2

SOCRATES *CONTRA* SOCRATES IN PLATO[1]

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I

That excellent book Gerasimos Santas contributed to the "Arguments of the Philosophers" series in 1979 is entitled *Socrates.* But once inside it you discover that what it is really about is a "Socrates" in Plato. More than once since I first started working on this book I asked myself: "Why not follow that example? Why not bypass, as he did, that bugbear of Platonic studies, the so-called 'Socratic Problem'? Why not let the historians have the Socrates of history all to themselves, keeping for myself that enchanting figure whose challenge to philosophers would be the same were he historic fact or Platonic fiction?" If my interests had been as purely philosophical as are those of Santas this, certainly, is the way I would have gone. But it so happens that my philosophical interests are impure. I cannot pass the buck to the historians without passing it to myself. All my life I have been one of their tribe and once in it no easy exit is allowed. The question "Who are you talking about – Socrates *or* a 'Socrates' in Plato?" will dog your steps, barking at you, forcing you to turn and face it in self-defense. If you do mean the former, you must argue for it. You must give reasons for the claim that through a "Socrates" in Plato we can come to know the Socrates of history – the Socrates who made history, taught Plato and others, changed their thinking and their lives, and through them changed the course of Western thought.

I have been speaking of *a* "Socrates" in Plato. There are two of

1 Much of the material in this chapter and the next was presented in Gifford Lectures at St. Andrews (1981), more of it in Townsend Lectures at Cornell (1986); most of it was discussed in seminars at Berkeley, Cambridge, and Toronto (1978–87). The answer to the so-called "Socratic problem" presented in this chapter and continued throughout the book is set forth summarily in a lecture to the British Academy entitled "Socrates" (appearing in vol. 85 of its *Proceedings* [London, 1989]).

them. In different segments of Plato's corpus two philosophers bear that name. The individual remains the same. But in different sets of dialogues he pursues philosophies so different that they could not have been depicted as cohabiting the same brain throughout unless it had been the brain of a schizophrenic. They are so diverse in content and method that they contrast as sharply with one another as with any third philosophy you care to mention, beginning with Aristotle's. This is a large claim. I shall be arguing for it in this chapter and the next.

Those two groups of dialogues fall arguably into the earlier and middle periods of Plato's literary production.[2] Since I shall have frequent need to refer separately to what Plato puts into the mouth of "Socrates" in each, I shall spare the reader tedious repetition by allowing myself a bit of shorthand. To the "Socrates" of the earlier compositions I shall refer as "Socrates$_E$" or "S_E" for short ("E" for "earlier"). To the "Socrates" of the works of Plato's middle period I shall refer as "Socrates$_M$" or "S_M" for short ("M" for "middle"). I itemize the dialogues which, in my judgment, make up these two groups, and also a third, intermediate group, transitional from the Elenctic[3] Dialogues in Group I to the dialogues in Group II:

Group I. The dialogues of Plato's earlier period:

(a) The Elenctic Dialogues, listed in alphabetical order:[4] *Apology, Charmides, Crito, Euthyphro, Gorgias, Hippias Minor, Ion, Laches, Protagoras, Republic* I[5] (abbreviating:[6] *Ap., Ch., Cr., Eu., G., HMi., Ion., La., Pr., R.* I).

(b) Transitional Dialogues (written after all the Elenctic Dialogues and before all of the dialogues in Group II), listed in alphabetical order:[7] *Euthydemus, Hippias Major, Lysis, Menexenus, Meno* (abbreviating: *Eud., HMa., Ly., Mx., M.*).[8]

Group II. The dialogues of Plato's middle period, listed in probable chronological sequence: *Cratylus, Phaedo, Symposium, Republic* II–X, *Phaedrus, Parmenides, Theaetetus* (abbreviating: *Cra., Phd., Smp., R.* II–X, *Phdr., Prm., Tht.*).

For the sake of completeness I should add

Group III. The dialogues of Plato's latest period, listed in probable chronological sequence: *Timaeus*,[9] *Critias, Sophist, Politicus, Philebus, Laws* (abbreviating: *Ti., Crit., Sph., Pltc., Phlb., Lg.*).

How pronounced and profound are the differences between the philosophy Plato puts into the mouth of Socrates,, upon the one hand, from the philosophy he expounds through Socrates,, upon the other, will be a principal topic of inquiry through much of this book. I list programmatically ten Theses," each of which specifies in its part A a trait of Socrates, exhibited *only* in (one or more) dialogues in Group I, and in its part B a trait of Socrates, exhibited *only* in (one or more) dialogues in Group II[11]

IA. Socrates, is exclusively a moral philosopher.[12]

2 For the near-consensus on this point among Platonic scholars in the present century and for some of the reasons for it see Ross, 1951: ch. 1 ("The order of the Dialogues"); greater detail in Constantin Ritter, 1910a: 190–272 ("Untersuchung der zeitlichen Folge [der Dialogen]"); best of all in Brandwood, **1958,** Particularly significant I regard the fact that when the dialogues arc ordered only by stylistic criteria, as in Brandwood, the results (summarized in Brandwood, **1976:** xiiiff. at xvii) are broadly in agreement with those I reach *by ordering these dialogues solely by their philosophical content:* see n. **8** below.

3 I so name them because throughout these dialogues Socrates' method of philosophical investigation is elenctic, which it abruptly ceases to be in the Transitionals: see Vlastos, 1983a: 27ff. at **57–8,** Appendix on "Demise of the Elenchus in *Eud., Ly., HMa.*". More *on* this in chaptrr 4.

4 Because chronological order within the Group is unimportant at the immediate stage of my argument. But most present-day Platonists would agree that the *G.* is the last dialogue in this Group (see e.g. Dodds, 1959: 20 and Irwin, 1979: 5–8).

5 See additional note 2.1 "The composition of Republic I."

6 I follow for the most part the abbreviations employed by Irwin, 1977a.

7 Because here too the chronological order within the set is highly controversial. For the *Mx.* we have a firm ***terminus post quem*** (the reference at 245C–E to the end of the war with Corinth, 387), which gives no clue to its order relative to the other four dialogues in its Group.

8 Brandwood, **1976:** xvii (cf. n. 2 above) places all of *Ap., Ch., Cr., Eu., HMi., Ion, La., Pr.* (his "IA Group") before all of *G., Eud., HMa., Ly., M., Mx., Cra., Phd., Smp.* (his "IB Group"). I differ from him in keeping the *Gorgias* ahead of all the dialogues in his IB Group on the strength of a criterion – use of the elenctic method, deployed with great panache in the *Gorgias* and in *no* other dialogue of his Group IB – which Brandwood ignores (understandably so: he uses ***only*** stylistic criteria). But the resulting difference in chronology is not great, since he too holds **(1976:** xviii) that the three dialogues in his IB Group that fall within my Group II (i.e. *Cra., Phd., Smp.*) "were probably the last to be written" in his IB Group; so if the *Gorgias* were transferred to his IA Group, his IB Group would split up into earlier and later segments, and the earlier (which would then consist of *Eud., HMa., Ly., M., Mx.* would coincide with my Transitionals and we would get complete agreement on the order

Ap., Ch., Cr., Eu., G., HMi., Ion, La., Pr., followed by
Eud., HMa., Ly., M., Mx, followed by
Cra., Phd., Smp., R., Phdr., Prm., Tht.

The residual difference – my splitting **off** the first book of the *Republic* from its other nine books to place it with the Elenctic Dialogues – is unimportant (see additional note **2.1**).

9 For the *Timaeus* see additional note 2.6.

10 I shall be referring to them as "The Ten Theses" throughout the rest of the book.

11 With the exception of (a) the speech of Alcibiadcs in the *Smp.* which, as I explained in chapter I, portrays the Socrates of the earlier dialogues, who "knows nothing and is ignorant of everything" (216D) and (b) the two biographical passages in the *Phaedo* (57A–61C and 115C–118) which also portray Socrates,. The one at 96E–99E I take to be Platonic, not Socratic, biography, since its stated purpose is to introduce the theory of Forms (100Aff.).

12 Cf. n. **5** to additional note 1.1. **His** arguments sometimes trench on other topics, but the only theses he investigates elenctically are propositions in the moral domain. Thus the

IB. Socrates, is moral philosopher *and* metaphysician *and* epistemologist *and* philosopher of science *and* philosopher of language *and* philosopher of religion *and* philosopher of education *and* philosopher of art. The whole encyclopedia of philosophical science is his domain.

IIB. Socrates, had a grandiose metaphysical theory of "separately existing" Forms and of a separable soul which learns by "recollecting" pieces of its pre-natal fund of knowledge.
IIA. Socrates, has no such theory.

IIIA. Socrates,, seeking knowledge elenctically, keeps avowing that he has none.
IIIB. Socrates, seeks demonstrative knowledge and is confident that he finds it.

IVB. Socrates, has a complex, tripartite model of the soul.
IVA. Socratcs, knows nothing of this model, which would have unsettled his conception of moral virtue and undercut his doctrine of the impossibility of incontinence *(akrasia)*.

VB. Socrates, has mastered the mathematical sciences of his time.
VA. Socrates, professes no interest in these sciences and gives no evidence of expertise in any of them throughout the Elenctic dialogues.

VIA. $\text{Socrates}_{\text{E}}$'s conception of philosophy is populist.
VIB. $\text{Socrates}_{\text{M}}$'s is elitist.

VIIB. Socrates, has an elaborate political theory whose ranking order of constitutions places democracy with the worst of contemporary forms of government, lower than timocracy and oligarchy, preferable only to lawless tyranny.
VIIA. Socrates, has no such theory. Though harshly critical of political goings-on in Athens, he says that he prefers the city with her laws to any contemporary state. But he leaves the rationale of the preference unexplained.

VIIA & B. Homoerotic attachments figure prominently in the conception of *erōs* in both Socrates, and Socrates,. But in the latter they have a metaphysical grounding in love for the transcendent Form of beauty which is wholly lacking in the former.[13]

claim that there is such a thing as "knowledge of knowledge and not-knowledge" he investigates only because it was proposed as (an unacceptable) definiens of *sōphrosynē*; and he gives up the search when he becomes convinced that it is not likely to get anywhere, confessing that he has no confidence "in his ability to clear up these things" (Ch. 169A).

13 Cf. the analysis of the difference between Socratic and Platonic *erōs* in chapter 1.

IXA. For Socrates, piety consists in service to a deity which, though fully supernatural, is rigorously ethical in its own character and in the demands it makes on men. His personal religion is practical, realized in action.
IXB. $\text{Socrates}_{\text{M}}$'s personal religion centers in communion with divine, but impersonal, Forms. It is mystical, realized in contemplation.

XA. In the Elenctic Dialogues $\text{Socrates}_{\text{E}}$'s method of philosophical investigation is adversative: he pursues moral truth by refuting theses defended by dissenting interlocutors. This ceases in the Transitionals: there he argues against theses proposed and opposed by himself.
XB. In the sequence of dialogues from the *Meno* through the *Phaedrus* Socrates, is a didactic philosopher, expounding truth to consenting interlocutors. Thereafter the metaphysical theory of the preceding dialogues of the middle period is subjected to searching criticism by "Parmenides" and then Socrates, assaying a fresh start, shifts to a new, "maieutic," mode of investigation in the *Theaetetus*.

I shall present a two-part argument. Its first part, to be presented in the present chapter and in section I of the next, will stay completely inside the Platonic corpus, developing the claim that in Group I dialogues Plato's Socrates exhibits distinctive traits which, in the Ten Theses listed above, set his philosophy in opposition to that of his namesake in the dialogues in Group II. In the second part of my argument, to be laid out in section II of chapter 3, I shall call on evidence external to the Platonic corpus to support the claim that *in those essential respects in which S_E's philosophy differs from that of S_M it is that of the historical Socrates,* recreated by Plato in invented conversations which explore its content and exhibit its method. I say "invented," not "reported." It is Xenophon who professes to be recalling Socratic conversations he had witnessed personally.[14] Plato does no such thing. Except for the *Apology*, where he goes out of his way (twice: 34A, 38B) to call attention to his presence at the trial,[15]

14 1.3 of the *Memorabilia* begins: "To support my opinion that he benefited his companions both by actions which showed what sort of man he was and by his discussions with them, I shall set forth as much as I can recollect of these" (Mem. 1.3.1). Early in 1.4 he declares: "First of all I shall state what I once heard him say about the divine realm in conversing with Aristodemus ..." For more references to such assurances by Xenophon and for how little they are worth see Robin, 1910: 32 and 35–7, who documents in detail their factual unreliability; cf. also Momigliano, 1971: 46–57, who locates Xenophon's work, like that of other Socratics, in "that zone between truth and fiction which is so bewildering to the professional historian" (46).

15 The Apology may be credited with the same kind of historical veracity as the speeches in Thucydides (an obvious parallel): recognizing that "it was impossible for him or his

he leaves himself out of the Socratic dramas he creates and rigs some of them so as positively to exclude his presence: in the *Pr.* he dramatizes a scene in which he could not have assisted because he had not yet been born;[16] in the *Cr.*, *Eu.*, *Ion*, *HMa.* he leaves Socrates alone with his interlocutor.[17] This is only to be expected on my hypothesis that those earlier works of Plato, no less than all those he was to produce thereafter, are meant as contributions to *philosophy* – not to biography as such. Socratic personalia Plato brings into his dramatic creations incidentally and, for the most part, only in so far as he considers them relevant to the philosophical content.[18]

On my hypothesis, Plato's overriding concern, in stark contrast to Xenophon's professed aim in his Socratic writings,[19] is not to preserve memories of Socratic philosophizing but to create it anew – to bring it alive in dramas whose protagonist philosophizes *more Socratico*. That remembered material should be used copiously is only to be expected. But my hypothesis does not bank on that. For what it proposes is that Plato in those early works of his, sharing Socrates' basic philosophical convictions, sets out to think through for himself their central affirmations, denials, and reasoned suspensions of belief by pitting them in elenctic encounter against the views voiced by a variety of interlocutors. In doing this Plato is producing, not reproducing, Socratic philosophizing. Employing a literary medium which allows Socrates to speak for himself, Plato makes him say whatever *he* – Plato – thinks *at the time of writing* would be the most reasonable thing for Socrates to be saying just then in expounding and defending his own philosophy.[20]

informants to memorize exactly what had been said" (τὴν ἀκρίβειαν αὐτὴν τῶν λεχθέντων διαμνημονεῦσαι, as paraphrased by A. Andrews, whose defense of the natural meaning of the text [1962: 64ff. at 65–71] I find entirely convincing), Thucydides assures us "they represent what I thought (ὡς ἂν ἐδόκουν ἐμοί) would be most fittingly said by each speaker on their particular topic, coming as close as possible to the general sense of what had been truly said (ἐχομένῳ ὅτι ἐγγύτατα τῆς ξυμπάσης γνώμης τῶν ἀληθῶς λεχθέντων)" (Thuc. 1.22.1).

16 In the year of Plato's birth (427 B.C.) Socrates was 42, well past his youth, to which there are repeated references in the *Pr.*: 314B, 317C, 320C, 361E.

17 To maintain the hypothesis that in these dialogues Plato is "imaginatively recalling, in form and substance, the conversations of his master" (Guthrie, 1975: 67) one would have to suppose, on no evidence whatever, that Plato (or a third party who had insured the transmission to him) had been given a play-by-play report of the arguments in each of these dialogues by Socrates himself or by his interlocutor.

18 See below, additional note 2.2 "Socratic personalia in the Platonic corpus."

19 Cf. n. 14 above and the opening sentence of Xenophon's *Oeconomicus*, "I once heard [Socrates] discuss household management as follows."

20 This part of the hypothesis alerts us to the possibility of shifts within the philosophical position allowed Socrates in Group 1 dialogues (e.g. it allows him to refute in the *Laches* the definition of "courage" he had propounded in the *Protagoras*, and to make explicit in the *Gorgias* a presupposition of Socratic argument – that the interlocutor always carries in his own system of beliefs premises entailing the negation of each of his false theses – which had remained purely implicit in the preceding dialogues: cf. Vlastos, 1983a: 27ff. at 71ff. ("Afterthoughts on the Socratic Elenchus," which I now feel is in need of revision).

Accordingly I can ignore the question which has bullied and befuddled many historians in the past: "Could Plato have heard what he makes Socrates say in this or that scene? If not, could he have had it on good authority?" For want of such authority the great Eduard Zeller lets fall out of his hands a crucial passage in the *Crito* (47cff.)[21] because it comes from a scene where Socrates speaks with his friend in the privacy of the prison cell and there is no indication of a line of transmission to Plato thereafter. Such scruples are obliterated by my hypothesis. Everything Plato puts into the mouth of Socrates is grist to my mill. To be sure, since the depicted character was, above any philosopher of the West, a man who lived his philosophy, the writer, deeply conscious of that fact, has reason to tell us much about the man's life, including his inner life, allowing us a fuller, more intimate, view of the man than is given us of any character, real or fictional, in the whole of ancient Greek literature. Even so, the writer's overriding concern is always the philosophy – the truths affirmed by Socrates, defended by his arguments, realized in his life, propositions which if true for Socrates are true for every human being.[22]

If that is Plato's primary interest, is it surprising that he should have pursued it in the form of dialogues instead of straightforward expository prose? It would have been more surprising if he had done the latter. For generations before him – from the first philosophers of Miletus, down to Socrates' contemporaries, Anaxagoras, Diogenes of Apollonia, and Democritus – expository prose had been the favored medium of natural investigation,[23] while for moral and political reflection Greek writers had regularly turned to dialogue.[24] So Herodotus, for example, in passages where he focuses on moral

21 Crucial for the interpretation of Socrates' moral theory (as I shall be pointing out below in chapter 8, n. 38, and in comment on texts quoted there as T12, T13, T14, T15). Zeller discerns the conflict between the instrumentalist ethics in Xenophon's *Memorabilia* and the sovereign claim of justice in Plato's *Apology*; and he believes that the conflict could be resolved through Socrates' teaching in the *Crito* (47D) that injustice is to the soul what a fatal disease would be to the body and hence *ipso facto* detrimental to the agent. But Zeller denies himself the resolution because, he says, "we cannot vouch for it that everything in the *Crito* comes from Socrates, its author not having been present at the conversation therein described" (1885: 151).

22 *G.* 505E, *Ch.* 166D.

23 As also in the parallel case of the Hippocratic treatises.

24 As the late Eric Havelock had observed, "Acted drama, or dramatized conversations, was the traditional Greek method of discussing and analyzing moral ideas" (1934: 283). This is true, notwithstanding declarative and protreptic sayings in gnomic prose (the dicta of the "Seven Wise Men," the Theognidea, the Hippocratic *Precepts* (παραγγελίαι), the fragments of Heracleitus and of Democritus, if we bear in mind that for the confrontation of opposing views Greek moralizing naturally turns to dialogue.

issues. When Xerxes declines "through highmindedness" to retaliate for Sparta's outrage against his ambassadors the morality tale takes the form of a mini-dialogue.[25] So too when Herodotus ponders the conflicting claims of monarchy, oligarchy, and democracy: he presents his meditation as a Debate on Constitutions (3.80–3). So too Prodicus switches from declamatory prose to dialogue to depict the choice between a life of easy gratification and one of hard, abstemious self-discipline: he stages a dialogue in which Vice and Virtue make opposing offers to Herakles (*ap.* Xen. *Mem.* 2.21–33). And so too Thucydides' reflections on the issue between power and justice produce the Melian Dialogue (5.85–112).

Moreover, just as Plato was about to start his work, prose dialogue had come into its own in that curious spin-off of Socrates' own refusal to write: the emergence of a new genre, the *Sōkratikoi logoi*, which had suddenly become a fashion, almost a craze. Beside Plato and Xenophon each of the following is credited by one or another of our sources with having produced such compositions: Aeschines of Sphettus, Antisthenes, Aristippus, Bryson, Cebes, Crito, Euclid of Megara, Phaedo.[26] That Plato was not the first in the field may be inferred from two reports, both of them well attested: Aristotle names a certain Alexamenus as the first writer of philosophical dialogues;[27] arid Theopompus[28] (the historian, contemporary of Demosthenes and Aristotle) charges that most of Plato's had been plagiarized from dialogues by Aristippus, Antisthenes, and Bryson.

Mastery of the resources of a new literary medium which suits so well Plato's dramatic flair challenges his artistic gifts. He tries his hand at it, produces little masterpieces, and delight in successful creation keeps him at it year by year.[29] But the artist in Plato could not have displaced the philosopher. We must assume that philosophical inquiry was the *primum mobile* in the composition of those

25 Hdt. 7.136. A similar one on the same theme at 9.78–9. (Both dialogues are quoted in part in section III of chapter 7.) Cf. also the conversation between Solon and Croesus at 1.130–2.

26 For references see Grote, 1865: III, 465ff.

27 Aristotle *ap.* Athenaeus 505B–C (fr. 3 of *On Poets*, Ross). In quoting the fragment Athenaeus notes that Nicias of Nicaea and Sotion of Alexandria (authors of histories of "successions of philosophers," used by Diogenes Laertius as a source) corroborate Aristotle's testimony.

28 *Ap.* Athenaeus 500C (= *Fr. gr. Hist.* II B 115,F 259 Jacoby). The authenticity of the report is accepted by Glucker (1978: 163), defended by Döring, 1988: 69 and Tsouna (1988: 64–5).

29 That several others were exploiting the genre would be no deterrent – quite the opposite! the superiority of his work to theirs would be scarcely less apparent to him than it has been to posterity. The difference is as palpable when his dialogues are compared with Xenophon's Socratic writings as when they are compared with surviving fragments of such work by another Socratic, Aeschines of Sphettus, whose dialogues were highly regarded in antiquity.

earlier dialogues no less than of any he was to write thereafter,[30] and that throughout this first phase of his writing Plato remains convinced of the substantial truth of Socrates' teaching and of the soundness of its method. But the continuing harmony of the two minds, though vital, is not rigid: the father image inspires, guides, and dominates, but does not shackle Plato's philosophical quest. So when he finds compelling reason to strike out along new paths, he feels no need to sever the personal bond with Socrates. And when these lead him to new, unSocratic and antiSocratic conclusions, as they visibly do by the time he comes to write the *Meno*, the dramatist's attachment to his protagonist, replicating the man's love for the friend and teacher of his youth,[31] survives the ideological separation. And so, as Plato changes, the philosophical persona of his Socrates is made to change, absorbing the writer's new convictions, arguing for them with the same zest with which the Socrates of the previous dialogues had argued for the views the writer had shared with the original of that figure earlier on.

Such is the scenario I shall be fleshing out in this chapter and the next two. That it is offered as hypothesis, not dogma or reported fact, should be plain. Such it will remain as I pursue it step by step. Of its truth the reader must be the judge.

II

On the first of those Ten Theses listed above I do not need to linger. Its story will unfold as I tell that of the rest. So I move directly to Thesis II, the most powerful of the ten: as I shall try to show in the balance of the present chapter, *the irreconcilable difference between Socrates, and Socrates, could have been established by this criterion even if it had stood alone.*

In the dialogues of his middle period Plato constructs a boldly speculative metaphysical system whose twin foundations are the transmigrating soul and its ontological correlate, the transcendent Form. We can pinpoint the entry of the former into the corpus:

30 A subsidiary one would be the very fact that the market was being flooded with rival accounts of Socrates' philosophizing. Plato would be as eager to defend Socratic philosophy against the well-meaning half-truths propagated by Socratics as was Xenophon to defend it against the slanders in Polycrates' *Accusation of Socrates*.

31 Plato's close contact with Socrates early in Plato's youth is attested in Xrn. *Mem.* 3.6.11: Plato's elder brother, Glaucon, is aspiring to political leadership at the age of twenty and Socrates restrains him, "taking a friendly interest in him for the cake of Glaucon's [uncle] Charrnides *and of Pluto.*"

T1 *M.* 81A–B: "...I have heard men and women who are wise in things divine." – "Saying *what?*" – "Something true, I believe, and glorious." – "*What* were they saying? *Who* were they?" – "Priests and priestesses who make it their business to give the reason for the rites they perform... This is what they declare: man's soul is deathless; at times it comes to an ending called 'death', at times it is reborn. It is never destroyed."

Here for the first time in Plato's work we meet this strange, visionary, doctrine that the soul has had many births and many deaths, and also its epistemological pendant, that *all* knowledge is innate, all learning in our present life being but the recovery of what our soul carries along from its primordial past:

T2 *M.* 81C: "As the soul is deathless and has been born many times and has seen all things both here and in Hades, there is nothing it has not learned ... As all nature is akin and the soul has learned everything, nothing prevents us once we have recollected one thing – which is what men call 'learning' – to rediscover everything else ourselves, if we are valiant and do not give up inquiring. *For all inquiring and learning is recollecting."*

Nothing remotely of this sort is stated or implied or even hinted at in any dialogue which precedes the *Meno*.[32] And once it comes in, it comes to stay: it saturates the *Phaedo*,[33] persists in the *Phaedrus* (245C–246A; 249B–D), and is displayed in great style in Plato's late dialogue,[34] the *Timaeus* (42B).[35] How alien this new story is to Socrates$_E$'s[36] whole way of thinking we can judge from the way he refers to the soul in the *Crito:*

32 It has been thought that there are anticipations of it in the myth of the *G.*, but only by tenuous inference (as in Dodds, 1959: 375; for a sounder analysis see Annas, 1982: 117). The central components of the new conception of the soul in the *Meno* (more fully in the *Phaedo)* are *[a]* its prenatal existence and successive incarnations in mortal lives (T1); (b) its extraordinary prenatal cognitive powers, these being the source of all learning during any of its mortal lives (T2). There is *no trace of either (a) or (b)* in the eschatology of the G., whose myth is a purely moral fable, an embroidery on the popular belief (to which Socrates, is very hospitable: *Ap.* 41A) in a retributive post-mortem trial by Minos and other divinities of the nether world – a belief with rich moral content and no epistemic import. 33 69E–72D; 72E–77A; 78B–80C; 100B–109A.

34 On the *Timaeus* see additional note 2.6.

35 Since the protagonist of this dialogue impersonates Plato in idealized projection (Timaeus has achieved the highest eminence in philosophy [20A], cosmology, and astronomy [28A], and has also attained the political success [19E–20A] to which Plato had aspired in vain at various times in his life: cf. the antepenultimate paragraph in chapter 4) we are in a position to ascribe to I'lato himself this fundamental doctrine which he had put into Socrates' mouth at the very point which marks the transition from Socrates, to Socrates,.

36 The views and associations of the historical Socrates are perversely misrepresented when the difference between Socrates, and Socrates, is ignored arid Socrates is then pictured as having lived in close association with Orphics (Taylor, 1949: 147), which gets some semblance of plausibility from the *Phaedo* (though even so would have to be reckoned a misleading exaggeration) but travesties grotesquely the Socrates of Plato's earlier dialogues and of Xenophon.

T3 *Cr.* 47E: "Is life then worth living for us once we have suffered the ruin of that in us which is damaged by injustice and benefited by justice? Or should we think inferior to the body *that in us, whatever it be* (ἐκεῖνο, ὅτι ποτ' ἔστι τῶν ἡμετέρων), that has to do with justice and injustice?"

That phrase, "that in us whatever it be," is symptomatic of the metaphysically reticent temper of the speaker's conception of the soul. For Socrates, our soul is our self – whatever that might turn out to be. It is the "I" of psychological function and moral imputation – the "I" in "I feel, I think, I know, I choose, I act," For "I believe" he says "my soul believes" (*G.* 486E). When he says that someone's soul is wicked we know this much of what he means: that person is wicked.[37] How much more he means we do not know: he doesn't say; to that question he never speaks. The queries, "Is the soul material or immaterial, mortal or immortal? Will it be annihilated when the body rots?" are never on his elenctic agenda. The first question he never addresses at all. He does allude to the second at the close of the *Apology* but only to suggest that it is rationally undecidable: both options – total annihilation or survival in Hades – are left open. In the *Crito* he reveals his faith in the soul's survival.[38] In the *Gorgias* he declares it.[39] Nowhere does he try to prove it in the earlier dialogues.[40]

For Socrates,, on the other hand, the immateriality of the soul is a formal theorem[41] and its prenatal and post-mortem existence a target for demonstrative overkill. He runs through a string of arguments in the *Phaedo*,[42] adds a new one in the *Republic* (608D–611C), then still another, along quite different lines, in the *Phaedrus* (245C–246A). The entity whose imperishableness S_M is so eager to prove is an immigrant from another world conjoined

37 Burnet's famous and highly misleading essay, "The Socratic Doctrine of the Soul" (1916: 126ff.) has fostered the misapprehension, now surfacing occasionally in the literature (e.g. Havelock, 1963: 204), that this conception of the soul as the psychological personality is a creation of Socrates and/or Plato. For a corrective see e.g. Vlastos, 1945–6: 381ff. and 53ff.; and, better, Solmsen, 1983: 355ff. Solmsen (356) **calls** attention to references to a person as "a *psuchē*": a "mighty *psuchē*," a "strong-minded *psuchē*," a "sweet *psuchē*" (Soph. *Ajax* 154, 1361, *Philoct.* 1013ff., *Eur. Medea* 110 and so forth).

38 54B–C.

39 Affirming that his eschatological myth is "true" (523A) and that Callicles is grievously mistaken in thinking it an old wives' tale (527A), but saying nothing to indicate that his belief in the **soul's** survival after death is elenctically defensible or otherwise retracting his declaration in the *Apology* (29B) that he has no knowledge of things in Hades. In particular, he does not offer argument for the truth of that belief. What he can and does argue for is the moral truth conveyed through the myth which he believes *can* be, and has been, proved true (ἀποδέδεικται, 479E), while its contrary cannot (οὐκ ἔχετε ἀποδεῖξαι, 527B).

40 I.e. nowhere prior to the introduction of the belief in reincarnation in the ***Meno,*** where Plato offers an argument for its corollary, the theory of recollection: in the *Phaedo* (73A–B) he refers to this argument as establishing "very clearly" (σαφέστατα) the truth of that corollary. 41 *Phd.* 79A–B. 42 69E–72D; 72E–77A; 100B–109A.

precariously to a piece of matter in this one. This conjunction is its great misfortune: corruption, exile, incarceration, entombment, defilement.[43] The imagery is Pythagorean." In the *Phaedo* we see that S_M has taken it over. He is now convinced that both intellectually and morally we would be incomparably better off if we had been spared incarnation, and that now, stuck inside an animal, our fondest hope should be to break away, to fly off never to return. Only in Pythagoreanism[45] do we hear of any such view in contemporary or earlier Greek thought.

That as stark a contrast between S_E and S_M marks their conception ofwhat each calls *eidos, idea* ("form," "character")[46] is not nearly so obvious. I must argue for it at length, devoting to it all the rest of this chapter. Our best clue to what Socrates, understands by *eidos* (or, synonymously, by idea) is in the work he makes it do. This is strictly definitional work. He mentions forms only when on the track of the answer to a "What is the *F*?" question. In the ***Euthyphro*** he lays down two conditions the right answer to that question will have to meet:

[1] The dcfiniens must be true of all cases falling under the definiendum.

43 For the imagery sec especially *Fhd.* 67D, 81E, 82A, 82E. The incarnate soul is "chained to a body," *Phd.* 81E; "entombed as it were, in its present body," *Cra.* 400C; "disfigured" by its association with the body, ***R.*** 611C–E; "encased in the body as in an oyster-shell," *Phdr.* 250C. "Defilement" or "pollution" is implied in speaking of the soul as "purified" in so far as it is separated from the body, "polluted" so far as it remains attached to it (*Phd.* 67A–C; 80E). The least gloomy of the images is the soul's "slipping into" the body allotted to it in each of its incarnations, *Phd.* 81E.

44 The soul "slips into" (ἐνδύεται) the body in the "Pythagorean myths" to which Aristotle alludes in *De Anima* 407B20ff.; ἐνδύνειν also in the account of the circuit of rebirths which Herodotus (2.123.2–3) says was Pythagorean in origin and "Greeks, some earlier, some later" made it their own. That the soul is "joined to the body as a penalty, as ifentombed" is ascribed by Clement of Alexandria (*Strom.* 3.17) to "the Pythagorean" Philolaus, whom Clement represents as saying that the doctrine is attested by "ancient theologians and seers." Plato ascribes to "those about Orpheus" the doctrine that the body is a "prison and guard-house" of the soul (*Cra. 400C*). This is the doctrine to which Socrates, refers with approval and which Cebes associates with Philolaus (*Fhd.* 61E–62C). The peripatetic philosopher Clearchus of Soli (fr. 2, *ap.* Athenacus 157C) ascribes it to Euxitheus "the Pythagorean."

45 The belief in reincarnation is the best attested of Pythagoras' doctrines: Xenophanes B7 (*ap.* D.L. 8.36); Empedocles B129 (*up.* Porphyry, *Vita Pyth.*); Dicaearchus, fr. 29 (*ap.* Porphyry, *Vita Pyth.*). And see Burkert, 1962: 98ff.; Barnes, 1982: 100ff.

46 Though either of these English words translates either of the Greek ones (cf. LSJ *s.v.* εἶδος, ἰδέα), "form" (in the sense of 'kind.' as in "imprisonment is a form of punishment"), is as good an English counterpart of ἰδέα as of εἶδος. But I shall keep "form" for εἶδος, "character" for ἰδέα, so that the reader will know to which word in Plato's text I am referring in translated text. And I shall follow the (fairly common) practice of capitalizing "Form" and "Character" (only) in contexts in which they are being used to refer to the non-sensible, immutable, incorporeal, "separate" entities which enter the Platonic corpus in the middle dialogues (cf. section III of this chapter).

Socrates brings this home by asking if the *F* "is not the same" in everything which is *F* (i.e. everything which has the property named "*F*"):

T4 *Eu.* 5D: "Is not the pious the same as itself in every [pious] action? And the impious, in turn, is it not opposite to all that is pious but similar to itself, everything which is to be impious having a certain single character (*idean*)[47] with respect to impiety?"[48]

[2] The definiens must disclose the reason why anything is an instance of the definiendum.

Socrates, formulates this condition by saying that the right answer to "What is the *F?*" must state what is that "because of which" (or "by which" or "through which" or "in virtue of which")[49] anything is *F:*

T5 *Eu.* 6D–E: "Recall that I did not ask you to teach me one or two of the many pious [actions] but that form itself because of which all the pious [actions] are pious. For you said that it is because of a single character that impious [actions] are impious and pious ones are pious. Or don't you remember?"

In assuming that these two conditions can be met S_E is making a substantial ontological commitment. He is implying that what there

47 Cf. the preceding note.

48 The last clause, καὶ ἔχον μίαν τινὰ ἰδέαν κατὰ τὴν ἀνοσιότητα ὅτιπερ ἂν μέλλῃ ἀνόσιον εἶναι, is translated, "and [the impious] possessing one single form in respect of its impiety. Does not this apply to everything that can be characterized as impious?" in Guthrie, 1975: 114–15. Here a separate question is produced by construing its terminal clause as "a conversational afterthought, syntactically detached from the rest of the sentence, which can only be read as applying the predicates to τὸ ἀνόσιον." That Plato's Greek can "only" be so read is false. It has been read as in the above translation by Robinson, 1941 (first edition of Robinson, 1953); Ross, 1951; Allen, 1970. This translation is more faithful to the text (it preserves its original segmentation) and takes it to be predicating impiety not of impiety but of its instances: "everything which is to be impious" (i.e. evcry possible instance of impiety) is to have the "single character" of impiety.

49 It takes a prepositional phrase (any of those four will do) to put into English what l'lato expresses more economically by putting the neuter relative pronoun into the (instrumental) dative case. Alternatively he exprcsses the same thing by "that which makes (ποιεῖ) *F* things to be *F*," employing the non-causal, constitutive, sense of "makes" (cf. O.E.D. *s.v.* "make," sense 13: "constitute," as in "one swallow does not make a summer"). At 11A6–8 Socrates rejects "god-loved" as an answer to "What is pious?" because it is only a πάθος of "pious" (a property which all pious things might just happen to have) instead of being its οὐσία (the property which each of them must have to qualify as pious). When thus contrasted with πάθος, οὐσία clearly stands for the essential nature of the *F* and thus may be properly translated "essence." Ifx is *F*, and P is a πάθος of *F*, while E is the essence of *F*, then *x* is *F* not *qua* P, but *qua* E; it is E, not P, that "makes" it *F*.

is contains not only spatio-temporal items, like individuals and events, but also entities of another sort whose identity conditions are strikingly different since they are "the same" in persons and in actions which are not the same: justice here and justice there and again elsewhere, the same in different individuals and occurrences, real in each of them, but real in a way that is different from that in which they are real, its own reality evidenced just in the fact that it can be instantiated self-identically in happenings scattered widely over space and time, so that ifjustice has been correctly defined for even a single instance, the definiens will be true of every instance of justice that ever was or ever will be anywhere – in Greece or Persia, on earth or on Olympus or in Hades.

That there are things which meet this strong condition is a piece of ontology firmly fixed in Socrates$_E$'s speech and thought. He *has* this ontology. Can he have it, without falsifying the claim I made in Thesis IA above, that he is a moralist and nothing more – no metaphysician, no ontologist? Can one *have* an ontology without being an ontologist?[50] Why not? The belief in the existence of a physical world independent of our own mind, stocked with material objects retaining substantial identity and qualitative continuity over long or short stretches of time, is a solid piece of ontology, as entrenched in the mind of the average Athenian then as in that of the average New Yorker now. Does this make an ontologist of either of them? Why should it? Can't one have a language without being a linguist? One qualifies as a linguist when one makes language an object of reflective investigation. One would qualify as an ontologist if one made ontology an object of reflective investigation. And this is what S_E never does. He never asks what sort of things forms must be if their identity conditions can be so different from those of spatio-temporal individuals and events that the identical form can be "in"[51] non-identical individuals and events. The search for those general propertics of forms which distinguish them systematically from non-forms is never on his elenctic agenda. He asks: What is the form piety? What is the form beauty? And so forth. What is form? he never asks. He is perplexed about many things, but never about the fact that what there is contains forms. He is never touched with

50 Thirty years ago (Vlastos, 1956: iiii, n. 10) I assumed that the answer has to be "No." Woodruff, 1982: 163 *et passim*, now takes that view and argues for it better than I did then. Even so, as I explain above, I am of a different opinion now. Woodruff says that "those who would enlarge ontology to cover evcry question about what there is would make ontologists of us all." So they would, if all it takes to be an ontologist is to have some belief or other about what there is; not so, ifstrenuous reflection on such beliefs is also required.

51 Cf. T4 above: "...the same as itself *in* every [pious] action."

wonder that such things as forms should be. He banks on their reality with the same unreflective, unexamined, unargued, undefended assurance with which the man in the street banks on the reality of trees and stones.

That is why it is gratuitous to credit him, as has so often been done in the scholarly literature, with a theory of forms.[52] His belief in their reality is no more evidence of his having such a *theory* than is the man in the street's belief in the reality of physical objects evidence of his having a theory of physical objects. A belief is not a theory if everyone's agreement with it can be presumed as a matter of course – if it is unproblematic for everyone, in need of explanation and justification for no one. This is the vein in which S_E believes in the reality of forms. He asks Euthyphro if piety is not the same character in every pious act, and gets instant assent. He presents Laches with a large variety of courageous acts – brave encounters with danger in war, at sea, in politics, and so forth[53] – and asks:

T6 *La.* 191E: "Try again to say about courage, first of all, what is that which is the same in all of these?"

and Laches offers not the least resistance to the assumption that in that motley collection there *is* something which is "the same in all." Neither Euthyphro nor Laches is a philosopher: one is a soothsayer, the other a military man, a general. But their responses are a fair sample of the one Socrates would have elicited from anyone on the street picked at random.

The same would be true if he had asked whether or not the form he is seeking to define *exists.* Consider this exchange with Hippias:

T7 *HMa.* 287C–D: "He will ask you, 'O stranger from Elis, is it not because of justice that just men are just?' Answer, Hippias, as if the question were being put to you." – "I shall answer that it is because of justice." – "Then this [thing], justice, exists?"[54] – "Very much so." – "And is it not because of wisdom that the wise are wise and because of goodness that all good things are good?" – "How else?" – "Then these [wisdom, goodness] exist: that could not be the case if these did not exist."

52 For an attractive version of this view, which allows S_E to have a piece of S_M's ontology – though only a modest one, still a far cry from S_M's two-world theory of reality – see Allen, 1970: 67ff. *et passim.*

53 *La.* 191A–E.

54 οὐκοῦν ἔστι τι τοῦτο, ἡ δικαιοσύνη; Literally translated (as in Fowler, 1926; Woodruff, 1982), ἔστι τι = "is justice something?", i.e. "is there such a thing as justice?" (in logician's language: "is there some *x* such that *x* =justice?"), in fewer words, "does justice exist?" I shall so translate the ἔστι τι phrase throughout its important occurrences, including T11, T12 in the *Phd.* (below in the present chapter); T22 in the *Smp.*; T1, T5 (in additional note 2.5) *el* passim in the *Prm.* (cf. n. 126 below), and *Ti.* 51B–D (quoted in additional note 2.5). *Cf.* nn. 55 and 66 below.

– "They do exist, indeed." – "Then aren't all beautiful things, too, beautiful because of beauty?" – "Quite so, because of beauty." – "Because this beauty exists?" – "It does exist – what is the worry?" – "'Say then, stranger,' he will say, 'What *is* this beauty?"'

Unlike Euthyphro and Laches, Hippias is an intellectual, a renowned one. He is an accomplished mathematician and astronomer, a historian too, a polymath. But there is no indication that his manifold accomplishments had ever given him occasion to investigate whether or not the justice of just persons *exists.* So there is no reason to believe that on these questions Socrates expects, or gets, from Hippias anything but the simple, unreflective, answers he would have got from anyone he might have fished out of the market. And we can see how they run. The existence of those entities strikes Hippias as so obvious that he grows impatient at being plied with such self-answering questions.[55] Only at the end of T7 is the point of eliciting agreement on the existence of justice, goodness, and finally beauty made clear: Socrates has been working up to a springboard for his great "What is the *F*?" question. From the admission that there is such a thing as beauty – that beauty exists – he moves directly to "What is beauty?", and to this question he hangs on like a bull-dog through the rest of the dialogue, lamenting at the end his failure to find the answer to it.

Now consider the exchange with Protagoras. The same question is put in equivalent[56] terms:

T8 *Pr.* 330C1–2: "Is justice a thing, or is it nothing? To me it seems a thing. How about you?" – "To me too," he said.

Socrates' interlocutor is once again a renowned intellectual, but renowned for something which has no parallel in Hippias' manysided accomplishments. Protagoras is famous for his dictum "Man is the measure of all things," a manifesto of extreme relativism.[57] It is so understood by Plato in the *Cratylus*:

55 Agreeing heartily to the first question, drily to the second, he finally wants to know what is the point of the persistent questioning: ἀλλὰ τί *γαρ* μέλλει – "What's the problem? Why are you asking?"

56 The question in T8, πρᾶγμά τί ἐστιν; is no different from the one in T7, ἔστι τι; It could have been asked as well in the latter form as in the former. Socrates is asking, "**Is** there such a thing as beauty? Is there such a thing as justice?" Cf. n. 66 below, and additional note **2.3.**

57 Many years ago (1956: xiiff.) I called the view "subjectivism." I stand by the substance of the account of it I gave there. But I would now agree with Burnyeat, **1976:** 44ff., that "relativism" would be a more accurate term for the view that if a appears to be *F* to a given subject S at t1, then *a is* F in relation to S at t2, provided it is borne in mind that this is *a highly subjectivized* form of relativism.

T9 *Cra.* 385E: "Come, Hermogenes, let us see: in your opinion is the essence of things[58] private to each of us, as Protagoras used to say, declaring "Man is the measure of all things" – that such as things appear to me, such they are for me; while such as they appear to you, such they are for you? Or do you believe that they have some stability of essence of their own?"

If Protagoras maintains that what any given person believes about, say, justice is true only for the person to whom it appears to be such-and-such, how can he be expected to agree that justice is "the same" throughout the great diversity of actions which diverse persons call "just"? He couldn't and he doesn't. He is never asked the "What is the *F*?" question.[59] And for good reason: for then the metaphysical issue would have surfaced, the rival ontological commitments would have clashed, and Socrates would have been called upon to defend his own, pushed into the role of ontologist which he prefers to avoid, and consistently does avoid in the earlier dialogues.[60] Plato manages things so that the conflict can be ignored. To the "Man is the measure" dictum no direct allusion is made throughout the whole of the *Protagoras.*" The first reference by Socrates, to the Protagorean ontology comes in a Transitional Dialogue, the *Euthydemus* (286B–C). There the Protagorean doctrine that contradiction is impossible is brought into the dialogue not by Socrates but by his interlocutor, Dionysidorus, who parrots it, without acknowledgement of its source, and Socrates does no more than call attention to the plagiarism.[62] He does so to make it clear that the doctrine was old hat and he implies that it was nothing to be excited about, for both it and its corollary, that false statement is impossible, are self-refuting.[63] Those strident paradoxes are not

58 οὐσία τῶν ὄντων. That "essence" is right, against "existence" (cf. additional note **2.3)** for οὐσία here is clear from the context in T9 and again at 386E: maintaining that things "have their own essence by themselves according to their own nature (ἥπερ πέφυκεν, 386E4), Socrates is opposing the Protagorean doctrine which destabilizes not the existence of things, but their "nature," as is indicated by πέφυκεν here and repeatedly in the sequel (cf. φύσιν at 387D1).

59 Plato gives Socrates no opportunity to put that question in the *Pr.* l'here is no definitional inquiry in this dialogue which would have given Socrates the occasion to ask questions such as those he asks Euthyphro at T4 and T5 and Laches at T6 and thus makes explicit the assumption that the ***F*** denotes a character which is "the same" in all the multiplicity of instances to which its name applies. 60 Cf. Thesis IA at p. **47** above.

61 Though Socrates would **be** expected to know all about it (he is not depicted as a philosophical illiterate).

62 He remarks that he has heard it "often, from many" and that "it was employed by those about Protagoras and still older thinkers" (he means, but does not name, Parmenides).

63 This "vulgar" **(286~10**φορτικώτερόν τι**)** refutation he thinks is all these claims deserve. There is not the least anticipation here of the sustained critique Plato will he devoting to them many years later in the *Sophist.* Taking no notice of their challenge to the ontologist, Socrates, treats them as fake paradoxes, pseudological firecrackers that explode harmlessly once their intolerable consequences, intellectual (286D–E) and moral (287A), are perceived.

allowed so much as a whisper in any Elenctic Dialogue and when they do find a voice in a Transitional one all they elicit is a snub. Their exclusion from the very work which bears Protagoras' name is remarkable when so much is to be made of them in dialogues of Plato's middle[64] and late periods.[65]

Returning to T7, let us note that there is a sense of "thing" so innocuous that everyone who is willing to discuss justice, piety, and the rest can be expected to agree that they are "things." This is the sense we give the word in everyday talk, using it in the quantifiers of English speech,[66] "everything," "something," "nothing"[67] and in all-purpose referential phrases like "I haven't understood a thing you are saying." In this sense of the word Protagoras would have to agree that justice is a "thing," i.e. something he and Socrates are arguing over, else the discussion could not proceed at all. But *could* he agree to even this, consistently with his doctrinaire relativism? Plato makes Socrates, decline to raise that question,[68] asking Protagoras to agree that justice is a "thing" with a determinate relation to each of the virtues,[69] so that they may proceed to disagree on just that relation -- on whether it is or is not tied to each of four others in that strictly *moral*[70] bond which is at issue throughout all the

64 The rejection **of** the Protagorean "Man is the measure" doctrine in the *Cra.* is the point at which the first intimation of the ontology of the middle dialogues shows up at T9 above (reiterated at 386E). To the "Man is the measure" dictum Plato returns over and over again in the *Tht.* (152A, 160D, 170D–E, 171C, 178B).

65 The impossibility of false statement becomes the central target of the Eleatic Stranger's critique of Parmenides in the ***Sophist***.

66 Cf. Vlastos, **1956:** 1iii, n. **10.**

67 The third of these is nicely paralleled in Greek: the normal way of saying "nothing" is οὐδέν, a contraction for οὐδὲν πρᾶγμα, "no thing" = "nothing" (I have so translated at T8 above). The second is matched by the use of πρᾶγμα for the *x* of the existential quantifier; cf. **n. 56** above.

68 Understandably ***so,*** if Socrates is to be kept down to the role of single-minded moralist, whose elenctic investigations are restricted to moral topics (cf. n. 5 in additional note 1.1, and n. **12** in the present chapter) : he may have views on all sorts of other things, including ontology, but he declines to debate them. If Protagoras had been allowed to challenge the assumption that "justice is a thing" the fat would be in the fire: the debate would have been diverted **from** a moral to an ontological inquiry.

69 If Protagoras believes that his relativist ontology allows him to challenge Socrates' views about the virtues, Socrates is perfectly justified in ignoring Protagoras' ontology to focus his critique on the moral content of the sophist's views.

70 I italicize "moral," for this is the only aspect of Socrates' theses which is consistently challenged by Protagoras throughout the debate. Their ontological import is left surprisingly imprecise in the expressions used by Socrates to identify the relation of the virtues *inter se* which he is defending throughout the argument. At **331B** he says that the virtues in question are "either the same or as similar as they could possibly be"; at **331B** he says they arc "one [thing]" and then shifts to "nearly the same." Neither he nor his adversary assay any specification of the relation other than the very precise one stated in the simplest possible terms by Socrates at **329E2–4** (whoever has any of them must have all of them). No further identification of it is necessary for the purposes of their debate; whatever might be the logic or ontology of the Socratic view Protagoras might wish to controvert, his substantive disagreement with its moral doctrine is made clear enough at

subsequent twists and turns of dialogue, as he insists and Protagoras denies, that each of the virtues is interentailing with each of the other virtues or, more simply,[71] that a person who has any virtue will "of necessity" have all the virtues. Plato could hardly have made it clearer that the interests of Socrates in this dialogue are exclusively ethical.[72] Brought up face to face with the premier relativist of the day, the chance to debate ontology virtually thrust upon him, Socrates, turns it down.

Now consider Socrates,. To the existence of the *F*, which had been regularly conceded to Socrates, by all of his interlocutors without contest, Socrates, refers as a highly contestable thesis. In the *Republic* he calls it a "posit" :

T10 *R.* 596A: "We are accustomed to *posit*[73] a certain single Form for each plurality to which we apply the same name."

In the *Phaedo* he calls it a *hypothesis:*

T11 *Phd.* **100B:** "I return to those [things] that are always on our lips and make them my starting-point, *hypothesizing*[74] that Beauty exists itself by itself,[75] and so too Goodness and Greatness and the rest. If you grant me these and concede that they exist I expect that from these I shall be able to discover and expound to you the reason (αἰτία) for the soul's immortality."

329E, where he confronts the thesis asserted by Socrates at **329E2–4** and flatly denied by himself there (at **329E5–6**) and then once again at the climax of the debate **(349~5–8).** Cf. Vlastos, **1981:** 221ff., especially at **264,** and the notes at **428–33.**

71 **As** he puts it himself at **329E2–4**: cf. the preceding note.

72 From which we cannot infer that his own lack of interest in metaphysical and epistemological topics would be shared by his closest adherents. Thus we know from Aristotle that Antisthenes had important logico-metaphysical doctrines (see Caizzi, 1964: 48ff. at **49-65;** Giannantoni, **1983:** II **319–407** and **III** 177–370), as did **also** Euclid of Megara with his Eleaticizing logic (Giannantoni, **1983:** I **37–48** and **III 31–58),** and **as** would also Aristippus have done *if* (as is possible, though improbable) he had been the originator of that remarkable epistemological doctrine which is ascribed to "the Cyrenaic sect" *ap.* Sextus Empiricus, *Adv. Math.* 7.190–200 **(on** which see Tsouna, **1988:** part **2,** ch. 1). One of the most impressive things about Socrates is his ability to attract and hold devoted followers, warmly attached to him and profoundly influenced by him, who felt free to go their separate ways in developing ethical and meta-ethical doctrines in sharp disagreement with one another and no doubt with him as well.

73 τίθεσθαι. Note the difference from Socrates,, who had not asked Hippias to "posit" that justice, beauty, wisdom, exist: he had asked if they do, and got full agreement. (I capitalize "Form" here [cf. n. **46** above], since εἶδος is now being used **as** a ***terminus technicus*** to refer to entities unknown to the man in the street whose categorial properties will be laid out in section III below.)

74 ὑποθέμενος.

75 εἶναί τι αὐτὸ καθ' αὑτό. The rendering of εἶναί τι **as** "is something" = "exists" was explained in n. **54** above. And there is no mystery about the meaning of the first occurrence of the reflexive pronoun: it is used in the sense of αὐτός = *solus* (examples in Riddell, **1867: 134;** and cf. Burnet, **1911:** "in this technical sense αὐτό is a development of αὐτός, 'alone,"' pointing out that at **Phd. 67D1** μόνην καθ' αὑτήν is used synonymously with αὐτὴν καθ' αὑτήν just before). But what on earth is the import of καθ' αὑτήν in this context? This will be puzzled out in section III below and further in additional note **2.5.**

To speak of a proposition as a *hypothesis* in this context is to treat it as an unasserted premise throughout the ensuing argument whose purpose will not be to probe the truth of that premise but only to demonstrate what would follow *if* that premise were true.[76] When so using that proposition one is not expressing uncertainty about its truth. Absolutely none was voiced earlier on in this dialogue when the existence of the Forms was introduced soon after its start by a question which had anticipated and received instant, enthusiastic, agreement:

T12 ***Phd.*** 65D. "Do we assert that Justice exists itself by itself or that it does not?[77] – "We assert it, by Zeus."

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86 χαλεπαίνει, **4760.** **87** *Loc. cit.*

88 See *Cr.* 48D for Socrates$_E$'s view of the crux of the opposition (his rejection of the *lex talionis:* to be discussed in chapter **7);** and G. 481C for Callicles' view of it: the doctrine that to suffer injustice is better than to do it "turns our human life upside down."

89 *Ap.* 19C, 20C.

90 Their ignorance of the Forms invalidates their moral beliefs ***en bloc:*** "the many traditional beliefs of the many about Beauty and the rest [e.g. 'Justice and Goodness,' 479D] are adrift in a sort of twilight zone between pure reality and complete unreality" (*R.* **4790;** translation partly after Cornford, **1945).** In the ***Phaedo*** even the best behaved of non-philosophers (οἱ κόσμιοι αὐτῶν, 68E) only achieve "an illusionary facade of virtue": "they are "brave through ***a*** sort of fear and cowardice" (68E), "temperate through **a** sort of intemperance" (69A). Their morality is "slavish, there is no health or truth in it" (69B).

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III

He is deep in this new project from the moment he mentions Forms in the *Yhaedo,* the first dialogue in which Socrates, expounds systematically his theory of Forms.[91] The first thing he notices about them is their *inaccessibility to the senses*:

T15 ***Phd.*** 65D4–12: "And again that Beauty and Goodness exist? [continuing T12 above] ... Well, then, have you ever seen anything of that sort with your eyes? ... Or grasped it through any other bodily sense?"

Here the assertion that Forms exist is not made in the context of a definitional inquiry,[92] as in the *Hippias Major*,[93] where the point of getting Hippias to agree that beauty exists is to spring on him the question, "Say, then, *what* is it?" In the *Phaedo* it becomes the prelude to a different kind of question, never raised in the earlier dialogues: Are Justice, Beauty, etc. the sort of thing we can perceive with any of our senses? If this question had been put to Socrates, he would have undoubtedly agreed that they are not. This is implicit in the whole of his investigative procedure – elenctic argument, an intellectual exercise in whose procedure appeal to sensible evidence would be a manifest irrelevance: the very idea that headway could be made in a search for a "What is the *F*?" question by referring to what. has been seen, heard, smelled, tasted, touched would be absurd. So on this point we could count on ready agreement between S_E and S_M. The difference lies precisely in the fact that those questions, which never arise at all for S,, become matters of vital concern for **S,.** The difference is symptomatic of the fact that S_E's

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T18 ***Phd.*** 65E–66A: "And would not one do this [i.e. come closest to having knowledge of what one is thinking about][97] if one approached it so far as possible by thought alone, and, not admitting sight into one's thinking nor dragging in any other sense alongside one's reasoning, but employing pure thought itself by itself, sought to track each pure reality" itself by itself (αὐτὸ καθ' αὑτό)?"

It boggles the mind that S, should want his warning against the evidential use of sensory data to extend even *to* the investigation of things like health and strength (T17 above), falling squarely in the domain of the physiological and medical sciences of the day, where sense-experience was firmly ensconced as the primary source of the data for knowledge.[99] But there is no doubt that this is what he means. He is convinced that if knowledge is what we are after, our only hope of reaching it is by "thinking" and "reasoning." There the mind, made safe from illusion-breeding sense-experience, can no more go wrong than it can in Descartes when inspecting "clear and distinct ideas."[100]

Closely related to their inaccessibility to sense-perception is a second categorial property of S_M's Forms: their *absolute exemption from change.* He holds that while all parts of the sensible world are constantly changing, no part of the world of Forms can change at all: in their case immutability is of the very essence of their being. So much S_E could have been expected to grant. He might well have thought it a strict consequence of the assumption that every form is self-identical in each of the distinct temporal occurrences which instantiate it. This seems to be the plain implication of such a question, "Is not the pious the same as itself in every [pious] action?": if piety in pious action *a* is "the same" as in pious action *b*, must it not be unaltered throughout the interval that separates *a* from *b* or from any other instance of piety no matter how remote

97 The referent of τοῦτο at 65E6 is γνῶναι ἕκαστον [περὶ οὗ σκοπεῖ], 65E4–5.

98 αὐτῇ καθ' αὑτὴν εἰλικρινεῖ τῇ διανοίᾳ χρώμενος αὐτὸ καθ' αὐτὸ εἰλικρινὲς ἕκαστον ἐπιχειροῖ θηρεύειν τῶν ὄντων. "Realities" for ὄντα: cf. additional note **2.3.**

99 From the earliest methodological Greek reflection in these sciences sense-perception had been conceived as the proper source of knowledge in their own domain. so Alcmaeon, early in the fifth century, thinks of the senses as "ducts" through which information is conveyed to the brain (Theophrastus, ***De Sens.*** **26)**; so too, soon after, for Empedocles (Diels–Kranz, DK B310) each of the senses is a "duct of understanding." We see this point of view expressed in the (late) Hippocratic treatise *Precepts*, which declares in its opening paragraph: "In medical practice one should pay the greatest attention not to plausible reasoning but to experience combined with reason. **For** rational reflection is a systematizing of what has been received through the senses."

100 The possibility of purely intellectual error is not allowed in either case. Decartes blames all error on the will, S_M on the senses. The thought that λογισμός may go wrong and needs sense-experience to keep it on the rails, which seems so obvious to the medical man who wrote the *Precepts*, has not occurred to S,

from either? The connection of "the same in every ***F***" with "the ***F*** always ***F***" is explicit in

T19 *HMa.* 299E6–7: "I was asking him about that which is beautiful for all and always... For beautiful, surely, is always beautiful."[101]

But to what purpose was S_E expressing this conviction? It was to control the definitional search in which he was engaged – to forestall (or refute) a definiens which holds true in the particular case the interlocutor has in view but is falsified in others. S_E did not stop to reflect that if a form is to be self-identical in cases spread over time it must be itself exempt from the change in which each of its temporal instances is enmeshed. The failure parallels the one noticed in the foregoing: that while S_E's elenctic procedures takes it for granted that forms are inaccessible to the senses, he never takes notice of this, never reflects on it, never makes the assumption explicit. Both failures evidence his one-track interest in moral questions, his indifference to the epistemological and metaphysical issues which are precisely the ones S, finds exciting. The excitement infects his style:

T20 ***Phd.*** 78D1–7: "That reality of whose essence we give account"' in asking and answering our questions, is it always invariantly constant or is it different at different times?[103] Equality itself, Beauty itself, each real thing itself, the reality,[104] does it ever admit of any change at all? Or does each of those things which are real,[105] existing always itself by itself,[106] unique in form, remaining invariantly constant,[107] never admitting of any alteration whatever in any respect in any way?"

As a piece of philosophical prose by a fastidious writer who never repeats himself without good reason[108] these lines are remarkable for

101 Reading this sentence in the same way as the terminal clause in T4 (***Eu.*** 5D3–5) above, I take the predicate to apply to each instance of the Form, not to the Form itself whatever is an instance of the beautiful is always beautiful.

102 αὐτὴ ἡ οὐσία ἧς λόγον δίδομεν τοῦ εἶναι. The λόγος which answers the "What is the ***F?***" question is an account of the reality (οὐσία) named "the *F*" which states its essence. See additional note **2.3.**

103 πότερον ὡσαύτως ἀεὶ ἔχει κατὰ ταὐτὰ ἢ ἄλλοτ' ἄλλως; The phrase ὡσαύτως ἀεὶ ἔχει κατὰ ταὐτά sounds pleonastic at first blush. Why shouldn't ἀεὶ ἔχει κατὰ ταὐτά suffice to tell the tale of the invariant constancy of S_M's Forms? Why need he add that adverb? Because he wants to specify the full range of invariance he has in view. For suppose F entails G and H. Then **F** will be not only constantly F but also constantly G and **H** – *not* constantly F but inconstantly G **or H.** We need to be assured that the F will be always invariant in all the ways in which it is possible for it to be invariant.

104 αὐτὸ ἕκαστον ὃ ἔστιν, τὸ ὄν.

105 ἢ ἀεὶ αὐτῶν ἕκαστον ὃ ἔστι.

106 ὂν αὐτὸ καθ' αὑτό. The import of the underlined phrase will be discussed below.

107 ὡσαύτως κατὰ ταὐτὰ ἔχει.

108 But has no objection to repeating himself for emphasis upon occasion. Elenctic argument in the earlier dialogues also licenses motivated repetition: "admirable it is, they say, to say twice and even thrice what is admirable," G. 498E.

saying the same thing two and three times over with only verbal variations: they "never admit of any change at all" – they "never admit of any alteration whatever"; they "are always invariantly constant" – they "remain invariantly constant." The emphasis produced by such reiterative assertion could hardly be stronger.

Now consider the complementary assertion of the instability of the temporal instances of the Forms:

T21 *Phd.* 78D18–E4: "What then of the many beautiful [things] – men or horses or anything else whatever of this sort – or of the many equal [things] or of any other **namesakes** of theirs." Are *they* always in the same state? **Or,** just the opposite, are they not, so to speak,'" never in any way in the same state?"

The force of the qualification in "so to speak" should not be missed. Without that scaling-down of the assertion, the denial of stability to sensibles in T21 would be as sweeping as is its assertion in the case of Forms in T20: it would mean absolute, total instability, perpetual change in every possible respect. And this would be not at all what Plato wants to say. For if a sensible instance of a given Form were involved in such all-pervasive, total, change how could we think of it as a *bona fide* instance of that Form? And if we could not, how could we identify *it* at all so that we can refer to *it* as the changing thing?[111] The hypothesis that *everything* is in total change self-destructs: if the hypothesis were true it would be impossible to assert its truth about *anything* in particular. Moreover, no sense could then be given to Plato's doctrine that sensible things are "namesakes" of Forms, each of them "participating"[112] in the particular Form whose "name-

109 πάντων τῶν ἐκείνοις ὁμωνύμων: since an instance of beauty is "a beauty" it is a "namesake" of the Form which it instantiates. Plato resorts to this metaphor to help fill the gap in his philosophical vocabulary left by the absence of a term for "instance" or for "particular." Aristotle's technical term for the latter, τὰ καθ' ἕκαστα has not yet been coined.

110 ὡς ἔπος εἰπεῖν. l'lato often uses this phrase (**or** its shorter variant, ὡς εἰπεῖν: for examples see Ast, 1835: *s.v.* εἶπον) to scale down the force of an assertion, **as** e.g. at *Lg.* 656E, "I mean really ten thousand – not in a manner of speaking." In T21 he is warning us that the inconstancy of instances of the Forms is by no means as extreme as is the converse invariance of the Forms they instantiate: Forms are absolutely immutable but their instances are not absolutely mutable.

111 It is along such lines that **S,** refutes the hypothesis that everything is in total flux: "If something is always slipping away would it be possible to say truly of it, first, 'it is ***that,***' secondly, 'it is *such-and-such,*' when, while we are still speaking, it must straightway become different and slip away and no longer be in that state?" (*Cra.* 439D; cf. *Tht.* 182D).

112 "It seems to me that if anything is beautiful other than Beauty itself, it is beautiful just because it participates in *that* Beauty," *Phd.* 100C. The doctrine is spelled out more fully in *Prm.* 128E: "Don't you hold that there is a form of Similarity and the opposite of such a thing, i.e. Dissimilarity? And given these two things, you and I and the other things which we call 'the many' participate in them – and those which participate in Similarity become similar in that respect and in so far as (ταύτῃ τε καὶ κατὰ τοσοῦτον ὅσον ἄν) they participate, while those which participate in Dissimilarity become dissimilar, and those which participate in both become both [similar and dissimilar]?" *(Prm.* 129A).

sake" it is. Nothing contrary to this doctrine is being asserted in T21 once the qualifying phrase is taken into account: we can understand S_M to be asserting that no sensible thing is ever the same in *all* of its properties and relations during any stretch of time, no matter how small.[113] This will allow sensible things to change in some ways while remaining constant in others – innumerable changes, subliminally minute, proceeding within every object of our perceptual experience while its gross perceptible properties remain recognizably the same. "But if this is how Plato wants to be understood couldn't he have said so more explicitly?" Certainly. But why suppose he would want to? Has he any interest in making his doctrine more palatable to the "soundlovers and sightlovers"?[114] He has no desire to conciliate these worldlings. Just the opposite. He wants to startle them, shock them out of the dogmatic certainties of their false ontology. His message to them: "If absolute stability is what you want, you will never find it in the world of sights and sounds. You must look for it in that other world in whose existence you do not believe."[115]

We can now consider a third categorial-feature of S_M's Forms: their *incorporeality.* How fundamental this feature of theirs really is Plato comes to see best in retrospect when he views the ontology of his middle dialogues from the perspective of his latest period. In the *Sophist* he sees the great issue in metaphysics[116] as that which divides materialists, for whom body *defines* reality,'" and immaterialists,[118]

113 Plato never asserts anything stronger. In the *Philebus* (59B1–2) he declares that nothing in this world "ever was or will be or now **is** constant." Cherniss, 1957a: 243, took this to mean that "all γιγνόμενα are in perpetual change *in every respect* [my emphasis]." But **(as** Irwin, 1977b: **3,** n. 5, has pointed out) Cherniss's paraphrase misstates what Plato wrote by overstating it: his text contains nothing corresponding to the words I have italicized; read strictly, the text asserts no more than that everything in this world is always changing *in some respect* – a perfectly intelligible claim, which might even be true.

114 S_M's label in ***R.*** 475ff. for the unphilosophical "many," the people who believe that there is nothing better than the half-real world of the senses: cf. the next note.

115 ***R.*** 479A1–3: "that fine fellow [the 'sightlover'], who does not believe in Beauty itself– a certain Form of beauty which is always invariantly constant."

116 He likens it to the γιγαντομαχία – the battle of the earthborn giants against the Olympians.

117 ταὐτὸν σῶμα καὶ οὐσίαν ὁριζόμενοι. This categorial property ofsensibles has now become so much more salient in his retrospective view of the ontology of his middle period, so definitive of their difference from Forms, that he feels no great need to set forth formally their other categorial properties. The material world's accessibility to the senses he takes for granted (that body is "visible and tangible" comes out in the immediate sequel, at *Sph.* 247B); its perpetual flux appears only in the charge of the immaterialists that their opponents reduce reality to pure process (γένεσιν ἀντ' οὐσίας φερομένην τινα, 246C1–2).

118 I resist the temptation to say "idealists" instead: against all varieties of modern metaphysical idealism, Berkeleyan or Hegelian, Plato's ontology remains solidly realistic.

the "Friends of Forms," who would "force on us the view that true reality'" consists of certain intelligible and incorporeal Forms" (246c).[120] In the middle dialogues this dimension of the Forms had been taken for granted, needing only to be noticed, not argued for. In the *Phaedo* (79A–B) it was brought up in a lemma in one of the arguments for immortality: the soul must be immortal *because,* as between "the two kinds of existent,"'' one of which is invisible and immutable, while the other is visible and ceaselessly mutable, the soul is ''more alike and akin" to the former, than to the latter. That the latter is material is not mentioned as such, but it is implied in the statement that "it is more akin and more similar"[122] to our body than to our soul. In the *Republic* the corporeality ofsensible things gets no formal recognition, but shows up incidentally when S, contrasts the Form of Unity (''the One itself") with sensible instances of it, describing the latter as ''numbers having visible and tangible[123] bodies" (525D). In the *Symposium*[124] the Form of Beauty is set off against ''a beautiful face or hands or any other thing in which body partakes.'' Thus in dialogues of the middle period the incorporeality of Form is taken for granted as one of its standard features, as well it might since it is structurally essential to those two other categorial properties of theirs which get the lion's share of attention: it is because they have no body that Forms *cannot* be accessible to our senses (which are parts of our body and can only record its interactions with other bodies) and that they *can* be immutable (for if they were corporeal they would be caught in the flux that engulfs the material world).

I have left till last the aspect of S_M's Forms expressed by that strange phrase which may have caught the reader's eye in two of the texts cited from the *Phaedo* above: Form *exists itself by itself* (T11, T12 [=T15]).[125] What can S_M mean by the "itself-by-itself existence" of

119 τὴν ἀληθινὴν οὐσίαν. Why "true" reality (i.e. its highest degree: cf. Vlastos, 1981: 62, n. 16)? To safeguard the existential status of the material world in contrasting γένεσιν φερομένην with οὐσία Plato does not deny γένεσις *some* degree of reality: cf. *Ti.* 50D, "being and,,.becoming ***exist***" (ὄν τε καὶ ...γένεσιν εἶναι).

120 This division between materialists and immaterialists Plato now sees as so far-reaching that useful dialogue between the two parties becomes hopeless: if you tell the materialists that you acknowledge immaterial reality they will have "utter contempt for you, they will not want to hear anything further" (*Sph.* 246B).

121 δύο εἴδη τῶν ὄντων. Cf. n. 75 above. 122 ὁμοιότερον...καὶ συγγενέστερον, 79B–E.

123 The tangibility of body was to be given pride of place in Plato's retrospective view of the ontology of his middle period: in identifying the bodily with the real the "giants" allow reality only to "that which has impact and can be touched." In the *Phaedo* the most conspicuous feature of body is its visibility: so at T18 above and again at 79A–B where the "two kinds of being" **are** distinguished as "visible" and "invisible" respectively.

124 211A–B (= T22 below). 125 On the literal sense of the phrase see n. 75 above.

the entities he calls εἶδος, ἰδέα?[126] Since he never speaks to this question directly we must ferret out an answer from its use in context. So let us concentrate on the most informative of the many passages[127] in which it occurs in dialogues of Plato's middle period. This is that passage in the *Symposium* where Diotima[128] reveals to Socrates the vision awaiting the lover of the Form of Beauty at the terminus of his quest when he finally comes to "see"[129] face to face the Form he has previously viewed only in its manifestations in beautiful bodies, minds, institutions, or sciences:

T22 *Smp.* 211A5–B6:[130] "[a] Beauty will not be manifest to him [at that moment] as a face or as hands or as any other corporeal thing nor yet as some discourse or science, [b] nor as existing somewhere in something else as, for example, in a living creature either on earth or in the sky or in anything else, but [c] as *existing itself by itself with itself,* always unique in form, [d] all other beautiful things participating in it in some such manner as this: while those other things arise and perish, it is neither enhanced nor diminished in any way, is not affected at all."

At [a] Diotima says that at the moment of climactic insight into the nature of Beauty the Form will not be seen as existing *in* any beautiful corporeal thing (hands, or face) nor yet *in* any beautiful process or product of thought (discourse or science). Since the disjunction ''corporeal/mental'' is exhaustive of things and happenings in the world of time, she has said that the Form of beauty will not be seen as existing *in* anything whatever in this world. But still

126 This question has been curiously neglected in the vast literature on Plato's Theory of Forms. Though scholars had been well aware that the leaner phrase, "the *F* itself" (αὐτὸ ΤΟ Φ), had been fully anticipated in Plato's earlier compositions (Riddell, 1857: 134; Campbell, 1894: 305–6; Burnet, 1924 on *Phd.* 64C6, 65D5, 65E3; Ross, 1951: 16-17; Allen, 1970: 74–5), they had apparently failed to notice that the "itself-by-itself existence" of Form is first asserted in the *Phaedo,* never in the earlier dialogues. *A fortiori* inquiry into the distinctive import of αὐτὸ καθ' αὐτὸ τΟ Φ was never put on their agenda. Most surprising is its neglect in the most laborious piece of research ever published on Plato's technical terminology, Constantin Ritter's *Neue Untersuchungen über Platon* (1910b): his investigation, containing a loo-page chapter on "*Eidos, Idea* und verwandte Worter," makes no allusion to the role of the "itself by itself" phrase in the evolution of Plato's idiolect. The fault is not remedied in his massive two-volume work, *Platon* (1910a, 1923).

127 But also informative is its occurrence in the *Parmenides* (128Eff.) where, as I shall argue in additional note 2.5, we can see Plato using the sentence "the Forms exist themselves by themselves" (128E–129A, 130B7–9, 133A, 133C, 135A–B) to express the same metaphysical claim as that expressed by "the Forms exist separately" (130B3–5, 130C1–2, 130C5–D2).

128 σοφωτάτη Διοτίμα (208B), a fictional figure, whose name, "she who has honour from Zeus," suggests "the possession of highest wisdom and authority" (Bury, 1932: xxxix). The only other passage in the Platonic corpus in which Socrates is represented as incorporating into his own philosophy a higher truth derived from a religious source is in the *Meno* (81A–B = T1 above): it is from priests and priestesses σοφῶν περὶ sa θεῖα πράγματα that he had "heard" the doctrine of reincarnation.

129 "Suddenly he will come to see a wonderful sort of beauty" (210E).

130 For comment on the immediate antecedent of this passage see Vlastos, 1981: 67–9.

not satisfied that she has done enough to impress her point on her hearer, Diotima proceeds to say it again at [b] : the Form of beauty will not be seen as existing somewhere[131] *in* something else, such as a soul, incarnate ("on the earth") or discarnate ("in the sky" or beyond it).[132] But surely this was made clear already at [a]? Why harp on it again at [b]? Why such repetitious emphasis?[133]

We can best see why if we recall that to speak of an attribute as being "in" something is current usage for saying that it is instantiated there; this would be ordinary Greek for saying that the thing *has* the property associated with the Form. This is how Socrates, speaks and thinks: he says "temperance is in you" for "you are temperate,"[134] "piety is in those actions" for "those actions are pious."[135] S_E takes it for granted that if temperance or piety or beauty exist they exist *in* something in the world of time. So if S_E were asked, "Where, in what, does beauty exist?" he would point to beautiful bodies, minds, actions, institutions, thoughts in the world of common experience and say "There – it exists in them." This would be the only possible locus of its existence for him, as for all his interlocutors. And this is just what S_M would want to deny. He declares in T22 that when the Form of Beauty is confronted at the moment of its lover's deepest, most complete, discernment of its nature, it will be seen as *existing beyond all actual or possible*[136] *instantiations of it.* Even if there were superlatively beautiful bodies, minds, actions, institutions in our world, the Form of Beauty would not exist *in* them. The Form would not need any of them in order to exist. To be the very quality which it is suffices for its existence.[137]

What is implied in the sequence of negations in [a] and [b] is

131 που, literally "in some place." Cf. *Ti.* 52B: **In** the "dreaming" view of reality (that of the ordinary man [cf. ὀνειροπολοῦμεν here with ὀνειρώττειν at **R.** 476C] which denies the existence of Forms) "whatever exists is of necessity somewhere, in some place (που ...ἔν τινι τόπῳ) that which is neither on earth nor in the heavens, is nothing." (Cf. Aristotle, *Phys.* 208a29: "evcryone supposes that **[all]** things which exist are somewhere.")

132 That even purely spiritual beings – discarnate souls and gods – are also "somewhere" ("the super-celestial place", ***Phdr.*** 247C) is an awkward but unavoidable feature of Plato's transmigration story.

133 As I noted earlier (n. 108 above) l'lato is not averse to repetition to produce an intended effect.

134 *Ch.* 159A1–2: ἐνοῦσαν αὐτήν, εἴπερ ἔνεστιν. Or, equivalently, "is present in you," σοὶ πάρεστιν, 158E7 (cf. *Eud.* 301**A4,** πάρεστιν μέντοι ἑκάστῳ αὐτῶν κάλλος τι).

135 *Eu.* 5D (= **T4**) : ταὐτόν ἐστιν ἐν πάσῃ πράξει τὸ ὅσιον αὐτὸ αὐτῷ. So too in the *Laches* (191E–192A): courage is the same *in* all those actions Socrates **asks** Laches to consider.

136 The negations in [a] and [b] arc perfectly general, unrestricted to actual instances of beauty: they would hold for possible no less than actual ones.

137 If Greek had separate words for "existence" and "essence" (which it does not: cf. additional note **2.3** on οὐσία) Plato would want to say that the essence of Beauty entails its own existence – the only sort of existence which anything in this ontological category ***could*** have: to exist the Form of Beauty need only ***be*** what it eternally is.

asserted directly at [c] : beauty *exists itself by itself with itself;* "with itself" is added here to "by itself"[138] to reinforce the Form's capacity for isolated, self-sufficient, existence. Existing "with itself," it does not need to exist in conjunction with anything in the world of time.[139] And we can see why this thought should lead to the one in [d] : the independent existence of the Form must be sustained in the face of the fact that multitudes of other things "participate" in it. So it is at [d], where we are assured that the existence of those "participants" does not affect its own in the slightest. "Unique in form" (μονοειδές), exempt from their endlessly variable diversity, it is untouched by the vicissitudes of their births and deaths : when they "arise and pass away" it is neither enhanced nor diminished, "is not affected at all." If every beautiful object in this world were to perish in a cosmic holocaust;[140] if all souls in the world were to perish with it; even if – blasphemous thought – the Divine Creator himself were obliterated, the Form of Beauty would remain what it always was and will always be, "itself by itself with itself," world or no world.

If this is what the "by itself" existence of Forms means for Plato in the dialogues of his middle period and still in the *Timaeus*,[141] we have good reason to believe that it is meant to express what his greatest pupil and severest critic was to call the "separation" (χωρισμός) of the Platonic Form:[142] *its existential independence of any actual or possible instantiation* of it in the world of time.[143] Aristotle's exact phraseology is not anticipated in Plato's corpus:[144] Plato never writes that his Forms are "separate" (χωριστά).[145] He does not need

138 And only here in the Platonic corpus. Plato's application of the "by itself" phrase to the Form is flexible; he usually fills it out by adding the initial reflexive pronoun, "itself by itself," but he does this only for emphasis, for he **can** use that phrase also without **such** increment (so at *Cra.* 386E, *R.* 476A11). In our present passage in the *Smp.* he gives it maximal verbal weight by adding "with itself" to "of itself."

139 We should notice that the self-sufficiency of its own existence is asserted *only* with reference to its disjunction from temporal instantiations, ***not*** from other Forms. The "communion of the Forms with one another" ***(R.*** 476A) (i.e. the entailment-linkages of each Form with multitudes of other Forms) is integral to the nature of each.

140 **A** purely notional possibility: Plato's universe, made by "the best of makers," is made to last for ever (*Ti.* 37C–D).

141 Cf. additional note ***2.6*** below ("Forms in the *Timaeus").*

142 For the meaning of χωρισμός in Aristotle and **Plato** see additional note *2.7.*

143 That (a) this is the right interpretation of what Aristotle means by ascribing "separate" Forms to Plato and that (b) in doing so he is completely faithful to Plato's intentions was powerfully argued against influential views to the contrary by Cherniss **(1942:** 31ff.). Fine, **1984:** 131ff., confirms Cherniss on (a) but dissents on (b). **In** additional note 2.5 "'Separation' in Plato," section ***2,*** below, I give reasons why we should agree with Cherniss on (b) no less than (a).

144 Though it may have been in oral discussion in the Academy, as I suggest in additional note 2.5, section 2, below.

145 But he comes so close to this in what he docs write – that the Forms "exist separately (εἶναι χωρίς)" – with **a** dependent genitive **(Prm.** 130B4 and C1) or even without one

to: he can, and does, express the same substantive doctrine by writing that they "exist separately" or, equivalently,[146] that they "exist themselves by themselves." He plants the latter phrase in the center of his great "hypothesis" in the *Phaedo* (TII) that beauty exists itself by itself, feeling no need to offer a separate argument for it, since the existence of his Forms independent of any other constituent of reality – sensible bodies or incorporeal souls – is the immediate consequence of their essence.[147] This is the heart of Plato's metaphysics: the postulation of an eternal self-existent world, transcending everything in ours, exempt from the vagaries and vicissitudes which afflict all creatures in the world of time, containing the Form of everything valuable or knowable, purged of all sensory content.[148] We meet this theory in some guise or other wherever Platonism lives in the philosophy or theology, the poetics, erotics, or even the mathematical ,philosophy of the Western world. So to continue interposing my exegetical mechanics between the "Socrates" who expounds this philosophy in Plato's middle dialogues and Plato himself would be a vexing affectation. Hereafter I shall not say "Socrates," in contexts where Plato is transparently what I mean.[149]

We can now consider how Plato's non-sensible, eternal, incorporeal, transcendent Forms connect with that extraordinary conception of the soul which breaks into his corpus in the *Meno* (TI above). The transmigrating soul necessitates a two-world topography for the diachronic tale of the soul's existence: "this" world,[150] which is the soul's present habitat, and that other world, whose location remains mysterious,[151] identifiable only by evocative

(130D1), that excellent translators (Cornford, 1939; Diès **1956;** Allen, 1980b) regularly disregard the difference. Thus τούτων ἑκάστου εἶδος εἶναι χωρίς, "a Form ofeach of these exists separatcly," comes through Cornford's translation as "each of these has a separate Form," in Allen's as "there is a separate character for each of them" as if Plato had written χωριστὸν εἶδος εἶναι ἑκάστου.

146 As **I** shall argue in some detail in additional note **2.5.**

147 Cf. n. **137** above.

148 Hence S_M refers to it as εἰλικρινές, καθαρόν, using one or the other or both of these epithets along with the "itself by itself" phrase: αὐτὸ καθ' αὑτὸ εἰλικρινές, *Phd.* **66A** (= T18 above) or even without that phrase: *Phd.* **67B**, πᾶν *το* εἰλικρινὲς and *Smp.* 211E, αὐτὸ **το** καλὸν ...εἰλικρινές, καθαρόν, ἄμεικτον. The realm of Form is "pure being" (ὄντος εἰλικρινῶς, *R.* 478D, 479D); it is the "pure region" (τόπον ...καθαρόν, at *Phd.* 80D [quoted in n. 152 below]).

149 By the same token I shall not say "$Socrates_E$" when it is clear that Plato's recreation of Socrates in the earlier dialogues is what I mean.

150 Literally, "this place" (τόνδε τὸν τόπον, *Tht.* **176B**). The demonstrative is replaceable by descriptive predications which identify its categorical status: the "corporeal and visible region" (**iv** τῷ σωματοειδεῖ καὶ ὁρατῷ τόπῳ, *R.* 532C–D).

151 It is that "supercelestial region (τὸν ὑπερουράνιον τόπον) which no earthly poet has yet hymned worthily or ever will" *(Phdr.* **247C**).

epithets,[152] or by traditional locatives,[153] but indispensable for the transmigration tale, since it is the world in which the soul exists before each of its successive incarnations and to which it returns upon its liberation from each. The transcendent Forms are the bridge between our present, incarnate, existence, and our discarnate past and future. Having come to know these entities in our prenatal history, we can now "recollect" precious fragments of that lost knowledge.

For the philosopher this "recollection" is a strenuously intellectual exercise. **As** I shall be explaining in chapter 4, its prerequisite is prolonged training in mathematics and dialectic. But it has also a different dimension which the great myth of the *Phaedrus* signals through poetic imagery. In "recollection" the philosopher grows the "wings" by which at death his soul will "ascend" to the "other" world:

T23 *Phdr.* 249C: "This is the reason why only the philosopher's intellect rightly grows wings: for to the best of his ability he is ever near in recollection to those things to which a god's nearness makes him divine."[154]

In popular belief the gods owe their privileged exemption from the fatality of death to their supernatural diet of nectar and ambrosia.[155] Plato in his myth upgrades, aetherealizes, those all-too-human gods of Homer. For feasting and carousing on Olympus his imagery substitutes processions of Form-contemplation *(Phdr.* 247Bff.) and he suggests that mind-contact with the Forms is precisely what makes his intellectualized divinities divine. His myth opens up the same privilege to men: we too have shared the nutriment of immortality in our prenatal state and now, in this mortal life, we may renew in recollection its immortalizing sustenance.[156] Creatures

152 "The region in which dwells the,most blessed part of what exists" (τόπον ...ἐν ᾧ ἔστι τὸ εὐδαιμονέστατον *toG* ὄντος, *R.* **526B**). "The noble and pure and invisible region, Hades" (τόπον... γενναῖον καὶ καθαρὸν καὶ ἀϊδῆ, εἰς Ἅιδου, *Phd.* 80D). "Hades," shorn of its harsh breathing, is derived by fanciful etymology from *r0* ἀϊδές, "the invisible"; a different, equally fanciful, derivation from πάντα τὰ καλὰ εἰδέναι at *Cra.* **404B.**

153 "We should try to flee hence *thither* (ἐνθένδε ἐκεῖσε, *Tht.* 176A–B = "from this world to the other," Cornford, **1935])**"; and cf. the description of the Forms as "the things *there* ([TU] ἐκεῖ) beheld by **souls,"** *Phdr.* **250A.**

154 πρὸς **yap** ἐκείνοις ἀεί ἐστιν μνήμῃ κατὰ δύναμιν, πρὸς οἵσπερ θεὸς ὢν θεῖός ἐστιν: Burnet's text; I am following the translation in Hackforth, **1952.** Same sense in Robin, **1950**: "c'est à ces realités mêmes que ce qui est Dieu doit sa divinitt."

155 Aristotle takes the beliefseriously enough to argue against it: "How could they [the gods] be immortal, if they need food?" (*Metaph.* 1000a17).

156 The soul's "nutrition" through its contact with Form is highlighted in the description of its contemplation by the gods and by discarnate human **souls** (247D–E: "and contemplating truth she is nourished and prospers [θεωροῦσα τἀληθῆ τρέφεται καὶ εὐπαθεῖ]; "and when she has truly contemplated and feasted upon true being" *ITU* ὄντα

of time though we be, in contemplation of Form we may unite ourselves in knowledge and in love[157] with the eternal.

"Mysticisni," according to the *O.E.D.*, is "the belief in the possibility of union with the Divine nature by means of ecstatic contemplation.'' As a definition this is much too narrow. For one thing, it overlooks non-theistic mysticism, as in Zen. For another, it ignores even theistic mystics who seek "union with the Divine nature'' by means other than contemplation. But in its very narrowness it is a tribute to that aspect of Platonism which is genuinely mystical and has inspired mystical philosophies and theologies in the Western world.[158] "Ecstatic contemplation'' fits perfectly the experience which Plato describes through verbs for seeing, viewing, gazing (ὁρᾶν, καθορᾶν, ἰδεῖν, κατιδεῖν, θεᾶν) and touching (ἅπτομαι, ἐφάπτομαι) for the terminal apprehension of Form. He thus alludes to the sort of intellectual experience in which prolonged exploration and searching, "suddenly''[159] culminates in insight that has the lucidity of vision and the immediacy of touch. Plato never says point-blank that in this experience ''union with the Divine[160] nature" of Form is achieved. He rests content with imagery of union, both the nutritive one we have already seen and a parallel sexual one:

T24 *R.* 490A–B: "The true lover of knowledge, whose nature it is to strive towards reality, will not tarry among the objects of opinion which the many believe to be real, but press on with a love that will not faint or fail, until he has come in touch with the essential nature of each thing with that part of his soul which is fit to touch reality because of kinship with it; and having thus come close to true being and mixed with it,[161] he may give birth to intelligence and truth, may know arid truly live and be nourished and thus find release from labour-pains – then, and not before.''[162]

In the *Symposium* too (212A) the philosopher ''gazing upon and

ὄντως θεασαμένη καὶ ἑστιαθεῖσα]), and is also prominent in the soul's contact with Form in the present life: τρέφοιτο at *R.* 490B (= T24 below); τρεφομένη at *Phd.* 84A (quoted in n. **160** below).

157 Love is as salient a feature of the philosopher's relation to the Form as is knowledge: *R.* 490A–B (= T24) and 500C (the philosopher "lovingly associates," ὁμιλεῖ ἀγάμενος, with Form); *Smp.* 211D–212A (too long to quote).

158 Plotinus, the creator of the purest mystical philosophy of the Western world, is steeped in Plato; the label, ··Neoplatonism,'' for the whole philosophical movement he spearheaded, is no misnomer.

159 *Smp.* 210E4–5, quoted in n. 129 above.

160 For the divinity of Form see e.g. *Smp.* 211E and *Phd.* 80B, 84A–B, and also *R.* **611**E. And cf. the description of the "separate" Form in Xenocrates (fr. **30:** cf. additional note **2.5,** n. 95).

161 πλησιάσας καὶ μιγεὶς τῷ ὄντι ὄντως. For μείγνυμι as a common term for sexual intercourse see LSJ *s.v.* sense **4** (in the passive form: "in Homer and Hesiod most frequently of the sexes, *have* ***intercourse*** *with*'').

162 The translation is modelled on Cornford's **(1945).**

consorting with" (θεωμένου καὶ συνόντος) the Form of beauty "will give birth (τεκόντι) *to* true virtue.''

To evoke this experience Plato intimates that in vision of Form the philosopher achieves what the devotees of mystic cults seek to attain in their rites. At times he pictures it as a Dionysian mystery of divine possession – ἐνθουσιάζειν,[163] the state in which man becomes ἔνθεος ("god is in him'').[164] Alternatively he depicts the prenatal contemplation of Form as though it were the celebration of an Eleusinian vision-mystery:

T25 *Phdr.* 250B–C: "Radiant beauty was there to see when with the happy choir we saw that blessed sight and vision and celebrated that rite which, with all due reverence, we may call the most blessed of all. Perfect were we the celebrants, untouched by any of those woes that befell us later. Perfect, simple, tremorless, blessed were those apparitions of the rite and celebration. In that pure light we too were pure, not yet entombed in this thing we now call 'body,' carrying it round, imprisoned in it as in an oyster-shell.''[165]

As this quotation shows, Plato's Form-mysticism is profoundly other-worldly. The ontology of non-sensible, eternal, incorporeal, self-existent, contemplable Forms, and of their anthropological correlate, the invisible, immortal, incorporeal, transmigrating soul, has far-reaching implications for the mind and for the heart. In the heart it evokes the sense of alienation from "this" world where the body lives, a nostalgia for a lost paradise in that "other" world from which the soul has come and to which it longs to return. In the mind it arouses a hunger for the kind of knowledge which cannot be satisfied by investigating the physical world. All we can find here are images, copies, shadows of that real world which we shall fully know only when liberated from the "oyster-shell.''[166]

One could hardly imagine a world-outlook more foreign to that of Socrates. He is unworldly: he cares little for money, reputation, security, life itself, in fact for anything except virtue and moral knowledge. But he is not otherworldly: the eternal world with which

163 *Phdr.* 241D2, E1; 253A.

164 Cf. Burkert, **1985: rog,** explaining ἔνθεος as "within is a god": ch. **6,** n. 55. And cf. *Phd.* 69D: **"As** those concerned with mystic rites tell **us,** 'Many arc the wandbearers, few are the βάκχοι [those who have attained union with the god Bacchus].' Those βάκχοι in my opinion are none others than those who have philosophized rightly."

165 The oyster-shell image is a carry-over from the ***Republic*** **(611**D–612A): to see the soul as she really is we must "disencumber her of all that wild profusion of rock and shell (ὄστρεα), whose earthly substance has encrusted her" (translation after Cornford, 1945).

166 "It has been really shown **us** that if we are ever to achieve pure knowledge of anything we must get rid of the body **... As** the argument indicates, we shall have this after death, not while we live" *(Phd.* 66D).

Plato seeks mystical union is unknown to him. For Socrates reality – real knowledge, real virtue, real happiness – is in the world in which he lives. The hereafter is for him a bonus and anyhow only a matter of faith and hope.[167] The passionate certainties of his life are in the here and now.

167 **As** is made so clear in the closing paragraphs **of** the ***Apology.*** In the *Gorgias*, though the eschatological myth is told to Callicles as a "true discourse" (523A), it is clearly bracketed off from the foregoing elenctic discussion with him where truth was established by rational argument.