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What Plato's Demiurge Does

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"What Plato's Demiurge Does"

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I. Issues and Traditions

In the Timaeus Plato marks out as one of the central components of his cosmology a god who is unique and rational and who is described essentially as a craftsman, and indeed who is typically referred to simply as the Craftsman or Demiurge. The Demiurge also appears in the Republic VII (530a) and appears at crucial junctures in all of the late, so-called 'critical' dialogues which expound positive doctrines, that is, the Sophist (265c-266d), Statesman (269c-273e), and Philebus (26e-27b, 28d-30e).⁽¹⁾ And yet in discussions of the Platonic cosmology the question "what does the Demiurge do?" is rarely raised. There are three reasons for this rarity.

First, there is a very strong tendency in Platonic criticism to take the figure of the Demiurge non-literally, that is, as not being intended as an actual component of Plato's cosmological commitments. There has been a dazzling array of readings of Plato's cosmology which take Plato as meaning something quite different than what he says when he describes the Demiurge. The Demiurge has been taken as a mere doublet of the World-Soul (Archer-Hind), or for the rational part of it (Cornford), as a general symbol for any craftsman-like activity (Cherniss), as only a hypothetical entity serving merely as a literary foil in the exposition of the human statesman and the World-Soul (Herter) and as a "sublation" of the World-Soul (Rosen).⁽²⁾ These diverse strategies should be seen, I think, largely as (unneeded) charitable attempts to distance Plato's thought from Christian thought. If these strategies are correct the Demiurge is either reduced to some other component of Plato's

cosmology or is demoted to a mere expository device and so the question of what he does tends not significantly to arise. The issue of whether the Demiurge is to be taken seriously as a component of Plato's cosmology is admittedly complex, but given the frequency and prominence with which the Demiurge appears in both mythical (Timaeus, Statesman) and non-mythical settings (Republic, Sophist, Philebus), his excision from the Platonic metaphysics through what invariably turn out to be idiosyncratic hermeneutics seems a desperate measure. I shall speak as though the Demiurge is meant as a non-reducible component of the Platonic metaphysics. And insofar as it is possible to give an account of his workings which both is coherent and gives the Demiurge a peculiar function in the Platonic cosmology, then arguments for non-literal readings of the Demiurge are considerably weakened; for such arguments are either based on alleged contradictions inherent in literal readings or based on considerations of cosmological economy.

The question of whether the Demiurge is a serious non-reducible component of the Platonic cosmology overlaps with the much debated question of whether Plato intended the Demiurge's act of initially forming the ordered world to be read literally.(3) Though I am inclined toward a literal reading, my interpretation of the Demiurge will in fact be neutral on this issue.

A second reason why the question of what the Demiurge does tends not to arise is that strong and persistent Neo-platonic strands in Plato criticism have tended to focus interpretive attention on questions of status rather than on questions of function. Thus we typically find critical worries over whether in ontological status or order the Demiurge is superior to or inferior to the Ideas or on a par with them, and if the last case, whether the Demiurge is to be identified with the Ideas in general (or with an aspect of them) or more specifically with the Idea of the good. Other types of status questions that have received critical attention deal with the temporal status and psycho-rational status of the Demiurge (is he timelessly eternal? sempiternal? or does he possess some other temporal mode? is he simply equivalent to reason? or something which possesses reason? is he a soul?). If these are an inquiry's dominant types of interpretive questions, then again the question of what role the Demiurge might play in Plato's scheme tends to be down played.(4)

A third reason for this same result is a general inclination in the last thirty years of the Anglo-American tradition of Platonic scholarship to be generally dismissive of cosmological issues. The reasonableness of this inclination is enhanced if the Timaeus is taken as a dialogue of the middle rather than late period. In this case, so it is claimed, the epistemological and logical concerns which wax so large in the late 'critical' dialogues can be examined without the incumbrances of the extensive meta-

physical commitments made in the Timaeus and middle period dialogues.(5) Further how the metaphysics of the middle period is construed is almost entirely based on its exposition in the Republic V(476a ff), of which the Timaeus is taken as a mere fanciful spin-off. Though I am neutral on the issue of the dating of the Timaeus, the interpretation of the Demiurge which I will be advancing will place the interests of the Timaeus squarely within the epistemological and logical concerns of the late group, especially the Philebus.

II. General Interpretation

When the Demiurge is given a positive interpretation, he is generally taken (implicitly or explicitly) to be an artist in a narrow sense, that is, as a producer of beauty. Beauty is construed as a final or intrinsic good, and so the Demiurge in fashioning the world, as a whole and in all its detail, is thought to improve upon it by making it beautiful. The world after his craftings, moldings, and shapings is better than before in the sense that a world consisting entirely of Henry Moore sculptures would be thought to be a better world than one consisting entirely of dirt clods. The Demiurge's improvements are not (or are not primarily) meant, on this account, to be functional or to serve some further end. If they are functional, their function is simply to provide objects which tend to produce harmless, pure sensual pleasures. Such pleasures themselves may be counted as intrinsic, though not very significant, goods (Republic 584b, Philebus 51b). In this way the Demiurge would act like a cosmetologist or interior decorator, who takes over something rough and disheveled and makes it look better. The Demiurge's standard of taste in this project will be impeccable, since he has the beauty of the Platonic Forms as his model (Timaeus 28a6-7). I suggest though that this in fact is not the nature of the Demiurge's project.

I will be arguing rather that the Demiurge's project is directed to an epistemological end rather than an aesthetic one. The Demiurge is bent on improving the world's intelligibility rather than its looks. Specifically, I will be contending that what the Demiurge does is to introduce standards or measures into the phenomenal realm by imaging as best he can the nature of Forms where Forms are construed as standards or measures (section IV).(6) There will, then, be two levels of standards or measures in the Platonic metaphysics. On the one hand, there are Ideal standards and on the other hand, there will be demiurgically produced standards immanent in the phenomenal realm (section V). The function of the immanent standards is to serve as the objects of true opinion in much the way that the Ideas serve as the objects of knowledge (section IV). The Demiurge's project, then, I suggest, is to introduce into the world conditions which make possible the formation of true opinions. And he

does this by trying to introduce into the world standards which are derivative upon the Ideal standards. What then are the properties of the Demiurge's Ideal model which are relevant to this project?

III. The Demiurge's Model

Each Form will have two broad classes of properties. First, each will have properties which distinguish it from all the other Forms, properties in virtue of which each is the particular Form it is. Let us call these internal or proper attributes of a Form. Second, a Form will have properties simply in virtue of being a Form. It will share these properties with all the other Forms. Let us call these properties which Forms have qua Forms external, formal, or metaphysical properties. Examples of such properties are: being what really is (Republic 597d, Phaedrus 247c, Philebus 59d), being the intelligible (Republic 477a, Timaeus 28a, 52a), having some sorts of unity (Republic 476a, Philebus 15a-b, 16d-e), which minimally include being unique (Republic 596a6-b3) and being $\mu\omicron\nu\omicron\epsilon\iota\delta\acute{\epsilon}\varsigma$ (simple, of one kind?) (Phaedo 78d5, 80b2, 83e2, Symposium 211b1, e4), possessing some particular sort of self-identity (Phaedo 78e, 80a) and possessing some sort of permanence, stability, or eternality (Timaeus 28a, 29b, 52a). What precisely Plato means by assigning each of these properties to the Forms is a matter of great debate. If, however, we construe Forms primarily as standards or paradigms, we can make a broad distinction among these formal or external properties.

On the one hand, Forms as standards will have among their formal properties what I will call functional properties. These are the properties which a Form-Standard has as an instrument fulfilling a role in Plato's scheme of things. These properties will primarily be epistemological. Forms have two epistemological roles. First they in themselves are in some sense objects of knowledge and second they, as standards or measures, allow us to identify, by reference to them, the types and kinds of other things. Thus by reference to the Standard Meter Stick I can identify other things as being a meter long. Further, and perhaps derivatively from this second role, Forms as standards serve as models for the practical projects (both productive and moral) of rational agents.

On the other hand, Forms as standards will have among their formal properties what I shall call standard-establishing properties. These will be the properties requisite to a standard's ability to serve as a standard, that is, requisite to it having the functional properties it has. Most notable among these properties is some sort of permanence. A standard

which can change with respect to that in virtue of which other things are identified by reference to it is not a (good) standard. Importantly, Plato also seems to interpret uniqueness as a standard-establishing property of the Ideas, and gives two arguments to this effect (Republic X, 597c; Timaeus 31a4-7).

IV. The Demiurge's Use of the Model

If the properties of the Ideas are as I have suggested, then in creating sensible standards immanent in the phenomenal realm, standards which image the Ideal standards, the Demiurge will have to do two sorts of things. First, he will take over from the phenomenal flux an instance or image of a Form, an instance which he wishes to make into a standard instance or paradigm case. He will try the best he can to make this instance as like as possible in content to the standard of which it is an instance; that is, he will try to reproduce as accurately as possible the internal or proper attributes of the Form. And he does this by eliminating any degree to which the instance might on its own fall short of its measure. So immanent standards will be 'perfect' particulars or 'perfect' instances. By "perfect particular" I mean a particular which corresponds precisely to the Form of which it is an instance. If I stretch a rubber band from its relaxed length to the length of the room, then at exactly one point in the stretching process the rubber band will correspond precisely in length to The Standard Meter Stick in Paris; at that one point it is a perfect particular of that standard. At other lengths the rubber band is a degenerate instance of the standard; it falls away from the standard as being greater or less than its measure. (7)

All immanent standards will be perfect particulars, but not all perfect particulars will serve as standards. For, second, aside from making the standard case to-be a perfect particular, the Demiurge will also have to invest it with certain standard-establishing properties in order to enhance the prospects of the instance serving adequately as a standard case. Fixedness or stability is one such property which improves a particular's aptness to serve as a standard. A rubber band even though it is stretched to exactly the length of the Standard Meter Stick will not make a useful stand-in for The Standard Meter Stick as a measure of length; for it, on its own, lacks stability and will easily change its length (as we know by continuing to measure it under different conditions against The Standard Meter Stick). So too, if the pound measure in my shop is made of dry ice, it will change its weight as it sublimates, and so it will serve less well as a standard than a weight made, say, of iron. We can always tell of these derivative stand-in standards that they have changed, by comparing them to the one original standard for their kind (The Standard Meter, The Standard Pound).

In reproducing the standard-establishing properties of the Ideas, the Demiurge's project may be thought of as trying to introduce some of the Ideality of the Ideas into the phenomenal realm. But the Demiurge's abilities to perform this task are highly restricted. What the Demiurge can do is limited to a large extent by the way the world is given to him. He is not omnipotent like the Christian God. He does not invent his materials, he discovers them. And in his materials there is a certain cussedness, which can partially defeat the enactment of his fully rational creative desires. The Demiurge can only make the world as like as is possible to the Ideal model (ἵνα ὡς ὁμοιότατος αὐτῷ κατὰ δύναμιν ἦ, 38b8-cl, cf. 39e1).

In some cases, it will be impossible for him to introduce the same standard-establishing properties which the Ideas have. Thus, if, as I think is the case, non-corporeality is one of the standard-establishing properties of the Ideas, this will be a property which the Demiurge will be unable to introduce into the phenomenal realm to any degree. In other cases, while he will not be able to confer upon the standard cases exactly the same standard-establishing property which the Ideas have, he will nonetheless be able to provide a passable substitute. Thus, while the Demiurge cannot provide standard cases with the sort of permanence which the Ideas have, nonetheless he can provide them an ersatz permanence (37d) which serves in a pinch to provide the constancy which standards require in order to be standards.

I will now defend this general interpretation of what the Demiurge does. First, I will show that Plato does not suppose that only Forms can serve in a way as standards, but he also believes that there are such things as standards immanent in the phenomenal realm and that these immanent standards are the product of demiurgic activity (section V). Second, I will show that the Demiurge's intent is indeed epistemological and will elaborate upon the cognitive role of the immanent standards (section VI). I shall end by suggesting that the figure of the Demiurge is more coherent than usually thought (sections VII and VIII).

V. Immanent Standards

Textual evidence that Plato did believe that there are such things as standards immanent in the phenomenal realm and that he did not suppose that only Forms serve as standards comes from several diverse sources.

Within the Timaeus itself, the distinction between transcendent standards and immanent standards is drawn in the very opening section of Timaeus' discourse where he is laying out his principles. Here it is claimed that there are two kinds of models, standards, or paradigms (παραδείγματα, 28c6-29a2). One kind is called "eternal," a paraphrastic reference

to the Ideas. And, in contrast, one kind is called "generated" ($\gamma\epsilon\gamma\omicron\nu\nu\omicron\varsigma$), by which I take Plato, in virtue of the contrast, to mean nothing more than "is part of the phenomenal world of becoming." (8) Later in the Timaeus Plato makes it clear that he intends the Demiurge's making of time to be viewed as a production of such immanent sensible standards (37c-38e). (9) This is particularly important for my interpretation. For the production of time is seen as paradigmatic for all of the Demiurge's craftings (39e3-4).

When Plato says that the Demiurge makes time, he does not mean that the Demiurge creates temporal succession. The Demiurge does not, that is, create events as having a determinate, transitive, asymmetrical, irreflexive order. Rather the Demiurge makes the means of measuring such orderings against a standard. He makes a clock (or more precisely clocks) by which we tell time (where 'time' here is taken colloquially). A clock is a regularly repeating motion with some marker which makes possible the counting of the repetitions. Plato initially expresses this understanding of time viewed as a clock rather abstractly in his claim that time proceeds or (more precisely) revolves numerably (37d6-7, 38a7-8). Stated more concretely, in the clocks which the Demiurge makes it is the bodies of the planets--the wandering 'stars' --which are the clocks' markers and it is the planets' circuits which are the regularly repeating motions. Thus Plato says that the planets (viewed as moving bodies) come into being to define (or mark out, $\delta\iota\omicron\rho\iota\sigma\mu\omicron\varsigma$) and guard or preserve numbers of time (38c6). They "define" numbers of time in that they are the clocks' markers. And the planets "guard" or "preserve" numbers of time in that each of their continuous wanderings offers a single referent for numerable motions and thus guarantee that the numberable motions are indeed repetitions which are requisite for motions to serve as a clock. When then Plato says that the planets collectively produce time (38e4-5) or more simply are time (39d1), he means by time something technical. He means that time is a clock, a clock by which we measure that which is measurable about motion and rest. The time which the Demiurge creates is a standard or measure immanent in the phenomenal realm, a standard which images an Ideal standard (37d5, 7; 38a7; 38b8-cl; 39e1-2).

Immanent demiurgically generated standards or paradigms are also to be found in the Republic. In the central books, we are told that the ordered parts of the phenomenal realm ("the embroidery of the sky") serve as $\pi\alpha\rho\acute{\alpha}\delta\epsilon\iota\gamma\mu\alpha\tau\alpha$ (529d7-8) in the study of the special theoretical sciences (astronomy in particular). It is clear from the context that the meaning of the term $\pi\alpha\rho\acute{\alpha}\delta\epsilon\iota\gamma\mu\alpha$ here falls within the range of its senses which cluster around "exemplar" rather than around "example" or even "parallel case" which are both other perfectly common meanings of the term. For these immanent paradigms are treated like blueprints in nature and function: "It is just as if one came upon plans carefully

drawn and executed by the sculptor Daedalus or some other craftsman (δημιουργός) or artist" (529d8-e3). Plato in his analogy here is referring to the custom of Greek sculptors, in making their final products (say, marble horses), to work from models or paradigms which themselves are artificial objects (clay horses) rather than to work directly from models which are natural objects (living horses). (10)

The paradigms which make up the embroidery of the sky are explicitly said to be the products of a demiurge (530a6, cf. 507c6-7), and are explicitly said to be material and visible (σώμα τε ἔχοντα καὶ ὁρώμενα, 530b3). Some of these earthly paradigms turn out, as in the case of the Timaeus, to be the parts of time: "days," "nights," "months," "years," and "other stars" (530a7-8), by which designations it is clear, especially given the context, that Plato is referring to measures or standards rather than to measurements taken from standards.

That Plato believed that some perfect instances of Forms are standards or measures is most clearly and persistently articulated in the Philebus. In it we find both transcendental measures (25d3 BT; 66a6-7), and measures immanent in the world (26a3, 26d9, 66b1-2). (11) The immanent measures of the Philebus are phenomena which correspond exactly to a Form and which have had removed from them by demiurgic activity the propensity to admit of degrees or to be subject to the more and the less. (For measures as immanent characteristics produced among phenomena, which are otherwise subject to the more and the less, especially see Philebus 24c7-d1.)

VI. Demiurgic Intent

The introduction by the Demiurge of measures or standards into the phenomenal realm is extremely important for Plato's epistemology. For it means that if one has only the phenomenal realm (and not also the Ideal realm) as the object of one's cognition, nevertheless, one is not limited to making judgments based entirely on merely relative comparison or merely relative measurement. By "merely relative measurement" I mean that ability which Plato claims we have, usually by direct sensory inspection and in any case without reference to measures or standards, to say that, on some scale of degrees, one thing is greater than another, or even possesses the same degree as another, but which does not entail the further ability to say what degree on the relevant scale of degrees either thing possesses. We would have the latter ability only if we could appeal to a standard or measure (Statesman 283c-285a). When we are provided with immanent standards, we have the improved epistemological skill of being able to make precise identifications of phenomenal kinds, without having to make

appeals (at least directly) to anything other than the phenomena.

As an illustrative example of what Plato means by merely relative measure and measure against a standard, let us take Plato's own example of (celestial) clocks. The Demiurge in creating clocks is not (as mentioned) creating temporal succession. Temporal succession exists whether clocks exist or not. Further Plato is not claiming that in an acosmic world in which there are no clocks we would (should we exist) be unable to perceive and make judgments about temporal succession. In a world without clocks we still can make merely relative measurements of time, that is, raw judgments of earlier and later, without appeal to a clock as a standard, just as we can make merely relative measurements of length, weight, and the like, without appeals to standards for those dimensions. Thus, if I snapped the fingers of one hand, paused, and then snapped the fingers of the other, anyone in the room who was paying attention could say which of the two events occurred first without appealing to a clock. But the two events could also be given a temporal ordering by appealing to a clock as a standard of measure for dating events. Each snap could be given a date by reference to a clock, say, 6:31 and 6:32 and given a temporal ordering as the result of this matching of each event severally to parts of the clock and then comparing the parts rather than as a result of comparing the two events directly against each other. Judgments of past and future are simply judgments of earlier and later which have as one of their relata the very act of making the judgment. Such judgments also may be made either by merely relative assessment or as the result of assigning determinate dates with the aid of a clock.

In general then, the presence of immanent standards will allow us to identify individuals correctly and precisely. In the case of temporal measures this takes the form of assigning dates (what time is it? It is 6:01). Derivatively, immanent measures allow us to make precise comparisons between things measured; for we are able to compare their determinate measures. Without appeals to standards or measures we are only able to say that one thing is greater or less than another (earlier or later than another) but without being able to say what either thing determinately is.

In the Philebus Plato spells out more specifically what he takes to be the cognitive and practical functions of immanent standards or measures. They are the objects of true opinion and of the applied arts and crafts (like accounting) (Philebus 55d-e, 66b1-2), in the same manner in which the transcendental measures are the objects of reason and the purely theoretic sciences (like number theory) (57d2, 58d6-7, 61d-e, 66a-b). False opinion has as its object not

nothing nor even what is not the case, but rather the phenomena which fall away from standards, phenomena, that is, which are subject to the more and the less and which on their own are approached only by merely relative measurement. Such objects tend to cause errors of judgment and practice, when we have only them before us and so are unable to identify and assess them with reference to standards (so also Republic 584a, 586b-c). This view of false opinion can be more easily understood, if it is remembered that opinion is for Plato at least as much a matter of pragmatics as of semantics. Opinion is more a matter of determining how we get along in the world than a determination of propositional accuracy. Even true opinion is to a large degree a matter of guessing, forecast and conjecture (Philebus 55e5-56a1, 62c1-2). True opinion is what allows us to succeed at our projects in the world, by guessing correctly the right course of action (Republic VI, 506c). Possessing models or blueprints for identification and guidance is of course very useful in this state of affairs. We have a better grade of cognition if we have access to standards and measures than if we do not.

The presence of measures and standards in the phenomenal realm then benefits that realm by largely constituting its intelligibility. For it is they which allow us to make accurate and useful identifications when we have only the phenomenal realm before us. I suggest that this sort of benefit is the primary aim of the Demiurge's craftings. The improvements which he works on the phenomena are primarily epistemological.

VII. The Scope and Limits of the Demiurge

The interpretation which I have given the Demiurge provides a sufficient clue in explaining one of his major (though puzzling) projects. One of the Demiurge's chief creations (aside from making 'time' and its instruments, the planets) is his making of the whole universe into a unique living-thing (30c-31b), an amalgam of the World-Soul and World-Body (34b, 36e).

We are in a position to give a precise and coherent rationale for the world's uniqueness. The Demiurge's aim is to produce an immanent standard of animality. The specific function which the Demiurge assigns to this immanent standard is to serve as a model for our own rational cognitive processes. By using it as a standard and by imitating it, we come to possess those cognitive faculties, powers, and processes which result in the possession and articulation of truths (47b6-c4 with 43e-44b and 37b6-8). The Demiurge, in making the World-Living-thing a standard, will therefore invest it with whatever standard-establishing properties he can. Thus it is invested with the same permanence or everlastingness which the standards of time possess (36e). If, as I have suggested, uniqueness is taken by Plato as a standard-establishing property, then

the Demiurge will invest his immanent standards with this property, if it is possible to do so. In the case of the World-living-thing (and possibly only in this case) this project is possible. And so the world is made unique.

In the case of temporal measures, the Demiurge cannot introduce uniqueness into the phenomenal realm, given that (among other things) Plato had to save the appearances with which that realm actually presents us and that it indeed presents us with a variety of celestial 'clocks', indeed at least eight of them (38d, 39b,c). And so in the celestial realm we are left with a situation rather like a pawnshop in which there are many watches running both severally (38d4-6) and collectively at different rates (39c6-7). The same claims are made of the various temporal paradigms in the Republic, where their deviations from conditions of constancy are directly attributed to their corporeality (530b3). And the result (as we would expect on my reading) is a reduced intelligibility available for those who try to tell time accurately: the measures of time are mutually incommensurable (Republic 530a7-b3, cf. 531a1-3) and are bewildering due to their number and intricacy (Timaeus 39d1-2).

VIII. Plato's Sane Craftsman

If the Demiurge's project is, as I have suggested, to introduce standards into the phenomenal realm by the co-joint production of accurate images and introduction of standard-establishing properties, then Plato avoids a number of serious charges which critics have standardly laid against him.

First, Plato and his Demiurge are not conceptually confused about the nature of the Demiurge's project. Specifically they have not confused the production of properties the presence of which in a thing makes it inherently good with the production of properties that make a thing an accurate, faithful or correct image of an original.⁽¹²⁾ Rather, Plato and his Demiurge realize that for an image to serve as an immanent standard it must have two sorts of properties. On the one hand, to serve as an immanent standard for the type of things for which it is to be the standard, a phenomenal image needs to reproduce accurately the characteristics of its original which make its original the original it is. The Demiurge will try to reproduce accurately the proper or internal attributes of the original in the image which is to serve as a standard. If we were to pick or produce a painting of Winston Churchill with the aid of which we were going to proceed to identify other paintings as being paintings of Winston Churchill, we would want our standard painting to image as accurately as possible the distinctive features of Winston Churchill. On

the other hand, for an image to be a standard, it will also need those standard-establishing properties which make it possible for, and enhance the aptness of, the image to serve as a standard. These will typically include properties like orderliness, stability, and unity. Now it is not hard to understand that these properties might be misconstrued by critics as being, just in themselves, final constituents of Platonic goodness. Neo-platonists, critics who have a right-wing political bent or who think Plato has such a bent, and the aesthetically-minded are all likely to suppose that these properties of order, stability, and unity just are what it means to be good for Plato and that the Demiurge needs no further justification for their introduction into the world. Thus these critics will claim that if the Demiurge should make any improvements in the world at all, he will make these improvements (order, stability, unity). Such a critic is Cornford, who in speaking of the unique world argument (30c-31b) declares: "Uniqueness is a perfection, and the world is better for possessing it" (p. 43). From this perspective of viewing uniqueness, stability and the like as intrinsic goods or perfections, it will naturally enough appear that the Demiurge is involved in two wholly unrelated projects: 1) the making of accurate images and 2) the introduction of properties which count as intrinsic goods. The correct reading, though, is to view uniqueness, stability and the like as having instrumental value, as making possible and enhancing the ability of images to serve as standards. The making of accurate images and the introducing of standard-establishing properties are co-joint parts of the Demiurge's project.

Plato's arguments giving the rationales for the Demiurge's actions, particularly the unique world argument and the account of the 'eternity' of the world, have been accused of constituting gross fallacies of division. (13) According to this charge, the Demiurge allegedly supposes that since the world is (to be) an instance of a Form, and since this Form is an instance of uniqueness and eternity, therefore the world is (to be) unique and eternal for these reasons. However, that some phenomenal objects are to serve as standards (of a sort) motivates their coming to possess the standard-establishing properties of the Ideas, including uniqueness and permanence. This motivation is quite independent of these phenomenal objects simply being instances of the Forms of which they indeed are instances. Therefore, the Demiurge's thought is not riddled with a fallacy of division.

The Demiurge has also been accused of being quite mad, since he at least seems to be indiscriminately reproducing in his copy each and every property of his original. Such an indiscriminate reproduction of properties would be a crazy way of proceeding for a number of reasons. First, sometimes an original will possess properties which are irrelevant to its

serving as an original (for example, having dents and scratches). One would not indiscriminately reproduce these in a copy. Second, there are some properties of an original which, though relevant to the original serving as an original, are wholly inappropriate for the product for which the model is used. Thus it is entirely appropriate that an architect's blueprint should be made of paper, but one would not make a house of paper because its plans were made of paper. Third, an original will possess some properties which are logically impossible to reproduce in a copy (for example, the age of the original and the numerical self-identity of the original).

On my reading of the Demiurge he is not subject to these charges. He does not indiscriminately reproduce the properties of his model, rather his project of making immanent standards provides him with a principle for selecting which of the attributes of his original are to be reproduced. It only appears that the Demiurge is picking and reproducing properties indiscriminately because so many of the attributes of the Ideas are standard-establishing properties and he will try to reproduce all of these. The Demiurge's choices are relevant and appropriate, guided by the nature of his specific project. When a relevant property of his model can not (for whatever reason) be reproduced, the Demiurge will substitute a related stand-in property to serve in its stead.

The Demiurge is therefore not wanting in intelligence, ingenuity, or sanity. I suggest that the figure of the Demiurge is a coherent one. Reasonable attacks upon the Demiurge will not take the form of accusations of absurdity, but will have to take the form of trying to show that what Plato wishes to explain by the figure of the Demiurge, namely, our ability to make accurate identifications of phenomenal types, can be achieved with considerably less conspicuous metaphysical consumption, just as the gods of the cosmological or first cause arguments are perhaps shown to be otiose by Newtonian mechanics.

IX. Theisms

If my reading of the Demiurge's aims and practices is anywhere near correct, the figure of the Demiurge of the Timaeus is a singular accomplishment in the history of ideas. We do not find a figure with his function and nature in either prior or subsequent theological speculation. The strongest traditions of theistic speculation in the West have treated the divine either as primarily a source of motion or as primarily a source of order. The one tradition can be traced back to Empedocles, whose Love and Strife set the world's components in motion. This tradition blossoms in the cosmological and first cause arguments for the existence of God. The other tradition can be traced back to Anaxagoras, whose divine Mind

set the world's components in order. This tradition blossoms in the teleological arguments for the existence of God.

If my interpretation of Plato's Demiurge is correct, the Demiurge does not fit into either of these traditions. For, on the one hand, far from being primarily a source of motion, the Demiurge is actually a source of stability and permanence, since these are conditions which enhance the prospects of some phenomena serving as standard cases. This is not to deny that the Demiurge might be thought of as necessarily moving things around: a forge worker will, after all, move things around in his project of tempering a piece of steel. But, it does mean that the Demiurge is not hypothesized to explain the origin or perpetual occurrence of motion in the universe, as gods are called upon to do in cosmological arguments, including Plato's own version of those arguments in the Laws X (894e-895b). (14)

Further, on the other hand, though the Demiurge may be viewed as a source of order, regularity and other 'intrinsic' goods, neither is their production his final end nor is he hypothesized in order to explain their presence in the world, as are hypothesized the gods of teleological arguments. The nature of the Demiurge is completely compatible with Plato's claim that there are "traces" of order even in the pre-cosmic era (53b2). (15) The Demiurge is not responsible for all regularity and order. He is responsible only for those final forms of order which proximately serve functions and manifest purpose. Such final orderings may be entirely new formations, but they may equally well be, to a large degree, incorporations of pre-existing orderly elements, which the Demiurge simply appropriates without alteration from the pre-cosmos (see especially Timaeus 46c-47a). Prior to their appropriation such elements will not correctly be said to manifest purpose; afterwards they will. But whether a demiurgic ordering takes the form of an appropriation or a formation, it is carried out not as a final end on its own but as part of the Demiurge's project of making immanent standards.

If the Demiurge bears a resemblance to any of the gods of the Western theistic traditions, it is to the god of the ontological argument, or at least, of those variants of the argument (like that in Descartes's Third Meditation) which employ the principle of sufficient reason. For both the Demiurge and the god of this ontological argument are hypothesized as necessary beings in consequence of certain epistemological 'phenomena'. Though, even here there is substantial difference between the two. For the god of the (Cartesian) ontological argument is hypothesized as being necessary to explain sufficiently an agent's actual possession of a

particular concept (e.g., my actual possession of the idea of infinity). But the Demiurge is hypothesized, on my account, as being necessary simply for establishing the conditions in virtue of which we potentially possess all concepts (i.e., possess the means of forming true opinions with regard to all phenomenal types).

It is perhaps because theistic speculation in the West has been so strongly influenced by such a limited number of traditions that the nature of Plato's Demiurge has remained largely obscure. (16)

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¹A divine demiurge also appears in the Laws X (902e-904c). I have argued elsewhere that the projects and commitments of the Laws X are incompatible with the cosmology and theology of the Timaeus. Nothing that is claimed of the Demiurge and his projects in this paper should be construed as applying to the Demiurge of the Laws X. See "Plato's Final thoughts on Evil: Laws X, 900-905," Mind 87 (1978), 572-575; "The Mechanism of Flux in Plato's Timaeus," Apeiron 14 (1980), 96-114.

²R.D. Archer-Hind, The Timaeus of Plato (London, 1888), pp. 37-40; F.M. Cornford, Plato's Cosmology (London, 1937), pp. 34-39, 76; H.F. Cherniss, Aristotle's Criticism of Plato and the Academy I (Baltimore, 1944), p. 607, cf. 425; Hans Herter, "Gott und die Welt bei Platon," BonnJbb 158 (1958), 106-117; Stanley Rosen, "The Myth of the Reversed Cosmos," Rev. Metaphysics 33 (1979), 75-76. For refreshing exceptions to this non-literalist trend, see T.M. Robinson, Plato's Psychology (Toronto, 1970), pp. 59-92 and A.E. Taylor, A Commentary on Plato's Timaeus (Oxford, 1928), pp. 63-67. Taylor, though, does not think that the Timaeus expresses Plato's own views.

³For arguments favoring a non-literal reading, see Cherniss, pp. 421-431, and for a defense of Cherniss' views, see Leonardo Tarán, "The Creation Myth in Plato's Timaeus" in Essays in Ancient Greek Philosophy, J.P. Anton and G.L. Kustas (eds.), (Albany, 1971), pp. 372-407. For an attack on Cherniss' views, see Gregory Vlastos, "Creation in the Timaeus: Is it a Fiction?" in Studies in Plato's Metaphysics, R.E. Allen (ed.), (London, 1965) pp. 409-419; see also Robinson, pp. 58-68.

⁴For some discussion of these sorts of status questions, see J.B. Skemp, The Theory of Motion in Plato's Later Dialogues (Amsterdam, 1967), pp. 163-170 and "The Relation of Reason to Soul in the Platonic Cosmology," Apeiron 16 (1982), 21-26.

⁵For an early dating with this aim in mind, see G.E.L. Owen, "The Place of the Timaeus in Plato's Dialogues" in Studies in Plato's Metaphysics, pp. 313-338.

⁶In the late dialogues "measure" (μέτρον = "limit," πέρας, Philebus 52c) tends to replace "paradigm" (παράδειγμα) as Plato's term of choice for the notion 'exemplar'. Plato in the late dialogues begins to use παράδειγμα (when used as a quasi-technical expression) to mean "parallel case" or "analogue" (Statesman 278e).

⁷I suggest that Plato draws in a general way the distinction between perfect instances and degenerate instances of a standard or model in the Sophist (235b-236c) where he distinguishes between two kinds of imitation (μίμησις, 235d1). There is imitation which produces images (εἰκούς). These reproduce the exact proportions of their originals (παραδείγματα). And there is imitation which produces phantasms (φαντάσματα). These, though somewhat similar to the content of their originals, deviate from corresponding precisely to them.

It also seems that the "immanent characters" of the Phaedo (103b,e) are perfect particulars of the Forms of which they are instances. See Alexander Nehamas, "Plato on the Imperfection of the Sensible World," APQ, 12 (1975), 105-117, for a general defense of the presence of perfect particulars of Forms in the middle dialogues. For the immanent characters of the Phaedo, see esp. page 116.

⁸Robinson suggests that the presence here of generated models is a "patent fiction," that they are hypothesized as existing solely for the sake of argument (p.67). This would be a possible interpretation if this were the only text where generated paradigms were advanced by Plato.

⁹On this passage see W. K. C. Guthrie's excellent comments, A History of Greek Philosophy V (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), pp. 299-301.

¹⁰For a discussion of the role of models in the production of Greek sculpture, see Carl Blumel, Greek Sculptors at Work (Glasgow, 1969) second English edition, pp. 36-39. Note illustration 28, in which the divine craftsman Athena is represented as making a clay model which a marble sculptor will then use.

¹¹In the Philebus the paronymous forms of μέτρον, viz., ἕμετρον and σύμμετρον, generally refer to immanent rather than transcendent measures or standards (26a7,8; 52c4; 64d9; 65d10). The issue of the status of measures in the Philebus is much debated. For defenses that some measures in the Philebus are Platonic Forms, see "The Platonic Number Theory in Republic VII and Philebus," Isis 72 (1981), 620-627 and "Philebus 55c-62a and Revisionism" forthcoming in CJP, suppl. vol. IX, New Essays on Plato (1983).

¹²This charge of conceptual confusion is laid by Richard Patterson, "The Unique World Argument of the Timaeus," Phoenix 35 (1981), 116-119.

¹³This charge and the next are laid by David Keyt, "The Mad Craftsman of the Timaeus," PhilRev 80 (1971), 230-235.

¹⁴For an analysis of Plato's version of the cosmological argument, see "The Sources of Evil Problem and the Principle of Motion Doctrine in Plato," Apeiron 14 (1980), 45-46.

¹⁵Vlastos thinks that Plato's commitment to some orderly elements in the pre-cosmos is fundamentally incoherent when placed against a metaphysical background which includes a demiurgic god ("The Disorderly Motion in the Timaeus" in Studies in Plato's Metaphysics, pp. 389-390; also "Creation in the Timaeus," pp. 413-414).

¹⁶Some of the positions taken in this paper are defended and developed in more detail in the first two chapters of The Platonic Cosmology (Leiden, E.J. Brill) forthcoming.