonism collected in Dillon, 41-47.
53 Hegel's brief exposition concentrates on Platonic Theology III. chap. 6-14, where Proclus elicits his doctrine of *henads* from Philebus. Of the three monads he says, "Und dies alles ist Ein Denken, Eine Idee: das Beharren, das Vorschreiten, und das Umkehren", translating (Saff.-West. TP, III. 50, 10). "Et tous ces trois moments repos, procession, conversion ont le caractère de l'Un et sont intelligible" (Saff. West.) "Diese drei Dreieinigkeiten verkündigen nun auf eine mystische weise die völlig unerkannten Ursache des ersten unmitgeteilten Gottes", translating Platonic Theology, 16-18. On the meaning of 'mystical' Hegel makes the precise comment "Das mystische daran ist, dass diese Unterscheide, die als Totalitäten, als Gottes bestimmt sind, als Eins gefasst werden."
The unification of self-consciousness is spoken of through successive contraries 'in itself - in another', 'rest - motion', 'same - different'; and through syllogistic relations of the undivided and the divided mediated by these categories. It is enough for the present argument to observe that this reflection leads neither to a complete unification of the 'noetic' nor to a concept of soul in which the relation of individual to universal is fully articulated. The latter result demands particular attention if one would see the criticism of Proclan Neoplatonism by Damascius and his revision of its principles as a necessary development.  

Proclus, as Iamblichus before him, has need to find a unified relation of the human soul to the One and the whole 'noetic' realm. It reflects the priority of 'being' over 'life' and the activity of thinking that the soul has an eternal being and is embodied in the sensible world through its activity. Although Proclus has moved far from Plotinus and early Neoplatonism towards a concrete concept of man, there is still a distance to go if the sensible individual is to be known as the immediate existence of the whole man. The original concept and desire of Neoplatonism is not yet fully realized.

(iii) Damascius

If with Proclus it is not far from sight that the three monads of the noetic realm make up one idea, Damascius brings fully to light that this unity is the truth of the matter. That the monads which together constitute the infinite procession and conversion of what remains with itself appear as a successive plurality is for a thought which has not hold fully of its own finitude. The primary division for Proclus of all things after the One into composite beings and henads belongs already to a finite standpoint.

The logical method of all the Neoplatonists is an infinite self-conscious thought which can make the finite and divided its own. But in this appropriation the present argument has shown in what ways it might remain held by finite abstractions. Proclus in considering the constitution of self-conscious thought gave an independent 'henadic' status to 'limit' and 'unlimited' the abstract moments of the division which rested undivided in the One. This initial concession to the finite pervaded his whole system even to his concept of the human soul. Damascius throughout his Principles uses a method of 'problems' and 'solutions' which shows a complete clarity about the relativity of finite moments. Problems are formed by fixed finite assumptions. The solution is to situate

54 These remarks condense a long and involved exposition of the 'third intellective triad' in Damascius' commentary on Parmenides (Ruelle II, 169-245). An analysis of the criticism of Proclus contained in this argument in Saff.-West. TP, V, ix - xciii.

55 For Proclus on the relation of the substance of the soul to its activity, Elements of Theology, Prop. 191. Damascius' criticism in his exposition of the third hypothesis of Parmenides, Ruelle, II, 246-273, esp. 252-7, 262,4. See the lucid exposition of the difference of Proclus and Damascius on the structure of the soul in Joseph Combes, Études Néoplatoniciennes, Grenoble, 1989, 260-7.

56 E.T., prop.6 "...le limitant et l'illimité ont l'inconvenient d'apparaître contredistingués comme des termes de même rang, ce que reporte là-haut nos proper oppositions", J. Combes, Études Néoplatoniciennes, 255.
them as relative in an infinite whole. The application of this method to Proclus' system breaks down its rigid structures and allows its moving spirit to appear far more clearly.\(^{57}\)

The Principles begins with a problem about the relation of the One, considered as principle, to a plurality of which it is assumed to be principle. In this problem lies the difficulty which has beset all his Neoplatonic predecessors of relating the One to the divided: each term has to be at once independent of the other and related to it. There is no solution to these contradictions unless in perceiving that the separation of principle from principled is the product of a finite thought, and that the One is not simply beyond division but has division as its own moment.\(^{58}\)

Damascius' method is perplexing to human thought in that it places the truth, which is its primary interest, beyond its grasp. So with all forms of Neoplatonism, but here, as afterwards with Cusanus, the limit of human discourse is directly exposed.\(^{59}\)

It would be long here to follow through Damascius' revision of the noetic world already strongly unified by Proclus. The primary opposition of 'ontic' and 'henadic' is all but dissolved in a concept of what is not one as first of all unified not 'limit' as opposed to 'unlimited', but transcending this division in relation to the undivided. The intelligible is thus not the product of prior 'henadic' elements but itself equally 'henadic' or divine. It comes into view with this knowledge of a unified division that the ideal world is in truth not a second level below the One but rather, as taught by the Oracles and other revelations, the One itself as triune. An intelligible world more within the grasp of a human thought subject to exclusive contraries can be thought no more than that: a world of human discourse.\(^{60}\)

This deeper unification of the ideal world permitted Damascius to see a concrete unity of the human soul in which the embodied individual in a sensible world is the whole soul, as also the soul as universal is not abstract but the whole soul. That the soul descends from its universality not in its activity only, as for Proclus, but substantially as well supposes an equality and concretion of its moments at one level and the other. This knowledge of the soul and the knowledge of the intelligible as triune and concrete are reciprocal.\(^{61}\)

Proclus was confident that he had learned from Syrianus, his teacher, the true and adequate exegesis of *Parmenides*. The four 'hypotheses' after the first give the complete procession of all things from the One even to the externalized and absolutely divided unity of matter. If the One is, all things both eternal and temporal are. The remaining four

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\(^{57}\) Damascius' method is equivalent to Cusanus' method of 'learned ignorance', a comprehensive scepticism which knows itself.

\(^{58}\) A conclusion from which nothing separates Damascius, but which he cannot draw, for with it would fall the whole Hellenic world and its gods.

\(^{59}\) Principles, 8.

\(^{60}\) Damascius' criticism of Proclus on the relation of the One to the Intelligible and to finite knowledge, Ruelle I, 111-113 (Combès III, 113-122).

'hypotheses' show that, if the One is not, all things in consequence are not. This exegesis Damascius finds defective, in that it omits from all reality what the world is for souls in a sensible world. Sensible reality it regards as a Stoic would from the side of its identity, not in its otherness and negativity. Damascius, knowing the concrete unity of the soul, regards the sensible world as for such a unified soul. In this, though inwardly, he resumes the standpoint of the Sceptic.\(^62\)

Thus the not-being of the One, as treated in the sixth 'hypothesis', is an indifference underlying affirmative and negative, such as is the universal side of the sceptical consciousness. The flux of images which have neither substrate nor definite relation to a knowing subject, presented in the eighth 'hypothesis', is again sensible immediacy as for the Sceptic. The seventh and ninth 'hypotheses' Damascius concedes to Syrianus and Proclus are about the nullity of all things, if the One is not. These hypotheses he declares to be 'impossible', that is, contradictory. But he hesitates to reject them as meaningless since all the 'hypotheses' as unified totalities contain like contradictions. It is as though, happy to have found meaning in two of the negative hypotheses, he turns from the anomaly that they should have a different status than the others.\(^63\)

These "meaningless" hypotheses also have in fact meaning for him. Through them a Sceptical relation of the soul to itself and its sensible objects is converted into that unified soul he knows already, for which also the flux of images is individualized. At that point the development of Neoplatonism appears to be complete; the argument has returned to the divided self-consciousness of Scepticism and made clear what that division of the individual from its universality is.\(^64\)

**(D) The Origin Of The Older Modern Philosophy**

1. Neoplatonism from Eriugena to Cusanus

With Damascius the development of Neoplatonism appears to be complete: the ideal and sensible worlds at the point of their complete explication and concreteness disclose through their nullity, as other than the One, that the One is the sole comprehensive truth. There remains with him however an ambiguity and hesitancy in the face of this result: the hypotheses which set forth the procession and return of all things are only for a finite thought, but that thought also finds it absurd to recognize the contradiction and nullity of its hypotheses to recognize its own finitude and permit the world of its finite discourse to be drawn into the infinite actuality of the One. This further step is taken by Eriugena, guided to it by Dionysius and Maximus Confessor. There is one finite totality or nature,

\(^{62}\) Exposition of the negative hypotheses, Ruelle II, 432-60; and the excellent study of Damascius on the negative hypotheses in Combès, *Études Néoplatoniciennes*, 131-188.

\(^{63}\) Ruelle II, 433.

\(^{64}\) For Damascius, as for all Neoplatonists, the One is the first moving interest of humans, the good through which they are unified; of all else outside this unified relation there is only a human or hypothetical knowledge.
which thought can divide into a creative beginning, a creative logos containing a plurality of ideas or created ends, the complete explication of this logos as soul and the sensible world, this world as through man united with its exemplar, the exemplary and the sensible thus unified as resting eternally in their creative origin.

A difficulty remains however in the system of Eriugena not far different from that of Damascius. The quadripartite division takes the place of the 'hypotheses'. The movement of the argument no longer depends on a Platonic text but is purely logical, the undivided good as it is for a thought which knows its moments as successive. For this extraneous thought the 'uncreated creative' is divided from 'that which neither creates nor is created' the principle as returned to itself. And between the two is room for the ideal world and its sensible image. What is the status of this thought and of the structure the ideal and sensible have for it?

The ideal totality 'creates and is created'. As one logos it 'creates'; as a plurality of ideas or 'primordial causes' it is 'created'. The structure is very much that of Damascius, the 'unified' in which contraries coincide, and within it the ideas as composed of 'limit and unlimited'. This totality is posterior to the One, from which for the contemplative subject it comes forth and recedes into it. The particular ideas are at once the objects of an immutable knowledge, and prior to this knowledge is endless 'dyadic' division. The sensible totality has the same ambiguity, that the soul knows a multitude of changing but recurrent images of the ideal content and when predicated of its material substrate those images dissolve into vanishing appearances.

Souls as returning to the ideal from their dispersion as the sensible totality again return first to their 'primordial cause' or their original state as created, and then through Christ or the logos into the unity of the ideal world. The subject which follows the outgoing and return of 'nature' through this twofold movement does away both with its objective divisions and with the gradations in its knowledge of them.65

There occurs then the question how beyond the divisions and constructions of a subjective reflection the infinite good is present to what is other than itself, how it is the end to which the rational creature in its finitude is principally drawn. The sense of this question, and how a further philosophical development beyond this point is possible, is readily intelligible if Eriugena's thought be situated in its historical context. The Periphyseon was written at a time when politically a unity of ends embodied in the 'emperor' had been established and drew individuals to it for a time, until it succumbed to the counter attraction of divisive passions and interests. The weakness of this restored Roman Empire was that the political good did not inform and give direction to those interests as different and opposed to its realization. For this formation it was not enough that the good should have come into view as that in which for thought all that came after it was enveloped. The good had to have root in the finite: it was necessary that the 'dyad' and the power of contraries be arrested in finite substances. The movement to the good might then have a sensible beginning and be through an ordered human life. Aristotle provided the means for this embodiment of the good.

65 As summarily stated at De Divisione Naturae V, 1019 - 21 (Migne).
Cusanus, six centuries after Eriugena, can appear to propose very much the same system. Dionysius and Proclus are also his masters. But between the two systems there is a profound difference: the good for Cusanus is realized in individuals as they have passed through the oppositions of an ordered human world to an infinite unity. His Neoplatonism has behind it a succession of Aristotelian positions in which the mediation of individuals with the good is variously understood. This history makes possible a transformation of Eriugena's system in which the externality of thought to the principle is overcome and the principle known not only by the negation of the finite but positively as the beginning of what comes after it.

The relation of the great Scholastic systems to the resurgent Neoplatonism of Cusanus can be indicated briefly in its general logical structure. It is sufficient in this interest to speak of Thomism, Scotism and the nominalism of Ockham. Presupposing the one good, these systems proceed to a knowledge of it by another route than that of Neoplatonism from a sensible beginning variously taken. From this beginning one moves to a demonstrated knowledge that God is or, it may be, finds the mediation questionable. The understanding is capable of a true knowledge of sensible substances, and from their finitude can argue to an infinite cause which sustains them. Neither the knowledge of sensible substances nor the ascent from them to God is frustrated by an 'unlimited' as an element of all things.

But the realistic beginning of such an argument tends to be undermined: the subject which carries it through and connects beginning and conclusion can always ask in that infinite relation whether the logical structure defining the sensible does not belong rather to itself. The subject in its relation to the good reacts against the limit a particular relation to the sensible sets to its freedom. It reacts first to a nominalist stand against the reality of the limit, then is receptive of another mediation between the world and the good which accommodates better its freedom.

In this way the assumed beginning with the world and its logical form is by degrees drawn into the relation of the subject to the good, and an underlying Neoplatonism draws other positions into itself. In this restoration there is the difference from all earlier Neoplatonisms that all finite structures through which the good appears and does not appear have lost every semblance of independence.

Aquinas assumes a world of Aristotelian finite substances, and by negating the infinite regress that appears in the mutual relations through which their actuality is sustained, arrives in his five ways at the concept of an infinitely actual being. The subject which carries through this proof knows itself as a substance as an intellectual form relating to itself all other forms through the necessity of the understanding. Within this unity there is a dispersion of powers, such that sense perception knows the individual directly, the understanding only mediatly. The logical movement of the proofs draws
together into one the self-relation of substances and their externality, and this unification is reflected into the subject.  

Practically, an inner unity of the will with particular natural relations through the virtues is converted into a Stoic individual, whose particularity is inward and has the form of universal rights. Scotism expresses the result of this unification. The individual is not an externalization of the substantial form having its principle in 'materia signata' but belongs to the perfection of the substance. The difference of individual from universal is contained in their relation, as 'formalities' within their community. The thinking individual is likewise more strongly integrated: discursive and intuitive moments of knowledge are more nearly one activity, as are thought and sense perception. The way to a knowledge of God is through individuals in which universals are present, not purely but in a particular content. Universals in their purity are only in the intellect. The question is whether there is a first in the orders of causality, finality and eminence. The reasoning here is to an infinite being in which the finitude and consequent dependence of substances so conceived has passed into an absolute unity of self-relation and division. This idea is not possible only but actual, since its perfection would be diminished if, as with all else, its universality and its division were not absolutely unified.

Scotism passes easily into the nominalism of Ockham, as the individual substances presupposed in the movement from the world to God are seen to rest on a simpler relation of individual and universal for the thinking subject. The difference of the sensible individual from the universal is the difference in the subject between a sensuous and a thinking intuition. In the one the multiple sensuous content is immediately united; through the other the subject is able to bring the content into logical form of judgment and syllogism.

The nominalist has made for himself a science of contingency in which the movement from the world to God is no more than a possibility without logical cogency. There is no proof that an endless regression is impossible. Practically he lives in a world of free individuals, a democracy where hierarchic order has lost its hold. There is the intuition of a common good, but with it an empirical diversity of ends.

The movement to God at this point is through an inner unification of division and discourse with intuitive unity, not simply their cooperation in relation to a given content, as in nominalism. The necessity which moved in the demonstrations of Aquinas and Scotus has to be discovered as the contrariety underlying contingent relations and their coincidence in the unity of thought. The objects of a thought which has thus taken its external presuppositions into itself are, as Neoplatonists had long known, constituted from logical elements and not alien to self-consciousness.

66 An annotation which would tie this and the following paragraphs to the texts would be too extensive to attempt here. There is also the difficulty that, as commonly in a history of philosophy, the connection of one position with another only comes out fully at the end of the development, when one looks back from Cusanus to Eriugena.

67 Scotus' proof is explicated fully in Gilson, Jean Duns Scot, Chap. II; on the twist Scotus gives to Anselm's argument, 168 ff.
Cusanus thought to have in the coincidence of opposites a truer knowledge of God and the world than could be obtained by reasoning from finite presuppositions. Only in God and in the intellect as turned to itself out of finite operations was the coincidentia oppositorum actual. All that otherwise was taken for truth was only an endless approximation. The right relation of the mind to this approximate truth was a docta ignorantia, a scepticism fully cognizant of itself. This scepticism is neither the attitude of Damascius nor that of Eriugena to the finite, allowing less of stability to it than either. For Cusanus himself it could not long stand without further foundation.

The system set for in the Docta Ignorantia and the De Conjecturis is very different from that of Eriugena. The beginning is with God as unity, equality of division and the nexus of the two: the universal coincidence of opposites, as man, collected into a self-relation which sustains its explication into divided relations, is this coincidence individualized. This concept is not of the God who creates only, but of that which 'creates and is created' or of the 'unified' of Damascius. But the 'creative' and 'created' moments of that idea are more strongly dissociated. The stabilized finitude of the ideal and the sensible worlds is more explicitly subject to the power of contraries. The mutual limitation and concretion of contraries into 'primordial causes' fall outside the consideration of God and is treated rather in the second book of the Docta Ignorantia, which is about the world, as "correlaria praeambularia ad inferendum unum infinitum universum."  

That the world is the idea under the form of endless division is common doctrine since Proclus. With Cusanus the scepticism latent in that account becomes explicit, in that his attention is on the dyadic form as prior to every content. And inference to God from the world would be mediated by the disclosure through 'learned ignorance' that it has no truth.

The return of the world to God, as treated in the third book of the Docta Ignorantia has likewise another structure than for Eriugena in that the point of interest is the relation of individuals as 'microcosms' uniting uniquely the two worlds to Christ or the universal Logos. Where in Eriugena's narration of the return individuals are restored first to their original state as united with their primordial cause and than raised to the creative logos, here these stages are for the subject the experience of the finitude of his unique independence. The method of 'learned ignorance' breaks through that barrier also, and the individual knows himself as within a unified end.  

Cusanus could not rest with this first system. It was the standpoint of a restless subjective spirit which sought unity beyond division but found it only at the term of a reflection which dissolved the division into an infinite self-relation. The way to this resolution was lost in the result. The docta ignorantia uncovered a unity beyond its reflection but could not overcome itself. This method, coming out of nominalism, found again a reasoned relation of the world to God. In however attenuated a form it assumed a world and a subject which knew it. Here the reasoning which discovered God as the

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68 Docta Ignorantia, II, 1-6.
69 Docta Ignorantia, III, 1-3.
principle destroyed its own assumption finite relations of thought to corresponding things.

The creative principle, at once beginning and end, in which all divisions subsisted became the interest of Cusanus. The 'coincidence of opposites' no longer appeared a sufficient concept of God, nor was he content with a knowledge of God by the via negativa. That way assumed a finitude which was to be negated, an assumption which the docta ignorantia dissolved. Nothing remained to conceal the true principle underlying the divisions.

The system which emerges from this revision is only different from that of Eriugena in that it is for the individual who has experienced the limit of relations to the good through an ordered 'otherness', ideal and sensible. The simple intuition of the One, which was ever for Neoplatonists the only unqualified truth, has no longer below it another thought which moves to it through oppositions. The docta ignorantia reduced all discourse to scepticism. The conclusion was then drawn that division and difference reside in and belong to the actuality of the creative good.

Cusanus works through this revision in successive attempts to speak of it adequately. He proposes to think of God as the non aliud, to be known not simply as beyond the 'otherness' which to the docta ignorantia discloses the untruth of the finite, but as that in which the finite rests. He is then dissatisfied with this name as not indicating clearly that God is not only the indifferent foundation of difference but the primary division and actuality. That infinite potentiality which also is he thinks might better be named possest But that name has the inconvenience that it suggests a difference and not the absolute unity of these moments. The most appropriate name he therefore finds to be 'posse', so far as this indicates the infinite actuality of infinite potentiality.70

Through the succession of these names Cusanus divests his thought ever more distinctly of the externality belonging to the method of docta ignorantia. The transcendence of otherness is transferred thus from a sceptical reflection to the One itself/thereby also the negative theology of the earlier systems passes into an affirmative presence of God in and through division and finitude.71

2. Modern Philosophy

70 "...quidditas quae semper quaesita est, et quaeritur et quaeretur, si esset penitus ignota, quomodo quaseretur quando etiam reperta maneret incognita? ... Cum igitur annis multis viderim ipsam ultra omnem potentiam cognitivam, ante omnem varietatem it oppositionem quaerere oportere, non attendi quidditatem in se subsistentem esse omnium substantiarum invariabilem subsistentiam ... non aliam et aliam aliorum entium quidditatem ... deinde vidi necessario fatendum ipsum rerum hypostasim seu subsistentiam posse esse, et quia potest esse, utique sine posse ipsa non potest esse ... Ideo posse ipsum...est quo nihil subsistentius esse potest." De Apice Theoriae, Opera, Paris, 1515, ccxix.

71 "Quando ... mens in posse suo videt posse ipsum ob suam excellentiam capi non posse, tunc visum supra suam capacitatem videt ... ibid., ccxx. The comprehensive Proclan monads are appearances of this ground, and [so the opuscule continues] the thinking whose object it is knows itself as having its division and difference intrinsic to it, as with Augustine's trinity of rational powers, which is not intelligible in a Neoplatonic logic. The principle of a new philosophical development has come into view.
The new philosophy began where the old ended, namely where the One beyond all else passed into the self-consciousness which knew the finite as its own. With this transition doubt took the place of the scepticism which had its understanding in Neoplatonism. Doubt has in it a point of certainty and the interest is to know the rest as in a necessary relation to the first certainty thinking has of its own being.

The first systematic analysis of what is in this self-consciousness certain of its being is the Meditations of Descartes. The indubitable certainty of self-consciousness is discovered by doubting all that can be doubted.\textsuperscript{72} The movement to this certainty is a separation of thought from all the content of sense perception, imagination, even of mathematics, which of supposed sciences appeared the most trustworthy. The world from which thinking abstracted itself was opposed to it as wholly other, extension infinitely divisible to the indivisibility of self consciousness.\textsuperscript{73} But the seeming independence of the subject in this relation was disturbed by a finitude not conformed to its certainty. This instability rested on the idea of an infinite being in whom all perfections were absolutely united the Neoplatonic One as having in its self-relation all the intelligible and sensible. By a proof of the existence of this idea from the dependence, not of a sensible world, but of the self-certain subject, the relation of the two is discovered to be that of creator to creature.\textsuperscript{74} In that relation the rational creature can discriminate true and false as certainly as it knows itself, through the pure logical form which unites self-consciousness with what is other than itself.\textsuperscript{75} That this inner truth should become a science also of material objects requires that the extended world which is wholly other than thought be known as depending on the existence of the divine idea. The thinking subject has thus confronting it the divine idea externalized, not a multitude of contingencies without necessary connection, ever dubitable to thought, but in which there is systematic unity and mutual exclusion of identical and different.\textsuperscript{76} Sense perception and imagination as related to that object are not principally doubtful and deceptive but that through which the mind moves to the clear and distinct ideas of the understanding.\textsuperscript{77} Finally on this foundation self-conscious thought can discover a necessary connection with that one body which it takes to be peculiarly its own.\textsuperscript{78}

The new philosophy has thus for its principal interest the same infinite One or Good as the old, only as not beyond the ideal and sensible totalities but in them as their creator. The way to a knowledge of this principle is not by turning from the illusory knowledge and nullity of the sensible world to an intelligible world which thought makes for itself in

\textsuperscript{72} Med. I. \\
\textsuperscript{73} Med. II. \\
\textsuperscript{74} Med. III. \\
\textsuperscript{75} Med. IV. \\
\textsuperscript{76} Med. V. The truth the mind has through the pure logical form of demonstration is immutably actual in the necessary existence of God: "Atque ita plane video omnis scientiae certitudinem et veritatem ab una veri Dei cognitione pendere, adeo ut, priusquam illum nossem, nihil de ulla alia re perfecte scire potuerim." Meditaciones de Prima Philosophia, Adam-Tannery ed., VII, 71. \\
\textsuperscript{77} Ibid., VI, 79. Nature as a mechanical system in which all things are both connected and mutually exclusive is knowable to the understanding which by its logic distinguishes true from false. \\
\textsuperscript{78} Ibid., 81.
the light of a primal unity. The idea is sought through a sensible world itself belonging to self-consciousness and the agreement of what is there discovered with the understanding.

The essential problems of this philosophy are also other than those of the old. The logic by which a free self-consciousness would know the natural and the human world contradicts its freedom. The subject finds an abstract freedom in the substance of Spinoza beyond the necessity of its infinite thinking and extended attributes. The monadic individuals of Leibniz do not define a self-conscious freedom. Free self-consciousness turns therefore to itself and would know God, the world and its own freedom, should this be possible, through itself and its ideas.\textsuperscript{79} This subjective reflection may be likened to ancient scepticism, but is rather an idealism which would know those relations to what is other, in which the subject is unfree, as contained in its freedom, in the concrete freedom present in the transition from the old to the new philosophy.

The infinite ideas of the earlier stage of this philosophy God, nature and self-conscious freedom recur in the subjective reflection, first as regulative ideas or as presupposed in the moral will\textsuperscript{80}, then as the true substance in which the subject is not first but the moment of return to the good itself through the externality of nature.\textsuperscript{81}

The new philosophy in its subjective phase was destructive of the state, that is, of an objective unity of ends.\textsuperscript{82} As in relation to the unified good of the state, as realizing variously that unified end, the subject is the bearer of rights established through the revolutions of the eighteenth century. These rights are other than those which attach to the free individual or person of the older world through its various relations to the good.

The new philosophy, so far as centred in the subject, was destructive of the concrete freedom of the Christian revelation. In its full explication where objective and subjective poles meet this philosophy gives the stability of thought to the Christian 'Vorstellung' of creation, fall, the inner division of the free subject. It provides thus a theological method extending the \textit{intellectus fidei} of Augustine.\textsuperscript{83} This is another method than those which rest on Neoplatonism and the primacy of the negative over positive theology.

What is meant by saying that the new philosophy began where the old ended has perhaps been clarified by a long and difficult argument.\textsuperscript{84}

\textsuperscript{79} Hume has before him the same infinite ideas as the Cartesian and subsequent philosophies and finds God, nature and freedom inaccessible to the subject empirically.
\textsuperscript{80} Kant, Fichte.
\textsuperscript{81} Schelling, with loss in the 'Identitätsphilosophie' of the difference between the old and the new philosophy; the difference is held together and restored in Hegel's \textit{Phänomenologie des Geistes}.
\textsuperscript{82} So far as an objective order is not also assumed (Locke) or in some manner derived (Rousseau, Kant).
\textsuperscript{83} Augustine, converted to Christianity out of the radical conflict of the will, as turned to God or to itself, through a Cartesian self-certainty uncovered conditions of his conversion in a meditation on Scripture. The new philosophy, through its derivation from the old, gives to the \textit{intellectus fidei} an independence from the text and a greater capacity to distinguish the spirit from the letter.
\textsuperscript{84} One usually takes a shorter route from contemporary subjectivity to Neoplatonism. But what there is more in this subjectivity than in ancient scepticism can easily colour one's perception of Neoplatonism and
obscure the development from it of another philosophy. That difficulty has been circumvented in this piece, but on its method more needs to be said than is possible here.
Ancient Scepticism And The Contra Academicos Of St. Augustine

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Are we ever justified in being convinced we know something and in acting accordingly? Does our happiness depend upon the possibility or impossibility of certain knowledge? Does the good life require a stable relationship to the truth or can it be had apart from this? Is the desire to apprehend truth our central concern as rational beings, the basis of our authentic existence? Is it rather an impediment to happiness, an illusory desire which we must dispel or condemn ourselves to a life of frustration and anxiety? One might simply dismiss this as a dead issue. After all, is not certainty a discredited concept in our supposedly post-philosophical era? Have not we all learned the finite and contingent character of all human discourse? Yet the signs of discomfort with these conclusions are evident in our culture as well. Certain foundations for our beliefs and actions, whether grounded in reason or the authority of revelation, can seem necessary antidotes to the pervasive loss of meaning in advanced societies. Indeed, the very distinction between civilized life and barbarity and cynicism is thought to rest on the capacity to draw clear moral conclusions. In support of this, it may be pointed out that contemporary relativism is often put forward on moral and socio-political grounds which betray it as clearly a dogmatism.

Nonetheless, it remains true that the human condition seems subject to a fundamental anxiety about the possibility of grasping the world we inhabit. Is reality as we perceive it to be or are we locked forever in our own subjective impressions? The problem can be put as follows: it seems always that in my effort to grasp otherness in nature, society, or beyond I rely upon some medium to bring the object before myself. But if this is the case how am I to know how much the perception before me takes its character from the object itself or from the medium which has delivered it to me?

In the ancient world Sceptical thinkers focused on the problem of sensation. Given that the senses are possible, and they need to such be to receive impressions from external objects, can they not be effected by external conditions in such a way that they do not register these objects as they truly are? And if this were not the case, or could be compensated for in some way, how could we be sure what characteristics of the object were contributed by the inherent operation of the sense organ? What is even worse, it is entirely possible to have sensations of objects which are not present. Far from guaranteeing that objects are as they appear, the senses do not even guarantee the
presence of an object at all. How, then, can we rely upon them in claiming to know how
the world is?

In our own day, Sceptics have tended to focus less on the problem of sensation and
more on the conditions for understanding and ordering the deliverances of sense. This is
the problem of the so called hermeneutical circle. To give shape and meaning to the data
which confront us requires a preset conceptual framework if we are to have more than a
mere chaos of impressions. But, since we cannot grasp the world as it is apart from such
frameworks how are we to determine whether they are part of the real structure of things?
We cannot put things on one side and concepts on the other to determine whether they
match. The same difficulty we noted with the senses appears here as well. It seems there
is no way to determine what belongs to the object and what belongs to the medium
through which it appears.

On the face of it these arguments can seem utterly persuasive and many have been
persuaded by them. On the other hand, civilization and even life itself seem to depend on
the capacity to distinguish what is from what is not and many others have impatiently
denounced Sceptical arguments as destructive of human flourishing. Nonetheless, it is
one thing to decry the evil consequences of Relativism and Scepticism and quite another
to demonstrate their falsity. Indeed, if it is the case that all knowledge is mediated the
sceptical argument is untouchable in both its ancient and modern forms.

In antiquity the Sceptical challenge was answered with the greatest thoroughness by
Augustine. His dialogue *Contra Academicos* as well as several passages in his other
writings vigorously oppose any effort to deny to human beings a sure foundation in their
quest to apprehend the Truth. For him, self-consciousness itself provided this foundation.
The fact that mind is, in the final analysis, unmediated self-presence puts knowledge
grounded in introspection beyond the power of appearance and renders it impervious to
doubt. On this basis, he proceeded to demonstrate that the Platonic tradition could
surmount the challenge of the New Academy, which had raised in a new way the problem
of thought's adequacy to being, by showing that self-consciousness itself was constituted
by the Ideas (*De Vera Religione* xxix,73).

Augustine noted that the opposition of being and appearance, on which Scepticism of
any kind thrived, is operative in any kind of knowledge in which something is known
indirectly through the medium of something directly known. Thus, a sensible object
external to ourselves is known, not by direct insight but through an image it produces in
us from which we infer the being and nature of that object. While Augustine thought
knowledge of this kind entirely adequate to its purpose and had no exaggerated suspicion
of the senses, he also saw that the refutation of Scepticism involved something more than
asserting this general fact. It involved cutting out the root of the Sceptical position by
pointing to the direct presence of reason to itself in its own operations. As an example of
the direct presence of being to thought, reason's knowledge of itself is immune to the
critical fire of the Sceptics, who always assume that knowledge is through a medium
capable of distorting the object known (see *De Trinitate* XV, chap.4).
Thus, against the tendency of ancient Scepticism to posit an absolute divide between subject and object, being and appearance, Augustine points to self-consciousness as uniting these oppositions. Moreover, because timeless and necessary truth constitutes the activity of thought revealed in judgement, even the judgement that I exist, this self-consciousness is not barren self-identity but inherently contentful. Its awareness of itself is simultaneously an intellection of the primary ideas. This being the case, the mind cannot fall completely out of its relation to being without ceasing to exist as a mind. Accordingly, any Scepticism which attempts to establish an absolute gulf between thought and being is defeated from the outset. The answer to the Sceptical question is the Sceptic himself inasmuch as in his own activity he directly unites the very terms, being and appearance, that he would hold forever apart.

In this way, Augustine showed that in thought itself lay the mediation between sensible appearance and its inner ground in the divine. Since self-consciousness holds together in itself the apparent and the real the theoretical life can involve more than the mere refusal to assent to appearances. The intelligible light, the bridge by which we return to our source from the shadows of the cave, is present, sustaining and illumining us even in the very effort to deny it. To return fully to ourselves is to return to this light and achieve final fruition and since we are present to ourselves by our very nature to return to ourselves is a matter of simply looking.1

Having said this however, it need not be denied that for Augustine Scepticism is not without a positive function. That any Scepticism which seeks to establish a sceptical discourse (rather than falling into silence) has of necessity a self-overcoming character will be a crucial point emerging from Augustine's argument. This fact represents both the limitation and the positive contribution of the Sceptical tradition. By undermining the claim of various dogmatisms to offer a certain grasp of our immediate sensuous environment by showing that our relationship to it is entirely mediated the Sceptics inadvertently pointed to thought itself as the immediate self-presence of Truth. In this way, their position constituted a possible route of return to the wisdom of Platonism insofar as it revealed, through its very denial of the light of truth, the presence of this light in the form of universal and objective laws of thought. Thus, Augustine can see Scepticism as moving beyond itself to a knowledge of the Ideas and as paving the way historically for the revival of the Platonic tradition in the school of Plotinus.

The present paper will examine the dialectical process by which scepticism can be converted to the ideas as dramatised by Augustine in the *Contra Academicos*. This is Augustine's most thorough treatment of the question and one which, to the end of his life, he regarded as having accomplished its aim (*Retractions*, 1, 1). Prior to this, however, it

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1 Augustine held with the Platonic tradition that the light of the Ideas mediated to us the divine ground of all finite being and knowing. Augustine also saw Orthodox Christianity's identification of the Word, the primal thought in which the Ideas were held as a unity, with God, as the logical ground of this mediation. Thus, that which discloses the principle to us is the presence to us of that principle in its own act of self-disclosure. We speak the being of God in God's speaking himself to us. Insofar as this occurs in the timeless necessity of thought, Augustine speaks of Christ the inner teacher. Insofar as this occurs in the contingency of time and space, he speaks of the incarnation of the Word.
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will be necessary to give a general account of the Sceptical position and the background from which it emerges.

II

The Ancient sceptics had proposed a radical solution to the questions which animated philosophical discussion in the Hellenistic era. This era was characterized by a number of dogmatic philosophical schools which claimed to offer human beings certain happiness in the midst of an unstable and fragmented world. The period immediately following the conquests of Alexander and the spread of Greek culture across Asia was one of profound spiritual upheaval. The loss of the political independence of the Greek city states undermined the traditional civic virtues which had given meaning to the lives of their citizens. In this situation, the speculative daring and profundity of Platonic and Aristotelian thought gave way to a new pragmatic spirit for which the paramount concern was securing individual well-being in a vast cosmopolitan empire. Moreover, this spirit was anti-metaphysical in temper and tended to revert to the materialism of early Greek thought (Reale, 8-10). Seeking the immediate good of the individual in his worldly situation, the Hellenistic schools eschewed all idealisms and espoused a rigorous immanentism.

Two of the most prominent of these schools, the Epicureans and the Stoics, sought to liberate humans from anxiety and disturbance by means of a dogmatic belief in the veracity of sense perception. For the former, clear and veridical sense perceptions were the foundation of an atomic theory which accounted for all things in terms of the fortuitous motion of atomic particles (Armstrong, 133-35). This knowledge was said to liberate us from the anxiety consequent on the belief in our responsibility to divine powers and allow us to pursue the tranquillity that results from the satisfaction of our basic natural needs (Armstrong, 137). In the absence of pain brought about by the

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2 An exhaustive account of the Sceptical movement cannot be given here. Indeed, no unproblematic account could be given for its history must be reconstructed from secondary sources that are sometimes vague and fragmentary. Our main primary text, the Outlines of Pyrrhonism by Sextus Empiricus, comes from the revived Scepticism of later antiquity and the picture that emerges from the accounts of earlier thinkers is not always consistent and clear. That being said, the lineaments of Scepticism as a way of life and the considerations that were taken to justify it are clear. This basic thought-form Augustine derived from Cicero and his critique of it goes more to this logical core than to the permutations of historical Scepticism. Accordingly, the following is offered as a crystallization of Sceptical doctrine as it would appeared to Augustine and his readers. This is adequate for the task at hand as historians are in basic agreement about those aspects of Scepticism on which Augustine's critique is focused.


4 The most extreme expression of this immanentist spirit is undoubtedly to be found in the Stoic claim that the sage could be happy even in the bull of Phaleris. Paradoxically though, they also counselled suicide in cases of extremity. Book IX of the City of God presents Augustine's own view of the possibility of earthly happiness and forms an instructive contrast to the attitude mentioned above.
fulfilment of these needs, the Epicureans thought they had discovered a limitless good (Reale, 164, 171). Moreover, the pursuit of this good was taken to require a withdrawal from all civic life into intimate private associations devoted to cultivating personal happiness (Reale, 120). Thus, the Epicureans found the end of man to lie, not in the theoretical life, but in a praxis which aimed at autarchy and apatheia, self-sufficiency and freedom from disturbance.

The Stoics too sought freedom from anxiety and disturbance, but rather than doing so by denying divine providence they sought to offer a path whereby human beings could identify themselves directly with the will of God. The Stoic sage, with his imperturbable grasp of sensible objects, was thought to be able to know the rational order expressed in the causal nexus of natural events (Long, 108). With this knowledge, he could live a life perfectly in accord with nature through identifying himself with and submitting to the divine logos (conceived as a fiery material substance permeating the cosmos) which governed all things (Armstrong, 124).

The Stoics, like the Epicureans, sought to ground their claims to knowledge of the Cosmos on the immediacy of sense impressions. They held that it was possible to identify a class of self-authenticating perceptions which they termed 'kataleptic' impressions (Long, 126–7). By means of these self-evident impressions, the 'wise man' could perceive with certainty extra-subjective events and discern through these the operations of the universal reason with which he sought to identify himself. A kataleptic impression was defined as one "... stamped and moulded out of the object from which it came with a character such as it could not have if it came from an object other than the one which it did come from."

(Cicero, Academica 2.18). Thus, the Stoics held that certain sense impressions impressed upon the percipient a form or shape which was the form or shape of an external object. They held too that these impressions were recognizable as such by their clarity and persuasiveness. If a certain impression had the character of a kataleptic impression, it could compel assent to the objective reality of that which was conveyed in the impression (Reale, 223). On this basis all forms of conceptual knowledge were thought to rest. Secure in his grasp of the physical Cosmos the Stoic was secure as well in his grasp of the divine Logos which was identical with it and thus could transcend the limitations of his particular existence through his love of fate.

The Academic Sceptics, however, saw a more direct path to tranquillity which did not rest on a shaky dogmatic realism. They began from two premises accepted by the Stoics: (1) that the 'wise man' does not assent to opinions but to true knowledge and (2) that true sense perceptions can be distinguished from false by a 'mark' of their authenticity.

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5 It should be remembered that, as materialists, the Stoics tended to take this formula literally; the object perceived left a physical impression on the soul that matched its own physical shape. Zeno described this in terms of eminence and depression while Chrysippus spoke more vaguely of 'qualitative alteration'. In doing this, he seemed to be responding to the criticism that Zeno's theory could not account for the simultaneous presentation of distinct shapes to the mind, as when a geometer thought at one and the same time of a circle and a square (Reale 221–222).

6 The Stoics held that a sense impression was veridical if it possessed a character such as it could not have if it came from an object other than the one from which it did come. This they termed a 'cognitive impression'. As to how one knew an impression to be cognitive the Stoics were vague. Zeno appears to
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(Cicero, *Academica* 2.40). The Sceptics then pointed out that the Stoics had never been able to give a clear explanation of this mark, and could not for it did not exist. Consequently, nothing could be perceived in such a way as to preclude the possibility of error. This being the case, concerning sensible things (the only things considered real in themselves by the Stoics) it was possible to hold only opinions. Since, however, the ‘wise man’ did not assent to opinions, it followed that he suspended all assent (Cicero, *Academica* 2.66).

The main effort of the Sceptics went into undermining the doctrine of the kataleptic impression. Here they argued very effectively that no sense perception, no matter how vivid, could guarantee its own correspondence to an external object. As Long puts it "Sense perceptions do not possess characteristics that mark off one that is certainly reliable from another that is not. In no particular case is any sense impression self-evidently true to the object it purports to represent. It may and often will be true, but it cannot be known to be true." (Long, 95-6) Thus, no matter how many true perceptions we have, the fact that a vivid dream or hallucination can appear to us in such a way that nothing marks it as such precludes us from saying that any one of our perceptions is unmistakably veridical. As far as sense experience is concerned, the true and the false are forever confused and as all other truth claims rest ultimately upon sensation, no secure foundation for philosophical knowledge exists. As Sextus Empiricus puts it "And if there is no presentation capable of judging, reasoning too would not be a criterion, for reasoning is based on a presentation. And this makes sense, for that which is to be judged must first be presented to someone, and nothing is presented to someone apart from non-rational sense perception." (Adversus Mathematicos 7.164.)

have held that an impression was cognitive if it was so clear and forceful as to compel immediate assent. To this, the Sceptics could easily reply that many dreams and hallucinations would, on this account, have to be counted as veridical. Later Stoics attempted to fend of criticism by arguing that the cataleptic impression itself was not sufficient to compel assent apart from circumstances favorable to its reception. Thus, the evaluation of particular impressions came to depend more on an analysis of the context in which the impression occurred. Even in antiquity the striking convergence between this view and the ‘probabilism’ of Carneades was remarked upon. Galen is even said to have remarked that in epistemology the doctrines of the Stoics and Sceptics were identical. For a useful account of this argument see A.A Long, *Hellenistic Philosophy.*

It is important to note the distinction between Scepticism and Relativism. The Sceptics claimed that there was an unbridgeable gulf between things as they appear to us and things in themselves. The suspension of judgement makes sense only on the presupposition that there is in fact an objective world which may differ from our perception of it. A perspectivalist who holds that there is no thing in itself apart from the appearance of that thing for a subject has no problem with assent to perceptions since, for him, what is is identical to what appears. Being and appearance are one and error impossible. In antiquity this position was represented by Sophists such as Protagoras and Gorgias. The Sceptics, then, held that subject and object were distinct and that there could be no mediated relationship between them.

The Sceptics did not confine their critique to sense knowledge and the claims based up on it. They claimed as well that logical truths were susceptible to the same arguments advanced against perception. Thus, for any inference claimed to be valid, they thought they could produce a fallacious one identical in form. As well, they made use of the notorious Liar's Paradox to undermine such general logical definitions as the assertion that a proposition was a statement either true or false (Cicero, *Academica* 2.95-98). In the field of Ethics too, the Sceptics thought that all accounts of the good life could be shown to be equally plausible and equally implausible. This was the point of Carneades famous demonstration in Rome, in the
If this was the case, then the Stoics' own premises committed them to the view that the 'wise man' could not assent to any perception as true (Long, 90-91). The Stoics held that the distinction between the wise and the foolish lay in the fact that the former acted only from certain knowledge and the latter from mere opinion (Zeller, 269-70). If certain knowledge did not exist, then it followed that concerning all things, the 'wise man' must suspend judgement. If he did not but assented rashly, he would expose himself to the possibility of error which would cause him to lose his purchase on that by which he was called wise in the first place, his possession of truth. Thus, if to be a sage it is necessary to be free of all error, then it is necessary as well to suspend judgement.

This withholding of assent was thought by all Sceptics to liberate human beings from the fear of error and to bring about a state of imperturbable self-sufficiency and happiness. "The Sceptics hoped to attain a freedom from disturbance by judging the inconsistency of appearances and ideas, and not being able to do this, they suspended judgement. Being in this suspensive state, freedom from disturbance followed fortuitously, as a shadow follows a body." (Sextus Empiricus, Outlines of Pyrrhonism 12.25). Thus, the Sceptic succeeds by failure. Discovering the inadequacy of all attempts to distinguish being from seeming and the impossibility of judging between rival philosophies and, moreover, knowing the insufficiency of opinion to satisfy our desire for knowledge, he simply renounces the fruit of his search and finds in this renunciation freedom and peace.

In this way, the Sceptics found in their own subjectivity, the suspensive state of thought resting in its own formal self identity, the abiding term of all discourse [However, they did not go beyond this to ask whether this subjectivity itself was intelligible in itself or whether it too possessed its stability in relation to a prior principle]. The Academic Sceptics in particular emphasized the practice of a negative dialectic which could undermine any given content by showing its contrary to be equally plausible. In this practice, the 'wise man' attained inner freedom from all appearances and impressions and in this negative fashion displayed his will to truth.

In certain Sceptics this doctrine appears to have produced an austere quietism which led inevitably to the accusation that it was a doctrine which rendered human life
impossible. After all, the physical necessities of animal life, to which human beings are subject, seem to demand the assent to certain appearances. If I am hungry, I must judge that the object in front of me is edible as opposed to poisonous. Suspension of judgement in this case would result in my starvation. What is more, as individual human beings are, by and large, too feeble to survive in complete solitude, the fact that they must live in society with others also places them in situations where assent to appearances seems unavoidable. How then could the Sceptic's way of life be anything more than an unobtainable ideal?

It fell to the Sceptic Carneades to work out a doctrine of plausibility by which, without giving full assent to anything as true, the Academic Sceptic could nonetheless function as a denizen of the realm of appearances (Hankinson, 111-12). Keeping his mind free from error he could still proceed to make the cave a somewhat comfortable place to inhabit if he were a careful enough observer of the shadows on the wall. Conceived in this way, the life of the Sceptic could, as far as appearances are concerned, be outwardly indistinguishable from the life of common men and women. Indeed, he could combine his seemingly austere doctrine with the highest degree of worldliness if only he kept himself inwardly free from assent. This could seem a plausible step to take. It is notable, however, that the Sceptics could never quite abandon a concern for the theoretical life. However successful the Sceptic might have been at navigating around the cave he did not seem to have ever wanted to call it home.

How, then, does the Sceptic judge plausibilities? Sextus Empiricus gives a lucid account of Carneades' views on this question. He notes that for Carneades and the Academics who succeeded him, it was possible to distinguish among different types of perceptions. These types he describes as follows:

They regard some as simply plausible; some as plausible and tested; and others as plausible, thoroughly tested and uncontroverted. For example, when one suddenly enters a darkened room wherein is lying a coiled-up rope, it is simply plausible that the presentation coming from this is as if it were that from a snake, but to the man who has looked carefully and

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11 In antiquity, numerous stories circulated about the supposed indifference of the Sceptics to even the basic necessities of life. Pyrrho, for instance, is said to have won the praise of one of his companions for not stopping to rescue him from a ditch. He himself was said to have been kept alive by the constant attention of others, who prevented him from being run over by wagons or from walking off cliffs. It is hard to say what kernel of truth might lie in these stories, though Diogenes Laertius, who reports them, seems to take them with a grain of salt (see Hankinson, 111).

12 Carneades is reported to have said that he suspended judgement concerning all matters discussed by philosophers and was indifferent to the rest (Contra Academicos 3.10.22.) This would seem to indicate that for him it mattered little that a certain degree of plausibility was possible in practical matters that could not be attained by theoretical reason. Only in the employment of the latter was the ethical good to be found, the freedom and self-possession of the happy man. Thus, the utility of plausible presentations would appear to lie in the fact that the 'wise man' can use them to secure the goods necessary to pursue a life of theoretical freedom. Scepticism, after all, is a kind of witness to the love of truth. For the Sceptic, error is an alienation from our true selves and this is why it must be avoided even at the cost suspending all judgement. In this it is recognized that our true freedom and dignity lie in the ordering of our thought to the truth of things, even if this is expressed only negatively.
thoroughly tested the circumstances, for example, by ascertaining that it does not move, that its colour is of a certain sort, and so on, it appears to be a rope according to the plausible and tested presentation. An example of an uncontroverted presentation is this. It is said that Heracles brought Alcestis back from Hades when she was dead and showed her to Admetus who received a plausible and thoroughly tested presentation of Alcestis. But since he knew that she was dead, his intellect recoiled from assent and inclined to disbelief. So those of the new Academy prefer a thoroughly tested and plausible presentation to a simply plausible one and an uncontroverted, thoroughly tested and plausible one to either of the other two. (*Outlines of Pyrrhonism* 33.226-9)\(^{13}\)

Depending on the importance of the matter at hand or the urgency of his situation the Sceptic could use any of these criteria. In a matter of little importance, or in an emergency when a careful evaluation was not feasible, he would be justified in acting on the plausible presentation. If more was at stake then the tested and uncontroverted presentation could be employed. In matters judged to be of greatest importance, the Sceptic would employ the uncontroverted and thoroughly tested presentation (Long, 98).

It must be emphasized however that none of these precautions could guarantee the truth of any perception. The possibility of a false perception meeting even the most rigorous evaluation remained. In spite of this, careful observation and experience allowed the Sceptic, as much if not more than any other man, to secure for himself such natural goods as need compelled him to seek. In matters concerning anything beyond sensible experience, such as the nature of God or the happy life, the Sceptics simply opposed all existing views to each other and showed none to be more plausible than the next. It appears though, that Carneades may well have allowed a judgement of plausibility to be made concerning some matters other than sense impressions, such as courses of action or, indeed the plausibility of Scepticism itself. Augustine, we shall see, takes Carneades to be claiming this. (Groarke, 115).

Thus, Ancient Scepticism produced an outlook somewhat akin to modern positivism in its resolute empiricism. They differed however in that they never advocated, as far as we know, a complete immersion in the world of common experience. While recognizing

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\(^{13}\) The predominance of the dialectical element over ethical has by some been used to differentiate Academic Scepticism from Pyrrhonism. Augustine himself understood Academic Scepticism as ethically motivated and among modern commentators Groarke is of the same view (Groarke 107). It need not be denied however that, in the sources that we possess, the ethical concern is more prominent among the Pyrrhonians. The reason for this is not far to seek. For the followers of Pyrrho, the Academics lapsed into dogmatism insofar as their epoche was based on a positive claim about the impossibility of knowledge. They saw no way to acquit the Academics of the charge of performative self-contradiction so often urged against Scepticism. Thus, they themselves made no claim about the knowability or unknowability of things but simply reported their own suspensive state of mind and their satisfaction with it. This ethical fact is the sum and substance of their scepticism. Even the arguments by which they attacked the dogmatists were taken simply as therapeutic and, their subjective purpose being fulfilled, were kicked away like a ladder. In this way, they avoided the contradiction inherent in a Scepticism which is at the same time a wisdom, that is, a rational criticism of life. They did so, however, at the cost of aphasia and final arbitrariness.
that we are bound by our physical existence to involve ourselves with the physical realm and all its attendant illusions they did not abandon the ideal of a theoretical freedom from it. This is due to the common ethical concern which, with varying degrees of emphasis, all the Sceptics shared (Groarke 107-8). The Sceptics knew that the good life for human beings was to be found in and through thought as it attained to some stable object above the flux of experience. This is why they refused to give assent to anything in the sensible realm. The fact that they did not find any such object outside of their own subjectivity should not be allowed to obscure the point that Scepticism possessed within its own assumptions both a speculative and practical relationship to the idea of truth and as such possessed an intelligible content.

This is why, for Augustine, Scepticism is a self over coming project the immanent critique of which will bring to light the objective truth that it rightly says cannot be identified with the sensible. That Scepticism itself does not come to see this is due to the fact that in freedom from error it thinks it has found our proper relation to the good. Thus, it is as much a problem of will as of knowledge. After all, if the Sceptic possesses the Good through suspension of judgement then any further argument would be beside the point. What else can interest someone who thinks he has the Good? To cut away the root of the Sceptical doctrine it is necessary to ask, with Augustine, whether apatheia and autarchy properly satisfy the will or are simply goods as limited as any other. It would be no exaggeration to say that the ultimate answer to Scepticism is conversion; for the Sceptic to see what lies before his own eyes requires that he have the will to see it. This will to turn to the light which enlightens every man born in this world, while not in anyone's power to produce save the Father of lights, can nonetheless find its human occasion in the demonstration that the Sceptic does not truly possess the good he seeks and does not realize that if he thinks at all about his own position it is only because of the light that illuminates the wall of the cave. The Contra Academicos is intended to show us how the Sceptic can be turned to see this light.

III

It is Augustine's contention that, historically, Scepticism paved the way for its own overcoming in the revival of Platonism (Contra Academicos III 3.18.41 40-45). For him, it was evident that the Academics had forgotten (or appeared to forget) the very Platonic doctrine with which they were historically associated. While knowing the negative side of the Socratic dialectic, they sought to stabilize this process through the suspension of assent without seeing the completion of it in the Platonic dialectic. Owing to their dialectical relationship with Stoicism and Epicureanism, which were materialist positions, the Sceptics were forced to take over the assumptions of their opponents in order to achieve a sceptical result. Because of this they did not take sufficient account of the fact that the objectivity of their critique rested, in the end, upon the Ideas as the
ordering principles of thought and being and the Word as the unity of the Ideas (at least as far as their exoteric teaching is concerned).  

As a Platonist, Augustine thought it possible to know both God and the self through a consideration of what was directly available to the mind in its own reflexive activity. For him, the scepticism of the Academy, far from abolishing the quest for truth, actually pointed to the true way of finding it by purging us of a dogmatic reliance on the senses. The negative result of the Sceptics displayed the nullity of sense experience conceived, in Stoic fashion, as in itself primary. Past this it simply remains to ask about the mind that can so dissolve the sensible into pure appearance what is presupposed in its activity, before seeing that what one has actually uncovered is a knowledge of the absolute priority of the Ideas and the derivative character of the sensible.

The Sceptic, then, by turning from appearances toward his own subjectivity, in fact comes closest of all, if he would only see it, to the locus of objective truth. As Augustine says, it is by returning to the inner chamber of the mind that one returns to the realm of spiritual substance in which immutable and incorporeal truth can be perceived (Confessions 'wise man' VII,x(16)). Since the process of recollecting this truth is primarily, for Augustine as for his Neo-Platonist predecessors, a process of self-recollection that turns inward on itself and upwards to its source, some way must be found to turn the soul's attention to itself so that it can perceive its own character and destiny.

The first step in this process is curing the soul of its tendency to confuse itself with the sensible appearances that are the primary object of its attention (Ibid. 'wise man' VII,i(2)). The mind that does this, through the apprehension of its own true inwardsness and hence its immateriality , becomes free to train its eye on the incorporeal realm that lies behind the veil of appearance and is in itself the proper object of knowledge. The

14 Augustine derived from Cicero the notion that The Academics concealed a pure Platonism from the threat of Stoic vulgarisation by means of their polemic against dogmatism. Modern scholars are almost unanimous in dismissing the possibility. Be that as it may, it serves Augustine well enough as a convenient fiction if all it means is that, as D.K House argues "it is theoretically sound that one can come to Platonism from a refuted Scepticism."("A Note on Book III of St.Augustine's Contra Academicos", Studia Patristica, vol.XVIII) Perhaps it is not so unlikely that in the end Augustine regarded it as no more than this. For our purposes, it is not necessary to go any further than to say the Scepticism witnesses negatively to what the Platonists show positively and that this fact finds poetic expression in the notion of a secret doctrine.

15 In his 83 Different Questions Augustine confirms that, as regards the senses, the Sceptics are correct. Speaking of the problem of hallucinatory experiences he says "In such experiences we cannot at all tell whether we are aware of the sensible objects by the senses themselves or whether they are the images of sensible objects. If, therefore, there are false images of sensible objects, and if they cannot be distinguished by the senses themselves, and if nothing can be perceived except what is distinguished from the false, then there is no criterion for truth resident in the senses"(Question 9). Of course, this is to say that there is no certain knowledge of sensible things. Opinion about sensible things is entirely justified and indeed necessary both for self preservation and the exercise of justice towards others. Also, it the ground upon which we possess what God has revealed to us of himself in history. To the soul inspired by charity, opinion even approximates to a kind of certainty, as in the acts of faith and trust that constitute friendship. Moreover, if it is precisely the function of the senses to furnish us with the material on which to form opinions, then it cannot be denied that they do this reasonably well and need not be rejected or condemned. For this side of Augustine's thought, one should consult his short but highly engaging treatise.
catalyst for this movement lies in the questioning subjectivity that seeks the unifying ground of the sheer externality of events in time and space in memory and the unity of memory in God. Thus, in seeking the unity of its experience, the mind discovers its own character as self-presence, the character of matter as the self-external, and the Good as the ground of both (Confessions X).

The Sceptic, having found the sensible inadequate to the inwardness of thought, has already begun this movement. Moreover, he moves also toward a Good beyond the mobility of sensible nature. However, the Soul that seeks its good must know the good it seeks and if it cannot find a true and knowable good among material things, it must then ask itself by what measure it reaches this conclusion. It must ask itself what the Good and the True are in their logical character. To ask this question is to realize that one has ceased altogether to speak about material things and is moving in the realm of Ideas that nothing spatio-temporal can adequately exemplify and to which subjectivity must submit as its own law. The discovery that the Good and True are, in their primary meaning, super-sensible and immutable completes the movement away from the sensible begun by the Sceptic by attaining a unity prior to the division of subject and object. Thus, both the externality and dividedness of the sensible and the emptiness of thought's formal self-identity (in which the Sceptic would rest) are transcended.

However, this turn to the incorporeal and hence intelligible is in no way possible to one who remains in the grip of materialist illusions. In this way, the Sceptical destruction of Stoic and Epicurean dogmatism can be granted to have a certain positive function. If then, the mind can be forced to look away from the sensible and into itself, it can discover within itself the Truth.

In his dialogue Contra Academicos Augustine dramatises the dialectical overcoming of Scepticism through depicting a series of conversations between himself, his friend Alypius, and two of his young students. The present paper will concern itself with the third book in which Augustine demonstrates to Alypius the self-contradictory character of Scepticism. It is here that Augustine gives dialectical expression to the movement noted above in a formal refutation of the Sceptical position. As it adequately illustrates the process by which the Sceptic can be brought to a state of aporia which forces him to recognize the priority of intelligible truth I shall focus primarily on this refutation. It should be noted though, that this refutation assumes Augustine's demonstration in Book I that the Sceptic cannot coherently claim to be happy simply through a negative relation to truth. Scepticism presupposes a relation to truth that can be fulfilled only through the possession of it. Once the Sceptic has been shown this he can be drawn into the argument for he can no longer pretend that he possesses the Good.

Augustine himself recounts in Confessions VII,1-6, how he freed himself from materialist notions of Divinity (reminiscent of Stoicism) by considering how the Good was, in its logical character, simple and incorruptible. This meant that the Good could not be identified with anything material. As the presupposition of all his activities he could not coherently deny its super-eminent reality and this forced him to recognize the Ideal as the primary reality underlying the secondary reality of material things.
Augustine's critique of the academic position proceeds in two phases. From 3.35 to 3.511 Augustine engages in the dialectical refutation of the sceptical argument, that is, he seeks to undermine its internal consistency. This section, then, is in dialogue form. Having accomplished this task, Augustine switches to the style of direct address in order to develop thematically a phenomenology of our basic forms of knowledge which even a Sceptic would be forced to acknowledge (3.10.23-3.14.30) and to demonstrate the impossibility of realizing the practical ideals of Scepticism (3.15.34-3.16.36).

I will now focus on the first phase and expound Augustine's account of the internal incoherence of Scepticism. His basic argument will be that if, as it must, Academic Scepticism claims to be a form of wisdom, that is, a valid reflection on our epistemic and moral condition, then it is in the hopeless position of trying to claim that it possesses this wisdom without 'knowing' it; that it is the case and can be validly affirmed to be the case that no concept can be connected to an objective state of affairs and that happiness lies in the apatheia consequent upon realizing this. Augustine contends that the appearance of contradiction here cannot be resolved and that Sceptical arguments are performative self-contradictions.

He proceeds by a pair of assumptions crucial to Scepticism. These are as follows: (1) wisdom must be conscious of itself as wisdom; and (2) knowledge, if it exists, must be of the true and not of the false. Now any Sceptic who holds that his position is a product of critical reflection upon our epistemic condition and what can be hoped for within it must hold that he possesses a description of that condition which corresponds to what that condition is; that is, he must claim that he possesses wisdom. If not, his scepticism cannot be distinguished from the simple ignorance of a fool. Sceptical ignorance is not 'simple ignorance' but ignorance derived from an account of our epistemic condition that is accurate. Now to know our condition is to know our knowledge of our condition, one cannot know without knowing that one knows by knowing one's own knowledge. Thus, a 'wise man' must know himself as wise and if a Sceptic claims to be such a man and not a fool then he must also claim to be conscious of his own wisdom as wisdom, that is, he must know the wisdom whereby he is wise.

The second presupposition, that knowledge is of the true and not of the false, is in fact the linchpin of the Sceptical position. The Sceptic claims that perception is impossible just because, while the true and the false are distinct in themselves, they cannot be distinguished in our experience. If this were not the case, and knowledge was of the false and the true equally, this confusion would present no obstacle to our knowing anything. Thus, since, according to the Sceptic, one must distinguish the false from the true in order to know and this cannot be done, knowledge is impossible and judgement must be suspended.

Augustine thinks these two concessions, which any Sceptic must make, are sufficient to wreck the Sceptical position. His argument, stated at 3.3.5.15-25, is straightforward. Suppose a man possessed wisdom and did not merely seek it. In other words, suppose he had learned what wisdom is. In doing so he has learned either something, a falsehood, or nothing at all. Now a man who has learned wisdom has not learned nothing for wisdom is
not nothing or there would be no difference between being wise and not wise. Nor has he learned a falsehood for a falsehood cannot be learned (ie, is not a genuine discovery). In learning wisdom, then, the 'wise man' has not learned nothing, nor a falsehood, but has learned something, the wisdom whereby he is a 'wise man' and not a fool. Thus, if he is wise and knows wisdom he must perceive the wisdom he possesses to be wisdom. But, if he claims that the content of his wisdom is that nothing can be perceived he is claiming to perceive and not perceive at the same time and in the same respect. Either he is wise and knows his wisdom, in which case his wisdom is not true wisdom, or he is not wise at all and cannot claim to know whether perception is impossible or not.

Augustine, then, has shown that the reflexive character of wisdom, that it is of necessity self-knowing, refutes the claim that wisdom lies in non-perception and the suspension of assent. He has also shown that even the supposed wisdom of the Academics must be 'about' something; that it must make some claim about our epistemic state and thus that we must know something to be the case. After all, the Sceptic is not claiming that he personally has never known anything but that it is not possible for anyone to know anything. Thus, Augustine has shown the key assertion of the Sceptics to be inherently contradictory; that one can, at the same time and in the same respect be both ignorant of truth and wise. Once the law of non-contradiction is admitted, and the Sceptic must admit it if he says the true and false are distinct, it becomes evident that he cannot claim at one and the same time to perceive and not perceive (since he claims that the content of his wisdom is that nothing can be perceived, he cannot claim this as wisdom unless he claims to perceive it).

Alypius, however, does not back down. He claims that the 'wise man' only seems to himself to be wise through knowing wisdom on the grounds of plausibility (3.3.5.25-27). Augustine counters that this only deepens the problem (3.3.5.35-40). If it seems to the Sceptic that he knows wisdom, it does not seem to him that he does not know it. This means that it will seem to him that he knows something. But Scepticism, if it is accepted as plausible, must be accepted on the grounds that it seems to be the case that nothing can be known. Thus, the contradiction remains; the Sceptic seems to himself to know that his position is true while at the same time his position states that we do not seem to ourselves to know anything. If we seem to ourselves to know something, Scepticism will not seem to be the case. But this means that Scepticism fails its own criterion of judgement; it will no longer appear plausible, and since the Sceptic follows what is plausible, his own position commits him to cease being a Sceptic.

Augustine has now shown two things: (1) that one cannot be wise and ignorant at one and the same time; and (2) that one cannot appear to oneself to be wise and ignorant at the same time. Implicitly, he has shown the dependence of appearances on the Ideas and that any assertion of an appearance entails the assertion of an intelligible content that governs that appearance, there cannot be mere 'seeming' without the objective reality of the ideas implicated in that 'seeming'. The next part of the argument will show Alypius that this has been uncovered.
Alypius does not yet see this crucial point. He still thinks that no knowledge claim is involved in the assertion that the Sceptic merely appears to himself wise and that the open investigation he engages in has no inherent content. This is because he still holds to a greater separation of being and appearance than Augustine and does not see that the Ideas in their objectivity are implicated in the positing of any appearance. Thus, he still thinks that Augustine's objection can be avoided by speaking in terms of appearances. This is crucial to his defence of Scepticism for the Sceptics claim that pure appearance can be present to our consciousness without a grasp of the real and indeed, through our dependence on the senses, is all that is present to us.

This problem appears in Alypius' inability to comprehend the question with which Augustine resumes the argument at 3.4.9.60. Augustine asks Alypius a simple question, does it seem to the 'wise man' of the Academics that he knows wisdom; that is, does it seem to Alypius that the academic is an instance of a 'wise man' who knows wisdom. Alypius, not getting the sense of the question, answers that it seems to the Academic that he knows wisdom. Augustine, however, is not asking whether the 'wise man' seems to himself wise but whether what he seems to himself to be is a 'wise man'. Thus, it is irrelevant whether he thinks himself wise or merely opines that he is wise or whether Alypius thinks or opines the same of him. His question, rather, is, what is a 'wise man' and what does a man who claims he is an instance of a 'wise man' claim that he is. The clear answer is that he appears to himself to be a man who knows what wisdom is. To be wise is to know wisdom and if I seem to myself to be wise then I seem to myself to know wisdom. Alypius finally grasps the distinction and the argument proceeds as follows: the Academic seems to himself to be an instance of the 'wise man', yet claims that he knows nothing. Yet a 'wise man' must know wisdom (for this is the definition of wisdom) and wisdom cannot be nothing for nothing cannot be known. Nor can it be a falsehood for there can be no knowledge of the false. Therefore, either wisdom is nothing and the Academic is no different from the fool, or there can be knowledge of the false, in which case the grounds for Scepticism disappear, or the Academic is not the 'wise man' reason describes and if he claims to be such a man he contradicts himself (3.4.10.85-100).

Thus, Augustine has shown that for the Sceptic to claim that he seems to himself wise involves combining two ideas, wisdom and ignorance, which cannot be combined either in reality or in appearance. Thus, in saying that he seems to himself wise the Sceptic is positing a contradictory appearance. What is more, this argument has brought to light something which will be thematically elaborated in the subsequent discourse; that the Sceptical argument assumes an intellectual intuition of the Ideas. To seem to himself to be anything at all, the Sceptic must grasp the intelligible character of what he appears to himself to be. Thus, if he says to himself "I seem to myself to be a 'wise man'' he has grasped an essence of which he holds himself to be an instance. Appearance depends upon the reality of what appears. Seeming cannot be without the being of what seems. Thus, the Sceptic cannot coherently claim that the power of appearance is universal for some objective content must condition any appearance and be present to any mind that beholds and judges it. In this case, we can see that if the Sceptic claims that he is wise in being ignorant and that the 'wise man' is he who knows wisdom, then he is combining in
his judgement ideas which cannot in fact be combined in either appearance or reality and thus his views have no claim to our assent as either true or plausible.

Having shown the Sceptical position to be incapable of coherent statement, Augustine can then proceed to a positive phenomenology of consciousness; that is, he can show what knowledge is inherent in the structure of any subjective experience and thus demonstrate that the Sceptical denial of knowledge is impossible and contradictory above all because we are inescapably knowers, if we exist as self-conscious beings at all. Thus, he demonstrates what any and every one of us must at any time know. He does not, and need not, go any farther than this in his argument for the root of sceptical indifference to claims concerning God, the soul, or the nature of the good life lies not in anything specific to inquiries into those objects but in a general denial that thought can by adequated to being through the medium of sense. To cut this root, as Augustine does here, by showing that being and thought belong together in the reflexivity of consciousness, is thus entirely adequate to the task of defending the pursuit of wisdom from the Sceptical challenge.

In a general way this argument recapitulates the movement in Neo-Platonism to complete the reduction of the sensible to finite subjectivity in Scepticism by reducing the subject to the objectivity of the Good. Augustine here has given formal expression to the validity of this move. But something else appears here as well which shows that in another way Augustine has taken more seriously than the Neo-Platonists the starting point of Hellenistic thought in the concerns of concrete historical individuality. The Contra Academicos ends pointedly with a reference to the incarnation, the unity of sensible human nature with the divine (3.19.42-15). Stoic pantheism and realism thought it had possessed this unity through the relation of sense perception to a divinised natural realm. The Sceptics were able to demonstrate that this was an illusion and the Neo-Platonists in turn that this demonstration rested on a prior intuition of the ideas. But Plotinian ascent, while valid as far as it goes, does not offer the possibility of salvation for finite individuals as finite individuals, and as such does not respond to the deepest concern animating Stoic and Sceptic alike, that is, how the individual can be free for himself in the world. Thus, Augustine sees the need for a further completion of the argument that comes full circle back to the sensible world in order to know concrete personality as one with the divine in Jesus Christ. This, however, he knows not by any Stoic pretence to an indefeasible grasp of sensible particulars but by the illumination of faith.
The Argument To The Hypotheses In *Parmenides*

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126a-127a

The reader of *Parmenides* should put himself in the place of the Clazomenian philosophers who have come to Athens to hear the great argument of Socrates with Zeno and Parmenides as recorded in the memory of Antiphon. From it they would learn what Anaxagoras had not made clear, how the *nous*, alone unmixed, could relate to the atoms in each of which were all difference, the endless process of separating their differences from the original mixture. Of the atoms in this endless process nothing could be said distinctly that would not show itself as other in further division.

Zeno gave general form to this recurrent same and different: the contraries themselves would have both to be united in the individual, and in that contradiction must be annulled. Parmenides would thus be shown to have said rightly that thinking and being were immediately one and that negativity or not-being was unthinkable.

Socrates had however given up the separation he found in Anaxagoras of the pure, unmixed *nous* from its work of distinguishing and ordering the atomic individuals. As the good, the *nous* was determination of itself and ordered its determinations to itself. This unity of the divided and the undivided Socrates could not think directly but had discovered a method by which a true finitude could be known. The confusions of sense perception and opinion or ordinary language, where the being of things has ever a negativity lurking in it, he thinks to be eliminated in 'separate' ideas - 'separate' in that, like the *nous* of Anaxagoras, they are 'pure' and 'unmixed', self-identical. In these objects Socrates had perhaps discovered the true finitude which Zeno thought to be impossible.

What the Clazomenians will hear reported to them by Antiphon is an examination of this 'true being' by Parmenides, whether and in what way it can sustain the argument of Zeno that all division and finitude ends in contradiction and nullity.

I

127a-130a: Introduction
What the dialogue is about is indicated more distinctly by the place and occasion of the meeting of Socrates with the Eleatic philosophers. Parmenides and Zeno have come to Athens to celebrate the Great Panathenaea. In Athena poets and other artists embody aesthetically the self-conscious reason which knows opposed positions, can stay and reconcile thus what would be mutually destructive conflicts -- the circumspect reason which exists humanly in Odysseus, her favoured hero; which gives Achilles pause when in just anger he would kill Agamemnon, first among the Greek commanders; can order the conflicting demands of Apollo and the Eumenides; which drives to madness and suicide in the soul of Ajax conflicting heroism and slighted dignity, where time and the reflection of an Odysseus would have saved him. In the last example, or in the mad Heracles, Zeno's contradiction as the truth and nullity of extreme division occurs, as also a possibility of surviving the contradiction. Athena one should suppose to preside over the division between Zeno and Socrates and to know a resolution adequate to both.

A brief exchange between Socrates and Zeno states the opposed positions whose relations, and in the end their unification, will occupy the remainder of the dialogue. Zeno has read his book, which then for the first time became known in Athens, to an interested audience, among whom was Socrates. The reading finished, Socrates, to be sure he has grasped rightly the logic of Zeno's proofs that there cannot be a plurality of beings, asks him to read again the first hypothesis of the first argument, and, that being read, states what he takes to be its meaning: 'if beings are many, they must be both alike and unlike, which is impossible; for neither can unlikes be like nor likes unlike'. Zeno confirming, he goes on: 'that being so, it is impossible that there be many; for if there were, they would suffer impossibilities'. Is it the common intention of all your arguments to contend against all the ways one speaks of a plurality that there are not many? Zeno confirms that Socrates has understood well the meaning of his whole book.

Thus all the forty 'paradoxes' of Zeno's book On Nature are comprised in one formula and taken into the discussion. Omitted in Socrates' statement of Zeno's logic is the counter hypothesis that there can be nothing that is neither like nor unlike. That one must attend also to negative hypotheses enters the argument of the dialogue when Socrates' response to Zeno has been stated, its meaning drawn out, and the problems of participation gone through. They will be shown by Parmenides to be no less necessary than the affirmative hypotheses about unity and being to a knowledge of the relation of a 'separate' intelligible world to a sensible world.

Zeno, so understood, appears to Socrates only to repeat in other words what Parmenides has already said, that a multiple world was an unthinkable, that is, contradictory, not-being. His many arguments were in effect a deception, by which, saying the same as Parmenides, he seemed to be saying something different. Zeno disallowed this reading of his intention: his purpose was neither to deceive nor to propose another than Parmenides' philosophy, but polemical only. He would show to those who thought it absurd that there was only being that, supposing a plurality, they were involved in equal and greater absurdities. Socrates, one might say, saw Zeno as a Sophist, as one who could at his will obliterate the difference of contraries. Zeno's clarification allows
Socrates to state his position not against 'sophistic' but in relation to the being of Parmenides.

Socrates takes it to follow from Zeno's adherence to the undivided being of Parmenides that they have common ground: 'Tell me this, do you not think there is an eidos by itself of likeness and another, its contrary, which is unlike; and that in these, which are two, you and I and the rest which we call many participate? Neither Zeno nor Parmenides has conceived such an ideal plurality. It occurs to Socrates to expect that Zeno has made this assumption because he for his part has another concept of being than the Eleatic. Being for Socrates is another name for the good, and the eidh are determinations of the good. Individuals, it seems clear to him, can have part in contrary eidh without contradiction. When Sophists say of something that it is 'like and unlike', 'one and many', they fail to distinguish in what comparison or in what respect the two belong.

The true difficulty far Socrates lies in the implications of a unified relation of the 'separate' eidh to individuals, which will not fall in the shifting comparisons of an extraneous subject or be in one respect and not another. In Phaedo where he tells how he came to the hypothesis of separate universals he speaks of them as substantial causes, e.g., of the union of soul and body which constitutes the human individual. But as not only separate and in themselves but present in individuals, universals are also mixed with one another. Nature is the process of mixing and separation. And this negativity and circulation of contraries is not only in changing and corruptible individuals but in their unchanging ideal basis, and through this individuals have a mediated relation to the good.

Socrates would marvel greatly if someone began by distinguishing and setting apart such universals as 'likeness' and 'unlikeness', plurality and unity, rest and motion, and then showed them able among themselves to mix and be separated - if someone could show the same aporia among objects attainable by reasoning as Zeno showed among sensibles, contraries mutually entwined in every sort of way. As Zeno's arguments proved the being of Parmenides to be the only truth of the sensible world, so would the concurrence and mutual exclusion of contrary universals prove the primacy of the good. So one might take the analogy. But for Socrates, as said, being has become the self-identity of the good. The good is not only in itself but divided and different from itself and relating its determinations to itself as to their end. And so he reads Zeno as showing among sensibles the multiple relations everyone assumes them to have, not their nullity.

It makes a difficulty in reading Parmenides that in speaking of the good, Plato uses abstract Eleatic concepts - unity and being. What these concepts signify for him is plain from the context, whether one think of the transition in Phaedo from the intelligence of Anaxagoras which separates extraneously the mixed individuals of a material world to an intelligence which moves 'for the best', or of the good of Republic toward which are ordered alike the divisions of the state and the soul. Zeno's arguments had for their purpose to show that nature or the material world which humans commonly suppose to be there, and themselves to be in it, is, for a thinking which has just begun to know itself, a nullity. How from this abstract beginning 'the one' came to be 'the good' in which is
centred in the sensible and ideal totalities Plato treats only elusively. From his standpoint it is not possible to write such a history of Presocratic philosophy as one has in Aristotle, which supposes that the substantial unity of the ideal and sensible world, toward which Plato's thought tends, has been discovered, and with it the division of being into primary genera or categories. The history of philosophy can then be regarded as a history of the discovery of the elements of substance.

This Aristotelian view of the movement of philosophical thought from Parmenides and Zeno to Plato is itself too narrow. The opponents of Parmenides appear in it as accomplishing something, if obscurely and without direction. The source of the instability of the several positions and the recurrent need to begin anew is seen to lie in a groping after the stability of substance as the category which alone remaining itself is receptive of contraries. Implicit in the history is therefore a relation to Zeno's common criticism, as one has it in Parmenides, of all who supposed they could think a multiple and finite being. But to bring out this relation clearly one would have to say of the successive attempts to think the finite that there was in them not one or more of the causes but them all and an incapacity of the category constitutive of a particular position to contain them. In all the positions until Anaxagoras, unless transiently in Heraclitus, thinking either with Parmenides and Zeno cannot find itself in the world that is there for it, or entering into it finds the logical forms in which it would think it inadequate to itself. Anaxagoras first brings the two sides in their strong separation together and would know them as one totality. But thought stands in an extraneous relation to the supposedly true entities of Anaxagoras' world. The endlessly recurrent relation of their togetherness and their separation, as for the unity of the thinking which divides and orders them, is subject to Zeno's criticism and, as 'ex ὑπόθεσι' independent of thought, first shows itself a contradiction and nullity.

Between Zeno and Parmenides in their own historical situation at the beginning of Presocratic philosophy and the application of their principle to Anaxagoras at the end, there is this difference, that then the nullity for thought of nature as simply there is immediately asserted without proof; now after successive attempts to think the finite were made and given up, the whole relation of thinking to its assumed world became explicit. Or, one might say, the Eleatic principle had its complete proof. On this understanding, Plato's use of Parmenides and Zeno in the dialogue as that against which Socrates presents his discovery of a true finitude can be taken as an abbreviation of Presocratic philosophy generally.

The result of Presocratic philosophy was not what Zeno would require, were his principle to be applied to its several forms and especially to Anaxagoras. Instead the thinking which knew itself one with being, with Socrates and the Sophists passed into the form of self-consciousness - a thinking which knew the positive and negative moments of what was other than itself as related to each other and to the thinking subject. There was no longer the thinking which knew being but not its division and multiplicity. One had in its place first the self-conscious subject which knew itself as 'measure of the being of beings and of the not-being of not-beings'. Or with Socrates the new principle took the form of a universal being to which belonged all negativity and difference. This principle
Plato called 'the good'. Regarded in its simple unity, apart from its division and multiplicity, it might be called 'one' or 'being'. And the reasoning which considered the relation of this unity to its determinations might be extraneous and not expressive of a teleological relation.

To use the Eleatic forms, abstract and inadequate to what one would think by them was indeed inevitable for Plato so long as he took for principles the 'one' and the 'indeterminate dyad' and on the assumption of their difference sought their unity through an external reflection and did not know their relation as the intrinsic self-determination of an original unity or as actuality. In Parmenides one sees the genesis of that concept, which begins to appear in the criticism of Eleaticism in Sophist.

II

130a-e: Of what are there ideas?

The argument then passes to the Platonic Parmenides for whom 'the one' is 'the good' and is assumed capable of showing the relation of all things to that principle. Ascertaining first from Socrates that the explanation he has given of a sensible plurality as 'participating' 'separate' ideas was not a thesis merely but for him the ideas are separate and self-identical, Parmenides would first learn whether it is intended universally or to apply only in some cases. By Aristotle's account it was held in the Academy that there were not separate eidh of negations, privations, relations, or where there was a prior and posterior. That is, the ideas were properly essences or substantial natures, 'by themselves' or self-identical, without the types of negativity and otherness mentioned. Always included as well were unity, being, like, unlike and such pure universals. The Socrates of the dialogue had not fully clarified the position, but was beyond the historical Socrates who was occupied with definition and with virtues and the good or beautiful as the end sought by them. He was beyond that Socrates who had not 'separated' these or any universals from language and 'opinion', whose ambiguities he disclosed. Here he had 'separated' and knew these forms as self-related objects of a universal thinking.

The Socrates of Phaedo, to discover what that unmoving independence of the soul was from all its mutable relations to the world, 'separated' universals from their unstable presence in the objects of sense and imagination. He came to this knowledge by correcting a view of the soul as simply in the natural cycle of birth and death, coming to be and perishing, or as having the continuity of a harmony of the changing elements of the cycle. In this reflection he comes to a knowledge of the ideas through mutable nature and has not, or has only begun, to relate the 'separate' ideas to that way through which thought came to them. Asked by Parmenides at that point whether there were ideas of 'man' as embodied soul or of the elemental natural bodies he would no doubt be perplexed. And it would appear absurd that there be ideas of 'hair', which protects animal bodies from externals, or of 'mud', 'dirt' and such unordered mixtures of the elements. The thought came to Socrates sometimes that there must be one account in all cases, but from it he falls back for fear he be destroyed in an 'abyss of absurdity'.

1 Met. 990a34-991a8 and elsewhere.
The 'abyss of absurdity' from which Socrates recoils is a loss of that stability his thought has found in a knowledge of the ideas. That certainty and himself as a thinking self-conscious being appear to be lost in that comprehensive idea to which Parmenides' questions have led him. The true being he had in the ideas will rest on a common idea inclusive also of that of which thought has not a certain knowledge. That which is self-identical and as such true for thought will also be not itself and untrue. This consequence is for Socrates absurd, that is, contradictory.

But Socrates, Parmenides observes, is still a young man and as such respects overly the opinions of men. He is not yet capable of what is not a human but rather a divine knowledge. The discovery of the ideas is the beginning of a science, of a knowledge of what the scientific understanding is. But there is also a dogmatism of the understanding, a common sense not easily moved from its certainty. But in Socrates, Parmenides discerns a philosophical enthusiasm which in his greater maturity will break through that barrier.

131a-e: The first aporia of 'participation'.

After intimating to Socrates that, having separated the ideas, he cannot stop short of a total idea reflecting all externality, Parmenides questions him on how one is to understand 'participation' or the relation to ideas of the individuals of the sensible world. This inquiry develops further Socrates' problem how self-identical ideas can be interconnected. For now not only has all the diversity of the sensible world been brought under one identity, but one asks how that identity can be individualized. In this and the previous line of questioning there is taking shape the structure of the ideal world, as this will be treated in the hypotheses about the relations of an absolute unity to a divided totality.

Parmenides begins by asking whether individuals participate a whole idea or a part of it or in some other manner, that is, can 'participation' be understood through the relation of parts to whole, or if not, through some other relation of the many to the unity of the idea. One will observe that the question, so formulated, takes up from where the questions on the content of the ideal world ended: how is that comprehensive idea related to the individuals of the sensible world.

Socrates in his answer shows that he knows well the sense of the question. 'Participation' is like the diffusion of light, which while remaining undividedly itself is spatially extended even to individuals. Elsewhere Plato compares the diffusion of the good to that of the light from the sun in the sensible world. But is not that identity, considered in its relation to individuals, rather like a sail spread over many individuals, touching each with some part of itself? 'Participation' would then not be of the whole, as Socrates' image intimates, but of the part.

The relation thus described one should compare with that of a unified thought to extension in the philosophies of Descartes and Spinoza. The difference lies in this, that the light in the image is thought to have division and difference in its identity, as on the other side the sail is not simply the continuity of extension but as partitioned among a
multitude of individuals. Here a like relation to that of the moderns emerges as one seeks the truth of a presupposed world. The particularity of the many has not given way to the abstract form, as later it will (as already in a manner in the matter of the Stoics) but is to be united with it. The argument then passes from the relation of parts to whole to the 'some other way' mentioned.

Parmenides begins the exposition of this more developed relation with the question whether an idea can truly be partitioned and remain one. Socrates accepting that to be impossible, Parmenides presents to him a way in which it can be thought possible. Consider the contrariety of 'great' and 'small' and an 'equality' which neutralizes their difference. In this relation one has the conditions of a unified process. The reflection of the self-diffusing unity and that process into each brings the process or becoming to a momentary halt and permits that first apprehension of being which is called aisthesis. The conditions of this relation are here simply set before Socrates, who apprehends both an immediately stabilized unity of the divided and the undivided and the need to go beyond it to a more than evanescent truth, and thus to a second account of 'participation'.

But before passing to the second and subsequent explanations of 'participation' a general observation on their common structure. In every case 'participation' is through a certain relation of the Platonic 'principles' - undivided unity and the indeterminate dyad. From one to another there is a strict logical development towards an adequate relation of the principles - a relation in which both have explicitly the same total content. In Republic one has the image of a divided line, whose divisions represent relations of thought to being, at each division more adequate than the last, 'hypotheses' by which one ascends to the good - the 'unhypothetical' principle in which being and thought are no longer divided. Neither the logic of that ascent is there given nor how a 'dialectical' or 'hypothetical' thinking can exceed itself in an 'unhypothetical' principle. Parmenides will supply both. In the several aporia of 'participation' it will attend not only to a positive relation of thought and being at each grade but also to a negativity in which they are divided. The negativity present at one grade is at the next taken into the positive relation, only to recur in another form. The series is not endless but in four stages reaches a point where the object of thought is seen to be the principles themselves. Hence there are four aporia, the last leading to the 'hypotheses' about unity and being or the relations of an ideal and a sensible totality.

The insufficiency of this first account of participation, which appears when its logical constituents have been brought out, is not further examined here. It is enough to have

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2 The argument here, dense from its brevity, will be explicated fully in the second hypothesis. For the general sense of it one may reflect on the difficulty in early modern philosophy of passing from the abstract relation of extension to thought to their relation in sense perception. Plato brings into one a rational and an empirical beginning of knowledge.
given the basis of the criticism of sense perception as knowledge which is amply set forth in *Theaetetus*.

**131e-132c: Second aporia.**

Socrates avowed that to define 'participation' was more difficult than he had supposed. The first attempt, that is, resulted for him in a renewed separation of individual and universal and the forming in his mind of a new relation. The object of his thought is not one individual but a multitude, and when he regarded them all there appeared to him one idea over them all. The multitude, that is, was not for him an indefinite plurality but implicitly under a universal. The many he regarded from the side of the universal into which the unstable content of *aisthesis* returned as to a stable and true being, as in that relation he could regard all the individuals of a kind, e.g., great things. And when he so regarded them there came into view for him one idea over all. In that way was formed for him the attitude of thought to being which in *Theaetetus* is called 'true opinion'.

Socrates accepts from Parmenides as true this account of how he discovered separate ideas. But the multitude being thus unified, what is the relation of the idea or universal to the many 'particpants'? Parmenides sets before Socrates the difficulty of that relation. In coming to this position one has circumvented the indefinite plurality of things which makes true universals appear the unattainable end of an endless process. In this unification the idea has been separated from all the individuals, and it appears evident that there can be no 'participations'.

Socrates counters this difficulty with the proposal that the ideas be regarded as objects of thought which occur nowhere but in souls. In *Theaetetus* the attempt to find in the soul a bridge between universals and individuals is examined at length. The constituents of the sought mediation are memory, recollection and imagination - a mediation attempted not for the last time in the history of philosophy, though decisively defeated in *Theaetetus*, where it is shown that a determinate relation of individual and universal is not to be found in the collaboration of these psychic powers.

Here Parmenides simply points to the consequence of Socrates' interpretation of the position - that the ideas as in the soul would save their universality, while through the soul related to endless division. To which Parmenides objects that each of these thoughts taken in itself would be a thought of nothing. Socrates concedes that a thought must be of something that is. Of some one object which that thought, being present to all the individuals, thinks, namely the one idea as being. The true being and the relation to it of all the individuals, with which the formulation of this position began, appear to be restored. But in a peculiar and impossible sense: the same necessity as thus conjoins the idea and all its participants also divides them and imposes a choice between an absorption of all the many into the thinking of them - where one will say that all things think - or a separation of thoughts from thinking - where one will say that all things are unthought thoughts.

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3 That criticism turns on the relation of the world as it is for the philosopher's contemplation to the world as measured by the clock.
The same division is treated in *Theaetetus* under the proposed definition of knowledge as true opinion with a *logos*. The *logos* both inwardly unites all plurality with the universal and is externalized into a dispersed multitude of parts, an externalized universal and a relation of individual to that universal. The elements of thought are thus materialized and as such unthought. So ends in that dialogue the attempt to equate knowledge with true opinion, by itself or with a *logos*. The whole argument in its barest essentials is given here in a few sentences. Its result is that an adequate account of 'participation' has not been found. For if the alternatives one is left to choose between are combined, the multiplicity and difference which *ex hypothesi* have their stability and truth in the ideas are rather obliterated in the *logos* so taken. There is demanded a *logos* which inwardly and in its explication contains all differences within a unity of form.

**132c-133a: Third aporia.**

This reasoning awakens in Socrates what in consequence of it appears the best explanation of participation: there are unmoving 'paradigms' in nature, 'the others', i.e. all the many individuals, resemble these and are likenesses of them; their participation in the ideas is nothing else than imaging them. In this he adopts the standpoint of a 'dianoetic' or reasoning thought which in treating of universal objects refers its proofs to sensible individuals in which are imaged the intelligible objects of which alone they are true.

Socrates takes 'participation' to be a positive relation, a likeness, of these individuals to the true objects of thought from which unlikeness has been excluded. He assents to Parmenides' statement that the relation must be reciprocal. But with that a negativity appears in the relation which demands a new idea to assimilate the two sides, a demand which repeats itself indefinitely, so long as all the variety of the many instances are not seen to have their truth in the one idea. Socrates sees the conclusion that 'participation' cannot be by 'likeness'. You see, observes Parmenides, how great is the aporia if one posit self-subsistent ideas. The transition from the scientific understanding of which for Plato the only model was geometry to a philosophical science was the most difficult. But only in that science could the relation of individual to universal be made clear and not subject to endless division.\(^4\)

**133a-135c: The fourth aporia.**

Socrates is at the edge of the greatest and most difficult aporia for one who has separated ideas from the sensible world. The preceding problem demands for its solution that the division in 'dianoetic' thought between the true objects of its necessary reasoning and the many sensibles it uses to represent them and this multitude be replaced by one idea. Thought will then have for its primary object the identity and division of the idea itself, in which will be contained the sensible multiplicity\(^5\)

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\(^4\) Not that Plato has here fully in view the logic of geometry: his criticism is in relation to that middle position he assigns to mathematics in *Republic* and, as in the other cases, the method is a Zenonian dialectic.

\(^5\) *Republic*, 510b-511d.
The aporia which occurs here is that if one take this new relation of thinking to being as an identity of the two sides, there appears against it their division - an unbridgeable gulf between thinking and its objects. The equivalent in the older modern philosophy is the division of the rationalist and the empiricist. For Plato it is the division between the philosopher and the sophist. Protagoras speaks like many since when he says that the shortness of life prevents one from knowing whether there are gods, that is, an endless division and otherness makes inaccessible such knowledge. But the later rationalism and empiricism have a common root and, as Plato will show in Sophist, so have philosophy and sophistic.

In Parmenides the aporia is given the form that the sensible and intelligible worlds are incorrigibly separated and also are not separated, in that each side has the other in it. Humans are cut off from the ideal or divine world and can know nothing of it. The gods, likewise, as Epicurus will teach, are in their realm and can know nothing of human affairs.

But if humans have no knowledge of ideas or universals there can be no unified direction in their lives. As Plato elsewhere elaborates, the state would disintegrate, justice would be the will of the stronger. Or rather there would not be justice or a political community at all. Even in the arbitrary will of the tyrant there is a residual reason. And Protagoras for whom truth is the immediacy of feeling Socrates proves to be a calculating utilitarian. The sophist who is the measure of being and not-being has reason in him. In a later age Hume for whom 'impressions' were the primary truth had in him a reason which knew the universal and divine, and that his empirical self could not attain to what he knew. The division between empirical and rational, as between sophist and philosopher, is a subordinate distinction.

As to the ignorance of the gods, it is in the transition from the 'dianoetic' to the unified knowledge of ideas that this has in it, and in truer form, a knowledge of the sensible world. In all the forms of knowledge criticized there in the previous aporiai there has been a conjunction of ideal and sensible worlds. In this last form, fully explicated as it will be in the 'hypotheses', the ideal and sensible worlds are known as complementary totalities. The aporia lies in the contradiction between the omniscience of the gods and their ignorance, which follows from the separation of a human or empirical world from a world true for thought. The resolution is in a recognition that the separation of the two is impossible.

How Plato saw the relation of human and divine he tells elsewhere in mythical language, especially in the great myth of Phaedrus. The life of the gods is a contemplation of all nature, within which is the human world. This contemplation is not of something alien, but of that through which the knowledge of their world is actual, is separated and the separation negated. Humans from their being in the world strive to participate in the divine contemplation of the unity of the two worlds, but even if they attain something of it, are drawn back from it to their world and the assumption that on its own is the prime reality. In Parmenides and other late dialogues the mythical vanishes and the interest is to give this content the form of thought.
135c-136c: Revised Zenonian dialectic.

The conditions on which such a philosophical thought is humanly possible were spoken of at length in *Republic*. From the standpoint the 'aporetic' argument has here reached, it is only necessary for *Parmenides* to impress on Socrates the necessity of being thoroughly practiced in dialectic. One has to be freed from a sophistic use of dialectic in the service of ambitions and particular ends or as the strongest defense against philosophy. For philosophical thought to be possible dialectic must have become a purely objective contemplation of ideas, of divisions and interconnections not imported but found in them. That dialectic Socrates had in the wonder which is the beginning of philosophy. But despite the strong philosophical spirit moving in him he will never discover the truth unless he has made his own that dialectic which is the method of its discovery.

On that method, before he consents to apply it to unity and being, the primary Eleatic concepts, *Parmenides* makes several comments, important if one would follow him. The dialectic is that of Zeno, his own principle with the negative moment by which one does not immediately declare the many nothing but shows their intrinsic contradiction and nullity. It is Zeno's dialectic applied, in response to Socrates' 'separation' of ideas and his difficulty concerning them, to the self-identical ideas. Through the *aporiai* which applied this method to particular relations of being and knowledge, the method has become known in its universality. Applied in this form to the relations of ideal and sensible totalities the method itself undergoes a certain change. In the earlier *aporiai* the method drew out the affirmative and negative moments of the forms of being, reflected on them and separated ideal and sensible components. There were not affirmative and negative 'hypotheses' separated and about the same totalities. Here where there is, to use analogically the *Phaedrus* myth, a going over of divine knowledge to its reflection in a sensible world and then a retraction and return to itself, the one movement can be followed through affirmative, the other through negative hypotheses. And on the human side there is a like alternation between an affirmative relation of rational and sensible moments, and one in which the difference of the moments is negated. The negative hypotheses have thus in the original a definite meaning which Neoplatonic commentators laboured vainly to discover from their standpoint, which had nothing in it of Plato's dialectical method.