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PLATO'S IMAGE OF TIME

(AN ESSAY IN PHILOSOPHICAL SOCIOLOGY)

BY

VICTOR J. GIOSCIA
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PLATO'S IMAGE OF TIME

(AN ESSAY IN PHILOSOPHICAL SOCIOLOGY)

BUT NOW THE SIGHT OF DAY AND NIGHT, AND
THE MONTHS AND THE REVOLUTIONS OF THE
YEARS HAVE CREATED NUMBER AND HAVE GIVEN
US A CONCEPTION OF TIME, AND THE POWER
OF INQUIRING ABOUT THE NATURE OF THE
UNIVERSE, AND FROM THIS SOURCE WE HAVE
DERIVED PHILOSOPHY, THAN WHICH NO GREATER
GOOD EVER WAS OR WILL BE GIVEN BY THE
GODS TO MORTAL MAN.

Timaeus 47

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

If one knew of an important writer who had written a number of consecutive and cumulative works, but if one chose to read the tenth in the series because he felt that it gave evidence of a stylistic superiority, one could be criticized for exercising a stylistic preference at the expense of his own doctrinal enrichment.

For example, if it is true that Plato wrote his dialogues over a period of many years, and that in some of the later works he reconsidered his philosophy of time, one could criticise that reader who chose to look for Plato's philosophy of time only in those dialogues to which he is attracted, by reminding the reader that he ignored the possibility of later modifications of doctrine which Plato may have attained.

In this age of process philosophies, we seldom witness scholarly interest in Plato's views of time and history. And yet Whitehead has remarked that not only the process philosophies, but, in some sense, all European Philosophy consists of a series of footnotes to Plato.[1]

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[1] A.N. Whitehead, Process and Reality (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1941), p. 63.

If it could be shown that there is a Platonic philosophy of time and that this philosophy is as seminal for the process philosophies as Whitehead's remark indicates it to be, it would seem well worth the effort to investigate this topic with some thoroughness. In addition, he who begins to read the scholars who have written in this area will quickly discover that many of them seem to prefer to study those dialogues which have come to be called the "middle" group.

As the reader will see in the pages to come, there has recently been a quickening of interest on the part of modern writers in the views of Plato on the question of time and its meaning, and these writers have attempted to investigate the relations between Plato's philosophy of time and contemporary process-philosophies. Several writers have addressed themselves to reconsiderations of the meanings of Plato's theory of time and the implications which this theory might have for contemporary investigations. For example, W.H. Walsh[2] discusses the controversy which arose after the publication of K. Popper's two

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[2] W.H. Walsh, "Plato and the Philosophy of History: History and Theory in the Republic," History and Theory (The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1962), II, 1, pp. 1-16.

volumes,[3] in which Popper wrote, somewhat angrily, that Plato's "view of the world" was "fundamentally historical." Although Walsh later agrees with Popper's assertion that Plato was at bottom a "totalitarian"[4] he disagrees strongly that Plato's view of the world was historical at all, and, in the remainder of his article, examines with great care and patience Books VIII and IX of the Republic to show that Plato did not really posess a "philosophy of History."

While it is not the aim of this study to discuss these two writers, it is instructive to cite them as examples because they contain views which are representative of certain aspects of Platonic scholarship in our generation.[5] Walsh represents the tendency to view the Republic as the final source of Plato's philosophy of the Polis; Popper represents that view which regards Plato as one of the first "social scientists" whose interest it was to observe and classify those irrevocable patterns in nature which make prediction of future events possible.

R.G. Bury has also addressed himself to the question

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[3] K.R. Popper, The Open Society and its Enemies (2 vols.; 2d ed. rev.; London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1952).

[4] Walsh, op. cit., p. 6.

[5] See, for example. R.L. Nettleship, Lectures on the Republic of Plato (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1955), and E. Barker, Political Thought of Plato and Aristotle (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1959). Both of these authors make slight reference to the Timaeus while discussing Plato's "Political Philosophy."

whether Plato has a philosophy of history, and, although he does not regard the Republic as the final source of Plato's reflections on this topic, and pays rather extended attention to the Timaeus, he nevertheless concludes that Plato does not achieve a sufficiently gradualist position to qualify as a genuine philosopher of history.[6]

E. MacKinnon[7] is of the opinion that an adequate conceptualization and subsequent insight into the meaning of the notion of time in contemporary physics must begin with the thoughts which the classical Greeks gave to this topic. He cites passages from the Timaeus to show that Plato's thoughts on time can be fruitfully consulted by a modern theorist and that such a consultation facilitates the modern's attempt to understand contemporary physical theory.

The contemporary student of Plato has been delighted with the extensive commentary which has been flowing from the pen of Gauss[8] in his six volume Handkommentar, and it might be mentioned that in the final volume Gauss devotes considerable attention to Plato's Timaeus and the social

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6 R.G. Bury, "Plato and History," Classical Quarterly, New Series, 1-2, pp. 86-94.

7 Edward MacKinnon, S.J., "Time in Contemporary Physics," International Philosophical Quarterly, II, 3, (September, 1962), p. 429.

8 Hermann Gauss, Philosophischer Handkommentar zu den Dialogen Platos, vol. III, part 2 (Bern: Herbart Lang, 1961).

function of Plato's theory of time in the cosmology which this dialogue develops.

In a similar vein, although of slightly less recent vintage, one notices in Bertrand Russell's Mysticism and Logic[9] an extended discussion of the relation between a conception of time and the sort of insight which he describes as "mystical." There the reader confronts the statement that Plato, like all "mystical" writers, regarded the reality of time as illusory, and Russell supports his claim by appeal to the Parmenides. He does not distinguish between the character of Parmenides which Plato has created in his dialogue, and the real Parmenides whose doctrines we must reconstruct from the fragments of his works bequeathed to us through the ages.

There is the now familiar quotation from Whitehead's Process and Reality to the effect that an analysis of Plato's thought is far from an antiquarian interest; it reads in full, "The safest general characterization of the European philosophical tradition is that it consists of a series of footnotes to Plato."[10] This statment is of considerable import since it appears in a major work of a major philosopher of our own era, who is known to have been deeply influenced by Einstein's notion of time in

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[9] Bertrand Russell, Mysticism and Logic (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Co., 1917).

[10] Whitehead, loc. cit.

his Relativity Physics. For this reason, Whitehead's philosophy may be viewed as a process philosophy because of its radical temporalism.

Again, in a similar vein, Heisenberg[11] perhaps the most distinguished of living physicists, has recently written that the key to the hoped-for solution to the fundamental enigmas involved in the constitution of matter, is to be found in Plato's Timaeus, where it is said that mathematical forms and not fundamental particles of a solid stuff are at the basis of the Universe.

Two groups of writers can be distinguished in the foregoing citations; one group of writers concern themselves with political and sociological questions, and the others are concerned with cosmological questions. It is therefore a matter of importance to note that Plato does not suffer from this division of subject matter; in the Timaeus, it is precisely these two seemingly disparate themes which he unites. Thus it is something of a problem for modern writers to account for the separation of cosmology from politics which most writers assume in approaching Plato's written works, although this separation is foreign to Plato himself.

Therefore, in addition to showing the relevance of Plato's thought to modern speculation, we must point out

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[11] Werner Heisenberg, Physics and Philosophy (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1958), ch. 4.

that some modern writers have divided Plato against himself, and have viewed his philosophy as if it were divided among the academic specializations which characterize modern universities. Or, to put the matter differently, we ought to realize that Plato's perspectives do not mirror our own perspectives, and that Plato's approach to certain fundamental questions about the ultimate origins of society and the Universe differ from our own. But it does not suffice to say that Plato's focus differed from our own; one must account for the difference, and explain how it was that Plato was able to consider cosmological and sociological questions as inseparable.

To account for Plato's undivided focus on what we would consider separate problems, it is necessary to anticipate some of the conclusions which we shall reach in subsequent chapters. Briefly, it can be said at this juncture that Plato included cosmology and sociology within a larger perspective, a perspective in which the origin of the Universe and the origin of society were seen as stages in a temporal process, so that he first presents an account of the origins of the Universe and then, presents an account of the origin of society, at a later time. But it should not pass without comment that Plato's account of the origin of the Universe was set down for the purpose of deepening his account of the origin of society, and that his discussion of the account of the Universe is preceded by statements to the effect that it is only upon

the broad canvass of the entire Universe that the best account of society's origins can be painted.[12]

The reason for this metaphorical phraseology is not arbitrary, and in the remainder of this study it will become evident that one must frequently resort to metaphor to explain Plato's meaning because Plato himself makes use of metaphor throughout his Timaeus, indeed, throughout most of his philosophy. This emphasis on metaphor, in fact, becomes one of the central problems for any commentator on the Timaeus and its philosophy. For Plato has fashioned his philosophy of time in such a way that it is impossible to be faithful to Plato's thought without a heavy emphasis on imagery. As we shall see, Plato's discussion of the reality of time contains not only a number of images but a definition of time whose central term is the word image. Since Plato defines time as an image, it becomes the problem of the commentator to reveal as clearly as possible the significance of this definition and the reason for his inclusion of image as one of its principal terms.

In short, it would be impossible to discuss Plato's Timaeus and its doctrine of time without paying considerable attention to Plato's use of the word image, and the meaning of this word in its philosophical context. But there is

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[12] See, for example. F.M. Cornford, From Religion to Philosophy (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1957).

another reason for discussing Plato's time-image, and again, to anticipate briefly what shall be discussed in the concluding portions of this study, we may say at this juncture that Plato has put imagery at the heart of his time-philosophy because it is the function of an image to present complex unities in a simple vision, on which one may, if one wishes, focus the more divisive powers of logical analysis. In short, Plato's use of image invests his doctrine of time with a great unity, which subsequent analysis finds to be a rich source of philosophical insight.

There is unanimous agreement among scholars that Plato concerned himself with those inquiries which he felt were important for a philosophy of life in community. It should not, therefore, be surprising to find that a sociologist who is interested in a full and complete history of sociological theory, endeavors to examine Plato's philosophy of society. Since, however, Plato does not separate his sociological theory from his cosmological philosophy, the sociologist is faced with the necessity of familiarizing himself with those parts of Plato's philosophy which most contemporary sociologists would exclude from current definitions of the province of sociology. This ought not give rise to the conclusion that the contemporary sociologist has forsaken his calling; rather, it should be interpreted as the willingness of the sociologist to extend his inquiry into those regions of thought where the theorist he is following has taken him.

In this sense, it is clear that Plato's sociological thinking must read it in its given context, and to do so, it is necessary to notice that Plato has made this context cosmological. It follows that the sociologist who reads Plato's theories of society without a comprehension of their stated cosmological context is attempting to take Plato's theory of society out of its given context, and that, to do so violates the general canons of scholarship.

The most explicit formulation which Plato made of his philosophy of time is found in his _Timaeus_. In this dialogue, he reexamines some of the ideas he formulated in the _Republic_, and, in so doing, makes the context of his examination of society explicitly temporal; that is, he suggests that it is necessary to know about time in order to know about the best form of society, and he examines these two problems together in the _Timaeus_.

The most important focus of this study is to set out the meaning of this apparant juxtaposition of problems and to show that it was no arbitrary mingling of themes, but a theoretical synthesis which flows from a central Platonic insight.

It will be established that the _Timaeus_ is very probably the last dialogue Plato completed and edited, that it is followed only by the incomplete _Critias_ and the unedited _Laws_. These facts, taken together with the fact that the _Timaeus_ recapitulates some doctrines of the Republic, give the _Timaeus_ a central importance in Plato's

reflections on society. Only much later in history do we find divisions of thought about society into the academic disciplines called Political Philosophy, Sociology, Economics, Anthropology, etc. Such divisions were not made in Plato's era. Plato wrote the _Republic_, the _Statesman_, the _Critias_, and the _Laws_, and in each of these dialogues he asks questions which twentieth century thinkers would regard as crossing over traditional academic boundaries. Therefore, although it might seem altogether strange to the modern reader, it is nonetheless true that Plato put together the themes of society and astronomy in the _Timaeus_, and that he linked them through his investigation of the reality of time.

It is necessary to clarify the claim that the _Timaeus_, is the last completed dialogue of Plato. The claim that the _Timaeus_ is a "late" dialogue means that the doctrine of the _Timaeus_ contains certain generalizations of doctrine which show it to be a more mature work, the result of subsequent reflection on the doctrines of prior works. The words "more mature" therefore mean that the doctrine of the _Timaeus_ includes, generalizes, and goes beyond other dialogues which are therefore doctrinally "earlier." Therefore, it should be evident that the characterization of a dialogue as "late" or "early" or "middle" refers not only to the period of Plato's life during which it was composed but also to the degree to which its doctrine represents a reflective advance over prior positions and themes.

More specifically, it will be shown that the *Timaeus* contains a discussion of the themes of eternity, time, and image, and that these three themes are related to each other in such a way as to be inseparable from each other and from the question of the basis of a society.

Thus, the statement that the *Timaeus* precedes the *Critias* and the *Laws* and succeeds the *Republic* means not only that these dialogues were written before and after each other respectively; it means also that the doctrine of the *Timaeus* is a "later doctrine" than the *Republic*, i.e., that is a reflective advance over the doctrine of the *Republic*. However, it should be pointed out that the precise meaning of this hypothesized advance will have to be spelled out in the following chapters. It is not possible to reach a precise meaning on this point here and now, because it is necessary to say exactly how and in what way the doctrine of the *Timaeus* constitutes an advance over prior dialogues, which it is the whole business of this study to describe.

Briefly, all that can be done here in the Introduction is to anticipate the conclusion, which is that the *Timaeus* refers to doctrines developed in the *Republic*, *Parmenides*, *Theatetus*, *Sophist*, *Statesman*, *Philebus*, and modifies the doctrines developed in these dialogues in a new way, referring "back" to them, and referring "forward," as it were, to the *Critias* and *Laws*. Again, this is not to say

that Plato was perfectly conscious of a precise and detailed plan to write the Critias and then the Laws, and that he knew full well in advance what the exact formulations of doctrine were to be in these future dialogues. No such definite finality is necessary to follow out the hypothesis of this study. Most Platonic scholars agree that Plato planned to write a trilogy, of which the Timaeus was the first dialogue, but we cannot even be sure that he fully intended to complete the trilogy. It may well be, as Cornford says,[13] that Plato planned only to complete the Critias, and then changed his mind and wrote the Laws instead of the Hermocrates. Again, this does not damage the hypothesis of this study.

In short, all that is maintained here is the view that the Timaeus contains Plato's most mature reflections on the themes of eternity, image, and time, and that in the Timaeus this trilogy of themes receives the most explicit formulation Plato gave it. This late formulation *re*formulates some of the ideas Plato had formed in the Republic, and therefore, one ought *not* look to the Republic for the final formulation of Plato's philosophy of eternity, time, or image. Further, the themes of eternity, time, and image are treated in the Timaeus in an explicitly

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[13] F.M. Cornford, Plato's Cosmology (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, Ltd., 1937), p. 8.

sociological framework, and are said to be part and parcel of the inquiry into the best society and its basis in time.

It is necessary to clarify the special use of the term "hypothesis" as it will be employed in this study. By hypothesis is meant nothing more than a tentative assertion of a conclusion, such that one states an hypothesis and then musters "arguments" in favor of it. The hypothesis in this study is a tripartite one: it involves the tentative assertion that the Timaeus is a "late" dialogue, that is, it was written during Plato's last years and it contains his most mature reflections on the doctrines which it discusses; it involves the tentative assertion that the doctrines of the Timaeus constitute a maturation and are the results of a progressive evolution which can be traced through the group of dialogues which the scholars have agreed to call the "late" group; and it involves the tentative assertion that the themes of eternity, image, and time, can be focused upon as those themes which Plato devoted his maturing efforts to expand and deepen by repeated reflection upon them. Finally, the tripartite hypothesis involves the tentative assertion that Plato's thoughts on the basis of society gradually shifted from an "eternalist" to a "temporalist" orientation; that is, in his early works, Plato reasoned to the conclusion that society is based on an eternal model, and in his later

works he reasoned that society also shares in a temporal process, or, to be more exact, in the reality of time itself.

Thus it is necessary to distinguish the word "hypothesis" from other uses of the term. For example, in the _Parmenides_ Plato discusses eight "hypotheses" and his meaning there seems to be that one may tentatively assert a proposition, and then, by reasoning logically to the conclusions which flow from it, and by asking whether these conclusions seem acceptable or not, either accept or reject the hypothesis. This is not the meaning of the term hypothesis as it will be employed here, for we do not intend to begin with the assertion that the _Timaeus_ is a late dialogue in which certain views are put forward. Rather we will attempt to ascertain whether there are acceptable arguments on whose basis it seems reasonable to conclude that the _Timaeus_ is what we hypothesize it to be and whether it says what we say it says.

Finally, it is necessary to distinguish the term hypothesis from the usage of the so-called physical sciences, wherein "data" are brought forward to "validate, verify, and confirm" the hypothesis. In the sciences, an hypothesis is said to be a "testable" proposition by reason of "operationalizing" its terms; i.e., describing the operations through which the investigator has gone

in the process of reaching his conclusions.[14]

As used in this study, the term hypothesis means that a conclusion has been tentatively reached and an insight has been developed by the writer as a result of reading the statements and works cited, and that he regards his views as reasonable conclusions because he has interpreted certain passages in a certain way. The term hypothesis is used because the writer does not regard his conclusions as definitive and exhaustive, but as probable and reasonable conclusions. In this, the method of hypothesis and arguments in favor of adopting the hypothesis as a conclusion resemble but are not identical with the methods of the sciences, because it is impossible to measure an interpretation with physical instruments or to reveal by what processes or operations one has reached his conclusions. Nevertheless, it is claimed that, by focusing his attention on the passages discussed, another student of Plato will probably be brought, if not to identical, then to similar conclusions.

One could, then, assert that it is the hypothesis of this study that the _Timaeus_ is a late dialogue in which Plato has united several themes from the late dialogues

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[14] Carl G. Hempel, "Fundamentals of Concept Formation in Empirical Science," _International Encyclopaedia of Unified Science_, vols. I and II; _Foundations of the Unity of Science_, vol. II, no. 7 (University of Chicago Press, 1952).

into a new unity, and that this new unity of themes places society on a basis different from the one it received in the earlier dialogues. Then the chapters devoted to the several aspects of this hypothesis could be viewed as "data" which conspire to "verify" the hypothesis; i.e., make it seem more reasonable than another view.

There are, then, three important problems surrounding Plato's philosophy of time. First, to get the philosophy of time into its Platonic context, it is necessary to show the chronological relation of the _Timaeus_ as a dialogue to the other dialogues. This is an "external argument" which attempts to establish the relative chronology of the dialogues by relatively non-interpretative criteria, i.e., criteria which do not demand an insight into the meaning of Plato's thought. Second, it is necessary to set the philosophy of time in the _Timaeus_ in its philosophical context. This is an internal argument, which traces the development of Plato's philosophy of time through the late dialogues, in which he considered this problem. Third, it is necessary to show how the definition of time emerges gradually from Plato's thought in the late group of dialogues, where the use of an image becomes gradually more appropriate.

These problems form a cluster about a deeper point, and it is this deeper point which deserves the best efforts towards clarification. Since Plato investigates the meaning of time, eternity, and image together in his effort to

describe the basis of the best form of society, it is necessary to reveal as clearly as possible how the themes of eternity, time and image are related to the basis of society. This constitutes the primary purpose of this study.

As we said above, the twentieth century has witnessed an increasing concern for what is called the Philosophy of History, which includes an attempt to understand human behavior in its historical setting.[15] Plato is infrequently consulted in this attempt, and when he is, the Republic is most frequently consulted. If it can be shown that Plato in the Timaeus devotes his most mature reflections to the meaning of human life in society in its historical setting, then the tendency to regard the Republic as the definitive source of Plato's reflections on man in history may receive a small counter-thrust. It may well be that Plato's philosophy of time and society, seen together as they are in the Timaeus, contains the seed of an insight relevant for our times.

As to the format of this study, certain preliminary remarks are in order. In the second chapter will be found a discussion of those arguments drawn from relatively non-interpretative sources which set the Timaeus in its

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[15] Hans Meyerhoff, ed., The Philosophy of History in Our Time (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1959), which contains a valuable anthology of the important authors in this field and some of their most representative views.

chronological order. That is, it will be demonstrated that the _Timaeus_ is in fact the last completed work we have from the pen of Plato, since the _Critias_ is unfinished and the _Laws_ is _unedited_. The argument in the second chapter is as external as it is possible to be, and relies as little as possible on insight into the meaning of Plato's thought. It is devoted to the scholars' discussions of Greek language and with certain topographic features of the dialogues. The order of the dialogues according to the "ancients" is recounted; stylistic and linguistic criteria are described and the conclusions reached by these methods are stated in support of the hypothesis. Certain details of Plato's life which are known from sources other than Plato's own writings are brought forward as additional support for the claim that the _Timaeus_ is a late work. Finally, the same chapter examines the information available to us in Plato's _Seventh Letter_. The problem of its authenticity is discussed and the relevance of this information is described.

In the third chapter, the order of the dialogues is taken to be correct, as established by the external criteria, and, assuming this order, the themes of eternity, time, and image are traced through the _Republic_, _Parmenides_, _Theatetus_, _Sophist_, _Statesman_, and _Philebus_. The gradual culmination of these themes in the _Timaeus_ is anticipated by tracing the development of these themes through the late dialogues. It is therefore not appropriate to call

this chapter only an internal or interpretative argument in support of the hypothesis that the Timaeus is a late dialogue, for it is concerned with the meaning of the doctrines of the several dialogues as well as the gradual progression of doctrine which becomes visible by reading the dialogues in sequence.

The fourth and fifth chapters are devoted to a commentary on those parts of the Timaeus which pertain to the trilogy of themes of eternity, image, and time, and those aspects of prior dialogues which are pertinent to these themes as the Timaeus treats them. In the final chapter the relation of eternity, time, and image to the Philosophy of Society is discussed in detail; certain references to the Critias and the Laws are made for additional clarification.

The final chapter is therefore devoted to the Philosophy of Society and the Philosophy of Time in their concatenation and interrelationship. Some modern studies of Plato's philosophy of history and the conclusions which these studies reach are there discussed, and, where appropriate, differences between their conclusions and the conclusions of this study are presented. Plato's Philosophy of Time and his Philosophy of Society are shown to be interdependent.

Finally, it should be mentioned that the study will draw on the original Greek sources only insofar as there are controversial points of grammar, and that English

translations are used throughout.

The writer realizes that this study concerns only a small part of the whole philosophy of Plato, and he humbly admits himself to the company of those more learned than himself who assert nonetheless that one never masters Plato but continues to learn from him at each reading.

The plan of the thesis, then, is quite simple. The second chapter will show that there is a significant measure of scholarly agreement on the order of the dialogues. The third chapter will trace the doctrines of eternity, image, and time through the late group of dialogues. The fourth and fifth chapters will show the interrelation of these themes in the _Timaeus_. The concluding chapter will show the relationships between Plato's philosophy of time and his philosophy of society, and point out what these relationships signify for a philosophy of history in the Platonic manner.

The study aspires to show that Plato regarded the eternity of the Forms as the sole basis of perfection when he was in his middle years, and that the _Republic_ may well be taken as representative of the philosophical reflections Plato articulated during these years. But, during the last years of his life, Plato rethought many of the themes of his earlier years, and, as the result of significant experiences and significant reflections on them throughout his later years, finally arrived at a reformulation of the doctrines of the middle years.

In his late reformulation, the temporality of the Forms takes on new meaning.

Whereas the Republic placed society on an eternal basis, the Timaeus places society on a temporal basis. But one should not conclude that Plato has simply shifted from one pole of a dichotomy to its opposite, for such a view would be incorrect. Rather, one should follow Plato through the doctrinal reformulations he accomplishes in his late dialogues to see how he has expanded his philosophical horizons, and in that way, one may arrive, as the writer has, at the view that Plato has ascended new philosophical heights, in which the simple dichotomy between time and eternity is no longer valid or fruitful, and that one best comprehends the basis of society by comprehending the processes which we call Time. One should not infer that Plato has abandoned former insights in his later doctrines. On the contrary, his former insights are included in his new doctrines, not merely as special cases but as points of departure. He retains the old in the new.

CHAPTER II

THE ORDER OF THE DIALOGUES

In the first chapter, it was stated that an attempt will be made in this study to verify the hypothesis that the _Timaeus_ is a late dialogue in which Plato significantly reformulates his earlier doctrines of eternity, image, and time. It was stated that the hypothesis was to be investigated by dividing it into two logically interrelated aspects; first, the order of the dialogues will be established and their relative chronology will be documented; second, the doctrines of the late dialogues will be traced insofar as they develop the tripartite theme of eternity, image, and time.

It was said that the first aspect relied upon criteria which demand an interpretation of the significance of Plato's style, and that the second aspect depends on an interpretation of Plato's thought. In this chapter, the criteria which do not depend on an interpretation of Plato's thought will be discussed. This chapter assumes that some knowledge of the order of Plato's dialogues is needed in order to interpret them intelligently, and so the chapter which discusses how the scholars established this order precedes the chapter which discusses Platonic doctrine.

It should be stated at the outset that one cannot simply assume that a dialogue which was composed later

than another is therefore necessarily a more mature work. This is precisely what must be demonstrated. In this chapter, the chronology of the dialogues is ascertained insofar as this is possible by citing the conclusions of those scholars who have specialized in the use of stylistic criteria. If one establishes the chronological order of composition there is a valid presumption that it also represents some sort of development in doctrine. If, then, one shows in addition that the doctrines developed follow an ascending order of reflection, the point is made. Thus, the arguments are not independent of each other.

If it can be shown that there is a development of doctrine which can be traced through the late dialogues, then it can be shown that this progression facilitates comprehension of the doctrine of the Timaeus. More specifically, the themes of eternity, image, and time can be traced through the late dialogues only after one knows which dialogues are late and in what order they should be read. Thus the chronology of the dialogues and the progression of doctrine are not separate items but logically interrelated aspects of a larger argument.

It would be possible to postulate an order for the dialogues which would support the view that the doctrine of the Timaeus is a culmination, and each scholar could do this without reference to non-interpretative criteria. But, in this way, so many different postulates would ensue

that it would become impossible for scholars to reach any agreement among themselves. This in fact is what happened when doctrinal criteria alone were used, and it resulted in such widespread disagreement that a need for some sort of non-interpretative criteria by which to establish the sequence of the dialogues was finally perceived. Further, the reliance on interpretative criteria alone and the subsequent differences in the alleged order could support the conclusion that the relation of the dialogues to each other had no bearing on their respective doctrines, since each scholar might postulate a different chronology. But Plato himself contradicted this view in those of his dialogues which refer to each other, as, for example, in the _Timaeus_, which refers to the _Republic_ almost explicitly by repeating those doctrines of the _Republic_ which are found nowhere else in those of Plato's written works which have come down to us.

The proceedure followed in this chapter is as follows. First, the testimony of the ancients is adduced. Then the efforts of scholars to use stylistic and linguistic criteria are described. Then, biographical information about Plato's life and travels is recounted. Finally, Plato's own description of his life and his travels is presented. By drawing from each of these sources, one can compile a composite picture of the criteria by which the order of the dialogues can be established, without reference to an interpretation of Plato's thought. It will

be shown that all of these sources lead to the conclusion that there is a group of dialogues which are later than others, and that the *Timaeus* is the latest of this group. In the next chapter, it will be shown that the doctrinal interpretation of these dialogues leads to a greater insight into the doctrine of the *Timaeus*.

I The Traditional View

Writing in his "Commentary," A.E. Taylor presents an impressive list of ancients who authenticate the *Timaeus* as Plato's work. He cites Aristotle's references to passages of the *Timaeus* and the fact that Aristotle refers to the *Timaeus* as a completed dialogue. In addition to reminding us that Aristotle may be presumed to know the works of his teacher, Taylor cites, in regard to the authenticity of the *Timaeus*, the testimony of Theophrastus, Plutarch, Chalcidius, Xenocrates, Crantor, Poseidonius, Proclus, Plotinus, Boethius, Cicero, and Diogenes Laertius.[1] This list is offered against the view of Schelling, who contended that the *Timaeus* was spurious, and by it, Taylor demonstrates that those who do not recognize the *Timaeus* as authentic are in the decided minority. There is little need to recapitulate all of the scholarship on each of these authors' claims and it is certainly safe to regard Taylor's scholarship in these matters as impeccable.

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[1] A.E. Taylor, *Commentary on Plato's Timaeus* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1928), p. 4.

To this list, Cornford adds the names of Galen, Theon, Derclydes, and Adrastus, who not only knew the Timaeus to be Plato's own but in addition agreed that it was the work of Plato's maturity. Summing up his own argument, Cornford says, "All the ancient Platonists from Aristotle to Simplicius, all the medieval and modern scholars have assumed that this dialogue contains the mature doctrine of its author."[2] Again it seems unnecessary to repeat the details of Cornford's scholarship which may, like Taylor's, be regarded as impeccable. Both authors state that the ancients regarded the Timaeus as Plato's mature work.

But the testimony of the ancients is hardly sufficient to establish beyond doubt that the Timaeus is both Plato's work, and, in addition, a work of Plato's old age. Citing the ancients lends a great deal of support to the claim that the Timaeus is authentic, but the claim that it is a late work bears closer scrutiny. This is especially true in view of the fact that, at one time, a lively controversy with regard to the alleged maturity of the Timaeus took place among the scholars.

Between the time of the ancients and the moderns, the Timaeus was not unknown. Jaeger presents a short and terse history of the Timaeus in the middle ages. Beginning

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[2] F.M. Cornford, Plato's Cosmology, p. viii.

with the fact that Plato's <u>Timaeus</u> deeply influenced Augustine, and through Augustine, the whole of the middle ages, and continuing through the Renaissance by way of the Byzantine theologian and mystic Gemistos Plethon, who brought Plato to the Quattrocento, Jaeger also describes the treatment Plato received at the academy of the Medicis, where Marsilius Ficinus taught from the text of the <u>Timaeus</u>.[3]

Jaeger notes a change in the eighteenth century, when Schleiermacher seems to have resuscitated a Plato who was nonetheless very much alive. However, theretofore, Plato had been regarded as a mystic and as a theologian whose doctrine was as systematic and systematized as the Aristotelianism of the Schoolmen. Plato was regarded only as the author of the theory of ideas.[4]

According to Jaeger, it was Schleiermacher's contention that the form which a philosophy took was a creative expression of the philosopher's individuality, and it was Plato's genius, he thought, to dramatize, and to use philosophy as a "continuous philosophical discussion aimed at discovering the truth."[5]

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[3] Werner Jaeger, <u>Paideia: The Ideals of Greek Culture</u> (3vols.; New York: Oxford University Press, 1943), II, pp. 77, 78.

[4] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 78.

[5] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 79.

Immediately after Schleiermacher's view became known, there followed a period during which the philological investigation of every last minute hypothesis of Plato's was undertaken with the painstakingly precise attention for which philologists are deservedly famous. However, it soon became evident that the forest was being obscured by the trees.

It remained for C.F. Hermann[6] to regard the problems of authenticating not only the authorship but the chronology of Plato's dialogues as of paramount importance, and Jaeger tells us that Hermann came to regard the dialogues as "stages in the gradual development of Plato's philosophy."[7] Thus Hermann brought "into the center of interest a problem which had hitherto been little considered, and gave it much greater importance. This was the problem of the dates at which the several dialogues had been written."[8] Since various authors developed differing opinions on the dating of the dialogues by using doctrinal criteria alone, it was the task of philology and researches into stylistic differences and minute characteristics of language to fix the date of composition as exactly as possible.

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6 C.F. Hermann, <u>Geschichte und System der Platonischen Philosophie</u> (Heidelberg: 1839), in Jaeger, <u>op. cit</u>., p. 79.

7 Jaeger, <u>op. cit.</u>, p. 79.

8 <u>Ibid</u>., p. 80.

II The Stylistic Controversy

T. Gomperz presents an entire chapter on the question of the authenticity and order of Plato's dialogues.[9] He makes a good summary of some of the chief difficulties to be encountered in an evaluation of the results of the whole stylistic controversy, and gives evidence of how and to what extent the whole question has been settled.

He begins with a tantalizing supposition: suppose Speusippus had sat down one afternoon, and, in fifteen minutes, written on a scrap of paper the order of the Platonic dialogues. But, of course, Speusippus did no such thing, nor did anyone else, so that the scholars were left with the need to know the order of the dialogues, but, also, they were left with a need to construct methods of establishing the chronology, with no hints from Plato or the Academy as to which methods would prove the most fruitful.[10]

Initially, each man interpreted the dialogues in what he felt was the logical order of Platonic philosophy. But this produced almost as many logical orders as there were interpreters.

According to Gomperz (and others, including Jaeger) it was Schleiermacher who first attempted to find his own

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[9] Theodor Gomperz, Greek Thinkers, trans. G.G. Berry (London: John Murray, 1905).

[10] Ibid., p. 275.

way out of this myriad of opinions. By viewing Plato's doctrine developmentally, and, starting with Aristotle's guarantees as to certain authentic passages and chronologies, he set about constructing an orderly arrangement of the dialogues. However, this attempt got off to a wrong start because, since only approximately half of Aristotle's works are extent, it became possible for some to construct what was called the argument from silence, i.e., those works of Plato which Aristotle did not mention might be regarded as spurious.[11] Gomperz points out that this was really an excess of Platonic zeal since it included only those works which Aristotle claimed were Plato's best.[12]

Notwithstanding these efforts, Gomperz states that even in ancient tradition, the _Laws_ were regarded as Plato's last work. Campbell then perceived that there were stylistic similarities between the _Laws_ and the _Timaeus_ and the _Critias_, including the fact that some 1500 words were used in these works which do not appear in any of Plato's earlier works.[13] In addition, these works appear last on the list of Plato's works which was kept by Aristophanes of Byzantium, the Librarian of Alexandria. But these are not final criteria. Gomperz asks "...is not

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11 _Ibid_., p. 278.

12 _Ibid_.

13 _Ibid_., pp. 279, 283.

an author's 'advance,' his progress towards perfection the surest criterion for the chronological arrangement of his works"? He answers his own question in the affirmative, but reminds us that this road leads to diverse and varied interpretations of "advance," because there are so many possible meanings for this term.[14]

For these reasons, the stylistic methods were tried. Describing them as "linguistic...and verbal statistics,"[15] Gomperz lists some of the criteria employed:

a. number and use of particles

b. new words and phrases

c. certain formulae of affirmation and negation

d. special superlatives[16]

He goes on to say that the use of these criteria produced "astonishing agreement between many different investigators."[17] They noted that the style of the *Laws*, known to be late, (from other sources) was very similar to the style of the *Timaeus*, *Critias*, *Sophist*, *Statesman*, and the *Philebus*.

He concludes:

The determination of the chronologically separate

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[14] *Ibid.*, p. 284.

[15] *Ibid.*, p. 285.

[16] *Ibid.*

[17] *Ibid.*, p. 286.

> groups and the distribution among these groups of the individual dialogues...are problems which may be regarded as finally solved; the more ambitious task of settling the chronological order within all the groups cannot yet be said to have been completed.[18]

However, Jaeger claimed,

> This method, in its turn, was at first successful; but it was later discredited by its own exaggerations. It actually undertook, by the purely mechanical application of language tables, to determine the exact date of every dialogue.[19]

Before entering into this lively controversy, it is necessary to distinguish a few crucial points; otherwise, Jaeger's claim that the movement discredited itself will not be intelligible. First, let it be noted that it is sometimes impossible to distinguish very well between the date of composition of a dialogue, that is, the period of time during which Plato is said to have actually written down his thoughts, and the date at which the dialogue appeared, that is, was circulated, and, as we should say, released for publication. Although it is sometimes possible to indicate that a dialogue was actually composed in the late period of Plato's life, one cannot simply equate a late doctrine and a late writing. This distinction is necessary if one is to assert that the doctrine of the *Timaeus* is a late formulation in Plato's life, and, as our documentation will attempt to indicate, both the formulation of doctrine and the actual composition of the *Timaeus* seem

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[18] *Ibid*., p. 287. [19] Jaeger, *loc. cit*.

to be very late, according to the sources available to us. But one cannot jump immediately from the conclusion that a dialogue was written late to the conclusion that its doctrine is therefore, on that basis alone, a late doctrine. It should be pointed out in this regard that we have no way of knowing whether Plato did or did not compose in the last years of his life, dialogues whose doctrine and style we should call early or middle doctrines. Like anyone else, he might incorporate in late writing what he had formulated much earlier. Although it is unlikely that Plato set early or middle doctrines down on paper in his late years, it is almost impossible to establish this unlikelihood to a degree of satisfaction which would entirely eliminate controversy. For example, the last few pages of the Philebus seem not to be in the same style or in the doctrinal spirit as the rest of the dialogue. It may well be that this dialogue was left unfinished by Plato, and was completed by the Academy after Plato's death, and that the completion was accomplished by an academician whose insight and doctrinal leaning corresponds to what we should call the middle period of Plato's philosophy.

However, in the instance of the Timaeus, it is claimed here that both the doctrine and the composition of the dialogue are to be placed in the last years of Plato's life, and that it was probably a late doctrine, because it was composed late. These are the two sides or halves of the

argument which we are following in the attempt to verify our hypothesis. On the one hand, if the dialogue was written late, we have probable grounds to infer that its doctrine is a late one. But it is unwise to conclude only from its late composition that the Timaeus contains a late view. In addition to establishing its date of composition one must examine its doctrine, to see whether it reveals a more developed form of Plato's later thought. Having made this distinction, it is now possible to pass in review the main points of the stylistic controversy, whose protaganists and antagonists tried by what we are calling non-interpretative criteria, to establish the late date of composition of the Timaeus.

Campbell[20] presents a brief outline of the history of attempts to date the dialogues. He recounts how Schleiermacher was so assured that Plato had a complete system of philosophy to expound that there must have been a pedagogical order of the dialogues which Plato intended so that his students could gradually master his philosophical system.

Campbell says that Schleiermacher's conception of a "complete system gradually revealed" was a stirring one which caused a renaissance of Platonic scholarship. Later,

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[20] L. Campbell, "Plato," Encyclopaedia Britannica, 11th ed., Vol. XXI, pp. 808-824.

C.F. Hermann's statement that the gradual development of Plato's thought in the dialogues was not a pedagogical gradualism but reflected the slow maturation and development of Plato's mind, brought about a quickening of interest beyond even that which Schleiermacher had precipitated. Ueberweg discerned that the Sophist and the Statesman must be placed between the Republic and the Laws on the basis of Hermann's view. Ueberweg and other Hegelians felt that the non-being of the Sophist represented a dialectical advance over the Republic and welcomed the chance to demonstrate this point of view by mapping out the dialogues in a series of dialectical advances.[21] Grote, on the other hand felt so strongly that the Protagoras was Plato's most mature doctrine that he discounted the chronological attempts of Schleiermacher, Hermann, and Ueberweg.

Campbell adopted a different method of reasoning. Starting with the conclusion that the Laws remained unedited because Plato died before he could do so himself, and noting that the Laws contains a reference to the death of Dionysius II, and inferring from the tone and style of the Laws that it is almost a monologue and represents a departure from the Socratic dialogues, and adding the agreement of the Ancients with his own view, Campbell

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21 Ibid., p. 810.

concluded that the _Laws_ is probably the last of Plato's works. Then, Campbell reasoned that both the _Timaeus_ and the _Critias_ presuppose the _Republic_, and both resemble the _Laws_ in style and tone. Thus they should both precede the _Laws_. Since the _Sophist_ and the _Statesman_ seem to belong together, he placed the _Philebus_ between them and the _Timaeus_ and _Critias_. So, Campbell concluded, the order of the late dialogues must be begun at the _Sophist_, and followed by the _Statesman_, _Philebus_, _Timaeus_, _Critias_, and _Laws_.[22] He says, in addition, that Dittenberger and Ritter followed him in taking this view, and that Lutoslawski later reached the same conclusions.[23] Jaeger says that he himself reached these same conclusions by another route. He also agreed with Campbell that the _Parmenides_, and _Theatetus_ immediately precede the _Sophist_.

It should be pointed out that Campbell's chain of reasoning depends on the placement of the _Laws_ as the last of the dialogues, and this placement does not rest exclusively on non-interpretative bases, since it includes the criterion of the tone and style of Plato's language. One must have at least a comprehension of the tones and styles of the language in which Plato wrote and some knowledge of the relation of style to the content which

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[22] _Ibid_.

[23] _Ibid_.

is expressed by language. To avoid confusion, it is necessary to define certain terms as they are employed in this study. By stylistic criteria, I mean the use made by reputable scholars of observations such as the presence or absence of Socrates in a dialogue, or the apparent attempt on Plato's part to have his passage read more smoothly and without unnecessary interruptions. Such devices as the avoidance of hiatus and the use of anacoluthic sentence endings are here called stylistic. The term stylometry refers to the application of statistical procedures to the number of particles in a paragraph, or to the frequency of certain words in one dialogue as against another; clearly, it carries metric connotations, and necessitates only the sort of competence which can easily be programmed into a computer. Whereas the stylistic reader must understand what he reads, the stylometric reader ought to avoid understanding the passage he subjects to statistical criteria. A similar difference could be found between counting a number of unknown objects, which, by analogy, would represent the stylometric method, and concluding that the objects so counted are a strange lot of objects, which be analogy, would represent the stylistic method. It is one thing to count the number of clausulae and quite another to notice that a passage reads more smoothly because of the presence of a number of clausulae. Thus objections to the use of stylometric scholarship need not carry equal weight if referred

to stylistic scholarship. It would be impossible, for example, to put words of the _Laws_ into a computer and arrive at the conclusion that the _Laws_ is a late dialogue, without at the same time programming into the computer the criteria according to which one says that a certain language style is late or early. There are similar studies concerning the language of Homer in progress at Columbia University, and there too, the criteria of "lateness" must be agreed upon before the "purely mechanical application of language tables to determine the exact date of every dialogue" is undertaken. Thus, Campbell's argument should read as follows; if the _Laws_ is agreed to be last, then the remainder follows on stylistic grounds. And it should be tallied against Jaeger that the placement of the _Laws_ as last does not rest on "purely mechanical" criteria.

This conclusion bears directly on the question of the chronology and the relation of the _Seventh Letter_ to the _Timaeus_, because the _Seventh Letter_ contains a description of certain events in Sicilian politics in which, Plato was directly involved. These events were significant experiences for Plato, and their impress is discernible in certain passages of the _Timaeus_. Detailed comment on the impact of the Sicilian journeys on the doctrine of the _Timaeus_ will be reserved for the discussion of the doctrine of the _Timaeus_ in the fourth chapter. Suffice it here to point out that the autobiographical material which the _Seventh Letter_ makes available was taken over

by the stylists,[24, 25] and added to their attempts to establish the order of the dialogues. Again, this shows that the stylistic criteria cannot be viewed as "purely machanical." On the one hand this limits the extent to which stylistic criteria may be said to be non-interpretative; on the other hand, since interpretative sources enter into stylistic researches, it seems to add to the reliability of stylistic criteria in establishing the order of the dialogues.

A.E. Taylor says that the real impetus for the stylometric method was received from Campbell's ground-breaking edition of the Sophist and Statesman, and that Dittenberger, Ritter, and Lutoslawski continued and extended Campbell's efforts, but, he adds, these scholars were able to agree further that there was a definite break in style between the Theatetus and the whole group of dialogues which Campbell had called the late group. However, Taylor says that the stylometric tabulations, while they could establish whole groups of dialogues which shared a style, could not effectively establish the order of dialogues within a given group.[26]

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[24] U.v. Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, Platon, I (2d ed.; Berlin: Weidman, 1920), in Jaeger, op. cit., p. 80.

[25] Jaeger, op. cit., p. 84.

[26] A.E. Taylor, "Plato," Encyclopaedia Britannica, XVIII (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 1957), p. 49.

It is interesting to follow A.E. Taylor's shifting emphasis and reliance on the stylistic researches. In the article which he wrote for the Britannica,[27] Taylor says there are no stylistic grounds for placing the Timaeus late in the order of Plato's dialogues. However, in the Commentary on the Timaeus,[28] there is a rather extensive description of the stylistic and stylometric criteria and a rather extensive reliance on both of them, albeit accompanied by a critique. Later, in Plato, the Man and his Work,[29] there is a recapitulation of the stylistic criteria and a somewhat limited reliance upon them. One can only conclude that Taylor did not deem it worthwhile to inform the readers of the Britannica on the intricasies of the stylistic controversy. Nevertheless, in all these works, Taylor concludes that the Timaeus is the work of Plato's last years.

It is informative therefore, to read Taylor's description of the stylistic criteria. He summarizes those used to establish the late group as follows:

1. a reduction of dramatic style
2. a lesser role for Socrates
3. the presence of a lecture

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[27] Ibid.

[28] A.E. Taylor, Commentary, p. 4.

[29] A.E. Taylor, Plato: The Man and His Work (6th ed.; 5th print.; New York: Meridian Books, Inc., 1959), p. 436.

4. periodic versus poetic style[30]

He says, in addition, that the last dialogue which bears the marks of Plato's earlier style must be the Theatetus, and that he shares this view with Ritter[31] and Lutoslawski.[32]

A.E. Taylor's recapitulation of the stylistic criteria is especially interesting in view of the fact that he follows Burnet rather carefully, and yet Burnet states, "I have ventured to assume the results of the stylistic researches inaugurated by Lewis Campbell in 1867."[33] It is also interesting to note that Burnet, like Taylor, refers to these researches as stylistic and not stylometric, which indicates that he is not willing to go so far as Lutoslawski's application of calculus to the frequency of hiatus and the use of clausulae in Plato's dialogues. On the other hand, Burnet himself makes use of "stylistic" arguments when he notes that the early dialogues make use of dramatic form and employ the person of Socrates centrally in that endeavor, whereas the later dialogues do

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[30] A.E. Taylor, Commentary, p. 4.

[31] Constantin Ritter, The Essence of Plato's Philosophy, trans. Adam Alles (London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1933).

[32] W. Lutoslawski, Origin and Growth of Plato's Logic (New York: Longmans, 1928).

[33] John Burnet, Greek Philosophy (London: Macmillan & Co., Ltd., 1914), Part I, p. 212.

so with less and less emphasis on drama and on Socrates' interlocutory role. On this basis Burnet too concludes that the *Timaeus* is the work of Plato's old age, but reserves decision as to whether the *Philebus* precedes it or not.

It is frequently recognized that Burnet, A.E. Taylor and Cornford collectively form something of a school, and so it is appropriate to take Cornford's remarks on the order of the dialogues into account. This is especially true since his translation of the *Timaeus* is the most recent and constitutes a valuable synthesis of scholarly efforts to understand this dialogue.

In his *Plato's Cosmology* Cornford discusses the dating of the *Timaeus* but makes only peripheral reference to the stylistic criteria.[34] He cites Wilamowitz [35] to the effect that Timaeus speaks with an authoritative tone, and makes little use of the gently poetic questionings of Socrates. Cornford also cites Ritter to the effect that the fourth person of the *Timaeus* is left unknown, perhaps because Plato wanted to keep open the possibility of writing a fourth dialogue in the series.[36]

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[34] Cornford, *op. cit.*

[35] Wilamowitz, *Platon*, I, p. 591, in Jaeger, *op. cit.*, p. 80.

[36] Constantin Ritter, *Neue Untersuchungen uber Platon* (Munich: 1910), p. 181.

But Cornford, like Burnet and unlike A.E. Taylor, makes little mention of the whole matter of stylistic dating. He assumes the results of the stylists but prefers to place the *Timaeus* and *Critias* just before the *Laws* for reasons of doctrine rather than for reasons of style.

Ritter says that he learned most "from the English," meaning Burnet, Taylor, and Cornford, and that his own researches brought him into "remarkably close agreement... with respect to their chronological determinations."[37] Briefly, his conclusions are these: there are six major groupings of dialogues, and the last group, composed of the *Sophist*, *Statesman*, *Timaeus*, *Critias*, *Philebus*, and *Laws*, must be late because a "careful study of the differences in language and expression" creates an "indubitable means of determining their genuineness as well as the approximate date of their appearance."[38] In addition, he says that there are changes in *style* and writing which are less precise but no less observable by the trained observer, and that perhaps the strongest of these considerations is the transition from the "poetic" style in the early works to the "didactic" style of the later works.[39] It is interesting to observe that when Zeller

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[37] Ritter, *The Essence of Plato's Philosophy*, p. 9.

[38] *Ibid.*, p. 27.

[39] *Ibid.*, pp. 29, 30.

challenged Ritter to try the stylistic methods on a modern writer's works, whose chronology could be independantly verified, Ritter was able to arrive at the correct chronology of the works of Goethe.[40]

Perhaps a summary of the stylistic controversy is in order at this point.[41] Briefly, it began with the efforts of Schleiermacher to reveal what he felt was the pedagogical gradualism of Plato's dialogues. But Hermann felt that the gradual development in the dialogues revealed not Plato's pedagogical process so much as the gradual growth of Plato's own insight. Campbell started with the assertion that the _Laws_ was the last work of Plato and noted stylistic similarities between the _Laws_ and a whole group of dialogues, which included the _Sophist_, _Statesman_, _Philebus_, _Timaeus_, and _Critias_. Ritter modified the stylistic criteria and made them more precise, and arrived at astonishingly similar conclusions. In turn, Wilamowitz and Lutoslawski carried the work further (and perhaps to excess) by accomplishing stylometric word-counts and establishing frequency tables for the number of particles, clausulae, and hiatus. They too reached similar conclusions. It emerged that the comparison of styles of writing employed

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[40] G.C. Field, _Plato and His Contemporaries: A Study in Fourth-Century Life and Thought_ (London: Methuen & Co., Ltd., 1930), p. 68.

[41] Ross has summerized these results in tabular form. See appendix A.

by Plato in the dialogues could be used by several relatively independant scholars to reach agreement on the chronology of the dialogues, and, on this basis, it was agreed that the Timaeus was a work of Plato's old age, since the Timaeus and the Critias resembled the Laws, more than any other work of Plato, in its style and composition. The researches of Burnet, Taylor, and Cornford assume these stylistic results and take them up into a more comprehensive view of the dialogues. This however does not alter their opinions that the Timaeus is the work of Plato's old age. Taylor and Burnet are uncertain whether the stylistic methods can place the Timaeus after the Philebus and conclude that if this is to be done it must be done on other grounds. More recent researchers have little or nothing to add to the stylistic probability that the Timaeus is the work of Plato's old age.

The criteria used by these authors are said to be non-interpretative, insofar as they refer to the use of grammar, style, language devices such as expletives, hiatus, clausulae, etc. But other criteria, such as the death of Dionysius II, the decreasing importance of the role of Socrates in the various dialogues, do, to a certain extent, demand a degree of insight and interpretation of the style of the dialogues, and are used both as starting points for stylistic analyses and as parts of such analyses. They cannot be said to be purely mechanical, nor are they wholly

objective, but their use by what Ritter calls "trained observers" has led to a remarkably wide and detailed agreement on the part of scholars to the effect that the *Timaeus* is the work of Plato's old age.

Before we pass on to an examination of those details of Plato's biography which help to establish the sequence of the late dialogues, there is another point which deserves attention, and it is the matter of those dialogues which Zeller and Ritter call the "transitional dialogues," namely the *Parmenides* and the *Theatetus*. It is necessary to note that a number of those scholars who have constructed chronologies of the dialogues have reached agreement that these two dialogues must be placed after the works of Plato's middle period, which include the *Republic*, and before the last period, which begins with the *Sophist*. In the next chapter, the doctrinal significance of this placement will become evident. It is necessary here only to document the assertion that reputable scholars have agreed to place the *Parmenides* and *Theatetus* immediately before the dialogues of the late period.

III Biographical Criteria

Up to this point, we have seen that there is a long and honorable tradition which regards the *Timaeus* as the work of Plato's old age, and that stylistic criteria, used by a small but highly reputable number of Platonic scholars, has brought about a condition of wide and detailed agreement that the *Timaeus* is Plato's work and that he wrote it

in his last few years

To these sources, let us now add a review of those details of Plato's life which may be useful in determining the order of the dialogues. Again, so far as possible, the argument here will attempt to avoid any interpretations of Plato's thought, in keeping with the attempt to divide the evidence in favor of the hypothesis into two inseparable but logically discrete aspects.

Unfortunately, the biographical information which we posess about Plato is painfully scant, since most of what we know about Plato's life has to be derived from the dialogues and the letters. The date of Plato's birth is usually said to be 427, although A.E. Taylor gives 428. Similarly, the date of Plato's death is usually given as 347 but A.E. Taylor gives 348. All agree that these dates are approximate. The concensus seems to be that Plato was approximately eighty or eighty-one when he died.

Plato was descended from an aristocratic family. His mother's first husband was Ariston who traced himself to Poseidon; her second husband was Pyrilampes, who related himself to Pericles. Plato's mother, Perictione, was of the family of Solon.[42]

Plato had two brothers, Adeimantus and Glaucon, and a sister, Potone, whose son, Speusippus was therefore

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[42] A.E. Taylor, "Plato," Encyclopaedia Britannica, pp. 48-64.

Plato's nephew as well as successor as head of the Academy. Plato was the youngest child in the family.[43] According to Cicero, Plato's introduction to Archytas (the Strategus of Tarentum) was extremely fortunate since Archytas later rescued Plato from slavery, into which he had been sold by Dionysius II.[44] The incident of Plato's slavery was also recorded by Philodemus in his Index Academicorum.[45] However, without the Seventh Letter it is not possible to set a precise date for this event. Cicero only tells us that Plato was in Sicily and that he was ransomed by Archytas from the slavery into which he had been sold.[46]

After citing the well known details of Plato's birth and aristocratic lineage, Ritter reminds us that Plato was born during the Peloponesian war and that soon thereafter Pericles succumbed to the plague. Plato was six when peace was concluded with Sparta in 421 and he was fourteen, an impressionable age, when the Athenian fleet was destroyed

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[43] Field, op. cit., p. 4.

[44] According to Field, Plato's benefactor was Archytas (Field, op. cit., p. 16), but according to Gomperz it was Anniceris (Gomperz, op. cit., p. 261).

[45] Field, op. cit., p. 18.

[46] Gomperz, op. cit., p. 261.

off Sicily.[47]

In 405, when he was approximately twenty, Plato met Socrates, and Ritter tells us that even his exceptional education in the arts of drama and poetry were not enough to prevent Plato from committing his poetic works to the flames, since they were not up to the new philosophical standards Socrates had impressed on him.[48]

When "The Thirty" came to rule, Plato was asked to join with them, but he could not bring himself to take part in a regime which he felt to be responsible for the injustice of Socrates' death, so he went instead to Megara for a few years.[49]

Plato also travelled to Egypt, Crete, Cyrene, and Italy and Sicily. The Sicilian travels were "of great significance" for Plato's philosophy. In addition to Archytas of Tarentum he met other Pythagoreans in Syracuse. It was during these travels that he also met Dion and Dionysius I. Plato was at this time fourty years old; Dion was twenty and Dionysius forty-three.[50]

Many years later, after the unfortunate and misconceived rivalry between Dion and Dionysius II, Plato was sold into slavery at the island of Aegina but was soon

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[47] Ritter, The Essence of Plato's Philosophy, pp. 21, 22.

[48] Ibid., p. 22.

[49] Ibid., p. 23. [50] Ibid.

ransomed. His benefactor refused reimbursement, so Plato took the sum and applied it to the purchase of a plot of ground in the gardens of Akademos, where the founding and administration of his school occupied his attention for the next twenty years.[51]

In 367, Dionysius I dies and Dionysius II is advised by Dion to send for Plato. A rivalry takes place between Dion and Dionysius. Plato is allowed to return to Athens for the duration of the war in which Syracuse is engaged, on the promise that he will return as soon as it is over. Plato leaves and Dion is banished.[52]

Five years later, Plato returns. He tries, with less success than before, to have Dion reinstated. He returns again to Athens in 360. Three years later, Dion assembles an army and marches on Syracuse. He meets with some success but is later assassinated. According to Ritter,[53] Plato mourns with deeper grief than he had for Socrates, although Ritter does not reveal the source of his information.

In 347, Plato dies. Ritter says: "To the end of his life he was mentally alert and active and enjoyed the honour

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51 Ibid., p. 24.

52 Ibid., p. 25.

53 Ibid., p. 26.

and respect conferred upon him by his circle of disciples."[54]

By accepting the authenticity of the *Seventh Letter*, Ritter is able to conclude that the *Parmenides* and the *Theatetus* were written before Plato's Sicilian adventures and that the late dialogues were written thereafter.[55] Thus Ritter is of the opinion that the *Parmenides* and *Theatetus* immediately precede the late group and should be read before them, since, in this order, the changes in style and doctrine between the *Parmenides* and the *Theatetus* and the late group became more clearly recognizeable. In short, the influence of Plato's Sicilian experiences can be better discerned in the late group, and this influence is not detectable in the *Parmenides* and *Theatetus*.

One final biographical point deserves attention before we pass on to a discussion of the relevance of Plato's letters to the matter of establishing the chronology of the dialogues, and it is the problem of determining the relative influence of Socrates on Plato's life.

While this problem seems at first sight to belong to a discussion of Plato's biography, actually it does not. While it is true to say that we have as little information about the details of Socrates' life as we have of Plato's,

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[54] *Ibid*., p. 27.

[55] Ritter, *op. cit*., pp. 329 ff.; *Untersuchungen uber Platon* (Stuttgart: 1888), pp. 88 ff.

the fact is that we can only determine the influence of Socrates by examining Plato's thought. It is frequently asserted that Plato wrote in the dialogue form because he held Socrates' method of communication in such high esteem, and this is probably true. But there seems to be no information which could help us to determine whether the order of the dialogues was influenced by Socrates. It seems better to postpone this question until the next chapter, where we take up the doctrines of the dialogues, and the influence of Socrates' thought on Plato's doctrine.

It might be noted in anticipation that Plato does give several hints, through the Parmenides, Theatetus, and in the whole group of late dialogues, of the extent to which the doctrines of these dialogues are "beyond" Socrates, that is, ask the sort of questions which Socrates probably would not have asked.

Let us pass, then, to a discussion of Plato's Seventh Letter, which reveals in some detail how Plato's Sicilian experiences influenced him. Such information will be useful in understanding some of the passages in the late dialogues.

IV The Letters

J. Harward [56] has made a very useful compendium which contains an impressive amount of material on the

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[56] J. Harward, The Platonic Epistles (Cambridge: The University Press, 1932).

Letters. He cites a number of ancients who regarded the whole collection of Plato's letters as authentic, including Diogenes Laertius, Plutarch, Lucian, Cicero, and Aristophanes the grammarian of Alexandria.[57] Although Jowett [58] followed Karsten [59] into the opinion that the entire lot was spurious, Harward says that the increasingly wide use of stylistic criteria soon dissipated the influence of their opinions. The stylists were thus able to overcome the views of Jowett and Karsten [60] which were that the letters were written in too lowly a style for them to be regarded as Plato's own, that the philosophical doctrine of the letters differs too widely from Plato's theory of Ideas, and that there are no sources from which we may conclude that Plato was actually ever in Sicily.[61] Wilamowitz was particularly strong in asserting the letters to be genuine, and his criteria were largely stylistic, that is, he was able to conclude that the style of the letters was not too lowly for Plato, but was in fact written with many of the idioms and phrases which Plato favored in his late years.

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57 Harward, op. cit., p. 60.

58 B. Jowett, The Dialogues of Plato (3rd ed.; New York: Scribner, Armstrong, & Co., 1878), preface.

59 H.T. Karsten, De Epistolis quae feruntur Platonicis (Utrecht: 1864), in Harward, op. cit., p. 61.

60 Harward, op. cit., pp. 71, 72.

61 Field, op. cit., p. 16.

Thus, there are few scholars today who would reject all the letters, although some scholars reject some of them, as we shall see. But in the main, the wave of scepticism has subsided. Thus, Harward is able to compile a list of scholars and tabulate which scholars accept which of the letters.

The Seventh Letter in particular, has been accepted by Taylor, Burnet, Ritter, Hackforth, Wilamowitz, Souilhe, Bury, and Field.[62] These scholars were able to agree largely because of the stylistic criteria as applied to the letters. Harward discusses these criteria in some detail. He divides them into four groups, which include the following:

1. choice of words, including neologisms and expressions known to be current in certain years by reference to other authors.
2. word order, including inversions of normal word order, hiatus, elision, the use of clausulae
3. sentence structure, including extra paranthetic clauses, hanging nominatives, a string of terse, clipped unmodified verbs, following intuitional rather than strictly logical order.
4. circuitous mannerisms and tautologous phrases [63]

One notices that the foregoing criteria are neither strictly stylistic nor strictly stylometric. In order to make use of them it would be necessary to be a "trained observer" as Ritter says, and, in addition to noticing the presence of these devices of style, one could, if so

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[62] Harward, op. cit., p. 76.

[63] Ibid., pp. 86-96.

inclined, make tables and count the frequency with which these mannerisms occurred. But the deeper point is that the most reputable Platonic scholars were able to agree on the basis of these criteria that the Seventh Letter was both genuine and late. Harward says "...the stylistic features in common (between the Seventh Letter and the Laws) are so striking that they stare the reader in the face."[64] Ritter makes a similar comment when he says, "On any unprejudiced reader it (the Seventh Letter) cannot fail to produce the impression of the natural outspokenness of a narrative of personal experience."[65] Cicero himself says, "praeclara epistula Platonis ad Dionis propinquos..."[66] To these, Harward adds his own view: since Plato regarded Kallipos as a "fiend incarnate," and since it was Kallipos who had Dion murdered, and since Kallipos wrote to Plato of the death of Dion in 354, and since the death of Dion is recorded in the letter, but the letter does not record the death of Kallipos, which occurred a year later, it is probable that the letter was written between 354 and 353.[67] From all of these probabilities, Harward concludes that the

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64 Ibid., p. 86.

65 Ritter, Neue Untersuchungen uber Platon, p. 408.

66 Tusc. Disp. V, 35, in Harward, op. cit., p. 189.

67 Harward, op. cit., p. 192.

letter was composed after the Sicilian journeys and before the Laws. This places the letters in a setting which is either immediately before or contemporaneous with the Timaeus. As we shall see after a discussion of the Seventh Letter in detail, it is probable that it precedes the Timaeus.

Having shown on the basis of reputable scholarship the authenticity of the Seventh Letter and its late composition, I would like now to summarize its contents, in order to point out certain experiences Plato had relevant to the doctrine of the Timaeus.

Plato begins by telling that his motive for visiting Sicily as the desire to see the people there freed by the best laws for the situation, and, in addition, he will recount in the letter the process in which he reached the formation of his opinions on the matter (324b).

He describes his youthful aspiration for a political career and recounts that some of his relatives, (Critias and Charmides) were members of the Thirty, and that they had asked him to rule with them (324 b,c). But he declines because he sees that their rule, like most revolutionary regimes new in power, suffered excesses. These were particularly visible in their attempt to send Socrates on a dishonorable mission (324 e). It was finally certain, when Socrates was sentenced to death at the hands of this regime (325 c). Plato notes sadly that the older he gets the more he realizes the extreme difficulty of handling

public matters (325 d). He noticed that not only the written but the unwritten laws were extremely inflexible and therefore hard to mold. As a matter of fact, those in Athens struck him as incurable, and for the time, nothing could be done (326 a).

We then read a small recapitulation of the Republic doctrine of the philosopher-king. Plato tells his readers that the situation in Sicily, like the one in Athens, is so difficult that there will be no peace for the sons of men until either philosophers are kings or those in power lay hold to some philosophical illumination (326 b). It was with these expectations that Plato first arrived in Sicily. He is repelled by the life of vice and court debauchery which he finds there, and says that here as elsewhere such immorality will inevitably lead to a succession of tyranny, oligarchy, and democracy (326 d).

However, while there, he instructs the young Dion who is extraordinarily adept at this sort of learning, and Dion resolves to "live for the future" which of course makes him terribly unpopular at the court (327 b,c) However it is his hope that Dionysius will learn too, and in this way peace and happiness will be introduced (327 d). This fits in with Plato's desires not to be "only a man of words" (328 a-c) and, in addition, helps Plato to prove to himself that he does no dishonor to philosophy by inaction (329 a). However, Dionysius does not devote himself to philosophy. Moreover, Dion is perceived as a

threat and is expelled from the court. Plato becomes a prisoner of the court (329 c-d). Dionysius flatters Plato, but Plato is aware that it is his status and not his philosophy which Dionysius desires (330 a).

Plato reflects on these experiences for his readers, and tells them an allegory to the effect that the physician is to his patient as the philosopher is to the state, and that, just as the physician prescribes diet, so the philosopher prescribes laws and constitutions which will eventuate in a good state (330 d-331 e). This too is reminiscent of the Republic. Again we are told that the good governor is he who frames good laws (332 b). To do so, a man must have loyal friends, and there is no surer test of vice than a man without friends (332 c). Such a man is Dionysius, whose early years were hungry for want of education and proper training. Thus he was raised discordantly, and, beyond the fact that he is wrecking Sicily, the greatest poverty arises from his lack of harmony with himself (332 d). Nevertheless, a way must be found to free Sicily by the introduction of just laws (334c). A way might be found if only Dionysius can be brought to harmony with himself. If it is not possible to introduce order through Dionysius, then other means must be sought, for the source of light is the soul at harmony within the man (335 a-d). Plato's hope is high and his desire is strong, but the worst crime is comitted: Dionysius refuses (335 e).

Thus the second venture ends worse than the first, due to a "fiendish" ignorance of matters of the soul and of philosophy on the part of Dionysius (336 b-c).

We are reminded of the early lesson of the letter, i.e., that a period of temperance after a revolution is as rare as it is necessary. Perhaps it follows that this is the time when just laws should be enacted but it is unfortunately true that this is also the time when such an enactment is least possible. Perhaps this task will remain for the future (336 e).

How should such laws come to be? Plato answers his own question by saying that only the best men can make the best laws, and actually goes into the proportion of men to the population (337 c).

The motive for Plato's third trip to Sicily is given. We are informed that Dionysius is eager to have Plato return, and that he has made progress in his study of philosophy. Archytas and his Tarentine circle of Pythagoreans implore Plato by letter, and one, Archydemos, even accompanies the trireme which is sent to supply Plato's passage. In order not to betray Dion and his other Tarentine friends, Plato allows himself to be convinced(339 a-e).

There follows what one writer (Ritter) calls a philosophical digression into the nature of the process wherein philosophy is "imparted" so that the student will see a "marvellous road" open before him (340 b,c). Here

we have a recapitulation of some of the thoughts Plato had set down in the Phaedo and in the Republic, where he described how the soul, reflecting on herself, sees a whole new realm (340 d).

"There neither is nor ever will be a treatise of mine on the subject" says Plato, in what seems at first to be a deep paradox. What can a philosopher mean whose magnificent dramatic dialogues are revered as perhaps the highest insights ever written? Is it all a game? The key to this, is to be found in the Seventh Letter, which explains to the friends of Dion that Plato never fell from honor and was not among the murderers of Dion nor among the followers or participants in the horrible rule of Dionysius who had him killed. Plato is not addressing a learned academy nor an audience of philosophers but a group of friends and former associates of Dion who cannot understand how the great Plato and his philosophy could not save Dion from an unjust fate.

To the claim of Dionysius that he was learning philosophy from the one lesson Plato had given him and that he was in fact producing learned treatises of originality and brilliance, Plato responds not only that his philosophy can't be taught in a few lessons, but that its deepest meanings cannot be taught at all, but must be experienced as a fire which is enkindled in the soul after an arduous preliminary regimen in the company of

teachers who have been so inflamed (341 d,e).

If philosophy cannot be taught as a series of learnable propositions, how can one expect to learn it in writings and disquisitions? To bolster this argument and to derive it from higher knowledge, Plato launches into a short essay on the steps and stages on the way to philosophical insight. There are, he says, three preliminary steps and two later stages through which philosophical knowledge is imparted (342 a).[68]

The "instruments" of this process are names, definitions, and images (eidola). Names are notoriously flighty and subject to the winds of change and fashion. Definitions are frequently contradictory and refer to aspects which shift. Images may be drawn and fashioned at will but what images attempt to convey is not necessarily subject to these inconsistancies (342 b,c). More proximate but still very distant is knowledge of the thing and closest is the thing itself as it is. If somehow one does not go through the first three, (names, definitions, and images) one cannot even aspire to the fourth, (knowledge of the thing) much less the fifth. It is much the same with the Good, the Beautiful, the Just, Bodies, even Characters of the

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[68] not learned. Plato is talking about the communication of philosophy, not the stating of it, nor the acquisition of it, but the process in which, so to speak, philosophy happens.

soul, and with all that is done or suffered (342 e).

Plato distrusts the fixity and unchangeable character of language as he hesitates to put down in words which seem firm and clear what cannot be grasped so easily (343 a). Words, definitions, and images contain much that is opposite to the things themselves (343 b). Philosophy is so hard that men satisfy themselves with images.[69] Most men cannot study philosophy, and even those who do, find it hard if not impossible to speak of. Perhaps, after the preliminaries of words, definitions, and images, a birth will take place but unless the preparatory steps are taken, naught will avail the ambitious, such as Dionysius. In addition, if there is no "natural inclination," even these steps will lead nowhere (344 a).

What is needed is a "sudden flash" which will arrive only occasionally and then only after long preperation (344b). Therefore, Plato warns his audience, do not expect to plumb the deepest meanings of philosophy too rapidly. And, even if a treatise on Laws, written by a great writer, should cross your attention, do not think that you see there the most precious thought of their writer; you do not. These, he implies, are images drawn for your information, but they are not philosophy, in its deepest sense (344 c).

Moreover, Plato tells his readers that his reverence for the truth is such that he will not entrust it to

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[69] See the Cave Allegory of the Republic 507.

vehicles. That which is inexpressibly beautiful should not be dragged down in homely expression. The inner harmony of philosophy will not mix with the discordant decadence of Dionysian politics. On the other hand, once truths of this sort have been experienced, there is no need to write them down because there is no danger of forgetting them. Once posessed, they live on (344 d). So ends the "philosophical digression."

Plato returns to his history of the events of his third stay in Sicily. He is implored to stay on by Dionysius' promise to restore Dion's property and income. Plato is asked to remain for a while to consider the plan, but while he does so, the last trade ships leave and the season for travel comes to an end. (He has been tricked) (346). After the ships are gone, Dionysius sells Dion's property (347). Plato is told that Herakleides will not be harmed, even though he led a guard's revolt for higher pay, but again Dionysius goes back on his promise. Plato is ousted from the palace gardens on the pretext that they are needed for a festival (349).

Plato begins to realize that his friendship for Dion is disadvantageous, that he no longer shares the tyrant's confidence, that he is no longer useful, either to himself or to the tyrant, and that his friends at the court are gradually being arrested.

He sends for help to Archytas (350). A trireme of thirty oars is sent, with Lamiskos, a Pythagorean, in

command. Plato is taken to Dion, who immediately plots revenge against Dionysius II. This time, Plato pleads not to be included, because of his advanced age, and because Dion is plotting to injure someone, and Plato will not be a party to violence (350 c).

Plato gives out another allegory. Like the brave captain of a good vessel who underestimates the brutal ferocity of a storm, it became Dion's fate to die at the hands of Dionysius' forces, but it was a death with honor.

Plato ends the letter by saying that he felt it was necessary to explain the paradoxical turn of events in Sicily, and he hopes he has done so (352).

Since reputable scholars have agreed that the Seventh Letter is Plato's own, and since, in all probability it was written between 354 and 353, we must place it in the late period. We should expect the extraordinary experiences of Plato's Sicilian travels to have a marked influence on the doctrine of those dialogues written after the travels which the Seventh Letter record.

However, in order to show what influences these experiences had on the doctrine of the Timaeus, it is first necessary to pass in review the doctrines of the dialogues between the Republic and the Timaeus. This task is the burden of the following chapter. It is possible at this point only to anticipate how the Seventh Letter leads us to expect that the Timaeus will reveal the influence of Plato's Sicilian experiences.

Thus, there is confirmatory evidence to be derived from the *Seventh Letter* for the view that the *Timaeus* is a late dialogue. This is indicated in the statement (at 344c) that even if a great writer were to write a treatise on laws and if such a treatise were to come to the attention of the Sicilians, it should not be regarded as philosophy but as a set of images. The fact that this statement is put in the hypothetical future seems to indicate that the *Laws* have not yet been written (at least, not completed). If the *Laws* is Plato's last effort, and if the *Timaeus* is as closely related to the *Laws* as the stylistic criteria indicate, this statement would seem to indicate that the letter itself was written before both the *Timaeus* and the *Laws*. We have already cited evidence for this view.

It is the business of the next chapter to spell out the doctrinal criteria on which this same conclusion can be reached. There, the relevence of the doctrinal points of the *Seventh Letter* will be introduced.

Perhaps it is not inexcusable to ask the reader to recall at this point that the division of the initial hypothesis into two methodological procedures, has, at this point, only dealt with one half of the argument, and that both halves are necessary to establish the hypothesis. Thus, one concludes from this chapter that the external sources, individually and collectively, point to the *Timaeus* as a late work. It now needs to be demonstrated that the *doctrine* of the *Timaeus* is a late doctrine.

Thereafter, it will be shown that in the doctrine of the *Timaeus* we find not only a later doctrine than its predecessors, but a more developed doctrine, consisting of a culmination and synthesis of the themes of eternity, image, and time.

V Conclusion

I conclude this chapter with the conviction that the *Timaeus* is a late dialogue, probably written after Plato's Sicilian adventures. It is difficult to fix a precise date for its composition. It is certainly after the first two Sicilian adventures and certainly before 347, the year of Plato's death.[70] Stylistic criteria place it in the same age grouping as the *Laws*. This makes it probable that the *Laws* and the *Timaeus* occupied Plato's attention alternately during the same set of years. This means that the *Timaeus* trilogy and the *Laws* were both written in the last years of Plato's life. I think it is probable that the *Timaeus* was written after the third Sicilian adventure, after Plato's indebtedness to the Tarentine Pythagoreans had increased a great deal. I feel no need to separate the *Laws*, the *Seventh Letter*, and the *Timaeus* more precisely because I think that work on all three of them could have proceeded together, yet I feel it is probable that the *Seventh Letter* precedes the completion of the *Laws* and

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70 i.e., it is in all probability not a posthumous edition.

the *Timaeus*. Cornford's hypothesis that Plato stopped in the middle of the *Critias* in order to complete the *Laws* is especially attractive.

CHAPTER III

THE DOCTRINE OF THE DIALOGUES

Introduction

In the foregoing chapter, the chronology of the dialogues according to reputable scholars was presented. The conclusion that the *Timaeus* is a late dialogue was reached by these scholars by utilizing several criteria, including stylistic interpretations, biographical information, agreement among some of the ancients, and certain relevant information which Plato set down in his *Seventh Letter*. It is now the task before us to confirm this conclusion by appeal to doctrinal development in the dialogues which precede the *Timaeus*. This will be done by showing that there are significant themes in the dialogues which precede the *Timaeus*, which are gradually modified and expanded until they are treated in a new way in the *Timaeus*.

It is obviously impossible in these few pages to present a detailed summary of all of the philosophical doctrines which Plato treated in each of the dialogues to be discussed. Therefore, only those themes which specifically culminate in the *Timaeus* will be passed in review. It is assumed that no significant distortion of Plato's philosophy will be made by selecting three themes which Plato discusses together in the *Timaeus*, and that no

distortion will be introduced by tracing these themes as Plato develops them in the dialogues which intervene between a logical starting point and the _Timaeus_.

The first problem, then, is to determine a logical point to begin our investigations. The _Timaeus_ itself gives us the starting point because it begins with a recapitulation of certain themes in the _Republic_. This seems to be a clear indication that the investigation of Plato's later philosophy must include some sort of comparison with the _Republic_ and the doctrines of the so-called middle period. In the discussion which follows, it will be assumed that the doctrines of the _Republic_ may fairly be taken as representative of the doctrines of the entire middle period, and that reference to the other dialogues of the middle period will be made only when it seems clearly necessary. Thus little mention will be found of the _Phaedo_, _Phaedrus_, and _Symposium_, and our inquiry will focus mainly on the _Republic_.

The _Parmenides_ and the _Theatetus_ constitute a special group of dialogues, as Ritter has observed. In these dialogues a special critique of the doctrines of the middle period is undertaken by Plato himself. Thus, if one plans to trace the development of certain doctrinal themes by starting with the _Republic_ and continuing through the late dialogues, one ought to interpose between the _Republic_ and the "late" dialogues, the _Parmenides_ and the _Theatetus_,

and their respective doctrines, insofar as they discuss the themes in question.

In the subsequent discussion of the doctrines of the late dialogues, it will be shown that the critique of the middle doctrines by the _Parmenides_ and _Theatetus_ had brought Plato to the recognition of a need for new doctrinal formulations. Thus, it will not only clarify the doctrine of the _Republic_ but it will shed light on the _Sophist_, _Statesman_, and _Philebus_ if we examine carefully the critique made by the _Parmenides_ and _Theatetus_. In this way, one may examine the sequence of doctrinal modifications which Plato made as he matured, and one may discuss both the doctrines and the doctrinal advances as one treats each succeeding dialogue.

Certain confirmations of the view that the _Timaeus_ reformulates old doctrines in a new way will be sought in relevant passages from the _Critias_ and the _Laws_, but these are only taken as lateral confirmations, and not as indices, of the extent to which the _Timaeus_ contains significantly new doctrinal formulations. They form, as it were, testable corollaries of the main hypothesis.

The three themes which I have selected to focus upon are the themes of eternity, image, and time. It should be noted that the words eternity, image, and time are not technical terms for Plato, and that their meaning will be found to change as the sequence of dialogues approaches the

Timaeus. For this reason, I prefer to call them themes and not terms or ideas or doctrines.

I have also made a methodological choice. It would be possible to select the passages from each of the dialogues which discuss eternity, image, and time, and by placing them together, one could discuss each theme separately. But there is another way, which seems more faithful to Plato's own method, and that is to pass each dialogue in review, and, in passing, point out those passages which are relevant to the themes of eternity, image and time. This latter method has been adopted.

In the chapters which follow the present one, a more or less interlinear commentary will be offered on those passages of the *Timaeus* which are relevant to the three themes I have selected for study. In this way, the gradual advance of Plato's thought is given what I feel is an appropriately developmental context.

I maintain, then, that in the middle period, i.e., in the *Republic*, Plato formulated a doctrinal position with respect to the relations of eternity, image, and time, that he began a critique of this position in the *Parmenides* and *Theatetus*, and that he began a new formulation in the *Sophist*, *Statesman*, and *Philebus*, which reached a new height in the *Timaeus*. The reader is asked to judge for himself in what follows whether this claim is credible.

The Republic

In the Republic, Plato retains the doctrine of the Forms, and seeks particularly to find the Form of Justice, its nature and origin (357 d). However, this is a hard task which can only be performed by those whose eyesight (for the Forms) is particularly good (368 d). For this reason, it is decided that perhaps the method of inquiry had better be adapted to those whose sight is not so perfect, so that, instead of attempting to gaze directly on the Form of Justice, it will be better to adopt a "shortsighted" method, namely, seeing Justice where it is writ large, in the state (369 a). This will bring about an unfortunate mutilation of pure vision, but it is inescapable. Moreover, it is a better method than the one adopted by such "story tellers" as Hesiod and Homer who rather tell lies than avoid distortion (377 e). These authors do not realize that "children" do not know the difference between allegory and fact. It were better that the truth be not told at all than told badly, yet the problem of representing truth in images is not a small one. The primary requirement is that truths must be represented, if at all, in a true way, worthy of their contents (379 b). "Because we do not know the truth of ancient traditions, we make falsehoods as much like the truth as we can, and there is no use in this."(382 d)

Here in the opening passages of Book II, Plato tells us that one encounters difficulty in attempting to reveal

those truths which have been seen by one's excellent eyesight, to those with less than perfect vision. Images of truth are, for such men, dangerous, and should be avoided.

Nevertheless, Plato does not stop the process of inquiry. Reluctantly, he will try to see the truth of the Form of Justice as it is writ large in the state. This tells us that the whole Republic is, in its own way, an allegory, designed not so much to spell out the legal machinations of a polis as to take a shortsighted view of the Form of Justice. We know this interest in Justice to be a lifelong concern of Plato. It is cited here to document the fact that even in the middle dialogues, Plato is not unaware of the danger of misrepresenting the gods, and that at this point in his development he uses a shortsighted method. He makes the decision to undertake a vision of Justice in the state despite his awareness that his description of the state will only imperfectly incarnate Justice in an image, which in this case, is an allegory (369 a). The problem is that allegories only imperfectly imitate the Form of Justice, which Plato tells us next in the famous allegory of the guardians and their education. It is necessary for the guardians to know the Forms, or else their guidance shall be lacking in some perfection, yet they are surrounded in their youth by "images of moral deformity (401 b)." Physicians, like judges, must cure by use of mind, and "a virtuous nature, educated by time, will

acquire a knowledge of both virtue and vice (409 e)." Thus, it will be necessary for the guardians to be exposed to <u>both perfect and imperfect</u> images of Justice, and, if they are strong, and if their souls are in harmony (410 e), they will rule well, despite the limitations which mere images of Justice impose on their thought.

This limitation of images is termed the "royal lie" and the "audacious fiction" (414 b). It is recognized that the sights of youth are like dreams, and that their education is an acquaintance with "appearance," but youth is in a process of formation in the womb of the earth. Perhaps it might not be possible to so educate the guardians in the first generation, but in the next, their sons will probably adopt this view (415 b). Here Plato anticipates the difficulty that a new set of laws may not be accepted with open arms by a generation of men, but the need is great; new laws must be found and promulgated. Yet the basis for new laws, i.e., a clear sight of the Forms, is impossible. It is as if Plato were scandalized by the need to speak the truth of the Forms in a language of imagery and allegory, yet, the political necessity (the need to know the truth) cannot be denied. Eventually, the guardians will see through the mere images of their education if they are instructed in these matters "and others not mentioned (423 e)." For that reason, there is no need to legislate about particulars, since these will

flow from the character of the institutions (425 c).

In order to legislate about the "greatest and noblest" institution (427 b) the one which deals with temples and sacrifices, Plato introduces the "method of residues" which we would call the method of gradual elimination. By presenting the given activities, which are presumed to be known, and by eliminating all the unacceptable ones, Plato arrives at a list of virtues which ought to characterize the guardians (428 a). (As we shall see, this method of residues is by no means the same as the method of division in the _Sophist_). Then, by eliminating lesser virtues, Plato arrives at the conclusion that the guardians ought to be temperate, wise, courageous, and just (432 b). And by further use of the method of residues, it is decided that Justice is the ultimate basis of the perfection of the state (433 a). As we shall see, this conclusion will be expanded in the _Timaeus_, where _Time_, not Justice is said to be the basis of perfection.

Justice itself is said to be "the having and doing what is a man's own, and belongs to him (433 b)." If a man does what he does, and does not attempt to do what others do, then Justice will have introduced harmony into the relations of the citizens.

Just as the classes of the state are to be in harmony with each other, so the soul's virtues will be in harmony with each other, if education proceeds correctly. Yet

Socrates confessed that he does not understand this notion of harmony too well. The technical insight into music and the harmony of string lengths is best left to the musician, as the matter of gymnastic is best left to the gymnast. Socrates relates the need for harmony in the soul; the images of this harmony in the particular instances of music and gymnastics are not directly his concern.

This is true because it behooves a man, and a state, to be a unity, whereas a skill in a large number of particulars strains unity. Thus, each class in the state has one and only one function, just as each man in the state will have one and only one occupation. Thus for the shoemaker to fight will be unjust, just as the fighter should not make shoes.

However, Socrates begins to doubt that his method of residues is working very well. He reminds us that we are seeking a knowledge of Justice and that we are trying to achieve it by seeing Justice writ large in the state, but the discussion seems to be bogging down in particulars. However, he hopes to "strike a spark" and in that way release a vision of his subject (434 e). He says:

> I must confess that the method we are employing seems to be altogether inadequate to the accurate solution of this question: for the true method is another and a longer one. Still, we may arrive at a solution not below the level of the previous inquiry (435 a)."

This is the same intractable necessity to reveal visions of a more perfect eye to those with less than

perfect vision. However, the method of employing images does reveal a "shadow" of Justice, and therefore, it is useful (443 c). So, on this basis he traces out the division of labor in a society, showing that each man who fulfills his appointed task is just only insofar as he does not encroach upon the appointed task of another. To do what another ought to do is a double injustice, both to oneself and to the other. The solidarity of the "imaginary commonwealth" (456 d) rests on this Justice, and, in the same way, the soul of the man who tries to cross his line of responsibility will be unjust. The relation of these divided responsibilities is injustice. We must assume this to be so, for we are reminded that the allegorical investigation of the Form of Justice is like dreamers feasting on a dream, and that the state here investigated is "imaginary (458 a)."

Does unity, achieved by the harmony of each individual (soul or class) performing his one task, really work. "The inquiry has yet to be made whether such a community will be found possible...and in what way...(471 c)."

To answer this, we must inquire what is the least change to be introduced into the state which would bring about the imaginary harmony we seek. The philosopher-king is the person who will accomplish this. Why do we need the philosopher-king? Because it is he who sees the Forms in their direct "Beauty" (476 b) and he knows the

difference between knowledge of something and knowledge of nothing. When one knows, he knows something, and this is true knowledge. When one knows nothing, he is in "ignorance" (477 b). The realm of opinion is in between, where what one knows both is and is not. True knowledge is of the immutable and the eternal, and only this is rightly called knowledge (478 e). This sort of knowledge and this sort alone should characterize the philosopher-king, and all those who deal in opinions about the Justice of this or that or the Beauty of this or that occupy some intermediary region which will not fit them for ruling, nor for introducing into the state the least change which will make it a just state. Only knowledge of the eternal and immutable is knowledge. And yet, as Galileo remarked in another age, it moves: the dialogue which castigates mere images continues on its allegorical way.

Not only is it true that knowledge which deserves the name is eternal and immutable, but further, those who dwell in the realm of opinion are called Sophists, whose cant and mere talk is subject to every whim and caprice of opinion, changing from day to day and from speech to speech. Such men cannot deserve the honor of navigating at the helm of state, for they follow the fancies of the demanding crew, whom they are supposed to lead (488 a). Just as most do not possess the clarity of vision to see Justice, these men do not know how sweet philosophy is.

Few know this (496 c). For this reason, there has never been a state ruled by the philosopher king, and none exists at the present (499 a). We see how necessary it is to found the state on justice yet we have confronted the supreme difficulty of revealing justice to the inhabitors of the realm of opinion. It is confessed to be impossible, and for that reason, rather than try to show the Sophist the form of justice, we had better imagine a state where youths are educated from the start to see through the dreams which characterize the realm of opinion.

> If then, in the countless ages of the past or at the present hour in some foreign clime which is far away and beyond our ken, the perfect philosopher is or has been or shall be hereafter compelled by a superior power to have charge of the state, we are ready to assert to the death that this our constitution has been, is, and yea, will be at any time, only when the muse of philosophy is queen. Neither is there any impossibility in this: the difficulty we do not deny (499 d).

Here is a striking juncture, for in it, Plato tells us that the vision of the eternal and immutable Form of Justice is only to be had by philosophers, that images are not completely satisfactory (since the Sophists deal in them), but that there is no impossibility in imagining the philosopher-king performing his role, perhaps in the past, perhaps at present, or perhaps in the future. The themes of eternity, image, and time, are joined in one passage. The eternal realm of Forms is the domain of the philosopher, not the Sophist, who dwells in the realm of opinion and changing imagery. At present, we have no philosopher-king,

but, since he is not impossible, he may be sought in another time; perhaps past, perhaps future, or perhaps in the present somewhere far away.

What will be the task of the philosopher-king.

> ...He will look at Justice and Beauty as they are in nature and again at the corresponding quality in mankind, and then inlay the true human image, moulding and selecting out of the various forms of life: and this He will conceive according to that other image, which, when existing among men, Homer calls the form and likeness of God" (501 b).

It will be his task to see the forms and to legislate in such a way that men are made in him image. To do so requires a very high wisdom indeed, and the education of the guardians must therefore by truly philosophical. They will not be allowed to take the shortsighted path: theirs will be the "long way." To this astonishing exhortation, it is objected: is there a higher form than Justice, and the still more astonishing answer is: yes. This is the idea of the Good and the Beautiful (504 d).

The Good and the Beautiful are not to be represented on the same level as Justice. For them, nothing short of the most perfect representation suffices (504 e). Yet, even the best opinion is only like a blind man hoping to find his way along a straight road (506). To discuss the idea of the Good is too much of a task for the present, but Socrates deigns to discuss the "child of the good"; he warns his hearers to be on guard lest he render a false account, although he has no intention of deceit (506 e).

What follows is an extended metaphor concerning sunlight, the eyes, and the things seen, in which Socrates explains that the sun is not sight but the source of sight,

> he whom I call the child of the Good, whom the Good begat in his own likeness, to be in the visible world in relation to sight and the things of sight what the Good is in the intellectual world in relation to mind and the things of the mind" (508 b).

This is the immediate prelude to the famous allegory of the divided line, in which the ambivalence which Plato seems to show with respect to images is somewhat clarified. It emerges that there are two sorts of images, those which pertain to the visible world and those which pertain to the intelligible world. In the intelligible sphere, reason apprehends the Forms, understanding apprehends images of the Forms. In the same way, there are divisions in the visible world: the reflections of the Forms in the visible world, when perceived truly, are reflections and images, but when they are not perceived truly, are mere shadows and opinions (510 a). In the intelligible realm, images function as hypotheses, suggesting but not confirming the Forms and the ideas.

Perhaps the most famous of all philosophical allegories is the next image which Socrates presents, the allegory of the cave (514 a). We are told that the divided line can be seen more concretely in the cave allegory. Going from the lowest to the highest of knowledge, we first have shadows, then the objects which cast the shadows, themselves

only images of the Forms. Then, the understanding captures images of the Forms and finally, reason sees the Form (515e). It is noteworthy, despite the familiarity of this allegory, to point out that the path of philosophical knowledge is laden with two difficulties: the first is the blinding clarity of the Forms when first seen: the second is the need to readapt one's eyes to the dark of the cave upon redescending (516 e). However, since the soul likes to climb, and prefers not to descend back into the cave, the guardians will have to point out that the whole state suffers if the enlightened ones do not redescend to enlighten in turn their former fellows (519 c).

Here we again confront two kinds of images, or rather two levels of images. This is an advance beyond the first books of the dialogue, where all images were mere copies, dangerous and to be avoided. But, Plato has not brought the realm of the Forms any closer: rather, he has added a small measure of validity to the images of the Forms. It is no longer true that no truth whatever can be had in the visible wordl: now, <u>some</u> images are valid, others are not. It is still true, however, that images do not perfectly reveal the Forms.

There is one further step in the treatment of images in the <u>Republic</u> which deserves emphasis. After Socrates describes the visible universe and the starry heaven as the most beautiful and perfect of all visible things (on

this basis the guardians are to be instructed in geometry and astronomy) he says that these sciences are not to be learned for their own sake, but because they contain instructive images of the "divine" (532). The unfortunate thing is that those who study the number of stars do not look for number itself, and even those who study numbers themselves do not reflect upon why some numbers are harmonious and some are not: they ignore the "images of the divine," not knowing that what they study is only like the truth, but is not the truth (533 c).

The seeds of a new insight are here, but it would be stretching the point to say that we are now fully instructed in it. It becomes true to say that for every level of truth, the level just beneath it "images" it. For this reason, there are two kinds of image in the divided line: from the higher vantage point of perception, mere sensation is only a shadow, the lowliest kind of image. From the point of view of reason, understanding is only an image. Similarly, every perception, from the higher point of view of understanding, is only an image. Image is thus a relative term, not necessarily opprobrious, since to advance from a shadow to an image is an advance in the right direction, i.e., toward greater insight.

This is an important doctrine in several respects, not the least of which is the new validity which images have been given. It is also important to stress the

relativity of images to the respective truths which they reveal, because it is just this function of revealing the higher truth which the _Timaeus_ develops in a new way. In the _Republic_, Plato admits the functional role of images with some hesitation. In the _Timaeus_, this hesitation is gone, and images are said to be perfectly appropriate revelations in themselves, since they are proportional to their paradigms.

Next we are given a Pythagorean myth of the origin and outcome of strife in the state, in which the diameters and circumferences of circles are described by means of the numbers for which the Pythagoreans are famous. The perfect strifeless circle is one whose diameter is a perfect number; i.e., one which is the sum of its divisors, as six is divided by and is the sum of 1, 2, and 3. Unevenly divided circles introduce strife in the state. This is the sort of tale the muses tell, and Homer speaks their language (545 e). However, while these tales are true in their way, Plato says that there are more pressing investigations, and little is made of the whole procedure. It is quickly introduced and quickly abandoned. Suffice it here to note that in this Pythagorean allegory time is represented by a revolving sphere, and, like a sphere, has a beginning, a middle and an end, so that the forms of government which correspond to the periods of time have a definite sequence. One might extract here a whole political philosophy of history in the Pythagorean idiom, but it can

be shown by a discussion of the _Timaeus_, that a philosophy of political forms and their temporal sequence along Pythagorean lines is far from the sort of treatment Plato can give to this subject.

Plato resorts once again to an image of the soul, but this time it is an ideal image, the best possible. The soul is pictured as consisting of one part polycephalous beast, one part lion, and one part man (588 c), just as the state consists of three classes, one of knowledge, one of ambition, and one of money (580 d). Having discovered this as a result of the inquiry into the state as the image of the justice of the soul, Socrates says now that the ideal city is a pattern laid up in heaven, and "he who desires may behold this, and beholding, govern himself accordingly. But whether there really is or ever will be such a one is of no importance to him, for he will act according to the laws of that city and no other" (592 b).

The last book of the _Republic_ again takes up the problem of representing this ideal realm in images which the short-sighted might be able to see. Here Plato rejects imitative poetry as mere copy-making, so that even the painter, who paints new images which did not exist before, is an inferior kind of creator, for when he copies the bed which the carpenter makes of wood, even the wooden bed is only an imitation of the Form of all beds. The painter copies, the carpenter copies, but the idea of the bed is

original and is not a copy of any thing or of any idea.

Thus, the doctrine of the Republic, insofar as it concerns the realm of Forms, describes this realm as a sphere in which what is remains what it is, and does not become something else. These Forms are the archetypes of the visible world, which, from the point of view of the Forms, consists of images and copies of the Forms. Images are subject to time in the guises of generation and corruption, and are changeable, and, therefore, are not truly real, since they are not immutable and eternal.

One last doctrinal theme of the Republic remains to be cited before we pass on to the next dialogue. It is the Myth of Er. Like the small Pythagorean allegory which purported to explain the origin of strife, it represents an attempt on Plato's part to plumb not only the depths of things but to discern their origins. The Myth of Er goes beyond the Pythagorean myth of political philosophy in that it is meant to be a brief cosmogony, not just the origin of this or that political form. To those who search the Republic for a literal political philosophy and its correlations with the soul, it might seem strange that the Republic should end on a note of myth. However, to those who see that the Republic is an allegorical attempt to portray the realm of Justice, (which is timeless) in terms which the shortsighted can comprehend, (namely, the images of the changing present) it comes as no surprise

that the *Republic* ends in a myth. In fact, since the whole *Republic* itself, is confessedly only a short-sighted representation of an eternal realm, there should be no jarring of consciousness when the Myth of Er is presented. The whole dialogue reads like an attempt to say what seems unsayable to those who think that saying things means they are true.

However, there are certain characteristics of the Myth of Er which ought to be singled out, in addition to its cosmogonical character.

The Myth of Er recounts the alleged journey of a slain warrior into the world after death, where he is allowed to see what happens to the souls who perish. Some are doomed to wander beneath the earth for ten times the normal lifespan (reckoned as ten times one hundred) and others are allowed to spend their time in a realm of "inconceivable Beauty." Thereafter, the souls are allowed to choose from a wide assortment of lives those they think they would enjoy in their next mortal period on earth.

The more interesting feature of this myth is the description of the stars and planets spinning in their relative spheres around the spindle of Necessity; the Fates, daughters of Necessity, may interrupt these revolutions momentarily or give them direction. The fates represent the tenses of time, one for the present, one for the past, and one for the future. Here is the circular image of time again, in which the revolutions of the

spheres of the heavens is taken to be the meaning of time: that is, the spinning of the spheres is the motion we call time. Notice, however, that here in the Republic, time derives from necessity. As we shall see, this is quite different from the doctrine of the Timaeus.

One of the most provocative features of this myth, is the perpetual recurrence which is said to characterize life, and the circular imagery in which this doctrine is cloaked. For, if it is taken seriously as a myth, it tells us that the number of souls must be a constant, and the careers of men are predetermined by their former lives. How could the experience of such a realm elude our conscious thought in the mortal portion of life? We are told that the souls must drink of the "waters of forgetfulness and negligence" before they return to a mortal abode (621 a).

This is a strange metaphor, especially when coupled with the doctrine of reminiscence, or with the description of the after-life in the Phaedo. What is the meaning of the "water of forgetfulness"? It pertains to the theme we have been describing throughout the Republic: the eternal realm of Forms, the visible world of time, and the strange distance between them which makes the truth of the eternal realm almost impossibly unintelligible to the visible life. Here in the Myth of Er the souls who have lived for a thousand years in the realm of "inconceivable Beauty" are made to forget this experience by imbibing the waters of

forgetfulness. In this way, a mythical answer is made to the problem of the difficulty of remembering the realm of Forms, the true home of the soul. Since the soul has been in the realm of the Forms, this former life is the basis of the soul's subsequent recognition of copies of the Forms in this life. This accounts for Socrates' constant attempt to be the midwife of insight. He hopes that a particularly well-chosen image might awaken the soul's memory of the eternal realm. His whole pedagogy is based on this premise.

On the one hand, this elevates philosophic discourse to a very high level. On the other hand, it puts the whole responsibility of achieving insight into the Forms on a lesser and inferior type of insight. This contradiction did not escape Plato, but he did not resolve it in the *Republic*. We shall have to look to succeeding dialogues for its resolution.

Summary of the Republic

We have seen that the *Republic* presents an attempt to gain insight into the eternal realm through the investigation of Justice as it is in the state, that this is an allegorical attempt to see the Form of Justice in the soul, and in that way to see Justice itself. However, we are told repeatedly that one needs good vision for this, and that not everyone has good vision. Further, even those with good vision have a difficult time communicating with those who have less than perfect vision. This forces him who has seen the Form of Justice to resort to images and copies of the

Form of Justice, which, unfortunately results in a mutilation of the truth of the Form. We are forced to rely on myths which are like the truth but are not the truth. They bring us close to the truth but not close enough. The height and distance of the Forms is the reason for this difficulty, and it is only partially diminished by the use of imagery, which is unfortunately always changing, becoming, and passing away. We must have the truth as it is, yet we cannot, for the realms of eternity and time are too discrete. While time derives from necessity, the Forms derive from eternity, and images constitute an in-between realm of compromise.

The Parmenides

It is generally agreed that the *Parmenides* and the *Theatetus* must be placed midway between the middle and the late dialogues. If it is true that Plato gradually developed his doctrines, one should expect to find in the *Parmenides* some criticism of the Form-theory as it was developed in the *Republic*, and some sort of further development of doctrine. In order to present the details of this hypothesized development, it is now necessary to examine the doctrines of the *Parmenides* which pertain to the themes of eternity, image, and time, and to see how Plato modifies his view of the relation of these themes to each other and in what way the meaning of these themes in themselves is changed. As we shall see, the eternal realm of the Forms

and the relation of this realm to the realm of visible things, as described in the _Republic_, is brought face to face with some sharp criticisms, in the light of which Plato modifies the positions he took in the _Republic_.

It is also generally agreed that one may logically divide the _Parmenides_ into two parts, the first of which is a dramatic introduction and the second of which constitutes the body of doctrine. In this second part, Plato divides his subject into a series of eight hypotheses. Before we discuss them, it might be wise to describe what the word hypothesis means as Plato uses it in the _Parmenides_.

First, Plato does not mean by hypothesis what is usually meant by this word in contemporary usage in our own day. We are accustomed to the provisional character of hypotheses and we regularly expect them to be written in the form of if-then propositions. Thus for example, we usually begin an investigation by asserting that, if a given theoretical view is true, then we should expect to find the certain conditions to obtain. Then we seek out the conditions, describe them as impartially and fairly as we can, and thereafter determine with what accuracy the conditions resemble those we predicted would obtain.

But Plato's method in the _Parmenides_ is different from the methods just described. He proceeds in a similar but not identical way, for he first decides to examine whether a given proposition is true or false and then,

first assumes the truth and then the falsity of the proposition in question, which he follows with a demonstration of the logical consequences of these assumptions. If he arrives at an absurd consequence by assuming the proposition to be false, he begins again by logically deducing the consequences of assuming the proposition to be true. In short, Plato asks what are the consequences of assuming a given proposition to be true or false, and it is these propositions which he calls hypotheses. His method differs from our own in that we are accustomed to confront our hypothetical propositions with observations which may or may not agree with predicted observations. Plato examines the logical consequences of a given view; we predict which observations shall be made if the hypothesis is true. While these two methods have much in common, they are obviously not identical.

The eight hypotheses which Plato discusses in the *Parmenides* are not equally relevant to the themes of eternity, image and time, so that the short summary of the doctrine of the *Parmenides* which follows should not be regarded as an attempt to summarize the entire significance of the dialogue.

The dialogue begins with a recitation of a youthful work of Zeno's, which asserts that the existence of the many leads to logical absurdities even more ridiculous than the alleged absurdities which are said to flow from the

assertion of the existence of the One. The basis for this assertion of absurdity is the statement that the many would have to be both like and unlike, and that therefore the Like would be Unlike and the Unlike Like, i.e., since there are both like and unlike things, both Like and Unlike would have to be said of them (127 e).

Socrates asks whether it is possible to assert that there is a Form of Like and a Form of Unlike, and that, instead of saying that each thing is both Like and Unlike, perhaps things share in these Forms, and in that way, things will only share in these Forms and will not have to be both like and unlike in themselves (129 a). While it would not be difficult to think that things shared in the Forms in this dual way, it would of course be impossible to assert that the idea of Like and the idea of Unlike themselves shared in a dual way in some higher Form. A thing might participate in the One and in the Many and in that way it could share in both of them without being both of them, and thus different from itself. In the same way, things could share in both Rest and Motion, Same and Different, and other pairs of opposites (129 e).

Parmenides and Zeno smile in admiration at this view, as if they were amused at the craft of this philosophical child named Socrates, who, at the time of this dialogue, is said to be no more than twenty years old (130).

Parmenides elicits from Socrates the admission that

his method leads to the assertion of a Form for the Just, the Good, and the Beautiful, and of all that class of notions (130 a). Therefore, there must be a Form of man, of fire, of water, etc. Similarly, there must be a Form of hair, dirt, mud, etc.

> ...visible things such as these are as they appear to us, and I am afraid that there would be an absurdity in assuming an idea of them, although I sometimes get disturbed and begin to think that there is nothing without an idea; but then again when I have taken this position, I run away, because I am afraid that I may fall into a bottomless pit of nonsense, and perish; and I return to the ideas of which I was just now speaking, and busy myself with them (130 d).

Parmenides responds that this is due to Socrates' youth, and that a time will come when philosophy will have a firmer grasp.

Parmenides then puts the issue squarely: are there or are there not Forms in which things participate, and in that way come to have the qualities of the Forms. Socrates says there are (131 a). Here we have the central problem of the Parmenides posed with exact precision: are there Forms and is there an eternal unchanging realm where they abide. This realm and its characteristics are assumed to exist so that they can be examined in a new way. The problem of the manner in which the Many participate in the One is chosen as the topic by which this issue is best focused, and they agree to discuss it.

The first objection Parmenides offers to this view is the problem of accounting for the way in which a Form could

be said to be in the many and yet remain one Form. For, if the Form were in the many, it would seem to be divided among them, and hence, not one Form, but many. Nor is it possible for the whole idea to be in each of the many for then the idea itself would be many (131 c).

The second objection Parmenides raises is as follows: if the Idea of Greatness (or Oneness, or Justice, etc.) arises as the Idea under which the many are comprehended, must not an Idea of the Idea arise which is the source both of the Idea and of its distribution in the many, and then an Idea of it, and so on, until an infinite regress is reached (132 b)?

Socrates attempts to evade this by asking whether the Idea may not be only a mental unity assigned to the class. Parmenides shows that even such an Idea would be subject to the same critique, for an Idea of the Idea would have to arise to give meaning to the first idea, and so on.

Socrates then attempts to say that the Ideas are really patterns fixed in nature, and that things resemble them. This is subjected to the same critique: another Idea would have to arise in which both the pattern and the thing would be like.

"The theory, then, that other things participate in the Ideas by resemblance has to be given up, and some other mode of participation has to be devised" (133 a).

These are not even the gravest objections which can be raised against the theory of the Forms. Even worse consequences follow once one perceives that the Ideas cannot exist in us or be known by us so long as they remain where they are said to be, for then they are there and not here with us. And if we cannot know them, is there any basis of intelligibility: how can we know, and what can we know (133 b). Parmenides asserts that only a long and laborious demonstration can remove this difficulty, which necessitates much training, (not good eyesight alone).

Parmenides begins then, by facing directly the problem which the Republic began to examine; i.e., if there is a realm of Forms separated from the realm of things, the relation of one realm to the other seems impossible, and with that impossibility of separation, partially bridged by the reluctant admission of images, the basis of true knowledge (and Justice, Good, Beauty, etc.) disappears. One falls thereafter into a "pit of nonsense." The further consequence is that anyone who might have knowledge of the Forms would be unable to have knowledge of us, since we are in a different realm (134 e). Separated realms leads to nothing less than the destruction of reason (135 c). All this arises out of the youth of Socrates, and his lack of training.

Parmenides holds out a hope: he says that there is more truth to be found, if, after affirming the hypothesis of separated realms and inspecting its logical results,

the hypothesis is also denied, and the results of this denial are similarly subjected to logical investigation. One should further test this method by both affirming and denying such hypotheses as the existence and non-existence of the One and the Many, Rest and Motion, Like and Unlike, Generation and Destruction (136 b).

Notice the characteristics of this method. The existence _and_ the non-existence, Rest _and_ Motion, Generation _and_ Destruction, are to be tested. _Both_ sides of the argument are to be followed. Nowhere has the question yet been asked whether there _are_ two sides. It is assumed. As we shall see, it is this assumption of a dualism running through the nature of Forms, Ideas, things, perceptions, etc., which Plato is subjecting to the light of his analysis.

So much for part one of the _Parmenides_. In the next portion Parmenides employs his method of affirmation and denial in eight hypotheses. In them, he subjects nothing less than the basis of the theory of Forms to a searching critique.

The first hypothesis of the eight is said to be Parmenides' own One; if this sort of One is, it cannot be many (137 c). From this it follows that it has no parts, no beginning, middle, end, is not like or unlike itself or another, is neither same nor different, is neither at rest nor in motion, is neither great nor small, limited not unlimited, equal or unequal. The relation of the One and

time is set forth as follows:

The One cannot be older, or younger, or the same age as itself, because that would imply Likeness, which it was shown not to have (140 a). Therefore it cannot exist in time at all (141 a). "And if the One is without participation in time, it never has become, or was becoming, or was at any former time, or has now become or is becoming, or is or will become, or will have become or will be hereafter."

> "Most true.
> "But are there any modes of being other than these?
> "There are none.
> "Then the One cannot possibly partake of being.
> "That is the inference.
> "Then the One is not. (141e)
> "But can all this be true about the One?
> " I think not" (142 a).

The result of the first hypothesis is clear: starting on the assumption of the One as unrelated, it follows that nothing can be said about it, not even that it is One. Assuming the logic to be impeccable, the hypothesis leads to its own contradiction. Such an hypothesis is untenable. Therefore, all the things which we tried to predicate of it, and found ourselves unable to predicate of it, are not predicable of it (*if it is what we assumed it to be*), that is, unrelated. If it is unrelated, it is unspeakably other. Therefore, we must seek for other ways to speak intelligently about it.

Here is the first clear attempt to close the gap between the unreachably eternal and the irrevocably temporal, a gap which is now clearly faced and admitted to

present an obstacle to intelligent thought. The One, therefore, cannot be in a completely separated eternal realm. It must somehow be in some sort of relation to the temporal realm. The ways in which the One is so related are the topics of the next hypotheses.

The second hypothesis (142 e-155 d) begins with a different assumption. It affirms that if the One is, its unity and its being are different. Therefore, it is a whole of two parts, unity and being. Each part, furthermore, is a one (142 d). Therefore, the One of hypothesis II contains division within it, and therefore becomes the recipient of the predicates which its former indivisibility made impossible. It is now, however, susceptible of both sides of the pairs of contraries which were formerly inapplicable. It is now One and Many, Infinite in number and Limited in number, Same and Other, in itself and in another, at Rest and in Motion. Further, these predicates are both applicable by affirmation, but, because each pair is contradictory, they are also inapplicable.

If the One is a One of parts, it partakes of time, which is always moving forward (152 a). Therefore, the One becomes older, younger, and is the same age as itself. Yet, since it is the same age as itself, it is neither older nor younger than itself (152 e).

In the same way, it is younger, older, and the same age as the Other and the Others (153 e). And, in the same

way, it is not older, younger, or the same age as the Other or the Others (154 a).

Therefore, since the one partakes of time, and partakes of becoming older and becoming younger than itself and the Others, and neither is nor becomes older or younger than the Others, the One is and was and will be, and was becoming, is becoming, and will be becoming. "And, if we are right in all this, then there is an opinion and science and perception of the One" (155 d).

Two conclusions may be drawn from the second hypothesis. First, the One, by hypothesis, is no longer so separate and so isolated that nothing can be known or said of it, so that it is now said to be in time and becoming, <u>and</u> not in time and becoming. Second, it is, by the same token, <u>both</u> like and unlike itself. But this is far from the final doctrine of the <u>Parmenides</u>.

In the first hypothesis, the One was indivisibly One and nothing could be said or known of it. In the second hypothesis, the One is divisible and therefore, everything can be said and known of it. But this is nor more satisfactory than before. Previously, we avoided contradictory predications at the expense of knowledge; now, we have knowledge, but it pays the price of contradictory predications. Since it is no more helpful to say everything of it than it is to say nothing of it, another way must be found to discuss the One intelligently.

Hypothesis IIA interposes another method by which

the One can be intelligently discussed. The One cannot be the bare unity of hypothesis I nor the divided unity of hypothesis II. Hypothesis IIA tries to see whether one can avoid the scandal of contradiction by making predications of the One at different instants, so that there will be no one time at which the contradictory predicates of hypothesis II need to be applied simultaneously. In its own way, it introduces some considerations of not-being, which, as we shall see, are pursued further in subsequent dialogues, especially in the _Sophist_.

If, as hypothesis II asserts, the One is divided, and partakes of time, it cannot both be and not be _at_ the same time (155 e). (This is precisely what is to be proved). Therefore, there must be an instant between the instant when the One is (said to be anything) and the One is not (said to be anything) (156 a). Similarly, there must be an instant between its generation and its corruption. In the same way, there must be an instant between the instant when the One is in motion and the instant when the One is at rest, when it is like and when it is unlike, etc. The strange instant between the instants at which predication may be asserted is a very peculiar sort of instant, for, if the predicates which we assert of the One are asserted of the One insofar as it is in time, the instant between these instants cannot be in time, and might therefore be called not-time. Plato does not use this term. He calls it a "queer instant" and says that the divided One of

hypothesis II leads to the conclusion of contradictory predicates, and that these cannot be simultaneously asserted (157 a). But if they cannot be asserted at the same instants, perhaps they can be asserted at different instants. Yet at any given instant, if we do not assert both sets of predicates and neither, (i.e., both affirm and deny them) this instant cannot be in time at all.

Hypothesis IIA may be called the "linear" hypothesis, by which is meant that in it, time is examined as if it consisted of a series of instants, a sort of Zenoism of time, an imaginary line. Plato here applies the third man argument to a linear image of time, a series of instants, yet, if time is a series of instants, a third instant will always be found between the two surrounding instants at which predication is made. It seems that Plato here asserts that time cannot consist of a series of instants and that predication is made impossible by so viewing it.

If becoming, motion, change, generation, alteration, and locomotion are in time, and their contraries are also in time, we cannot avoid the difficulty of contradictory predication by assuming that time is a series of instants, nor can we say that the pairs of predicates switch over from one instand to another in an interstitial instant. For, if a predicate is asserted of the first instant and the contradictory predicate is asserted of the third instant, at the point of the second instant, nothing can

be asserted, and we are back to hypothesis I where we can neither affirm nor deny anything of the One. However, this philosophical gymnastic has not been unfruitful. We know now that the need to make intelligent statements about the One is not satisfied by assuming that it is a completely separate One. We know that we cannot say that it is completely divided, for then it is really a Two. And we know that we cannot insert the instant between the One and the Two in order to fasten predicates on either end and allow the middle to be the transition, for then the middle is neither One nor Two.

I hope it does no violence to the spirit of philosophical continuity to say at this juncture that the remainder of the Parmenides may be briefly summarized. The Parmenides does not attempt to solve its problem within itself, but leads one beyond it. The third hypothesis points out that parts in their multiplicity, and parts in their relation as parts of a whole, must be distinguished, and on this basis, their limitation and relative infinity can overcome the contrariety they seem to suggest. In this way we avoid the contradiction of saying that the parts are both limited and unlimited and therefore cannot be predicated of the One. In fact we must say that the parts participate in the One as parts, but that parts by themselves are merely unlimited.

The fourth hypothesis considers the relation of the One to Others, that is, each part, as a One, has some of

the properties of the Other insofar as it is a part. The fifth hypothesis considers the need to understand how the One, the parts, and the Others limit each other. (This point will be pursued at some length in the Philebus). The sixth hypothesis examines the characteristic of the Other insofar as it is only other. The seventh hypothesis considers the result of assuming the existence of the many without assuming the existence of the One. This is said to result in mere opinion, which is inadequate precisely insofar as it sees only the many as many and ignores the many as parts of the whole. The eigth hypothesis points out that the assumption of the existence of the Many without the One results in a contradiction because without the One there is no Many.

Summary

I would like to summarize the doctrine of the Parmenides insofar as it pertains to the hypothesis of this study. It is, I think, an examination of the naive assumption that the realm of the Forms in its bare unrelated purity renders intelligent predication, and therefore, all intelligent discourse, impossible. It asks how and in what way we may both speak of the Forms and speak of appearances without separating their respective realms. It states that the realms are related (in some way-hypothesis III) but it never really reveals this way with any precision or clarity.

However, for the purposes of this study, an important

conclusion has been stated. We saw in hypothesis IIA, that it is not possible to regard time as a series of instants strung out along an imaginary line, and that the instant is, in some way, not-time, a "queer instant."

As we shall see, in one of the next dialogues, the _Sophist_, the generalization of this problem of not-time is examined: i.e., the problem of not-being. A new method of division of predicates is introduced in the _Sophist_ and developed in the _Statesman_. The question of limit and measure is examined in the _Philebus_, and, finally, the divisions of becoming and the nature of time are examined in the _Timaeus_.

However, between the _Parmenides_ and the _Sophist_ there is another dialogue which intervenes, the dialogue which is generally agreed to follow the _Parmenides_. It seems to be the task of this next dialogue to examine the protagonists of hypothesis VII, in which it is said that there are those who hold that the Many exist and can be known. This is the subject of the _Theatetus_.

The Theatetus

This dialogue sets itself the problem of examining knowledge, and asks itself to answer such questions as "do we know," "how do we know," and "are there kinds of knowledge." Where the _Parmenides_ focused on the consequences of hypothesizing that the realm of Forms is completely separated from the realm of things, the _Theatetus_ inquires into the basis of knowledge from the other direction,

namely, it focuses on the world of things and seeks the basis for speaking of it intelligently and knowingly.

In the interests of brevity, only those portions of the Theatetus which are directly relevant to the analysis of the themes of eternity, image, and time will receive comment in what follows, and no implication should be drawn that the entire significance of the dialogue consists in these portions to the exclusion of other important aspects of the dialogue. It is the business of the following comments to focus on the significance of the problem of knowledge and the attendant problem of error to show that the Theatetus constitutes something of an advance over the Parmenides precisely because it takes some of the conclusions of the Parmenides into account.

Theatetus suggests that knowledge is perception (151e). Socrates reminds Theatetus that this position makes all knowledge infallible, and that this same doctrine fits Heraclitus, Empedocles, and Homer, indeed, fits a whole tradition, with the single exception of Parmenides. According to this tradition, all things are in a perpetual becoming, and therefore we may not say that things are being or something, because they are all in flow and flux (152 e). In perception as well as in matters of the soul, motion, not rest, is the source of health, according to these philosophers.

Socrates then reaches the conclusion that whatever

appears can only be while it is appearing. He remarks "Let us follow out our recent statement and lay it down that there is no single thing that is in and by itself" (153 e), as if Socrates were testing the hypotheses of the Parmenides in the realm of perception. Thus we read "...nothing can become greater or less either in size or in number, so long as it remains equal with itself" (155 a). Again, we find "...a thing to which nothing is added and from which nothing is taken away is neither diminished nor increased, but always remains the same in amount" (155 a). And "...must we not say...that a thing which was not at an earlier instant cannot be at a later instant without becoming, and being in process of becoming" (155 b)? On the basis of these axioms, things both change and do not change and are perceived and are not perceived. "The conclusion from all this, is, as we said at the outset, that nothing is one thing by itself but is always in process of becoming for someone, and being is to be ruled out altogether" (157 b). All is flux, each is flux. Socrates wants to make sure that the point has been firmly made so he asks: "Once more, then, tell me whether you like this notion that nothing is but is always becoming good, or beautiful, or any of the other things we mentioned" (157 d).

The bearing these questions have on the three themes of eternity, image, and time which we are pursuing is, briefly, this; perception deals with appearance and the

world of appearance is a fluxion in which all things are becoming. Therefore, the forms cannot be located in a completely separate eternal realm which guarantees knowledge. Yet we seem to know. The question is, are the images which perception furnishes us true because they are neither eternal nor mere appearance? Plato is again posing the problem: how can the visible world participate in the eternal world? In the Theatetus, the question becomes: do the images which perception gives us make possible a knowledge of the eternal?

Socrates reminds us that the "men of flux" constitute only one group, which is opposed by another group, consisting of Parmenides and Melissus, who hold that "all things are a unity which stays still by itself, having no room to move in. How are we to deal with all these combatants? For, little by little, our advance has brought us, without our knowing it, between the two lines..." (180 e). Socrates says that the inquiry will succeed best if the flux doctrine is examined, and if the re-examination of the forms is postponed (183 A).

But let us not be deceived by the statement that Parmenides' view is to be postponed. For, no sooner has Socrates said it, than he enters into discussion of what is known, and, asks whether all the things that we say we know are perceived by sense. We say, for example, that a flower is white and that the flower is. Surely the faculty that says it is white and no white and the faculty that

says it is and is not, surely these cannot be the same faculty.

> You mean existence and non-existence, likeness and unlikeness, sameness and difference, and also unity and numbers in general as applied to them; and clearly your question covers even and odd and all that kind of notions. You are asking through what part of the body our mind perceives these (185 c)?

Socrates congratulates Theatetus on reaching the conclusion that the mind is its own instrument in perceiving, since it saves him a long argument (185 e). Thus, we go beyond the statement that knowledge is perception, for we know the existence of a thing not by perception but by the mind's reflection on something perceived (186 e). And this reflection is temporal, for all those qualities of which we spoke (the Parmenidean pairs of contraries) "seem to me above all to be things whose being is considered, one in comparison with another, by the mind, when it reflects upon the past and present with an eye to the future" (186a). Such reflections upon perception only come, if they come at all, to those who go through a long and troublesome process of education (186 c). For, if one cannot reach the existence of a thing, he cannot reach the truth (186 c).

Welcome as it seems, this statement only pushes the difficulty further back. If the mind's reflection on itself is like two voices of the mind speaking to each other, why do we assume that the voices always agree. Cannot the voices of the mind disagree; in short, are all judgments necessarily true? We dismissed Protagoras because

he made all perceptions infallible: are we to say we have gone beyond his position only to assert that all judgments are infallible (187 a).

The suggested approach to the problem of false judgment is the famous allegory of the wax tablet (191b ff.). We are asked to imagine that the mind contains a wax tablet and that its quality varies in different people: some have good, clear, firm, wax, others have unclear, muddy, soft, wax, and so the images which perception imprints on the tablet vary. In addition, the strength of the imprint varies. Images are the gifts of Memory, so that, in any act of knowledge, we must now distinguish the memory image, the perception (the present image) and the mind's knowledge (reflection on images with "an eye to the future").

Notice that the basis of this division is temporal, and not a static hierarchy. Images are not discarded merely because they are "low," and knowledge is not better merely because it is "high": we are now asked to see that false judgments can arise out of faulty matching of remembered images, present images, and reflections on images with "an eye to the future." This is a significant advance over the _Republic_.

The discussion of knowledge is further complicated because we may confuse past images with present images, past perceptions with present perceptions, past knowledge with present knowledge, and each of these may be faulty

both by reason of faulty wax, varying strengths of impression, or mismatching. Even Theatetus complains of the complexity. In addition, we have again only pushed the difficulty further back, because we are assuming that the mind is infallible, and that is just the problem we wanted to investigate. "That was the very ground on which we were led to make out that there could be no such thing as false judgment: it was in order to avoid the conclusion that the same man must at the same time know and not know the same thing" (196 c).

Socrates reminds Theatetus that the whole conversation assumes both that we know, and that we do not know, what we say. If we do not assume that we can know, conversation is impossible (197 a); If we do not assume that we may not know, all knowledge is infallible.

Another allegory is introduced to supplement the wax tablet. It is the allegory of the Aviary. Where the allegory of the wax tablet was concerned with images and the possibilities of conflict between images and reflections on images, the allegory of the Aviary is concerned with flying birds, which symbolize reflections i.e., thoughts. Although reflection upon images gives rise to thoughts, these thoughts soar and must be recaptured in recollection if we are really to know. Here again we are shown that there is a temporal emphasis to be placed on the acts of knowledge, for, in a sense, knowing is relearning what we

knew before (198 e). Yet, if we ask whether some of these recollections might not also be false, we see that the criterion of true knowledge remains to be found (200 b).

Perhaps there is no way to define knowledge, and we must content ourselves with the statement that perception gives rise to true belief and opinion.

Socrates shows that this conclusion is due to an inaccuracy. For example, he says, the syllable was not, until the letters were combined in just that fashion; it is a one <u>after</u> its parts become parts of it (204 a). Here is another recapitulation of the arguments of the <u>Parmenides</u>. It is the same with number: a sum is not a sum <u>until</u> its component integers are added, and only thereafter is it one sum (204 e). But this is the distinction to be made (as it was made in the <u>Parmenides</u>): the whole consists of the parts; not just any parts, considered in themselves, as unrelated ones, but parts as related. In other words, the difficulty is only apparent, and it vanishes as soon as we see that the whole and the parts are not two different things in isolation but related aspect of a One (205 b).

> To conclude, then; if, on the one hand, the syllable is the same thing as a number of letters and is a whole with the letters as parts, then the letters must be neither more nor less knowable and explicable than syllables, since we made out that all the parts are the same thing as the whole (205 d).

Therefore, Socrates concludes that those who hold that the elements or the whole are more or less knowable than each other, are playing with us. We can know the elements, as

parts, and therefore, an opinion with an account is knowledge.

But what is an account (logos)? It cannot be only an enumeration of parts as isolated parts (207 e). The other meaning might be "the image of thought spoken in sound" or language (208 c). This is the problem, not the answer. Perhaps marking off a thing and distinguishing it from all others constitutes a good account (208 d). An account will then mean putting the thing's "difference" into words. (209a) But Socrates quickly shows that we must first know the common to distinguish the different, which begs the question of knowledge. (209 e) Therefore it does not seem true to say that knowledge is opinion with an account of difference, unless we already know the common on the basis of which we distinguish the difference. (Although this is what we do, it is not a definition of knowledge since it includes "knowing the common" in its "definition").

The dialogue ends a few lines later with Socrates saying that all the definitions of knowledge so far adduced are mere "wind-eggs" (210 b). Theatetus is told that the mid-wife's art is a heavenly gift which Socrates uses on those in whom beauty resides, and that as a result of this gymnastic they have engaged in, Theatetus will thereafter be better enabled to know what knowledge is. The conclusion, on the surface, is that we know, but cannot define what knowledge is. Actually, we have said several

things about what it is not, and therefore Theatetus has made progress along the "long way" which is required for this sort of knowledge. That is why the last words of the dialogue are "But tomorrow morning, Theatetus, let us meet again" (210 d).

Summary

What have we learned about eternity, moving images, and time? A great deal, it seems. And what we have learned cannot be separated from the doctrines of the dialogues we have considered so far. We see in the *Theatetus* that some of the positions of the *Republic* and of the *Parmenides* have been reexamined and certain modifications have taken place. We know now that knowledge must include, but is not exhaustively defined by, moving images of thought, (birds); that we cannot refer to parts in isolation but must discuss them *as* they are related in a One; that the mere enumeration of elements does not comprise an explanation; and, above all, that we know, but do not know how we know. In addition, and perhaps this is the most striking conclusion of all, we have seen that the mind can be viewed as conversing with itself, and that this internal dialogue consists of the attempt to put images and reflection on the past, present, and future in their right order. We have advanced far beyond the naive view that the mind is a static camera whose job it is to escape the transient shadows of perception in a flight to eternal forms. We are now told that it

is the task of mind to discern the right temporal order of its ingredients, so to speak. However, even after all these things have been done, we still do not have a definition of knowledge. The important point to notice is that the steps and hypotheses of the _Theatetus_ are no longer regarded as inferior but as necessary preliminaries in the "long way" which the mind must take to true knowledge.

Somehow, we have found, not what knowledge is, but what complete knowledge is not. This insight, namely, that somehow what is not, in some way, must be included in what is, will be examined in the next dialogue, the _Sophist_, which can, from certain points of view, be regarded as a triumphant breakthrough into another whole way of philosophizing.

The Sophist

We enter now into the series of dialogues unanimously regarded as the late group, in which Plato's evolved reflections are to be found. The _Sophist_ begins with a dramatic introduction which includes the participants of the _Theatetus_, but now we meet an additional person, an Eleatic Stranger. This seems to be the fulfillment of the _Theatetus_' promise to consider the Parmenidean approach to truth after the _Theatetus_ dealt with the "men of flux." It is further interesting to note that the Stranger begins the whole dialogue by using a method which is unavailable to the men of flux, namely, the method of division, which

seemed to the men of flux to presume knowledge, not to seek it. (This point will be expanded in the Statesman). The Stranger does not allude to this hypothetical difficulty, and he employs the method without question. This confirms the hint that we are now to inspect the heritage of the Parmenides, not in the manner of the Theatetus, nor exactly in the manner of the Parmenides, but in some new way to deal with philosophical inquiry. And, as we shall see, we are told new things about eternity, images, and time.

It is agreed that a trial run of this method should be had before the Sophist is defined, and they agree to use an easy example, the angler one familiar to them all. This is important because it assumes the results of the Theatetus; the angler is at once a familiar experience but an undefined reality.

The definition of the Angler is reached, and the method of "halving" is satisfactorily put to the test. What is of special interest to us here is the difference between this kind of division, and the method of elimination which Plato had previously used in the Republic. In the sort of dividing which Plato accomplishes here, it is necessary for the divider to proceed very carefully and to divide the subject into exact halves, so that only what actually pertains to the subject is retained and what is found not to pertain to the subject nevertheless reveals something about the subject (221 b). If the

division is not well made, the remainder will contain too much, that is, the definition will remain too vague. Only by carefully determining what something is not can one reach a precise knowledge of what something is. Thus it is incorrect to equate the method of division which we find in the _Sophist_ to the method of residues which we confronted in the _Republic_. The latter proceeds by eliminating classes of objects, the former by dividing within a class of objects.

It is necessary to notice, however, that the Stranger provides the divisions, and that Plato passes over the fact that in some way the Stranger knows what divisions are most helpful. It is almost as if the Stranger already has a higher wisdom. In other words, he does not draw his distinctions from appearance, but somehow draws them from a higher kind of knowledge. It is important to emphasize this point because it is in strong contrast to the method advocated by the men of flux in the _Theatetus_.

Having defined the Angler, Socrates now attempts to define the Sophist. To those he convinces, the Sophist seems to know all things, and to be versed in every art, but such competence is impossible. Now we approach the central concern. For the Sophist cannot truly be what he claims to be, yet he certainly appears to be. Appearance and reality cannot be the same, yet the question is, how do they differ. This question might be called the most

important question in all of Plato's dialogues so far. The definition of the Sophist, then, is a case in point: we are to investigate this particular gentleman, as we investigated the Angler, in order to discover how reality is, and what appearance seems to be; in the language of this study, how the eternal forms are related to the temporal world.

The Stranger asserts that the Sophist is an imitator, and that sufficient division of the imitative art will reveal him. Just as imitation may be divided in two kinds, so the images which imitation produces are of two kinds; some images (eikastike) are like reality in that they are faithful to the proportions of the original (235 d); others distort the proportions of the reality, and these we shall call fantasies (phantastike) (236 b). But now the problem becomes even greater, because to distinguish the image from the reality we have to say that the image is not the reality. How can a man say what is not true, or assert the existence of what is not. The word which Parmenides forbade must be uttered - not-being (237 a). No sooner do we distinguish the image from the reality than we distinguish not-being from being. At this point, Plato leaps beyond the level of Parmenides' and of his own earlier philosophy, and reaches out into virgin territory. And at this point, Plato's most crucial discussion of the meaning of the word image is begun.

Surely, the Stranger asserts, we cannot just say that what is, is not. Yet we say "not-being" as if it were a singular; we say "not-beings" in the plural. We agree that not-being is unutterable and inconceivable, and yet we speak the words; in short, in the act of saying we cannot say it, we are saying it (238 c). This is the dark hole into which the Sophist retreats when we try to refute him, for, if we say that an opinion of his is false, we assert that it is-not true, and in so doing, we assert that it is-not, and he therby chides us on this contradiction (239 d). This is precisely what happens if we ask him what an image is. "How can I describe an image except as _another_ made in the likeness of the true" (240 a). But if it is _other_ than the true, it is _other_ than what is, and hence it is-not. The Stranger then begs not to be accused of patricide, for, if they are to catch the Sophist in their dialectical trap, the philosophy of Parmenides must be put to the test (241 d). In a certain sense, we must say that not-being is, and being is-not.

The Stranger then says that the predicament in which they now find themselves is due to the fact that the former philosophers treated their hearers with disdain, as if dealing with children. They followed their arguments where-ever they led and left the children to wonder at their meanings, because they spoke in myths, among which he classes the One and the Many (242 e), the myths of strife

and peace, the three principles at war in the soul, the moist and the dry, and includes in this group the Ionian and Sicilian explanations in mythical garb (242 d). He says that a discussion of most of these myths may be deferred to a later occasion; at present, the chief of these will be discussed; the myth of the One and the Many.

The Stranger proceeds to recapitulate several of the points made in the Parmenides, citing this as the main difficulty among all those presented by the myth-makers. He shows that both the unity and the existence of a One cannot be the same parts, nor can any of the pairs of predicates be reduced to a simple identity, since, if one of a pair is chosen as being, the other must then be other than being, i.e., not-being (245 d).

The materialists who claim that only the tangible exists are then subjected to a critique. Their opponents are also brought forward, and these are the "friends of the Forms," who disolve tangible realities in a sea of corruption and generation. None of these schools, Plato tells us, are able to deal intelligently with the question now before them: the question of not-being. Having reached this point, Plato can no longer choose from existing alternatives. The Stranger says "Let us improve them, if we can" (245 e). The doctrine he develops to accomplish this improvement is the doctrine for which this dialogue is noted, the doctrine of not-being. It must be shown how justly this doctrine may

be said to constitute an advance, by comparing and contrasting it to earlier philosophies. For example, if, on the one hand, the materialists were to admit that there is a difference between things and thoughts, they would be forced to admit that there are some incorporeal existences, and if this were admitted, they could be asked whether being is common to both. If on the other hand, the friends of the Forms distinguish between what is and what is generated, both being and generation will have to share in something common, just as the materialists had to admit that something was common to things and thoughts (248 e). Now both the materialists and the friends of the Forms are caught. As soon as the friends of the Forms admit that knowing and being known are different, that one is active and one is passive, they will see that one is powerful, the other is not. Thus the Stranger suggests that Being is Power. If the friends of the Forms deny this, by claiming that knowing is only a motion as in generation, there will be no knowledge at all. So there must be motion in knowing. "And, Oh Heavens, can we ever be made to believe that motion and life and soul and mind are not present with Being. Can we imagine Being to be devoid of life and mind, and to remain in awful unmeaning and everlasting fixture" (248 e)? Clearly, they cannot. Therefore, "We must include motion under being, and that which is moved" (249b).

As we shall see, this is an important anticipation

of the <u>Timaeus</u>. And yet, if all things are in motion, there can be no sameness or permanence or relation to the same. The philosopher must be equally deaf to those who say all is in motion and to those who say there is no motion. Somehow, we must have both, yet somehow we can have neither alone. Further, if we have only a third, this third will not be either nor will it be both (250 b).

This is not the place for a long discussion of the Stranger's solution to this difficulty. We are interested only in its relevance to the themes of eternity, image, and time. Suffice it to say that, in the following brief summary, I am all too aware of the danger of flatly stating the results of a long philosophical process. However, brevity must be attempted.

We see, then, that being and not-being are equally perplexing. The Stranger suggests that we try to work out the doctrine of not-being, in the realm of predication. Can we say that all of the Forms indicated by names, of which there are thousands of pairs, can be mixed with each other, or only that some forms mix, or must we say that no forms mix (251 d).

These tentative conclusions are tested on the examples of grammar and music, where we see now that only some letters go with certain others, and only certain notes go with certain others. Similarly, he who develops the art which knows which of the forms go with which other

forms, is truly the philosopher, and the art of division is his art and his alone.

The philosopher knows that Rest and Motion, Same and Other, are the most general divisions of being, although he is hard to see by excess of light (254 a). (As we saw in the Republic cave). Rest and Motion do not communicate with each other, but being communicates with them both. Same and Other do not communicate with each other, but being communicates with them both. But Motion and Rest communicate with Same and Other, and therefore, Motion is both Same and Other than being. In other words, Motion is both being and not-being. And Rest is both being and not-being. And Same is both being and not-being. "Every class, than, has plurality of being and infinity of not-being" (256 e). And

> Whereas, we have not only shown that things which are not exist, but we have also shown what form of being not-being is; for we have shown that the nature of the other exists and is distributed over all things in their mutual relations, and when each part of the other is contrasted with being, that is precisely what we have ventured to call not-being (258 e).

There is one last refuge, the realm of images, into which the Sophist will now try to escape. The Sophist will contend that only some images partake of falsity, but the ones that he uses do not. Images are again divided, as before, into two sorts, the images which are like the original in proportion, and the others, which are fantasies and distortions. If the art of philosophical division will

be applied to images, the Sophist will be deprived of his last refuge (264 e).

Since images are either divinely produced or humanly produced (265 b), the Stranger himself suggests that they discuss divinely produced images at greater length.

> Looking now at the world and all the animals and plants which grow upon the earth from seeds and roots, and at inanimate substances which form within the earth, fusile or non-fusile, shall we say that they come into existence, not having existed previously, in any way but by creation of God, or shall we agree with vulgar opinion about them (265 c)?

Notice that the creation of the world is spoken in a context of a division of images, not of Forms. Plato will expand on this point at much greater length when he reaches the Timaeus, but now, since Theatetus agrees with him the Stranger says he will postpone this extended discussion: right now he wants to trap the Sophist, once and for all.

We now confront, yet again, a divided line. But, like the previous discussion of images, it is a more developed doctrine than it was in the Republic. Having divided image-making into human and divine, we now must divide images into genuine images and fantasies (266 e). Thus, there are both human and divine images, and human and divine fantasies. As an example of divine images which are genuine, we have the whole world of things. As an example of fantasies, we have shadows caused by things interrupting firelight, as in the analogy of the cave.

Human images can be seen in those genuine imitations which preserve the proportions of the originals, as for example in true speech. The next subdivision, false images, or human fantasies, is found to be the realm of the Sophist.

One further division remains. He who imitates and knows that he imitates genuinely, is not a Sophist, but a philosopher. It is the Sophist who imitates fantasies.

Summary

What have we learned from this dialogue, with reference to the themes of eternity, image, and time. Obviously, the most significant doctrinal advances were made with respect to images, where we learn that their production is both a human and a divine art. But more deeply, it has emerged that not-being cannot be divided absolutely from being, and that the entire realm of things is suffused with both being and not-being. One is tempted to assert that the gap between the realms of eternity and time has been closed, but Plato has not explicitly said this and the adoption of this conclusion would be premature. What has been explicitly shown is that the Parmenidean isolation of the One, beyond all predication and therefore beyond all time is unfruitful, and Plato has advanced beyond the Parmenidean position. The realm of the Forms cannot be a separate realm, as it was described in foregoing dialogues. Just as we have advanced from a faulty conception of being through a notion of not-being, so we have advanced from a

faulty notion of the realm of the Forms through notions of what the Forms are not. Of time, we are told little in an explicit way. But one should notice that the Parmenidean "queer instant," what we have called "not-time" has been generalized, for the Sophist shows that not-being is to being what not-time is to time.

The Statesman

The participants of this dialogue begin their dialectical search for the definition of the Statesman, utilizing the method of division developed in the Sophist. But, the Eleatic Stranger now cautions the hearers not to divide arbitrarily and too quickly, but to make sure that the divisions they follow in the argument are real divisions into real classes, and not arbitrary divisions for which names are invented.

The general point deserves to be underscored. Plato is reminding us that division which proceeds only in haste to reach a fore-ordained conclusion is sophistic. Such a division ignores the fact, established in the Sophist, that not all classes communicate with each other, and so division must follow the lines which mark off real classes from fantasies. "We must not attempt too general a division of the class..." (263 e). "More haste...(means)...less speed" (264 b). It is especially necessary to draw out the implication that an empirical acquaintance with classes of objects is necessary for the process of right division.

The dialogue proceeds with the method of dividing until it reaches the conclusion that the Statesman is he who uses the predictive art of knowledge, runs herds of living things, which live on land, who are hornless, who do not interbreed with other classes of animals, and who are two-footed. But the Stranger is not satisfied (267a,b,c). For, unlike the shepherd, the Statesman's right to rule is disputed by the herd. A new beginning must be made. The Stranger announces that he will approach the subject by employing a myth. But the Stranger says that his tale is not to be a retelling of the familiar myth of Kronos, but the Stranger's own version, which, he says, is the basis of all such stories. In so saying, Plato undercuts the myths he has told in the preceding dialogues, from the myth of Er in the _Republic_, through and including the One and Many, which he presents and criticises, respectively, in the _Parmenides_ and the _Sophist_. We shall see that even the myth of Kronos shall be transcended in the _Timaeus_.

The Stranger tells us that the universe was once helped in its rotation by the god who framed it in the beginning, but that it completed its circle of rotation and then set itself in rotation in the opposite direction. It did so of its own natural _necessity_, which the Stranger will now explain (269 d).

It is the only prerogative of divine things to be steadfast and abiding, but the universe, since it partakes

of the bodily, cannot enjoy this rank. However, as far as possible, it will have uniform rotation (269 e), and rotation in reverse is at least in a uniform direction, which is as close to the divine as it can be. Even the divine god could not change this direction for it would violate eternal decrees. Therefore, there are many things we cannot say of this universe: neither that it revolves entirely by itself, nor that the god revolves it in its entirety, nor that a pair of divinities revolve it in opposite directions (270 a). In one era it is moved by the god and has its own sort of immortality, in another era it revolves by itself of its own momentum.

At the time when the reversal of rotation takes place, human life experiences great changes. The course of life itself reverses, and the old grow younger and younger become children and finally wither away (270 e). On the other hand, the race of earth-born men, long dead, now are reborn out of the earth, as they were in the former rotation (271 c).

Since a reversal of motion takes place at both the restoration of proper motion and at the onset of reversal, the Stranger tells about the time when the universe was helped in its rotation by the god. In that era, all things came about without men's labor. When this god was shepherd, there were no political constitutions and no personal possession of wives or children, since all men rose up

fresh out of the earth with no memories. (This is the analogue of the "waters of forgetfulness" in the myth of Er). Neither did they need clothing or beds but disported themselves in the open. Such was the reign of Kronos (272b).

"The crucial question is-did the nurselings of Kronos make a right use of their time" (272 b)? They certainly had the opportunity to engage in philosophy, since they had the requisite leisure, and if they did, their happiness would be a thousandfold greater than ours. "Be that as it may, let us leave this question aside until we find some-one (Timaeus?) who can inform us accurately whether or not their hearts were set on gaining knowledge and engaging in discussion" (272 d).

When the era of Kronos came to an end, the drastic experiences of reversal of motion again took place. The god released his helping hand and a great shock went through the earth. It tried to follow out the instructions given to it by its father, but gradually the bodily element gained sway, and it approached the primordial chaos out of which it had been fashioned (273 b). At this moment, the god again beholds it, and seeing its time of trouble, again resumes the helm.

But we are not now in the era of Kronos. It has now been ordained that the universe must take sole responsibil-ity for its course, and, following and imitating the change in the universe, all things have to change, and, in particular, a new law of birth and nurture is now binding

on all creatures (274 a). Since we do not have this guardianship of the god to follow, but, "imitating the universe and following it through all time, we live and grow at one time in this way and at another time in that" (274 e). As we shall see, the Timaeus advances beyond these doctrines, especially beyond this particular doctrine of necessity.

The relevance of this myth to the definition of the Statesman is now revealed by the Stranger. Since there are, in either era of rotation, men who were sired in the former era, we must be careful to look for the right models of the Statesman. In the era of the gods' rule, the shepherds experience no strife, since all is in harmony; but in the subsequent era, the shepherd is forced of necessity to care for a strife-torn flock. Which of these is the Statesman most like (275 a)?

Before answering this, let us note that there are several features of the myth of Kronos, as the Stranger composes it, which pertain to our tracing the themes of time, image, and eternity. We are told that the universe is framed by inserting order into chaos, that time is governed by the motion of the revolving universe, and that the bodily element is the cause of the corruption and decay of an era. This would seem to reverse the claim of the mature character of the Statesman, since it resembles the doctrine of bodily imperfection, an early doctrine. However,

it is a children's tale, and, as we shall see, Plato will not allow it to pass without criticism. The most important feature, for our purposes, is the intimacy with which the notion of right rule is connected with the right time and the right revolution of the spheres. We have come far from the bland assertion that there is a single pattern laid up in heaven which he who is willing can easily discern. Now we are charged with the need to see how right order in the state is dependent on the order of the heavens because they are linked by time. We should further note the _Statesman's_ anticipation of the _Timaeus_ in its description of the demiurge and the world soul in the universe described as a living creature.

It emerges that the whole reason for the recounting of the Kronos myth was to show that the first image of the Statesman was incorrect, because it really represented a Statesman from the wrong cosmic cycle, innapropriate to the cycle we are now following (275). The shepherd of the other cycle is much more like a divine shepherd, whereas our cycle seems to produce tyrants. Even so, the myth of Kronos is insufficient, and it is said to be too long. It was assumed that a grand myth was necessary, as fitting kingly responsibility, but, as usual, we went too fast in our haste to arrive at a definition (277 b).

The Stranger admits that it is difficult to explain anything without the use of examples, and he is now in the

strange predicament of using examples to explain his doctrine of examples (277 d)! The familiar pedagogical device of the alphabet is again resuscitated, and the use of known syllables next to unknown syllables is put forward as an instance in which similarities and differences can be distinguished (278 b). Our own mind reacts the same way to the letters with which the universe is spelled out. (Again, the cosmological concern) The Stranger admits however, that notwithstanding his familiarity with the letters in one combination it is difficult to recognize them in another setting (278 d).

Another analogy is introduced, and this time it is the weaver's art. A long semi-technical discussion of weaving arrives at the fact that the weaver is a uniter, but he needs the carder, who separates fibers, so that the weavers art consists of both separating and combining (283b). In other words, the proper art of dialectic consists in the skillful handling of both the warp and the woof of being, or, as we saw in the Sophist, the correct analysis of being and not-being. It is noteworthy that the Stranger here, as he did in the Sophist, agrees to supply the divisions, or else the argument would have become interminable. Here is another hint that he who uses the method of division must know in advance where he is going, a point which the men of flux advanced. But, instead of confronting this objection head-on, the Stranger attacks it from

another direction; through the question of relative measure, of excess and of defect.

It is quickly ascertained that if the greater is greater only by relation to the smaller, and the smaller is smaller only by relation to the greater, there is no way to say what is right in itself (283 e). Therefore, there must be a standard of measure to which they both approximate in some way. (And so the Forms are reasserted). In the same manner, if there were no standard, there would be no way of dividing the unjust from the just man, nor, for that matter, would it be possible to discern the right practice of any art. "Must we not do now what we had to do when we discussed the Sophist. We felt constrained there to admit that what is not-x nevertheless exists..." (284 b). So there must be two standards of measure, one having to do with measures relative to each other, and the second those which "comprise arts concerned with due measure, due occasion, due time, due performance, and all such standards as have removed their abode from the extremes and are now settled about the mean" (284 e). This seems to refer to the Pythagoreans, who assert that measure has to do with all things brought into being, but who fail to see that there are two sorts of measure, and who therefore are prohibited from seeing that there are real classes of things with affinities for one another, just as there are real differences between some things which therefore have no affinity for one another (285 a,b,c). It is necessary

to divide according to real classes, not merely to divide every item from every other. This is another recapitulation of the <u>Sophist</u>: only some forms communicate with each other.

This view is asserted in another way when the Stranger says,

> Some of the things that have true existence and are easy to understand have images in nature which are accesible to the senses, so that when someone asks for an account of any one of them, one has no trouble at all-one can simply point to the sensible image and dispense with any account in words. But to the highest and most important class of existents (being) there are no corresponding images, no work of nature clear for all to look upon (285 e).

In short, the classes of being have images, but being itself does not. The important political corollary of this becomes evident in the Stranger's description of the unlikelihood of the many ever achieving the art of state-craft, since the true science of statecraft is like the true science of being: it has no images, and it would be quite out of the question to look for fifty kings at any one time (292 e).

It is important here to comment on what has been said about the lack of images of being, for, at first sight, it seems to contradict the trend we have been tracing through the late dialogues. Plato has told us (in the <u>Sophist</u>) that only some of the classes of being communicate with each other, and he reminds us of it here. When he says that there are no images of being, he seems to mean, that there are no sensory images for the sort of

pure unmixed being which Parmenides described. But we have already seen another sort of being in the Sophist. The lack of images, then, pertains to the classes of being, not to being as such nor to beings as such.

I do not wish to enter into a lengthy exegesis of the Statesman concerning law and political philosophy. Let it suffice here to write that the Statesman should posess the true art of law-making, that this art depends on his real knowledge, of which the laws will be images, and that he shall have to weave the special knowledge of the special departments of life together as best he can, for he can best do so. Those who follow those laws, and who know them to be images, live in Justice. Those who follow the laws and do not know they are images, at least follow a just life unknowingly (291-300).

The final task of the dialogue is to describe how the life of the state is woven by the Statesman. We are confronted with the daring statement that the virtues which comprise the state are, in contradistinction to those described in the Republic, not at harmony with each other, which means that the several parts of goodness are actually not in accord (306 c). What is the Statesman to do about this? He is to establish a training program to bring out the best qualities of future citizens, some of whom will have opposite virtues. He weaves both sorts into the fabric of the state, some forming the warp and some forming the woof. This training program "first unites that

element in their soul which is eternal, by a divine bond, since it is akin to the divine. After this divine bond, it will in turn unite their animal nature by human bonds" (309 b). In short, the Statesman will implant in every citizen in the state what we would call a sense of values, whether they understand them to be of eternal origin or not, and he will accomplish the insertion of this warp by a clever weaving of the woof, the human element. In this way, citizens will at least imitate, albeit unknowingly, their right measure and true standard. More specifically, the Statesman will require those who give evidence of divine wisdom to intermarry with those who seem without it, and so interweave the divine and the human. Thus for example, instead of inbreeding a race of warriors who will eventually get out of hand by sheer power of zeal, or, on the other hand, inbreeding a race of perennial moderates who never dare to invent, the Statesman will see to it that there are cross fertilizations of these two breeds. In this way the best weave is had, which marries the gentle to the brave. Socrates ends the dialogue by saying "You have drawn to perfection, sir, the image of the true king and statesman" (311 c).

Summary

After a rather comical beginning, the Statesman quickly discards the first definition of the Statesman. The Myth of Kronos is put between it and the next attempt,

and its results are that the Statesman must have a real knowledge of the rotation of the universe in order to ascertain the right time for the right kind of image of the ruler. There are certain necessities of cosmic motion which must be imitated in the ruler's art. The Pythagoreans are chided for their remorseless division without regard for real classes and true dialectic.

But perhaps the clearest indication of Plato's development of the themes of eternity, image, and time in this dialogue is to be found in the view that the true Statesman is he who weaves the being and not-being of opposing virtues into the fabric of the state, an eternal warp and a temporal woof, which are to be interbred via marriage across real classes.

Two themes stand out as clear anticipations of the Timaeus: the concern for cosmological time, in the myth of Kronos, and the introduction of the sexual allegory, which, as we shall see, in the Timaeus, is generalized.

However, before we reach the Timaeus, we must see how the Philebus treats these themes.

The Philebus

If one approaches the Philebus with the expectation that it will deal with some of the topics of the Statesman in a more developed manner, its opening passages seem to be anachronistic, for the dialogue begins with a discussion of the relative merits of pleasure and wisdom (11 a), subjects

discussed in great detail in the Republic. But it soon becomes apparent that the discussion will be anything but a simple repetition. For example, when Socrates asks whether there might not be a third state even better than pleasure or wisdom, or whether some mixture of the two is preferable, we see that the theme of mixture, as introduced in the Sophist and evolved in the Statesman, is actually to be reexamined in the context of an ethical inquiry.

It is agreed that there are many pleasures, each of which differ from the others. This simple observation serves to reintroduce the problem of the One and the Many on an ethical level, and with this reintroduction, we will be confronted with the modifications and developments which the subjects of pleasure and wisdom must receive in the light of Plato's later reflections. Thus, it is agreed that unity and diversity of pleasures is "the same old argument" (13 c). Somehow, the unity and diversity of pleasure must be understood, not in the old way, but in a new way. The key to the new way is the principle of Difference.

It is said that this principle of Difference is a marvel of nature because it asks us to affirm that "one would be many or many one" (13 e). No one any longer argues that it is marvelous to assert that Socrates is many and one because he has many limbs but is only one Socrates: everyone has agreed to dismiss this as childish (14 d).

Here the initial impression of anachronism fades completely, for the passage clearly asserts that it is childish to continue to play on the words "one" and "many" now that the Parmenides and the Sophist and the Statesman have advanced so far beyond this verbal naivete. He who asserts that the One or the Beautiful or the Good have a real existence which in some way is beyond generation or destruction, introduces a problem of far greater import than the problem of matching names and things (15 a). For, if these Forms are real, and if they are always the same, or if they are said to have a permanent individuality, he who asserts these propositions is dealing with matters of greater depth than seems at first apparent. In the same way, if one asserts that these Forms can be dispersed and multiplied in the world of generation and the endless number of things which compose this world, he involves himself in a difficulty, for he seems to assert that the Forms are at once what they are in themselves and at the same time in the world of many things (15 c). In short, he who asserts that there are many pleasures and who says at the same time that Pleasure is a One, involves himself in the difficulties of "the old argument" and since the old argument has not been resolved, one cannot pretend that it is a simple assertion when he says that there are many pleasures, all of which are Pleasure.

To put the matter in our own way, we should say that the statement "there are many pleasures, each of which

shares in the idea of Pleasure" involves all of the difficulties which Plato has been examining in the *Parmenides*, the *Sophist*, and the *Statesman*. In short, we are confronted with nothing less than a philosophical summary of the problems and doctrines which Plato confronted in the late dialogues.

Notice that it is openly admitted that the verbal assertion of both the unity and the diversity of Socrates is "childish," and no longer a cause for wonder. The whole world is said to know this now. Plato seems to be saying here that there are deeper issues at stake than the linguistic gymnastics these issues first created. True, these questions will be discussed, but their resolution will take place on a higher plane than it had heretofore. As usual, Plato begins a difficult investigation by focusing on the practical face of the deeper problem. Notice too that these questions about pleasure and wisdom are not mere allegories or childrens' stories; they are the points of departure. Plato intends, as we shall see, to apply the method of division, which he has been perfecting in the *Sophist* and the *Statesman*, to the questions of ethical import involved in a discussion of pleasure and wisdom and their relative merits. But in addition to applying the method, he will perfect it further, and greater insight into the method as well as its applicability will be reached. It is no longer possible to begin with the simple

separation of the One and the Many, because the method of division has gone beyond this level of simplicity.

The One and the Many, therefore are said to "run about everywhere together, in and out of every word" (15 d). Therefore, we must not divide too quickly between the One and the Many, or run too quickly from the Many to the One. The endless number of the Many is a kind of infinity, that is, a lack of determined specificity, or, in another sense, a vague and indefinite formlessness.

> The infinite must not be allowed to approach the many until the entire number of species intermediate between unity and infinity has been found out-then and not until then may we rest from division (16 e).

The familiar analogy of the alphabet is offered, and it is agreed that every sound we utter is both one and infinite, that is, a sound is at once just _this_ sound, but in another sense it is only _a_ sound, which by itself has no meaning, just as letters by themselves have no meaning until they are related to each other in words. But the precise knowledge of the number and nature of each sound is the special province of the grammarian (17 b), just as the precise knowledge of tones and their intervals is the province of the musician (17 c).

In this way, Plato seems to say quite clearly that the way to knowledge is neither the addition of elements to each other without regard to the kinds of relations these elements must have to be intelligible, nor the

simple recitation of the name we give to them to create the appearance of their simple unity.

Since these themes were treated in the Statesman it seems reasonable to place the Philebus after it. It was necessary to insert this point here because the degree of unanimity with which the scholars agree that the Statesman succeeds the Sophist is not had in the placement of the Philebus after the Statesman. It seems now that the Philebus can be read more intelligently by placing it after the Statesman but before the Timaeus, but we shall have to see whether this is true after reading the Timaeus.

The method of division, as developed in the Statesman, is summoned here in the Philebus to do service in the quest for the nature of pleasure and the nature of wisdom. We have seen that Plato regards Unity as the dialectical opposite of infinity, which, for him, means the indeterminite vagueness or an unspecific description of an element, without some account of its manner of relation to its fellows. In this respect, it is striking to note a brief allegory of the god Theuth, whom the Egyptians describe as the author and divider and enumerator of sounds in music and grammar (18 d). As we shall see, the Timaeus will test the method of division on a cosmic scale in a tale similarly attributed to an Egyptian priest.

In any event, the problem now is not merely to assert the unity and the infinity of number, or pleasure,

or wisdom, but to ascertain the kinds of each, and, by implication, the Unity, Likeness, Sameness _and_ the opposites in everything (19 b). Whereas Socrates once preferred to discuss the Forms and to avoid the realm of things, he does not fear to enter into this latter problem now, because, just at this instant, some god appears to have given him a new memory (20 b).

Socrates quickly convinces Philebus that he would not even have full pleasure if he did not also have mind and memory and knowledge, because, without them, he would not know whether he was experiencing pleasure. Similarly if he had no memory he would not remember pleasure, which is also pleasant, nor, without "true opinion" would he be able to perceive present pleasures. In the same way, had he no knowledge, he would be unable to calculate future pleasures (21 b). Similarly, a life of mind without pleasure or pain would be unfeeling. Therefore, somehow we must have both in a union, which is a kind of third (22 a). But, on this account, neither pleasure nor wisdom can be the good, which was decided (at 19) to be the most perfect. Socrates exempts divine mind from this refutation, admitting only that human minds are excluded from exclusive posession of the Good (22 c). For, the divine mind may turn out to be the cause of the three, and, in that case, it will be a fourth. There may even be a fifth, but that will be discussed later.

When we say something is hotter or colder, we make a comparison, and such comparisons are always relative, admitting of degrees, and this is an endless business because such measures suggest no way to establish a stable measure. Thus, the class of all such comparatives includes an infinite, i.e., an unlimited number. However, the <u>class</u> of unnumbered things itself <u>is</u> the unity of such comparatives (25 a). On the other hand, its opposite, the class of all numbered things, admits quantity and is therefore finite, or limited, and here too, the class itself is the unity of these (25 b).

Now, let them be mixed and let the offspring of these two classes be inspected. For out of their union comes a third class which has been generated by their mixture, and it includes all things so generated by the limitation of the unlimited (26 d). Further, the cause of this union is not the same as any of the three classes so achieved, and it therefore must be a fourth class (27 b). The problem is to ascertain which class pertains to mind, for, obviously, pleasure is of the first class since it always admits of degree. In this regard, the question is raised:

> ...whether all of this which they call the universe is left to the guidance of an irrational and random chance, or, on the contrary, as our fathers have declared, ordered and governed by a marvelous intelligence and wisdom...Wide asunder are the two assertions, Socrates, for that which you are now saying is blasphemy; but the other assertion, that mind orders all things, is worthy of the respect of

> the world, and of the sun, and of the moon, and of the whole circle of the heavens;...(28 d).

Here, quite obviously, is a clear anticipation of the Timaeus. In addition, we are next presented with an analysis of the elements of bodies, which are said to be the traditional fire, air, water and earth, and, just as before, the mere enumeration of their discreteness does not explain their unity, for they are united in a body (29 d). The further point is that the universe too consists of these elements but it too is a unity. And of course, it would be folly to assert that the unity of the universe depends on our bodies; rather, we depend on its unity. The analogy is carried further, because we know that we have souls, and, in the same way, we must assert that our souls depend on the soul of the universe. Further, as bodies consist of four elements, so the four classes previously discovered may be considered as these elements; that is, the unlimited, the limited, their offspring, mixture, and the cause of their union, are in fact the true meanings of fire, air, earth and water. The universal fire which is the cause of our fire is the hidden meaning of mind as the cause of the universe (30 d). So we must conclude that the universe consists of four elements and that we are similarly constructed, and our construction depends on its.

Fire, earth, water, and land correspond to the unlimited, limited, mixture and cause. It is not said

which elements correspond to which elements, but it is clear that mind corresponds to fire, both in us and in the universe. It goes without too much comment that this doctrine goes beyond a simple Heracliteanism or Pythagoreanism or Anaxagoreanism, or Anaximandereanism. It is, in my view, the seed of the more exact and detailed view which we shall find in the Timaeus.

In the remainder of the dialogue, there is a delineation and cross comparison of the types of pleasure and pain, including the cognate emotions, and desires. It would be tempting to enter into a detailed commentary on this section of Plato's philosophy to show some of its origins or that certain doctrines of the modern giants of depth psychology are deeply in Plato's debt. However, our purpose here is to trace three themes insofar as Plato treats them explicitly. Perhaps a short summary will not be too deficient.

Just as there are four classes of elements which enter into the composition of the body and of the universe, so there are four classes to be discerned in the discussion of pleasure. However, it is more complicated here, since there are four classes of pleasures, four of pains, four of emotions, four of desires, and the intermixture of each of these with every other gives rise to innumerable variety. Plato himself does not even attempt an exhaustive treatment. What is significant for our purposes is the treatment of

memory and perception. We saw in the Sophist and the Statesman that certain images could be false while others could be true. In the realm of feeling, the feelings attendant upon true or false images will be correspondingly true or false. Thus Plato develops the significant ethical dictum that pleasures (or pains or emotions) though felt, may be false. We meet again the artist in the soul (imagination) which sometimes correctly and sometimes incorrectly inscribes the memory-images of past, present, and future experiences (39 a). Thus, the question of images, irrevocably linked to the tenses of imagination, is, in the Philebus, introduced into the discussion of pleasure, pain, and emotion. Again, since the number of combinations of pleasures, whether unlimited, or limited or mixed or causative, is innumerable, the multiplication of this innumerable number by the three tenses adds an exponential innumerability. Had he wanted, Plato could have trebled and then quadrupled the exponent by the introduction of the intermediary tenses of becoming, and then quintupled the whole by using the middle voice of his native grammar. However, he assures us that he has not forgotten his own former dialogues, when he says "...for any class to be alone and in perfect solitude is not good nor altogether possible" (63 b).

The end of the dialogue, interpreted in the light of the gradual growth of Plato's thought through the late

group, is striking, for it asserts unequivocally that neither mind and wisdom nor pleasure and pain are simply superior to one another: there must be mixture. Formerly, mind and knowledge of the forms would have been indubitably best; now, mixture is necessary. However, this is not to be interpreted as a simple linear progression, because, as we shall see in the Timaeus, what is necessary and what is good are not due to comparable causes and are not therefore subject to the same criterion for choosing which is better. It may well be that what is better is unfortunately not what is necessary.

Summary

There are unmistakable hints in the Philebus that the dialogue which succeeds it will take up certain strands of Pythagorean logic and develop them further, as for example the whole question of the manner in which the cause of mixture accomplishes its business, or, as another example, the application of the method of division to the universe, which was only briefly and partially done in this dialogue.

This much, however is certain. The Philebus begins with the extension of the method of division to the realm of pleasure and knowledge of pleasure. The purist position that either pleasure or mind must be affirmed as the best is abandoned as "childish" and as an "old argument," which, it is agreed, no longer captures philosophic interest.

The isolated eternality of the forms, modified by the *Sophist* and the *Statesman*, is further modified by the assertion that pleasures or any Form or class cannot be both good and alone.

Lastly, the familiar doctrine of the aviary of images is maintained, and developed insofar as it is now employed to explain the basis of false pleasures, feelings, and emotions. A beginning is made into the physiology of reminiscence and an intimate connection is drawn between such a physiology and the first outlines of a concrete cosmology. For this intimate connection and a fuller description of the relations between a psychogeny and a cosmogeny, we must look to the *Timaeus*.

Summary of the Chapter

Tracing the hypothesized modification and development of the tripartite theme of eternity-image-time through the *Republic*, *Parmenides*, *Theatetus*, *Sophist*, *Statesman*, and *Philebus*, it emerges that Plato's treatment of these topics is not a simple linear progression. I think I have shown that these themes are, in fact, treated together wherever discussion of any one of them is broached, and that to speak of one involves the need to speak of the others.

From the eternal realm of the Forms and the shadow-like copies of them in the *Republic*'s cave, we saw the initial doctrine of the Forms of the middle dialogues

subjected to the criticism of the <u>Parmenides</u>. There we are told that the naive view of the Forms as separated from what appears to us leads to logically untenable positions, from a series of unreal instants to hypostasizing non-existence. A hint of the doctrine of not-time emerges. The <u>Theatetus</u> informs us that we must examine the reality of moving images, as if the results of perception were flying birds in an aviary-like memory. The <u>Sophist</u> examines not-being and concludes with the extraordinary assertion that not-being in some way is, so that the artificial separation of the world into what is either eternal or temporal, agreed to be inadequate in the <u>Parmenides</u>, is now shown, not only to be inadequate, but to be impossible. Things are not isolated absolutes sharing in isolated absolute Forms, for images have their own sort of reality. The <u>Statesman</u> acknowledges that this reality of images must be generalized beyond a psychological doctrine, and implies that there might well be cosmic images, which are better and more intelligible than the myths and fables of the historical story-tellers. The <u>Philebus</u> shows that there are far-reaching ethical implications of this doctrine, and especially, leads to a discussion of the cause (s) of mixed classes and mixed realities.

In short, from an initial position which asserted the realm of Forms to be eternally separated from the world of moving images, Plato comes to assert that moving

images have a reality which is in no way to be despised or neglected in favor of a naively-viewed eternity. The world of time and the moving images in it cannot be intelligently separated from the eternal.

This is not to say that the eternal and the temporal are the same world, or that a simple blending or a denial of existence to one or the other is Plato's conclusion. On the contrary, only by the careful dialectical investigation of the differences between eternity and time can their relations be spelled out with any philosophical accuracy.

However, it remains to spell out this relationship of Forms, images, and times. To qualify as a genuine evolution, such a treatment will have to synthesize all that has gone before, in a way which will not excise any real progress made before it. This means that there will have to be a discussion of the psychology of knowledge as well as a cosmology of being, and that these two preponderant interests will have to be united in a way which spells out their intimate relation. This is exactly what the *Timaeus* will do. If the *Timaeus* accomplishes this task, it follows that the *Timaeus* should be regarded as a later dialogue and that we should find in it a new synthesis of the doctrines of eternity, image, and time.

CHAPTER IV

THE TIMAEUS

I The Introductory Conversation (17a-27b)

We have seen in the foregoing two chapters that the *Timaeus-Critias-Laws* is the last group of writings to which Plato devoted his attention. The argument was divided into two logically interrelated parts: first, tradition, stylistic researches, biography, and autobiography led to the conclusion of the second chapter that the *Timaeus* was actually written late; second, the gradual modification and development of the doctrine of the middle period, as exemplified by the *Republic*, was traced through the *Parmenides*, *Theatetus*, *Sophist*, *Statesman*, and *Philebus* in the third chapter. We shall now investigate how the *Timaeus* synthesizes the themes of eternity, image, and time in a new and more unified way.

Because of the sheer bulk of commentary we shall make on the doctrines of the *Timaeus*, the reader will find two chapters devoted to this last dialogue. The present chapter deals with the introductory remarks to the dialogue and to the introductory remarks which Timaeus delivers as a prelude to his rather extended monologue. The next chapter examines the relations of eternity, image, and time in the light of the purposes which the introductory portions of the dialogue reveal. The introductory remarks

found in the Timaeus set the foundations, not only for Plato's later philosophy of time but also for the functional significance this philosophy has in relation to Plato's view of the best possible society.

The first hint that the Timaeus will interest itself in temporal questions comes in the list of persons who are scheduled to hold the dialectical conversation. We know that Critias was the name shared by Plato's grandfather and his great-grandfather. His grandfather was a poet in his own right and a collector of constitutions, and his great-grandfather was associated with Solon.[1] We note that Hermocrates, a general famous for his defense of Athens and for his attempt to establish a just regime in Syracuse, is also scheduled to speak.[2] We note the presence of Socrates, who has spoken relatively little in the late group of dialogues, but who reappeared in the Philebus. And finally, we note Timaeus of Locri, an Italian city well-governed by Pythagoreans.

Here is a strange assembly; Critias is a very old man of considerable political experience in Athens; Timaeus is a Pythagorean Stranger who is in Athens for the festival of Athena; Hermocrates is an Athenian general distinguished in the Peloponnesian War; and we note that Socrates is now

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[1] A.E. Taylor, Plato: The Man and His Work, p. 2.

[2] Cornford, Plato's Cosmology, p. 2.

described as a very old man. One might almost conclude from this cast alone that questions about the morality of ancient Athenian politics will be discussed.

Socrates opens the dialogue. His discussion of "yesterday" is a "recapitulation"[3] of some of the doctrines of the Republic, (books II-VI) namely, the description of the farmers, craftsmen, and guardians who make up the "best form of society" (17c). The occupational specialization which alloted one and only one role to each individual citizen because he was best fitted for one and only one role, is restated as a reminder of "yesterday's conversation." The statement is made that this brief recapitulation leaves nothing out and is an exact description of the contents of yesterday's conversation. Thus, one should not conclude that this recapitulation includes the entire contents of the Republic, for this would create a manifest contradiction. The Republic conprises ten books, much of which are not recapitulated here. Quite obviously, something has been left out, and Socrates implies clearly that he intends to discuss only those doctrines which he has summarized above. One might add, however, that the recapitulation does deal with those doctrines of the Republic which are central to the whole dialogue, namely, the occupational specialization of three classes of citizens,

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[3] Gauss, Philosophischer Handkommentar zu den Dialogen Platos, p. 157.

who do not mix the functions of the others into their own allotted lives, just as the Forms on which their respective perfections are based do not mix or combine.

Socrates says that the description of these citizens (of the Republic) makes him feel like "a man who has been looking at some noble creatures in a painting, or perhaps at real animals, alive but motionless, and conceives a desire to watch them in motion and actively exercising the powers promised by their form" (19b,c).

Two features of this statement are particularly remarkable. First, we notice Socrates' apparent indecision as to whether he is looking at a painting (a mere copy) or at real animals who are motionless (a genuine image but motionless). Second, it is unusual to see Socrates admit his inability to extract the doctrine he seeks through his accustomed midwifery. These aspects of the introductory conversation hint that the Timaeus will attempt to go beyond earlier Socratic positions.

Socrates goes on at some length to spell out his precise inability, and he connects it explicitly with the firmness of his aged opinions about the poets (19d), although he stated in the Theatetus that he had no opinions of his own. He says that he does not mean to imply that he has a lowly opinion of the poets in general (which he had in the Republic) but he feels now that the good imitator (there are none such in the Republic) should be familiar

with the surroundings which he is going to imitate (19e). On the surface, this statement pertains to the history of ancient Athens; allegorically, it says that Socrates' viewpoint is not the one to be followed in this dialogue. Socrates does not usually speak of genuine imitation, for this sort of imitation is introduced by the Stranger in the Sophist. Just as the Sophists move about from city to city too often, and do not remain in any one city long enough to become familiar with it, so Socrates is said to be unfamiliar with the matters about to be discussed. Plato seems to say here in the gentlest way that he has great respect for his old teacher but that Socrates' viewpoint is not the most fruitful one for his present concern.

Timaeus, however, is a well-born citizen of Locri, which is a well-governed state, so he is better qualified to discuss the constitution of the society which Socrates would like to see in motion. Timaeus is better suited by reason of his philosophical training, and, in addition, he has the necessary qualifications for statesmanship which were described in the Statesman.

Hermocrates sets the foundation for the discourse by telling us that Critias remembers a story which bears directly on the trend of their discussion. It is a story of ancient Athens and the way she conducted herself in ancient times. It is said to be true on no less authority than Solon's own words, since Solon himself is said to have told the story to Critias' grandfather. The story had

been forgotten through lapse of time and the destruction of human lives by a catastrophe (20e).

Socrates inquires why the tale was not recorded, and Critias tells him that Solon had been forced to lay it aside because, after he had returned from Egypt, there were too many troubles in the city (21c). (If it is true that Plato himself traveled in Egypt, this statement might be interpreted as Plato's own excuse for not writing the Timaeus sooner because of the difficulties he himself experienced on his own return to Athens. The awe with which the origins of Athens would be regarded by its citizens would confront a writer of new legends about Athens with the need for a great deal of caution, and the reservation that there were too many political difficulties would serve as an excellent excuse, should Plato have felt the need for one).

Thus, the story of ancient Athens was not lost only because Solon did not have time to write it but also because of the intervention of a catastrophe which destroyed the actors in the drama. Solon says, however, that when he himself was travelling in Egypt, he was received with great respect, because the Egyptian priests who knew the ancient history of Athens claimed that there is a kinship between Athenians and Egyptians, and they even said that the name of their own city-god is the Egyptian word for Athena (21e). Solon was of course interested to hear about Athenian antiquity, and recounted for the Egyptians

the venerable legends with which he was familiar.

But the Egyptian priest sighs with benigh patience, and says, "Ah Solon, Solon, you Greeks are always children; in Greece there is no such thing as an old man" (22b).

This would be an interesting remark no matter what the chronology of the Timaeus, but, since the Timaeus is so late in the series of late dialogues, the remark becomes crucial. Several times in the preceding dialogues, the childishness of certain opinions is mentioned, and the rigours of dialectical discipline are extolled as the only remedy. In the Parmenides, Socrates' youth is blamed for the naivete of the early form-doctrine (130) and in the Theatetus (175) Socrates himself chides Theatetus for his youthful impatience. Plato used this form of criticism increasingly in the late dialogues, during which he came to realize that a certain maturity is prerequisite for right philosophy. Now we are told that no amount of individual or personal maturity is of consequence for the Greeks, for collectively they are all children. Here is a very definite indication that the sort of knowledge which Timaeus will put forward is not reachable by that heretofore most favored of philosophical paths, the doctrine of individual, personal reminiscence. In short, reflection is only the source of some knowledge, not of all. Taken in conjunction with the stated purpose of the dialogue, that is, the conditions of the best society, it delivers a fatal blow to the Socratic procedure of questioning

contemporaries. There are some things about which contemporaries have no knowledge, and it is necessary to know these things in order to describe the best society. One needs to know the origins of a society, and it is probable that one's contemporaries do not know this. This is precisely the difference between memory and history, and it constitutes a significant expansion of doctrine beyond the earlier dialogues. In earlier dialogues, myths were presented to perform the function of carrying the individual memory beyond its contemporary confines, but we saw in the *Sophist* that these myths (not all myths) were "childish."

In short, more than the maturity of the individual person is required for true knowledge of the best society; the best society requires its citizens to have a knowledge of its origins; allegorically, this translates into the need for a society to know its ultimate origins, and it is this interpretation which makes the *Timaeus*' relation of cosmology and sociology intelligible. In the process of tracing the historical antiquity of Athens, the *Timaeus* will discern the origins of the whole cosmos. As history includes memory, so cosmology includes sociology: this is the import of Timaeus' tale. And in both aspects of the proportion, the cardinal issue is the "amount" of time involved.

Solon, however, does not understand the appellation

"children," and inquires what the priest means when he says that he, Solon, an old man, is a "child." The priest explains that there are periodic catastrophes due to temporary deviations of the celestial bodies from their regular orbits, and that, at these times, the deviations bring about floods. These floods wreak havoc on most people but the Egyptians are saved by their irrigation system.[4] For this reason, the Egyptians have been able to maintain a continuous record which covers a period of 8,000 years, but the Athenians were destroyed in one of these periodic catastrophes, and therefore have no continuous records. Thus they had to begin afresh, like children, to trace their origins (22b-23d).

Solon is astonished, and asks for a more complete account of ancient Athens. The Egyptian priest responds willingly, saying that it is good for the city for him to tell the story. He says that Athens was founded by the goddess a thousand years before Egypt was founded, which means 9,000 years ago. Thus, according to the priest Solon's stories are nothing more than nursery tales since they recount only one deluge, when in fact there have been several. Furthermore, the priest says that the Athenians were once counted among the bravest of people in the era just before the last catastrophe, and that present

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[4] Cornford, op. cit., appendix, p. 365.

Athenians are descended from their seed. (24)

The priest describes the Egyptian caste system of priests, craftsmen, and soldiers, in which system each class performs one and only one function, and he adds that these contemporary Egyptian institutions are continuous with those olden days when the goddess instructed both Athens and Egypt in these ways. Furthermore, the laws of Egypt are said to reflect the "order of the world, deriving from those divine things the discovery of all arts applied to human affairs..." (24b). As we shall see, this is almost how Timaeus will describe the origin of all human arts.

There are other records which pertain to Athens, and the priest decides to inform Solon about one exploit in particular, the greatest which Athens ever performed; it is the fable of Atlantis (24e). The story recounts how Athens once vanquished foes who invaded her even after her allies had been defeated, and suggests that the invaders came from an island which has now vanished beneath the sea. Frutiger is not alone in the opinion that no such island ever existed, and concludes that it must be credited to Plato's imagination.[5] It is nevertheless fascinating to follow Cornford into the opinion that the island of Atlantis was the staging area for invaders who crossed the

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[5] P. Frutiger, Les Myths de Platon (Paris: 1930), pp. 244 ff.

Atlantic, perhaps from America.[6]

It is interesting to forecast the almost exact thematic parallel of the tale of the Egyptian priest and the tale which Timaeus will deliver. In both, the cosmological origins of the art of healing are described. Plato of course viewed the proper function of statecraft to be the healing of society, as, for example, in his repeated comparisons of the statesman to the physician.

Critias himself tells Socrates that he is surprised to notice how Socrates' story (the recapitulation of Republic doctrines) and the tale of Atlantis resemble each other in so many details (25e). Critias had expected that it would be difficult to find a basis for their conversation of today, and so he carefully rehearsed the story of Atlantis before he spoke it (26). He assures us that the tale is exactly as he heard it because he says,

> How true is the saying that what we learn in childhood has a wonderful hold on the memory. I doubt if I could recall everything I heard yesterday, but I should be surprised if I have lost any detail of this story told me so long ago (26b).

In addition to guaranteeing the accuracy of the tale, this remark of Critias tells us something else of equal importance, for it reminds us that his tale is introduced only as a basis of today's conversation, and as the raw material for the discourse of Timaeus. Critias himself says

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[6] Cornford, op. cit., p. 14.

he has only approached the main points when he says:

> We will transfer the state you (Socrates) described yesterday and its citizens from the region of theory to concrete fact; we will take the city of Athens and say that your imaginary citizens are those actual ancestors of ours of whom the priest spoke. They will fit perfectly and there will be no inconsistency in declaring them to be the real men of ancient times (26d).

Thus it seems to be Plato's purpose to see beyond the recapitulation of Republic doctrines which Socrates made in the beginning of the Timaeus, and this is confirmed by the statement that Critias' story will serve only as material for today's discourse. For, if Critias' story were not only the basis but was in fact the perfect match between Socrates imaginary realm and the ancient city of Athens, the dialogue could end here, with the conclusion that the Republic once existed. The doctrine of the Timaeus, however, concerns not only what the best society ought to be and what it was, but what is the origin of the best society and what is its basis.

Socrates agrees that fitting the Republic citizens into ancient Athenian society is a proper basis for today's discourse, and goes so far as to say that if this is not the basis, there can be no other (26e).

The plan of the projected trilogy is now revealed; Timaeus, who knows more of astronomy than anyone else present, will begin with the birth of the world and carry the account forward until he reaches the birth of man. Critias will start from the origin of man and carry the

account to the birth of Athens. In this way, the actual origins of society will be discovered. Interestingly, no mention is made of the proposed content of the _Hermocrates_. Once before, Plato hinted at a projected trilogy, and seems not to have completed the third dialogue. Perhaps, as before, we shall learn so much in the two dialogues that the third seems unnecessary.[7] Or perhaps Plato wrote the _Laws_ instead.[8] In any case, the point at issue is whether the fitting of the _Republic's_ citizens into the ancient Athenian _polis_ suffices to describe the origins and bases of the best society. It is agreed that Timaeus will account for the origin of man from his astronomical beginnings, and that this is necessary as a preliminary for the investigations into the actual origins of society.

One cannot therefore follow Taylor into the opinion that this introductory conversation is actually only an introduction to the _Critias_.[9] By extending this logic, the _Parmenides_ and _Theatetus_ are only introductions to the _Sophist_, and the _Sophist_ only an introduction to the

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[7] Q. Lauer, S.J., The Being of Non-Being in Plato's Sophist (unpublished manuscript; New York: Fordham University).

[8] Cornford, _op. cit._, p. 8.

[9] A.E. Taylor, _Plato: The Man and His Work_, p. 440.

Statesman, etc. Such a linearization of Plato's philosophy leaves everything behind in which case we should read only the *Laws* and dismiss all else as preliminary introduction.

In the next section, we shall confront Timaeus' own introduction, and as we shall see, he connects his remarks to the general introductory remarks we have just discussed.

II The Role of Image (27c-29d)

Timaeus invokes the blessings of the gods, as custom requires, but says that the other members of the conversation must also call upon their own powers, so that they can understand Timaeus' thoughts on the proposed theme (27c).

> The first distinction to be made is that between
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> what is always real and has no becoming and what it is which is always becoming and is never real. That which is apprehensible by thought with a rational account is the thing which is always unchangeably real; whereas that which is the object of belief together with unreasoning sensation is the thing that becomes and passes away, but never has real being (28a).

At first, this seems to be the familiar dichotomy between the eternal and the temporal, but it is not. In dividing the line of knowledge here, Plato deliberately accentuates the "top" and the "bottom," but leaves out the other intermediary divisions which he has established. In the Cave, opinion and false images were placed in between the Forms and mere sensation; in the *Theatetus*, right opinion was established; in the *Sophist*, genuine images; and in the Philebus, the need to mix the Forms and the four levels of knowledge. Thus the meaning of the sentences

which open this section of discourse are illuminated by a summary of the doctrines of some of the preceding dialogues.

This is confirmed by Timaeus' next sentence. He says,

> Again all that becomes must needs become by the agency of some cause, for without a cause nothing can come to be. Now whenever the maker of anything looks to that which is always unchanging and uses a model of that description in fashioning the form and quality of his work, all that he thus accomplishes must be good. If he looks to something that has come to be and uses a generated model, it will not be good (28b).

Here is a recapitulation of the preliminary doctrine of the good painter of the Sophist, where those imitations which faithfully represent the proportions of the original are good images, but those which distort the original are mere fantasies (234, 235). The main point here is that in the early dialogues, an imitation would necessarily falsify; in the late dialogues, an imitation must be carefully made in order to preserve the proportions of its model, and if it does so, it may properly be called good. This is especially true in the Philebus, where the cause of the mixture of elements is responsible for the quality of the mixture (27a). Here, Timaeus says that if the maker is to use a generated model (a copy of the original) he will be copying a copy, whereas he should copy the original, and by preserving its proportion, imitate genuinely.

This much could have been said in the Philebus, and was in fact said in other words. But now this doctrine must be generalized and tested on a cosmological scale. Therefore, Timaeus uses the phrase, "concerning the whole 'heaven' or

'world' (not heaven _and_ world)..." (27b), parenthetically adding that the name can be chosen to suit heaven itself. It is interesting to observe that the term heaven (_ouranos_) is now taken to be synonymous with the whole cosmos, whereas formerly, a strict division was made between heaven and the visible world. This foreshadows the entire theme of the dialogue, in which the former gap between heaven and earth is now to be supplanted by a richer and more meaningful relation.

Has this heaven, or universe, always been, or did it begin from some beginning? Timaeus answers his own rhetorical question by saying that it must have begun because it has a body and is apprehensible by sensation together with right opinion, and it was formerly established that those things which are so apprehensible are things which become and are generated. This refers to the _Theatetus_ where it was established that sensation and true opinion do have a measure of the truth but are not the sources of that truth, and to the _Sophist_, where it was established that images, if genuine, have a measure of truth because they are not absolutely not-being but have a reality of their own. The doctrine of the _Philebus_ is brought into the account in the next line where we read "But again that which becomes, we say, must necessarily become by the agency of some cause" (28c).

Next comes the often quoted statement "The maker and father of this universe it is a hard task to find, and

having found him it would be impossible to declare him to all mankind" (28c). This statement is absolutely central to the exposition of the remainder of the dialogue. It asserts that the gap between the eternal and the temporal realms is not only a cosmological but a sociological one. It is not an impossible task to find the father of the universe; it is hard. But it is impossible to declare him to all mankind. For this reason, as it was said in the Statesman, some authors make myths and childish stories when they confront this impossibility of declaration, and even the One and the Many is said to be such a myth, made for minds incapable of genuine dialectic.

Now the problem is not that there is a gap in the structure of the universe, but that some kinds of communication are impossible. On the one hand, some truths are ineffable, on the other hand some people cannot be told the glaring truth because it would momentarily blind them as it did the prisoner of the Cave when he was released to see the Sun. But the Sun is there, and those few who can and do see it, ought to lead others to it.

There is a further difficulty. The insight into the ultimate origins of being is not only the subject of myths and stories which the people feed themselves on; they hold on to these myths with rigid conviction, and the innovator in this area must beware lest he invite the hemlock with which Socrates was sentenced to death. Plato has already said several times that these myths are for children, but,

evidently, he has underestimated his own age. This relates directly to the whole purpose of the dialogue, which is to replace what Plato regards as dangerous fantasies about the ultimate origins of the universe, with a more rational account. Notice he does not intend to make an absolutely rational account, which the learned elite of Pythagoreans, Eleatics, and Academicians, might demand. The account of Timaeus cannot be written in the arcane language of the intellectualist; some way must be found to declare the father of the universe to all mankind. This need springs from Plato's conviction that the best state is composed of the best citizens, and, those citizens are best who know their traditions (Atlantis) and their ultimate origins. In short, the experience so familiar to the teacher of a difficult doctrine was also Plato's experience-how to tell the student by example without distorting the truth of the original meaning.

This difficulty is exacerbated by the fact that the myths of the origin of the universe were probably held with the fervor of blind conviction by Plato's contemporaries, much as they sometimes are by our own contemporaries, so that the attempt to redefine them would be regarded as blasphemy by those whose hold on these myths was invested with the unshakable grasp of an inflexible conservatism. This seems to be his meaning when Timaeus says that the maker of the universe clearly looked to the eternal for his model, and that the contrary supposition "...cannot be

spoken without blasphemy..." (29).

Plato is caught between two extreme difficulties: on the one hand the childish myths must be corrected, but this might be regarded by the people as blasphemy; on the other hand, the people to whom Plato wishes to speak the correction cannot understand the deeper truths behind the myths, so that he has to put them in examples which are not perfectly appropriate; but this involves the danger of blasphemy in his own mind. The difficulty of finding the father is compounded by the impossibility of revealing him adequately. It is extremely important that this dual difficulty be born in mind in what follows, because it bears directly on the use of genuine images and Plato's repeated insistence that the dialogue is a probable myth (eikota mython). One makes a mistake in expecting Plato to speak out boldly in a purely rational language about the maker of the universe for two reasons; first, as we noted, some truths seem ineffable; second, one would miss Plato's concern for the prisoners of the cave who would be blinded by the pure truth but left in the dark by anything less. The efficacy of the act of communication involves taking the audience's view into account, and Plato was far from ignorant on this point.[10]

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[10] Cf. V.J. Gioscia, "A Perspective for Role Theory," The American Catholic Sociological Review, XXII, 2 (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1961), pp. 143 ff.

This accounts for the strangely popular grounds on which the argument (whether the model of the universe is eternal or generated) is settled. Timaeus says "Everyone, then, must see that (the father) looked to the eternal..." (29a).

The next portion of the paragraph adds a peculiar reaffirmation for the eternity of the model of the universe. It states "...for the world is the best of things that have become, and he (the father) is the best of causes." There is no preparation for this statement in all of Plato, as far as I know. One could expect that the father of the universe would be described as the best of causes on the extension of the theme of avoiding blasphemy which runs through the whole dialogue. But there seems to be no preparation for Plato's statement that the world is the best of things that have become, unless it is Plato's knowledge that he is going to describe the world as the result of the best of causes, and therefore knows it must be the best of "effects." But this creates the very difficulty which this dialogue is trying to avoid, and that is the description of the best cause as one whose action can only bring about the best results. For, in one sense, the world is the best result of the best cause, but in another sense, it is only the best of things that have become, and becoming is not the best sort of being. In short, there has already been a slight movement from the strictly univocal causality of the best cause, toward some

kind of intermediary causation. In this way, Plato continues to pose the whole problem of some sort of mid-ground between eternity and the realm of becoming. This is confirmed in what follows next.

Timaeus says,

> Again, these things being so, our world must necessarily be a likeness (eikona) of something. Now in every matter it is of great moment to start at the right point in accordance with the nature of the subject (kata physin archen). Concerning a likeness (eikonos) then, and its model (paradeigmatos) we must make this distinction; an account (logos) is of the same order (suggenes) as the thing it sets forth-an account of that which is abiding and stable and discoverable by the aid of reason will itself be abiding and unchangeable (so far as it is possible and it lies in the nature of the account to be incontrovertible and irrefutable, there must be no falling short of that); while an account of what is made in the image (eikonos) of that other, but is only a likeness (eikona) will itself be but likely (eikotas) standing to accounts of the former in a proportion: as reality is to becoming so is truth to belief (29b-c, Cornford).

Since this passage is absolutely central to the whole exposition of Plato's philosophy of time, image, and eternity, it may be well to compare other translations of this paragraph.

Archer-Hind has it:

> Granting this, it must needs be that this universe is a likeness of something. Now it is all important to make our beginning according to nature: and this affirmation must be laid down with regard to a likeness and its model, that the words must be akin to the subjects of which they are the interpreters: therefore of that which is abiding and sure and discoverable by the aid of reason the words too must be abiding and unchanging and so far as it lies in words to be incontrovertible and immovable

they must in no wise fall short of this; but those which deal with that which is made in the image of the former and which is a likeness, must be likely and duly corresponding with their subject: as being is to becoming, so is truth to belief (29b-c, Archer-Hind).

Jowett has:

And being of such a nature the world has been framed by him with a view to that which is apprehended by reason and mind and is unchangeable, and if this be admitted must of necessity be a copy of something. Now that the beginning of everything should be according to nature is a great matter. Let us then assume about the copy and original that the words are akin to the matter which they describe, and that when they relate to the lasting and the permanent and intelligible, they ought to be lasting and unfailing, and as far as is in the nature of words irrefutable and immovable, and nothing less than this. But the words which are the expression of the immitation of the eternal things, which is an image only, need only be likely and analogous to the former words. What essence is to generation, that truth is to belief (29b, c, Jowett).

T.T. Taylor has:

And from hence it is perfectly necessary that this world should be the resemblance of something. But to describe its origin according to nature is the greatest of all undertakings. In this manner, then, we must distinguish concerning the image and its exemplar. As words are allied to the things of which they are the interpreters, hence it is necessary, when we speak of that which is stable and firm and intellectually apparent, that our reasons should be in like manner stable and immutable, and as much as possible irreprehensible, with every perfection of a similar kind. But that, when we speak concerning the image of that which is immutable, we should employ only probable arguments, which have the same analogue to the former as a resemblance to its exemplar. And, indeed, as essence is to generation, so is truth to faith (29b-c, T.T. Taylor).

R.G. Bury has:

> Again if these premises be granted, it is wholly necessary that this Cosmos should be a Copy of something. Now in regard to every matter it is most important to begin at the natural beginning. Accordingly, in dealing with a copy and its model, we must affirm that the accounts given will themselves be akin to the diverse objects which they serve to explain; those which deal with what is abiding and firm and discernible by the aid of thought will be abiding and unshakable; and in so far as it is possible and fitting for statements to be irrefutable and invincible, they must in no wise fall short thereof; whereas the accounts of that which is copied after the likeness of that Model, and is itself a likeness, will be analogous thereto and posess liklihood; for as Being is to Becoming, so is Truth to Belief (29b-c, Bury).

These five translations and the commentaries on the passage will be reviewed in order. First, Cornford holds that the chief point established in this prelude is that the visible world, of which an account is to be given, is a changing image or likeness (eikon) of an eternal model, and reasons that it is not a realm of being but of becoming. He says, therefore, that we must not expect anything more than a "likely" account, because only that which is stable can produce a stable account, and becoming is not stable. "There can never be a final statement of exact truth about this changing object."[11] Having taken this view, Cornford goes on to comment on the distinction of being and becoming. It is to be noticed that he delivers his comment as a derivative of his view that the account of becoming is

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[11] Cornford, op. cit., p. 24.

only likely because it is unstable.

Cornford comments that the opening sentence of the preceding passage divides the world into two realms, the one of Forms which intelligence grasps, and the other of sensation, which is always imprecise and in flux. We have seen however that this two-fold division is not a dichotomy, but rather an emphasis on the extremes of a four-fold division. We differ, therefore, with Cornford's conclusion that the use of the word "becoming" (_genesis_) by Plato is "ambiguous" by which he indicates that it has only two meanings, one which means that a thing comes into existence, and the other which means that a thing is in the process of change. There are many more senses in which the word "becoming" can be understood, as Plato showed in the _Parmenides_ (151e-152e). For example, one may say "is becoming," "was becoming," "becoming older," "becoming younger," "will be becoming," etc. On the basis of his simple division into two meanings, Cornford adopts the conclusion that the second meaning cannot be what Plato means and that therefore the world must have begun in time. He then differs with A.E. Taylor, who attributes the Christian theory of creation to Plato via Whitehead's theory of time. The point here is the fact that Cornford has assumed Plato to have spoken a simple dichotomy, the familiar dichotomy between the realm of Forms and the realm of becoming. Thus, for example, he says that the _Sophist_ similarly divided the kinds of production in two (265b)

whereas it is clear that there are several kinds of production stated there: human and divine, fantasy a d image, proportional and non-proportional. This is especially important, because the Sophist divides genuine production into human production and divine production, but omits speaking of false divine production whereas it does speak of false human production. It is precisely this problem, i.e., how can a divine product be lacking in any divine perfection, which Plato is now examining. But it is not a mere repetition; it is now the starting point for Plato's expanded doctrine. Just as the Sophist investigated the relation between not-being and divine production in the realm of things, so now the Timaeus is investigating the relation between not-being and the divine production of the entire cosmos. One need not suppose that the familiar doctrine of the split between the realm of Forms and the realm of things has remained unmodified between the Republic and the Timaeus. One need not assume that there is no difference between the Sophist doctrine and the Republic doctrine with respect to the reality of not-being. Yet Cornford introduces the Sophist's division (which he sees as a dichotomy) into the Timaeus, which he similarly dichotomizes.

Cornford notes that the distinction to be made is not simply between being and becoming, but between eternal being and that which is always becoming. It seems better

to state that Plato is here distinguishing that which is <u>only becoming and always becoming</u>, from <u>another sort of becoming</u>, which it is the business of this dialogue to discuss. Therefore, while it is perfectly true to Plato to say that, clearly, the world has become, it does not follow to say that the world is <u>only becoming</u>, for, on that supposition, how could it be the best of things that have become?

Consistently, then, Cornford concludes that the maker of the universe is <u>merely</u> mythical and that therefore there was no "moment of creation." This follows from Cornford's division of the passage into <u>only</u> two realms, which he concludes must therefore be <u>either</u> true <u>or</u> mythical. But the whole division in two is not the only interpretation possible, for it does not follow Plato through his development.

Thus, Cornford is led to take literally the dictum of the <u>Seventh Letter</u> that there neither was nor is nor shall be a doctrine of Plato's on the subject, and that Plato is <u>only</u> revealing a mythical figure of the maker of universe, but not the real exact truth. Cornford's view makes it impossible to conclude that the difficulty of revealing the maker to all mankind is not a sociological difficulty inherent in the crass and hollow mentality of most men, nor the impossibility of an ineffable truth, but Plato's refusal to speak out what he knows perfectly well. This seems to be only one interpretation of the passage

which states clearly that the maker can be found, admittedly with difficulty, but cannot be revealed. Cornford precludes the interpretation that the difficulties of communication necessitate the mythical figure or that it might be true to say that the maker is ineffably inscrutable and should not be spoken for fear of blasphemy, both of which interpretations seem more plausible in the light of the doctrinal development of the late dialogues. Thus Cornford says that a similar "device" was employed in the _Republic_, referring probably to the Myth of Er. But in the late dialogues, Plato repeatedly criticises these myths as childish. Yet Cornford's interpretation of myth is responsible for his dichotomy here, where, it seems possible to offer there other interpretations.

It will be the business of our concluding chapter to show why Cornford's interpretation narrowly construes Timaeus' mythical language. Suffice it at this point to indicate what that conclusion will be. Plato does not stop at a _merely_ mythical account in the _Timaeus_. True, there is another myth of "creation" in the _Timaeus_, but it is not all that is to be found there. In addition to the mythical, Plato is, as usual, revealing what he feels to be the truth, so that he who sees what the myth _means_ has seen more than the myth. In this way, the _Timaeus_ can be read either as myth and myth alone, or it can also be interpreted as a new doctrine in which Plato points clearly beyond _mere_ myth. This view is clearest in the

ending of the passage cited, where Plato says that we must see, not mere myth, but a likely myth, just as in the <u>Theatetus</u> we must have, not only opinion, but right opinion, or in the <u>Sophist</u> and opening passages of the <u>Timaeus</u>, we must see, not mere images, but moving images, which faithfully reproduce the proportions of the original model.

Thus, Cornford can say,

> In the application here it is argued that, since the world is in fact good, its maker must have copied a model that is eternal. The world then is a copy, an image, of the real. It is not, indeed, like an artist's painting, at a third remove from reality; but on the other hand it is not wholly real.[12]

Notice that Cornford does not distinguish, as the <u>Sophist</u> does (at 266d) between a good painter's faithful copy, and a poor painter's unfaithful distortion. Cornford implies that images are separated from the ultimate reality. Cornford seems to ignore the distinction between a genuine image and a mere copy in this case. He says, "The cosmology of the Timaeus is poetry, an image that <u>may</u> come nearer the truth than some other cosmologies."[13] He seems to mean <u>mere</u> poetry, as opposed to genuine poetry. This does not help us to understand Timaeus' statement that he will give the best possible account, which seems to mean genuine poetry.

But what does the statement that the <u>Timaeus</u> is

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[12] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 28.

[13] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 30.

poetry mean for Cornford. It means that

> ...inexactness and inconsistency are inherent in the nature of the subject; they cannot be removed by a stripping off the veil of allegory. An allegory, like a cypher, has a key; the Pilgrim's Progress can be retranslated into the terms of Bunyan's theology. But there is no key to poetry or myth.[14]

Certainly there is poetry, and myth, and imagery. But these must not be seen in the youthful light of the myths which Plato himself calls childish; they must be seen as the best possible account to reveal this doctrine to all mankind. Cornford's interpretation would lead one always to insert "only" when ever he refers to images, since, in such a view, things are either perfectly true or they are only images. But for Plato, this simple dichotomy has long outlived its utility, and the doctrine of not-being, and the mixture of being and not-being is, in the *Timaeus*, a further effort on Plato's part to clarify his thought on these matters.

Archer-Hind comments that the eternal model of the universe and its creation in time represents Plato's use of allegory, and that there can be

> no question whatsoever of the beginning of the universe in time. The creation in time is simply part of the figurative representation; in Plato's highly poetical and allegorical exposition, a logical analysis is represented as taking place in time, and to reach his true meaning we must

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[14] *Ibid.*, pp. 31-2.

strip off the veil of allegory.[15]

Here is the source of Cornford's statement that it is impossible to "strip off the veil of allegory." Later in his commentary, Archer-Hind writes that although Plato is talking about "absolute thought thinking itself" Plato has put this idea into the figure of a gradually unfolding process. My view is that it is not necessary to strip off the veil of allegory to see Plato's meaning, for the allegory does not conceal but enhances the doctrine. For those who see only the allegory, it affords a pretty image of the truth. But for those who see the doctrine, the image is an added richness, which does not cloud the doctrine, but actually helps it to radiate of itself, and to shine more radiantly. However, one notices that Archer-Hind does not translate the final portion of the passage in question by the phrase "only an image"; he says, simply, that an image is "likely" and "duly corresponding" with its subject. Thus Archer-Hind is able to conclude that words stand in the same relation to the Forms, which they represent as the images do, and that this proportion is a special case of the more general formula at the end of the passage, which has it that becoming is to being as probability is to truth. This is not mere imagery, for words themselves, in this setting, become images. Later, when

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[15] R.D. Archer-Hind, Commentary on the Timaeus London: The Macmillan Company, 1888), p. 86, n. 14.

the whole cosmos is termed an image, Cornford's diminution of imagery will suffer because he has not allowed anything less than pure being to be called being, and so, whatever is less than pure must be somehow less than real. Thus Archer-Hind has escaped the claws of this argument by interpreting Plato's text to mean that words and images must correspond to that which they represent, so that a moving cosmos described without the use of a moving image would violate the canons Plato sets down for faithful representation.

However, Archer-Hind seems not to follow his own conviction that the later dialogues show a constant progression, because he adds that this analogy is precisely what one finds at Republic 511e. But there we find, not a division into two parts which are proportional, but a fourfold division of the powers of the soul where images are the lowest level of intelligence, and not the proportional representation of truths of reason.

Jowett too holds that the images which are only imitations of eternal things must be only images. Jowett's well-known Kantian bias is clearly evident here, since those kinds of knowledge which give anything less than the inscrutable nature of the Forms cannot be satisfactorily called true knowledge, but only images and copies. The fact that Jowett places the Timaeus next after the Republic is in part based on his claim that there is little difference between the doctrine of the two dialogues. This is a

function of two factors; first, Jowett wrote his translations before the stylometrists ushered in the new era of Platonic criticism, and second, if one reads the Timaeus with the expectation that its doctrine will not differ materially from the doctrine of the middle period, and then translates the text with that view in mind, it is not only consistent but logically necessary to write "only an image." But if one follows the majority of scholars who placed the Timaeus in the late period, then one may see in the Timaeus certain doctrinal reformulations, so that it is not necessary to expect Plato to speak in the same epistemological voice which the later dialogues clearly modulate.

But a point worth making is partially confirmed by Jowett, in that he agrees with Archer-Hind that Plato makes words proportional to their referents, just as images are proportional to their paradigms. Although Cornford's translation of "accounts" is somewhat cumbersome, Jowett, however, agrees with Cornford in translating the second half of the proportion "what essence is to generation, so truth is to belief," although Cornford prefers being to essence.

The little-consulted work of T.T. Taylor is also instructive with regard to the passage in question. T.T. Taylor translates paradeigmatos not as paradigm, nor as model, but as exemplar. This translation could lead to the same difficulty into which Cornford was led, since the

word exemplar has inescapably transcendental connotations, creating the impression that there is a spatial separation between the world of exemplars and the world of images, and this in turn would lead to the diminution of the role of images and the arguments based upon them. And so, T.T. Taylor says that in the discussion of images, "we should employ _only_ probable arguments," thereby separating what Plato is trying to put together in a new way. However, T.T. Taylor says,

> The faith which Plato now assumes appears to be different from that of which he speaks in the sixth book of the _Republic_, in the section of a line; for that is irrational knowledge, whence also it is divided from conjecture, but is arranged according to sense. But the present faith is rational, although it is mingled with irrational knowledges, employing sense and conjecture; and hence is filled with much that is unstable.[16]

He goes on to say that for Plato there are four kinds of truth, and that some must be conjoined with sensibles. This opinion is noteworthy since it was written in 1804, a full half-century before the scholars decided to resort to language tables to sort the dialogues into their chronological context. Here is a scholar who sees that Plato's reference is to the _four_ truths, not of the _Republic_, but of the _Philebus_, where the Good is said to impart purity to the mixture.[17]

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[16] T.T. Taylor, _The Timaeus and Critias of Plato_ (Washington: Pantheon Books Inc., 1952), p. 112.

[17] _Ibid_., p. 17.

Bury does not relate the four truths of the Timaeus to the four divisions of the Philebus, but, instead, dichotomizes being and becoming.[18] Thus in the last few lines of his translation, he says that, on the one hand, statements which copy the eternal must be,

> in so far as it is possible and fitting for statements to be, irrefutable and invincible, they must in no wise fall short thereof, whereas the accounts of that which is copied after the likeness of that model, and is itself a likeness, will be analogous thereto and posess likelihood;

Although Bury does not insert an "only" in this passage, the feeling tone is indicated in his translation by his use of "whereas," which makes it seem that he has shifted the field and is now speaking of the opposite side of the dichotomy. His translation makes it seem that the universe is only a copy of a copy, and therefore probably less than true. This seems to go against the aim of the passage, which is to account for the use of imagery, which, in earlier dialogues (Republic, Phaedo) were unworthy vehicles of the truth, but in later dialogues (Sophist, Statesman) are not only worthy but somehow necessary to describe the not-being integral to every real thing.

It is A.E. Taylor's view that the Platonic theory of creation in the Timaeus is a perfectly Christian vision, and that, futhermore, Plato's view is best understood by applying to it the fundamentals of Whitehead's theory of

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[18] Bury, "Plato and History," p. 5.

time, as set out in the "Concept of Nature." There are here actually two "heresies," as Cornford says. The first is the assertion that Plato's theory of creation is assimilable to the Christian notion: the second is that Whitehead's theory is both Christian and Platonic. It might seem that these theological disputes are not to the point, but, unfortunately, Taylor has introduced them in explanation of the passage which is under discussion.

Taylor first determines that Plato has said that the world clearly must have had an eternal model but that the world itself is mutable. Then he says, "This is virtually what Whitehead means when he says in his own terminology that objects are 'ingredient'"[19] in events. From this he draws the inference that Plato insists on a provisional character of representation because the senses only perceive roughly, and because it takes a long time for the coarseness of sensory perception to cross-check itself and finally arrive at precise and exact perceptions. Cornford seems right here when he says that A.E. Taylor's speculations derive from A.E. Taylor and hardly at all from Plato. It might be true to assert that Plato held the senses not to be "infinitely acute" but this is a long way from the claim that Plato offers a provisional account because the senses are so dull and because they

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[19] A.E. Taylor, Commentary, p. 73.

can only report what they perceive at a given time.[20]

A.E. Taylor nevertheless does not insert the "only" which others want. His translation reads:

> We must lay it down that discourses are akin in character to that which they expound, discourses about the permanent and stable and apprehensible by thought themselves permanent and unchanging (so far as it is possible and proper for discourses to be irrefutable and final, there must be no fallingshort of that-), discourses about that which is itself a likeness likely and corresponding to their objects.[21]

However, he adds the comment that Timaeus' discourse and Timaeus' "warning" about proportionality pertain to the whole cosmology.

> It is not given as a finally true account of anything but simply (only?) as the account which, so far as Timaeus can see, best "saves," i.e., does full justice to all the "appearances" so far as they are known to him.[22]

So, although A.E. Taylor does not insert "only" in his translation, he asks that the passage be interpreted as a warning that the account is simply the best one which Timaeus can devise to save the appearances. This follows upon Taylor's assumption that the _Timaeus_ is a dialogue in which we should expect to find "nothing more" than the doctrine of a fifth-century Pythagorean, a "provisional tale," the "best approximation" Timaeus could manage. This

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[20] _Ibid._

[21] _Ibid._, p. 74.

[22] _Ibid._

interpretation makes it impossible for Taylor to accept the Timaeus as a dialogue which contains anything of the "later Platonic theory."[23]

Rather than enter into a detailed discussion of this Taylorian "heresy," as Cornford calls it, and rather than give the details of a long and involved series of quotations from the Ancients, it seems more appropriate to state Cornford's view of A.E. Taylor's unique and solitary opinion that the *Timaeus* is *only* Plato's eclectic and rather artificial combination of Empedoclean biology on to the stock of Pythagorean mathematics and astronomy. Cornford says, in summary,

> It is hard to understand how anyone acquainted with the literature and art of the classical period can imagine that the greatest philosopher of that period, at the height of his powers, could have wasted his time on so frivolous and futile an exercise in pastiche.[24]

In addition, Cornford feels that "There is more of Plato in *The Adventures of Ideas* than there is of Whitehead in the *Timaeus*."[25]

Except for Bury's, the most recent translation of the passages under discussion (29b-c) is Cornford's, which has the additional merit of supplying a detailed commentary, familiar at once with the sources and the conclusions of

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[23] *Ibid*., p. 19.

[24] Cornford, *op. cit*., p. x.

[25] *Ibid*., pp. 11-12.

Platonic scholars. Yet Cornford's translation contains the assumption that the doctrine of the Timaeus cannot go beyond the dialogues of the late period which precede it. Yet Cornford himself places the Timaeus after the Philebus on doctrinal grounds; he feels that the Timaeus generalizes the divisions of the Philebus into the far more general topic of cosmology. But he fails to see that the Timaeus does not merely apply the Philebus' doctrine to cosmology; the Timaeus seeks a broader generalization of insight, proportional to the broader range of inquiry. Thus, in the passage in question, one should not conclude with Cornford that Timaeus is apologizing for the use of image because of Plato's repudiation of images in the middle period. There is an explanation which is much more simple; the Timaeus says quite simply that the image by which the universe is to be described is proportional to its model. The simplest view is that Plato now introduces an image into his most mature doctrine, and one can plausibly draw the inference that Plato's mature doctrine contains a re-assesment of the value of an image. To force Plato to hold fast to his earlier repudiation of the value of images is to preclude the need for the whole Timaeus, which, nevertheless, Plato wrote in his last years.

Thus, the simplest interpretation of 29b-c seems best. We must accept Plato's statement that the Universe is an image, and we ought not inflict our interpretations

of the earlier Platonic Philosophy on the philosophy Plato writes in the <u>Timaeus</u>. This interpretation saves us the trouble of inserting cumbersome deviations from Plato's simple language. It seems too circuitous to assert that, although Plato says the Universe <u>is</u> an image, what he really means is that the Universe is <u>not</u> an image but <u>only</u> allegorically described <u>as if</u> it were an image. It seems simpler and more correct to say, with Plato, that our Universe <u>is</u> an image.

Now the problem becomes more philosophical, for we must inquire of the succeeding passages about the reality of an image, what an image is and why an image is, and, with Plato and the whole <u>Timaeus</u>, <u>when</u> an image is. This inquiry, as we shall see, is not to be separated from the main theme of the trilogy of which the <u>Timaeus</u> is the first dialogue; what are the conditions of the best form of society.

It would seem then, that the sense of 29b-c is as follows:

> Granting these premises, we must see now that our Universe is an image of something. Now in all things it is most important to start at the natural beginning. Concerning an image, then, and its paradigm, we must state the following: as a word is proportional to the reality it describes,-a description of that which is stable and abiding and discoverable by the aid of reason being itself stable and abiding (so far as it is possible for descriptions to be so-there must be no falling short of that) so, a description which describes an image will be proportional to the image it describes; as reality is to becoming, so is truth to rational faith.

This reading, it seems, restores the whole proportional tone of the passage, which is a carefully balanced set of proportional propositions, culminating in the statement that reality is to becoming what truth is to a rational faith.

Thus, when Timaeus tells Socrates that the participants of the dialogue should accept the account he is about to give as a "probable myth" (*eikota mython*) (29d) it need not be understood as "only" a myth but, in contradistinction to the childish myths which are for those who can see no further, the myth which Timaeus is about to tell is a likely or probable myth. This follows out the theme established in the former passage. Just as the image which our world is, is not *merely* an image, so the myth of Timaeus is not *merely* a myth. As the image is proportional to its model, so the myth will be proportional to its model. The myth is a description of the Universe, and the Universe *is* an image. And since the image is faithful to the proportions of the original, as the *Sophist* stated it must be to have its measure of truth, so the myth will be proportional to the image, so that it can have its measure of truth. For some images are fantasies, and some myths are childish. But the universe is a genuine image and the myth which describes it is faithful to the proportions of the image, its model. As reality is to becoming, so image is to myth. It cannot be stressed too strongly that the reality and hence the reliability of images and myths

depends on the account given to images in the <u>Sophist</u> which goes beyond the sterile purity of the isolated Forms of the <u>Parmenides</u>, which were there described as due to the naivete of the youthful Socrates. In this connection, it must equally be stressed that Plato is not vindicating any and all myths. He explicitly says only <u>faithful</u> images (in the <u>Sophist</u>) and only probable myths (in the <u>Timaeus</u>). But this is new. For Plato had written myths in each of the dialogues in the late period, and the famous myth of Er of the <u>Republic</u> is easily remembered. In the <u>Sophist</u> even some views of the One and the Many are called childish myths. And in the <u>Seventh Letter</u>, Plato tells us that there neither was nor is nor shall there ever be a doctrine of Plato's on the subject of the ultimate Forms. In view of 29b-c this paradoxical statement becomes intelligible. It means that there cannot be a doctrine of the ultimate Forms in <u>isolation</u>. Since the Universe is an image, the account of its ultimate Forms must be proportional to its reality. Thus the account of the origins of the Universe, which is a locus of the Forms and the powers which they promise, must be mythical; not <u>merely</u> mythical, but <u>genuinely</u> mythical. It is Plato's sense of the inneffable and his poetic genius to see beyond every exact and fixed statement. The need not to blaspheme and yet the need to communicate can only be united in a properly proportional account of the subject. One must, and yet one dares not, speak the Name of the Ultimate Form. One may find the father of this universe

but it is impossible to reveal him to all mankind. This speaks the double necessity not to lie and not to distort, and this double necessity is met by the true myth, which functions to reveal yet hide, to speak yet remain silent. Thus, while the myth speaks Plato's doctrine, in a sense, it does not constitute a doctrine. It is precisely this not-speaking which constitutes the connecting theme between the *Timaeus* and the *Sophist*, but, at the same time, it is the generalization of this theme to a cosmic level, united to the investigation of time and eternity insofar as they relate to the best society, which constitutes the *Timaeus* as a culmination of the themes of eternity, image, and time, as they were gradually developed in the later dialogues. Granted that the *Timaeus* is poetry, it is not *only* poetry; it is, above all, Plato's philosophical poetry.

So far, then, we have been told about the role which an image is to play in Plato's description of the origin of the Universe. We have been told that the Universe *is* an image and that one properly makes use of a myth to describe an image as accurately as it can be described. It remains for Plato to tell us what an image is, how the Universe is an image, and, most especially, how the description of the Universe as an image explains the relation of time and eternity to the best society.

CHAPTER V

TIME AND THE UNIVERSE

I The Motive of Creation (29d-30b)

So far, we have been told that the World is a becoming image of an eternal realm. But this is precisely the problem. How can like be unlike, or how can the maker generate less perfectly than the perfect model. We recall the *Sophist* (265b) distinguishes divine and human production and that the *Philebus* has told us that the cause is the maker. But these distinctions only seem to introduce new problems. How can there be eternal becoming; would the cause of such an eternal becoming have to be a perpetually sustaining cause; or does eternal becoming mean that what becomes never began, or that what began shall perpetually become and continue. These questions must now be confronted, for the general issue which underlies them is "what is the relation of a becoming image to reality."

Cornford states that "Plato denied reality to what is commonly called matter."[1] The materiality of this universe, however, is not unconnected with the motive for the generation of the Universe by its maker. We shall investigate the two issues simultaneously. Timaeus informs us of this motive when he tells us that the father of this Universe is good,

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[1] Cornford, *Plato's Cosmology*, p. 31.

and hence, not jealous of his perfection, so that "he desired that all things should come as near as possible to being like himself" (29e).[2] The father therefore:

> took over all that was visible-not at rest-but in discordant and unordered motion-and brought it from disorder into order, since he judged that order was in every way better (30a).

But the most striking is:

> That this is the supremely valid principle of becoming and of the order of the world, we shall be most surely right to accept from men of understanding (29e).

Here the first part of the problem of an eternal becoming is stated. Plato has established that the model of the Universe must clearly be the eternal, and that the maker of the Universe introduced order, and that this order is the <u>most</u> valid basis of becoming. Yet, the following statement creates the problem, for it asserts; "Now it was not nor can it ever be permitted that the work of the supremely good should be anything but that which is the <u>best</u>" (30b). Here is the antithesis clearly stated: The Universe resembles an eternal model, yet it is a becoming Universe, and becoming, heretofore, could not be described in superlatives. Becoming is as perfect as it can be after it is ordered and endowed with intelligence.

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[2] One is tempted to restore the hiatus which Cornford habitually tries to remove as "intolerable." Then the passage would read, "he desired that all things should come as near as possible to being, like himself."

Plato leaves the problem unresolved at this juncture. He says only that the Universe was framed as perfectly as possible. It is thus a living being with reason and soul. Yet soul is presumably eternal. It is important to realize that this problem, namely the reconciliation of eternity and becoming, is kept alive during the succeeding passages, and has not yet been resolved. This is no oversight: Plato means to hold this question in readiness until the doctrine he is developing can supply the answer.

Thus it is important to notice that the demiurge fashions the Universe <u>to the end</u> and <u>by nature toward</u> perfection, which seems to mean that its present state is incomplete, and yet the Universe is ordered and given intelligence so that it might be as perfect as possible. Later (in 48a and 52d) we shall have occasion to point out the <u>relative</u> omnipotence of the demiurge. At this point, we have not yet been told how it is possible to place the eternal and the realm of becoming in a harmony without flaws. The relation of the eternal model and the becoming Universe remains problematic.

Cornford states that it "...is not easy for us to understand" the relative and not absolute omnipotence of the demiurge. For it is clear that the demiurge has not created <u>ex nihilo</u>, but has ordered the discordant motions only in so far as it was possible. Cornford concludes that the set of discordant motions, the chaos, the material which the demiurge orders, is an eternally present

material, and so the demiurge cannot be simply equated with the God of the Christians.[3] Cornford wants to help Plato avoid the "impossibly absolute divinity" who, being absolute, could not involve himself in earthly affairs. But this seems unnecessary, since the demiurge is in no danger of being impossibly absolute; rather is he in danger of being so completely relativized in Cornford's description that he becomes, not only not the God of the Christians, but not even the demiurgic divinity which Plato describes.

II The Model of the Universe (30c-31b)

In the next paragraph Timaeus speaks of the model after which the demiurge fashioned this Universe. He says that we must not suppose that the model was any specific Form, for then the Universe would lack the perfections of the other Forms after which the Universe was not copied. The Universe is most like that Living Being of which all the other things are parts, and it contains them all. In this, the Universe is very much like the model because there are no specific perfections lacking to it.

What can this Living Being be to whom no perfection is lacking and who serves as the model for each specific perfection. It cannot be any one Form, for on this supposition there might be others (31a). Nor can it be a Form of all Forms, for this position involved the difficulties

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[3] A.E. Taylor, Commentary, p. 37.

mentioned in the Parmenides. Is it The Form of The Good, or perhaps the Demiurge Himself? None of these answers satisfy. If it were the Good, Plato could easily have said so, as he did in the Republic. Nor does the demiurge regard his own perfection as a model; he is said to regard a model, but he is not described as looking to himself. It is hard to see the grounds for Taylor's assertion that the demiurge fashions by "an overflow of his goodness."[4]

Plato himself "recapitulates" the third man argument of the Parmenides to the effect that the model which embraces all the intelligible things there are cannot be one of a pair (the simplest number)

> for then there would have to be yet another Living Creature embracing those two, and they would be parts of it; and thus our world would be more truly described as likeness, not of them, but of that other which would embrace them (31a).

The Universe must be one, like its model. Here again the Timaeus marches out boldly beyond the doctrines of its predecessors, for that One after which the Universe is modelled is not the sort of One which is put into the mouth of Parmenides in the dialogue which hears his name, but a new sort of One which is now to be described. Or rather, Timaeus will now present a mythical account of that One of which the Universe is the image.

III The Body of the Universe (31b-32c)

But Plato does not launch immediately into a

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[4] Ibid., p. 78.

description of the One. Instead, he takes the lesson of the Philebus to heart and proceeds to reveal how the Universe is composed of four primary elements, first the traditional fire and earth, and then the third which unites them, "for two cannot be satisfactorily united without a third" (31b).

Here Taliaferro's brilliant analysis of Plato's Pythagoreanism is apropos. He shows how the necessity of proportion between lines, planes, and spheres, is a generalization of the proportions within lines, planes, and spheres. That is, just as the extremities which make up a line are proportional to each other, so the plane and the sphere have proportional elements; but further, the proportion between the line and the plane is proportionally the same as the proportion between the plane and the sphere. In the same way, the realms of physics and geometry are proportional to each other, as the realm of matter is proportional to the realm of soul, and the realm of soul with the realm of being. Plato seems to be suggesting that there is a general proportionality between being and becoming.[5]

Yet this is abstract, and Plato wants to present the tale with all the richness of which a myth is capable. Although a radical unity of realms has been introduced,

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[5] T.T. Taylor, The Timaeus and Critias of Plato, pp. 29 ff.

the structured, leveled unity of these realms must be spelled out, for the Universe shares in the intelligibility of its model, which comprehends all the things within it in a single unity. It is as if Plato were building suspense into his drama of creation. There is a difference between a metaphysical dramatist, who writes drama with metaphysical overtones and suggestions, and the dramatic metaphysician, who writes metaphysics with dramatic overtones. Plato seems to be one of the latter sort, since his *Timaeus* portrays the metaphysical origins of the Universe, in such a fashion that Timaeus' account manages to create dramatic suspense.

Since the Universe is visible, it must be bodily, and that which is bodily must have come to be. But, the *Philebus* informed us that the visible must have fire to be visible and earth to be tangible, and, since no two can be united without a third, fire and earth cannot be united without a third. Here in the *Timaeus*, the third must unite fire and earth in the best way possible, which is in the manner of a geometric proportion (31c). This is the best because "in that way all will necessarily come to play the same part toward one another, and by so doing they will *all* make a unity" (32a). Plato speaks here of the relation of proportional elements to each other; 2 is to 4 as 4 is to 8. By transposition, 4 is to 2 as 8 is to 4, and in this way the mean, 4, comes to be the outside term and therefore it seems to be the outer boundary of the proportion. This is the arithmetical way of allegorizing

the doctrine that proportion is what unifies, just as the side of the plane forms the outer boundary of its area. There is no need to dwell on the obvious Pythagorean style of this image. The point is that the elements of fire and earth need to be united in a proportion so that they define each other in the unity which they form. But on the basis of a simple proportion of this type, the Universe would have a plane surface with no depth. Yet we see that the World is a solid, "and solids are always conjoined, not by one mean, but by two" (32b). Therefore the god set water and air between fire and earth, and made them proportional to one another. In this way the unity of the Universe was achieved, and the proportionality of its four elements to each other is their boundary. Further, only he who set the elements in proportion could disolve it (32c). All of the elements were used up in the construction of the Universe, and in this way the Universe resembles its model's perfect unity, for none of the materials were left over and it is therefore, in its way, complete. It is also, on that basis, simple, that is, one Universe, and hence resembles the unity of its model. Since only he who made the Universe can disrupt its unity, and since there are no materials left over which could attack the Universe, it is free from old age and sickness, which come about by the introduction of materials from without. This at first seems to mean that the Universe resembles the eternity of its model in that those elements which might bring about

age and sickness to the eternal would have to be outside its definition, and so, the Universe, in its fashion, similarly cannot age or succumb to sickness for this would require elements outside it, of which there are none (33).

But the shape of the body of the Universe is "that which is fitting to its nature" (33b); it is spherical. This is an extremely important phrase, since some regard Plato's image of time as circular and therefore interpret the Platonic Universe as closed, and subject only to eternal recurrence, without novelty or growth or process.[6] Therefore it is necessary to dwell on this phrase, for it says precisely and unambiguously that the spherical shape of the body of the Universe is proper to its nature. The foregoing passage clearly tells us that the Universe resembles its model in its own way, and that the perfection of the Universe is the aspect of the model from which the spherical shape derives. It is one thing to say that the Platonic Universe is spherical and therefore closed; it is quite another thing to say that the Platonic Universe, which is a becoming image, is as perfect as it can be, and therefore allegorically spherical. This latter view cannot be stressed too strongly, because it is common to regard the Platonic Universe as non-temporal, or as imperfect because it is only spherically temporal. Plato, on the

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[6] E.g., Alexandre Koyre, From the Closed World to the Infinite Universe (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1958).

contrary, tells us clearly that the perfection of the model is the paradigm for the perfection of the Universe, which is a becoming image, so that it is appropriate to its style of perfection for it to be spherical. It is necessary to state simply that the question of the temporal character of this Universe has yet to be broached and will not be introduced by Plato until the discussion of the soul of the Universe has been undertaken. It follows that descriptions of the temporal character of the Universe based on its spherical shape do not follow the logical order of the dialogue, for they extract elements of the dialogue out of their context, in order to put them together in an order which was foreign to Plato's stated order. The spherical shape of the body of the Universe as Plato describes it, is the way in which the body of the Universe resembles the perfection of its model, insofar as that model is a self-comprehending figure, that is, a figure which is a proportional unity. It is not the function of the spherical shape to resemble the eternity of the model; on the contrary; it is the function of the revolution of the sphere, governed by the world-soul, to resemble the eternity of the model. In so far as the body of the Universe is spherical, to that extent does it resemble the unity of the model. One must call to mind here the impossibility of describing each and every characteristic of the Universe at the same time and by the

same set of words. Plato, like every other writer, cannot speak simultaneously of every aspect of his vision; it takes time to describe every feature of what one describes. The function of an image in this context becomes somewhat more evident, and the truism that a picture is worth a thousand words is not irrelevant to this characteristic of written description. For an image, a picture, can put forward thousands of details in a simple simultaneous unity, whereas the description of the picture in written words must focus on one aspect at a time. Thus Plato describes his Universe as a becoming image, to indicate that the unity of its elements is complete and harmonious: but to reason immediately from its spherical shape to its temporal character is an instance of cart-before-the-horsemanship. We must wait until the discussion of the body of the Universe has been completed, and then for the discussion of the soul of the Universe. Then, and only then, does Plato introduce his doctrine of time and the relation of time to the eternal model.

Thus Plato states that the spherical body of the Universe is without organs or limbs, because the Universe which embraces all living things within itself ought to have that shape which comprehends all shapes within itself. The sphere is the most perfect shape because it "comprehends in itself all the figures there are" (33b). The shape of the Universe is proportional to its model: as the model is the most perfect model, the sphere is the most perfect shape.

To accomplish his stated purpose, Plato describes how the Universe, as an image, is proportional to its model. In so doing, Plato continues to follow his own injunction; as reality is to becoming, so is truth to faith.

But again, it is important to notice that the precise description of the relation between an eternal becoming and an eternal being has not yet been made clear. It is still held out for later comment. In short, during his description of the shape of the Universe, Plato has not yet said how it can be that the Universe can be an eternal becoming. The spherical shape of the Universe is basic but not sufficient for an insight into Plato's philosophy of time.

Similarly, one cannot pass immediately from Plato's spherical Universe to Plato's philosophy of time. The motion of the sphere, which he is about to reveal, is basic, but even this will not be sufficient for the explication of Plato's time-doctrine. The spherical Universe has no organs for sight or food, and is therefore not dependent on anything else. It has the sort of motion which, above all, belongs to reason and intelligence, namely, uniform rotation. It does not go from up to down, nor from down to up; nor from left to right, nor right to left; nor does it go from forward to backward, nor from backward to forward; the maker took these six motions away from it in the process of ordering its discordant wanderings. It revolves uniformly within its own limits (34a).

In his description of the body of the Universe, it is important to see that the divisions of the Philebus and the arrangement of the elements in their proportions are recapitulated here in the Timaeus. Otherwise, one fails to notice that the relation of fire, air, earth, and water, in the Timaeus is a subtle transfiguration of the Pythagorean number four, and also a substitution of proportion for the Amity which the elements had when ordered by the Nous of Anaxagoras, which, as Socrates complained in the Phaedo, Anaxagoras introduces early in his work but soon proceeds to ignore. Here Plato carries the theme of proportional unity into the relation of the elements themselves. It is doubly important to take note of this proportionality as constituent of the Universe, because Plato has described the relation of proportionality as the best sort of unity for the Universe, and the Universe must be the best possible because it is an image of its model. As we shall see, the world soul is similarly the best possible, for, not only is it too a resemblance of the model but it is the deeper source of the proportional perfection of the Universe.

IV The Soul of the Universe

The plan of the god who makes the Universe into the best image of the best model could not exclude soul from his activity, so that the excellent body of the Universe, which is spherical, and therefore not dependent on anything outside of itself, must in some way be related to a soul.

The Soul of the Universe was set in the center, but further "wrapped its body round with soul on the outside" (34b). Here the transposability of the elements of a proportion comes into the account. For, at first, it seems that the center of the Universe cannot at the same time be the periphery. But, just as the mean term of a proportion can become the extremes by transposition, so the Soul, which is first described as the center (the mean) now becomes the outer boundary. This use of mathematical image seems to be Plato's way to indicate allegorically that the very heart of the Universe is also its limit, and that its center is not to be taken as a strictly spatial point but as the inner principle of the Cosmos, which therefore also animates its sphere of functioning and the limits of that functioning. Because the Soul of the Universe is both its center and its limiting boundary, it is described as a "blessed god" (34b).

One might easily wonder why the body of the Universe is discussed before the Soul, which is said to be the most excellent source of perfection. Plato explains in the next paragraph why this was done. He says that we should not suppose, merely because the Soul came later in the account of the Universe, that it is therefore younger, for that would be an insufferable perversion of right order. Already, "There is in us too much of the casual and the random which shows itself in our speech..." (34c). The priority of Soul in perfection is not absolute and total;

there are still too many obvious wanderings and deviations from the orderly to assert that the Soul is prior in every way.[7] Plato is all too aware that the Universe cannot be empirically described as exhibiting the perfections of Soul. It seems likely that Plato described the body of the Universe before describing the Soul in order to follow out his initial premise that the *Timaeus* will reveal the plan of the Universe in an image, so that, by first establishing the visible shape of the Universe, he will then be able to make use of the shape he attributed to it to fashion images of the Soul. This was the procedure of the *Republic*, for there, it was explicitly agreed that the best plan for the investigation of the Soul would be to see it writ large in the State. So here, it seems that Plato is saying that we shall come to understand the Soul of the Universe writ large in its body. Throughout the *Timaeus* the details of the image are described before the image itself, but this is only an apparent reversal of the order in which the Universe was fashioned. It does not seem wise to interpret this, (as Cornford and A.E. Taylor do) as "inconsistent." If one understands from the outset that the best description of the Universe must be proportional to its reality, then the details of the allegorical level of explanation are not inconsistent with the details of the reality of the

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[7] E.R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1957).

Universe. Only on the supposition that Plato is following a linear plan of description would it follow that details are out of place. But if one accepts Plato's approach through image, then one remembers that the exigencies of written description create the appearance of a linear account, whereas, in fact, Plato concentrates on one aspect and then another of the entire image, which, in its unity, does not serialize or linearize the elements of the account. Plato's Universe does not consist of a series of elements which must therefore be described one at a time. One could more easily attempt to fashion a length of rope from grains of sand.[8] Thus, if one starts from an expectation that the description of the Universe must be a linear account, one should conclude that Plato's description of the World-Soul should have preceeded his account of the Body of the Universe. But, if one starts from the awareness that Plato is describing those aspects of the Universe which will lead to an insight into the whole Universe in a simple image, which is the best kind of account of the Universe because it is proportional to its kind of being, one is not disappointed that Plato describes the Soul of the Universe after the body. One ought to recall in this regard Plato's deep concern that it is, after all, impossible to reveal the maker of the Universe to all mankind.

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[8] George S. Claghorn, _Aristotle's Criticism of Plato's 'Timaeus'_ (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1954), p. 87.

He attempts, by means of his imagery, to communicate to as many as possible. In this way, the recipient of his account has been presented with the shape of the body of the Universe, and he can now elevate this image by perceiving how it has Soul at the center and all around it.

However, the World-Soul is not so simple that its description can rest on the characteristics of centrality and periphery. The description of the "parts" of the World-Soul follows next, in a passage which Cornford has described as "one of the most obscure of the whole dialogue."[9] Further, he says that the passage "would be simply unintelligible to anyone who had not read and understood the Sophist."[10] In a note he adds that A.E. Taylor has precluded this basis for understanding the World-Soul because A.E. Taylor denies a knowledge of the Sophist to Timaeus.[11]

By his reference to the Sophist, Cornford points out that the "ingredients" of the Soul will be the Forms which Plato there said communicated with each other, namely, Unity, Sameness, and Difference. Particularly, Difference has the character of not-being, yet these Forms communicate with each other. In the following passage from the Timaeus, Plato describes how the World-Soul comes to be

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[9] Cornford, op. cit., p. 59.

[10] Ibid., p. 61.

[11] A.E. Taylor, Commentary, p. 128.

formed, and how the communication of these Forms is accomplished in the World-Soul.

> The things of which he composed soul and the manner of its composition were as follows: Between the indivisible existence that is ever in the same state, and the divisible existence that becomes in bodies, he compounded a third form of existence composed of both. Again, in the case of Sameness and that of Difference, he also on the same principle made a compound intermediate between that kind of them which is indivisible and the kind that is divisible in bodies. Then, taking the three, he blended them all into a unity, forcing the nature of difference, hard as it was to mingle, into union with sameness, and mixing them together with existence (35a-b).

This passage bears extensive comment, for several of its points are crucial to Plato's development of his philosophy of time.

First, it is clear that the Forms have not been repudiated by the *Timaeus*, since the passage begins with a description of the Forms which recapitulates their treatment in the *Sophist*. The kind of existence which is always the same is proper to the Forms, and was proper to the Forms as early as the *Phaedo* and the *Republic*. But in the *Sophist*, the Different was introduced, based on Plato's recognition that it is necessary to say what is-not in order to say what is. In short, the entire doctrine of not-being of the *Sophist* has reappeared in the *Timaeus*. But, just as the initial recapitulation of the *Republic* at the beginning of the *Timaeus* (28a) does not rest with a simple repetition but proceeds further, so here the recapitulation of the *Sophist* doctrine of not-being, on

the level of the Forms, i.e., Difference, will not end Plato's discussion. He means to go beyond this point. Or, to put the matter differently, Plato will now investigate the relevance of the doctrine of not-being insofar as it helps to explain the constitution of the World-Soul.

The second point to be noticed is the recognition that there are, as Cornford translates it, "kinds" of existence: there is the "kind" of existence proper to the Forms, there is the "kind" of existence proper to divisible bodies, and in addition, there is a third "kind" of existence, between them, an intermediate existence, proper to the Soul of the Universe. Further, these three "kinds" are further divided and then further recombined, so that there is a whole hierarchy of "kinds" of existence. Cornford's diagram is instructive on this point.[12]

First Mixture	Final Mixture	
Indivisible existence Divisible existence	Intermediate existence	
Indivisible sameness Divisible sameness	Intermediate sameness	Soul
Indivisible difference Divisible difference	Intermediate difference	

Note that it is no longer possible to assert that there is only one "kind" of existence which deserves the

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[12] Cornford, loc. cit. "Kinds" is a peculiar expression which is repeated here only to assure an accurate representation of Cornford's view.

name, the sort reserved for the Forms in the Republic, where all else is mere shadows. In this connection, it should be recalled that the Sophist distinguished sharply between the kinds of images (eidola), and reached the conclusion that some images are false (phantasiai) but some are genuine. Of those that are genuine one must further distinguish those that are of human origin and those that are of divine origin (240a). The Sophist therefore credits images with some sort of existence. But the Timaeus does not simply describe the Universe as an eidolon, a little Form, so to speak. The Universe is an eikon, which now comes to mean that it is like the perfection of the most perfect. But even this is not the high point of Plato's analysis, as we shall see. Nevertheless it is central to the exposition of this passage to notice that the doctrine of the Sophist, which makes it necessary to somehow include not-being in the realm of Forms, is now recapitulated, but, in addition, it is not only the reality of the Forms but the reality of the whole Universe which must now be explained. And in this connection, Plato has shifted from a description which accords some sort of being to images, to a description of the whole Universe as an image, and that the transition from eidolon to eikon is intrinsic to this development of doctrine.

Thus, between the two orders of existence with which we were formerly acquainted in the Sophist, namely, the eternal and the becoming, Plato has now inserted a third.

This is a further development of his doctrine of proportion, of which we saw the first usage in this dialogue in the composition of the body of the Universe. The sort of mixture which the _Philebus_ prefigures is now developed in Plato's attempt to construct the entire Cosmos on this basis. But, in the _Philebus_, the precise details of the manner in which this mixture was to be accomplished were left somewhat less clear than they are now painted, for the _Philebus_ insisted that the cause of the mixture was in fact the god, but the god was not described as the maker of the whole Universe; he was there only the mixer of the Forms in some things.

This passage, like the passage at 29, is a radical innovation on Plato's part, which takes the doctrine of the _Timaeus_ far beyond the doctrines of its predecessor-dialogues. It is a recapitulation, but the recapitulation serves as a basis for an advance. Where once only the Forms were ultimately real, now there are "kinds" or "sorts" or "levels" of reality; but these are not to be distinguished from each other as merely Different; they are also the Same, and, further, they are in a proportional Unity. The significance of this proportional unity is the basis of the succeeding passages, where we notice that the basis of knowledge itself has undergone a radical growth. And, in addition, the basis of the former division of the world into the eternal and the becoming has similarly

undergone a radical growth, wherein it will no longer be possible for Plato to distinguish simply between the eternal and the becoming as separated realms, but the relation of the eternal to the becoming will have to be described in a new way. Somehow, the eternal and the becoming will be related in a way which will explain how it is possible to have an eternal becoming.

This pertains to the statement that the Universe is an image. For, as we saw, the Universe is an image which in some way is like its eternal model and yet is a becoming image; yet it was not explained how there could be any reality to such an intermediary thing. The basis for the reality of the Universe as an image has now been laid. For the World-Soul itself is neither simply eternal nor simply becoming; it is a proportional unity of the Same and the Different.

But, from basis to doctrine is not an immediate step. The lesson of the Philebus and the Statesman, which was the caution not to divide too quickly, but to proceed by following the right divisions according to the way things are, is not foreign to the author of these lessons. Before he gives the details of the reconciliation between eternal being and mere becoming, Plato follows out the division of the World-Soul into its precise portions.

Of course, we should not expect that Plato's passages on the motions of the planets will be adequate from the point of view of contemporary astronomy, so that

a detailed commentary on the exact motions of the planets will be of interest only to those whose taste runs to collecting the opinions of the ancients and constructing a history of opinions with no care about their relevance or utility to contemporary experience. Plato had no Galileo to instruct him, nor a Newton. Furthermore, the invention of the telescope and the mass spectrometer have outmoded most of Plato's astronomy. But it is interesting to note that Plato looked to astronomy as a case in point. For, if the World-Soul united the Same and the Different within itself, and if the World-Soul, by reason of its superior dignity, is actually responsible for the motions of the planets, it should follow that the revolutions of the planets will occur in what Plato will describe as the revolution of the Same, the Different, and their Unity in the revolution of the uniform.

This is precisely the description which we confront in Plato's astronomy. It emerges that the seven divisions of the Soul are intermediate between the seven basic Forms, on the one hand, and the seven planetary distances, on the other, which in turn are proportional to the seven basic string lengths. Plato tells us that the harmony of the musical scale is only one level (or sort, or kind) of harmony, and that the Soul of the World is itself an intermediate between the ultimate Forms and the body of the Universe. The fundamental truth is the assertion of

proportionality and the harmony of the elements of the proportions.[13] Plato goes on to construct an intricate allegory of the circles of the Same and of the Different; he describes how these circles have been joined in the center of the Soul, and how the revolution of the Same circumscribes the revolution of the Different (the allegorical indication that the Same is the "outer" limit of the Different). The seven circles of the Soul represent the proportional share which the Soul has in the seven Forms,[14] just as the seven tones reflect the seven planetary distances. The point is not merely the number of circles, but the motion of the circles, since planets and music certainly move.

Plato tries very hard to make his allegory exact in every detail. He indicates that motions are shared proportionately by the seven planets, which means, (as A.E. Taylor has seen [15]) that Plato anticipated our own contemporary relativity theory of motion. (Heisenberg makes the same point [16]). It is anticlimactic to note that Plato knew the solar system to be heliocentric, although this is not universally agreed upon.

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[13] T.T. Taylor, _op. cit._, Introduction.

[14] According to T.T. Taylor, _loc. cit._

[15] A.E.Taylor, _Commentary_, Appendix.

[16] Heisenberg, _Physics and Philosophy_, ch. 4. See also MacKinnon, "Time in Contemporary Physics," pp. 428-457.

Plato next relates the seven motions of the Soul to the seven dimensions of the body, which is fashioned later than Soul, although it was described earlier. He says in summary;

> ...the soul, being everywhere interwoven from the center to the outermost heaven, enveloping heaven all around on the outside, revolving within its own limits, made a divine beginning of ceaseless and intelligent life for all time (36e).

It is unnecessary to point out in this age of possible thermonuclear holocaust that Plato's optimism is derived from the perfection of the Universe which is the image of the perfection of the model, and not from the sort of empirical observation which has created pessimism in many quarters. However, one should note that Plato's Sicilian adventures did result in a sadness which Plato describes in his Seventh Letter. The difference between Plato's sadness over the outcome of Sicilian politics and the contemporary pessimism lies in the world-wide scale on which contemporary destruction can be accomplished. One might wish to derive a sense of optimism from the possibility that the Universe will go on even if the planet earth does not harbor any human life. For Plato refers to the life of the World-Soul as it inspires the body of the Universe, and not to the life of man, which, Plato was aware, is all too short. In the Myth of Er, the Republic describes the life of man as a span of one hundred years, and the cycle of good life as a span of ten thousand years. Here in the Timaeus intelligen life is "ceaseless."

But the discourse concerning the World-Soul was not written only to illustrate that Plato was master of the Pythagorean system of numbers. Where Pythagoras would derive the proportions of any body from the numbers 1, 2, 3, and 4, Plato establishes harmonic intervals which do not sum to the perfect number 10; instead, he leaves the end of the proportions open, so that the scale of tones or the planetary differences might be further calculated, if one wished.[17] Here one could agree with A.E. Taylor that Plato has given a "provisional" tone to his dialogue,[18] but, at the same time, one would have to disagree that Timaeus does nothing more than recite fifth-century Pythagoreanism, for Plato's Universe is not strictly Pythagorean. There seem to be several reasons for this, not the least of which is Plato's _use_ of Pythagorean numerology in a description of a Universe which has far more complexity, and, at the same time, far more simplicity than the Universe of Pythagoras. This is most evident in the Pythagorean insistence that the Forms (numbers) are the ultimately real, and the World of appearance is less real. In what follows, Plato will reveal that there is a kind of knowledge proper to the World-Soul which transcends a knowledge of number, by including it in a more comprehensive knowledge.

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[17] Dodds, _op. cit_.

[18] A.E. Taylor, _Commentary_, p. 113.

Thus, the body of the Universe is visible, but the Soul of the Universe is invisible, and is the "best of things brought into being by the most excellent of things intelligible and eternal" (37a). Because the Soul has been blended out of the Same, the Different, and the Existent, she is "in contact with anything that has dispersed existence or with anything whose existence is indivisible" (37a). In this way the Soul is like anything that is, and it can therefore know anything that is, "either in the sphere of things that become or with regard to things that are always changeless" (37b).

Thus, even though the World-Soul is the intermediate form of existence between what is eternal and what becomes, Plato can still say that there are two "levels" of existence, one eternal and one becoming. But he no longer says that there are only two forms of existence, nor that these two "levels" or spheres are exhaustive of all existence. Since the Soul is intermediate, it is a third "level" of existence. Yet, one courts danger by the simple enumeration of the number of forms of existence for one misses the whole emphasis which Plato has put on proportionality throughout the Timaeus. The Soul could not know either realm if it were simply in between the eternal and the becoming; the point is that the Soul is in a proportional unity with the eternal and the becoming, and so, it is part of each and each is part of it. Plato tells us in the following passage that both the circle of the same and the circle

of the different transport their respective judgments into the Soul:

> Now whenever discourse that is alike true, whether it takes place concerning that which is different or that which is the same, being carried on without speech or sound within the thing that is self-moved, is about that which is sensible, and the circle of the different, moving aright, carries its message through all its soul-then there arise judgments and beliefs that are sure and true. But whenever discourse is concerned only with the rational, and the circle of the same, running smoothly, declares it, the result must be rational understanding and knowledge (37b, c).

Several features of this passage bear comment. First, it states that belief arises from the circle of the Different, (which includes the realm of the many, the dispersed, and the sensible objects of perception) and that beliefs must be sure and true if they arise from the proper revolution of the circle of the Different. Second, it describes this sort of judgment as intrinsic to the World-Soul, and not an inferior sort of knowledge. For the Same and the Different constitute Soul; no longer is Soul only the superior portion of the divided line. Third, the knowledge of the Same and the knowledge of the Different both comprise Soul, and are both proper functions of Soul, having allegorically, the relation to each other of proportionality. This is not to say that rational knowledge alone is not better; rather, it asserts that belief and opinion are not bad or impossible. Both judgments are necessary to what Soul is, and both sorts of knowledge arise when Soul does what Soul does; namely, generate the motions

of the Universe. Lastly, the judgment by the Soul is called an aesthesis, which, unlike the English word "judgment," extends to feeling and to the appreciation of beauty as well as of truth. This capacity to know aesthetically is of the utmost significance in Plato's Universe, and it is especially necessary for a consideration of the next topic to which Plato addresses himself, namely, time. For if time is a Form then reason alone will comprehend it. But if time is an image, then its beauty is as important as its truth.

V Time as Image (to 39e)

Up to this point in his development of the construction of the Universe, Plato has insisted that the Universe embodies in its proportional way the perfection of its model, and yet the model is consistently described as eternal, while the Universe is said to be an eternal becoming. The Universe is described throughout the foregoing passages as a reality which is as perfect as it can be, and yet Plato nowhere says how a visible and tangible body can be like its eternal indivisible model. Even the existence of the World-Soul and its participation in the whole of the Universe, in its divisible as well as its indivisible aspects, that is, in its sameness and in its difference, is not sufficient to confer on the Universe the closest approximation to the perfection of the eternal model, even though Plato usually attributes the highest perfections to Soul. In the following passage, Plato finally makes explicit the

way in which the Universe of becoming most resembles the eternity of its model. To all the perfection which he has attributed to the Universe, including intelligence, judgment, and uniform revolution, he now adds the perfection which enables the Universe to resemble its eternal model to the fullest extent possible, the ultimate perfection of which the Universe is capable. Plato writes:

> When the father who had begotten it saw it set in motion and alive, a shrine brought into being for the everlasting gods, he rejoiced and being well pleased he took thought to make it yet more like its pattern (37c).

When the Universe was set "in motion and made alive," the requirements which Socrates had laid down in the beginning of the dialogue were met. However, Plato does not end his sentence on this condition; he adds that the Universe was alive and in motion, and, in addition, it was a shrine (agalma). This peculiar word has caused the commentators no small difficulty.[19] Its meaning is not fixed and precise, since it may mean a statue or it may mean a thing of joy. But the connotation of the word suggests that either the statue or the thing of joy are made by the lover who beholds in the statue an image of his loved one, which makes the agalma both a statue and a thing of joy. One recalls that the dialogues of the late period, especially the Sophist, have consistently lent

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[19] A.E. Taylor, Cornford, Archer-Hind, Bury.

themselves to an exposition of the difference between a mere statue, which may or may not be faithful to the proportions of the original model, and a genuine image, which is faithful to the proportions of the original model. The agalma is not only faithful to its original model but the model is a loved one whose very visage brings joy to the heart of the beholder. Heretofore, the Universe was described as an image, (eikon) but in this passage it is described as agalma, an image which brings joy to the heart of the beholder.

But the Sophist distinguished between human and divine images. One can understand that a human craftsman might take delight in an image of his loved one, but when the maker of the Universe takes delight in the image of the perfection of the eternal model, it is another matter. For this image is said to be a shrine for the everlasting gods, and the plural is unmistakable. For the plural gods have not made the Universe; this was the work of the demiurge; yet the Universe is not described as a shrine for the demiurge but for the everlasting gods. It is tempting to conclude from what first seems to be a glaring inconsistency that Plato had made the Universe to be a place in which the gods may worship the Living Being who is the model of the Universe. Or, going beyond the surface of the allegory, one might conclude that the One Living Being who is the maker of the Universe takes delight in Himself in the image of Himself which is called the

Universe, since Plato clearly says that the maker rejoiced when he beheld it. But it is first necessary to state that Plato does not offer these interpretations himself, and we are forced once again to remind ourselves that the finding of the maker of the Universe is a hard task and the revelation of the maker to all mankind is impossible. It seems best to interpret the passage in the light of Plato's own statement that the exact and specific description of the maker is impossible. Nor does it seem wise to expect that Plato is trying to bring us to the point where we ourselves experience the reality behind the veil of allegory, in the hope that we will experience what he means, even though he does not say it explicitly. Although this might very well be Plato's intention, we have no way of knowing whether he has designed this passage, indeed, this entire dialogue, to create the basis of such an experience. Although it is impossible to pretend that we do not project our own views on to the structure of Plato's philosophy, since we are moderns and our minds are attuned, as it were, to our own era, nevertheless we ought to attempt to plumb Plato's meaning, so far as we can. To assert that this is impossible is to abandon all historical scholarship; to assert that this poses no difficulty at all is _naivete_ in the extreme. Thus, despite the agreement which Augustine and many other philosophers felt when confronting this passage, we ought not to conclude that Plato has "anticipated," as the saying goes, the doctrines

of Christianity. One could as well say that the ineffability which characterizes Plato's maker of the Universe is due to his acquaintance with Buddhist or Mosaic doctrines of the ineffability of the Divine.

One must rest at Plato's statement that the Universe is an agalma, and that the maker rejoiced when he saw that it was alive and in motion. In the Phaedrus (at 252d) there is a similar usage of agalma, in which the lover chooses his love (eros) as if the love were a shrine (agalma). There is another use in the Laws (931a) where parents who receive proper veneration from their children are regarded as instances of agalma.

However, one must recall that Plato has said all through the Timaeus that the Universe was fashioned by the demiurge, who in turn looks to the perfection of the eternal model, and not to himself as the locus of the eternal model, so that the simple equation of the eternal model with the demiurge runs counter to the stated details of the allegory. Again, it would seem to be a modern projection to interpret this division of the model from the demiurge as a justification for the claim that Plato distinguished the Father from the Creator. From such an interpretation one could reach out to the conclusion that, for Plato, Summun Bonum est diffusivum Sui, but this stretches interpretation far beyond Plato's stated words.

The attempt on the part of some commentators to assert or to deny these implications of Plato's words,

then, seems to represent an attempt to fit Plato's meaning into more contemporary doctrines. One cannot quarrel with those who find inspiration in Plato's text, but this is not the question. The question is, what did Plato mean? And in this context, it seems beside the point to fit Platonism into more recent doctrines of creation, and rather more to the point to relate the details of Plato's intricate allegory to what is clearly demonstrable and attributable to Plato as a fourth-century genius, and not a twentieth-century commentator on twentieth-century investigations. The great controversy which Plato's demiurge has created will not be settled in these pages. The point under discussion is the distinction between the Universe as a shrine and the Universe as an image, and the fact that Plato described the Universe as an image (_eikon_) throughout the preceding passages, but now refers to it as a shrine (_agalma_).

But a relatively full view of this shift of emphasis must include stylistic as well as theological considerations. For, Plato will put forward in the next few passages, a doctrine of time as a special sort of image, and, in order to avoid calling both the Universe and time by the same name, Plato has elevated the Universe to the status of a shrine-image so that he can refer to time as another sort of image. Recall that the beginning of the _Timaeus_ confronts the reader with the need to avoid blasphemy, and yet the equally insistent need not to demean the Universe

or to rob it of any due measure of perfection. Thus the Universe as a shrine becomes the locus of divine function, and as we shall see, the Universe as temporal becomes the <u>manner</u> of divine function: respectively the place where the demiurge acts and the way in which he acts. There is a further note which should be added. For a shrine may be occasionally empty of the presence of the god to whom it is dedicated, or it may be filled with his presence. And it is precisely this distinction which bears on the following passage. For the Universe has so far been endowed with body and Soul, but the maker sought to make it <u>yet more</u> like its eternal model, not only a shrine in space but in some way an eternal shrine, as much like its model as it can be.

> (Just)[20] as that pattern is the Living Being that is forever existent, so he sought to make this Universe also like it, so far as it might be, in that respect. Now the nature of the Living Being was eternal, and this character it was impossible to confer in full completeness on the generated thing (37d).

Here Plato speaks the paradox which has run through the previous discussion of the Universe as an eternal becoming. He states openly that the model is the Living Being who is eternal but the Universe is a generated thing which therefore cannot be eternal in the same way. It is this difference between the model and the Universe which

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[20] Cornford has "So."

must be reconciled in order to describe the Universe as a thing which is as much like its model as possible. And to accomplish this, Plato says:

> But he took thought to make, as it were, a moving likeness (eikona) of eternity; and at the same time that he ordered heaven, he made, of eternity that abides in unity, an everlasting likeness moving according to number-that to which we have given the name Time (37d).

In this passage, the themes of eternity, image, and time culminate in a synthesis, of which there are several aspects. First, notice that the act of the demiurge which brought order to the original chaos, which Plato has already described, is said in this passage to be the same act as the act of making time. Second, notice that time as an image is made, not of chaos but of eternity. Third, note that Time is a moving image and an everlasting image. Fourth, note that Time is said to move according to number. Fifth, note that we have given it the name of Time. I shall discuss each of these aspects in turn.

1. The activity of the demiurge.--The Universe has been described throughout the Timaeus as made by an act of the demiurge, whose activity brings order out of the discordant motions which confront him. This feature of the allegory has elicited much comment, and some of the commentators would like to conclude that the demiurge does not create ex nihilo because Plato clearly says that the demiurge was confronted by a chaos of discordant motions.[21] Others

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[21] Cornford, op. cit.

would like to conclude that it is merely a detail of the allegory which does not jibe with the details of literal experience, so that one can dismiss the chaos as only a mythical element but not a real thing. Both views seem unnecessary, for Plato was neither writing mere allegory nor Christian Theology. It seems more to the point to show that Plato once before introduced a prior consideration into his account after he has introduced a later consideration, as we saw, for example, when he described the World-Soul after the World-body. There, it was to give the reader the necessary materials out of which he could fashion the image through which Plato put forward his account of the process. Plato of course attributes to Soul a superior sort of perfection than that which he attributes to body, but not because these parts of the Universe stand in an external hierarchy of items which are spatially and existentially discrete; rather, the proportional unity of the entire Universe is his primary desideratum, and he says repeatedly that the Universe is an image, and that we must see it as we see images, in their unity. But one cannot simply call off a list of parts if one wishes the reader to appreciate and know the unity of the image, since the list would create the impression of a linear, serial juxtaposition of parts, whereas the Universe is the most excellent unity of things that have become.

So here, the doctrine of Time, the aspect of the Universe by which it most resembles its eternal model, has

been introduced last in the account of the perfected Universe, and we are told that the making of Time is accomplished by the demiurge <u>in the same act</u> as the ordering of the original chaos. Plato has again introduced the most difficult aspect of the doctrine he is fashioning, after the materials have been provided for the reader to see the doctrine in its unity. Logically, since the act of ordering the Universe is the same as the act of making Time, one might expect that these two aspects of the act of constructing the Universe should have been discussed together. But this runs into a severe difficulty, which is the simple fact that Plato did not do so, which leads to the contradiction that what we should expect Plato to say is not what we should expect Plato to say; in other words, if we are being faithful to the development of Plato's logic, we ought not to expect him to put the making of Time and the making of order into the same paragraph since he did not do so. It is only necessary to perceive that these aspects are united better in an image than by serial logic, to follow Plato's meaning as exactly as he states it. Thus the function of image as an explanation of the relation between time and eternity is not less than logical; on the contrary, the image provides the basis to transcend the linear <u>appearance</u> of philosophical logic and to reach into the heart of Plato's doctrine of the Unity of the Universe.

2. <u>Time is said to be made as an image of eternity</u>.--At first, this seems to mean that the demiurge fashioned the

Universe out of the material of an original chaos, but fashioned Time out of the material of eternity. This is not only a philosophical difficulty but also a function of translation. For, in English (American?) we say that something is an image <u>of</u> something, which does not mean, for example, that the image of Freud, is made out of the material of his flesh. An image of Freud can be made of photosensitive paper, of clay, or bronze, or the graphite scratchings of a pencil, or colored pigments, etc. However, when one discusses the Universe as an image, a Universe which has been described as exhausting all of the four elements out of which it is made, what can the image be made of. But the answer stares us in the face. Plato has said that the Universe is a Unity of the four elements of fire, earth, air, and water, which has Soul indivisibly in each and every one of its parts. One cannot then expect the image, which the Universe is, to be <u>made of</u> any one of these so-called ingredients; the Universe is an image precisely because it is a <u>Unity</u>. Just as the Universe is a Unity, so is it an image, and one can as reasonably ask of what is unity made as one can ask of what is an image made. The Universe, as image, is like the Soul of the Universe; it is indivisible from its existence. Thus, insofar as Time is an image, it is not compounded out of the elements of chaos or out of the perfection of eternity. Time as image is Plato's way of describing, "as it were," the temporal unity of the Universe. The phrase "made of" seems

ambiguous only because in English, the preposition "of" is sometimes used to indicate apposition, sometimes to indicate the genitive, as in derivation. The "of" here is appositive.

3. Time is said to be a moving image, and an everlasting one.--We have already been given the ingredients of this aspect of the Universe from which we may construct an image. For the motions of the circles of the planets have been described as due to the ordering perfection of the Soul of the Universe, and we are aware that the several motions of the circles within the Universe take place within that sort of motion which is best suited to the perfection of the Universe, namely, uniform rotation. Because Uniform rotation is the best sort of motion, which best suits the sort of perfection the Universe has, we know that the Universe is a sphere which revolves and comprehends all the other motions of the circles within itself. Just as the Soul comprehends all that can be comprehended because it is indivisible from every area of the Universe, so uniform rotation includes the several motions of the circles which revolve within the sphere of the Universe. The question now arises whether the motion which characterizes Time is the uniform motion of the entire sphere itself, considered apart from the subsidiary motion of the interior circles, or whether it is one of the lesser motions of one or some of these circles, or whether it is all of these motions in some sort of unity. But we have been given the material

from which to reach this conclusion, for we have been told that the making of Time is the same act as the making of order. Thus, Time is the proportional unity of all the motions of all the circles, including the motion of the outer sphere, insofar as these are a unity. For, as order unifies chaos, Time unifies motion. Once order has brought the elements of chaos into a unity, they are no longer elements of chaos, but of unity. So, once Time has brought unity into the several motions of the circles, they are no longer only several circles, but are now the elements of the proportional Unity of Time. It would be wrong to suppose that order is the principle according to which the many elements of the spatial universe have been united into a One and that Time is the principle according to which the many elements of the temporal Universe have been united into a One, because that would lead to the conclusion that there are two Ones. Two Ones would create the third man problem which has been adduced already in the _Timaeus_ to show that the Universe is One and only One, or one One. The Universe is a radical Unity, not simply of spaces and Times, but, one ought to say, of Time-space. At the same time, however, one must assert that the Unity of the Universe is not a simply homogeneity without parts, for that would be the _de_struction and not the _con_struction of a Universe. Plato's Universe is neither atomistic nor pantheistic; it is a unity of proportional realities, a moving image.

The second aspect of the moving image is the everlasting character of its motion. Again, we have been furnished with the material to construct an understanding of this characteristic. We have already called attention to Plato's optimism in his use of the word "ceaseless," by which he seems to indicate that the Universe must resemble eternity by being indestructible. This feature of the Universe might well be called its alleged immortality, and it is therefore appropriate to recall again that the Universe exhausted all the elements out of which it was fashioned. It was said, on this basis, that there were no forces outside of it which might attack it and that it was therefore impervious to age and sickness. There is nothing outside the Universe which might attack it and so it must be immortal, ceaseless, indestrutible, everlasting. Can Plato have concluded naively that there are no dangers to which the Universe is subject? To answer this, it is necessary to recall the reservation with which the whole character of Time has been prefaced. Plato says clearly that the perfection of Time was given to the Universe as far as it was possible to do so. But why should it not be fully possible? For two reasons. First, if the Universe were as eternal as its model it would be identical with its model and there would then be no difference between the model and the reality. But this cannot be, for the Universe, being visible, must have been generated, and must therefore have been fashioned on a model. Secondly, throughout his

philosophy, Plato repeatedly uses the phrase "as far as possible" without giving a doctrine of possibility which would explain the meaning of the phrase. Both the need for a model and the limit of possibility are related to the doctrine of not-being. The meaning of this doctrine of not-being for the realm of the Forms, was first revealed in the Sophist, where it becomes the Different. The Universe is both the same as and different from its model, so that it is like its model and yet it is-not like its model. Having said that the Universe is a Unity of the Same and the Different, and having said that Time gives the closest approximation to perfection that the generated Universe can attain, one should expect that Plato will now develop his doctrine of not-being on a cosmological scale, as he has developed his doctrines of eternity and image and Time on a cosmological scale. This new doctrine of cosmic not-being is found in the second half of the dialogue, where the relation of necessity and the receptacle of becoming is discussed. One can conclude at this point only that the perfection of Time is as perfect as it is possible for the demiurge to make it, but, since the demiurge is not absolutely omnipotent, the full character of eternity could not be conferred on the Universe. The demiurge must persuade necessity, not force it.

Or, to put the matter in another way, insofar as the perfection of the Universe depends on the activity of the rational demiurge, it is perfect; but insofar as the

Universe depends on the reluctance of necessity to be persuaded by the demiurge, it lacks perfection. Thus the everlasting image, which we call Time, is subject to the recalcitrance of necessity. In recognising this, we rescue Plato from the charge of naive optimism, for the perfection of the Universe is its everlasting character, but this is not the same as asserting that the Universe is absolutely perfect; even Time must confront necessity.

4. Time is said to move according to number.--Again, we have been furnished with the material to understand this assertion. We know already that the Universe considered as a whole is a sphere, but considered as the proportional unity of the many circles and living beings which inhabit it, it is a populated sphere. Thus Time is neither the revolution only of the outer periphery nor only the sum of the rotations of the many circles which inhabit the interior of the sphere. Time is the order which the One Universe enjoys; (correlatively, the order of the Universe is the Time it enjoys). Time encompasses both the Unity and the multiplicity of the Universe insofar as it is the perfection of the Universe which makes it most like its eternal model. It would be a serious misreading of this phrase to assert that Plato's Universe is simply a Pythagorean Universe because Time moves in it according to number. Such a view focuses on the plurality of motions within the Universe but ignores the proportional Unity which these motions have in the Universe. This is not to say that

Plato's Universe is non-Pythagorean. On the contrary, there is a great deal of Pythagorean wisdom in this dialogue, and one should not forget that Timaeus, the principle speaker of the dialogue, is represented as a Pythagorean. But it is a long way from the assertion that there are Pythagorean elements and themes in Plato's Timaeus to the assertion that the whole dialogue is only a Pythagorean tale. Time moves, no doubt. Time orders the Universe. And the many motions which the Universe includes are not excluded from the ordering perfection which Time brings to the Universe. But it seems more reasonable to say that Time moves the many, and that Time brings order to the many by moving them in accordance with the perfection of which Time is the image. To derive the reality of Time from the number of motions in the Universe would be tantamount to the assertion that Time is a subsidiary perfection of multiplicity, whereas the passage clearly states that Time brings the Universe into a closer and more perfect relation to its eternal model.

5. We have given it the name Time.--Once before, Plato expressed a desire to use the right name for the Universe, and he said there that we ought to give the name to it which is most appropriate and acceptable to it (28b). It is instructive to recall that the difficulty of finding the right name would remind Plato of Cratylus, his first teacher, as it calls up for us the dialogue which bears his name. But one should also recall that the difficulty

of finding the right name for the Universe, and for Time, are related to Plato's concern to avoid blasphemy. For we must remember that the majority of simple Athenians had deities and names for those aspects of the Universe which they regarded as mysterious. Thus the name of Time could very well have precipitated controversial discussions in Plato's Athens which could swell to the dimensions which they had reached with Socrates. The _Phaedo_ would convince anyone that Plato was not afraid of death, and so it does not follow that Plato is cautious out of fear. It is better to think that Plato regarded thinking through the doctrine of the _Timaeus_ as a more important work than entering into a polemic with those who could not understand it, especially if we are correct in asserting that the _Timaeus_ is not only a synthesis of doctrine but a preparation for the _Critias_ and the _Laws_, which were intended to have direct political influence.

These five aspects of Plato's doctrine of Time, then, show that Plato has come to relate eternity, image, and Time in a new synthesis, which passes far beyond the way in which these doctrines were treated separately in prior dialogues. But we shall not conclude that the passage just discussed is sufficient to establish our hypothesis, for Plato has not completed his discussion of Time. Before we can conclude that Plato's image of Time is the high synthesis we claim it to be, we ought to have the entirety of Plato's doctrine of Time before us.

Before adding the final details, perhaps a small summing up is in order. Plato has said that the Universe is a shrine, and that its deepest perfection is its temporality, which is the way it is ordered. Time is a moving image, because the Universe resembles its eternal model as closely as possible.

Plato now speaks of the parts of Time, having already spoken of the Unity of Time. He says that there were no days and nights, or months and years, before the Universe came to be, and that all of these came into being simultaneously. However, he says

> All these are parts of Time, and 'was' and 'shall be' are forms of Time that have come to be; we are wrong to transfer them unthinkingly to eternal being. We say that it was and is and shall be but 'is' alone really belongs to it and describes it truly; 'was' and 'shall be' are properly used of becoming which proceeds in Time, for they are motions (37e).

There is much that is important in this passage, but the central point which concerns our exposition of Time is the phrase "becoming which proceeds in Time." By this small phrase, Plato indicates that there is a distinction to be made between becoming and Time, and that these two words do not indicate the same reality. It is important to notice that the familiar antithesis between eternity and time is not identical with the antithesis of eternity and becoming. For it is clearly said that becoming proceeds in Time. We must attempt to see how Plato relates Time, Becoming, and eternity in a meaningful way. Plato does not put them in a simple juxtaposition, for there are clearly three of

them, and their relation to each other is not a simple opposition. We have seen that Time introduces the perfect order which characterizes the Universe, and we have been told that the Universe is a becoming image. How are these statements to be reconciled so that the Universe may continue to have the perfection which it has been said to have. The key to this problem is given in the following:

> But that which is forever in the same state immovably cannot be becoming older or younger by lapse of time nor can it ever become so; neither can it now have been nor will it be in the future; and in general nothing belongs to it of all that Becoming attaches to the moving things of sense; but these have come into being as forms of Time, which images eternity and revolves according to number (38a).

The important consideration here is the phrase "moving things of sense," for it specifies the realm of becoming, as the realm of the moving things of sense. Here is Plato's familiar doctrine that the things of sense keep moving and therefore give rise to difficulties for the intelligence which would like them to be still so that the things of sense would be as stable as the names we give to them. But the context of the doctrine has been changed. Formerly, intelligence had to go beyond the merely visible because the constant changes in the visible realm made knowledge impossible. This early conviction of Plato led to the theory of Forms, which are eternal and therefore sufficiently stable for intellectual comprehension. But now, the greatest perfection of which the Universe is capable is the perfection which Time brings as the

principle of order. We are now informed that becoming proceeds _in_ Time. Thus it is inexact to say "...that what is past _is_ past, what happens now _is_ happening, and again what will happen _is_ what will happen, and that the non-existent _is_ the non-existent" (38b). Plato has affirmed that the ordering of the Universe has been made even more like its model by Time, the moving image of eternity. The theory of the Forms, up to this point, has told us that things share in Forms and therefore achieve a certain resemblance to being. But Plato tells us now that resemblance is not enough, for it leaves too wide a gap between being and becoming. Thus the Forms by which things resemble being are further perfected by Time, by which, things share in the eternity of being, as much as possible. Time, then, even perfects the Forms because Time helps things share in the intimacy of eternity's own nature. By Time, things share in the divine ordering of the Universe.

> Time came into being together with the Heaven in order that, as they were brought together, so they might be dissolved together, if ever their dissolution should come to pass: and it is made after the pattern of the everenduring nature, in order that it may be as like that pattern as possible: for the pattern is a thing that has being for all eternity, whereas the Heaven has been and is and shall be perpetually throughout all time (38b, c).

Thus Time embraces all. By it, becoming most "becomes" Being. It has been generated like the forms of Time but it transcends them, because it has been made to increase the great intimacy which becoming has been brought to have

with Being.

This could be paraphrased in several ways. One could speak of the relation between becoming and being as that of Time, such that they are constituted by that relation with respect to each other. One could say that Time is the consummation of the contact which becoming and being have with each other. One could speak in Hegelian language and say that Time is the Mediation of Becoming, by which becoming "becomes"being. But out of profound admiration for Plato's greatness as a stylist, Plato's imagery should be retained. But the truth must be understood as well as seen. "Time, the moving image of eternity," is spoken in the language of philosophical poetry, a language largely of Plato's invention. The phrase is beautiful as well as truthful, for it not only relates the realms of eternity and becoming truthfully but it also relates them beautifully, in the kind of elegant simplicity we expect of great truths. Time has so perfected the Universe that what merely becomes incessantly is now enabled to share in the perfection of eternal being. Time transfigures what merely becomes into what really is, without destroying its becoming.

Thus it is not illegitimate to ask "where is time," and Plato answers that, since the World-Soul is responsible both for the order and the motion of the numbered Universe, Time lives in the Soul of the Universe. Time accomplishes the ceaseless transcendence of becoming, for, by Time, things which only became, now "become" being.

It is important to state that Time does not so completely accomplish its transfiguration of mere becoming that nothing any longer becomes; the unification which Time introduces into the manifold realm of becoming is a proportional Unity, so that becoming no longer needs to be excluded from the perfection of the Universe, but can now enter into it on its own terms. Things which become, become intelligible by Time, because Time introduces order into their motions, whereas ceaseless becoming as such, unordered by Time, has no order at all, and hence no intelligibility. Thus, where once Plato insisted that only the eternal is intelligible, now he asserts that Time brings becoming into the realm of the intelligible by introducing order into the realm of the incessantly becoming.

The basis for the often-asserted statement that Plato's image of Time is circular, derives in part from his description of the Universe as a sphere which revolves uniformly, and in part from the following passage:

> In virtue then of this plan and intent of the god for the birth of Time, in order that Time might be brought into being, Sun, Moon, and five other stars-wanderers as they are called [22] were made to define and preserve the numbers of Time. Having made a body for each of them, the god set them in orbits [23] in which the revolution of the Different was moving-in seven orbits seven bodies (38c).

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[22] They do not really wander; see <u>Laws</u> 822a.

[23] Cornford has "circuits."

It is not necessary to follow Plato into the detailed descriptions which he gives for the motions of each of the planets and for each of the spheres, since as we noted previously, his observations were limited as much by the lack of such modern instruments as the telescope, the mass spectrometer, radio telescopes and 200-inch lenses as by the absence of Kepler, Copernicus, and Newton. The general point is this; Time is the perfection of the Universe and is coterminous with the ordering activity of the demiurge; the numbers of Time, corresponding to the many of bodies, are made visible by the bodies we call planets, which revolve both in their various orbits within the circle of the Different and the circle of the Same. Time gives rise to the orderly motions of the bodies called the planets and the stars. "Thus for these reasons day and night came into being, the period of the single and most intelligent revolution" (39c). And again:

> In this way then, and for these ends were brought into being all those stars that have turnings on their journey through the Heaven: in order that this world may be as like as possible to the perfect and intelligible Living Being in respect of imitating its ever-enduring nature (39e).

The planets, then, are living beings who follow out prescribed courses according to number. But the perfection of the Universe which Time introduces is not merely the month or the year or the day or the night; these are the numbers of Time, just as was and shall be are the forms of Time. Time, the reality, is the order of the Universe in

motion. Time is neither motion nor the result of motion (indeed, quite the reverse is true; motion is the result of the order which the demiurge elicits from chaos). Nor is Time becoming, for becoming proceeds in Time. In short, Time is the Life of the Universe, which was foreshadowed in the *Sophist*, where the Stranger says:

> And, Oh Heavens, can we ever be made to believe that motion and life and soul and mind are not present with Being. Can we imagine Being to be devoid of life and mind, and to remain in awful unmeaning and everlasting fixture (249a)?

CHAPTER VI

TIME AND SOCIETY

While it has not escaped the attention of the scholars whose interest leads them to the *Timaeus* that its doctrine of Time is inseparable from the doctrine of the eternal model, the purpose or role of Plato's Time image is frequently overlooked.[1] Similarly, while it is true that Plato fashions his image of Time with great care and is conscious throughout his formulation of a desire not to distort the ineffable while yet speaking of it, it seems that insufficient attention has been paid to the relevance of the introductory remarks in the opening section of the dialogue to this image, and the relation of these remarks to Plato's doctrine of Time.

To rectify this oversight, it is only necessary to recall the opening passages of the *Timaeus* where Socrates had agreed to the plans which Timaeus and Critias had made for their talk: Timaeus intends to describe the origin of the Universe and to carry on his account *until* it had reached the *time* when man made his appearance; there*after*, Critias intends to take up the account and to describe

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[1] For example, in his chapter on the doctrine of the Timaeus, Ross (W.D. Ross, *Plato's Theory of Ideas* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1951).) discusses the role of Time not at all.

ancient Athens; both of these accounts are to be given so that Socrates may fulfill his wish to hear an account of a real city, not an imaginary one; not a tale of "some noble creatures in a painting, or perhaps of real animals, alive but motionless" but an account of real creatures, "in motion, and actively exercising the powers promised by their form" (19c). In this way, Plato gently suggests that the power to describe the actual origins of the best society are beyond Socrates, and it must be the task of others to supply it. This is the meaning of the obviously inadequate recapitulation of the doctrines of the Republic, which are much too briefly summarized in the opening passages of the Timaeus. There is no need to look for deeper or more arcane meanings in Socrates' confession of inability to construct such an account; it is not the absence of opinion on Socrates part, as it was in the Theatetus. In the Timaeus, Socrates does not say that he is "only" an opinionless midwife who must deliver the philosophical offspring of those pregnant with the truth; on the contrary, he says quite openly that he is not up to the task, and that the power to tell such a story is beyond him. It has been generally agreed among the scholars that the opening passages of the Timaeus "recapitulate" the Republic,[2] and most of those who do not agree on the order of the

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[2] Gauss, Philosophischer Handkommentar zu den Dialogen Platos, p. 157.

dialogues as they have been described in chapter II agree that the *Timaeus* must be later than the *Republic* for this interpretative reason.[3] And it has long been agreed that the *Republic* is the work in which Plato reveals a political philosophy, or, as we call it, a philosophy of society. But if we take separate conclusions, on which the scholars agree, and, if we attempt to see them in relation to each other, we shall arrive at a simple and yet, to the best of my knowledge, an uncommon conclusion. If (1) it is true that the *Republic* is a dialogue in which Plato has attempted to see the powers of the soul "writ large," that is, if the *Republic* is a dialogue in which the state is seen as a magnification of the soul; and, together with this, if (2) we see that the *Timaeus* is a dialogue in which the "alive but motionless," society of the *Republic* is recapitulated, and, if we add to this (3) the fact that the *Timaeus* first develops a doctrine of Time before setting out the details of the best form of society, we may draw a startling conclusion; Plato has made the doctrine of Time the basis of a new Platonic sociology. Where the *Republic* describes a State based on the view that only the eternal is real and all else is mere becoming, the *Timaeus* describes a society based on the perfection which Time confers on the discordant motions of a primordial chaos. Plato has

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[3] Jowett, *The Dialogues of Plato*, II, pp. 456-7.

shifted the basis of his sociology from the eternal to the temporal; no longer is it his view that the realms of eternity and becoming are separated by an unbridgeable chasm; now, in the Timaeus, through the gradual process we described in Chapter II, Plato has arrived at the formulation of a doctrine in which Time is, so to speak, the bridge between these two realms.

But this image of Time as a bridge falls short of Plato's meaning. It would be better to say that the Universe which the Timaeus reveals is a proportional unity of many levels, and that Time is the proportion between eternal being and incessant becoming. But further, it is necessary to recall that Plato does not use this sort of intellectually precise language; he prefers to say that Time is the moving image of eternity, because the richness and allegorical suggestiveness of the phrase "moving image" captures two very different levels of meaning, i.e., both the ineffable truth of the eternal model of the Universe, and the magnificent beauty of the concrete relations within the visible Universe.

To the best of my knowledge, Bury is the only writer who has seen that the Republic is Plato's first Philosophy of History, and that in the Timaeus Plato modifies this view.[4] But Bury nevertheless concludes that there has been

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[4] Bury, "Plato and History," p. 5.

no growth of Plato's doctrine, and that the conclusions of the Timaeus are implicit in the views stated in the Republic. This seems to stretch the meaning of the term "implicit" beyond reasonable bounds, for, on this basis, we should have to conclude that Plato's movement from an eternal basis to a temporal basis is no development, but merely an explication of former views. It is difficult to see how one can say that the basis of society in one dialogue is eternity and the basis of society in another dialogue is Time, and that the one view is "implicit" in the other.

Similarly, it is hard to see the grounds for A.E. Taylor's assertion that the Timaeus is only an introduction to the Critias, since, as we said above, such a view would so linearize Plato's philosophy that we should have to view the Laws as the only source of Plato's mature philosophy. One should not ignore the early works of a genius such as Plato when one reads his later works, since this procedure deprives one of the measure of the man and the gradual maturity which he was able to reveal in his late writings.

It seems to us more reasonable to follow Cornford into the opinion that the Timaeus was the first of a projected trilogy of dialogues, which were to have revealed Plato's reflections concerning the basis of the best possible form of society, after a life-long concern for this subject. If it is true that Plato's Sicilian adventures were of such a nature as to discourage and disillusion the

great man from his life-long hopes to bring about good government, we should expect to see bitterness and pessimism in the works written after these experiences. But we find no shallow despair in the Seventh Letter or in the Timaeus; rather we confront a dialogue which is written in a style especially designed to appeal to those whose philosophical training was not so arduous nor so disciplined as Plato's own. Plato does not become a disdainful elitist, nor is the Timaeus a children's allegory, written by a sour old grandfather, for there is a great deal in it which requires strenuous philosophical reflection and painstaking attention. Yet, even those without philosophical training and exacting logical skill can be moved by the poetry which Plato has made in the Timaeus. It is both a mature philosophy and a beautiful myth which seems to be designed as well for the elite philosopher as for the untutored statesman.

Thus it seems pointless to criticise the Timaeus as an uneven dialogue which skips about from the level of thought to the level of myth, and, on the basis of such a criticism, to prefer to look to other dialogues for more philosophical meanings because the style of earlier dialogues is more even and their philosophy more exactly stated. This is not unlike preferring to look in the pantry for the broom only because there is a light in the pantry, when, in fact, the broom is in a darker but more spacious room in the attic.

If it is true that the Timaeus was written after Plato's later and more mature reflections on the requisites for the best possible society, as we tried to establish in the third chapter, one should not ook to the Republic for Plato's most mature doctrines of society. And yet those writers who wish to discuss Plato's philosophy of society as a philosophy of history or as a political philosophy seem more drawn to the Republic, and few of them go to the Timaeus as the source of Plato's teaching on this subject.[5]

This is not to complain that scholarly inattention plagues the Timaeus, for the Timaeus has not gone without a great deal of comment by writers in almost every century in the West. Yet it has not been viewed as the dialogue in which Plato makes his most explicit statements on the basis for the best possible form of society, and no writer in the modern era has seen in it the culmination of Plato's gradual development beyond the doctrine of eternity in the Republic. And yet this seems to be precisely what Plato has done.

This is not the place to examine and comment in detail on the elements which, according to Plato, would characterize the best form of society, since these

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[5] Walsh, Plato and the Philosophy of History. See also Barker, Political Thought of Plato and Aristotle, Nettleship, Lectures on the Republic of Plato, Popper, The Open Society and its Enemies, and numerous anthologies which present Plato's Republic but seldom if ever present the Timaeus.

specifications are to be found in part in the Critias and in great detail in the Laws. It is not our purpose here to describe exhaustively Plato's later sociology. The issue here is the role of Plato's image of Time as a basis for his later sociology, insofar as this can be ascertained by a careful reading of the Timaeus in its chronological and doctrinal context. The Timaeus seems to be unequivocally clear on this issue, for Plato shows repeatedly in this dialogue that the basis for a sound understanding of his sociology is the role of Time in the nature of the Universe. Thus, before Critias can accomplish his promise to furnish Socrates with an account of ancient Athens in her prime of social life, Timaeus speaks a monologue which comprises almost the entire work which bears his name. In the first half of the dialogue, which discusses the Universe insofar as it is due to the Work of Reason, Plato leads gradually and ineluctably to the basis of the rational perfections which are brought to the Universe by Time. In the Republic the perfections of society derive from a participation of the state in eternal justice; in the Timaeus, society is perfected by Time, which brings order to chaos.

The most serious objection to our conclusion is the claim that Plato only speaks of the gradual construction of the Universe as if it were gradually brought into existence, when his actual meaning remains hidden between the lines. A.E. Taylor adopts this view, when he says that Plato believes the Universe is eternal, and therefore it

does not actually have a temporal character (Archer-Hind also holds this view). In short, Taylor claims that Plato described the Universe as if it were gradually brought into being because it would be easier for Plato's readers to comprehend his meaning in this way.[6]

Happily, Plato himself seems to upset this view in the *Timaeus*, when he distinguishes quite carefully between the eternal and the becoming, between a false image and a genuine image, between a mere myth and a genuine myth. If the *Timaeus* were only a myth designed to create the appearance of the truth but not to reveal the actual truth, it would follow that Plato has cast his whole account of the origin of the Universe into the deceptively simple mold of orderly succession. But the discrepancy between the deliberately temporal image which Plato has created and the calm stillness of the eternal, which he recurrently describes, seems too wide to support the interpretation that Plato remained an eternalist in the midst of a temporalist account.[7]

It seems better to view Plato's statements about the temporality of the Universe as the basis of its perfection,

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[6] A.E. Taylor, *Commentary*, pp. 689 ff.

[7] J.F. Callahan, *Four Views of Time in Ancient Philosophy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1948), rightly says that A.E. Taylor errs here because of his adoption of Aristotle's notion of Time.

and to reject the assertion that Plato's Universe is actually eternal even though he says it is temporal. But there is a deeper point, and it is this; to continue to distinguish so sharply between eternity and Time after reading the *Timaeus* is to miss a major doctrine of the *Timaeus*, which describes philosophically-mythologically the proportional relation between the realms of eternity and becoming, and to view the role of Time as the mediator between these realms, such that they are no longer as separate as they were described to be in the *Republic*, but are aspects of a proportionally united Universe. The assertion that Plato separates eternity and Time ignores Plato's description of their relation in the *Timaeus*, where Time is said to be the proportional unification of becoming and eternity. By viewing Plato's doctrine of Time as the "mediation" of becoming, one can reach the basis of Plato's late sociology, since Plato repeatedly has Timaeus say that the gradual origin of man must be sought in the gradual origin of the Universe, and it is precisely Timaeus' function to reveal Plato's doctrine of Time so that Critias can take up the account of man. To assert that Plato held a static view of the Universe but spoke of it as a gradual process, because he was unable to discuss the whole Universe at once, seems to misinterpret the crucial significance of Plato's definition of Time as an image. For the Image is the whole Universe, and, furthermore, it is deliberately described as a moving image. As we have

said repeatedly above, Plato was not unable to describe the whole Universe at once; he did so in an image, and while it is true that he gradually reveals the elements and aspects of the image in a serialized description, he nevertheless insists that the Universe is one image. In short, Plato no longer impales himself on the horns of a dilemma by separating eternity and Time; he has transcended such an impasse by describing a Universe which is both hierarchical and processual, yet neither in isolation. One may continue to dissect logically Plato's Universe into one part hierarchy and one part process, but it seems to see that it is the dissector and not Plato who so bifurcates the Platonic Universe. That is, one may analyze the Platonic Universe into logically discrete categories, and focus now on the hierarchic aspect and now on the processual aspect, but one can also say that Plato's Universe is a proportional unity in which the temporal hierarchy (or the hierarchical temporality) are concretely related. Thus one could reject A.E. Taylor's view that Plato believed the Universe to be eternal but described it as if it were temporal, so that Plato could communicate better to the philosophically ill-equipped.

However, it should be borne in mind that the _Timaeus_ does not itself _contain_ a new sociology, but presents the _basis_ for one, for we must look to the _Critias_ and the _Laws_ for the details of Plato's later view of society. It is our contention here that this later view is unintelligible

without a sound interpretation of Plato's moving image of eternity.

It follows that the entire basis of society and the communal life of man is not to be found completely within those aspects of the Universe which are due to the orderly perfections which derive from Time. For our analysis has stopped midway in the monologue of Timaeus; we have described, up to this point, only the works of reason, and have not presented any discussion of those aspects of the Universe which derive from necessity. Plato has not described the demiurge as absolutely omnipotent, for even the demiurge must attempt to persuade necessity, not force it, to yield to the urgings of Time and order.[8]

The admission that Time itself is not all powerful, but must confront, so to speak, the cosmological inertia of necessity, serves to strengthen, not weaken, the

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[8] There are several aspects of Plato's discussion of Time and Society which bear a marked resemblance to some aspects of the philosophy of Anaximander, but a discription of these similarities and differences would require a lengthy discussion which would take us into the origin of Plato's doctrines, whereas it is only our purpose here to present and examine Plato's doctrine. For example, while it would be instructive to investigate the extent of Plato's indebtedness to Anaximander's dark saying about the reparation which things offer in Time for their injustices, (see, for example, John Burnet, Early Greek Philosophy (4th ed.; London: Adam and Charles Black; New York: The Macmillan Co., 1930), pp. 52-53.) it would necessitate more comment than we have room to present here.

conclusion that Time brings perfection. Whereas it was once possible to say that Plato viewed the eternal as the only source of perfection and viewed the temporal realm of becoming as the source of imperfection, it now emerges that Plato has made a sharp distinction between incessant becoming, which is indeed less than perfect, and Time, which brings perfection even to becoming. When becoming is ordered by Time it is no longer merely incessant, nor only a ceaseless and perpetual fluxion of chaotic changes, but an ordered motion which is perfected by Time, the source of orderly motion. Necessity belongs to mere becoming; Time belongs to reason and eternity.

It follows that a society will be perfect insofar as it regards Time as the paradigm of its style of life, and that society will be imperfect insofar as it regards mere becoming as the model for its political flux. And these are exactly the doctrines which Plato develops in the _Critias_ and the _Laws_. The _Critias_, as much as we have of it, describes the "mythical" kingdom of Atlantis, and we have a brief foretaste of this description in the opening passages of the _Timaeus_. In the third book of the _Laws_, we have what the moderns would call a philosophy of history, or, in other terms, what could well be described as an incipient philosophical anthropology. The third book of the _Laws_ dwells at great length on the questions which we are now examining; it is concerned with "immense periods of Time" and "thousands of cities" which came to be and

have now disappeared from memory, and puts the question to itself whether there may not be a discernible pattern in the rise and fall of these cities. Or, to see the matter from another point of view, one could point to the tenth book of the *Laws* where questions about what we might call divine providence are raised and discussed, in a context which is explicity temporal. Or again, one could cite quotation after quotation from almost any book of the *Laws* which would show that Plato was much interested in the relative durations of various things, from constitutions to kingdoms and from mountains to men.

But these investigations must be left to another time when they can be treated with the exhaustive documentation they deserve. It has been our purpose to spell out in detail the reasons for adopting the view that there is a Platonic philosophy of time and that this philosophy is inseparable from Plato's concern for the best possible society.

Before the final words are written, however, it seems appropriate to state a few opinions which have emerged during the course of this study. While it would be impossible to draw final conclusions about the relevance of Plato's philosophy of time to the intellectual pursuits of the modern world without at the same time presenting a history of Platonic scholarship for all of the intervening years between Plato's era and our own, it is possible to state a few opinions which have been reached

on this subject, providing caution is advised about the extent to which we may derive philosophical satisfaction from a careful reading of Plato's works.

Perhaps the most persistent opinion which comes to mind concerning Plato's philosophy of time is the frequently stated view that the Greeks viewed the world as closed and that their view of history was in sharp contrast to our modern view of the open Universe. While it is not possible to state that this view of the Greek world as closed is without any foundation, it is not only possible but necessary to confront the closed view with the import of the doctrine of time which we find in the _Timaeus_. It is simply incorrect and therefore, unscholarly to repeat the naive eternalism of the _Republic_, if the _Timaeus_ is as late a work as it seems to be. One should not continue to separate the eternal from the temporal after one has studied the _Timaeus_, and one could say with some accuracy that the whole import of the _Timaeus_ has been to remove this intolerable dichotomy by revealing the manner of relation of these two aspects of the Universe.

This is not to assert that Plato came in the end to a simple monism in which all things are merely becoming. As we have said repeatedly, time perfects becoming. But there is an ineluctable gradualism in the Universe the _Timaeus_ describes which cannot be ignored, and, while it is true to say that our modern notion of process is richer by far and more concrete than ever a Greek could

imagine, it is also true to say that there was some degree of openness in the Greek Universe and that it would be false to state simply that it was a closed world.

The political implications of this openness deserve some attention although it is only possible to suggest some more obvious points here. If the Universe is closed and is in some way a completed whole, it becomes the business of the statesman to discern those Laws by which the Universe attains its style of perfection and to fashion human laws in such a way that human perfection is sought in copying the perfection of the Universe. In this way the constitution of the state should be only a copy and an imitation of the Universe.

If, on the other hand, the Universe is open and is in some way incomplete and unfinished, it becomes the business of the statesman to model his constitution as far as possible on the perfection of the Universe and thereafter to improvise and invent those measures which seem best under the circumstances. If such a statesman can be found, he will understand that the sources of imperfection are not solely derived from the failure of the citizens to model themselves on the eternal forms, but might result from the very incompletion of the statesman's actions. In other words, it follows from a completed world that its citizens must adjust themselves to its patterns; it follows from an incomplete world that its citizens play a part in its completion. It does not follow that

the citizens of an incomplete world must live in a totalitarian regime where all law emanates from an elite few who claim to have discovered the basis of all law. To put the matter differently, it can be said that a closed Universe has no room for human innovation, whether it be political, scientific, or philosophical; the converse statement would read that only in an open Universe can the citizenry aspire to creative participation in the processes of the state.

Unfortunately, this simple division of worlds into those that are closed and those that are open is not applicable to Plato's Universe, since it is a world in which there are eternal models as well as incomplete republics. Something of a similar view obtains in current anthropology in which one may read many statements to the effect that there are some basic exigencies of human nature which must be met in any culture, but that there are a number of ways in which cultures can set about handling these exigencies in their own respective styles. Plato's Universe is neither simply open or simply closed; nor does it suffice to say that it is both. The Platonic philosophy handles this question in a different way, for it describes a world in which there are stages of completion and degrees of openness. Thus for Plato it is possible to claim the best of both possible worlds, for he can assert that there are eternal models for human political action and that

there are necessary innovations and inventions which the statesman must create. To the extent that the human invention resembles the temporal order which the Universe achieves, to that extent is it good. In other language, one can say that the Platonic conception of perfection which appears in the *Timaeus* is a gradualist notion, such that a thing is perfect if it is as good as it can be at a given time. Perfection then is a stage concept which refers itself inevitably to a basic pace at which perfection is achievable.

In this way, one can see that the Platonic Universe is neither simply open nor simply closed, and that he who uses the paradigm "open or closed" really uses a spatial idea, not a temporal one, and is therefore guilty of a species of philosophical reductionism. The question is not whether the Universe is closed or open but whether there is in the Universe sufficient ground for the gradual attainment of perfection. Even this last statement seems to put perfection at the end of the process, whereas in fact it is possible to say in the Platonic idiom that a thing is as perfect as it can be *while* it is proceeding at its proper pace of attainment. In this way, one does not need to assert that perfection is attainable only in some otherworldly realm, or that only those things which have achieved release from the quagmire of time have entered into eternity. On the contrary, those things which have nothing of time in them but share only in the incessant

flux of becoming have no measure of eternity in them precisely because eternity can be brought to becoming only by time.

To use another perspective, the same point can be made in another way. In a Universe in which the eternal is removed from the temporal by a radical division, only those things which have transcended the division may properly be called eternal. Thus, no individuality can be claimed for any person who has not transcended time and achieved eternity. But in Plato's Universe, each person who finds his proper pace of achievement may be said to be as eternal as he can be at the moment, or that his perfection consists of the entire process of attainment. It is therefore necessary for the citizens of the _Republic_ to model themselves entirely upon the eternal forms or be called failures, where the citizens of the realm founded on the philosophy of the _Timaeus_ may be said to posess individuality insofar as they attain perfection to the extent that it is possible to attain it at the time. In this way, another of the frequently asserted opinions about the world of the Greeks is found wanting. In conversation with philosophers, one frequently hears that there were no genuine individuals in the Greek world, since genuine individuality would scandalize the Greek notion of an ordered and predictable world. We must clarify the statement that there is individuality in the Greek world; a more accurate statement would read that there is a genuine basis of individuality in the

philosophy which Plato reveals in the Timaeus, but this statement must be quickly followed by the statement that there were few Greek individuals. While it is true on the one hand to state that most Greeks felt the Universe to be closed, it is nonetheless true that Plato's Timaeus does not reveal such a Universe.

This creates something of a problem for the historian who would like to see one ethos in the age which produced both Plato and Aristotle. If the Timaeus reveals the philosophy herein described, we must separate Plato from his pupil even more widely than is sometimes the practice, for it does seem to be true that Aristotle's Universe is closed, since it is a world in which time is described as an accident. Surely this is far from Plato's view of time as the source of the perfections which make it possible for him to regard the Universe as a shrine. It is necessary to state that the gap between the moving image of eternity and the measure of motion is even wider than it has usually been described, if the viewpoint herein adopted is credible.

Again, this is not the place to discourse upon a philosophical prejudice, nor is it claimed that the philosophy of Plato is superior to the philosophy of Aristotle. Such statements do violence to the historical view which regards philosophies as different because they were written by different men in different times with different needs. Aristotle was not confronted with the

same political realities that confronted Plato, and to that extent, at least, we should, expect their political philosophies to differ. However, it remains true that Plato placed time at the very heart of his doctrine and that Aristotle placed time at the accidental periphery of his. To that extent, Plato's philosophy of time is more congenial to the modern mind which occupies itself with questions of historical process and temporal being.

Viewed in this light, it becomes possible to see the basis of Whitehead's remark that Plato has spawned almost the entire philosophical heritage of the West. Furthermore, it becomes possible to compare Science in the Modern World to the Timaeus, since the authors of both works attempted not only to write a history of contemporary science but also to show in their discussions of the scientific theories prevalent in their respective eras that beyond the reach of the sciences there were insights upon which the sciences unknowingly depended.

In that same spirit, I have attempted to write of Plato's image of time, since it is my conviction that every age, and not only Plato's or even Whitehead's, depends unknowlingly on a view of time and derives its basic cognitive orientation from its time-view.

If it is true that Plato matured until the last, and that he sought in the end to plumb the awesome mystery of time and eternity, I felt that his search could only enlighten the attempts of a working sociologist to make

some sense out of his own era by viewing it, in the last analysis, as a moving image of eternity.

There is one aspect of the temporal perfection of the Universe which deserves special attention in the light of modern interests, and that is the special perfection which develops in the individual man in time. We pointed out in chapter three that Plato made frequent use of the age of the speaker in several dialogues, sometimes accusing the speaker of naivete because of his youth and sometimes praising the venerable age of the speaker and the wisdom which came to him because of his age. For example, in the _Parmenides_, Socrates is very young and Parmenides is very old, and Plato implies clearly that the very young do not yet have the requisite insight for profound subjects. This is again true in the _Theatetus_ wherein Socrates is now the old and wise man, as opposed to the young and malleable Theatetus. In view of the fact that the _Timaeus_ casts the whole middle doctrine of individual reminiscence into a more generalized sociological frame of reference, it should be pointed out that Plato has not abandoned his reminiscence theory in the later dialogues: actually, he has fortified it by showing that there is a cosmological basis for the sort of memory which a society must have in order to be as fully societal as it is possible to be.

Thus, just as the society develops in time, so the individual citizen develops in time, and in time, the citizen not only ages, but he matures and grows wise. It

is this very maturity of insight which Plato himself experienced with his own advancing years, and it is therefore unsurprising that we find in the later dialogues a doctrine in to which the perfection of reason is attained by those individuals who have participated more fully in time than those younger philosophers whose maturity is yet unreached.

To put the matter somewhat more technically, Plato has so closely related cosmogenesis and anthropogenesis by reason of their mutual participation in time that it is also possible to relate the ontogenesis of the individual citizen to the same basis in time. While it was always possible to say with Plato that the older man is probably the wiser man, it is possible, after a careful reading of the later dialogues, to assert that the older man ought to be the wiser because of his fuller participation in time. Or to put the matter in more modern language, the gradual development of the individual person takes place not only according to psychological processes, but also according to sociological and cosmological processes, since all of these processes may be seen as particular manifestations of the perfections which Time brings to the Universe.

Therefore, I assert that a careful reading of the _Timaeus_ in its doctrinal and chronological context leads to the following conclusions.

Plato's final formulation of a doctrine of Time was revealed in his _Timaeus_. In that work, he tells us that

Time is the basis of society, from which the society derives the perfections of life and mind in motion. Thus it is false to divide eternity and time from each other since Time delivers perfections and perfects mere becoming so that it most resembles the source of perfections. It is good to regard Time as a moving image of eternity since this phrase indicates the mediatory role of time. The simple division of eternity _versus_ time is false, since eternity differs most from mere becoming. Time perfects becoming by relating it concretely to eternity. In this way, the things of the Universe may achieve individuality since they need not be either completely eternal nor merely becoming but may be best what they are by being as fully as possible what they are when they are. Thus, from the early form-doctrine of the middle dialogues, Plato has advanced to a new position. It is neither a renunciation of the Form-doctrine nor a simple extension or reapplication of it. In the _Timaeus_, the Forms are paradigms and have reality only to the extent to which the things modelled upon them derive their perfections from them. The earlier Form-doctrine described a number of perfect Forms from which things differed by reason of their imperfection; the later form-doctrine describes a set of Forms which are originative, such that they give of their perfection in a process called Time.

In such a world, society is not a realm removed from a penultimate world of silent and unspeaking self posession,

but becomes the way in which eternal perfection discloses itself, which Plato calls the moving image of eternity.

APPENDIX A

Ross[1] gives a tabular presentation of the order of the dialogues according to "five leading students" of the subject. Since the order of the early works is not in question here, the table is abbreviated to show the order of the dialogues starting with the *Republic*, on which there is wide agreement. However it should be noted that Ross does not distinguish between stylistic criteria and stylometric criteria and uses the two interchangeably in his chapter on the order of the dialogues. With the exception of the *Phaedrus*, the scholars cited by Ross give substantially the order I have adopted as the most probable.

Arnim	Lutoslawski	Raeder	Ritter	Wilamowitz
Rep. 2-10	Rep. 2-10	Rep.	Rep.	Rep.
Theaet.	Phaedr.	Phaedr.	Phaedr.	Phaedr.
Parm.	Theaet.	Theaet.	Theaet.	Parm.
Phaedr.	Parm.	Parm.	Parm.	Theaet.
Soph.	Soph.	Soph.	Soph.	Soph.
Pol.	Pol.	Pol.	Pol.	Pol.
Phil.	Phil.	Phil.	Tim.	Tim.
	Tim.	Tim.	Critias	Critias
	Critias	Critias	Phil.	Phil.
Laws	Laws	Laws	Laws	Laws
		Epin.		

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[1] W.D. Ross, *Plato's Theory of Ideas* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1951), p. 2.

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ABSTRACT

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<u>Plato's Image of Time</u>

Dissertation directed by J. Quentin Lauer, Ph.D.

The most explicit formulation which Plato made of his philosophy of Time is found in his *Timaeus*. In this dialogue, he reexamines some of the doctrines he had formulated in the *Republic*.

By reference to a wide concensus of scholarly opinion, it is established that the *Timaeus* is very probably the last dialogue Plato completed and edited, that it is followed only by the incomplete *Critias* and the unedited *Laws*. These facts, taken together with the fact that the *Timaeus* recapitulates some doctrines of the *Republic*, give the *Timaeus* a central importance in Plato's reflections on society.

This means that the *Timaeus* contains a "later" doctrine than the *Republic* and that in the *Timaeus* we find a reflective advance over the doctrines of the "early" and "middle" dialogues of Plato.

The study traces the evolution of the three themes of eternity, image, and time and shows that Plato discussed them in an increasingly generalized fashion as he grew

older. It traces the development of these themes from the *Republic* through the *Parmenides*, *Theatetus*, *Sophist*, *Statesman*, and *Philebus*.

The study espouses the view that the *Timaeus* contains Plato's most mature reflections on the themes of eternity, image, and time, and that the formulation in the *Timaeus* *re*formulates some of the doctrines of the *Republic*, and therefore one ought *not* to regard the *Republic* as the final formulation of Plato's philosophy of eternity, image, and time.

Further, the themes of eternity, image, and time are treated in the *Timaeus* in an explicitly sociological framework, and are said to be part and parcel of the inquiry into the best society and its basis in time.

Plato included cosmology and sociology within a larger perspective, in which the origin of the Universe and the origin of society were seen as stages in a temporal process. His account of these matters in the *Timaeus* is preceded by statements to the effect that it is only on the broad canvass of the entire Universe that the best account of society's origins can be painted.

The use of such metaphorical phraseology is not arbitrary, and one must frequently deal in metaphor to explain Plato's meaning because Plato makes extensive use of metaphor throughout his *Timaeus*, indeed, throughout most of his philosophy. Plato's discussion of temporal

processes contains a definition whose central term is the word image (*eikon* not *eidolon*). Since Plato defines time as an image, it becomes the problem of the commentator to reveal as clearly as possible the significance of this definition and the use of image as one of its principal terms.

The study concludes that Plato viewed the entire Universe as an Image and sees Time as the Life of Society.

VITA

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