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Plato as portraitist[1]

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My choice of Plato as portraitist for the theme of this essay represents the inspiration of a passing moment. Whenever one is asked to speak about Plato, one is in truth always invited into a wide space, a space which in my view offers many aspects and always holds ready something new and challenging. And that is just how I felt about this new portrait of Plato. However, before I come to Plato himself, I must navigate an enormous stumbling block. What is a portrait? Had I no obligations to the wonderful occasion that brings me here, I should prefer to speak solely about this question: What, in fact, is a portrait? Is something like this head a portrait? If I were to attempt to explain what I think a portrait is, I would probably say: It is the likeness [*Abbildung*], the image [*Bild*] of an individual or a person that would enable us to recognize it, if we know it. But what kind of words do we use here? Person? In Greek, this is called *prosōpon* – the role, or, better, the mask that one wears. This is surely something other than what we mean in our everyday use of the word "person." Were I to be more precise, I might say that what I mean is an individuality, an individual; translating that into Greek, it would be called *atomon*. But this leads us far from what we are really seeking, namely, the words that let us describe what we take a portrait to be.

Thus my initial impulse turned out to be a matter for serious reflection. What does it mean for us to possess a portrait of Plato, the head of a portrait statue, which through fortuitous circumstances and the special efforts of Herr Vierneisel has been preserved until now? Just what do we have here – an image, a portrait, a *ritratto*, something torn from reality instead of something real? We all know that what characterizes a portrait as such poses a unique problem, above all for the Greeks. What can we say, for example, about images [*Bildern*] of the gods, whom no one has ever seen? Archaeologically speaking, this is one of the most important questions regarding the concept of the portrait – how the depicting [*Bildwerdung*] of the gods came about in

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this art form. What was the importance of Homer for something like vase-painting? Scholarly research deals with questions like these. Upon reflection, I then realized that it is not so very different for ordinary people like ourselves when it comes to our portraits. A portrait is not just a random shot, such as today's cameras take. Nor does it come about simply as a result of sitting for someone, as one says so quaintly. But here again, there is already much to ponder. What can we still call reality when one sits for a portrait? I have recently heard it suggested, to my great surprise, that Plato actually sat for Silanion. That is something I really do not believe. But in any case, what makes such images or busts into portraits is something completely different. In truth, a portrait is much more. With regard to the depicting of the gods, an image emerges, as we know, through recurrent reproductions of cult images, constantly modified and repeated. As a result of this, a god becomes its image. But perhaps with human beings it is not so very different, and it is the case even there that one becomes one's own image only gradually. Only thus, namely through becoming one's image in such a way, can a person have an image, and it is precisely this image which, in the portrait, has become valid for everyone.

Clearly the most distinctive element of a portrait is its intention to be recognized as such. Phenomenology has taught us that it is good to clarify such questions by being attentive to variations in the way language is used. So, for example, we say of a face, or a figure, or a single face in a group picture, that it has the quality of a portrait, that it is portraitlike [*portäthaft*].[2] Here, language has already carried out an abstraction for us. And so we ask it how one can use the word "portraitlike." In general, what does one mean in saying this? The word seems self-evident, and yet it presents a difficult problem: what a portrait is. This problem has occupied me for over fifty years in the course of my studies in art history. Holding in view the difference between a historical picture and a picture of similar events which is not a historical picture, we could perhaps say of the latter that it is a genre picture. The word "genre" already indicates that it is in a specific sense something universal. But is not the historical picture, as a picture, also something universal, since it is indeed not the events themselves, but rather the events as captured in a picture? And yet it is something unique, which is represented in the picture so meaningfully that it is there for all and, as such, is universal. Hence I would say that the portraitlike consists in the universal becoming visible in the individual and in the fact that one must, as the one portrayed, completely coincide [*erfüllen*] with one's own image. Hegel once wrote under a portrait of him, "Our knowledge [*Kenntnis*] should become recognition [*Erkenntnis*]. Whoever knows me will here recognize me." From this statement of the great

thinker one can begin to see just how much is required for knowledge to become recognition and for a likeness to be a portrait.

However, after this abstract introduction – something like an organ prelude – I want to turn to the wonderful occasion which brought me here. What was it like for me to be able to see for the first time this new head of Plato, previously known only from reproductions? I think that in cases such as these, one should not read what others have said. It is important that one see with one's own eyes. I have probably seen too much with my eyes. So I must confess that the appearance of this head surprised me tremendously. One immediately feels the immense power concentrated in it. The steep vertical lines on the forehead are especially pronounced, more so than in numerous replicas we knew already. I must further confess that I found the head surprisingly beautiful. It remains for us to reflect on the importance of this fact, and why it signifies something other than the value of the artwork. However, what stood out to me next about the head, and that until then I had not seen at all – I don't know whether anyone else has already said this – was this: I saw in it most of all the Attic wit, something extremely skeptical and far-sighted, distant and satirical, especially in the region of the mouth and in the eyes. What I perceived there was something which to me surely counts as an Attic virtue, one that in general we lack and that, perhaps for this reason, we easily miss. After all, the Platonic dialogues, those descendants of Attic comedy, show ample use of this Attic humor, and Plato's thinking of utopia would be impossible without it. On top of that, we know how Plato loved Epicharmus, and we know from the *Symposium* how he admired Aristophanes. The third thing that struck me was this: How Roman it is! Granted, it is a Roman copy of a Greek sculpture. And I can fully understand the inclination of the archaeologist to take the replica's similarity to the unavailable authentic bronze as being of chief importance. In my view, however, what stands out most is that it is so Roman. It has something of the greatness of those gripping Roman portraits from the time of the Republic, which we all know to be a true perfection of the art of portraiture. Here this has been powerfully unified and wedded with that type of portrait which depicts the philosopher. It is a philosopher, and yet it is unmistakably the portrait of a completely singular man. Only through a lucky coincidence, the inscription on a late replica, do we know with any certainty at all that this is really meant to be Plato. But one does believe it. I see a particular benefit in the fact that this head strikes me as so Roman. One encounters here the effective history to which we ourselves belong, if I might call upon this hermeneutical guiding concept.

Plato's influence, his spiritual legacy, passed through this Greek-Roman mediation. One need think only of Plotinus and Augustine. When we come

upon this head today, it is as if we are led back through this masterful copy to him, to Plato himself, and indeed through our very own spiritual history. We should in no way imagine that we could see this head in the way that Plato's contemporaries saw it. I will leave open whether much about this head seems Roman to me only because of my great familiarity with the Roman portraits from the time of the Republic which are in Boston. Nor do I want to foreclose the possibility that Silanion already experienced something of the transition from the image which is of a type [*Typusbild*] to the individual portrait which was initiated in the fourth century. However, other replicas of the head do not really confirm this. It seems more likely to me that such a splendidly crafted marble copy of a bronze original is a unique creation in itself, and that the creator of a copy of such quality necessarily had to contribute something of his own, something which had emerged for him out of his time and environment – namely, the period of transition from the Republican portrait to the Imperial portrait. This was perhaps not the case with the original, if indeed the original stems from a similar transition period, only in the reverse direction – from type to individual portrait.

But we should also ask whether we are able to see this development in this way only because we bring our own spiritual history along from the start. The history that has taken shape as the transformation of the Greek to the Roman, of the Roman to the Christian, and thence to the reflected inwardness of modernity – this history, rooted in Plato, is ours. We do not dream this; we see it. And here, through this Roman copy of the Greek original, it is brought to life right before our eyes.

Admittedly, I would never have ventured to speak on this topic in such a way – by profession I am no archaeologist – if there were not also the Greek *literary* portrait. Here then is the second question I must ask myself, namely, whether this literary portrait does not also contribute something to how we today see this head of Plato. With regard to this question, I feel more qualified to speak. In the end, the great writings of Plato, which have come to us wholly intact, comprise the first genuinely complete corpus of an ancient prose author. It was not edited and pruned through the censorship of Alexandrian teachers, as is the case with the Greek tragedies. Indeed, our *corpus platonicum* contains a few pieces more than Plato himself wrote. In any case, we may assume that the entire production of Plato is a unique portrait, a portrait of Socrates, and that at the same time it also represents a self-portrait of Plato. But we should be rather cautious with the expression self-portrait with regard to these literary portrayals. We will see how little what Plato here gives of himself has the character of a portrait. We are also fully aware of the tension that necessarily exists between a sculpture and a

literary portrait. "Leave the Greek his earth and clay into forms compressing, through their child his hands in play thrill on thrill expressing" – these verses from the *West-Eastern Divan* continue: "We, though, grasp our own delight in Euphrates river, in the liquid element roaming hither, thither" – and the poem ends: "Purely scooped by poet's hand, water is cohering."[3] These verses vividly demonstrate the difference between the plasticity of sculptural forms and the fluid element of poetic language.

We are all familiar with the difficulties involved in illustrating books. Consider a praiseworthy example, such as the artistic high point that was English illustration in the 19th century. These illustrations do not limit and confine the imaginative wealth of the poetic text, such as that of Thackeray or Dickens, but rather offer a wide play-space, guiding the reader's fantasy with dance-like ease. It is likewise exceptional when a literary portrait, through its imaging power, leads to an actual picture or a portrait statue – something we can find in particular in the literary work of a great author. One can guess, of course, that I speak of the image of Socrates, which has taken shape both in a pictorial type [*Typusbild*] and at the same time in an actual literary portrait.

We might ask ourselves what language is, what it is capable of, and how it can do what it is capable of. Let us consider as an example the written life history, the biography. One could look at the biographies of Plutarch, which unfortunately are no longer as vivid in our cultural consciousness as they were in the 18th century. In Plutarch, description and narrative alternate, almost like two different aspects of the same thing. Description corresponds to the typological element in Aristotelian anthropology, which is a Greek cultural legacy and is naturally present in Plutarch. The other aspect is narrative, which contains moments unattainable for any of the visual arts. Flowing time, in which a literary creation lets something arise before us, claims the listener and reader in a curious way. One becomes, if I might say so, a co-creator. In listening as well as in reading, we experience a text in ever-new ways, through a stream of images and impressions which a great writer can inspire without imposing them on us. This is one of the wonders that language and writing accomplish. How the visual arts speak to us – that is another wonder.

What standards, then, apply to a portrait? One thinks here of the opposition between ideal and realistic portraits, which is in truth a completely false opposition. There are only ideal portraits. There is only the one idealizing look, through which what is transitory or ephemeral in a face or even the appearance of a whole figure – grasped either in formation or decline – is raised to an enduring form. It is not just a single moment – even a "fertile" one – that is captured in the portrait. Everything is there, what came before

and what came after, and a whole life history is "narrated" as the eye of the artist reads it. In a certain way, an ideal portrait follows what Johann Gustav Droysen once said so beautifully: "You must be like that, for that is the way I love you – the secret of all education." For a case of realism taken to the extreme – or, we might say, of failed idealization – a case of realism which, through its very exemplarity, has become unforgettable for me, consider Lovis Corinth's portrait of the poet Eduard von Keyserling, which now hangs in the Neue Pinakothek in Munich. This endlessly delicate, decadent, suffering poet and author (unfortunately no longer read enough), one of the foremost narrators of the German language since Fontane, stares at us with large, frightened eyes. "Here a breath and we tremble from decay." That is also what his poems "Evening Houses" portray, a magical portrait despite the strangeness of these gaunt necks and almost lifeless, flickering eyes. Here too we would say that one could recognize him if one had known him, and, like me, would never forget him even if one did not know him – indeed, even if one had never read a line of his. Whether a picture is a portrait, or a literary portrayal is portraitlike, depends on the intention of the representation and the "conception" of the represented. In contrast, the model used by a painter does not as such have the effect of a portrait. But what is more, one must guard against inserting into the portrait one's own conception of the portrayed – whom one knows or thinks one knows – which is not there at all, instead of seeing what is really there. And so here as well we should not attempt to read into the bust of Plato our own image of him. Only then does one see lips somewhat resigned and an eye that glances over the world in spirit. That is what I could not see in it. Yet just as every head has many faces, the same is true for the portrait, and to that degree what we think we recognize therein is justified.

It is no different with literary portraits, especially Alcibiades's portrayal of Socrates in the *Symposium*, in which the figure of the implacable Socrates reaches an incomparable plasticity. Alcibiades introduces himself and says he would like to praise Socrates using "images," and then adds: "But please do not laugh."[4] He knows exactly what he is saying. The Greek word for "image," *eikōn*, has a double meaning here. It designates not only "image," but also a "similitude" through which one could express what is truly meant. Thus the comparison with Silenus and Marsyas alludes to the actual appearance of Socrates, and everyone quite naturally laughed, because the actual appearance of Socrates did have something markedly ugly about it, something absurd, with his protruding eyes and peculiar snub nose. Aristotle, as I once suggested,[5] alluded to this when he referred to Socrates while arguing against Plato's doctrine of ideas, which he charged with *chōrismos*, with the

separation of the idea from the appearance. Even in the word *simos*, the snubness can be meant only of a nose – just as, with an idea, something can be meant only if it "appears."

Hence this is an indirect reference to Socrates. He had just such a nose, and Theaetetus was proud to look like him. That is how Plato's literary portrait, here voiced by Alcibiades, characterized the appearance of this extraordinary man and indeed his whole being, and itself created a model for the visual arts. Similarly, there was an entire literary genre, the Socratic dialogue, belonging to the so-called Socratics. There were many who aspired to this genre in Platonic times. But in general we cannot characterize these dialogues as portraits, even if such features might occasionally have appeared in them. Yet a great author like Plato, even if he makes people say abstract things, will still reveal something of their humanity wherever he can. The speech of Alcibiades in the Symposium is a shining example of this.

But let us turn first to the image of Socrates that appears in the typical Socratic dialogues of Plato. Plato's intention here is a different one. Socrates and his interlocutors remain curiously vague – with the consequence that we as readers suddenly see ourselves in the role of the person whose ignorance is disclosed. The intention that Plato the artist here pursues is simply to force one to think through questions and answers. Hence these dialogues are rightly called leading dialogues, and the vagueness of the characters is thus not their artistic weakness but rather the fulfillment of a task that these texts pose. These dialogues do not claim to assert Plato's true doctrine, nor are these assertions simply put in the mouth of Socrates. If I were to choose an example from this group of dialogues, which belong to the early time of Plato, I would select the *Euthyphro*. This is a famous dialogue in which the Socratic art of argumentation (which one can admittedly correct with modern logic) is presented in a dramatic situation. Socrates meets a *mantis* (a seer), who boasts about being especially able at his art. He meets Socrates just as the charge of impiety is being brought against him. There follows a long conversation about what impiety or its opposite, piety (*eusebeia*), really is. This provides a wonderful indirect portrait of Socrates[6] as a man who is *eusebēs* and who now behaves as if he wants to learn the science of piety from the seer. In truth, he knows better than anyone else that one must already be what one wants to know. The story to which this relates speaks clearly enough. Euthyphro has brought his father up on charges for letting a slave die out of negligence, and regards his act as a heroic moral deed. Socrates tries to show him his mistake. But he fails, since Euthyphro simply has no idea what *eusebeia* is. This is shown by his committing such an error in reverence as to bring his own father up on charges (in a dubious case). The conversation concludes with

the refutation, in the eyes of the reader, of the seer's definition of piety as the manner in which one best conducts business with the gods.

In my view, this conversation is a key for all Platonic dialogues insofar as one maintains that Socrates taught virtue to be knowledge, and that finding definitions was his goal. Surely in this sense Socrates can only be a not-knower [*Nichtwissender*]. Whenever a definition is sought in such cases, it can never be found. The *Euthyphro* represents in my view a first phase in Platonic writing, in which the element of portraiture in the dialogues was consciously moderated. Everything is directed at having one pose the question of the good onself, without relying on finding an answer man – whether a seer or someone else who, due to their profession, knows better. This knowledge is the learned ignorance of Socrates.

The second type of Platonic dialogue differs from the first in an essential way. It shows the figure of Socrates not only in his critical superiority, but at the same time as a visionary of the true. This is the mythical Socrates – surely different than the not-knower, and yet the same. Here the portraitlike element lies not only, as in the first type of dialogue, in the implicitness of his knowing ignorance [*wissenden Nichtwissens*], on which the apparently knowledgeable foundered. Now the superior not-knower, in the full potency of his physical presence and his teaching, with all the vigor of his charismatic personality, goes beyond himself. This is indeed something remarkable: the strength of his arguments receives a new and higher validation in the appearance of the man who here vouches for himself. The portraitist in Plato, who shines through everywhere in his work, is here called upon to employ the full range of his art in order to breathe such life into the figure of his master that it itself becomes an argument. The fact that we no longer have a simple dramatic exchange of question and answer, but rather account, testimony, and narrative, is hence completely justified. Narrated conversations have the strongest portraying effect – which is to be expected, considering the difference between visual art [*Bildwerk*] and the literary portrait. For the latter has the advantage of being able to unite plastic imaging and the description of action. Written in this style are, first and foremost, two of the most well-known Platonic dialogues, namely the *Phaedo* and the *Symposium*. Both dialogues are narrated, permitting the figure of Socrates to appear in his full vitality.

The *Phaedo* reports the conversation concerning the immortality of the soul that Socrates led in prison, with his Pythagorean friends, on the last day of his life. It is told by someone who was there. Plato himself, says the narrator, was not there because he was sick. I have always asked myself whether he was really sick, or whether this is another subtle literary fiction, one which raises the person who is absent to a higher presence and, in this way, does not

allow the author to disappear behind his work. But perhaps it was true in this case. It was indeed significant for later readers of Plato whether the one sentenced to death by the public court was still faithfully followed by his friends, who wanted to be together with him until the last moment. This would by no means endear a person to the rulers of the day. One hardly needs to recount the story itself, how the conversation begins, how Socrates reported that he had begun to render the Aesopian fables into verse because he had dreamed that Apollo said to him repeatedly, "Socrates, practice music." Since Apollo continued telling him this, even during the last night of his life, Socrates concluded that he must follow this bidding on paths other than those he had taken his whole life long in conversation. And so he tried to render the Aesopian fables into verse. An incredible invention. I lip-read it from this head of Plato; a joke, satire, and deeper meaning as well are hidden here. In any case, Plato underlines Socrates's fidelity to the religious life of the city through the absurd and comical consequence of changing Aesopian fables, with all their instructional clarity and moral usefulness, into verse, and of Socrates being the one to do so. Plato himself could not have won much fame as a poet with such material.

Equally famous is the second example of a narrated conversation: the banquet, the *Symposium*, in which the entrance of Alcibiades finally brings about the above-mentioned portrait of Socrates. The entire recounting of the banquet occurs as a narrated conversation. At the start it is reported that Socrates stayed behind on the way to the banquet. The hosts were becoming anxious as to whether he would come at all. But something had occurred to him, and so he went no further but rather stopped to reflect. This is certainly a very portraitlike touch. However, it is the end of the dialogue which forms a unique portrait of this extraordinary man. This happens specifically with the speech of a drunken Alcibiades, inspired by both hate and love, which disrupts the whole banquet scene.

The two dialogues which I here place in the foreground have very different subjects. Yet they are so essentially tied up with the life and death of Socrates that each of them can be described as portraits of Socrates. Let us begin with the first, which describes the last hours of Socrates's life. What is told here represents not only an outstanding high point, as well as end point, in the life of Socrates, it represents at the same time a crucial turn in Plato's own life and in his entire body of written work.[7] One understands immediately how the idea of letting these last conversations be told by someone else creates distance and thereby lets Plato portray Socrates as he was and acted, not just in terms of what he had to say. Thus Plato could obviously go far beyond mere remembrance – in contrast, for example, to the "Memorabilia" of

Xenophon, which belong to the memorial literature of this unique man who, until they finally got rid of him, was just as known in the streets of Athens as he was unwelcome there. But now we face the task of showing the Platonic art of portraiture in its philosophical significance. Plato portrays only because he argues. He does not portray solely in order to achieve a poetic effect, but rather in order to say something – as a thinker – through poetic representation.

The subject of the *Phaedo* is the immortality of the soul, which was a question of real concern for the century of enlightenment in which this scene plays out. The two main participants in this final conversation, Simmias and Cebes, come from the Pythagorean world of science. It is obvious from the start that they are not members of a religious sect. They trust far more in the mathematics, medicine, and biology of the time. They know, for example, that the material of the human body transforms itself completely in a very short time. No organism keeps the same cells its whole life long, as we would say today. Now the Pythagoreans certainly knew nothing of cells. But they did know what is essential – that the stuff of which the living body consists is used, and is renewed, like a garment. Socrates provides extensive explanations in an attempt to show the two participants, against their objections, that the soul cannot die because it is first and foremost what brings life. One can in no way imagine a soul, this airy breath which at once awakens the spirit and grants it presence, other than when it ensouls a person. In this way, the immortality of the soul could be, so to speak, logically proven. Plato, or his Socrates, prepares this proof insofar as he comes to speak of mathematical things. He shows that numbers are obviously something. But what are they really? Numbers have a peculiar being. It is not the kind of being possessed by those things which are counted by them. Nor are numbers like the last breath of the dying, which one sees and hears. So a new tension enters the dialogue. Socrates shows something about numbers that is, but without one's knowing what it is, from where it comes, or to where it goes. One knows, however, that it is such-and-such. All of us, even we laypersons, are conscious of the simple fact that there are prime numbers, that they occur less and less often the higher one goes on the number line, and that nevertheless no one can say where the sequence of prime numbers really stops. Our mathematicians have developed theories and models in order to solve these riddles of the human spirit. Yet it remains mysterious how something can be produced in the numbers themselves which exerts on us the compulsion of reality. It is not the way we would like it – although it seems so simple, always adding one and one and then another one, endlessly one plus one. Our mathematicians – even our schoolchildren – rub their hands with delight at

the simplicity of this task. And yet, in the end, there is still no easy answer when, for example, a child wants to know the largest number there is. It is a strange being that numbers have. This leads finally to the fact that there exists something we cannot lay our hands on, something that even the natural scientist with her methods cannot grasp in its proper being.

Perhaps matters with the soul are just as they are with numbers, or with the normative ideas and ideals by which the community orders its life. The Platonic Socrates loves to give two examples: the same itself is, so to speak, an ideal pair of two sames, and justice itself is the just itself. One perceives a certain kinship between the former and the latter, the same and the distributive justice that gives each the same. One also senses that both are a complete mystery and that much more still lies behind them. So the proof is finally led to how the soul cannot take part in death, because life is always with it. Death is always closed off from it, and the soul is *athanatos*, immortal like the immortals. Both seem inseparable, the soul and the gods, both inseparable from immortality. Here we must be aware that the immortals of whom the myths and the poets tell have the character of appearance for mortals. Likewise, the soul appears only in life and as life – while death is shrouded in the darkness of the *ignoramus*. – But then the dialogue surprises us with a new question: whether the soul is also indestructible. Certainly this is an old linguistic pair, *athanaton kai anolethron*, immortal and indestructible. They sound like one and the same. The new argument concerning "indestructible" is thus hard to understand. Only one goal becomes clear, to make mathematical truths valid for those beings that can think.

In the end, of course, it comes out that Socrates himself knows his arguments are able only to refute rational reasons against immortality, but do not represent any positive proof of it. For us, the real meaning of the dialogue as a portrait of Socrates lies here. Only the practical consequence, the adherence to the world of religious representations in which everyone lives, is supported by this example of the Socratic attitude in view of the unprovable and unknowable. Hence, the portrait of one eager for knowledge and of one unshaken by the fear of death becomes the strongest of all arguments. After the Socratic proof, Simmias confesses that he is not yet completely convinced. He obviously means that the child in us, the part of us that fears, which had been spoken about earlier, has still not been completely placated and that further doubts could yet come. Socrates rightly praises him for this. Throughout one's life, one should never feel certain about such a question. And yet, despite this, one should comport oneself morally and socially as if one had such knowledge, and in such a way that one would be well-received by the gods in Hades. Thus should we all live. Here again Socrates shows himself to

be the *eusebēs* that we know. He too does not know how things really are. But whatever the case, one must lead one's life in a way that seems good and just. That much he knows.

The portrait that the *Phaedo* presents is a true masterpiece among literary portraits, for which we owe thanks to Plato. It shows Socrates in the hour of his death. One need only recall his famous last words, when, as his limbs were already growing cold, he said to his friends: "You must still slaughter a cock to Asclepius." There is nothing here of the deeper meaning that Nietzsche, in the spirit of Schopenhauer, found in these words. It is much more like the opening scene with the dream that leads Socrates to write poetry. Once again we see that meticulous compliance with holy conventions ordained through custom and practice – even when Socrates once again remains ignorant.

The second shining example of a Platonic literary portrait is found in the *Symposium*. Again, our task will be to recognize the portrait that emerges here as the completion of an argument. The banquet itself is a celebration of speech. In the end, it has to do with the Greek people. Anyone who has been to Greece knows the endless waves of sound which pound and roar through every nook and cranny of the streets of Athens, evidence of the Greek gift of speech, and of their tremendous love of it. At the banquet described here, a circle of friends has come together, including, among others, the prize-winning tragic poet Agathon, the comic poet Aristophanes, and Socrates himself. It is decided not to have a wild drinking party, but rather an exchange of philosophical speeches. The theme of the speeches is to be Eros, the passion of love. Each of the participants gives praise to all-powerful Eros and its beauty with profound and spiritually moving speeches – even Aristophanes. At the end comes Socrates, and a Socratic dialogue ensues.

Socrates begins by asking what Eros really is. It is a desire – but a desire means longing for something, indeed, something which one lacks. From this Socrates concludes that Eros himself is not really beautiful, as everyone has said, since he is actually the one who desires the beautiful. Eros is therefore not the beautiful boy who is always in the retinue of Aphrodite, but the unshodden one, the one whose desire remains unstilled. He is himself not beautiful, but rather directed longingly towards the beautiful. This is vintage Socrates, an argument of uncanny logical consistency.

A new world of thinking is indeed opened up here. The *Phaedo* contains the first introduction to this new world. This is seen in the famous self-portrayal of Socrates, the story of how he bought Anaxagoras's book in the market. Knowing that it cost so-and-so many minas, the Americans have calculated how long the manuscript, and therefore the book, must have been on the basis of the pay for writers at that time. It was apparently quite a short book.

It speaks of *nous*, which we would call "spirit." This word evoked a wholly new realm of meaning for Socrates, regarding which he anticipated the help of Anaxagoras. Now we are aware that Socrates was not content with Anaxagoras's account of how *nous* gave the decisive impetus to the formation of the world. He did not want to know how *nous* puffed and pushed, but why the ultimate order of the world is as it is, and why it is such a good order. That is the *nous* for which he sought. It is not something good in itself, the finest, the purest, that which pervades everything, as Anaxagoras describes it, but rather something which looks upon the good. Socrates expected in *nous* not so much something that sets the formation of the world in motion as something that is directed to what is good and beautiful in the order of the world. *Nous*, the thinking, the spirit, is not one distinct being among all others, but rather that which differentiates all beings.

The same idea is found in connection with love, with Eros, in the *Symposium*; Socrates shows that Eros is the desire for the beautiful and not itself something beautiful. Socrates indeed knew of the vigorous power of passion that overcomes one; however, he saw that Eros is not only a natural power, but also a desire for something. Eros is always *erōs tinos*, and it always pursues the beautiful. But if this demon, as Diotima calls it, loves the beautiful, it must distinguish between the beautiful and the ugly. If so, then it is, in truth, thinking: *Erōs philosophos*. Whoever is unconsciously enraptured by passion is thereby directed toward something, spellbound by something that has come over one. An observer would perhaps assume that this passion takes from the person all reason and ability to decide. But it is always the beautiful, and never the ugly, which attracts someone. Thus Socrates continues the dialogue with Agathon until the superficiality of his praise of Eros and his ignorance become conscious to him.

At this point, however, Socrates breaks off the dialogue with Agathon. He goes on to relate his conversation with the priestess Diotima, who taught him the ways of love. Again, there is a subtle irony in Socrates's appeal to the priestess Diotima of Mantineia. Plato artfully hints that, whether Diotima is posing questions or answering them, it is in fact Socrates speaking, and that it will still be Socrates when Diotima begins to lead the dialogue herself and gives her speech (*Symp.* 202e). This will be true even when Diotima no longer believes that Socrates will be able to follow (210d)—which she repeats often, exhorting Socrates to strain himself. Even then, it is not actually Diotima who speaks, but rather Socrates, going beyond himself and laying out the entire vision of the way of love. Here we must be attentive to how the distance between Diotima and Socrates increasingly diminishes. It is always only Socrates, beginning with the slight mockery of Diotima, who portrayed

Eros to him as a universal principle of life, "like a real sophist" (208c1). "You must know," this really means, "you can believe me about that." She then goes on to refer everything back to the desire for immortality and to recognize Eros, and that desire itself, in all forms of human life and creation. Although the homoerotic and pedagogical passion of Plato and his readers is not primarily for women, but rather for young, talented boys, the love of the feminine is included in love for procreation and continued life, for having and rearing children (208e2). The higher desire, the right ideas, the *logoi* – to awaken these things in other souls and above all to see in them the beautiful, this is the complete wisdom of love that Socrates here learns from Diotima. No doubt because it is irrelevant, the question of whether Socrates finds his pedagogical Eros only after the lesson of the fictional priestess remains open. (This happens in other Platonic dialogues as well; for example, in the *Apology*, the question of the justification of Socratic practice as obedience to the Delphic oracle remains open). Not without reason does Diotima say that Socrates could be initiated into the rites of love (209e5). We easily understand this about Socrates in the description of the passage from one beautiful youth to another, and in the assertion that what we seek in others are the *logoi* – which in truth motivate this passage (210c1 f.). Is it not, in the end, always already Socrates who has this wisdom about love?

One has cause, however, to ask oneself what Diotima leaves in doubt, namely, whether Socrates will really be able to follow until the end. Does the Platonic Socrates ultimately doubt himself and the ascent to the beautiful, which like a sudden revelation becomes visible in its truth, purity, and unity, or is Socrates as it were driven out beyond himself? It sounds like a step in the direction of ontotheology, a step which Aristotle the physicist will take and thereby become the founder of metaphysics, the ancestor of Christian scholasticism, and in the end the founder of the modern world of science. The renewed account of the ascent becomes clearer and clearer, becomes too clear – that is, transparent – when the ascent leads from one beautiful body to another and thence to the beautiful soul. One may feel somewhat perplexed, reading about this upward path. Yet it is the well-known problem of the constitution of the universal, of *epagōgē* (which of course has nothing to do with *enumeratio simplex* [complete enumeration] and which involves a transition to *noein*). What is reminiscent in this account of the path of love is nothing else than the experience of the dialectician, as described by Aristotle in the *Posterior Analytics* (B 19). Diotima's doubt as to whether Socrates could follow is itself a deeply grounded irony. It is no longer Socrates who projects this dialectical structure into the pedagogical experience of love. The Socrates of the *Phaedrus*, who otherwise does not spare logical argumentation, is

here, as Diotima, more reticent. Indeed, he sees in the sweet madness of loving the elevation and transition to truth, but not in such a run-through of every beautiful body and every beautiful soul. This is, as it were, only an expression for the unsayability of the universal. Or is it still more?

We encounter another hesitation and half-evasion, similar to Diotinia's here, when Socrates is asked about the good in the *Republic*. There he has succeeded in making the four Platonic cardinal virtues convincing. But then he is also required to answer the question about the good, the *megiston mathēma*, which is defined by him as incomprehensible and unattainable, not teachable like the other *mathēmata*. Finally he suggests the simile of the sun, and later the myth of the cave in order to sketch the new educational path for the future rulers of the ideal state. We should take note of the parallels between this path, the path to the good in the *Republic*, and the path to the beautiful in the *Symposium*. When here the Socratic art of argumentation no longer produces only negative results and failed definitions, one indeed realizes that the explanatory power of the *logos* is exceeded by the beautiful as well as by the good. As much as Plato is inclined to continually change from the beautiful to the good and from the good to the beautiful as if they were the same, the *Philebus* confirms that it is difficult to find a concept for either the beautiful or the good. In the end, the beautiful itself can only be described as the appearance of the good in a threefold way (*sun trisi*), in a triad of determinations. In the *Statesman* it is even called "the exact itself" (*auto to akribes*), which is in everything, but not over everything, as the inner measure.[8] How does Plato address this difficulty in the *Symposium*? I think that, here as elsewhere, the solution has long been clear. One must simply read the dialogues and not just use the material to reconstruct his doctrine – or the Kantian doctrine, or even the unwritten dialectic of Plato himself – which in any case could not be learned. The figure of Socrates, his whole life, enriches these dialogues to a dimension that the conceptual only suggests. Socrates is not simply a role into which Plato slips. In the end, his conversation partners are often we ourselves, we thinking readers. This might well be ignored – in particular by those who, bewitched by the spell of modern, so-called scientific philosophy, saw the Platonic "system" in Plato, the Aristotelian "system" in Aristotle, the scholastic "system" in Thomas Aquinas, the counterreformatory "system" in Suarez, and lastly thought about the concept of system in German idealism, always seeking only to recognize the proper system of philosophy from the point of view of such false objectivity. In the case of the *Symposium*, we cannot reconstruct any such system, and yet neither can we disregard the dramatic ending, which interprets Diotima's entire account of the way of love in terms of Alcibiades's portrait of Socrates. One

is not being prepared here for something that Plato himself knows and could state better.

The dialogue describes the entrance of Alcibiades: how he is startled at the sight of Socrates, how he admires him – and how he finally loses all measure and all inhibition in the almost shameless telling of his intimate experience with Socrates. What he gives here is a unique testimony of what Socrates has learned from Diotima and what he was. The Platonic ideal of the Doric harmony of *logos* and *ergon* is brought vividly to life in the figure of Socrates. The strategy of seduction that Alcibiades describes does not succeed because Socrates was unseduceable. Alcibiades even accuses him of that. Socrates would always only give the illusion that he was in love. In truth, he wants only to be loved by us. This is the image that Plato draws here.

In the eyes of Alcibiades, it seems as if Socrates has learned all too well from Diotima, and as a result could never love him. Or is it reversed in the end: is it Alcibiades who did not know how to love, since he always wanted only to be loved? Is it for this reason that such a promising man became the *homme fatal* of Athens? Whatever the case may be, Alcibiades was one of the greatest disappointments Socrates ever had. Plato's readers knew how he eventually became responsible for the destruction of Athens in the Peloponnesian War. They would have been able to recognize in this Socrates the Platonic answer to the breakdown of the Socratic pupil.–

The two aspects of Plato's literary portraits which we have examined now present us with the task of drawing philosophical consequences. They are of a radical kind. We had concluded from the structure of the speech of Diotima that the description of the ascent to the beautiful follows the stepwise conceptual scheme of *epagōgē*. From that we determined that the ascent to the beautiful consists of nothing else than learning to see the beautiful, which is in everything. Now this admittedly sounds too much like modern nominalism, or like the projection of concepts back into Plato. In reality, however, what emerges before us in this portrait of pedagogical Eros has a higher truth. It is immediately clear even for us that love does not blind, but rather makes one see, in the sense that one strives to see the other and to let him be in his true possibility. Hence there lies in the passion of love, if one does not allow oneself to be enchanted by its "false" madness, an intellectual longing for the other which is the foundation of all true love. In Plato, an intellectual longing means that true Eros is directed toward the "logoi," and the logoi always refer to that which is valid for everyone. What is proper, good, and beautiful – this is the one beautiful, that which is itself meant in all love of the beautiful. And yet the beautiful as such can not be separated from this or that particular thing. It can never be detached from its appearance. The beautiful

must appear; otherwise it is not the beautiful. For it is pure shining [*Scheinen*], and as such it is not dependent on what kind of being it is, whether human or god or any other beautiful thing. As pure shining, appearance [*Erscheinen*], shining forth [*Herausscheinen*], the beautiful is like that "splendor" which is, according to Plotinus, as if poured out over that which appears, because this shine [*Glanz*] has its being in the *diffusio sui*, in its diffusion [*Austeilung*]. Plato has shown this in a wonderful myth in the *Phaedrus*, in which the soul, imprisoned in the body, feels its wings grow again at the sight of the beautiful and uplifts itself anew. In the *Phaedrus* it is said that the beautiful stands out above all others, because it shines forth (*to ekphanestaton*).[9] Thus the beautiful is conceptualized in Platonic terms as something to whose essence it belongs to appear. Of course, we usually hear Plato saying that all appearances participate more or less in the essence, in the *eidos*, and also that beautiful things are never pure beauty, but are always mixed with something else and are to that extent impure. Yet it belongs to the unique essence of the beautiful to appear. One of the foremost questions in the entire tradition of the metaphysics of light is whether the Platonic doctrine of ideas actually holds that the essence is in the appearance – which is what the young Socrates, with his example of the daylight, has in mind in the *Parmenides*.[10] What does this claim mean as a philosophical assertion?

I begin with a remark found in Aristotle that Plato was actually a Pythagorean, that he had simply introduced the word *methexis* in place of the word *mimēsis* – just another expression for the same thing.[11] It is difficult to translate these Greek expressions. The word "imitation" cannot rightly stand for what *mimēsis* means here. Better would be "re-presentation" [*Darstellung*]. For that is the Pythagorean teaching: "The sun-orb sings, in emulation, 'mid brother-spheres, his ancient round: his path predestined through Creation, he ends with step of thunder-sound."[12] Thus Goethe describes the Pythagorean harmony of the spheres in his verses. The paths of the stars follow the numerical proportions according to which they are ordered. On this thesis, then, the stars represent the numbers, and, to this extent, the appearances fulfill the ideality of the numbers. Thus it is a mathematical vision of the cosmos which immediately presents itself in the Pythagorean view of the world: the numbers are what things fundamentally are. The Pythagorean doctrine effects a kind of identification of being and number.

Plato did in fact change the expression, as Aristotle claims. Instead of "mimesis," he says "methexis." But here translation becomes extremely difficult. Methexis actually means "participation" [*Teilhabe*], and if one says it in Latin, it will be yet further misunderstood: *participatio*. For here the idea of the whole and the parts intrudes, which, in the Greek expression, as with

German equivalents such as "*Teilnahme*" and "*Teilhabe*," is really not relevant. Can one really speak of taking a part [*Nehmen eines Teils*] when one takes part [*Anteil nimmt*]?

However, to say that the appearance participates in the idea and is not like the stars, which imitate or represent numbers, indicates more than a mere change of expression. Yet Aristotle dilutes the distinction, as if there were no difference. He even tries to equate Plato's doctrine of ideal numbers with the Pythagoreans in order to emphasize its untenability. In reality, a wholly new ground reveals itself in this change of expression, a ground on which Plato establishes both his proximity with and his departure from the Pythagorean world-view. It is the Socratic-Platonic ground which Plato entered with the flight into the logoi and which he introduced to the world with the name "dialectic." When the stars bring the numbers to representation through their paths, we call this representation "mimesis" and take it to be an approximation of the actual being. In contrast to this, "methexis" is a wholly formal relationship of participation, based on mutuality. "Mimesis" always points in the direction of that which one approaches, or towards which one is oriented, when one represents something. "Methexis," however, as the Greek *meta* already signifies, implies that one thing is there together with something else. Participation, *metalambanein*, completes itself [*erfüllt sich*] only in genuine being-together and belonging-together, *metechein*. Now Plato himself certainly used the expression "mimesis" in various ways, but only in order to emphasize the ontological difference between, on the one hand, a copy [*Nachbild*] and likeness [*Abbild*] and, on the other hand, the original [*Urbild*] and model [*Vorbild*] of the idea. It is also worth noting, as I emphasized in my first study of Plato,[13] that the problem of methexis will not really provide an answer concerning the relationship of appearance and idea. Not without reason is Plato quite indefinite in his choice of expression for this relationship. That was not his problem, since this relationship was already presupposed in his flight into the logoi. In contrast to this, the presupposition under which one sought to adapt Plato to Neo-Kantianism and its theory of knowledge was unexamined. Hence Nicolai Hartmann, following Natorp, developed the theory of descending methexis, which necessitated returning to the question of individuation and concretion. According to this theory, the constitution of the individual was first developed fully in Plotinus and, in this way, what Plato's dialectic of methexis strove for was attained. So the binding of the eidos to the logos is disregarded, and language is consequently replaced with mathematical calculus. However, that is really a modern (nominalist) turn. Against it, Aristotle retains logos as the starting point. But, for him, both expressions, "mimesis" and "methexis," are only metaphors. He

himself gave a conceptual answer to the question of the difference between the individual thing and its eidos: it is the introduction of the concept of *hyle* – of stuff, of material – which, through its being-together with the form, is the concrete, which he called the *synolon*. This is not the place to delve into the Aristotelian step to concept-formation and his implicit dependence on the logos- and eidos-doctrines of Plato.[14] Our starting point is the separate valence which Plato can claim for the manner of representation of his thinking. This has allowed him to become not only the great portraitist whose capacity for plastic representation we see and admire in the *Phaedo* and in the *Symposium*. Plato has also understood the need to indicate, even in the conceptual language of his dialectic, the limit that is set for the concept and the language of humans with regard to the appearances of reality.

One can therefore see that it is no accident when Plato says "methexis" rather than "mimesis" for the relationship to the ideas. The problems posed by methexis are pushed to the limit in the first part of that most mystifying of dialogues, the *Parmenides*. There the most important difficulty for the hypothesis of the ideas is that knowledge of the ideas would be accessible only to the gods and knowledge of the world of appearances only to humans – a chorismos of complete absurdity. Actually, this is a premonition of the later Platonic dialectic, which dissolves Parmenides's objections against Socrates and the hypothesis of the ideas. Not until the *Sophist*, in which the formulation and elaboration of the problem found in the *Parmenides* is taken up in a positive way, do we really learn what is at stake for Plato himself in the question of methexis. It was a wonderful and bold idea to introduce the young Socrates into conversation with the master of rational consistency. This idea has cost historical research and its quest for historical facts much misguided effort.

Once again, one must be able to read what is said implicitly in a dialogical argumentation. At the beginning of the *Parmenides*, Socrates criticizes the inferior dialectic that Zeno has presented against the hypothesis of the many. There is nothing unusual about this. Socrates would have found it astonishing only if a corresponding dialectic of the ideas themselves were possible, a participation of the ideas in each other and not just the participation of the individual in the idea. What is revealed here, so to speak, is the subversive role that Socrates plays in the dialogue with Parmenides. He anticipates the problem of the participation of the ideas in each other, even while regarding such a thing as altogether incredible. Stenzel correctly observed how, in the dialogue with Parmenides, Socrates is forced step by step into the difficulties which accompany a general doctrine of ideas and of participation in the ideas. In the hypothesis of the beautiful and the good, Socrates does not doubt that

"it itself" would be different and separate from everything that participates in it. Here it is self-evident that with the good, the beautiful, and the just, we are dealing with an ideal toward which we all strive. On the other hand, Socrates's embarrassment increases (as he expressly admits at 130d) when the hypothesis of ideas is expanded to absolutely everything that one can say and claim as meant. Of course, I cannot believe that in this one could see an embarrassment of Plato; still less does the first part of the *Parmenides* as a whole catch Plato in a crisis of the doctrine of ideas. To assert this would seem to me a hermeneutic naivete that misses the sense of the whole.

But it is also incorrect to view Socrates as if he did not understand the problem of participation, even though he does not know how to counter the Parmenidean critique and is, in the end, soundly thrashed by him. In fact, Socrates is treated from the start with great respect by the old Parmenides, even when he is unable to refute the objections that Parmenides directs at the doctrine of ideas. Plato indicates that Socrates finds the use of the concepts of whole and part inadequate, especially in the reified form in which Parmenides employs them for his refutation. This is shown by the profound statement that Plato puts in the mouth of Socrates which seeks to evade the aporias of participation: participation is like the daylight, distributed over everything, yet without light being separated from light and day being separated from day (131b). Likewise, when the day example is replaced with that of a sail spread over many, Socrates yields to this reification only with hesitation and a "perhaps." And he makes yet another significant claim in response to the third-man argument with which Parmenides confronts him, revealing the process of iteration of each third man to be a simple thought game. It is hardly unreasonable to want to reserve ontological status only for the eidos itself, nor does it indicate the kind of nominalistic weakening of the eidos that Parmenides assumes it does. Certainly the young Socrates is not yet ready for the conceptual clarification of participation. But, again, Plato takes every precaution to show that it is not a simple lack of understanding on the part of Socrates. Parmenides praises him for his persistence and encourages him to practice still more in "what the world calls idle talk."[15]

Through such practice in idle talk he will perhaps learn that there must be participation of one idea in the other – and this means there must be the one and the many – if there is to be logos at all. Later, the stranger from Elea, to whose conversation Socrates is only a listener in the *Sophist*, will help him with that. It had by then become clear that the absurd chorismos, against which Aristotle would direct his critique, already in the *Parmenides* represented the critical point in the hypothesis of the ideas. This means that, in the final analysis, we cannot speak of such separation of the ideas in Plato, as

Aristotle supposes. "You have sought too soon to determine a particular eidos" – these are the last critical words Parmenides has to say to Socrates. They indicate that the relation of ideas to each other, the participation of ideas in each other, which seemed unthinkable to the young Socrates, will be the genuine basis of the Platonic dialectic. All logos contains such participation of ideas in each other.

That appearances participate in ideas remains the presupposition which lies beneath the hypothesis of the ideas. It shines through clearly in the *Parmenides*, as in all the magnificent visions to which Socrates attains. This is confirmed just as much in the ascent to the good in the *Republic*, through the myth of the cave, as in the ascent to the beautiful, which Diotima represents to Socrates as the way of love. In the *Parmenides*, when Socrates uses the daylight analogy to illustrate how a universal (the *eidos*) relates to the particular, this presupposition becomes explicit. That this participation exists is, in the end, the condition for the very possibility of thinking and speaking, of the binding together of ideas and understanding. The "splendor" of the beautiful and the light of day describe methexis more truly than the relation of whole and part, in which the Eleatic dialectic entangled Socrates. In the good, as in the beautiful, as in the light, the ubiquity of participation is made known.

The signifying power of the syllable *meta* lends *methexis* the sense of being-with. We find the same sense of the syllable *meta* in the original text of the Parmenidean poem (fr. 9). There it is said of light and of night that neither has any share of nothing (*meta mēden*). In the concept of mixture, which admittedly makes a reifying interpretation easy, we encounter a problem similar to that found in "participation." But in connection with the philosophy of ideas, something like the concept of mixture is no longer incomprehensible. It is reported of Eudoxos[16] that he used the concept of mixture to interpret the participation of the appearances in the idea and that he taught the inherence of the ideas in appearances. Similarly, the metaphor of mixture, in which the good of human life should be sought, is used in Plato's *Philebus*. However, that does not mean an actual mixture of separate components, of the "hedone" and of knowledge. What is meant is being-with. The number too is with the idea, with being. Thus the path of thinking always goes through differentiations of the one from the other. But that is precisely the way of logos: it expresses the being-with of one eidos and another eidos. The anamnesis takes place as dihairesis (*diairesis*). In the Pythagorean metaphor of mimesis, it was still unclear how number could be being itself. In the *Phaedo* this is immediately evident in the Socratic flight into the logoi. Precisely with that, statements become possible which also have validity for the individual, so that the sentence "Theaetetus flies" must be false.

The strongest evidence for this relation between the ideas and the concrete individual, however, is the teaching of the four kinds in the *Philebus*. There the Platonic Socrates relies on the Pythagorean doctrine of opposites and draws the conclusions that lie in the relation of limit and unlimited. The point is that the being-mixed-together of the opposites of limit and unlimited makes a third kind of being unavoidable. So here one encounters, as the third, the concept of the metrion (*metrion*), the measured and limited. It could seem trivial that there must also exist the limited. But this result in the *Philebus* is followed by another conclusion which leads just as necessarily to a fourth basic kind of being. The third in addition to limit and unlimitedness represents the true wonder of being: coming into being, being which has become. This is not a mere application of thinking, number, and measure to the undefined and unlimited. Measure here belongs rather to being. It lies in the metrion, of which the *Statesman* speaks as the genuine measure that is proper to the being itself. As a concrete existent, this measured being points back to an original being, to the cause, the nous, that governs and steers everything, so that it is appropriate and corresponds with the whole – like the good, the healthy, or the beautiful.

When one grasps the internal logic according to which the four kinds derive from one another in the *Philebus*, one immediately sees that, in this doctrine of the kinds, the old problem of methexis reappears. Both additional kinds, the measured (i.e., the appropriate) as well as the last ordering cause, represent all that is beyond the reach of thinking, of number, of measuring, and, in the end, of logos: the concrete. The attempt to deduce the concrete from measure and number alone is here immediately derailed. The concrete is undeniably tied together with "nous," and so the fourth kind of the *Philebus* repeats the mythical account of the reality of the real. This is the participation of the idea in the appearances, precisely as the demiurge in the *Timaeus* is responsible for the reality of the universe.[17]

A further illustration of what remains implicit in the Platonic way of thinking is the so-called second principle that, according to Aristotle, was introduced by Plato in his famous lecture on the good together with the *hen*, the one. Here I might refer in particular to my work "Plato's Unwritten Dialectic."[18] The "indeterminate dyad" takes the place of the *apeiron*, to which an entire series of Pythagorean concepts refer. Just as Plato replaced mimesis with methexis, so also did he confer a new, purely "logical" sense to the concept of *apeiron*, clearly in order to release it from the connotations which burdened the older, cosmological concept of "apeiron" since Anaximander. In his physics, Aristotle showed that the indisputable validity of the concept of "apeiron" is based on the unbounded progress of thinking and on the in-

finitude of the number line. From this point of view, Plato was likely to accept the Pythagorean tetraktys as the guiding schema of the number line. He apparently looked at the first "ten" as an original schema for all order and filled it with variable content, if we can trust Aristotle's account.[19] The closed pyramid of the number ten, however, opens the possibility of counting into the infinite. Number is the many in the one, and to it corresponds the schema of the dyad, to which no determinate content can be assigned. This schema is the principle of all thinking and all differentiation. It transcends the numerically theoretical meaning of *peras* and *apeiron*, which the Pythagoreans had also applied to astronomy and music. It exceeds any possible content, and goes beyond even the concept of hyle, which Aristotle referred to it. For the sake of the numbers and in view of mathematics, Aristotle is compelled to purify *hyle* to its genuine conceptual sense, raising *hyle* to *noete hyle*, "intelligible stuff."[20]

This consideration teaches that Plato saw in the *aoristos duas* the limit of number and of logoi. In this respect he stands closer to Aristotelian metaphysics than to the Pythagorean identification of being and number. Aristotle himself has recognized the *atomon eidos* as constitutive for defining the what-being [*Was-Sein*], because the *tode ti* can only be shown, not spoken. The different and also, in a certain sense, the superiority of Plato consists in the fact that, insofar as he holds fast to the dialogical character of all speech, this limit of logos is "suddenly" transgressed in dialogue again and again. This is the reason why Plato dedicated no real attention at all to the participation of the individual in the eidos – something which Aristotle criticized. What Aristotle had in mind is confirmed when, in the *Phaedo* (100d), Plato offers any number of concepts that one might use for the relation of the individual to the idea, the participation of the individual in the idea. Above all, however, the real force of the Socratic arguments for the immortality of the soul, which are tied to the hypothesis of the ideas, depends entirely on the participation of the ideas in each other, and takes it as self-evident that this will be valid for the individual soul as well. Hence the proof of immortality passes without hesitation over the *eidos* and from there to the god. Both obviously belong to the realm of the ideas.

We seem to be far afield from the topic when we bring the problem of methexis, which belongs to the Platonic doctrine of ideas, and the doctrine of ideal numbers into relation with Plato as portraitist. And yet replacing "mimesis" with participation, "methexis," and taking part does not seem to me a bad way of describing the essence of the art of portraiture and of the portrait. In our introductory considerations, we had reason to reflect on what is called a realistic portrait, and we could hardly describe our reflections other than

with the conceptual tools that we find in the problem of methexis. A portrait is not a mere mimesis in the style of that automatic reproduction of modern technology that we call a "photograph" [*Aufnahme*]. A human face "torn out" of nature does not establish how the face in fact looks. The portrait – and even the "picture" [*Aufnahme*] made with photographic materials – is only a portrait if it is a portrait and not a passport photo. What we call eidos, therefore, is something valid drawn from the individual appearance. Are we not all, finally, in this sense Platonists?

Let us once again allow the wisdom of language to lead us. When one says "an individual" and "individual," language reminds us of a concealed truth. We tend to speak of an individual and of individuality when we have before us, whether in a picture or in reality, that which eludes words, the concrete, living presence of a person. But when we want to comprehend somebody in their individuality or in a portrait that reproduces this individuality, there is always in this act a certain recognition of ourselves, namely, of the human in the other individuality. Does not the word "individual" already tell us this? A glance at the history of the word is most instructive. The word is the Latin translation of "atom." When Plato identifies the last differentiable thing in the differentiation of the "ideas," which can always be further distinguished from each other, he still says *atmēton eidos*, "indivisible" eidos. He does not use the expression "atom," obviously in order to keep the specification that he called "dihairesis" in mind and to avoid falsely recalling Democritus, who had thus named the last indivisible components of nature. In contrast, Aristotle uses the word frequently, and in the same logical sense it had in Plato's expression – namely, as the limit of specification and not of material division. In any case the word- and concept-history of atom point to an emergence out of the universal and to the limit of the universal. What Aristotle called the *tode ti* is that to which one can point only if one means a "this." We, of course, speak of the individual without consciously realizing that what we mean by this is one limit of the specification implied when we call something "unique." Here linguistic practice supplies an example of the irresistibility with which language and thinking appropriate even what they cannot reach. What they cannot reach is precisely the indivisible, which designates itself as the limit of differentiation. The indivisible always remains in relation to the differentiation. So when we ask what is particular in an individual, we are not conscious even in our own linguistic perception that we treat the individual as "effabile."

In metaphysics, one finds oneself entirely in the tradition of the ancients. Today we confront the problem, foreign as such to the ancients, of the "principium individuationis." It is not coincidental that this principle arises

from a later formulation and conceptual development. The claim that Aristotelian matter, *hyle*, is the principle of individuation stems from the measuring, mathematizing attitude of modern science, and thus misses the analogical function of Aristotelian *hyle*, defined through its relation to *morphē*, form, and *eidos*. This language also misses the sense of limit that lies in the concept of individuation. In modern science, we would speak of space and time as principles of individuation, because the measured is thereby rendered unambiguous. In truth, the individual, according to our linguistic practice, represents the limit of all measurability. So what health is does not let itself be described through pure measurements. Likewise, much could be said about the significance of the transformation in meaning which ultimately led to the complete eradication of the concept of the individual from the categorizing thinking of metaphysics, in which the word had its origin. For us, the word means the Christian-mediated mystery of the human heart and the boundaries of the soul – the measure of which, as Heraclitus already knew, one can never take (Fr. 45).

So we are led back, by this long excursion through metaphysics and the limits of logos philosophy, which is our ancient heritage, to our opening theme: What is a portrait? Whether we refer to a portrait in poetry or visual art, or simply in the context of what we describe as "portraitlike," we always mean that the represented are persons whose individuality determines what a picture of this type expresses. With regard to such a picture, the assertion that the individual person is "ineffabile" is not valid. At the same time, individuality remains a relative limit concept and does not mean a this-here, but rather the image of a human being that places a person before our eyes. For where the individuality of the person is made visible in the picture, there is a stir in the picture, in this motionless presence, as the ceaseless flow of life overcomes it. The individual is not merely a "here and now," but rather a playing together of many unique features that brings to life what is fixed.

As with the reading of a written or printed text, the process of decoding abruptly converts into understanding. A picture too lets the one represented suddenly become living for us. A story places something almost tangible before our eyes – which also happens when one is really convinced by an explanation. In all such cases something is suddenly there. We perceive something common to the good itself, the beautiful itself, and the exact itself, of whose sudden appearance the Platonic dialogue speaks. What it is, that here is "here," is of course unsayable. But at the same time this means that everything that is here in such a way will represent itself differently in everyone, and yet will be the same. So a portrait invites us to recognize it, even when we have seen neither the one represented nor reproductions of him. Hence a

myth might be a shocking encounter for us with something we have secretly known. Or a word that is spoken to us, for instance, the word of promise, which goes out to everyone and yet is *pro me*.

Let us turn back to the place from which the new bust of Plato brought us to such reflections. I saw it next to that unique bust of Homer, whose blind eye penetrates everything. Beside it now stands – centuries lie between them – the thinker, in whose features is inscribed so much insight, withdrawal, and distance from all that comes to pass. When one then enters the hall in which the monuments of Platonic times stand, one is immediately captured by the spell of several tombstones. We would not speak here of a portrait. It would truly be inappropriate to represent the dead one or his mourning father in a portrait. A tombstone is not a monument of a person, but rather a gesture of remembrance and of departure. The figures that take leave from one another touch each other softly and stand in a silence which creates between the two a space of vibration – even when it is only the young boy and his dog. The one who mourns always reaches out over the space of separation and gently takes hold of the arm of the dead. As I learned in my visit to the Glyptothek, in conversation with Herr and Frau Vierneisel, it is always the survivor who takes the hand of the deceased, as a last embrace. It is the clinging to life that solemnly confesses itself and yet nevertheless accepts the parting without objection. This has the intimacy of a portrait. But it is more a portrait of departure.

These tombstones belong to the same time as Plato himself and his statue, which was certainly made by Silanion after Plato's death and yet still as if after his life. Just as the monuments are not portraits, neither is the image of Socrates that Alcibiades compares with the statue of Silenus, which opens itself and makes knowable its inner beauty. In the National Museum of Athens, just as in the pieces here in Munich, lies an unimaginable spiritual richness. Year after year, we are presented with new pieces. What has remained spared from the storms of world history here in the Greek landscape has been brought to light in our day, like gifts from the earth. The Athenians were for the most part a farming people whose citizens owned and were buried on their own land. Hence much has been sleeping in the bowels of the earth.

Now the earth teaches us to read Plato. Reading Plato is learning to see. In these dialogues, the Platonic Socrates takes us with him. The difficult account-giving that he requires, and which constantly fails and ends in ignorance, reaches beyond itself when in stepwise reflective differentiation it leads to something which we can, with Aristotle, call a definition (*horismos*). Each dialogue can, or at least should, always continue in another dialogue. Each ending is like a new prospect. Again and again, the Platonic dialogues dis-

play fragments, terminations, transitions – which, as in the case of the *Philebus*, were already famous in antiquity. The *Parmenides* also ends in aporia. The ten books of the *Republic* are certainly an artful composition, and yet they teem with gaps and tears and breaks, which a misguided philology has at times marshalled for the purpose of riveting together a historical-genetic construction.

The pretense of historical-critical reflection which conducts itself this way falls into error when it deals with Greek dialectic and indeed with the Greek art of dialogue, and most of all when it has to do with philosophy. Verifying the authenticity of the *Seventh Letter* was indeed not necessary to put an end to all claims that giving definitions is the last word of the philosopher. As the excursus of the *Seventh Letter* confirms, the true experience of thinking is much more the sudden illumination of understanding.[21] Out of the inexhaustible effort to understand, insight is born, suddenly, like that highest inspiration of the good itself and the beautiful itself, about which we have spoken.[22] When one possesses Plato's mastery of the poetic art, one finds pleasure in seizing upon mythical fantasy, opposing the seeming ultimate validity of everything fixed in writing with stories of playful nonreality and meaning. Likewise, Plato needed the art of portraiture, not in order to make thinking and account-giving more entertaining, but rather to perpetually remind thinking of the incompletability of our human endeavor. So well did Plato comprehend the limits of all demonstration that he himself recast the very expression "philosophy" as the epitome of all detachment from everyday matters and of dedication to theoretical existence, and imposed on it a new inner tension and determination.

It is of course Diotima, in the instruction of Socrates dealt with above, who says: "No god philosophizes and tries to become wise" (for he already is).[23] "To love" wisdom and what is wise here acquires the distinctive sense of not having it and therefore striving for it, being thus between ignorance and knowledge. It is like an unfolding of the knowing ignorance of Socrates, namely what Plato, through Diotima, presents here to Socrates for his education. Of course, the fiction thus continues. Socrates learned it from Diotima, and he fulfills what he has learned in an exemplary way.

With this, the portrait of Socrates that emerges in the Platonic depiction of the banquet becomes in reality a self-portrait of Plato. Not without reason does he prefer the expression *dialektikē* – not in the terminological sense of dialectic that has become dominant since Aristotle, but rather in a sense that goes back to the Socratic art of leading dialogues. Arguing through oppositions, which is tied to the Eleatic Zeno, first came to be known by the name *dialektikē* through the *Parmenides*. We are inclined to see the difference be-

tween the ancient and the modern dialectic since its renewal through Kant, and above all his followers, in the fact that dialectic has just now attained the positive sense of a philosophical method. It was virtually anointed the method of philosophical demonstration by Hegel. That is correct, but only if one presupposes the modern concept of science, the fundamental role of method, and the corresponding ideal of demonstration. A dialectic that knows the limit of logos and holds fast to its embeddedness in the pragmatic unity of life can be called, from this point of view, "negative." In truth, the Socratic ideal of the "Doric harmony of logos and ergon"[24] is realized therein, and as long as this holds true, the portrait is a reminder of the responsibility of thinking. For the portrait discloses the universality of the individual – like all genuine knowledge. So I quote once again the profound inscription that Hegel once put under his portrait: "Whoever knows me will recognize me here." I would give it a similar twist: Whoever looks at Plato's head in the Glyptothek will, insofar as one knows Plato, recognize Plato in it, and then two millenia of our history would remind us of what being human is and what thinking is.

Notes

1. This essay was first presented on February 29, 1988, in commemoration of the acquisition by the Glyptothek in Munich of a sculpted head of Plato. It should be noted that Gadamer's comments were delivered within view of the head, a Roman copy in marble of an original bronze which is attributed to Silanion, a Greek sculptor of the mid-to-late-4th century BCE. The text of the presentation appeared in print with the title "Platon als Porträtist," published by the Freunde und Förderer der Glyptothek und der Antikensammlungen München e.V. (München 1988). The essay was then substantially revised and expanded for publication in Gadamer's collected works, and was printed with the title "Plato als Porträtist" in Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Gesammelte Werke*, volume 7 (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1991), pp. 228–257. The present translation follows the latter version. This essay represents an important contribution by Gadamer, inasmuch as it brings together two fields which have long occupied Gadamer's thinking. The study of Greek philosophy, and especially of Plato, has been an abiding interest of Gadamer's for over seventy years. His first book, *Plato's Dialectical Ethics*, was published in 1931, and succeeding decades have witnessed a steady stream of essays on numerous aspects of Greek philosophy (to which three of the 10 volumes in Gadamer's collected works are devoted). However, Gadamer has also maintained a long-standing interest in art and art history, evidence for which is readily apparent in the first part of *Truth and Method*, which presents the experience of the work of art as the paradigm for hermeneutic experience in general. The section on "The Ontological Valence of the Picture," which also contains a discussion of the portrait, is of particular relevance to this essay. In addition, volumes 8 and 9 of the collected works, which comprise a two-volume subset entitled "Aesthetics and Poetics," gather together many of Gadamer's most significant essays in

this field. The translators would like to gratefully acknowledge the assistance of Dennis Schmidt and Walter Brogan in the preparation of this translation. (Translators' Note; hereafter TN).

2. In addition to the sense of having the quality of a portrait, the German word "porträthaft" connotes both similarity or likeness to a portrait (cf. kindhaft, childlike) as well as a certain capacity or appropriateness for being portrayed (cf. glaubhaft, believable). Thus, as Gadamer suggests, one might speak of a range of things as portrathaft: an image that is, or is like, a portrait, as well as an actual face or figure that would readily lend itself to being portrayed. (TN)
3. Goethe's German text reads: "Mag der Grieche seinen Ton zu Gestalten drücken, an der eignen Hände Sohn steigern sein Entzücken; Aber uns ist wonnereich, in den Euphrat greifen und im flüss'gen Element hin und wider schweifen. . . . Schöpft des Dichters reine Hand, Wasser wird sich ballen." Translation by J. Whaley, *West-Eastern Divan* (Oswald Wolff, 1974), p. 19. (TN)
4. *Symposium*, 215a. (TN)
5. In "Amicus Plato magis amica veritas," *Gesammelte Werke*, volume 6, pp. 84 f. ["Amicus Plato Magis Amica Veritas," trans. P. Christopher Smith, in *Dialogue and Dialectic* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), pp. 194–218. Hereafter *DD*. (TN)]
6. See also "Sokrates' Frömmigkeit des Nichtwissens," in *Gesammelte Werke*, volume 7, pp. 108 ff. [An earlier version of this essay has been translated as "Religion and Religiosity in Socrates," by Richard Velkley, in *Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy*, vol. 1 (1985), pp. 53–75. (TN)]
7. On this point see also my work on the proofs of immortality in Plato's *Phaedo*, *Gesammelte Werke*, volume 6, pp. 187–200. ["The Proofs of Immortality in Plato's *Phaedo*," trans. P. Christopher Smith, in *DD*, pp. 21–38. (TN)]
8. *Statesman*, 284d. (TN)
9. *Phaedrus*, 250d. (TN)
10. *Parmenides*, 131b. (TN)
11. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 987b 12. (TN)
12. "Die Sonne tönt nach alter Weise, in Brudersphären Wettgesang, und ihre vorgeschriebne Reise vollendet sie mit Donnergang." *Faust* I, "Prologue in Heaven." Translation by Bayard Taylor (Houghton Mifflin, 1870). (TN)
13. "Platos dialektische Ethik," volume 5 of *Gesammelte Werke*, pp. 3–163. [*Plato's Dialectical Ethics*, trans. Robert M. Wallace (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991). (TN)]
14. On this point see my works "Amicus Plato magis arnica veritas," in volume 6 of *Gesammelte Werke*, pp. 71–89, and "Die Idee des Guten zwischen Plato und Aristoteles," in volume 7, pp. 128–227. [*The Idea of the Good in Platonic-Aristotelian Philosophy*, trans. P. Christopher Smith (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986). (TN)]
15. *Parmenides*, 135d. (TN)
16. Alexander in Arist. Met. 97, 17–18 (Hayduck). [Alexander of Aphrodisias, *On Aristotle's Metaphysics* 1, trans. William E. Dooley, S.J. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989). (TN)]
17. On this point compare my work "Idee und Wirklichkeit in Platos 'Timaios,' " in volume 6 of *Gesammelte Werke*, pp. 242–270. ["Idea and Reality in Plato's *Timaeus*," trans. P. Christopher Smith, in *DD*, pp. 156–193. (TN)]
18. In volume 6 of *Gesammelte Werke*, pp. 129–153. [Trans. P. Christopher Smith, in *DD*, pp. 124–155. (TN)]

19. For example, *Physics* Γ 6, 206b32; *Metaphysics* Λ 8, 1073a20; M 8, 1084a12.
20. See my essay "Gibt es die Materie?", in volume 6 of *Gesammelte Werke*, pp. 201–207.
21. *Seventh Letter*, 344b. (TN)
22. On this point compare my treatment "Dialektik und Sophistik im siebenten platonischen Brief," in volume 6 of *Gesammelte Werke*, pp. 90–115. ["Dialectic and Sophism in Plato's *Seventh Letter*," trans. P. Christopher Smith, in *DD*, pp. 93–123. (TN)]
23. *Symposium*, 204a. (TN)
24. On this principle see my study of logos and ergon in Plato's *Lysis*, *Gesammelte Werke*, volume 6, pp. 171–186. ["*Logos* and *Ergon* in Plato's *Lysis*," trans. P. Christopher Smith, in *DD*, pp. 1–20. (TN)]