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The Philosophical Economy of Plato's Psychology: Common Concepts in the *Timaeus*

I Common concepts and dialectic

If I had not taken an oath never to take an oath, I would have sworn in the past that the *one* dialogue of Plato's on which I would never speak in public would be the *Timaeus*. Plato's 'likely story' always seemed too elusive to me to trust myself on this shaky ground. If I break my unsworn oath now, then it is not because I feel any safer on this territory, but only because I got carried away by another likely story that may have inspired me with false confidence. The paper here is a continuation of a topic I have developed in an article on the *common concepts* in the *Theaetetus*.¹ It must seem like a violation of Attic urbanity to base a talk on a paper already published somewhere, thus advertising one's own work, but I have been eager to continue that line ever since I finished the article, and so I am glad for the opportunity to do so here. I hope that what I have to say on the *Timaeus* can largely stand on its own, but some references to the *Theaetetus*-article will be necessary, at least by way of a summary as my starting point.

The introduction of the *common concepts* (κοινά) as the 'mind's own business' concludes the argument against perception as knowledge in the *Theaetetus* (184b-186e).

"You mean being and not-being, likeness and unlikeness, same and different; also one, and any number applied to them. And obviously too your question is about odd and even, and all that is involved with these attributes; and you want to know through what bodily instruments we perceive all these with the soul." (185d).²

Concerning the 'soul's own business', in distinction from sense-perception, Socrates then adds the following clarification:

"Wouldn't you say that it is through touch that the soul perceives the hardness of what is hard, and similarly the softness of what is soft?" --"Yes."--"But as regards their being--the fact that they are--their opposition to one another, and the being again, of this opposition, the matter is different. Here the soul itself attempts to reach a decision for us by rising to compare them with one another."--"Yes, undoubtedly."--"And thus there are some things which all creatures, men and animals alike, are naturally able to perceive as soon as they are born; I mean, the experiences which reach the soul through the body. But calculations regarding their being and their advantageousness come, when they do, only as the result of a long and arduous development, involving a good deal of trouble and education."

My essay's suggestion is that the introduction of the common concepts, properly understood, would contain Plato's solution to the problem of knowledge in the *Theaetetus*. Such a 'proper understanding', which would be the end-point of the 'arduous development', is not reached in the dialogue itself, however, because *Theaetetus* does not pick up the hint of what the soul's own business ought to be, namely the appropriate dealing with the common concepts.³ --What *would* amount to an 'appropriate handling' of

¹ "The Soul's Silent Dialogue: A Non-Aporetic Reading of the *Theaetetus*", *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society*, 215 (1989), 20-49. It was Ed Lee, one of the symposiasts, who encouraged me to take on the *Timaeus*, after the presentation of its nucleus at the APA in Portland/Ore. in March 1988. For a more extensive discussion that is based on similar considerations cf. Allan Silverman, "Plato on Perception and 'Commons'", *Classical Quarterly* 40 (1990), 148-175.

² Translation M.J. Levett, rev. M. Burnyeat, *The Theaetetus of Plato*, Indianapolis 1990

³ There can be a weak reading and a strong reading of this passage. The weak reading assumes that it refers to all acts of judgment, including such simple judgments as "this is red". The strong reading presupposes that what is achieved through much labor and education (*paideia*) is the full reflective command over the common concepts and their application. I plead for an inclusive reading, but for a kind of *double meaning*

the common concepts? There are several levels on which the common concepts can be applied. The naive, unreflected and implicit application of 'sameness', 'difference', 'being', etc. happens in all formations of beliefs. Possible mistakes on this level are discussed by Socrates in the puzzles about false beliefs and in the similes of the Wax Block and the Aviary. Such unreflective application of the common concepts, even if it should happen to be correct, can never be 'accountable', however, and hence Theaetetus does not manage to distinguish between true belief and knowledge. What Plato means by knowledge, is nevertheless at least indicated in the *Theaetetus*, when he refers us to the *expert's* discipline, how the writing- and the music-master's command over their subject differs from the schoolboy's (207b).¹ The expert applies the common concepts systematically and reflectively: the expert 'grammarian' and musician not only know all the elements of their field, they also have an account for their differences and inter-connections.

The difference between the expert's explicit systematic account and the lay-persons implicit familiarity with the 'difference' is not worked out more clearly, and so the dialogue ends in an *aporia*. If Theaetetus had seen the implications of the reference to such expertise, he would have given up the attempt to upgrade one piece of information, a true belief, to a piece of knowledge with the help of a 'distinguishing mark'. No such upgrading is possible; what would be needed is rather the embedding of a belief in a network of understanding of the whole field. Theaetetus, not surprisingly given his youth and inexperience, has missed the point that on the same kinds of objects, even such lowly objects as the alphabet, there can be *two* kinds of 'silent dialogues of the soul with itself' (190a). There is the ordinary, more or less humdrum, formation of beliefs of the soul when she 'rushes to her conclusions'. And there is the systematic account worked out by the knower.

The advantage of this interpretation of the last part of the *Theaetetus* is that it does not shoulder Plato with the grave omission of any *hint* at a solution to the dialogue's problem, an omission that Cornford and others have thought, could only be filled by a resort to the theory of the Forms. If that were the message of the dialogue, Plato would have indeed seriously misled us in its last part, by focusing the discussion on objects of sense perception at all. If my interpretation is right, however, belief/opinion and knowledge need not have a separate field of application. They can be concerned with the same field, as in the case of the writing- or the music-master and of their disciples: the objects are the same for the novice as well as for the expert, the difference lies in the manner of application of the common concepts.

What supported my confidence in the hypothesis that Plato envisaged the distinction of these two levels of dealing with the common concepts as a solution of the problem of knowledge in the *Theaetetus*,² is the fact that the depiction of the 'soul's own business' looks like an abridged version of the method of *dialectic* that Plato introduces in the *Philebus*. I am referring to the procedure ('the gift of the gods') that Socrates recommends there to overcome the problem of the 'one and many', with the aid of *peras* and *apeiron*: (16c-19b). As Socrates claims here, anyone who is ever supposed to be any good in any field, ought firstly to work out the generic unity of his field, then to divide the genus into

that refers to both, i.e. that both simple opinions and reflective judgments are 'the business of the soul itself'. But only the strong sense of dealing with the κοινά would give us knowledge.

¹ The difference is, of course, not worked out in the *Theaetetus*, except that the difference between the novice's shaky command in giving a 'complete enumeration' in spelling a word is contrasted with the proper understanding of the expert ("λέγειν γραμματικῶς", 207b3).

² Besides the ordinary level of handling of the *koina* and the higher level of the expert's systematic application, there might be a third level implied in the introduction of the *koina* as the soul's own business, which is learned 'only through much labor and education', in the *Theaetetus*. The third level would be the *philosopher's* explicit account of the common concepts taken by themselves, in the way Plato suggests in the *Sophist* in his discussion of the *megista gene* and the 'interweaving' of the Forms.

the subgenera, and then to proceed to the infimae species. When he has given a numerically complete account of all these subdivisions he can finally 'let it go into the unlimited', when he comes to the indefinitely many possible instantiations. In all these endeavours it is essential *how* one applies the *common concepts*, above all: being, sameness, difference, unity, plurality. Without such an appropriate procedure there will be no way of establishing the genus, nor of ascertaining that all the different subdivisions have been captured. In each case the scientist has to reflect on the sameness and difference, unity and plurality within his field: he will have to find out in what sense different species have the same overall genus, he will have to find out how, precisely, they differ.—“Unless we are able to do this for every kind of unity, similarity, sameness, and contrariety, in the way that our recent discussion has indicated, none of us will ever turn out to be any good at anything.” (19b).¹ To speak with the prescription of the *Theaetetus*-passage quoted above: they have to decide on 'their opposition' and 'the being of their opposition'! The attraction of tying together the concept of knowledge I advocate for the *Theaetetus* with the one presupposed by the 'divine method' of the *Philebus*, is not only that both employ the same *disciplines* as paradigms, namely music and writing, but in addition that we seem to have in both cases *one* world, the world of common experience, and two ways of dealing with it, that distinguish the expert and the amateur, they do not move in different worlds.²

II Two 'levels' in the *Timaeus*

How well would such a distinction fare between 'different dialogues of the soul'—instead of separate ontological realms—as a working hypothesis for the constitution of the 'world soul' and its operation in the *Timaeus*? At first sight the auspices are not favourable to my enterprise at all. If any of the late dialogues of Plato would seem to contain a clear commitment to a two-world theory with strictly separate objects for knowledge and opinion, then it is the *Timaeus*! A brief reminder will suffice to show this. The generated world is a 'temporal' copy of the its model (*paradeigma*), the eternal world. The former always becomes and never is, the latter is always and never becomes (27d5 ff.). The corporeal world is, just as it was in the *Republic*, described as *visible*, 'grasped by opinion with sense-perception' δόξη μετ' αἰσθήσεως, and contrasted with the *invisible* world of the mind, that operates νοήσει μετὰ λόγου, 28a. Plato recommends even a different *language* to describe both worlds (29b; 38b). And his commitment to transcendent eternal, separate, Forms seems to be an integral part of this two-world theory. Does he not speak of the 'really real animal', the παντελής ζῷον (31b1; cf. νοητὸν ζῷον, 30c7; ὃ ἔστιν ζῷον, 39e8) of which the created animals are only copies? I do not have to pile up more evidence against myself; the opening pages of *Timaeus*' 'likely story' are full of it. So what could be gained from any attempt to establish a connection between the epistemology of the *Theaetetus* and of the *Philebus* (provided that I am right about them), that could throw any light on the ontology and epistemology in the *Timaeus*? It might seem that I had better leave this dialogue well alone, since the *Timaeus* is a hard thing to explain for anyone who suggests an interpretation that smacks of what conservatives call 'revisionist' tendencies in the interpretation of Plato's metaphysics and dialectic.

I will not try to talk away the evidence that Plato separates being and becoming in the *Timaeus*, nor will I try to talk away the paradigm-function of at least some of the

¹ This is the only passage in which sameness and difference are mentioned explicitly in the *Philebus*. He concentrates more on *peras*, *apeiron*, and 'number' in this dialogue. But sameness and difference are clearly needed for the divisions. The method strongly recalls the explanations of scientific procedure in the *Phaedrus*, 265c ff; we will here not go into a more comprehensive discussion of dialectical method, however.

² This is not contradicted by Plato's distinction between pure and impure science later in the *Philebus* (55c ff.), we will touch this question again later.

Forms. My enterprise is a much more modest one, it focuses rather on the question how Plato's *psychology*, the constitution of the world-soul, allows the soul do deal with both realms, so that we can see how 'separate' the two actually are in that encounter. We will thereby get a clearer notion whether the soul's operations are really *worlds* apart or only *levels* apart, as I suggested for the expert's knowledge in the *Theaetetus* and in the *Philebus*. This will, I hope, in the end also shed some light on our evaluation of the mythical language of a created world and of an uncreated eternal model in the mind of a divine demiurge.¹

The common concepts (although they are not called by this name in the *Timaeus*) play a role of eminent importance in Plato's account of the world-soul (and therefore also of the human soul). Not only does the soul have— and use them, the soul is *made* of them, and her activities are defined in terms of them. The composition of the soul out of these abstract elements is introduced rather abruptly (35aff). Nothing prepares us for this strange mixture that supposedly makes up the 'mistress' over the body (*despotin kai arxousan*). It is a mixture that consists of a combination of the Forms of being, sameness, and difference themselves, together with their earthly counterparts, the being, sameness, and difference as they apply to the objects of the world of change.

"He made her out of the following elements and on this wise. From the being which is indivisible and unchangeable, and from that kind of being which is distributed among bodies, he compounded a third and intermediate kind of being (en meso synekerasato ousias eidos). He did likewise with the same and the different, blending together the indivisible kind of each with that which is portioned out in bodies. Then, taking the three new elements, he mingled them all into one form, compressing by force the reluctant and unsociable nature of the different into the same."²

What are we to make of this strange composition of the world soul, that will also be the composition of the human soul, albeit in a less pure form (41d)? The overall intention is clear: The soul is obviously to participate in both worlds, in the eternal world of the intelligible and in the contingent, visible, one. But why make a *mixture* out of the two, why not give both kinds to the soul, uncontaminated, side by side? And *how* are they supposed to form a "third and intermediate kind of being", how can these two disparate composites blend together?—Timaeus gives us no explanation. In what follows he continues the rather cryptic discussion of the world-soul's composition: the mixture is 'divided' in a harmonious way so as to produce a series of harmonious numbers; and finally he decrees, that it forms different kinds of circles, the circles that underly the cosmic order. We are not told what, precisely, this division amounts to, what to make of its semi-mythical language, how the harmonious ratios are somehow 'imprinted' on the 'bands' that form the soul; for not all of the proportions are actually made use of to account for physical properties of the motions, their speeds or for the explanation of the distances between the heavenly bodies (cf. 35b-36b). The soul is obviously to have a mathematically harmonious structure; fortunately we can leave this aspect of the world-soul's nature largely aside.

We will confine ourselves to the question *why* the soul contains a mixture of the eternal with the temporal, and *how* these two disparate elements can be mixed. The question why the soul is composed in this way is the easier one to answer, so let us turn to it first. That the world-soul contains only a *mixture*, and not the Forms in their purity, must be due to her nature. Even the divine world-soul is a physical entity that exists within time and has extension. Because the soul is an extended thing (she stretches through the body), it is not a mere metaphor when Plato treats it as if there were literally 'strips' of soul-stuff that can be divided in mathematical ratios and that form circles which move in different directions at different speeds. But although the soul is not made of 'stuff' she

¹ For time's sake I will leave out all mention of the need for a reinterpretation in terms of 'three natures', in 50d-52e, the *matrix*, besides Forms and Matter.

² A somewhat modified version of Jowett's translation.

must have extension and motion, otherwise she could not function as the self-moving motor, her prime function in Plato's physical account of the universe. This is the reason why Plato stresses her, at least in principle, *mortal* nature as a generated thing (37a-e).¹ That she will never die is due to the goodness of the creator, not to her intrinsic nature itself (41a-b). If the world-soul is at the same time 'immortal', she is so only to the degree that such an entity can be: she incorporates the principles of being, sameness, and difference in the way an entity can which exists continuously through time, i.e. by continuous and regular activity. That is, I presume, why the soul's activity of *sameness* manifests itself as a physical phenomenon in continuous homogeneous locomotion: the circular motion and rotation. In its purity this circular motion is executed only by the souls of the fixed stars.² All other heavenly bodies also perform the motion of the different, and therefore are active in both senses; some have 'more different motions', others less (36c-d; 40a-d).³

But if the soul is 'of this world', and not of the other, the super-temporal one, why does she nevertheless have a mixture of the elements of 'the other world'? The reason is clearly stated by Plato, it lies in her intellectual function: she must be able to 'converse' both with the objects in the changeable and with those of the unchangeable world (37a/b). The soul must not only both *be* and *act* in accordance with her own constitutive elements, namely being, sameness, difference and the rational numbers and proportions, she must also *understand* them as she encounters them in dealing with things in the world. So 'having' is the condition of understanding (in accordance with the principle that *like is comprehended by like*):

And because she is composed of the same and of the different and of being, these three parts, and is divided and united in due proportion, and in her revolutions returns upon herself, the soul, when touching anything which has being, whether dispersed in parts or undivided, is stirred through all her powers to declare the sameness or difference of that thing and some other (hoto t'an ti tauton e kai hotou an heteron), and to what they are related, and by what affected, and in what way and how and when, both in the world of generation and in the world of immutable being.

So the world soul can understand both the 'dispersed' world of particulars and the uniform world of the eternally selfsame. Such an economical middle status is, of course, only what is to be expected, given the fact that Plato explicitly argues for the need of the *unity* of the one visible world and the unity of the world-soul. He therefore does not want to give two entirely separate souls to it; there are not 'two souls that live in its breast', an eternal one that longs for reunion with her transcendent bretheren, and a temporal one that ties her to this side. No such split exists within the world-soul. But what, in fact, does this 'mixing' of the eternal and the temporal elements mean for the 'concepts' that the soul consists of? Plato seems to want to signify that she is capable of applying being, sameness... both in a limited way to deal with things in space and time, and in an unlimited sense when dealing with the rational side. Are they, nevertheless, the *same* concepts? The text seems to deny it. But if they are of a quite different ontological order, why are they tied ('mixed') together in this strange way? Before we go into any further speculations of our own, let us take a look at the rest of the crucial passage:

¹ Cf. Hackforth on the 'divinity' of the world soul: "The problem is complicated at the outset by Plato's very wide application of θεός. As M. Diès says ("Tout est dieu ou divin chez ce trop divin Platon"), many things are called 'Gods' or 'divine': the Demiurge is a θεός, so is the created Universe, so are the stars and planets..." "Plato's Theism", 440, (ed.) R. Allen, *Plato's Metaphysics*.

² Sameness of direction and 'likeness' as uniformity of speed. Likeness had earlier been used already in the sense of homogeneity (33b of the homogeneity of a globe--ὁμοίωτατον αὐτὸ ἑαυτῷ).

³ On the limitations of Plato's astronomical model in the account of the motion of the planets cf. G. Vlastos, *Plato's Universe*, Seattle 1975, pp.58 ff.

“And when reason (logos), which works with equal truth, whether she be in the circle of the diverse or of the same—in voiceless silence holding her onward course in the sphere of the self-moved—when reason, I say, is hovering around the sensible world and when the circle of the diverse also moving truly imparts the intimations of sense to the whole soul, then arise opinions and beliefs sure and certain. But when reason is concerned with the rational (logistikon), and the circle of the same moving smoothly declares it, then intelligence and knowledge are necessarily achieved (νοῦς ἐπιστήμη τε). And if anyone affirms that in which these two are found to be other than the soul, he will say the very opposite of the truth (37b/c).”

The interpretation of this text is, of course, very tricky. The soul is here engaged in two different kinds of ‘silent dialogues’, in its onward course in ‘voiceless silence’. There is the silent dialogue on the level of becoming, the visible world, (the motion on the circle of the diverse), and here true and reliable opinions are achieved (δόξα καὶ πίστις γίνονται βέβαιοι καὶ ἀληθείς), while the dialogue on the level of the unchangeable (ὁ τοῦ ταύτου κύκλος) leads to intelligence and knowledge. Nevertheless, it is the steadfast activity of reason on both levels which achieves reliable results.

That the soul combines both reason and belief is, of course, nothing new. The world-soul must be capable of both if she really is able to be ‘in touch’ with all the parts of the world and to converse with herself on all the things that go on in the world (34b) and to maintain its proper order. The soul therefore must be able to encounter both ‘realms’ in its activities. But how should this be possible? If the soul is a thing in time, a member of the visible world, how does she encounter things eternal, how are they contained in the created world? If we do not want to assume that the soul’s ‘moving in two different circles’ is a kind of schizophrenic activity, a leap of the world-soul upwards into a “hyperuranian place”, we should look for a more pedestrian interpretation of her activities.

Since the world-soul contains such a mixture, we have to assume that Plato’s universe, the one created world, contains a mixture of the eternally self-same Forms and the ‘dispersed forms’ within itself, i.e. we have to assume that such a combination of the eternal and the temporal is contained in the entities that fill the world, too.¹ This is now no longer a question of the possibility of such a mixture in the *soul* alone, but the question of the combination of forms and sensible objects as such. We therefore have to answer the question both for the soul and the created universe as a whole: *how* is such a mixture of the self-same and the ever-changing possible? This was our second question raised earlier.

In view of the unity of the world I want to contend that it is not just the double-sidedness of the soul itself, i.e. her membership in two worlds that allows her to converse with entities in both spheres. I think the parlance of ‘two worlds’ is misleading in the first place, and it is certainly no accident that Plato himself employs no such terminology. The two-world terminology is the fruit of the translator’s embarrassment, to render a translation of the word ‘κόσμος’ (cf. 30c/d). The *double-sidedness*, emphasized by the ‘mixture’ seems to be rather a feature of the *one* world itself. And therefore the soul can move about in different ways, in her comprehension of entities *as* either eternally selfsame or *as* “dispersed and changeable” respectively. She moves in ‘different circles’ when she treats whatever she encounters *as* either a contingent, sensory object, or *as* an intelligible, stable object.

The result of my subversive activities, which were designed to deprive the world-soul of any access to truths that the human soul cannot in principle share, is obvious: I can from now on, treat the world-soul and the human soul as on a par, and speak simply of ‘the soul’. The main difference between them, the assailability of the human soul by all sorts of confusions through the manifold conditions of the human body (42a-44b), does not affect the question of how the mind works. For once the turmoil in the human soul has subsided, she can move in the orderly circles of sameness and difference (42b) in the same

¹ No ‘gazing’ at the Forms at the upper end of an ontological ladder is envisaged, as we find in the κατοπτειν of the *Symposium* (cf. 210e; 211d).

way as the world-soul herself does. It stands to reason that Plato had gone into the description of the world-soul's psychological make-up partly with an eye on the human soul all along. Having in essence been deprived of sense-organs,¹ it is not quite clear how the world-soul could receive many 'intimations of sense', leading to opinions and beliefs anyway. It may rather be only the *order* of the material world that the world-soul is in touch with and converses with itself about. But this may be one of the points whose coherence we had been asked by Timaeus not to press too much.

III Dialectic, belief, knowledge, and their objects

But how can it be maintained, someone might object, that Plato in the *Timaeus* has only different *applications* of the soul's concepts in mind when he clearly takes the Forms to be the *paradigms* for everything that is of a changeable nature, when he treats the sensible things as mere *copies* or *likenesses* of those ideal models, just as he did in the heydays of the Forms? Since I do not want to overplay my cards, I will not try to deny that at least some of the Forms in the *Timaeus* are eternal, immutable paradigms. There seems to me no way around it, and it serves no purpose to try to argue them away, as if they owed their presence merely to Plato's semi-mythological rhetoric. I will rather suggest a reading that is *compatible* with the rhetoric and still displays a theory of the Forms that does not presuppose as rigorous a separation between the contingent and the immutable as at least some of the interpretations by the 'friends of Plato's Forms' presuppose. Whether my interpretation meets Plato's own intentions is a matter that is not for me to decide.

So back to the text. Plato's soul encounters two kinds of entities, the indivisible kind (*ameristos*), and the divisible kind 'that is portioned out in bodies' (35a). In each case she deals with them in a fashion that looks not all that different, however: "when touching anything which has being, whether dispersed in parts or undivided, she is stirred through all her powers to declare the sameness and difference of that thing and some other, and to what they are related and by what affected, and in what way and how, and when, both in generation and in immutable being", 37a/b.--It is significant that the soul is clearly not supposed to merely gape in silent admiration at the Forms themselves, or to call on them to explain the nature of the visible objects, as something 'hanging above' them in a heaven of ideas. She is treating the Forms in the 'circle of the eternally selfsame' in fact in the *same way* as she treats those that are 'portioned out' among the sensible objects: she establishes their sameness and difference, relations, and interactions, "in what way, and how, and when". If this is not a slip on Plato's side, the soul functions in the same methodical way, whether she deals with the objects in the circle of the eternal, the Forms, or whether she deals with the changeable objects.

Loose talk in such a crucial text that explains the functioning of the soul is extremely unlikely. It seems therefore that Plato is here describing the soul's work in a way that is supposed to remind us of the method of *dialectic* of the kind we found hinted at in the *Theaetetus*, and discussed more fully in the *Philebus*. If this is true, we can first of all draw on these other sources to explain the parallel treatment of the different realms in our passage in the *Timaeus*, and we can also make use of the *examples* that Plato employed in the other dialogues, to provide an illustration of the soul's movements in her 'two different circles'. So let us turn to the expert in music and to the master in the art of writing once again. In what sense do they deal with 'sameness itself', or 'difference' or 'being itself', i.e. with strictly identical and unchangeable eternal objects? And in what sense do

¹ 33c: "neither eyes nor ears..." (and obviously not smell or taste either). This might leave *touch*, but the ascription of circular motion and rotation as the only fitting motions might let us despair of that too, as an explanation of the autocommunication of the soul in the world of the changeable. It is the human soul that needs the vision of the cosmic order (47a-e) to start philosophizing, and so establishes order within its own motions.

their objects represent at the same time the 'ideal patterns' of the changeable 'dispersed' objects of the senses?

It may sound at first sound rather funny to hear of the writing- and music master's 'handling Forms', but it is actually quite simple and straightforward to explain in what sense such experts always do deal with the 'eternal'. For the 'grammarian' the elements of his art, say for instance A or E, will always be the *same* in so far as they are the objects of his art. When at work in his discipline, he is dealing with *the* A, or E, as such, the unchangeable elements of the art. If they are treated in the 'technical' way, they are not 'scattered' instances, 'portioned out in this or that body', i.e. written in a more or less wobbly way on this or that blackboard. What is written on the board are the 'scattered' entities that bother the schoolboy, who has to learn how to write them, and who has trouble to recognize them again once he has written them. It is the schoolboy who can deal only with this or that visible and changeable A or this E, and if he is steadfast enough he may in fact end up with a right opinion about it.

The art *per se*, however, deals only with the prototypes, not with individuals in space and time. And if the expert studies the connections between his entities, the conditions in which they occur, "what they affect and are affected by, and when and how", then he is, once again, concerned with the conditions of their actual, temporal, occurrence, but with the inherent conditions and interrelations; their discovery and determination are the task of his art. In the *Philebus* Plato is concerned most of all with the generic and specific interrelationships and differences. For instance, both letters, A and E are vowels, they share the *same* genus and subgenus. They will always be *different* in being different species of vowels. There are, of course, many other aspects in the world of the eternal P's and Q's that the expert will study, such as their possible combinations and incompatibilities.¹ This is also the feature of such expertise that we find stressed in the *Sophist* (253a-c). In this case the artist moves in the soul's 'eternal circle'.

What is not studied by the expert, except incidentally, are the peculiarities of particular occurrences of A's or E's. There is nothing worth studying here. That a schoolboy may confuse 'Θ' and 'Τ' when he writes 'Theodorus' is of no scientific interest. Nor are any other such features, e.g. the wobbly images of the letters we produce. This is not to say that the expert can skip the work in the 'second circle' entirely: he needs the sensible images of his art to do his work and to communicate with others. And he may occasionally be confused by such images and wonder whether any two occurrences are ever quite the same and feel riled by such difficulties, especially in his function as a teacher.

Whether he treats such difficulties as part of his art or not, it is clear that in their 'dispersed' form as individual occurrences the characters will have to be treated differently from the way they are dealt with when they are 'themselves'. The A I just enuntiated (or thought about) has a beginning in time, a duration, an end. It has a location, an intensity, it is not strictly homogeneous. My voice may have wavered. For this reason such entities are never on the level of the 'self-same'. They belong *eo ipso* to the level of the 'diverse': they are always differentiated in various ways from all other individual occurrences that are not specifiable in terms of the *art itself*. That is why the soul when she encounters the actual occurrences moves always in the circle of the 'diverse' and achieves at best true opinions through sense perception. This is not only true of the particular entity the soul gets hold of in this way, which shifts, changes etc. It is also true of the *conception* of sameness that she will apply to it: She will treat her object *as* changeable, variable, as existing in time and space. So if I ask myself whether two things I have encountered are actually the same, I

¹ Plato later in the *Philebus* distinguishes pure and impure sciences (cf. 55c ff), and only the mathematical elements in them seem to establish true scientific value, and strict eternal truth is reached only by dialectic. But the music master has at least his harmonics to resort to, and some such construction can also be made for the 'grammarian': in the *Theaetetus* (163b-c) the difference between the visual and audible characteristics and the *meaning* of letters and sounds is emphasized. So there may be hope for the scientific status of the grammarian too.

must apply 'sameness' with all the qualifications that objects in the sphere of the changeable require. That is why Plato can talk of two different sets of common concepts of being, sameness, and difference, one for the eternal and another for the temporal sphere.

But does this illustration of the different methods not much rather speak for strictly separate circles, i.e. a two-world theory, that I tried to deny for Plato in the *Timaeus*? I want to maintain that in spite of the difference in the conception of the entities on both levels there cannot be a strict separation of the two circles, a mixture or combination of the two is in fact necessary. For otherwise I could not think of this particular A as *an* A, a vowel etc. No reasoned dialogue of the soul with herself could ever get started in which she could establish a sameness in the circle of the 'diverse', i.e. the ever shifting realm of the beings that come and go. If the soul could not do this kind of ordering of the sensible phenomena, she could not even begin to study any of them *as* possible members of a species, genus etc.¹ If there were two entirely separate set of concepts, it would not be clear how they might be related or even whether they *could* be. In short, if the soul could not combine the two ways of encountering her entities by moving from one circle to the other, she could do no scientific investigations in this world. This, however, is how Plato lets the human soul discover that there is a higher order of things: That there is an order within disorder is discovered by the soul because of her contact with the regularity of the motions of the heavenly bodies (47a-e). Without the observation of continuity in time, of regularity in change, we could not conceive of any sameness or specifiable difference, not even of the 'scattered' sameness or difference of a recurrent 'A' and an 'E'. There would be only a disordered flux of appearances for us. Once such regularity is discovered, we can find it everywhere, whether we start with individual cases, or whether we have already reached a higher general level of comprehension. Such a progression in both directions, from one circle to the other, seems presupposed by the divine method in the *Philebus*: You can proceed 'top down' from the one to the unlimited multitude, or you may, by force of circumstances, have to move in the reverse direction 'bottom up', and first seek to establish an order in the unlimited multitude of dispersed occurrences (16c-e).

What evidence do we have that Plato in fact assumed the same kind of dialectical method for the working of the world soul in the *Timaeus*, that we find in some of the other late dialogues? How, in particular, is such a claim compatible with the model-copy distinction, and further, with his insistence on a separate language for the two orders?— There is, first of all, the striking occurrence of 'being, sameness, difference, and number' as the elements of the world-soul, which I have exploited so far. It is all the more striking since the 'paradigmatic' model of creation would let us expect rather different elements of the soul: the perfect Models of all things. Instead, the soul seems to have only the *tools* for doing dialectic, both in the eternal and in the temporal world! If the elements of the soul, being, sameness, and difference, are Forms, then they are clearly not 'perfect models' of imperfect copies. The Same is not the perfectly Same, nor is the Different a model Different. That Plato does not have any such 'model characters' for the common concepts in mind, is made clear when he affirms that sameness and difference in the eternal have the same *specifications* as they do in the temporal: sameness and difference in this and that respect, under these and those qualifications. The only difference between the concepts on the level of the eternal and the temporal is that in the realm of the eternal the *same* things are always the same and the same ones always different in the same way, in the same respect, and with respect to the same things.

That Plato has the same basic conception of dialectic in mind for the *Timaeus* that he works out in his other late dialogues, is actually not discountenanced by his remarks that the eternal Forms and their temporal counterparts presuppose a different *vocabulary* and *concepts* (29b; 37e-38a), if confusions between the eternal model and the 'moving image of

¹ On the connection between the sensory system and thought cf. Silverman, l.c. 159-60.

eternity' are to be avoided. That Plato is not thereby trying to establish a strict separation between two worlds, the world of perfection and the imperfect material world, becomes clear if we look at the reasons *why* 'temporal vocabulary' should not be applied to the eternal Forms. He is not concerned with 'soiling the pure' by the contact with the 'impure' but with the avoidance of *dialectical confusion*, i.e. of applying 'temporal vocabulary and notions' to the eternal, abstract concepts themselves, as in the ascription of 'was', of the temporal 'is', or of 'will be' to the general concepts themselves. Equally wrong would be the application of the 'is' of the eternal present to temporal entities. Plato clearly has the same confusions in mind here, against which we are supposed to steel ourselves through the 'laborious play' in the second part of the *Parmenides*; it teaches us in what sense Forms are, or are not, wholes, unities, pluralities, at rest etc. These are the confusions that can arise when the soul, to speak in the language of the *Timaeus*, is not clear about the circles she moves in. That the *Timaeus* has indeed the same kinds of confusions in mind as the *Parmenides* is indicated by one of the examples he explicitly refers to: that what is atemporal cannot become older and younger (38a): "...but that which is immovably the same cannot become older or younger by time, nor can it be said that it came into being in the past...nor is it subject all all to *any* of those states which affect moving and sensible things and of which generation is the cause".¹

The *Timaeus* seems therefore to presuppose that the reader is familiar with those problems, and also, with the fact that they are capable of a proper solution. A 'reformed' or 'discriminatory' kind of dialectic would be exactly what the soul needs, within the framework set by the *Timaeus*, to make sure that she is treating her objects right. That is why she needs a different language and different concepts for her different circles.

That Plato seems to presuppose that these difficulties can be avoided by the appropriate method is, as I tried to claim earlier, the upshot of the 'dialectical passage' in the *Philebus*. For his report of the difficulties of 'the one and many' also points back to the problems raised for the Forms in the *Parmenides*. Plato now claims, however, that these difficulties are really only the result of the kinds of discussions that young boys delight in when they touch them for the first time.² The 'godly method' of putting order into one's research by establishing a structure within the field itself, seems to Plato obviously sufficient to avoid such problems for the theory of the Forms.³ What is different in the two dialogues is only the focus. The 'godly method' is not concerned with the formation of opinions but with the correct procedure to establish knowledge in any given field. In the *Timaeus*, by contrast, Plato takes both knowledge and the procurement of true opinions in the sphere of the sensory into account and recommends that one should treat the visible things in the same way as the intelligible ones, provided one keeps in mind, that we use the concepts of being, sameness, and difference in their *temporal* sense. So the picture looks at first sight rather different because both the soul's scientific and its unscientific (but true) dialogues are accounted for.

IV The Forms in the *Timaeus*

If Plato is not thinking of Forms as transcendental entities outside or above the world, but conceives of them as the kind of entities that his frequent use of the example of the writing- and music-master in his late dialogues suggests, then we will search for the Forms *within* the field of the different sciences themselves rather than behind or above them. Let us continue on that line a little bit further, to see how far it will take us and what

¹ For the paradoxes of time, cf. *Parm.* 140e-141e, 151e-152e et pass. Not all of the paradoxes are, of course, concerned with time, but most result from the confusion between different *meanings* of terms, as they apply to the concepts themselves, or to spatio-temporal entities respectively.

² Young boys are already in *Rep.* VII, 539b removed from dialectical exercises.

³ How, precisely, this 'divine method' answers the problems enumerated in 15b-c cannot be discussed here.

more enlightenment we can draw from it for the *Timaeus*. The Platonic scientist, I had suggested, finds the objects of his field within this one world. Where he *differs* from the amateur is in not regarding his entities as 'visible' objects, but as 'intelligible objects', which are not subject to the conditions of change in time and place. The 'real musician', e.g., will not be vexed by my making a slip of the finger and playing a G-natural in the A-Major mode, if it is clear that this was just an accident in the 'temporal' performance of music. He will be vexed, however, with his fellow composer if he writes such a note in his composition and claims that this is how it ought to be. There are no G-naturals in the A-Major mode!

There is, admittedly, something odd about the claim that there are 'intelligible' musical sounds, and even more so, that there are 'intelligible letters' or other elements of sensible things that exist outside of time and place. But such a move is necessary if Plato wants to avoid the trap for his theory that he had exposed in the *Parmenides*, the trap of assuming that the Forms are entities with the same physical properties as their copies, only in a more perfect form. If that assumption is done away with, then we can't ask Plato any more whether the Form of G-natural is a particularly clear and loud sounding G-natural. It is not a particular sound at all. It is *the* G-natural that all composers talk about when they say that it does not belong into A-Major, but that it does belong, e.g. into F-Major. Similarly, the writing master will not be vexed if you ask him whether the 'Form of A' is an A with extra-straight lines, or whether its sound is extra long or short, crisp or soft. He may tell you that the Form is just the prototype of all A's, no matter how you represent it, whether by signs written, spoken, or thought of. This, it seems to me, is the upshot of the insistence in the *Timaeus* that the 'paradigms' are not visible objects but *intelligible* entities, which do not depend on their physical representations. The musician's G-natural would in fact stay *the* G-natural even if there were another Vienna conference to reverse the earlier decision and moved the A-natural down from 440 Herz to 430 Herz again. Plato's demiurge might frown at our moving the sensible images around *ad lib.*; he might mumble something about the fittingness and beauty of 440 Herz vs. 430 as a sensory representation, but the decision would not change music as such. G-natural would keep its place within the harmonic structure of the F-natural scale (a 9/8 step up from F) and would still have none within that of A-natural, regardless of the 'sensible images'!

As you will have observed, I have moved from the abstract concepts, namely sameness, difference, number etc., on to the 'paradigmatic Forms', such as ideal sounds and letters. This shift is not without reason, for as I acknowledged earlier, paradigmaticism looms large in the *Timaeus*, since the whole world-order is said to be the imitation of a divine model. To explain the nature of the world-soul as that of a living creature endowed with soul and reason (30b ζῷον ἔμψυχον ἐννοῦν), Plato introduces the Form of the animal. Not only that: there is even a hierarchy of such model Forms: there are four Forms of animals, corresponding to the kinds of animals in the world. And just as 'animal as such' is said to contain all kinds of animals, so must the world, as the created copy of the eternal model, contain all possible kinds of animals.

This paradigmatic conception of Forms does, however, not resist the dialectic treatment, as I have depicted the work of the world-soul. Let us leave the question of the 'ideality' of the 'model animal' aside for the moment, and merely observe that the 'intelligible animal as such' is depicted by Plato as nothing but the highest genus, and that the hierarchy among the 'model animals' is that of genus and species (30c): "let us suppose the world to be the very image of which all other animals both individually and in their kind are portions. For the original of the universe contains in itself all intelligible beings, just as this world comprehends us and all other visible creatures". 'Containment' is clearly used in two different senses, as is confirmed by the argument for the *uniqueness* of the world: Any duplication on the 'intelligible side' could only be a *higher* Form that would have to *include* the former 'Form of animal' (31a), while the duplication of the physical world would mean a second such intelligent animal. What does the Form of animal contain? It

contains the four different genera of animals: the four kinds corresponding to the four elements that the sensible animals will inhabit, fire, air, earth and water, i.e. the heavenly bodies, birds, fishes, and land-animals (39e-40d). And each of these kinds are furnished with the degree of perfection that is possible.

Plato seems, thus, to presuppose two different kinds of Forms in the *Timaeus*. There are the abstract concepts, the κοινά, on the one hand, and the perfect models on the other; and the soul is equipped with the first kind, while the physical world is furnished with copies of the other. I think nothing is gained by any attempt to deny this 'dovetailing' of the Forms in the *Timaeus*, but I also do not see that this creates any great problems either. The Forms are ideal standards where such ideals are applicable and appropriate in the furnishing of the world-order that makes it a rational world. The Forms are general concepts where no such ideal standards can be implied.

The old problems of the *Parmenides* need not resurface in the *Timaeus* if one takes seriously the restrictions that Plato here lines out for the intelligible models: the 'νοητὸν ζῷον', the intelligible animal is not itself an animal, living, breathing, moving around. I assume that the emphasis on 'νοητὸν' is supposed to stress this fact. It is the *conception* of an animal: the creator reflects on what it means to be a living creature and conceives its preconditions: "when he was framing the universe, he put intelligence in soul, and soul in body, that he might be the creator of a work which was by nature fairest and best" (30b). The Form of the world-soul, this intelligent mortal-immortal animal is described in reference to its functions. It must consist of these elements and perform such motions...

So the Form of the animal will not contain more than the *intelligible principles* that determine what it is to be an animal of a certain kind; these intelligible conditions will at the same time set the framework for the physical conditions, for the kind of body the animal will need and for the external conditions under which it will live. The Form of the Tiger is then not the ideal Tiger with particularly sharp and shiny teeth and claws, or the most beautiful and regular stripes; the form will be only the intelligible preconditions of such a quadruped. It is no accident that Plato leaves the execution of the actual generations of animals to the forces of nature, 'the younger gods'. They have to contend with all the physical conditions, the conditions of 'necessity', that determine what the actual living creature can be like, as depicted at length for the human organism and its elemental constituents in the rest of the dialogue.

There are then no literal look-alike eternal 'models' for the physical objects. The models are in each case the intelligible conditions that stand in relation to their sensory signs in the same way as the types of sounds as defined by the principles of harmonics stand to the audible sounds. What makes it difficult for us to envisage this kind of 'copying' of an intelligible *original* is that normally copies do in the literal sense resemble their originals. The copy of a Rembrandt is a picture, the copy of good behaviour is a kind of behaviour, models and copies are usually entities in the same ontological order. There are obviously no such restriction in Plato's conception of imitation: the sophist can 'imitate' reality in words, by passing on would-be-knowledge of 'all things', but clearly his words are not mirror-images of reality. Young Theaetetus' initial bewilderment with such 'making of all things' by 'imagery' shows that it takes some familiarization for a Greek too (*Soph.* 232c ff). Plato's 'imitations' do not always make such high demands on our ability to envisage abstract 'likenesses'; the Forms of the *Phaedo* (the equal) or the Republic (e.g., justice itself) do not prima facie force us to strain our comprehension in that respect. Whatever the history of this development, the *Timaeus* clearly makes high demands on our comprehension. That there can be a 'mobile imitation' of an immobile eternity must mean that there cannot be any 'resemblance' between this copy and its original in any literal sense of resemblance. We can comprehend such a 'copying' at best in the sense that the copy

incorporates an intelligible principle, e.g. that continuous motion is the mobile image of strict sameness, i.e. the only sameness there can be in a world of change.¹

What kinds of entities have Forms according to this ontological scheme? I suppose that all entities have Forms that allow for a systematic or normative ordering, which displays a structure. There must then be a Form for everything that is definable or sortable. This at least would explain why the world-soul is said to deal with the Forms in the same way as she deals with the things she encounters in the visible world, by sifting and sorting, and classifying, and by working out what stands in relation to what and in what circumstances. This would, perhaps, even include dirt and hair, to take up Parmenides' examples that embarrassed young Socrates, provided that they are not mere by-products of physical necessity. There are, after all, intelligible principles that explain the different sorts of earth and of the parts of the body.

But why does Plato adopt this, at first rather confusing, kind of paradigmaticism in the *Timaeus* side by side with the common concepts at all? The answer seems to lie in his *teleological* conception of the world, i.e. that the world as a whole is supposed to be *good*. What does this goodness amount to in the *Timaeus*? I will not try to go beyond the scope of my essays in further final speculations and thereby venture into the territory of Professor Robinson's paper. Suffice it to say that the objects created by the demiurge must be conceived as perfect in their kind. And so certain kinds of Forms will at the same time be the intelligible models of those kinds. They have to conform to the Platonic ideals that stand behind the whole discussion: that the created world must embody regularity, continuity, harmony. The visible world is supposed to be the mobile image of a well-coordinated universe. What prevents it from being merely the model of a well-oiled machine is the demand that it should be a world that satisfies the mind. Our minds, any mind.

This defense of Plato's paradigmaticism will not solve all problems or satisfy all critics. Plato may be playing a difficult conceptual game, but one can see how he hoped it could all be fitted together. He hoped to combine the changeable with the eternal aspects of the world in such a way that he is no longer open to the reproach that his world of Forms is 'totally useless', as he expresses it in the *Sophist*. As you will recall, he there takes up a problem for the "friends of the Forms" (248a) that their separation of the world of being and becoming, of soul and body respectively, may lead to the consequence that 'real being' ('τὸ παντελὸς ὄν') is totally inactive and "has neither life nor thought, but stands immutable in somnolent aloofness, devoid of intelligence". Whether Plato's theory of the Forms ever deserved this reproach or not, in the *Timaeus* the combination of the two circles in the soul and her ability to move in both of them acquits him of such accusations. The common concepts, and with their help also the Forms of all else there is, are quite within the reach of the soul.

V Conclusion

What makes it so difficult to understand the depiction of the world-soul's activities and its objects in the *Timaeus* is the Plato's figurative way of speaking: I referred already at the beginning of this essay to the difficulty of understanding the "commingling of elements" like in a kind of dough, the "measuring off" of strips of soul-stuff in proportion, the forming of circles and the circular motion ascribed to the soul. These metaphors or half-metaphors make it very difficult to follow Plato. *Timaeus* himself had, of course, warned us that he is speaking in a figurative way. The whole philosophical discussion in the *Timaeus* in fact *starts* with this warning: while Socrates' 'static' picture of the best state is prefaced with the promise that it will become fully real and true when depicted "in

¹ For a much more lucid and comprehensive discussion of the problems of the images in the *Timaeus* cf. R. Patterson, *Image and Reality in Plato's Metaphysics*, 90 ff

motion", as a historical development (26c)¹, the reverse is true in Timaeus' cosmology. The mobile image is *only* an image of reality, and so he can only tell a likely story (*eikota mython*, 29d), as befits anyone who deals with the changing world as a copy of an eternal pattern. So while in politics the world in motion is the true one, in the cosmic order of the world the mobile world is only an image. What does that mean in non-figurative terms? Plato would presumably have told us that himself, if he could have done so more clearly. It is very difficult to explain how 'the word has become flesh'.

My position, to repeat it once again, is this. Plato's insistence that the eternal immobile model is "the real thing" and the mobile world only an image is to stress the sincerity of his conviction that the intelligible pattern, the unchangeable network of principles, must be the foundation of the physical reality. Only because there is such a *fundamentum in re* can we have concepts that allow us to understand and explain the world. Without such really existing concepts our thinking would be nothing, it would be a groping for stability in a changing world that could at best provide similarities without any fix point to determine their nature. The concepts that we have are, however, at least for us not separable from the particular applications that we make of them, nor discoverable independently from the experienced world. The application of 'sameness' and 'difference' in specific ways allows the scientist to work in his field, in the way indicated so often for the musician and writing-instructor. 'Sameness' and 'difference' are applied in everyday connections all the time. What makes them less stable and precise is the fact that in the realm of becoming the conditions of sameness and difference, first of all, never remain stable (in this respect the same, different in this way) because the objects may constantly change at least in slight ways. Secondly, these conditions can never be fully given (the nuances do not allow us to specify with any precision, for instance, in which way the sound F# is the same as the one I heard a minute ago). The infinity of possible slight variations prevents precision here. Without immutable tools and a firm foundation not even relative certainty about the realm of the changeable can be attained.

The Janus-headedness of the general concepts is a consequence of the need to interpret the world at the same time as intelligible and as sensible. Since our mind (just as the world-soul does) has to be able to understand both the ever changing reality around us ("if any one of us ever wants to find his own way home", *Phil.* 62b), we need to be able to apply the concepts to this changing unstable world. The concepts themselves are, however, unchangeable, and so we have to possess understanding of them as such, as well as of the way they are employed in the applied sciences. The soul therefore has to be made of both elements (*Tim.* 29 "words are akin to the matter which they describe; when they relate to the lasting and permanent and intelligible, they ought to be lasting and unalterable, and, as far as their nature allows, irrefutable and invincible..."). What is true for the words (*logoi*) must of course also hold for the concepts themselves. So the soul must contain both elements, the conceptions that lets it deal both with the immutable and with the changeable. For the mind cannot comprehend what is not akin to it; the same principle is in operation that Plato discusses for sense-perception: like is known by like.

What is achieved by making the world soul janus-headed, by assigning it this economical middle status between the timely and the eternal, is a self-sufficient world-order that can continue to function forever. For once the harmonious order is established, the *kosmos* can maintain itself. The "unspeakable father" is not involved in the actual life of the intelligent animal, and so this guarantor of the rationality of the whole does no more interfere with the life of the child than does the "odourless mother". The economy deployed by Plato in the construction of the world-soul explains the ambitious title of this paper: the soul has all she needs.

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¹ "The city and citizens, which you yesterday described to us in fiction (*en mytho*), we will now transfer to the world of reality (*epi t'alethes*)."