

The Origins and Development of Greek Dualism

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Awaiting his execution for impiety and corrupting the youth, Socrates continued to do the very thing that had made him a scapegoat to the angry and humiliated Athenians—he philosophized. How better to prepare for death? How else to prepare for divinity? “No one may join the company of the gods,” he says, “who has not practiced philosophy and is not completely pure when he departs from life.”¹ Death alone frees us totally from the senses and pleasures of the body, he claims, but in the meantime philosophy purifies: it liberates the soul, and especially its reason, from a bodily prison.² This Platonic picture of philosophy appears dualistic in at least two ways. Not only does it divide soul from body, it divides the cosmos as we perceive it through our senses from the cosmos as we know it by our reason. Along with this picture goes the practical demand that we eschew our bodies and everything that they produce in us: sensations, imagination, appetites, and emotions. Favoring pure reason in their stead, Plato promises us the consolation of divinity.

Shortly before receiving his own consolation, Socrates recounts his youthful enthusiasm for “that wisdom which they call natural science,” the philosophies of his monist predecessors.³ The first of them was Thales of Miletus.⁴ He seems to have supposed that all the changes of the cosmos were but variations of one substance, water.⁵ Next after him, in the same city, Anaximander likewise claimed that there was one substrate of all change and diversity, but rejected anything so definite as water, favoring simply ‘the indefinite’ (*to apeiron*).⁶ Also from Miletus, Anaximenes returned to a definite substance, air, arguing that it ruled the cosmos just as breath—which the early Greeks conflated with *psychē*—rules our bodies.⁷ He even explained the mutation of his principle into the many things of the cosmos by adding the mechanism of condensation and rarefaction.⁸ Despite the brilliance of this innovation, it supplied only the conditions in which a substrate changes from one thing into another. As far as we can tell, none of the Milesians explained *why* this happens.

Although Socrates does not name the philosophers he studied in his youth, he does say that his enthusiasm for them faded once he realized their silence about the *real* cause of anything—namely, “what was the *best* way for it to be.”⁹ Besides the Milesians, some of the major predecessors he might also have read were Xenophanes, Heraclitus, and Parmenides. From Colophon, near Miletus, Xenophanes introduced earth as a principle substance, but also exalted one god, one *theos*, writing that “completely without toil he shakes all things by the thought of his mind.”¹⁰ Later testimonies reported that he equated this one god pantheistically with the cosmos itself.¹¹ Other accounts thus associated his monism with that of Parmenides and the ‘Eleatic tribe,’¹² who argued far more stringently than any other monists that existence must be not only one,¹³ but even unchanging and homogeneous.¹⁴ For his part, Heraclitus of Ephesus tolerated change, even the ceaseless flux for which he is famous, but he too was a monist. Introducing fire as a principle, he

equated it with his *logos* (account).¹⁵ “Listening not to me but to the *logos*,” he began his book, “it is wise to agree that all things are one.”¹⁶

In his search for a philosophy that would make goodness causally efficacious, Socrates was no doubt disappointed by the fifth-century Atomists, Leucippus and Democritus, whose cosmos was an amoral collision of atoms in a void.¹⁷ Incidentally, a similar disappointment would arise long after antiquity, when the scientific revolution of the seventeenth century appeared to corroborate the Atomists’ cosmology. After the manner of Socrates, many modern philosophers became disenchanted with its materialist monism, provoking them to look elsewhere for a source of value, including reason.¹⁸ For his part, Socrates’ interest in philosophy was rekindled when he heard someone reading from a book of Anaxagoras which claimed that *nous* (mind, thought, or reason) directs and causes everything.¹⁹ “I was delighted with this cause,” he says, “and it seemed to me good that *nous* should be the cause of all. I thought that if this were so the directing *nous* would direct everything and arrange each thing in the way that was best.”²⁰ In other words, Socrates initially thought that Anaxagoras had supplied his cosmos with efficacious value—specifically, what Aristotle would later distinguish as a *final* cause: an ultimate goal, the best good.²¹ He read Anaxagoras’ writings quickly, eager to learn about this best good which *nous* seemed aimed to effect.

His hope was soon dashed, however, once he recognized that Anaxagoras’ *nous* was not directing anything toward the best; in fact, he came to believe it played no role whatsoever in explanation.²² Had he asked Anaxagoras about his predicament—“why am I in this cell?”—the answer would not have been that *nous* is directing him and everything in the cosmos towards the best. The answer he instead imagines receiving is a parody of materialist monism: “the reason that I am sitting here is because my body consists of bones and sinews, because the bones are hard and are separated by joints, that the sinews are such as to contract and relax,” and so on.²³ To be fair to Anaxagoras, he might have given *nous* more of a role than Socrates allows. His bones and sinews could have been arranged in this way by *nous*’s rotation of the cosmos.²⁴ Be that as it may, Anaxagoras never explained *why* the cosmos was rotated by *nous* in this particular way rather than another. His answer thus remained a material one, or at most an efficient one—to anticipate Aristotle’s terms, which we shall eventually explain—and Plato’s Socrates thereby considered it limited. Limited, but not irrelevant. After all, the material cause supplies the necessary conditions of an event; the final cause adds its sufficient condition. Socrates compares his philosophical predecessors to “people groping in the dark,” since they sought only the necessary conditions, not the sufficient condition, which he calls the real cause. “Imagine not being able to distinguish the real cause from that without which the cause would not be able to act as cause.”²⁵

Whether or not this was ultimately a failure of monism, it was certainly a perennial difficulty. Successors to the Milesians may have supplied explanations of why the cosmos changed—by adding a *theos*, a *logos*, or a *nous*—but their additions only pushed the question one step further back. Why, it remained to

be explained, did these principles act? Why, Socrates wonders, is it *best* for anything to be the way it is, let alone to change into something else? Why, to return to the question he imagines posing to Anaxagoras, is he *here*, sitting in this prison cell? The question is not idle. In *Crito*, a dialogue whose narrative precedes that of *Phaedo*, the eponymous disciple and devoted friend of Socrates has begged him to slip past the conniving warden.²⁶ But Socrates refuses, arguing notoriously that he is bound to obey the laws, even now when the jury has applied them unfairly. They have safeguarded him his whole life, and by his lifelong presence in Athens he has tacitly agreed to follow them, whatever they might require of him.²⁷ To ask ‘Why am I here?’ in *Phaedo*, then, is to return to this reasoning of *Crito* and ask again, ‘Why is it best for me to be here?’ In *Phaedo*, though, the question drops its political guise and assumes a deeper, cosmological significance.

Phaedo is a thoroughly Pythagorean dialogue, a fact which Plato signals by several dramatic clues. The location, for example, is Phlius, a center of Pythagoreanism in Plato’s lifetime. As the dialogue begins, moreover, a certain Echecrates entices Phaedo to recount Socrates’ death-bed conversation about the immortality of the soul, a central Pythagorean doctrine. Echecrates was himself a student of a famous fifth-century Pythagorean,²⁸ Philolaus, who also taught Socrates’ two main interlocutors in the dialogue, Simmias and Cebes.²⁹ Beyond these Pythagorean characters, location, and topic, the dialogue advances distinctly Pythagorean doctrines, as we shall see when we return to it after having examined the origins of Pythagoreanism itself. For now, let us notice an important fact for our discussion of Greek dualism: the dialogue in which Socrates expresses his disappointment with his monist predecessors is the same dialogue in which he advances Pythagorean dualism.

In this chapter we aim to explore the origins and development of this dualism, a dualism which should hold a special place in the history of philosophy and religion. After all, when scholars of religion discuss dualism, they most often mean dualism of the cosmological sort: division between two world principles, especially one that is good and one that is evil. When scholars of modern philosophy discuss dualism, by contrast, they almost always mean dualism of the psychological sort: division between two elements of the human, especially between the mind and the body.³⁰ A discussion of the ancient Greek philosophers complements a volume on dualism in religion and philosophy, we hope to show, because they propose divisions of both sorts, cosmological and psychological. To the Pythagoreans, Plato, and the many traditions of philosophy and religion that follow them, these two sorts of division are intimately related by a shared ethics of purification and divinization. Our aim in this chapter is to explain the origin and development of this ethics, as well as the cosmology and psychology that elaborate it.

We shall begin with the cosmological dualism of the Pythagoreans, tracing it back to Zoroastrian dualism. Since Pythagoreanism presents an eschatology foreign to the Persian religion, however, we shall look elsewhere for the source of its psychological dualism. Finding its resemblance to the early religious philosophy of India, which was ultimately monistic, we shall argue that Pythagoreanism forged for the

Greeks a powerful synthesis of these two Eastern traditions, one dualistic, the other monistic. Despite their differences, both make purification and divinization the means and goal of their ethics. Thus, when Plato adopts the Pythagoreans' synthesis as his main philosophical framework, he assumes the logic of purity (especially purity of thought) that they inherited from the East. Facing the inevitable tensions of this synthesis, he mediates, though never quite resolves, them by exploiting the innovations of intervening Presocratics. So evenly does his system balance the monism and dualism of his predecessors, in fact, that it becomes difficult to label it as one or the other. Perhaps it was this perfect ambivalence, we shall conclude, that made his philosophy—most especially its ethical program of purification and divinization—irresistible to many of his successors.

1.1 Pythagorean Cosmology

Little is known about Pythagoras himself, and the religious devotion he inspired in followers throughout antiquity has made it difficult to separate fact from fiction in their accounts of him. Yet most agree that he was born on Samos—near the Ionian coast—sometime in the middle of the sixth century B.C., and that in approximately 530 he established a colony of followers in Croton, on the coast of southern Italy. This society persisted at least a century; the school of thought it initiated continued through much, if not all, of antiquity.³¹ “The Pythagorean tradition admits of a wide range of philosophical ideas and interests,” warns Carl Huffman, “and we should be wary of assuming a rigid set of philosophical dogmas accepted by all Pythagoreans.”³² What united them, it seems, was a way of life. Speaking not of Pythagoreanism exclusively but of ancient philosophical schools more generally, Pierre Hadot has concluded that they were each united by “the choice of a certain way of life and existential option which demands from the individual a total change of lifestyle, a conversion of one’s entire being.”³³ We shall examine the conversion expected of Pythagoreans when we come to our section on their psychology, but in the meantime we should note, again with Hadot, that “this existential option, in turn, implies a certain vision of the world.”³⁴ Let us try, then, to reconstruct the vision of the world—a dualistic vision—shared by most Pythagoreans.

We must first be wary of confusing the so-called Neopythagoreanism of Roman times, which produced most of the extant accounts,³⁵ with the pristine Pythagoreanism of the sixth and fifth centuries B.C. Walter Burkert has convinced most scholars that the version of Pythagorean philosophy preserved in later antiquity was the product of Plato and his school.³⁶ Peter Kingsley has disputed Burkert’s point, arguing that Plato, especially in his myths, offers both as faithful and as eclectic a record of early Pythagorean ideas as does any other source,³⁷ but we may avoid this difficult controversy by limiting our sources to those who either preceded Plato or would have been aware of any Platonic distortions of the tradition, if such distortions ever occurred. Two authors will prove especially helpful: Philolaus of Croton (ca. 470–390), who was the

only pre-Platonic Pythagorean to publish their doctrines, and Aristotle, who knew Plato well enough to distinguish pre-Platonic Pythagoreanism from his own teacher's appropriations and elaborations of it.³⁸

The Pythagoreans are now most widely known by the theorem which bears their name. Ironically, though, the 'Pythagorean' theorem was discovered by the Babylonians a millennium or more before the birth of Pythagoras.³⁹ Borrowing from the East their knowledge not only of mathematics but also of harmonics and astronomy, the Pythagoreans introduced into Greece the arithmetic regularity of plucked strings and the geometric patterns of orbiting stars.⁴⁰ In harmonics, for example, they took strings of different materials and showed that they could always produce the same chords so long as they maintained the same ratios of their lengths: 2:1, for instance, sounded a note and the same note an octave higher; 3:2 and 4:3 sounded the fifth (e.g., C-G) and the fourth (e.g., C-F) respectively.⁴¹ This fact suggested that qualities, like sound, could be reduced to quantities, and that mathematics revealed the secret order of the cosmos. As a symbol of this order, they revered the so-called "tetractys (fourness) of the decad," an equilateral triangle of sides four units long. For by arranging ten pebbles as a triangle, placing one at its apex, two in the second row, three in the third, and four in the fourth, they symbolized the harmonic ratios: 4:3, 3:2, and 2:1.⁴² Of all the special meanings which they assigned to numbers,⁴³ the cosmic significance they devoted to four and ten thus appears most readily understandable.

According to some accounts, Pythagoras was the first to use *kosmos* to speak of the heavens, although other sources attributed the coinage to Anaximander or Anaximenes.⁴⁴ Whoever used it first, the word signified both order and ornament, an ambiguity from which we derive both 'cosmic' and 'cosmetic.' For the Greek philosophers who adopted this word and made the *kosmos* the object of their inquiry, this ambiguity helped them conceive the universe as both ordered and beautiful. The Pythagoreans specifically believed this *kosmos* to express a *harmonia*.⁴⁵ The extent of this belief becomes more intelligible once it is recognized that *harmonia* not only came to mean 'harmony,' as we know it from music, but also preserved its original meaning: 'joint,' 'fitting together,' or 'composition.'⁴⁶ The Pythagoreans thus believed that the spheres of the heavenly bodies sounded a musical harmony corresponding to the mathematical ratios of their composition.

As we should expect from our brief discussion of the tetractys of the decad, there had to be ten such bodies, because the Pythagoreans thought "the number ten is something perfect and encompasses the entire nature of numbers."⁴⁷ The precise identity of all ten is unclear, as is the status of cosmic fire among them.⁴⁸ What is clear about fire, in particular, is that Philolaus placed it both at the boundary of the cosmos and at its center.⁴⁹ This boundary fire was indisputably the stars; the central fire may have been that of the underworld.⁵⁰ Pythagorean inhabitants of volcanic Sicily and southern Italy were well situated to observe such fire, as Kingsley argues, and the association between the fire of the stars and the fire under the earth will become important when we come later to Empedocles' notorious leap into Mount Etna. In the meantime,

wherever exactly they placed their central fire, the Pythagoreans believed it was orbited by the other heavenly bodies harmoniously—which is to say, with both mathematical regularity and musical beauty.⁵¹ According to their legends, in fact, only Pythagoras himself could hear this music; though it surrounds us all, we notice it no more than does a blacksmith the habitual noises of his shop.⁵²

Less fancifully, they believed that everything, both in the heavens and below, exhibited mathematical ratios. “All things that are known have number,” wrote Philolaus, “for without this nothing whatever could possibly be thought of or known.”⁵³ Numerical form, in other words, is necessary for intelligibility. Whether or not the Pythagoreans also considered it sufficient for existence, and what it would mean if they did, is a matter of controversy. According to Aristotle, they believed “the whole heaven (*ouranos*) . . . is numbers.”⁵⁴ Since they equated *ouranos* and *kosmos*, as we have seen, this was to say that they believed the cosmos to be numbers. In the same vein, writes Aristotle, they believed “number was the substance of all things,”⁵⁵ and that “sensible substances are formed out of it.”⁵⁶ Huffman rejects Aristotle’s testimony on this point, especially when it comes to the particular equation of the number one and the substance of the central fire.⁵⁷ It is “impossible to imagine that he [Philolaus] confused the arithmetical unit with the central fire,” he writes, “for if he did, his arithmetical unit is more than a bare monad with position; it is also fiery and orbited by ten bodies.”⁵⁸ But as odd as this equation may seem to us, Charles H. Kahn sees no reason to doubt Aristotle’s report of it,⁵⁹ since it does agree with Philolaus’ own statement that “the first thing fitted together, *the one in the center of the sphere*, is called the hearth.”⁶⁰

More generally, if Aristotle’s report is correct, and number really was for the Pythagoreans the substance of all things, they believed numerical form to be what he called the *archē*, or principle, of the cosmos. This technical term is one component of Aristotelian philosophy that will help us to appreciate the novelty of Pythagoreanism, another is his account of the four causes: material, formal, efficient, and final.⁶¹ According to this account, for example, the form or shape of a house is easily distinguished as a cause not only from the house’s matter (its wood and nails), but also from both its efficient and its final cause. The efficient is a builder—or, more specifically, what it is that makes a builder a builder: his craft (*technē*) of building.⁶² At the very least, the final cause is shelter. This four-fold scheme may not apply to Aristotle’s predecessors as neatly as he thought it did, but there is nonetheless value in adopting it and then reading, along with him, the history of early Greek philosophy as a gradually more accurate approximation of it.⁶³

Beginning with the Milesians in the sixth century, as we have seen, most of the early Greek philosophers isolated some one thing to be “that of which all existing things are composed and that out of which they originally came into being.”⁶⁴ Their principles were at first purely material, although far from inanimate. Each exhibited something active. Anaximenes, for instance, said that his air rules the whole cosmos, “just as our soul, being air, holds us together and controls us.”⁶⁵ Thus the Milesians (from Aristotle’s perspective) proffered causes that were simultaneously material and efficient. Not long after the Milesians,

Xenophanes made earth and water the generative material principles of the cosmos,⁶⁶ but also, as we saw, he stated that one *theos* (god) “shakes all things by the thought of his mind.”⁶⁷ As early as the sixth century, then, Greek philosophy became acquainted with the notion of a distinct efficient cause. Later, in the fifth century, Anaxagoras would develop it further. In the beginning, according to him, “all things were together.”⁶⁸ Nothing was apart from this primal cosmic mixture except *nous* (thought). It remained pure and then began rotating the cosmos in order to “set in order all things.” With this rotation, Anaxagoras effectively equipped the one god of Xenophanes with a mechanism of movement—centrifugal force.⁶⁹

Plato would later appropriate Anaxagoras’ pure *nous*, as we shall eventually see, making it heed the final cause of the cosmos.⁷⁰ This final cause was his Form of the Good, a Form of the abstract Forms that were Plato’s formal causes, but not entirely his innovation. For even if Huffman is right that the Pythagoreans believed numerical form only to order things which exist independently (rather than constituting their substance, as Aristotle reports), their use of number introduces formal causes into Greek philosophy.⁷¹ After all, the Pythagoreans showed that harmonies were not to be explained by appeal to the matter of plucked strings but instead to the ratios—that is, to the numerical form—of these strings. In anticipation of Plato, however, we should notice that the Pythagoreans also seem to have reified their numbers. The first integer, recall, was the one in the center of the sphere, the central fire. But it is not the only *one*. “There are many ones in the cosmos,” writes Kahn, “but the *first* one is the central fire.”⁷² Plato’s Forms will lead a similarly double life. There are many instances of beauty in the world, but the first beauty, so to speak, is that of the Form of Beauty. Like Platonic Forms, Kahn concludes, Pythagorean numbers are “both universals and privileged particulars.”⁷³

In his later years, Plato would also adopt the most important of the Pythagoreans’ numerological distinctions.⁷⁴ They considered each number to be one of two types: *apeiron* or *peperasmēnon*—indefinite or defined; alternately, as most translators prefer, unlimited or limited.⁷⁵ According to Huffman, this obscure distinction, rather than number itself, was primary in Philolaus’ system.⁷⁶ After all, he began *On Nature*, the book in which he scandalously divulged Pythagorean doctrines, with this sentence: “Nature in the cosmos was composed out of unlimiteds [*apeirōn*] and limiters; both the cosmos as a whole and everything in it.”⁷⁷ Kahn has explained this obscure distinction by recalling the Pythagoreans’ use of pebbles to generate numbers, introducing space or void between them. “The same process that generates the numbers,” the Pythagoreans may have reasoned, “will generate geometrical solids and the visible heavens.”⁷⁸ Though obscure, this claim helps make sense of one still more obscure. Aristotle wrote that the Pythagoreans imagined “the world inhaling also the void which distinguishes the natures of things, as if it were what separates and distinguishes the terms of a series.”⁷⁹ Perhaps, then, the central fire, the one at the hearth of the cosmos, inhaled the void, the way fire must inhale the air, and thus generated the other numbers, which is to say, the cosmos.

Recalling the Pythagoreans' musical investigations, Cornford offered another way of understanding the obscure distinction between limit and unlimited. Taking the unlimited continuum of sound made by strings of indefinite lengths, he suggested, the Pythagoreans imposed limit on it by fretting their strings according to definite ratios. They thus produced the harmonies already described. In doing so, "the unlimited is no longer an orderless continuum; it is confined within an order, a *cosmos*, by the imposition of Limit."⁸⁰ There were many unlimiteds according to the Pythagoreans, not simply the one *apeiron* of Anaximander. Limiting their unlimiteds—or defining their indefinites—the Pythagoreans not only posited two sets of principles, they moralized them. Thus Aristotle: "evil belongs to the unlimited, as the Pythagoreans conjectured, and good to the limited."⁸¹ In so doing, they introduced into Greek philosophy a cosmic and moral dualism that emerges more fully in another report of Aristotle. "Others of this same school," he wrote, "declare that there are ten principles (*archai*), arranged in parallel columns ...

limit	unlimited
odd	even
one	plurality
right	left
male	female
at rest	moving
straight	bent
light	darkness
good	evil
square	oblong ⁸²

We cannot be sure of the list's rationale. The selection of opposites and their arrangement have puzzled commentators, beginning with Aristotle himself.⁸³ No scholar since has successfully explained the whole list, although progress has certainly been made to explain some of the opposing pairs.⁸⁴

The simplest such example is the opposition of square and oblong. Since numbers were concrete arrangements of pebbles, or figures, the number 2 was considered oblong, since two pebbles form a rectangle (of dimensions 2 x 1); by contrast, the number 4 was a square (2 x 2).⁸⁵ The ratio of its sides was thus 2/2, or 1. In fact, square numbers always exhibited the ratio of 1: 2/2, 3/3, 4/4, etc. Limited in this way, their ratios differed from those of the oblong numbers, which exhibited unlimitedly many ratios: 2/1, 3/2, 4/3, etc. In one stroke, then, we see a connection between *square*, *limit*, and *one*, all of which are ranked together in the first column of the Pythagorean table of opposition; correlatively, we see the connection between *oblong*, *unlimited*, and *plurality*, which are ranked together in the second.⁸⁶

Unfortunately, no early text illuminates the Pythagoreans' reason for assigning light and darkness to their respective columns, but Cornford offers a plausible hypothesis: "Light is the medium of truth and knowledge; it reveals the knowable aspect of Nature—the forms, surfaces, limits of objects that are

confounded in the unlimited darkness of night.”⁸⁷ For the Pythagoreans, then, as harmony is good, so too is light; and as cacophony is bad, so too darkness. Simultaneously, it would thus appear, they introduced into Greek philosophy the canonical contrast between light and darkness,⁸⁸ and with it an ethics that enjoined specific actions that promoted light and eschewed darkness. The importance of this particular contrast to the thought of Plato cannot be overestimated, and we shall examine it when we come to him. Now is the time, however, to notice the correspondence between this Pythagorean contrast and the dualism of Zoroastrianism.

1.2 Eastern Precedents

“Ormazd was on high in omniscience and goodness,” begins the Zoroastrian cosmogony, or *Bundahišn*; “for boundless time He was ever in the light.”⁸⁹ Against this good god was ranged Ahriman, the evil, who “was abased in slowness of knowledge,” and “darkness is his place.”⁹⁰ Although this sharp contrast between good and evil, light and dark, corresponds neatly to the cosmological dualism of the Pythagoreans, difficult problems of chronology interrupt any confident assertion of influence. After all, the so-called *Greater Bundahišn* dates from the late ninth century A.D., more than a millennium after the early Pythagoreans we have been discussing. But as Prods Oktor Skjærvø writes in his contribution to this volume, these late texts “encapsulate the orally transmitted knowledge of the priests of that time and so contain material that reaches far back into the history of Zoroastrianism.”⁹¹ More specifically, as M. L. West observes, the *Bundahišn* is a commentary “on the *Dāmdāt Nask*, one of the lost portions of the Avesta, presumably dating from the Achaemenid period,” which began a generation before Pythagoras formed his society.⁹²

Other scholars trace the *Avesta*, and thus Zoroastrianism’s cosmogonic dualism, much further back.⁹³ Even though it is the oldest text of this ancient religion, it was not written down until the sixth century A.D. It records a long oral tradition, however, and studies of its dialect argue a much earlier date of composition. Skjærvø concludes that “on the basis of linguistic considerations it is possible to assign its oldest parts to the second half of the second millennium B.C.E. and the later parts to the first half of the first millennium.”⁹⁴ Not all scholars agree with this use of linguistic considerations to date either the *Avesta* or the life of Zarathustra (whom the Greeks called ‘Zoroaster’). S. A. Nigosian, for example, thinks they are unreliable and that therefore “the tradition of placing Zoroaster at about the seventh to sixth centuries BCE may have to be allowed to stand.”⁹⁵ Whatever the merits of these linguistic dating methods, and whether or not the Greek tradition of dating Zoroaster to the seventh or sixth centuries is correct, all scholars—even those of antiquity—agree that Zoroastrianism arose early enough to have influenced Pythagoreanism. In the Roman era, several authors went so far as to claim that Pythagoras himself studied under Zoroaster, or at least the Persian Magi.⁹⁶ This story goes back to Aristotle’s student, Aristoxenus,⁹⁷ who apparently wrote that “Pythagoras went to Babylon and learnt from Zaratas that Light and Darkness were the male and female principles from which the world was created.”⁹⁸ Even if the tradition were baseless, as W. K. C. Guthrie

observes, “at least it is evidence that a resemblance between the Greek and Persian systems was remarked by the fourth century.”⁹⁹

Their resemblance is not limited to a cosmos divided between good and evil, light and dark. Skjærvø distinguishes Zoroastrianism’s *two* dualisms: the *cosmogonic* dualism we have been discussing (“two primordial entities: the one good, the other bad”), and another, *cosmic*, dualism (“the world of thought and that of living beings”).¹⁰⁰ These two divisions are linked by the fact that both worlds were created as battlegrounds for the war between the two primordial entities, their minions, and the humans who must choose sides.¹⁰¹ The Zoroastrians chose the side of the good and imagined themselves fighting on his behalf by the correct performance of rituals designed to keep the evil at bay. According to the logic of these rituals, “the world of thought contains ‘models’ (*ratus*) for all things in the world of living beings,” and in the daily sacrifice “these ‘models’ in the world of thought are re-assembled and arranged by means of their representatives in the world of living beings in order to produce a ritual microcosmic model that will then contribute to the regeneration of the ordered macrocosm.”¹⁰² These ‘models’ resemble in some ways Pythagorean numbers. The *one* of the central fire was a sort of model for the many inferior *ones*, as we saw,¹⁰³ and Pythagorean rituals, invoking the *tetractys*, symbol of cosmic order, very likely aimed to promote a similar regeneration in agreement with their own cosmological dualism.¹⁰⁴

Zoroastrian rituals were as ubiquitous as the cosmic battle. By the medieval period, observes Jamsheed K. Choksy, “every action came to be regarded as either opposing the Evil Spirit or aiding him, for it was dictated that all acts and deeds were either meritorious works or sins, with there being no neutral functions.”¹⁰⁵ But even in antiquity, Zoroastrians sought to achieve in mundane life “purity of thought (*humata*), word (*hukta*), and deed (*huvarashta*).”¹⁰⁶ Although espousing no world-denying asceticism,¹⁰⁷ since our world was supposed to be home to the forces of light as well as the forces of darkness,¹⁰⁸ the *Vidēvdāt* prescribed many rules for avoiding pollution.¹⁰⁹ Most important were those concerning the disposal of corpses.¹¹⁰ Nearly as important was avoiding certain bodily substances when they became separated from the body and thus ‘died’: “skin, saliva, breath, cut nails and hair, blood, semen, the products of menstruation, urine, and feces.”¹¹¹ Contact with each had to be avoided as carefully as contact with a corpse. “After hair was cut and nails were pared,” for instance, “they were taken separately to a desolate spot at least ten paces from human beings, twenty paces from fire, thirty paces from water,” in order not to defile these sacred elements.¹¹²

From just this sort of ritual Pythagoreanism may have inherited its own peculiar prohibitions, some of which were recorded by Aristotle in his *On the Pythagoreans*.¹¹³ “Don’t . . . stand upon your nail-and-hair-trimmings,” went one of these prohibitions.¹¹⁴ Of course, the Pythagoreans and the Zoroastrians have not been the only groups to share taboos against bodily products; every culture finds one or another threatening and ‘dirty.’ In her book on the subject, *Purity and Danger*, Mary Douglas presented the purity rules of

biblical Jews and of Indian Brahmins,¹¹⁵ among other groups, concluding that “there is no such thing as dirt; no single item is dirty apart from a particular system of classification in which it does not fit.”¹¹⁶ Dirt, in other words, is disorder,¹¹⁷ and order is restored by purification.¹¹⁸ Moreover, writes Douglas, “order implies restriction; from all possible materials a limited selection has been made and from all possible relations and limited set has been used.”¹¹⁹ Purification should thus be a matter of limiting the unlimited, since “disorder by implication is unlimited, no pattern has been realized in it, but its potential for patterning is indefinite.”¹²⁰ Although she neglects to mention them, no group could more neatly epitomize Douglas’s theory than the Pythagoreans, for whom the cosmological dualism of unlimited and limit serves as the perfect background against which the soul is purified, as we shall see in the next section, by mathematical study and self-restraint.

In the meantime, let us consider two additional Pythagorean prohibitions: “don’t wipe up a mess with a torch, don’t commit a nuisance towards the sun.”¹²¹ These peculiar taboos become more understandable when we assume an Iranian influence. To the Zoroastrians, after all, “fire, represented especially by the sun, is regarded as a symbol of divine purity.”¹²² *Vidēvdāt* 8 says that a fire fed with fragrant sandalwood will slay thousands of demons, and yet it is vulnerable to defilement by contact with garbage.¹²³ *Yasna* 36 invokes fire, both the fire here below and that of the sun, as “the most beautiful form of forms.”¹²⁴ Not only would Zoroastrians have avoided wiping up a mess with a torch, their “religious practice dictates that it [fire] should always be kept thirty paces away from carrion, fifteen paces from the polluting gaze of menstruating women, and three paces from excrement.”¹²⁵ Protecting both fire and himself from impurities, then, the Zoroastrian waged daily skirmishes in a great cosmic battle. “In every sphere and in every situation demanding a decision between two opposites,” as we have seen, “human beings have to make a choice between these two principles.”¹²⁶ The ultimate reward for those who have sided with the good principle—Ohrmazd, or, as he was originally known, Ahura Mazda—is eternity in his divine company. “The souls of the just proceed to the golden thrones of Ahura Mazda,” reads the *Vidēvdāt*.¹²⁷

Besides the Pythagorean resemblances to Zoroastrianism we have noticed so far—their moralized cosmological dualism, their contrast between light and dark, their belief in abstract models for the material world, and some of their taboos—we have yet to discuss a final resemblance: the importance they both accorded to purity of thought. We shall not come to this resemblance until the next section. For now, let us emphasize that the credibility of the hypothesis of a Zoroastrian influence on Pythagoreanism is based not solely on these resemblances, but also on the growing contact between Greeks and Persians. Since the ‘Orientalizing’ period of the seventh century B.C., Greeks had been adopting artistic styles from the Near East and Egypt, showing their wide diffusion not only as artists but also as merchants, mercenaries, and craftsmen.¹²⁸ This diffusion brought them into contact with the mythology and astronomy of the older civilizations. Thales’ prediction of the eclipse in 585 B.C., for example, has traditionally been used to mark

the beginning of Greek philosophy.¹²⁹ But Thales stood on the shoulders of giants, owing his astronomical success at least in part to the ancient records of Babylon.¹³⁰ Besides their astronomical data, he may also have borrowed from the Babylonians their idea of water as a cosmic principle. “When Apsû primeval ... mingled their waters together.”¹³¹ So begins the Babylonian cosmogonic poem, *Enuma Elish*, “with a description of the watery chaos that preceded the formation of the universe.”¹³² Whatever his sources, Thales shows no trace of Zoroastrianism. The Persians would not conquer Babylon until 537, by which time Thales was very likely dead. But before that, in 546, they controlled many of the Greeks of Asia Minor.¹³³ There is good reason, then, to believe that Zoroastrianism would find its way into Greek thought shortly afterwards.

Aside from their fundamental similarities, though, the Pythagoreans differed from Persian—and even traditional Greek—religion on at least two important points. First of all, they posited not personal gods but the impersonal opposites of limit and unlimited. This difference was typical of Greek philosophy, even from its earliest period, when Milesian philosophers largely rejected the anthropomorphism of Homer and Hesiod, and fashioned a cosmos ruled instead by impersonal substances and forces. The Pythagoreans’ spirit of abstraction thus argues an affiliation with Miletus as much as with Iran. But in a second respect the Pythagoreans differed from all three—from Zoroastrianism, the epic poets, and also the Milesians. For the Pythagoreans taught the transmigration of souls, a doctrine which they likely drew from even further East.¹³⁴ In time we shall come to transmigration—otherwise known as reincarnation (between species), or by its Greek name, *metempsychōsis*—but not before noticing earlier correspondences between Greek philosophy and the East that make the case for westward influence more plausible.

We have already mentioned Thales’ use of Near-Eastern astronomy for his prediction of an eclipse, and of its mythology for his abstraction of a cosmic principle. His successor in Miletus, Anaximander, seems to have borrowed the Iranian astronomy which “placed the stars nearest the earth, then the moon, then the sun.”¹³⁵ But when it came to a cosmic principle, he proposed one still more abstract than water. This indefinite he described as “deathless and indestructible,” declaring it “to contain all things and steer all things.”¹³⁶ All these things—the many, as they would be called—“perish into the things out of which they come to be, according to necessity, for they pay the penalty and retribution to each other for their injustice in accordance with the ordering of time.”¹³⁷ In order to find precedents for these doctrines, as M. L. West has also argued, we must go beyond Mesopotamia, to India, where monism rather than dualism dominated cosmological thought.¹³⁸

“As a unity only is It to be looked upon,” *Brahman*, the principle of the cosmos, “this indemonstrable, enduring Being.”¹³⁹ So reads one of the earliest Upaniṣads, the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*, which most scholars date to the eighth or seventh centuries B.C., placing it well before the emergence of Greek philosophy.¹⁴⁰ From other Upaniṣads we learn that their cosmic principle, like Anaximander’s, “is not born, nor dies.”¹⁴¹ Yet this is only the most generic of their resemblances. More specifically, *Brahman* is “the One

embracer of the universe,”¹⁴² the “One controller.”¹⁴³ Indeed, says the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* again, it is without qualities and wholly indefinite (*neti, neti*—not this, not that).¹⁴⁴ Like Anaximander’s indefinite, moreover, it exacts retribution from whoever succumbs to the illusion of independent qualities and existence. For “there is on earth no diversity,” and “he gets death after death, who perceives here seeming diversity.”¹⁴⁵ With diversity an illusion, and unity their only reality, the Upaniṣads are preoccupied with the problem of reconciling real unity with the appearance of change and diversity—the so-called problem of the one and the many.¹⁴⁶ This problem was also a focus of much Presocratic philosophy, which was almost entirely monistic.

This similarity between early Greek and early Indian philosophy is but one of the many catalogued by Thomas McEvilley;¹⁴⁷ nor has he been the only scholar to do so. As we have seen, West has shown that Thales was not the last of the Presocratics to absorb religious ideas from the East, especially from Persia and India. After presenting unmistakable parallels between the Heraclitean and Upaniṣadic cycle of the elements, for instance, he remarks “that the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* alone throws more light on what Heraclitus was talking about than all the remains of the other Presocratics together,” even though “it is a long walk from Ephesus to India.”¹⁴⁸ To explain this influence, however, we need not imagine anyone making such a trek, for McEvilley has also enumerated far more plausible routes of transmission.¹⁴⁹ In the ‘Orientalizing’ period of the seventh century, for example, Greeks adopted artistic styles from the Near East and Egypt, showing their wide diffusion not only as artists but also as merchants, mercenaries, and craftsmen.¹⁵⁰ While such ventures would not have brought Greeks so far as India, it would have brought them into intermediate territories.

In the mid-sixth century, the Persians began to unify these territories, eventually bringing both Greeks and Indians under one rule. Herodotus thus relates the story of Scylax, from his home region of Caria, who not only navigated the Indus river for Darius in 517, but later wrote a widely read book about his voyage.¹⁵¹ Several years earlier, however, Darius came to power and commissioned the Behistun inscription, which listed the territories he had inherited. One of these was Gandhāra, whose capital, Taxila, was likely where the author of the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, Uddālaka, trained.¹⁵² Darius’ empire thus encompassed, at its eastern edge, a center of Upaniṣadic study, and, at its western, the cradle of Greek philosophy—the coast of Asia Minor. This region included not only Miletus, but also Xenophanes’ Colophon, Heraclitus’ Ephesus, Anaxagoras’ Clazomenae and even Pythagoras’ Samos. By his influence on the affairs of this island, in particular, Darius demonstrated a salient example of the sort of “diffusion event that could have brought Indian traditions through the Persian court and into the center of a Greek philosophical school with lightning-like speed.”¹⁵³

Darius would later send there as ruler, complete with Persian retinue, a certain Syloson, who was the brother of Polycrates, the former tyrant of the island who had been killed by a Persian satrap in 520.¹⁵⁴ This disastrous influx of Persians to his native island would not have affected Pythagoras directly; he had

emigrated in 530 to escape the tyranny of Polycrates.¹⁵⁵ But when the tyrant was killed, Darius summoned his famed personal physician, Democedes of Croton, to the Persian court, where he kept him under house arrest to treat the royal family.¹⁵⁶ After curing the Queen of an ailment, Democedes was allowed to participate in a Persian reconnaissance mission around Greece and South Italy, where he escaped and returned to his hometown. Since physicians were often indistinguishable from philosophers in antiquity,¹⁵⁷ and this was especially true of the Pythagoreans, it would not be at all surprising if Democedes spoken with them when he returned, or even joined their society.¹⁵⁸ He could thus have transmitted to their society Indian medical ideas he may have learned from Gandhāran physicians who were likewise detained in the Persian court,¹⁵⁹ since “a seemingly Indian physiology which Plato knew was also known to Pythagoreans.”¹⁶⁰

It is far from our task to elaborate this physiology; we should nevertheless add this salient route of transmission between India and Greece to others that included imperial displacements of whole populations,¹⁶¹ conscription of subjects into royal building projects,¹⁶² and finally, in the Persian court itself,¹⁶³ cultural confrontations such as the following one recorded by Herodotus:

During Darius’ reign, he invited some Greeks who were present to a conference, and asked them how much money it would take for them to be prepared to eat the corpses of their fathers; they replied that they would not do that for any amount of money. Next, Darius summoned some members of the Indian tribe known as Callatae, who eat their parents, and asked them in the presence of the Greeks, with an interpreter present so that they could understand what was being said, how much money it would take for them to be willing to cremate their fathers’ corpses; they cried out in horror and told him not to say such appalling things.¹⁶⁴

In addition to such official encounters, it is possible, though not likely, that mendicant Indian seers made it to Greece themselves. Aristoxenus believed that an Indian yogi had come to Athens to visit Socrates.¹⁶⁵ According to the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, upon recognizing that one’s inmost self (*ātman*) is but a drop in the ocean of the cosmic principle (*Brahman*), “one becomes an ascetic.”¹⁶⁶ Desiring only this self “as their home,” it adds, “mendicants wander forth.”¹⁶⁷ Ordered to wander forth, then, yogis may have brought asceticism into Greece itself, or at least into neighboring territories.

By one route or another, however, early Greek philosophers seem to have learned of Indian cosmology and psychology, rather than the other way round. Focusing on the doctrine of reincarnation shared by the Indians and the Pythagoreans, McEvelley shows how “in Greece this doctrine seems to have appeared in the seventh or sixth century with little or no sign of development,”¹⁶⁸ in works with other Eastern elements, and remained culturally isolated from the dominant religion of the epic poets. The Indian version, by contrast, “seems to have crystallized in the seventh century, after a series of developmental stages involving the progressive synthesis of a number of elements from different sources.”¹⁶⁹ This synthesis

produced the following tripartite structure: reincarnation (*saṃsāra*), according to merit (*karma*), bringing ultimate escape (*mokṣa*) from the cycle of birth and death.

For good conduct in this life, thus, after death we may find ourselves in the womb of an upper-caste mother; for bad, in “the womb of a dog, or the womb of a swine.”¹⁷⁰ With supreme merit—which is a matter of thought and purity—a seer may escape rebirth altogether: “he, however, who has understanding, who is mindful and ever pure, reaches the goal, from which he is born no more.”¹⁷¹ Specifically, he achieves this goal, *mokṣa*, by recognizing that diversity is illusion, for “there is on earth no diversity,” and “he gets death after death, who perceives here seeming diversity.”¹⁷² By recognizing this illusion as such, a seer sees finally that *ātman* is *Brahman*. But this recognition comes only after having exercised “restraint of the breath, withdrawal of the senses, meditation, concentration, contemplation, absorption.”¹⁷³ This six-fold technique, or *yoga*, aims to achieve a purification of thought. “With effort he should cleanse it,” namely thought, for “if thus on *Brahman* it were fixed, who would not be released from bond?”¹⁷⁴ Thinking purely of the principle of the cosmos, in other words, brings liberation from the prison of embodiment. Thinking purely, in short, one becomes divine: “even the gods cannot prevent his becoming thus, for he becomes their very self.”¹⁷⁵

As we shall see, this rough outline of the eschatology of the Upaniṣads matches that of the Pythagoreans. Even to skeptical scholars, India has thus seemed their most plausible source.¹⁷⁶ “That an Ionian of the sixth century,” writes Burkert, “should assimilate elements of Babylonian mathematics, Iranian religion, and even Indian metempsychosis doctrine is intrinsically possible.”¹⁷⁷ More recently, scholars have become more confident of this pedigree. “The only religious tradition in which the doctrine of transmigration is at home from a very early period is that of India in pre-Buddhist times,” writes Kahn, so “we can at least see that the ... legend of Pythagoras’ journey to India in search of the wisdom of the East may very well contain a grain of allegorical truth.”¹⁷⁸ However, the case for Indian influence upon the Pythagoreans rests not simply upon their adoption of the doctrine of transmigration, but also upon its precisely similar tripartite structure. As McEvelley has noticed: *saṃsāra* becomes *metempsychōsis*; *karma* becomes *katharsis*; and *mokṣa* becomes *lūsis*.¹⁷⁹

1.3 Pythagorean Psychology

Xenophanes famously said that Pythagoras interceded on behalf of a beaten puppy with these words: “Stop, don’t beat him, since it is the soul of a man, a friend of mine, which I recognized when I heard it crying.”¹⁸⁰ This belief in *metempsychōsis* linked the cosmological dualism of the Pythagoreans with their psychological dualism. For only by aligning one’s soul with the good side of the cosmic divide, only by practicing purification (*katharsis*), could one ensure a better incarnation in one’s next life. Even when better, embodiment of any kind was still bad. “The soul has been yoked to the body as a punishment,” wrote

Philolaus, “it is buried in it as though in a tomb.”¹⁸¹ The Pythagoreans taught that only persistent *katharsis* from life to life would permit one an escape (*lusis*) from the tedious cycle of reincarnation altogether.

A Byzantine encyclopedia of ancient lore, the *Suda*, claims that it was Pherecydes of Syros (sixth century B.C.) who introduced the doctrine of reincarnation into Greece.¹⁸² His father’s name, Babys, “belongs to a group ... which are certainly of Asiatic origin,”¹⁸³ and this is but one of several puzzle-pieces assembled by West to argue that Pherecydes imported into Greece Iranian and Indian doctrines, not least of which was reincarnation.¹⁸⁴ Wherever he acquired it, this belief encouraged later biographers to make him the teacher of Pythagoras.¹⁸⁵ But in the fifth century, a Pythagorean named Ion of Chios wrote that Pherecydes, “even in death has a delightful life for his soul, if indeed Pythagoras was truly wise about all things.”¹⁸⁶ Although open to several interpretations, this passage likely means that Pherecydes had been good in this life, and therefore received a delightful afterlife because that is the reward of the good—just as Pythagoras taught. That the soul transmigrates according to the merits or demerits it has achieved in its former life appears to have been the eschatology of the fifth-century Pythagoreans, as well as of Pythagoras himself.

Accordingly, this doctrine surfaces in the work of two fifth-century poets who wrote on Sicily, near enough to the Pythagorean colonies of southern Italy to have been influenced by their doctrines.¹⁸⁷ The first of them was Pindar (518–438). Though not himself a Pythagorean, while on Sicily he wrote an ode for the Olympic victory of Theron of Akragas in 476. This poem, the second Olympian Ode, begins with a reference to Heracles, “and maintains the general theme of the hero right through to its mystical passage,”¹⁸⁸ in which Pindar elaborates an eschatological myth that includes multiple reincarnations, punishments, and (for those who have kept their oaths) eternal “company with the honored gods.”¹⁸⁹ In another poem, lost but for a fragment quoted by Plato, Pindar has Persephone reward the souls of the dead according to the atonement they have tendered her in life. According to scholarly reconstruction of the myth from later Orphic sources, the original sin of all humans was our creation. Born from the ashes of wicked Titans—whom Zeus had smitten with his thunderbolt after they had eaten Dionysus, his son by Persephone—we inherited the mixture of evil and good present in these ashes.¹⁹⁰ We thereby became mixtures of good and evil, and the aim of Orphic cult would naturally have been the purification of the one from the other. Whatever our ancestral debt, however, Pindar has Persephone reward the good among us with a better life in our next incarnation.¹⁹¹

A more elaborate Pythagorean eschatology can be found in the writings of a second poet of the fifth century, Empedocles (ca. 492–432), a resident of Akragas who, according to Diogenes Laertius, even studied among the Pythagoreans.¹⁹² Eulogizing Pythagoras, he called him “a man of immense knowledge, who had obtained the greatest wealth of mind.”¹⁹³ Indeed, he added, Pythagoras could remember his past incarnations, and thus “easily saw each and every thing in ten or twenty generations.”¹⁹⁴ Claiming the same clairvoyance for himself, Empedocles said that he had already been a girl, a bush, a bird, and a fish—though perhaps not

in that order.¹⁹⁵ For he imagined a hierarchy of animals and plants in which souls were reincarnated according to their merits. As he told it, the best animal to become was a lion; the best plant, a laurel.¹⁹⁶ Best of all incarnations, moreover, was that of a human. Only as a human, presumably, could one act to purify oneself, and assiduous purification would bring the ultimate reward: life beyond the cycle of reincarnation. One of the gradual developments in Indian eschatology described by McEvilley is the replacement of an early version, according to which the soul progresses through all the species randomly (thereby recognizing that *ātman* is *Brahman* by dint of longsuffering experience), with a later version that includes early escape for those humans who recognize this by dint of contemplation.¹⁹⁷ Like the other Pythagoreans who espoused transmigration, Empedocles describes a version of the later sort. Without any extant record of indigenous development, then, the doctrine seems to have arrived in Greece already formed.

The likeliest source is India, as we have seen, but in order to understand Empedocles' own particular adaptation of transmigration we must first explain his dualistic cosmology, which owes more to Persia. Two forces compete for supremacy in his cosmos, Love and Strife, which mix and separate its stuff in alternating cycles.¹⁹⁸ "If we said that Empedocles in a sense both mentions, and is the first to mention, the bad and the good as principles," wrote Aristotle, "we should perhaps be right."¹⁹⁹ This paradigm of early Greek dualism also epitomizes the philosophical spirit that sought divinization through purification of thought. Empedocles imagined a stage in his cosmic cycle, the stage in which Love dominates, when everything is intermingled and the cosmos forms one giant sphere. This sphere is "merely a mind, holy and unutterable, rushing with rapid thought over the whole world."²⁰⁰ Although the individual soul was originally unified with this intelligent sphere of Love, Strife has separated it, imprisoning it in a body.²⁰¹ Here it is doomed for a certain time to wander the earth—no less than "thrice ten thousand seasons"²⁰²—preserving a divided allegiance.²⁰³ While incarcerated and in exile it may act to promote either the Strife that cursed it or the Love from which it originally sprang.²⁰⁴ "Two fates or spirits take over and govern each of us when we are born,"²⁰⁵ we must choose between them.

Not surprisingly, Empedocles enjoins his readers to attend to Love in their thought.²⁰⁶ Those who do so, recalling the Zoroastrian mantra, "think friendly thoughts and perform deeds of peace."²⁰⁷ Such deeds preclude eating meat and having sex. "The bodies of the animals we eat," he believed, "are the dwelling places of punished souls."²⁰⁸ To eat them would therefore be murder, possibly even patricide or matricide.²⁰⁹ As for sex, it favors Strife rather than Love, ironically, because it coöperates in the construction of more human bodies in which souls may be imprisoned.²¹⁰ Pitched between Love and Strife, then, the reincarnated soul participates daily in a cosmic contest. To favor Love is to seek purification—for which reason the practical side of his poetry was known as *Katharmoi*.²¹¹ But these 'purifications' are matters not just of action, but also of thought. By thinking divine thoughts, the convert to Love imitates the pure thought that

reigns when the cosmos is one giant sphere. “Happy is he,” Empedocles thus wrote, “who has gained the wealth of divine thoughts.”²¹²

Beyond mortal happiness, Empedocles promised divinization. Those humans who had lived nobly, as “prophets and poets and physicians and princes,” (incidentally, Empedocles’ own professions), “arise as gods, highest in honour.”²¹³ Having lived piously and justly, then, having fully purified their souls, they escape the cycle of rebirth and possess happiness for eternity, “at the same hearth and table as the other immortals, relieved of mortal pains, tireless.”²¹⁴ By several accounts, Empedocles may have symbolized his own such purification and divinization by casting himself into Mount Etna. Examining this peculiar story, which has generated ridicule since antiquity,²¹⁵ Peter Kingsley has decoded its complex synthesis of Pythagorean eschatology and magic. The volcano, for example, offered not only the ritual significance of purification by fire but also a gateway to both the fiery underworld below and the fiery heavens above.²¹⁶ Still more peculiar than the volcano was the shoe it spewed forth after Empedocles dove into its crater. “This one bronze sandal,” writes Kingsley, “was the chief ‘sign’ or ‘symbol’ of Hecate who, as the ‘controller of Tartarus’ and mediator between this world and the next, grants the magician access to the underworld.”²¹⁷ Empedocles anticipated his purifying death by claiming escape from the cycles of reincarnation even while he lived: “I go about you an immortal god, no longer mortal.”²¹⁸

His Pythagorean eschatology thus reproduced the tripartite structure of the Indian doctrine—*metempsychōsis* upon death, *katharsis* in increasingly noble human lives, and *lūsis* after one’s final incarnation as a prophet, poet, physician, or prince. As such, it marked a sharp departure from the eschatology of the Homeric epics. For example, the Homeric soul (or “shade,” *psychē*) emerges as something distinct only after death, never entering another body but persisting only as something insubstantial and miserable in Hades.²¹⁹ Achilles would famously rather “slave on earth for another man—some dirt-poor tenant farmer who scrapes to keep alive—than rule down here over all the breathless dead.”²²⁰ Inverting Achilles’ lament, then, the Pythagoreans preferred to this life another—whether it was the chance to purify oneself further in another bodily existence, or an escape from mortal bodies altogether. It thus appears ironic, at first, that Pythagoreans often practiced medicine, the art which aims to make our time in mortal bodies both longer and more comfortable. Empedocles, for instance, promised to teach “all the potions which there are as a defence against evils and old age.”²²¹ But also, he wrote, “you shall bring from Hades the strength of a man who has died.”²²² Mastery over old age was a part of his mastery over death, it would seem, and both were offensive to Homeric religion, which reserved true immortality for the gods.²²³ Indeed, immortality was for traditional Greek religion synonymous with divinity.²²⁴ Not even heroes were permitted more than the persistence of their name on earth and their shade in Hades. No heroes, that is, except Heracles and Dionysus.²²⁵

Their apotheoses helped humans imagine the same for themselves, and so it is not surprising that “the idea of imitating or identifying with Dionysus in later times often tended to go hand in hand with the idea of imitating Heracles.”²²⁶ For his part, Heracles earned a seat on Olympus for his extraordinary deeds, or ‘labors,’ and thus became, as Burkert writes, “a model for the common man who may hope that after a life of drudgery, and through that very life, he too may enter into the company of the gods.”²²⁷ Empedocles seemed to realize this hope, as Kingsley has noticed, since three of his purported deeds recapitulated Heracles’ labors: diversion of a river for the sake of cleansing,²²⁸ retrieval of someone’s soul from the underworld,²²⁹ and immortalization through fire.²³⁰ Heracles, however, had a traditional place in Greek mythology; Empedocles and the other Pythagoreans were newcomers. The arrival of these philosophical ‘heroes’ thus challenged the old precepts to avoid excess and to think mortal thoughts. “Nothing in excess,” declared the temple of Delphi. “Do not, my soul, strive for the life of the immortals,” wrote Pindar.²³¹ Thus, a mortal could never expect to imitate Heracles’ super-human accomplishments, but could perhaps wish for his retrieval of the soul from Hades, just as he was supposed to have retrieved Alcestis.²³² But “Pythagoreans are presented as practicing the ‘imitation of Heracles’ from the very beginning of Pythagoreanism in the West.”²³³ Heracles died on a funeral pyre and then, purified, entered the company of the gods. Empedocles’ immortal leap into Etna was not expected of every Pythagorean.²³⁴ However, by joining their company, or at least by beginning their ascetic preparation for pure thought, one could strive in this mortal life for the life of the immortals.

The cult of Dionysus encouraged similar hope, promising immortality and even divinity to its initiates. From burial sites throughout the Greek-speaking world, including southern Italy, archaeologists have exhumed gold plates that read “from a man becoming a god,” and, more mysteriously, “I am a kid who has rushed for the milk.”²³⁵ As Kingsley has observed, young goats were associated with Dionysus, “specifically in the context of suckling milk.”²³⁶ Moreover, this allusion was preceded by another: “I have made straight for the breast of Her Mistress, queen of the underworld.” This queen was Persephone, and the coincidence of her with Dionysus in an eschatological context evokes Orphic mythology.²³⁷ Before the initiate could rush for the milk of the underworld, Bacchic festivals in this life induced an ecstasy, or divine madness (*mania*), that presented the votary with a foretaste of divinization by making the votary and god one.²³⁸ Perhaps it is not so surprising, then, to learn that a work called *Bacchae* has been attributed to Philolaus, or that Archytas the Pythagorean “refers in his writings to details from Dionysiac ritual.”²³⁹

Nor were the Bacchic festivals and the Pythagorean societies the only alternatives available to fifth-century Greeks seeking intimacy with the divine. The Eleusinian mysteries, for instance, seem to have made similar promises.²⁴⁰ So too did the Orphics, who are difficult to distinguish from the Pythagoreans, in some ways; in other ways, from the worshipers of Dionysus.²⁴¹ In Euripides’ *Hippolytus* (429), for instance, Theseus scorns his son’s Orphic piety with words that reveal four features at odds with the Homeric religion

represented by the traditional hero: immortality, chastity, dietary restrictions, and literacy. “So you’re a companion of the gods,” Theseus spits sarcastically, “someone special?” First of all, the initiates of the cults claimed, as we have seen, the company of the gods: immortality at least, if not also unity with the divine. Secondly, chastity was one way that they distinguished themselves from others, a means of purification (*katharsis*). “So you’re chaste,” adds Theseus, “and pure of evil?” Hippolytus advertises his sexual purity in the portentous words of his opening speech.²⁴² Another means of purification was dietary restriction, especially vegetarianism. “Peddle your vegetables,” concludes Theseus, “and revere the smoke of your voluminous books.”²⁴³ The Orphics were not only vegetarians but also, finally, readers.²⁴⁴ Central to Homeric religion, by contrast, were animal sacrifice and ordered public festivals that preserved the oral tradition of bards.

“The characteristic appeal to books is indicative of a revolution,” observes Burkert; “the new form of transmission introduces a new form of authority to which the individual, provided that he can read, has direct access without collective mediation.”²⁴⁵ This revolution made Orphic religion and Pythagorean philosophy indistinguishable—to us, certainly, but also to ancient writers of the period. For example, Ion of Chios said that “Pythagoras composed some things and attributed them to Orpheus.”²⁴⁶ Herodotus wrote that the prohibition against burial in woolen clothing “accords with the Orphic and Bacchic rites, as they are called (though they are actually Egyptian and Pythagorean).”²⁴⁷ Ion’s claim argues an assimilation of Pythagoreanism and Orphism; Herodotus’s conflation of both with the cult of Dionysus, not to mention the Egyptians (at least when it comes to burial customs). That even contemporaneous authors could confuse them offers some consolation to the frustrated scholar.²⁴⁸ More importantly, it reveals the similarity of Pythagorean philosophy to the doctrines of contemporaneous salvation cults.²⁴⁹ No such confusion was made with the other philosophical movements of the period; nor was such a confusion possible. The novelty of Pythagorean philosophy lay in its blend with religion.²⁵⁰ “Every distinction they lay down as to what should be done or not done,” observed Aristoxenus, “aims at communion with the divine.”²⁵¹

Conversely, the novelty of Pythagorean religion lay in its blend with philosophy. Even though the Pythagoreans shared their ultimate goal with the salvation cults, their route to this goal was quite different. Whereas Eleusis promised immortality to those who had been initiated and had seen the holy objects, and whereas the Bacchics tasted unity with the divine in the midst of their revels, the Pythagoreans—and perhaps also the Orphics—favored small congregations whose asceticism was aimed at a purification of thought. Although the Zoroastrians also made the purification of thought one aim of their rituals and taboos, as we have seen, asceticism was foreign to them. Ascetic practices such as chastity,²⁵² vegetarianism,²⁵³ and the apparently related prohibition of bean-eating,²⁵⁴ must therefore be traced to another source. Since the doctrine of transmigration seems to stand behind them, at least in the case of Empedocles, they likely came from the same place as this doctrine—namely, India.²⁵⁵ Even if these particular ascetic practices be traced

outside Pythagoreanism and the Greek world, the ascetic impulse is nonetheless at home in their adapted variety of dualism. After all, asceticism is self-restraint, or self-limitation, and Pythagoreans venerated limit over against the unlimited. Cosmology thus matched ethical practice; dualism warranted a way of life.²⁵⁶ Alongside limit went harmony, moreover, whether of lyre strings or the music of the spheres. Musical and astronomical study were thus further means by which Pythagoreans sought to align themselves with the good over against the evil.

Ascetic restraint weakened the body while inquiry strengthened the soul, but study of the cosmos, in particular, not only strengthened the soul, it assimilated the one to the other. The correspondence between the two “very likely goes back in some sense and to some degree to Bronze Age Mesopotamia where the trail of the macrocosm/microcosm correspondence leads.”²⁵⁷ The Milesians take it for granted. Anaximenes, for instance, asserted that an infinite air ordered the cosmos just as breath orders our body.²⁵⁸ He also believed that the soul shares in the divinity of the cosmos itself, since “air is a god.”²⁵⁹ Although Philolaus did not divinize air, he did write that the cosmos “drew in from the unlimited time, breath, and void which in each case distinguishes the place of each thing.”²⁶⁰ As vatic as this doctrine appears, the idea seems to be that time, breath, and void are unlimited continua—like lyre strings—which, when limited by the imposition of boundaries from without, become quantities. No extant fragment connects this doctrine with the breath of the human body, but one does say that we resemble the quantified cosmos by virtue of our mathematical reason. For “mathematical reason,” wrote Philolaus, “inasmuch as it considers the nature of the universe, has a certain affinity to it (for like is naturally apprehended by like).”²⁶¹ In other words, our mathematical abilities show an affinity between our soul and the divine cosmos. By practicing mathematics in addition to self-restraint, then, the Pythagoreans sought to develop and augment this affinity.²⁶²

They thereby fomented a revolution that was simultaneously religious and philosophical. In philosophy, they justified a peculiar, even ascetic, way of life. In religion, they disregarded the religious precept to think mortal thoughts and instead enjoined their initiates to become divine through pure thought of the divine.²⁶³ As we have seen, this revolutionary quest for pure thought synthesized the contributions of several older traditions of philosophy and religion, both monist and dualist. From Miletus—and still further, from Babylon—they seem to have inherited their mathematics and astronomy; from India, their tripartite eschatology. Although both of these traditions were monistic, the Pythagoreans nonetheless integrated these elements into a dualistic cosmology they seem to have adapted from Persia. Unstable as it may have been, this roughly dualistic synthesis and the program of purification it enjoined—according to which one component of the human being was to eschew the body, and through repeated incarnations decide for limit against the unlimited, good against evil, light against darkness, becoming, in the end, divine—would exercise more influence over the subsequent history of Greek philosophy than any of its competitors. Many Greek philosophers would ignore this dualistic synthesis and its ethics,²⁶⁴ but both would be adopted, and then

adapted, by Plato, who would bequeath them to Aristotle, the Neoplatonists, and thereby to Augustine. Through this lineage would the Pythagorean revolution have its immortal effect on the thought of the West. Before coming to the next figure in this philosophical succession, Plato (427–347), we must briefly discuss the Pythagoreanism of his first teacher, Socrates (469–399).²⁶⁵

2.1 Socrates the Pythagorean

Aristophanes portrayed Socrates as a student of things beneath the earth and in the heavens,²⁶⁶ which is to say as a *physiologos*, or student of nature. This portrait offered plenty of opportunity for ridicule. After all, legend had it that the first of the *physiologoi*, Thales, “was gazing upwards while doing astronomy,” and was so oblivious of his situation that “he fell into a well;”²⁶⁷ and so, as Aristophanes’ Socrates stood gaping at the night sky, “a speckled gecko on the roof shat right on his head.”²⁶⁸ Anaximenes posited condensation and rarefaction as the mechanism by which air changed into other elements; to Aristophanes’ Socrates this mechanism explains only the farts of a gnat.²⁶⁹ Anaxagoras had *nous* rotate the cosmos in order to effect its separation into distinct things; in *Clouds* this rotation becomes the prosaic “whirling of the Celestial Basin.”²⁷⁰ Of all the *physiologoi* ridiculed by Aristophanes, Diogenes of Apollonia (460–362) has the most in common with this portrait of Socrates. “That which possesses intelligence,” he taught, “is what people call air, and all humans are governed by it and it rules all things.”²⁷¹ “The heavenly Clouds,” says Aristophanes’ Socrates, “grace us with our intellect.”²⁷² Consequently, he prefers to spend his time suspended in a basket: “hanging up my mind and mixing the minute particles of my thought into the air which it resembles.”²⁷³ According to Aristophanes’ Socrates, it would thus seem, suspension purifies thought.

But this Socrates is a condensation not only of the *physiologoi*, most of whom were monists, but also of the Pythagorean dualists and of the Sophists, who were largely silent on the fundamental constituents of the cosmos. We need not consider his Sophistry,²⁷⁴ but we cannot neglect his Pythagoreanism. Adept in musical theory, he asks Strepsiades to tell him “which measure is more aesthetically pleasing, the three-quarter beat or the four-quarter beat.”²⁷⁵ More importantly, he shows himself to be no stranger to the mystery cults. “Don’t worry,” he reassures Strepsiades as he prostrates him upon a sacred couch, crowns him with a wreath, sprinkles him with meal, and then recites over him an invocation of the Clouds—“it’s just part of the initiation rites.”²⁷⁶ Moreover, when Strepsiades asks one of Socrates’ students to clarify an obscure reference, the student says of the physical doctrines under debate in Socrates’ school: “Only students may be told such things. It’s the sacred law.”²⁷⁷ Such secrecy was the hallmark not only of the mystery cults, but also of the Pythagoreans. According to legend, in fact, Hippasus suffered either expulsion from the society or divine retribution in the form of a shipwreck once he had divulged Pythagorean secrets.²⁷⁸ Aristophanes’ Socrates thus seems as much a Pythagorean as a *physiologos* or a Sophist.

Plato's Socrates appears rather different—at first glance. “If anyone says that he learned something from me or heard something in private that all the others didn't also hear,” he says during his defense, “you may be sure he isn't telling the truth.”²⁷⁹ This challenge comes in the midst of his protest that he is not a teacher, as alleged in the unofficial charges, the slander which he must refute before even coming to the official indictment.²⁸⁰ Specifically, then, he is not a teacher like the Pythagoreans because everything he says he says publicly. He is not a teacher like the *physiologoi*, moreover, because their subject is one that he knows “neither a lot nor a little but nothing at all about.”²⁸¹ And he is not a teacher like the Sophists, finally, because he asks no fee, invites no students, and freely admits his ignorance of the subject some of them pretend to teach: virtue.²⁸²

In the end, Plato's Socrates is not a teacher of any sort because he proposes no doctrines, only questions.²⁸³ These questions are part of his notorious technique of “cross-examination,” the *elenchos*, which he has used as comfortably for years in the interrogation of politicians, artists, and artisans about the marketplace as he uses it now in the courtroom-refutation of Meletus. To submit to the Socratic *elenchos* required one to be ready to expose to scrutiny every thought about the most important matters, especially the virtues. Its goal was the harmonization of these thoughts. When he exposes a contradiction in the thought of a famous Sophist, for example, he asks him, “Which of these propositions should we abandon, Protagoras? . . . The two statements are dissonant; they are not in harmony with one another.”²⁸⁴ And Socrates submitted himself as thoroughly to this examination as he submitted his interlocutors. “It's better to have my lyre or a chorus that I might lead out of tune and dissonant,” he says to one of them, “than to be out of harmony with myself, to contradict myself.”²⁸⁵ In these analogies between music and thought, overtones of Pythagoreanism first become audible.

Like the Pythagoreans, additionally, Socrates considered the harmonization of thought his divine mission. Asked whether anyone were wiser than Socrates, Apollo's oracle had answered No. He was wisest who knew nothing grand, and distinguished himself from others only by the recognition of his ignorance. Human wisdom was of little account, as Socrates thus interpreted the oracle; it amounted to no more than this humble recognition.²⁸⁶ To convey his divine message to the Athenians, he subjected their cherished beliefs to the *elenchos*, purifying them of pretensions and dissonant contradictions.²⁸⁷ Cornford would later observe the connection of “the idea of the Socratic *elenchos* with the idea of *purification*.”²⁸⁸ And even Plato, near the end of his career, would write that “the *elenchos* is the principal and most important kind of *katharsis*.”²⁸⁹ As for his divine mandate to perform this *elenchos* upon himself and his fellow citizens, Socrates would never doubt it. “The god stationed me here,” he claimed at his trial, “to live practicing philosophy, examining myself and others.”²⁹⁰

Remaining within the Pythagorean tradition, then, Socrates advanced philosophy as the means of purification and even salvation—of the city, but more particularly of the soul. Urging his fellow citizens to

eschew wealth, honor, and the care of their bodies, he advised them instead to take care that “your soul (*psychē*) may be in the best possible condition.”²⁹¹ We have difficulty now, in the wake of the Pythagorean revolution he helped advance, to appreciate the novelty of Socrates’ advice. But in a culture still indebted to the Homeric epics, in which *psychē* was a miserable shade, pursuit of its best condition must have appeared strange.²⁹² Socrates nonetheless went to his death pursuing it, enjoining its pursuit, and believing that it could be achieved by obedience to Apollo and the demands of the *elenchos*.

Plato appears to have recognized shortcomings in the latter, if not both. As for obedience to the gods in general, he too would enjoin proper reverence of them;²⁹³ indeed, should his injunction be disobeyed in the utopia he describes in *Laws*, the meet penalty is death.²⁹⁴ Plato’s reverence also included respect for oracles,²⁹⁵ and he would even fashion several divine myths of his own.²⁹⁶ Yet his vision for the philosophical life would carry it beyond Socrates’ posture of humble submission. In *Republic*, for instance, philosophers are to be not only “god-fearing,” but also as “godlike as human beings can be.”²⁹⁷ Following the Pythagoreans in this respect above all, then, Plato abandons the traditional precept to think mortal thoughts. His philosophers must transcend the Socratic recognition that “human wisdom is worth little or nothing.”²⁹⁸ (We shall return to this most important point when we conclude our discussion of Plato.)

Accordingly, the *elenchos* becomes insufficient. Interrogating his interlocutors about the virtues, Socrates illuminated their implicit commitments and thereby exposed their contradictions; however, his method alone could not decide which of their contradictory beliefs should be surrendered, which (if either) maintained. Socrates may have recommended consistency, but his *elenchos* alone could determine no truth. In *Gorgias*, in fact, Plato has him all but recognize this shortcoming. Speaking of his conclusions that it is better to suffer wrong than to do it, and that once caught it is better to pay the penalty than to escape unpunished—two conclusions that have survived his interrogation unrefuted—he nonetheless says, “I don’t *know* how these things are, but no one I’ve ever met, as in this case, can say anything else without being ridiculous.”²⁹⁹ The *elenchos* thus excludes absurdity by ensuring consistency; in order to yield knowledge, though, its practitioner had to supplement it with dogma, whether in the form of oracular conviction, traditional belief, or fabricated myth.

Plato elsewhere recognizes the danger of mistaking such unexamined dogma and then conforming everything else to it.³⁰⁰ He dramatizes this danger by confronting Socrates with two dynamic rivals—Calicles in *Gorgias*, and Thrasymachus in *Republic*—who claim that traditional beliefs about justice are but the products of power politics. “The people who institute our laws are the weak and the many,” fulminates Calicles, “and they assign praise and blame with themselves and their own advantage in mind.”³⁰¹ Thrasymachus adds defiantly: “justice is nothing other than the advantage of the stronger.”³⁰² Despite some differences, their critiques correspond to this extent at least: traditional beliefs about justice have been shaped by political and rhetorical manipulation. They are, as we might say now, false ideologies.³⁰³

Since the *elenchos* must draw upon traditional beliefs about justice and the other virtues, though, it cannot refute this critique without begging the question against it.³⁰⁴ If philosophers are to find truth outside ideology, therefore, they must transcend the *elenchos*. If they are to find purification and salvation by thought, consistency alone will prove insufficient. To remedy just these shortcomings, it would appear, Plato returns to Pythagorean topics. In *Meno*, for example, the discussion turns to mathematics,³⁰⁵ and not just to mathematics, but to a special case of the so-called Pythagorean theorem.³⁰⁶ Socrates interrogates this time not a politician, artist, or artisan, but a slave. Without any previous education in geometry, Meno's slave seems to learn the true dimensions of an eight-foot square, overcoming his prejudice that these dimensions were simply double those of a four-foot one. Socrates' questions have been instrumental in his success: first they expose the contradiction of his false claim to knowledge, and then eventually they lead him to recognize the correct answer.

Naturally it seems to us that the slave has *learned* and that Socrates has been his teacher. But our prejudices about knowledge prove no less mistaken than the slave's about mathematics. He cannot have learned the dimensions of the square, it turns out, since learning has been precluded by the so-called Meno paradox: we can never find what we seek to know unless we already know what we seek—otherwise we would seek in vain, never recognizing our object even were we to find it. Whether someone knows something or not, he cannot learn it: “he cannot search for what he knows—since he knows it, there is no need to search—nor for what he does not know, for he does not know what to look for.”³⁰⁷ But if learning is impossible, how has the slave deduced the eight-foot square's dimensions? Plato's peculiar answer to this question distinguishes *Meno* from the dialogues that appear to present a more historically accurate Socrates.

2.2 Plato's Synthesis

According to Aristotle, the historical Socrates asked questions but did not pretend to know the answers himself,³⁰⁸ sought universal definitions of the virtues but was unconcerned with nature as a whole,³⁰⁹ and did not hypostasize these definitions the way Plato would soon do.³¹⁰ Aristotle's report of Socrates resembles the portrait of him found in Xenophon's dialogues.³¹¹ In the group of Platonic dialogues thus labeled ‘Socratic,’ Socrates often interrogates someone who claims to understand a virtue until he reduces him to perplexity (*aporia*). Characteristically, in this group, he offers no answers of his own, nor does he widen the investigation to incorporate the whole cosmos. In a second group of dialogues, by contrast, he does, advancing positive doctrines—including doctrines of epistemology, ontology, psychology, and eschatology, which are most relevant to our inquiry. In the latest group, finally, from which the character of Socrates disappears almost completely, Plato rejects or at least reformulates these doctrines. The Platonic corpus is thus commonly divided into three groups.³¹²

Meno and most of the dialogues we shall discuss come from the second group,³¹³ where Plato weaves into the Socratic persona some of the Presocratic philosophies we have mentioned. These include the ontologies of Heraclitus and Parmenides, Anaxagoras's doctrine of *nous*, Hippocratic medicine, and even Sophistic rhetoric.³¹⁴ But more prominent than all of these elements is Pythagoreanism, with its denigration of body and exaltation of soul, its quest for divinity through purification, and finally its cathartic method: pure thought. For Plato, as we shall see, this thought is first of music, later of mathematics, next of immaterial form, and finally of the Form of Forms—the Good. By synthesizing all of these elements, his second group of dialogues thus elaborates Pythagoreanism, supports it with new and borrowed arguments, and then bequeaths it to subsequent philosophers in a version that will become, to many of them, irresistible.

The question raised by *Meno* remains: if learning is impossible, how has the slave deduced the eight-foot square's dimensions? By itself, Socrates' *elenchos* cannot have taught him mathematical truth, nor truth of any other sort; it serves only to expose inconsistencies. But with help from it as a mnemonic device—that is to say, with a number of leading questions that begin to look suspiciously like instruction—anyone can recollect knowledge already possessed but forgotten.³¹⁵ Famously, then, the slave has not *learned* the square's dimensions, he has *recollected* them.³¹⁶ As his lifelong master attests, however, he has never been educated in mathematics. He could not have acquired his knowledge in this life; he must therefore have acquired it earlier.³¹⁷

In *Meno*, Plato has Socrates introduce this epistemic solution upon the authority of unnamed priests and priestesses, but also, significantly, by invoking Pindar. In fact, he quotes the very fragment of Pindar's poetry we examined when we discussed Pythagorean eschatology.³¹⁸ "As the soul is immortal, has been born often and has seen all things here and in the underworld," Socrates concludes, "there is nothing which it has not yet learned."³¹⁹ Having learned everything in his past lives, he adds, "nothing prevents a man after recalling one thing only—a process men call learning—discovering everything else for himself."³²⁰ But a crucial point has been ignored. The *Meno* paradox should have rendered learning in former lives as impossible as it is in this one. Indeed, an infinite number of incarnations should have added nothing to the wisdom of a soul doomed to seek either what it knows and cannot learn, or what it does not know and cannot find.

As if to answer this objection, Plato in *Phaedrus* embellishes his eschatological epistemology by imagining a pure soul, unencumbered by a body, moving in a divine realm where it perceives directly "what is truly real."³²¹ The *Meno* paradox required of learning a search; direct perception obviates it: what we wish to know lies right before us. Denied this direct perception while still embodied here below, however, we must labor in indirect perception, using sensible things for "recollection of the things our soul saw when it was traveling with god."³²² What we saw while traveling with god will be explained shortly; for now we should notice that our means of recollection are not only the *elenchos*, as in *Meno*, but also the sensible world

itself—or at least those parts of it that reflect the true reality. “When he sees the beauty we have down here,” says Plato of the noblest type of soul, he “is reminded of true beauty.”³²³

According to this myth, before its conjunction with a body each human soul at least glimpsed what is truly real, whether true beauty or the true form of anything else known by us. Indeed, our glimpses of these forms distinguished our souls from those of animals; never having directly perceived forms, animals cannot recollect them, and are thus doomed to ignorance.³²⁴ Conversely, our direct perception has permitted us knowledge. Not every human soul was in the best possible condition when it perceived true reality, however; our levels of knowledge vary as a result of these conditions. Confidently including himself among those—the philosophical souls—who were in the best possible condition, Socrates says of true reality, “we saw it in pure light because we were pure ourselves.”³²⁵ Plato thus treats philosophy as a cult that purifies its devotees for “that blessed and spectacular vision ... the mystery that we may rightly call the most blessed of all.”³²⁶ By philosophizing, therefore, we become perfect enough to perceive directly the true forms, the “sacred revealed objects that were perfect, and simple, and unshakeable and blissful.”³²⁷ Unmistakable here is the language of mystery cults such as that of Eleusis; throughout the dialogue, moreover, we find the language of ecstatic rites such as Bacchic frenzy.³²⁸ The account of *philosophy* as purification, however, recalls the more intellectual tradition of Pythagoreanism.

This Platonic debt to the Pythagoreans emerges still clearer from *Phaedo*. Besides the dramatic hints of Pythagoreanism in this dialogue, we find music and mathematics featured prominently among the philosophical examples. Simmias, for instance, suggests that “the soul is a kind of harmony,” a harmony of the body’s elements.³²⁹ If so, it cannot be immortal, since it disappears once the body decays and its elements become discordant. Socrates rejects this hypothesis because it is incompatible with the epistemology of recollection. After all, if recollection is to occur, as in the case of Meno’s slave, the soul must have existed before the body. But musical harmony cannot exist before its instrument; neither, then, could the soul if it were a harmony of the body.³³⁰ But recollection is not simply taken for granted in *Phaedo*. Plato has Socrates defend it as vigorously here as he did in *Meno*, and his argument once again exploits a mathematical concept: equality.³³¹

We reason about equality, and speak of it, even though our bodily senses perceive no such thing. Although they do perceive many things we judge to be equal, these are equal only in some respects, at some times, or from some perspectives, whereas equality cannot be unequal in any way. Consequently, we cannot have acquired our knowledge of it by perception of the many equal things. None of them is sufficiently equal to be the standard of equality to which we appeal when we judge two things equal. We must, therefore, have had previous access to something without any mixture of inequality, something *purely* equal. This was none other than the Equal itself. But “our present argument is no more about the Equal,” adds Socrates, “than

about the Beautiful itself, the Good itself, the Just, the Pious and, as I say, about all those things to which we can attach the word ‘itself.’”³³²

Of all these ‘Forms’—as they have come to be known,³³³ thanks to Cicero’s translation (*forma*) into Latin—Plato describes Beauty in most detail. The dialogue devoted to it is *Symposium*, and, as in *Phaedrus*, the language is that of sacred rites. In his capacity as mystagogue, *Erōs* leads us to Beauty, “the final and highest mystery.”³³⁴ Plato informs us that “it always *is* and neither comes to be nor passes away, neither waxes nor wanes.”³³⁵ Such a description recalled Parmenides, who argued that being is one, ungenerated, and imperishable, “nor was it ever, nor will it be, since it is now, all together, one, continuous.”³³⁶ Indeed, Plato’s description removes Beauty from the sensible world described by Heraclitus—where opposites blend together, and the only stability is change.³³⁷ Beauty, writes Plato, is thus not “beautiful this way and ugly that way, nor beautiful at one time and ugly at another, nor beautiful in relation to one thing and ugly in relation to another.”³³⁸ Like Equality and all the other Forms, it cannot be perceived by the senses. Like them, in sum, it is “absolute, pure, unmixed, not polluted by human flesh or colors or any other great nonsense of mortality.”³³⁹

The terms of this description of a Form match those attributed in *Phaedrus* to the sacred revealed objects. Each was said there to be perfect, and simple, and unshakeable and blissful,³⁴⁰ as we have seen, but also “without color and without shape and without solidity, a being that really is what it is, the subject of all true knowledge.”³⁴¹ If there is to be any stability in the cosmos, but especially in our knowledge of it, then there must be these Forms.³⁴² They must be purely what they are, without mixture of anything else, without becoming anything else, without any of the movement, color, shape, solidity, or ‘pollution’ from the ‘nonsense’ of the changing material world. By thus separating Forms from matter—the one stable and pure, the other changing and mixed—Plato draws a starker cosmological distinction than did his Pythagorean predecessors. He thereby synthesizes the philosophies of other Presocratic predecessors, making the Parmenides the philosopher of real being, Heraclitus the philosopher of illusory coming-to-be:

You people distinguish coming-to-be and being and say that they are separate? . . . And you say that by our bodies and through perception we have dealings with coming-to-be, but we deal with real being by our souls and through reasoning. You say that being always stays the same and in the same state, but coming-to-be varies from one time to another.³⁴³

After the death of Socrates, according to Diogenes Laertius, Plato studied with a Parmenidean, Hermogenes, and his Heraclitean brother, Cratylus.³⁴⁴ Both appear as Socrates’ interlocutors in *Cratylus*, where Cratylus’ Heracliteanism, if not Hermogenes’ Eleaticism, is evident.³⁴⁵ Whether or not Plato studied these philosophies under quarreling brothers, he takes their rivalry very seriously. Indeed, the philosophical contest between

them—which flares most hotly in *Theaetetus*³⁴⁶—forges the basic distinction of Plato’s ontology: Form versus matter, Being versus coming-to-be.

As if conceding a draw, Plato adopted both views in *Republic*, although naturally he had to modify each. Departing from Parmenides’ austere monism, which fails to account for our apparent knowledge of distinct things, he seems not to suppose his Forms to be one, instead making them as many as are needed to account for each of the many things known. Nor does he adopt the perpetual flux and the subversion of opposition he saw in Heraclitus. After all, it is susceptible to several problems of which Plato is keenly aware. “It isn’t even reasonable to say that there is such a thing as knowledge,” he writes in *Cratylus*, “if all things are passing and none remain.”³⁴⁷ In fact, as he adds in *Theaetetus*, a whole new language would be required by this hypothesis, otherwise every utterance would prove equally correct.³⁴⁸ Going still further than his critics, it should be noted, Cratylus saw the futility of speech in a world where even meanings were unstable. Accordingly, wrote Aristotle, he “did not think it right to say anything but only moved his finger.”³⁴⁹ Finally, if all opposites were to blend together, so too would Form and matter, which Plato is intent upon distinguishing. Thus reserving Heraclitean chaos for the material particulars alone, and multiplying Parmenidean unities according to human epistemic needs, he next introduces an intermediary between Being and coming-to-be: the Pythagorean soul.

2.3 Plato’s Pure Thought

“When the soul investigates by itself,” writes Plato in *Phaedo*, “it passes into the realm of what is pure, ever existing, immortal and unchanging, and being akin to this, it always stays with it whenever it is by itself and can do so.”³⁵⁰ The Forms are pure because they have the properties of which they are Forms, but never their contradictories; they do not change according to respects, places, or perspectives; they are ‘by themselves,’ as Plato defines them.³⁵¹ Thus, for example, the Form of Equality is equal and has no inequality about it. By remaining separate from material particulars, which share contradictory properties, it remains purely equal. The soul, by comparison, is impure to the extent that it is not ‘by itself,’ but mixed with something that is not a soul, the body. It becomes pure, or more nearly so, when it “investigates by itself”—in other words, when it forswears the body and separates itself from the body’s realm of mixture and impurity.

As in Pythagoreanism and the mystery cults alike, so in Plato, “it is not permitted to the impure to attain the pure.”³⁵² In order to think of pure Forms, then, the soul must transcend the body, and this transcendence is the first stage of its purification. Citing the “language of the mysteries,” but also recalling Philolaus,³⁵³ Plato deems the body a prison, not to mention an evil infection, an inebriating contamination, and a source of discord.³⁵⁴ For, as matter, it is “most like that which is human, mortal, multiform, unintelligible, soluble, and never consistently the same.” The soul, by contrast, is “most like the divine, deathless, intelligible, uniform, indissoluble, always the same as itself.”³⁵⁵ The soul, in other words,

resembles the Forms. By thinking of them, it abandons the illusions of changing material particulars presented to it by the senses, and focuses instead on the unchanging Being accessible to its reason. *Phaedo* is thus the *locus classicus* not only of soul-body dualism, but also of the Pythagorean effort to purify the one of the other. *Katharsis* and its cognates, in fact, occur thirty-three times in the dialogue—more than once for every two pages of the Stephanus edition.³⁵⁶

The ultimate bodily transcendence is death. Although Socrates has hitherto heeded Philolaus' prohibition of suicide, then, once his death is required by law, and his *daimōn* makes no protest, he welcomes it.³⁵⁷ Incarcerated in a body, but forbidden to escape it by our own hand, Plato offers us an interim but fleeting transcendence through contemplation of Form. Philosophy thus becomes a training for death.³⁵⁸ Above all other studies, it eschews the senses and “bids the soul to gather itself together by itself, to trust only itself and whatever reality, existing by itself, the soul itself understands.”³⁵⁹ Only in total isolation from the material, Plato implies, can the soul become pure enough to enter the second stage of its purification: assimilation to the objects of its thought, the Forms. Plato experiments with several models of this assimilation; ironically, as we shall see, all of them are bodily.

2.4. Plato's Ambivalent Body

Three models of this assimilation of formal purity will emerge, and we shall examine each in turn. Their similarities tap the deepest currents—even cross-currents—of Plato's philosophy. For though this philosophy epitomizes contempt for the body, all three of these models are based, albeit metaphorically, on bodily processes. The first of them casts reason's assimilation of Form as sexual intercourse, the second as eating, the third as sight. After discussing the first two in enough detail to appreciate their ironic role as explanations, we shall focus primarily on the third. For sight is the model that Plato anticipates even in the other two, the one he develops most fully once he turns to it exclusively, and the one that plays the most ambivalent role in his thought.

In *Symposium*, Plato describes the ascent of a lover from the many beautiful things, including beautiful bodies, to the Form of Beauty.³⁶⁰ Along the way, the lover passes through the “beauty of knowledge,” and becomes a lover of learning, a philosopher. “The real lover of learning naturally strives for what is,” he writes in *Republic*; “he does not linger over each of the many things that are believed to be.”³⁶¹ The philosopher, in other words, is a lover of Form. Like any lover, he longs to be with his beloved. When he is finally in its presence, he looks on it not with the eye of the body, but with the eye of his soul: reason. “Do you think it would be a poor life for a human being,” once he has arrived before the Form of Beauty, “to look there and to behold it by that which he ought?”³⁶²

The philosophical lover, however, will not satisfy his passion with this beatific vision. He, and specifically his reason, are frustrated until “he *grasps* what the nature of each thing itself is with the element

of his soul that is fitted to grasp a thing of this sort because of its kinship with it.”³⁶³ The philosopher must grasp Form, and must do so now not with his whole soul, but with an element. In *Phaedo*, recall, the whole soul was akin to the Forms; according to *Republic*’s more refined psychology, though, this kinship has been explicitly limited to reason. However akin the soul and its reason are to Forms, they become more so by mixing with them.³⁶⁴ Exercising reason in pursuit of Form, in fact, the philosopher “has intercourse with what really is.”³⁶⁵ The union is not fruitless. Once he “has begotten understanding and truth, he knows, truly lives, is nourished, and—at that point, but not before—is relieved from his labor pains.”³⁶⁶ Metaphorically speaking, then, reason enjoys sex with Form. The offspring of this union is true virtue in *Symposium*; in *Republic*, understanding and truth.³⁶⁷ United with the pure, Plato therefore implies, the philosopher is purified of vice and ignorance, two conditions he elsewhere calls the worst impurities afflicting the soul.³⁶⁸

As a second means of the soul’s purifying assimilation of Form, Plato imagines the contemplation of Form as ingestion. With a double irony, he marshals the model in order to favor intellectual over bodily pleasures.³⁶⁹ According to it, bodily pleasure involves being filled with matter, and thus with a mixture of what-is and what-is-not, whereas intellectual pleasure is being filled with what-purely-is: Form. The pleasures of the table, for instance, consist of being filled with food. But, at the very least, food ceases to be food once it has been digested, unlike the Forms, which never change. As a result, the pleasures of the table cannot last; based upon the ingestion of impure mixtures, they are impure. The pleasures of ingesting Forms, however, are pure—as pure as the Forms themselves.³⁷⁰ The Form of Equality is purely equal, as we saw, and the Form of Beauty purely beautiful, etc. Respects, perspectives, and times make no difference to the Forms. Nourished with Form, Plato thereby implies, the soul assumes the purity of its nourishment. We become what we eat. Or rather, our souls become what they think. Eating, like sex, involves mingling and union. The third metaphor for the soul’s assimilation of formal purity, sight, is less intimate, and yet ultimately more important to the logic of Plato’s program of purification.

As he concludes this analogy between thinking and eating, the language of sight surfaces in his complaint about people who pursue only bodily pleasures. Oblivious of the Formal realm, and thus “never looking up at it,” they are “never filled with what really is,” and so live “never tasting any stable or pure pleasure.”³⁷¹ The pair of reason and sight feature more prominently in the use of the same model in *Phaedrus*. “A god’s mind is nourished by intelligence and pure knowledge,” he writes there, “as is the mind of any soul that is concerned to take in what is appropriate to it, and so it is delighted to be seeing what is real and watching what is true, feeding on all this and feeling wonderful.”³⁷² Only the philosopher’s soul rises to the intellectual heights from which it may join the gods and “gaze upon what is outside heaven,” namely the Forms.³⁷³ Although they are without color, shape, and solidity, they are nonetheless visible, but “only to reason [*nous*].”³⁷⁴

“Philosophy,” Plato tells us in *Phaedo*, “persuades the soul to withdraw from the senses in so far as it is not compelled to use them,”³⁷⁵ and the sense of sight does not escape his censure: “investigation through the eyes is full of deceit.”³⁷⁶ Elsewhere, however, Plato writes that “our sight has indeed proved to be a source of supreme benefit to us,” a gift of the god.³⁷⁷ We should not be surprised by this importance of sight, especially to the assimilation of Form, not only because it has emerged in both of the models we have just examined (sex and eating), but also because a connection between sight and the Forms has already been forged by Plato’s Greek. His favored terms for ‘Form’ are *eidos* and *idea*, words which are derivatives of *eidō*, a verb which means primarily ‘to see,’ but also, in the perfect tense, ‘to know.’ For Plato, then, sight appears to play an ambivalent role. His ambivalence may be traced back, first, to his Pythagorean predecessors, who esteemed the stars and yet scorned the bodily prison housing the eyes with which we see them. But their ambivalence we have traced still further back, arguing that they synthesized from India, on one hand, an ascetic contempt for the body,³⁷⁸ and from Persia, on the other, the reverence of fire, sun, and the light produced by both.³⁷⁹ This light distinguishes parts within an otherwise indefinite darkness, grants limit to the unlimited, and form to the formless; the Pythagoreans thus ranked it with the good.³⁸⁰ To Plato as much as to them, the celestial lights have special significance, dividing the dark heavens with their light but also with their numerical regularity:

Our ability to see the periods of day-and-night, of months and years, of equinoxes and solstices, has led to the invention of number, and has given us the idea of time and opened the path to inquiry into the universe. These pursuits, in turn, have given us philosophy, a gift from the gods to the mortal race whose value neither has been nor ever will be surpassed.³⁸¹

2.5 Plato’s Divine Light

At once both a propaedeutic to reason and a bodily capacity, sight stands on the border, so to speak, of Plato’s fundamental distinction—much like the sun which makes it possible. Between the visible (which both is and is-not) and the intelligible (which is “what purely is”)³⁸² stands the sun.³⁸³ For just as we see material particulars thanks to the rays of the sun, he claims, so too do we understand Forms thanks to the enlightenment produced by another Form, the Form of the Good. And just as the sun sustains visible things in being, by nourishing the plants and thus indirectly the animals as well, so too the Form of the Good sustains the other Forms, even that of Being. “The Good is not being,” but, says Plato, “superior to it in rank and power.”³⁸⁴ Likewise superior in *its* realm, the sun is not only, like all the other planets and stars, a god,³⁸⁵ but “an offspring of the Good and most like it.”³⁸⁶ Although visible, the sun thus rises by virtue of its filiation to the border of the invisible and intelligible.

By raising the sun to this sublime level, Plato is subtly drawing on an ancient religious tradition that exalted the sun as a god. The Greeks knew they shared this tradition not only with Persia but also with

Egypt,³⁸⁷ and in typical fashion they expressed their own reverence in poetry. The Homeric epics, for instance, consider the sun the god of sacred oaths; Hesiod, the expositor of crime. Aeschylus says that its light is blessed; Sophocles, that it beholds and nurtures all.³⁸⁸ In *Oedipus Tyrannus*, for instance, where symbols of light and dark play evident roles, he even has a Chorus call Helios “foremost of the gods.”³⁸⁹ Above all these Greek authors, writes James Notopoulos, “the poet par excellence of the sun and light is Pindar, Plato’s favorite.”³⁹⁰ “A dream of a shadow is man,” he writes; “but whenever Zeus-given brightness comes, a shining light rests upon men, a gentle life.”³⁹¹

While Plato follows Pindar in his esteem for light, as in his doctrine of reincarnation, for his theory of sight he follows the other poet associated with Sicily and Pythagoreanism—Empedocles.³⁹² In Empedocles’ general view of perception, like perceives like: “by earth we see earth, by water water, by ether divine ether, and by fire destructive fire.”³⁹³ Calling this ether divine, Empedocles remains faithful to the religious veneration of the sun and its light. But he also requires us to possess an inner source of ethereal light. Just as a burning lamp produces light by its internal fire, in our eyes, too, “the ancient fire, guarded in the membranes and fine tissues, lies in ambush in the round pupil.”³⁹⁴ Retaining the aqueous humor, these fine tissues nevertheless “let the fire pass through inasmuch as it is finer-textured.”³⁹⁵ This theory survived into the Renaissance—“He seemed to find his way without his eyes,” says Ophelia of Hamlet, “for out o’ doors he went without their helps, / and to the last bended their light on me.”³⁹⁶—largely because Plato adopted it in *Timaeus*, the dialogue that exercised preëminent philosophical influence in Western Europe for much of the Middle Ages.³⁹⁷

“The eyes,” Plato tells us there, “were the first of the organs to be fashioned by the gods, to conduct light.”³⁹⁸ And as in Empedocles, the light they conduct is in part their own. Accordingly, before adding that “like makes contact with like,”³⁹⁹ Plato writes:

Now the pure fire inside us, cousin to that fire, they made to flow through the eyes: so they made the eyes—the eye as a whole but its middle in particular—close-textured, smooth, and dense, to enable them to keep out all the other coarser stuff, and let that kind of fire pass through pure by itself.⁴⁰⁰

The eyes possess a light that is already pure, then. For in order to assimilate the light of the ethereal heights, they must share a similar purity. The heavenly gods, the stars of the firmament, have been made “mostly out of fire, to be the brightest and fairest to the eye.”⁴⁰¹ Purer still is the sun—for Plato, the Pythagoreans, and the Zoroastrians.⁴⁰² In order to see this purity, our eyes must shine with a spark of it. Lest this spark be dimmed by looking downward, where it will be mixed with dark earth, Plato enjoins us to look upward, rarefying it by the further assimilation of divine ether. Providently, his subordinate gods have made this a little easier,

placing our eyes in the head, the uppermost part of our body. There the organs of sight join their spiritual counterpart: reason.

Partitioning human anatomy as carefully as the philosopher-kings zone their city,⁴⁰³ the gods next ensured that “they had built an isthmus as boundary between the head and the chest by situating a neck between them to keep them apart.”⁴⁰⁴ The chest and flesh below house ambition and appetite, which always threaten civil war in the soul. If the first wins such a war, and begins to rule a soul with anger, this soul risks being reincarnated as a four-footed animal, since it will be “drawn more closely to the ground.”⁴⁰⁵ If appetite wins, in turn, the soul risks reincarnation as a snake, sinking still lower, and “crawling along the ground.”⁴⁰⁶ When reason remains supreme, however, it combines with sight to elevate the philosopher, both in body and soul. While reason gains mastery over him, in fact, he begins even in the present life to assume a more upright posture.⁴⁰⁷ This “most sovereign part of our soul,” another divine gift, “raises us up away from the earth and toward what is akin to us in heaven.”⁴⁰⁸

Combining sight and reason, astronomy becomes our means of elevation, a process that purifies both. The heavens revolve in a circle—or at least they appear to do so—and Plato, like most Greek philosophers, honored the circle above all other shapes.⁴⁰⁹ Once we have come to know the celestial revolutions and to calculate their cycles, Plato writes, “we should stabilize the straying revolutions within ourselves by imitating the completely unstraying revolutions of the god.”⁴¹⁰ Cosmological observations thus have salubrious effects on the soul, thanks to the regular cycles observed. “This kind of motion,” writes Plato in *Laws*, “bears the closest possible affinity and likeness to the cyclical movement of reason.”⁴¹¹ Fixed by its center, he notes, circular motion is “regular, uniform, always at the same point in space.”⁴¹² Like reason, then, it is “determined by a single plan and procedure.”⁴¹³ Similarly, in *Timaeus* we learn that gods fashion mortals by imbuing their bodies with “the orbits of immortal soul.”⁴¹⁴ Disturbed from birth by the passions and sensations to which flesh is heir, however, not until bodily growth declines do “the soul’s orbits regain their composure.”⁴¹⁵ Only then do they begin “to conform to the configuration each of the circles takes in its natural course.”⁴¹⁶ At this point, observation of the celestial revolutions hastens the conformity and makes reason more rational; in other words, it purifies it.

In concert with harmonics,⁴¹⁷ its Pythagorean sister-science, astronomy thus directs reason upwards, toward the celestial lights, the “gods” as Plato calls them elsewhere.⁴¹⁸ And yet this redirection must not be merely literal. After all, astronomical ratios are “connected to body,” since their subjects “are visible things.”⁴¹⁹ In fact, he ridicules satisfaction with the visible heights accessible to astronomy when superior but invisible heights may be achieved by dialectic.⁴²⁰ “No one will dispute our claim,” he writes, “by arguing that there is another road of inquiry that tries to acquire a systematic and wholly general grasp of what each thing itself is.”⁴²¹ Even the geometry-of-solids-in-motion, which Plato envisions as an astronomy purified of all visibles,⁴²² would still leave some of its basic concepts unexamined. It would never ask, for example,

whether Parmenides and Zeno were right and motion impossible. Dialectic alone investigates such questions; it alone dispenses with hypotheses, as Plato writes, and “journeys to the first principle [*archē*] itself.”⁴²³ By returning us to the *archē*, he returns us to the question with which Greek philosophy began. Plato’s *archē*, as it turns out, is the final revelation, the most sacred object, of his philosophical cult.

2.6 Dialectic and Divinization

Following Plato’s famous allegory of the cave, mathematics, harmonics, and astronomy lift us, the ‘cave-dwellers,’ out of the darkness of our ‘prison,’⁴²⁴ an incarceration that recalls the bodily prison of not only *Phaedo* but, originally, Philolaus.⁴²⁵ As the liberated ascend, in fact, they pass the wall behind which puppeteers have been parading statues in front of a fire—statues that cast the shadows they had taken for realities before their liberation.⁴²⁶ Cornford noticed the correspondence of this and the other stages of their ascent with the initiation rites of mystery cults, such as that of Eleusis, which involved torch-lit darkness and climaxed with the revelation of a sacred statue.⁴²⁷ Remembering also the passage of *Phaedrus* that compares the spiritual ascent into the realm of Forms with a similar revelation—the passage in which the soul is also said to be imprisoned in a body like “an oyster in its shell”—we cannot overlook Plato’s appropriation of cultic imagery, whether it be of Eleusis, the Orphics, or the Pythagoreans.⁴²⁸ Just as these cults sought union with the divine, Plato soon promises a sort of divinization to his initiates.

Their reason has been purified, but this eye of the soul is no more sufficient for intellectual sight than is the bodily eye for ordinary sight. No matter how clear and pure it is, if it is to see, it must be “turned around from darkness to light.”⁴²⁹ Dialectic effects the conversion. Mathematics, harmony, and astronomy begin by drawing ‘cave-dwellers’ out of their prison, but only with dialectic will they contemplate first the objects illuminated above, and then ultimately the source of their illumination.⁴³⁰ In the allegory, when someone emerges from the cave, once he has adjusted to the brilliant light he first sees “shadows most easily, then images of men and other things in water, then the things themselves.”⁴³¹ Therefore, just as his ascent from the cave involved stages—first recognizing the images projected on the wall as such, and then seeing the projectionists’ models as mere artifacts—so too does he proceed in stages when he arrives in the upper air. Of *Republic*’s three most famous analogies—the Sun, the Divided Line, and the Cave—the second marks these stages most clearly.⁴³²

Beginning with the Sun analogy’s distinction between two realms, and thus “a line divided into two unequal sections,” Plato asks us next to “divide each section—that of the visible kind and that of the intelligible—in the same proportion as the line.”⁴³³ The significance of these proportions has eluded commentators,⁴³⁴ but all are agreed that four subsections result and that each represents not only a stage of the cave-dweller’s epistemic ascent, but also the increasingly real objects which he exploits as he ascends. Apprehension of the first main section, the visible, happens with two inferior mental faculties: imagination

(*eikasia*) and belief or faith (*pistis*), the former devoted to apprehending images, the latter to their originals, physical objects.⁴³⁵ Apprehension of the second main section, the intelligible, happens with two superior mental faculties: discursive thought (*dianoia*) and thinking (*noēsis*).⁴³⁶ “Using as images the things that were imitated before” (namely, physical objects), Plato’s *dianoia* “is forced to base its inquiry on hypotheses, proceeding not to a first principle [*archē*], but to a conclusion.”⁴³⁷ In this way, as Plato observes, geometers rely on images of squares and diagonals in their proofs about them—for instance, their proofs that the diagonal is incommensurable with the side of the square—even though “they make their arguments with a view to the square itself and the diagonal itself.”⁴³⁸ The ‘square itself’ and ‘diagonal itself’ are, as we have seen, Plato’s ways of speaking of the Forms of square and diagonal, and Forms are his *archai*. Denied direct access to them, *dianoia* must use images of these intelligible Forms to make hypotheses about them. Its association with images distinguishes it from the ultimate epistemic stage, *noēsis*, which dispenses with images, and indeed with all representations.⁴³⁹

“A non-representationalist account of knowledge,” writes Lloyd Gerson, “holds that knowledge is a state in part constituted by the knowable, not merely caused by it.”⁴⁴⁰ Such a state is not readily understood by us in the wake of the scientific revolution, which provoked philosophers to develop the representationalist epistemologies that have dominated the field ever since.⁴⁴¹ According to them, roughly speaking, the mind is like a mirror, whose knowledge is an *image* or *representation* of reality. To non-representationalists like Plato and Aristotle, by contrast, the mind is more like a sponge, whose knowledge is an *assimilation* or *reception* of reality.⁴⁴² “Thinking [*to noein*]” says Aristotle, for example, “must be capable of receiving form.”⁴⁴³ This reception of form makes thinking—the highest form of knowledge for Aristotle—partially constituted by the knowable, the way a sponge is partially constituted by the water it has absorbed. Aristotle even goes so far as to say that “what thinks and what is thought are identical,”⁴⁴⁴ advancing the Pythagorean epistemology according to which like is known by like.⁴⁴⁵

As with so many other Pythagorean elements, this epistemology seems to appear in *Phaedo*. It makes explicit the suppressed premise of this dialogue’s so-called Affinity argument,⁴⁴⁶ according to which the soul must be immaterial because the Forms it knows are so: like can be known only by like. A non-representationalist epistemology, with its assimilation of known by knower, would also explain why knowledge, and especially philosophical knowledge, is supposed to purify.⁴⁴⁷ For when a philosopher knows a Form, according to this epistemology, he must somehow become identified with it. If he is not annihilated by this identification, he should assume the Form’s properties. Since Forms are pure, he ought then to be purified. Should the ideal philosopher know the Form of the Good, moreover, his purification would be total—especially if, as we shall see, this Form is the rational order of the cosmos. Consistent with the epistemology of the Divided Line, however, this ultimate identification must remain ineffable: description would taint non-representational knowledge with words. Hence there is method to Plato’s mystical madness.

Were you to reach its summit, he writes accordingly, “you would no longer see an image of what we are describing, but the truth itself.”⁴⁴⁸

Short of this revelation, Plato must resort to images. The ones he chooses to illustrate the direct apprehension of Forms, as we have seen, describe identification with them in bodily terms. Sex is unitive in a way that makes the boundary between agent and patient difficult to draw; eating is incorporative to the extent that it makes such a boundary impossible. The last of Plato’s images for knowledge of Forms is doubly ironic. In order to illustrate a relation that is free of images, he adduces the faculty of imagery: vision. Although it downplays total identification, this image exploits not only the religious echoes noted earlier,⁴⁴⁹ but, more importantly, the fact that vision can take in its object instantaneously as a unity. Forms, after all, are paradigmatic unities. Of the Form of Beauty, Plato says “it is always one in form [*monoeides*].”⁴⁵⁰ But beyond their individual unity, it seems, all the Forms are united in a super unity, a Form of Forms, the Form of the Good. For this Form is the “unhypothetical and the first principle [*archē*] of everything.”⁴⁵¹ Indeed, as we have seen, it ‘illuminates’ the other Forms so that they may be ‘seen,’ even though they too are *archai*, real beings and genuine objects of knowledge. “Not only do the objects of knowledge owe their being known to the Good,” writes Plato, “but their existence and being are also due to it.”⁴⁵² The Form of the Good thus presents at least three problems.

First of all, the additional unification of things that are always one in form “seems otiose.”⁴⁵³ After all, Plato has described Forms as being “themselves by themselves.”⁴⁵⁴ Why make these paradigmatic unities parts of a super unity? Secondly, and more seriously, if this super unity has the individual Forms as parts, how can it remain always one in form, for it too is a Form? And finally, how can the individual Forms remain grounds of both being and knowability,⁴⁵⁵ while also depending for their own being and knowability upon the Form of the Good? If we are to understand Plato’s Forms at all, then, we must try to understand this obscure source of intelligible light. We must try, in other words, to behold “the sun—not reflections of it in water or some alien place, but the sun just by itself in its own place.”⁴⁵⁶

Even Socrates trembles before such a task: “I’m afraid that I won’t be up to it and that I’ll disgrace myself and look ridiculous by trying.”⁴⁵⁷ Recent scholars, however, have shown no such trepidation. John Cooper, for example, suggests that the Good is rational order, since mathematics—which otherwise appears to be ethically neutral—helps lead philosophers to it.⁴⁵⁸ Plato himself says that “the excellence of each thing is something which is organized and has order.”⁴⁵⁹ Since the Good is something like the excellence of the whole cosmos, it should therefore be a supreme organization and order. Indeed, if we recall the anthropological conclusions of Douglas—according to which disorder is impure and evil; order pure and good—we should expect a benevolent god with to bring about a supreme cosmic order.⁴⁶⁰ And this is precisely what happens in the cosmogonic story of *Timaeus*. “The god wanted everything to be good and nothing to be bad so far as that was possible,” begins this story, “and so he took all that was visible ... and

brought it from a state of disorder to one of order, because he believed that order was in every way better than disorder.”⁴⁶¹

Assuming that the Good is indeed a supreme order, encompassing even the other Forms, Gerson has offered two reasons why Plato would have adopted such a view, one historical and the other more philosophical. First of all, Plato may unify his many Forms so as to join the quest for ultimate unity that animated the Milesians. “That the ultimate principles of reality should be an infinity of Forms,” adds Gerson, “must have seemed to the mathematically minded Plato intellectually intolerable.”⁴⁶² In other words, despite his separation of Form from matter, despite his pervasive allegiance to the Pythagorean dualists, and even despite his eventual agreement with the Zoroastrians that there was a malevolent god at war with the benevolent one just mentioned,⁴⁶³ Plato was nonetheless a monist. In our conclusion, we shall not only trace the history of this monism further back, but also expose the fundamental tension this history bequeaths to subsequent traditions, both philosophical and religious. In the meantime, let us consider the less historical, and more philosophical, reason that Plato unified even the individual Forms by one Form, the Form of the Good.

Secondly, suggests Gerson, if these many individual Forms remain altogether independent of one another, “if, say, the Form of Five and the Form of Odd are separate, there is no explanation within the theory of Forms of why instances of the former are always accompanied by instances of the latter.”⁴⁶⁴ The Form of the Good—as rational order—thus becomes, in the terms of more recent philosophy, “an ontological mirror of analyticity,”⁴⁶⁵ a feature of reality that explains why some truths are necessary. But this Form cannot be merely an arrangement of all the other Forms, lest it lose the unity characteristic of a Form.⁴⁶⁶ It must somehow remain simple, even as it integrates the individual Forms, grounding their being and knowability. Gerson suggests that the Form of the Good meets these apparently impossible requirements by being “*virtually* all of the other Forms.”⁴⁶⁷ In itself, in other words, the Good is a simple unity; as known by us, however, it appears multiple.⁴⁶⁸

Although this suggestion maintains the unity of the Form of Forms, it appears to do so by compromising the independence of the individual Forms. How can they remain grounds of both being and knowability, we asked, while also depending for their own being and knowability upon the Good? If Gerson’s suggestion is right, they do not so remain: the individual Forms lose their independence. This loss can be justified by another example of virtuality: “a function,” he writes, “is *virtually* all of its arguments.”⁴⁶⁹ A function grounds the being and knowability of its arguments, we might say (at least insofar as they are arguments). Analogously, then, “the objects of knowledge owe their being known to the Good;” moreover, “their existence and being are also due to it.”⁴⁷⁰ The Form of the Good is thus superior in rank and power to the other Forms,⁴⁷¹ in the way that a function is superior to its arguments: it is independent of them, while they depend on it.

While fruitful, Gerson's suggestion leaves one feature of the Good unexplained. Plato likely did join the Presocratic quest for the *archē* of the cosmos, and a Form of the Good that is all the Forms virtually has supplied a better candidate than any of its predecessors. But Plato also had Socrates complain in *Phaedo* that of all the Presocratics not even Anaxagoras, who made *nous* its *archē*, could provide the cosmos with a purpose.⁴⁷² Accordingly, C. D. C. Reeve has shed still more light on the Good by noticing how it provides an ultimate purpose to Plato's conception of craft (*technē*). Each particular craft aims at some particular good—as medicine, for example, aims at the good of bodies.⁴⁷³ Moreover, one craft often uses the products of another, so that the crafts as a whole form a sort of hierarchy. Now, in Plato's view, users alone have knowledge of “the *aretē* (virtue or excellence), the goodness and correctness of each manufactured item, living creature, and activity,”⁴⁷⁴ whereas producers have no better than true belief on such matters. Since everything—whether it be an artifact, action, or organism—has a natural purpose or use according to Plato, virtue and the rest are “related to nothing but the use for which each is made or naturally developed.”⁴⁷⁵ In the completely teleological cosmos he envisions, finally, these individual purposes somehow serve one architectonic, cosmic purpose.

“Only the god knows whether it is true,” adds Plato, with a humility often overlooked; “but this is how these phenomena seem to me.”⁴⁷⁶ And how do they seem? All explanation must be in terms of Form—this much he thinks he has proven.⁴⁷⁷ That all Forms have been ordered according to the best, though, remains for him a matter of hope. This teleological faith finds its most concise expression in Aristotle, who represents all crafts and inquiries as forming a natural hierarchy aiming at the good, with what he calls ‘first philosophy’ at the top.⁴⁷⁸ For Plato, only philosophers have been trained in the one craft, dialectic, that aims to discern this benign rational order.⁴⁷⁹ But, as he knew, only statesmen have the power needed to ensure that this craft is effective in the world.⁴⁸⁰ In *Republic*, famously, he unites the two.⁴⁸¹ The ideal philosopher, the philosopher-king, uses the results of the other crafts and orchestrates them in imitation of the cosmic order he has seen, digested, and ‘known.’⁴⁸²

Having thus achieved a synopsis of all knowledge, the hallmark of an authentic dialectician,⁴⁸³ the philosopher-king perceives the rational order of the entire cosmos. At the ultimate stage of the Divided Line, recall, this perception of Form was immediate, unmediated by representations, whether images or words. Beyond discursive thinking (*dianoia*), then, the philosopher achieves direct perception, non-representational thought (*noēsis*), of the most fully real. This most fully real is the Good, all the Forms virtually. Once the ideal philosopher has lifted the eye of his soul (reason) toward the radiant truth shed by it, then, his intellectual vision must be purified of all representations. Not only will he use “pure thought alone ... to track down each reality pure and by itself;”⁴⁸⁴ seeing the perfect harmony of these Forms, “he imitates them and tries to become as like them as he can.”⁴⁸⁵ Coming to resemble their rational order, in fact, he thereby

assimilates himself to the Form of the Good. Purified to this extent, finally, “the philosopher, by consorting with what is orderly and divine, becomes as divine and orderly as a human being can.”⁴⁸⁶

Whether he thereby becomes a full-fledged divinity, however, is at best unclear. Usually Plato is careful to specify that the philosopher becomes divine only “to the extent that human nature can partake of immortality,”⁴⁸⁷ so that he will possess “what Homer too called divine and godly when it occurred among human beings.”⁴⁸⁸ Such passages suggest that Plato intends ‘divine’ as an epithet of superlative praise. In other passages, though, he exalts philosopher-kings beyond human status, even if he does not quite divinize them. Those who have finished their tenure of service to the city, he says in one such passage, “will depart for the Isles of the Blessed and dwell there.”⁴⁸⁹ After they are gone, “the city will publicly establish memorials and sacrifices to them as *daimones*, if the Pythia agrees.”⁴⁹⁰ If she disagrees, they will be honored simply as “divine and happy people.”⁴⁹¹ His glorification of philosophers in *Phaedo* comes closer to divinization, where the soul of the voluptuary “can have no part in the company of the divine,” since it has been riveted to the body by its pleasures, not to mention its pains,⁴⁹² whereas that of the philosopher can “spend the rest of time with the gods.”⁴⁹³ Even if they do not become gods, then, by spending eternity among gods they become immortals, and to traditional Greek religion, as we have seen, this was sufficient for a claim to divinity.⁴⁹⁴

The eschatological myth that follows describes more exactly the blessed life that philosophers will enjoy in such company.⁴⁹⁵ Besides communicating with the gods in speech, they will breath pure ether, and see the “sun and moon and stars as they are.”⁴⁹⁶ Plato thus imagines divinization as a consummation of ethereal purity and celestial light. “That area is so bright,” however, “and the eyes of most people’s souls can’t bear to look at what’s divine;”⁴⁹⁷ naturally, then, admission must be restricted to those who can bear it, those whose life of pure thought has divested their thinking of images—inasmuch as this is possible for embodied persons—and thus prepared the eye of their soul for the brilliance and rarity of the place. The inadequate vision of the many whom these philosophical initiates leave behind recalls not only the dazzled emergence of the future philosopher-kings from the cave into sunlight, but also the longstanding mythological tradition according to which unaided humans were unable to look directly upon the glory of Zeus.⁴⁹⁸

In the ascension myth of *Phaedrus*, similarly, Plato allows that when some people die, their “soul becomes a companion to a god.”⁴⁹⁹ But in the tedious cycle of rebirth, only “if it is able to do this every time,” only if the weight of bodily concerns never again draws it back down to earth, will it remain among the stars and “always be safe.”⁵⁰⁰ For the Pythagoreans, remember, the soul transmigrated according to its merits.⁵⁰¹ So long as it strove for purity in each of its incarnations—whatever that might mean to a bird or a bush—it ascended with each one. Fully purified of all bodily taint, finally, the soul would reach the level of divinity, there remaining always safe from the danger of renewed pollution. Plato adopted this eschatology

more or less in its entirety.⁵⁰² Thus, the soul of the man who had striven for goodness throughout his life, “would at the end return to his dwelling place in his companion star.”⁵⁰³ Installing pure souls in the pure ether of the heavens, then, Plato enriches his educational stargazing with additional moral and religious significance. It is no wonder, once again, that astronomy stands near the summit of his program of purification and divinization.

We have already seen how this program advances that of the Pythagoreans. Beginning with their mathematics, harmonics, and astronomy, Plato not only adds dialectic to their curriculum, but also explains its supremacy with an unprecedented breadth and depth, synthesizing the insights, arguments, and methods of all his predecessors, monists and dualists alike. The most important components of this synthesis are his innovations in epistemology, ontology, and psychology. We have discussed the first two fields in some detail, but have mentioned the third only in passing. As far as psychology is concerned, we have seen how Plato adopts the Pythagorean division of the soul and body. We have also seen how he begins to distinguish within it a special part, reason, which assimilates itself to Forms in the process of purification and divinization. We have yet to see, however, the way in which he justifies this distinction, let alone how he divides the soul still further into three parts. Although this innovation also incorporates the thought of a predecessor—Anaxagoras’ *nous*—the psychological division it codifies is among the most novel and enduring contributions of Plato’s philosophy. Once we have exposed it and the integral role it plays in his program of purification and divinization, we shall conclude by summarizing the results of this chapter.

2.7 The Divided Soul

Plato’s first sustained discussion of the soul appears in *Phaedo*, a dialogue which in antiquity acquired the appropriate subtitle *On the Soul*. Just before Socrates is to die—a fact which heightens the pathos of the discussion—Plato has him argue that the soul is immortal. Destruction, he claims, is nothing but the dissolution of a composite into its parts. The soul cannot be destroyed, therefore, because it is an undivided unity, a partless simple. It must be so, in fact, since it is like “the things that always remain the same and in the same state,”⁵⁰⁴ namely, the Forms. Only among them does it feel at home; once with them, as we learned in our discussion of purification, “it ceases to stray and remains in the same state as it is in touch with things of the same kind.”⁵⁰⁵ These things are invisible, of course, and thus “can only be grasped by the reasoning power of the mind.”⁵⁰⁶ However, this reasoning power cannot be a separate part of the soul, since the soul must remain simple in order to be indestructible and immortal. In *Phaedo*, then, the soul seems to be identified with reason. Appetites and ambitions, insofar as they are mentioned at all, are products of embodiment.⁵⁰⁷ Plato’s first brand of psychological dualism, then, is between rational soul, on the one hand, and body, on the other.

Such dualism presupposes that the body can indeed produce other human motives, the irrational or non-rational ones. By the time Plato writes *Phaedrus*, however, he allows only the soul such production, since “this self-mover is also the source [*archē*] and spring of motion in everything else that moves.”⁵⁰⁸ This doctrine of motion is no passing fancy, but the crucial premise in Plato’s twilight campaign against materialism and atheism, a campaign he wages most openly in *Laws*. According to its argument—which anticipates Aristotle’s more famous one for god as the unmoved mover⁵⁰⁹—immaterial soul is superior to material body, as mover to moved; soul must therefore be superior, as god, to the whole material cosmos.⁵¹⁰ If the soul alone produces motion, including its own, the body is inert and incapable of producing rival motives. “Desire is not a matter of the body,” he thus writes in *Philebus*.⁵¹¹ “Every impulse, desire, and the rule over the whole animal,” he adds, “is the domain of the soul.”⁵¹²

Granting the soul powers beyond the rational ones that were its exclusive possession in *Phaedo*, then, in *Phaedrus* Plato represents reason colorfully as a charioteer, one who must keep his chariot on a true course by directing two powerful horses. One of these horses is white, “needs no whip, and is guided by verbal commands alone”⁵¹³—when, that is, it decides to follow the driver rather than impetuously disobeying. The other horse is black, sometimes disregards the whip, and “leaps violently forward and does everything to frustrate its yokemate and its charioteer.”⁵¹⁴ The first is a spirited element in the soul; the second, an appetitive—as we learn from parallel treatments of the soul in two other dialogues. In the ninth book of *Republic*, for example, Plato also represents the soul as tripartite, first likening reason to a little human being, then fusing this homunculus with both a lion and a many-headed beast in order to fashion a model of the soul.⁵¹⁵ As we learn from the less metaphorical psychology of the same dialogue’s fourth book, the lion represents a narcissistic element in the soul that produces ambition and then anger when it is frustrated, while the many-headed beast represents appetite and sexual passion. This precise partition of the soul is confirmed still further by *Timaeus*, in which, as already mentioned, each element inhabits a separate region of the body: reason, the head; ambition, the chest; appetite, the gut.⁵¹⁶ In all three dialogues, then, Plato appears to abandon the dualism of *Phaedo*, where a simple soul opposed its bodily prison. Despite appearances, however, the old dualism continues, only now in a more sophisticated form. Instead of a rivalry between soul and body, Plato internalizes his dualism even further, pitting reason against rivals within the soul itself.

The discussion of the soul in *Republic*, which is more thorough than any other in the Platonic corpus,⁵¹⁷ begins by articulating a premise that we may call the Principle of Non-Opposition—one which, but for a minor difference, anticipates Aristotle’s far better known Principle of Non-Contradiction.⁵¹⁸ According to this premise, “the same thing cannot do or undergo opposite things; not, at any rate, in the same respect, in relation to the same thing, at the same time.”⁵¹⁹ In words more suited to our purposes, if anything does or undergoes opposites in relation to the same thing, at the same time, we can conclude that it does so in

different respects. The principle withstands straightforward objections based upon physical examples. For instance, a man may be doing opposites (both moving and not moving) in relation to the same wall, at the same time, but he can do so only because he does this in two respects—that is to say, in two parts of himself. He moves with one part, his hands; he stands still with another, his feet.⁵²⁰

Now, as humans, we often experience conflicting motives in relation to the same thing, at the same time. Too often, of course, we follow the worst of them. The Greeks called this phenomenon *akrasia*,⁵²¹ and Plato first raised the philosophical problem posed by it in *Protagoras* and *Meno*.⁵²² In both of these dialogues, Socrates' so-called intellectualism—his belief that knowledge is both necessary and sufficient for virtue—required him to argue that *akrasia* is impossible, so that it is impossible to do anything other than what one considers to be best.⁵²³ In *Republic*, by contrast, Plato is able to avoid this paradoxical conclusion by introducing the Principle of Non-Opposition.⁵²⁴ In this way, whenever someone both wants to do something and at the same time does not want to do it, he can experience these conflicting motives in different parts of himself. An example helps to illustrate the claim.

Plato describes a man whose disease and suffering make him thirsty, but whose rational calculation of what is best—presumably under the influence of a Hippocratic physician⁵²⁵—motivates him not to drink.⁵²⁶ Pushed toward a drink by the one motive, pulled back by the other, such a man is like the archer who pushes away a bow with one hand, but draws its string with the other.⁵²⁷ The archer's conflicting motions are possible only because he has at least two parts to his body, two hands. The conflicting motives of the thirsty man are possible, correlatively, only because he too has at least two parts to himself. In *Phaedo*, Plato called these two parts body and soul, and would have cast *akrasia* as a victory of the first over the second, had he addressed it. But in *Republic*, as if anticipating the argument of the later dialogues that the soul alone is a source of motion, Plato never considers the body as an opponent to the soul.⁵²⁸ Instead, he assumes that these antagonistic motives are both produced by the soul. Applying the Principle of Non-Opposition to them, then, requires that they be produced by different elements within it. These different elements we may call the parts of the soul, and although the argument that divides them is not above criticism, it is difficult to resist.⁵²⁹ Without division of the soul, after all, conflict within it seems impossible. With at least two internal parts or elements, however, our *akrasia* becomes explicable: we may know what is best, thanks to one element; but another element remains oblivious of the best, gains mastery of our soul, and leads us to act against it.

Plato calls this oblivious part “the irrational and appetitive element,” saying that with it the soul “feels passion, hungers, thirsts, and is stirred by other appetites.”⁵³⁰ For this reason it is allegorically the rebellious horse, altogether heedless of its master's commands. But it is also the many-headed beast we have already mentioned, a beast “with a ring of tame and savage heads that it can grow and change at will.”⁵³¹ According to Plato, in fact, unless one of these heads—more literally, the particular appetites that dwell

within the appetitive part—has gained supremacy over the others and has regimented them according to its own agenda,⁵³² they will grow and change without pattern.⁵³³ Some will come into being from nothing, while others will disappear altogether. Characterized in this way, they begin to resemble the aim of their devotion: the Heraclitean realm of visible, material objects. These unstable mixtures of being and non-being offer impure pleasures, as we have seen.⁵³⁴ By exploiting the cognitive weakness of the bodily senses,⁵³⁵ they lure the soul into seeking all its satisfaction with them. When the appetitive element gains mastery in the soul, then, it orients the whole soul down toward these dark impurities. Thus hunched and enslaved, the soul remains heedless of the invisible yet brilliant rational order that it can neither perceive nor comprehend.⁵³⁶

To see this order, a soul must possess a “rationally calculating element.”⁵³⁷ In its calculations, however, this element seeks not just a theoretical, let alone a merely eschatological, acquaintance with rational order. As we have seen, its ultimate goal is a purifying assimilation in this life as well as the next. Since this order is none other than the Good, moreover, such purification cannot leave the soul’s practical life unchanged. Indeed, when reason gains mastery of someone and he consorts with the greatest of Forms, “only then will it become possible for him to give birth not to images of virtue (because he’s in touch with no images), but to true virtue.”⁵³⁸ Making goodness the goal as much of his action as of his thought, then, his reason concerns itself with “what is beneficial for one and all.”⁵³⁹ According to *Republic*’s account of pleasure, which we have already discussed, the pleasure produced is not only pure, but the purest. Forms are pure being, after all, and the Good is superior to them all in rank and power.⁵⁴⁰ Whenever there is conflict between pure reason and the other parts, therefore, “it is better for everyone to be ruled by divine reason.”⁵⁴¹

This new brand of psychological dualism—between reason, on the one hand, and the lower parts of the soul, on the other—is nowhere more evident than in *Timaeus*, which recounts the origin not only of the cosmos, but also of the human soul. Plato there imagines the subordinate gods creating it in two steps. “Having taken the immortal origin of the soul,” they first encased it in a round body (the head). Within the rest of the body, the trunk, “they built another kind of soul as well, the mortal kind.”⁵⁴² This mortal soul receives another division, into ambition and appetite, making the embodied soul tripartite, and thus concordant with the psychological accounts of *Republic* and *Phaedrus*. But in origin, at least, the human soul is bipartite: immortal and divine reason above, mortal and merely human soul below. Upon death, accordingly, these two souls will separate again. The subsequent fate of the mortal soul is unclear, except that it will fall away from the immortal like so many barnacles from the sea-god Glaucus.

Although a divinity in truth, writes Plato, Glaucus has his radiance dimmed here below by “the shells, seaweeds, and rocks,” that “have grown into him.”⁵⁴³ So likewise for our divine reason. In this life its natural radiance is dimmed by the appetite and ambition that, thanks to its embodiment, encrust it. Epistemically, this means that it must think discursively, using representations. Plato’s presentation of these very images—of Glaucus, along with all the other indelible images of *Republic*—exemplifies embodied

thought. “The effort to employ images to convey the truth about images themselves and what they represent,” writes Gerson paradoxically, “is the embodied philosopher’s burden.”⁵⁴⁴ Dialectic seeks to purify the philosopher, however, by pushing him to think without such images, without even words or concepts. Philosophy, according to Plato, encourages him to eschew *dianoia* in favor of non-representational *noēsis*, a direct assimilation to the Forms, and ultimately to their rational order. This order is the Form of Forms, as we have seen, the Form that is all Forms virtually.⁵⁴⁵ Moreover, it is the Good. The goal of philosophy may therefore be characterized as the assimilation of the philosopher’s thinking to this Good: the perfect purification of his thought.

What the thinking soul “is like when it has become pure,” writes Plato, we cannot perceive by the senses; “that we can adequately see only by means of rational calculation.”⁵⁴⁶ While embodied, though, our rational calculation remains mired in representations which keep us from ‘seeing’ anything directly. But by thinking ever more abstractly, we may at least identify ourselves with the activity of our reason rather than with the activities of our inferior parts, whether of soul or of body. “The more one engages in what Plato considers to be non-bodily activity,” writes Gerson, “the more one is inclined to recognize that one is an entity other than a body.”⁵⁴⁷ The human being, after all, is a hybrid. Although our unfortunate embodiment has fused our reason with ambition and appetite, not to mention a body,⁵⁴⁸ this reason is nonetheless what we *really* are. Fusion with inferior elements infects it with images, as we have seen, making embodied reason itself an image—quite literally—of its disembodied counter-part. “An embodied person, like everything else in the sensible world,” observes Gerson, “is an image of that which is ideal or really real.”⁵⁴⁹ Despite the philosopher’s best efforts to realize his ideal, then, he must remain its image, “a metaphor of what the person really is.”⁵⁵⁰ Only death will free him from the bodily prison and permit him to think directly of the Forms, and ultimately of the Good. If disembodied thinking happens directly, identifying the knower completely with the known, disembodied thought should then *become* the Good. At this point, if none other, will the philosopher have a claim to divinity.

3. Conclusion

We may now summarize Plato’s program of purification and divinization, as well as the influential psychology and cosmology that underwrite it. According to this complex nexus of ideas, the human is a hybrid of divine reason above, and mortal elements below. These mortal elements include not only the body but also the inferior psychological capacities produced by its union with reason: the motives of appetite and emotion, as well as the epistemic tools of imagination and sensation. The cosmos as we know it by use of our reason must therefore be distinguished from the cosmos as we perceive it through our senses, imagine it, and then react to it by our appetites and emotions. These distinctions are not ones for theory alone. Each philosopher must absorb them into his own life, by purifying his divine reason of its association with the

merely human and mortal capacities. He should recognize the illusions fostered by these capacities as such, and should free himself from all desire for them. As compensation for this painful process of purification, he can expect the consolation of divinity.

Although Plato advances a version of this program that is far more elaborate than anything we can reconstruct from the extant fragments of the early Pythagoreans, we have nonetheless seen how he develops a philosophy which in its fundamental outlines he inherited from them. With the origins and development of this philosophy now at hand, we are in a position to tender two conclusions about it: one psychological, the other cosmological. In both cases, Plato proposes doctrines that maintain dualism and monism ambivalently, overlaying their fundamental tension with a synthesis so comprehensive that it and the ambivalence it conceals would prove irresistible to many of his successors.

In psychology, first, Plato dualistically divides the human into good and bad parts, identifying our selves with our reason and thereby alienating us from most of our humanity. Any accurate psychology must divide the human somehow if it is to account for the conflicting motives of every human life. But Plato's particular way of describing this division—despite the air of inevitability that surrounds it for those, like us, who inhabit the philosophical and religious cultures he helped to fashion—is a result of the contingent history that fashioned him. Most immediately, this was a Pythagorean history, but more distantly, it seems to have been a confluence of two Eastern currents: Zoroastrianism and the philosophy of the Upaniṣads. Though at odds cosmologically, both recommended purity of thought, an agreement that would ensure the supremacy of pure thought as an ideal of the Pythagoreanism that synthesized these two traditions.

This supremacy would be still further bolstered by the Presocratic philosophies Plato drew into his own synthesis. For instance, Anaxagoras not only made *nous* a quasi-divine mover, as we have seen, but also preserved its purity from the mixture of everything in everything that was his cosmos. Only so could he keep inanimate matter from a share of intelligence. Plato incorporated this doctrine naturally enough into the Pythagorean program of purification and divinization, making pure thought both the goal of ethics and the nature of the divine. This dualistic division of pure thought from everything else, however, also disguises a deeper monism. For he follows the Pythagorean belief that like is known only by like, developing a non-representational epistemology according to which knower and known become one. In this way, the consummation of his own practical program is an assumption of the philosopher's self into the cosmic order that is the Good. Far downstream from the Upaniṣads, then, Plato preserves something very like their efforts to assimilate *ātman* to *Brahman*. The Indian philosophers further taught that *ātman* already was *Brahman*, that the appearance of diversity was but a seductive illusion. Plato likewise enjoined the Greeks to eschew their sensations of diversity and to restrain the appetites and emotions that it incited.

This parallel brings us to the second conclusion of this chapter. Even better than his psychology, Plato's cosmology maintains monism and dualism ambivalently—and must do so in order to preserve the

goals of his ethics. It would seem that he inherited this ambivalence from the Pythagoreans, since they synthesized the cosmology of dualistic Zoroastrianism and the eschatology of the monistic Upaniṣads. Whatever its source, however, Plato mediated this tension so successfully that it is hardly ever noticed. To see that it exists, consider the vexed relationship he introduced between Forms and their material instances. Sometimes he writes as if Form and matter—or Being and becoming—were two separate realms between which the individual soul must decide, after the manner of a Zoroastrian.⁵⁵¹ At other times he writes as if the realm of Form—and of the Form of the Good especially—were the only real reality, so that sensible particulars become only illusions, with no independent existence.⁵⁵² In this picture, the soul must liberate itself from the cycle of reincarnation by recognizing them as such, after the manner of a yogi.⁵⁵³

We began this chapter with Socrates in his cell recalling the disappointment he experienced with the materialist monism of his philosophical predecessors. It is tempting to think that Plato could have satisfied his teacher by developing a purebred dualism, or perhaps a spiritual monism without any tincture of dualism. And yet his inconsistent mixture of monism and dualism appears necessary in order to justify his allegiance to the practical program of purification and divinization that is arguably his deepest commitment. As far as the relationship between Form and matter is concerned, material particulars cannot have an existence independent of Form, lest this independence compromise the cosmic unity guaranteed by the Form of Forms. But neither can material particulars be mere illusions. If the perfect unity of the Forms is all that really exists, after all, what could remain to cause these illusions? In moral terms, something independent appears necessary in order to create the evil illusion of plurality, even though the independence of this evil cause subverts the cherished unity of reality which is the ideal of purification.

The same paradox will arise for both Neoplatonists and the Christian philosophers they influenced. Plotinus, for instance, needs matter in order to explain evil, but this explanation works only by subverting the total sovereignty of the One.⁵⁵⁴ Augustine, similarly, explains evil only by compromising the omnipotence of God.⁵⁵⁵ These are controversial claims that go beyond the scope of this chapter, but in light of what we have learned here we should not be surprised to find that the conflict between monism and dualism which Plato inherited, mediated masterfully, but could never fully resolve, emerges in some form or other in the philosophies and religions that have adopted his ambivalent cosmology.⁵⁵⁶

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Endnotes

- ¹ *Phaed.* 82b10–11; trans. G. M. A. Grube, in Cooper 1997:72. See also *Phaed.* 85a2.
- ² *Phaed.* 80c–84b.
- ³ *Phaed.* 96a7–8; trans. Grube, in Cooper 1997:83. The Greek translated here by ‘natural science’ is *peri phuseōs historia*.
- ⁴ The dates of Presocratic lives are often estimates: Thales (ca. 625–545), Anaximander (ca. 610–540), Anaximenes (ca. 585–525), Xenophanes (ca. 570–478), Heraclitus (ca. 537–480), Parmenides (late 6th–mid 5th century). Socrates, we know for sure, died in 399 B.C.; his birth year has been estimated at 470.
- ⁵ Aristotle, *Metaph.* 983b20 = DK 11A12.
- ⁶ Simplicius, *Phys.* 24.12–21 = DK 12B1 + A9.
- ⁷ Aëtius, 1.3.4 = DK 13B2. For the association of *psychē* and breath, see Claus 1981:61, citing *Il.* 22.467. Diogenes Laertius, however, writes that Xenophanes “was the first to declare that ... the soul is breath” (9.19).
- ⁸ Theophrastus, quoted by Simplicius, *Phys.* 24.26–25.1 = DK 13A5.
- ⁹ *Phaed.* 97c8; trans. Grube, in Cooper 1997:84. Italics added.
- ¹⁰ Simplicius, *Phys.* 23.19 = DK 21B25; trans. Leshner 1992:33.
- ¹¹ Simplicius, *Phys.* (*Comm. Arist. Gr.* IX, 28 = *Dox. Gr.* 483) = DK28A8; Sextus Empiricus, *Pyr.* 1.224 = DK 21A35.
- ¹² Plato, *Soph.* 242d3–5 = DK21A29; Aristotle, *Metaph.* 986b21–22 = DK 21A30.
- ¹³ Simplicius, *Phys.* 145.1–146.25 = DK 28B8.5–6.
- ¹⁴ Simplicius, *Phys.* 145.1–146.25 = DK 28B8.1–33; Simplicius, *Phys.* 111.18–112.15 = DK 30B7.
- ¹⁵ In the fifth century, *logos* could mean any number of things, but all were related in some way to speech, thought, measure, or truth. For an exhaustive list of meanings and citations, see Guthrie 1962:420–424. For another *logos of logos*, see Peters 1967:110–112.
- ¹⁶ Hippolytus, *Haer.* 9.9.1 = 22B50; trans. McKirahan, in Curd 1995:34.
- ¹⁷ See, e.g., Sextus Empiricus, *Math.* 7.135 = DK 68B9 (=B125); and Aristotle, *Metaph.* 1071b33–35 = DK 67A18. The dates of Leucippus are very uncertain; in fact, there was some doubt even in antiquity whether he existed at all (D.L. 10.13 = DK 67A2). Those who believe that he did estimate that he was born in, perhaps, 470, and died in 390. Democritus’ dates are more certain: 460–370, making him a younger contemporary of Socrates. Plato’s total neglect of him in the dialogues is therefore quite remarkable. Although their productive lives overlapped, Plato makes no explicit mention of him anywhere. That said, he does seem to have him in mind when he describes the intellectual battle between materialists and formalists, a battle he likens to the Gigantomachy (*Soph.* 246a3–c3).
- ¹⁸ In the wake of this problem, some modern philosophers drew inspiration from the Epicureans, whose writings were extant, stemmed from those of the early Atomists, and proposed an ethics of equanimity for this value-less cosmos. The eponymous founder of Epicureanism lived from 342 to 270; his chief student, Metrodorus, from 331 to 278. The dates of Epicurus’ two other students, Hermarchus and Polyaeus, are not known. More well-known to moderns is the Roman Epicurean, Lucretius (91–51). The exemplary Epicurean atomist of the modern scientific revolution was Gassendi (1592–1655), who adapted the ancient system to Christianity. Not all early modern philosophers would be satisfied with the Epicurean solution, however, and the problem would become one of the chief preoccupations of modern philosophy. Alasdair

- MacIntyre (1990) has distinguished three rival approaches to the problem: first of all, the Thomistic tradition continues to credit values inherent in the cosmos; secondly, the Encyclopedic approach of the Enlightenment has sought these values instead in universal human conditions, whether in the desire for pleasure or happiness (e.g., Utilitarianism), or in the deliverances of reason (e.g., Kantianism); thirdly, the Genealogical method of Nietzsche, and more recently of Foucault, seeks to discredit its two rivals by exposing all moral claims as assertions of power.
- ¹⁹ *Nous* has been translated by ‘intelligence,’ ‘mind,’ ‘thought,’ ‘reason,’ and ‘understanding,’ among other English words. This diversity arises not only from the usual difficulties of translation, but more so from the long and distinguished career of the word and its cognates in Greek philosophy. Most notably, Plato appropriated it to name his highest epistemic state, as well as his highest god; Aristotle did the same, while also using it as the name of the highest part of the human soul; finally, Plotinus chose it as the name for his second hypostasis. Stephen Menn (1995:14–18) describes the difficulty of translating *nous* and exposes the inadequacy of the standard translations. To use one of them always, in the interests of an artificial consistency, would sometimes become awkward. We shall thus vary our translation when required by the context, but shall favor ‘thought’ when appropriate. To begin with Anaxagoras, this is the translation favored by Barnes 2001:185–198.
- ²⁰ *Phaed.* 97c2–6; slightly rev. from trans. Grube, in Cooper 1997:84. Italics added.
- ²¹ For the distinction among causes, which will be explained below, see *Phys.* 194b17–195a3 and *Metaph.* 983b23–985b24.
- ²² *Phaed.* 98b7–c2.
- ²³ *Phaed.* 98c5–8; trans. Grube, in Cooper 1997:85.
- ²⁴ See, e.g., Simplicius, *Phys.* 300.31–301.1 = 59B13.
- ²⁵ *Phaed.* 99b2–4; trans. Grube, in Cooper 1997:85.
- ²⁶ *Crit.* 44e–46a.
- ²⁷ *Crit.* 50a–52d.
- ²⁸ D.L. 8.46 = Aristoxenus fr. 19 Wehrli.
- ²⁹ Simmias and Cebes are said (*Phaed.* 61d6–7) to have spent time in the company of Philolaus. The dramatic locale is given at 57a. As for Echebrates, Diogenes Laertius (8.46) reports that “the last of the Pythagoreans, whom Aristoxenus in his time saw, were Xenophilus from Thracian Chalcidice, Phanton of Phlius, and Echebrates, Diocles, and Polymnastus, also of Phlius, who were pupils of Philolaus and Eurytus of Tarentum.”
- ³⁰ An example of a modern philosopher’s discussion of dualism can be found in William Lycan’s contribution to THIS VOLUME.
- ³¹ By neglecting to discuss Pythagoras, and instead discussing Pythagoreanism, we follow Aristotle, who “rarely mentions Pythagoras, more frequently speaking of ‘those who are called Pythagoreans’ or ‘the Italians,’ as though unwilling to attribute the doctrines he reports to Pythagoras himself” (McKirahan 1994:80).
- ³² Huffman 1993:10.
- ³³ Hadot 2002:3.
- ³⁴ Hadot 2002:3.
- ³⁵ The most famous Neopythagorean was Numenius of Apamea, whose dualistic thought F. Copleston describes in these terms: “Dualism is very apparent in the psychology of Numenius, since he postulates two souls in man, a rational soul and an irrational soul, and declares the entry

of the soul into the body as something evil, as a ‘fall.’ He seems also to have taught the existence of a good and bad world-soul” (1985:448).

³⁶ C. H. Kahn 1996:1284. Because of this importance of Plato to later Pythagoreanism, the Neopythagoreans became indistinguishable from Platonists, and *vice versa*, to the point where they all came to be known in late antiquity as Neoplatonists.

³⁷ See, e.g., Kingsley 1995:217 and 331.

³⁸ This is the method adopted by both Burkert and Huffman. “All the basic conceptual terms which Aristotle assigns to the Pythagoreans,” Huffman thus writes, “are also found in Fragments 1–7 of Philolaus” (1993:28). Also helpful—especially when we come to Pythagorean psychology—will be fragments of Xenophanes (DK 21B7), Heraclitus (DK 22B40, 22B129), and Ion (DK 36B4), and a comment of Herodotus (4.95). These passages appear together in McKirahan 1994:81–82. With so little contemporaneous evidence, a judicious use of later sources will sometimes be necessary to round out the picture. As for our principal sources, they may in the end be one. Huffman (2003, 1.2) believes that Aristotle based his account of Pythagoreanism on Philolaus’ book.

³⁹ McEvilley 2002:85, citing Neugebauer 1957:36. See also Kahn 2001:32–33.

⁴⁰ McEvilley 2002:67–97.

⁴¹ Stobaeus, *Ecl.* 1.21.7d = DK 44B6a.

⁴² Sextus Empiricus, *Math.* 7.94–95, quoted and discussed at McKirahan 1994:93. Although Sextus is late, he appears to be borrowing from Posidonius (Kahn 2001: 31, n.16), and the doctrines he reports agree with the fragment of Philolaus already cited (Stobaeus, *Ecl.* 1.21.7d = 44B6a). Another rationale for the perfection of ten was that 1 represented a point; 2, a line; 3, a plane figure (the triangle); and 4, a solid (the pyramid). “All these are primary and the starting points for the other figures of each kind,” wrote Speusippus (fr. 4 [Lang] = DK 44A13), quoted and discussed at McKirahan 1994:100.

⁴³ See, e.g., Aristotle, *Metaph.* 985b28–33 = DK 58B4; and Alexander, *Comm. Metaph.* 38.10–39.20. For discussions, see McKirahan 1994:108–113 and Kahn 2001:32–33.

⁴⁴ Peters 1967:108–109. The following ancient sources attribute the first use to Pythagoras: Diogenes Laertius 8.48, Aëtius 2.1.1. But it occurs also in Anaximander 12A10 and Anaximenes 13B2.

⁴⁵ Aristotle, *Metaph.* 1090a20–25.

⁴⁶ McKirahan 1994:93.

⁴⁷ Aristotle, *Metaph.* 986a2–12 = DK 58B4; trans. McKirahan 1994:105.

⁴⁸ For brief introductions to Pythagorean astronomy and its controversies see Kahn 2001:25–27 and McKirahan 1994:104–107. These discussions credit Aristotle’s account. For a very different treatment, which begins with a rejection of Aristotle’s testimony, see Kingsley 1995:172–213.

⁴⁹ Stobaeus, *Ecl.* 1.22.1d; cited in Barnes 2001:179.

⁵⁰ Kingsley 1995:172–194.

⁵¹ Huffman 1993:283.

⁵² The analogy is Aristotle’s: *Cael.* 290b12–19.

⁵³ Stobaeus, *Ecl.* 1.21.7d = DK 44B6a; trans. McKirahan, in Curd 1995:23.

⁵⁴ *Metaph.* 986a21.

⁵⁵ *Metaph.* 987a20 = DK 58B8; trans. Ross, in Barnes 1995:1561. See also *Metaph.* 986a16–17.

⁵⁶ *Metaph.* 1080b17–21; trans. Ross, in Barnes 1995:1708.

⁵⁷ See, e.g., Huffman 1993:57–64. For a concise summary, see Huffman 2003 (section 3).

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- ⁵⁸ Huffman 1993:205; cited in Kahn 2001:27.
- ⁵⁹ Kahn 2001:27; see also Schibli 1996.
- ⁶⁰ Stobaeus, *Ecl.* 1.21.8 (1.189.17 Wachsmuth); trans. Huffman 1993:227. Italics added.
- ⁶¹ *Metaph.* 983a24–32 distinguishes the four causes, but they are more thoroughly distinguished at *Phys.* 194b16–195a3, and then again at 198a14–21.
- ⁶² *Phys.* 195b22–25.
- ⁶³ See *Metaph.* 1.3–6. This text begins “We must inquire of what kind are the causes,” and then proceeds to tell a short history of Greek philosophy. On the anachronism of Aristotle’s causal analysis of the Presocratics, see Guthrie 1962:63. For a more recent, and more favorable, discussion of Aristotle’s use of his causal theory as a framework for his history of preceding philosophy, see Collobert 2002.
- ⁶⁴ Aristotle *Metaph.* 1.3983b6–27 = DK 11A12; trans. McKirahan, in Curd 1995:10.
- ⁶⁵ Aetius, 1.3.4 = DK 13B2; trans. McKirahan, in Curd 1995:14.
- ⁶⁶ Philoponus, *Phys.* 1.5.125 = DK 21B29. See also DK21B33.
- ⁶⁷ Supra note 10.
- ⁶⁸ Simplicius, *Phys.* 155.26 = DK 59B1; trans. McKirahan, in Curd 1995:54.
- ⁶⁹ Simplicius, *Phys.* 35.14–16 = DK 59B9.
- ⁷⁰ *Metaph.* 988b6–15. See also *Phaed.* 96a–99d, *Resp.* 508e–509a, and 511b–c.
- ⁷¹ *Metaph.* 987b10–11.
- ⁷² Kahn 2001:28.
- ⁷³ Kahn 2001:28.
- ⁷⁴ Plato, *Phileb.* 23c9–10.
- ⁷⁵ See, for instance, *Metaph.* 986a23. The only exception was the number one, which was of both types (*Metaph.* 986a20). As for the Greek terms, a comment is in order about their translation. The first we have already encountered with the mention of Anaximander. His first principle was the *apeiron*, and we translated it there as the ‘indefinite.’ In order to appreciate the continuity of Pythagorean thought with its precedents, then, it will be helpful to remember that the term persists, even though it is most often given a different translation in discussions of Pythagoreanism—namely, ‘unlimited.’ Translators choose this English approximation because the second Greek term with which it is contrasted above, *peperasmēnon*, derives from *peras*, which is best translated as ‘limit.’
- ⁷⁶ Huffman 1993:39.
- ⁷⁷ D.L. 8.85 = DK 44B1; slightly rev. from trans. McKirahan, in Curd 1995:22. The Greek verb is *harmozō*, and it exhibits the same range of meanings as *harmonia*: ‘to join,’ ‘to compose,’ and also ‘to harmonize.’
- ⁷⁸ Kahn 1974:173; cited in Huffman 1993:204.
- ⁷⁹ Aristotle, *Phys.* 213b25–26; trans. R. P. Hardie and R. K. Gaye, in Barnes 1995:363.
- ⁸⁰ Cornford 1922:145. Cited in Guthrie 1962:248.
- ⁸¹ *Eth. nic.* 1106b29–30. For the equation of justice with number, see *Metaph.* 985b28–33 = DK 58B4.
- ⁸² This translation and arrangement of *Metaphysics* 986a22–26 appears in McKirahan 1994:107. For a discussion of *archē* (pl., *archai*), a central concept in early Greek philosophy, see Guthrie 1962:57 and Peters 1967:23–25. From this word, which we shall translate as ‘principle,’ we derive ‘archaic,’ ‘archaeology,’ ‘architecture,’ etc.

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- ⁸³ At *Metaph.* 986b4–6, Aristotle writes “how these principles can be brought together under the causes we have named has not been clearly stated by them” (trans. W. D. Ross, in Barnes 1995:1560). But he also says that “the principles in the second column are indefinite because they are privative,” a notion he then proceeds to explain (*Phys.* 201b25–26; trans. Ross, in Barnes 1995:344). For a modern treatment, see McKirahan 1994:108.
- ⁸⁴ The articles of Cornford (1922, 1923) made the biggest strides. The chapters of Guthrie (1962:212–306) and McKirahan (1994:79–116, but especially 94–97) summarize the progress that has been made in the meantime.
- ⁸⁵ From this system we derive some of our own mathematical terminology. The square root of a number, for example, is the length of its sides when it is formed as a square.
- ⁸⁶ Explanations for some of the other oppositions can be found in McKirahan 1994:94–108, but especially 107–108.
- ⁸⁷ Cornford 1922:141.
- ⁸⁸ See Cornford 1903:441, Notopoulos 1944a:165–167, Notopoulos 1944b:229 n. 97, and especially Classen 1965.
- ⁸⁹ Boyce 1984:45.
- ⁹⁰ *Bundahishn* 1.1; trans. Boyce 1984:45. See also *Bundahishn* 1.39–42.
- ⁹¹ Skjærvø: THIS VOLUME.
- ⁹² West 1971:30.
- ⁹³ E.g., *Yasna* 30.
- ⁹⁴ Skjærvø, THIS VOLUME.
- ⁹⁵ Nigosian 2003:16.
- ⁹⁶ These accounts are: Cicero (106–43), Strabo (63–21), Plutarch (50–120), Apuleius (120–170), Clement of Alexandria (150–216), Hippolytus (170–236), Porphyry (234–305), and Iamblichus (245–325). For full citations and discussion see Guthrie 1962:217–218, 253–254.
- ⁹⁷ Guthrie 1962:249–250.
- ⁹⁸ West 1971:32. Hippolytus (fr. 13 Wehrli, *Haer.* 1.2.12) attributes the story to Aristoxenus and Diodorus of Eretria. “Zaratas,” adds West, “is of course Zoroaster” (1971:32, n. 2).
- ⁹⁹ Guthrie 1962:250.
- ¹⁰⁰ Skjærvø: THIS VOLUME; citing *Yasna* 28.2, 43.3 and 53.6. See also *Greater Bundahišn* 1.13–14.
- ¹⁰¹ Nigosian 2003:84–89.
- ¹⁰² Skjærvø: THIS VOLUME; see also Nigosian 2003:82.
- ¹⁰³ Supra note 72.
- ¹⁰⁴ The Zoroastrian ‘models’ also anticipate in some ways Plato’s Forms—which were perfect models for everything in the sensible world, and which his philosophers were to contemplate and emulate, as we shall eventually see.
- ¹⁰⁵ Choksy 1989:8. For a discussion of the many rituals see Choksy, chs. 2–4; for a brief summary, see Nigosian 2003:104–109.
- ¹⁰⁶ Nigosian 2003:91. Although written in Sasanian times, some of the *Vidēvdāt*’s prohibitions appear in classical authors. Choksy (1989:85, 87) cites Xenophon and Ammianus Marcellinus.
- ¹⁰⁷ Nigosian 2003:91, 118.
- ¹⁰⁸ Nigosian 2003:111.
- ¹⁰⁹ Choksy 1989:9.
- ¹¹⁰ For translations of the most important passages, see Nigosian 2003:54–57.

- ¹¹¹ Choksy 1989:18; see also Nigosian 2003:108.
- ¹¹² Choksy 1989:80, citing *Vidēvdāt* 17:1–10.
- ¹¹³ Aristotle fr. 195 [Rose], quoted in D.L. 8.34 ff. = DK 58C3.
- ¹¹⁴ D.L. 8.17.
- ¹¹⁵ Douglas 2004:42, 64.
- ¹¹⁶ Douglas 2004:xvii.
- ¹¹⁷ Douglas 2004:44, 50.
- ¹¹⁸ Douglas 2004:5, 7.
- ¹¹⁹ Douglas 2004:117.
- ¹²⁰ *Ibid.*
- ¹²¹ D.L. 8.17. Kahn admits that the Pythagorean *akousmata*, or sayings, are mysterious, suggesting that they “seem to have served as observances and passwords to mark membership in the Pythagorean community” (2001:10).
- ¹²² Nigosian 2003:113.
- ¹²³ *Vidēvdāt* 8.79–80; cited in West 1971:185.
- ¹²⁴ *Yasna* 36; trans. Boyce 1984:54.
- ¹²⁵ Choksy 1989:13. See *Yasna* 25.7, 36.1; *Ataxsh Niyayishn* 1.1; and *Zadspram* 3.82–83. See also Nigosian 2003:113.
- ¹²⁶ Nigosian 2003:88.
- ¹²⁷ *Vidēvdāt (Vendidad)* 19.32; trans. Boyce 1984:80. See also *Arda Viraz Namag* 12.1–2.
- ¹²⁸ McEvelley 2002:5.
- ¹²⁹ Herodotus 1.74 = DK 11A5. For the ‘beginning’ of Presocratic philosophy, see, e.g., Curd 1995:1.
- ¹³⁰ McEvelley 2002:6, n.22; McKirahan 1994:24–25.
- ¹³¹ 1.1 –5; trans. Alexander Heidel 1963:18.
- ¹³² Naddaf 2005:39. See also McEvelley 2002:29.
- ¹³³ Buchanan Gray 1964:9–10.
- ¹³⁴ “La préexistence des âmes n’est attestée en Iran que tardivement.” Duchesne-Guillemin 1953:101; cited in Guthrie 1962:254–255.
- ¹³⁵ West 1971:89.
- ¹³⁶ Aristotle, *Phys.* 203b10–15 = DK 12A15; trans. McKirahan, in Curd 1995:12.
- ¹³⁷ Simplicius, *Phys.* 24.13–21 = 12B1 + A9; trans. McKirahan, in Curd 1995:12.
- ¹³⁸ In addition to the Upaniṣadic passages we shall quote, West 1971:93–94 supplies several others. In short, there is no shortage of evidence for a resemblance between Anaximander and early Indian philosophy.
- ¹³⁹ *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad (B.U.)* 4.4.20; trans. R. E. Hume, in S. Radhakrishnan and C. A. Moore 1989:88.
- ¹⁴⁰ McEvelley 2002:60, with citations.
- ¹⁴¹ *Kaṭha Upaniṣad (K.U.)* 2.18; trans. Hume, in Radhakrishnan and Moore 1989:45.
- ¹⁴² *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad (S.U.)* 3.7; trans. Hume, in Radhakrishnan and Moore 1989:90.
- ¹⁴³ *K.U.* 5.12; trans. Hume, in Radhakrishnan and Moore 1989:48.
- ¹⁴⁴ *B.U.* 4.5.15; trans. Hume, in Radhakrishnan and Moore 1989:88–89. See also *B.U.* 4.4.20.
- ¹⁴⁵ *B.U.* 4.4.19; trans. Hume, in Radhakrishnan and Moore 1989:88.
- ¹⁴⁶ See, e.g., *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad (M.U.)* 1.1.7, 3.2.7–8; *Chāndogya Upaniṣad (C.U.)* 6.10.1, 8.7.4; *B.U.* 2.3.1; *S.U.* 4.9.

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- ¹⁴⁷ McEvelley 2002:59 lists eight general parallels between early Greek and Indian philosophies. Chapter 2 (pages 23–66) discusses many specific parallels. These latter, in particular, are specific and numerous enough to dismiss the obvious objection—*post hoc ergo propter hoc*—to the hypothesis of Indian influence over early Greek philosophy.
- ¹⁴⁸ West 1971:201–202. For the abundant similarities between Heraclitus and Eastern ideas, see West 1971:165–202. For a summary of his similarities with the Upaniṣads, see McEvelley 2002:36–44.
- ¹⁴⁹ McEvelley 2002:5–18.
- ¹⁵⁰ McEvelley 2002:5.
- ¹⁵¹ Herodotus, 4.44. “Scylax’s book, along with the later work of Ctesias of Cnidus, who was himself in Persian service in the late fifth century B.C., was one of ‘the two standard descriptions of India before Alexander the Great’” (McEvelley 2002:8, citing Halbfass 1988:11).
- ¹⁵² McEvelley 2002:60, n. 68.
- ¹⁵³ McEvelley 2002:16.
- ¹⁵⁴ Herodotus 3.120–128, 139–149.
- ¹⁵⁵ D.L. 8.3.
- ¹⁵⁶ Herodotus 3.129–137.
- ¹⁵⁷ The most famous of the early philosopher-physicians were Philolaus and Alcmaeon, both of Croton, and Empedocles, of nearby Sicily. All were associated with the Pythagorean society. But the fusion of medicine and philosophy was not unique to Pythagoreans. Democritus was said to have written medical works, and some Hippocratic treatises dealt in places with philosophical topics (e.g. *Morb. sacr.*, *Nat. hom.*, and *Vet. med.*). In the Roman era, Sextus Empiricus and Galen were both physicians and philosophers. The latter even wrote a treatise entitled *The Best Doctor is Also a Philosopher*.
- ¹⁵⁸ Democedes seems to have acquired his original training in Croton. Within one year of emigrating, he was recognized in Aegina, his new residence, as the best of the island’s physicians (Herodotus 3.131).
- ¹⁵⁹ It is likely that Darius kept physicians of different nationalities in his court, since Democedes displaced the Egyptians who had tried to treat Darius before him (Herodotus 3.132).
- ¹⁶⁰ McEvelley 2002:16; see also 208–212.
- ¹⁶¹ Herodotus 6.20 and 6.119. See McEvelley 2002:8–9.
- ¹⁶² These were called *kurtash*, writes McEvelley (2002:8), and “among the *kurtash* were individuals from conquered populations, including both Ionians and Bactrians.”
- ¹⁶³ McEvelley 2002:6–7.
- ¹⁶⁴ 3.38; trans. Robin Waterfield 1998:186–187.
- ¹⁶⁵ Eusebius, *Praep. ev.* 11.3.8; cited in McEvelley 2002:10. See also McEvelley 2002:16–18.
- ¹⁶⁶ 4.4.22; trans. Hume, in Radhakrishnan and Moore 1989:88.
- ¹⁶⁷ 4.4.22; trans. Hume, in Radhakrishnan and Moore 1989:88.
- ¹⁶⁸ McEvelley 2002:117. See also 111 and 118.
- ¹⁶⁹ McEvelley 2002:117.
- ¹⁷⁰ *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 2.23.3; trans. Hume, in Radhakrishnan and Moore 1989:65.
- ¹⁷¹ *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* 3.8; trans. Hume, in Radhakrishnan and Moore 1989:46.
- ¹⁷² *Bṛhadāranyaka Upaniṣad* 4.4.19; trans. Hume, in Radhakrishnan and Moore 1989:88.
- ¹⁷³ *Maitri Upaniṣad* 6.18; trans. Hume, in Radhakrishnan and Moore 1989:96. See also *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* 6.6–15.

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- ¹⁷⁴ 6.34; trans. Hume, in Radhakrishnan and Moore 1989:96.
- ¹⁷⁵ *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, 1.4.10; quoted in McEvelley 2002:100.
- ¹⁷⁶ Guthrie 1962:251 cites Zeller and Ueberweg-Praechter.
- ¹⁷⁷ Burkert 1985:299.
- ¹⁷⁸ Kahn 2001:19. See also Gomperz 1920:126–127.
- ¹⁷⁹ McEvelley 2002:98.
- ¹⁸⁰ D.L., 8.36 = Xenophanes DK 21B7; trans. McKirahan, in Curd 1995:18.
- ¹⁸¹ Clement, *Strom.* III iii 17.1 DK 44B14; trans. Barnes 2001:181.
- ¹⁸² Phi, 214; McEvelley 202:103 also mentions Cicero, *Tusc.* 1.38 as indirect evidence.
- ¹⁸³ West 1971:3.
- ¹⁸⁴ He was said to have written a book that went by the name *Theokrasia*, which may be translated “Divine Mingling” (with Kirk et al. 1983:51), or even “Fusion with God” (with Lafontaine 1986:49).
- ¹⁸⁵ D.L. 8.2.
- ¹⁸⁶ D.L., 1.120 = DK 36B4; trans. McKirahan, in Curd 1994:82.
- ¹⁸⁷ The two major Pythagorean settlements were Croton and Metapontum. At the beginning of the fifth century, however, Pythagoreans there suffered a political catastrophe in which many of them were murdered. Nevertheless, their intellectual influence in the region would likely have lingered even after they lost political power.
- ¹⁸⁸ Kingsley 1995:257.
- ¹⁸⁹ *Ol.* 2.65–66; trans. Race 1997a:71.
- ¹⁹⁰ *Orph. frag.* 60–235. For complete citations and discussion, see Burkert 1985:297–298, note 15. See also Bluck 1964:278–279. For a complete treatment of Pindar’s eschatology, see Lloyd-Jones 1990:80–103.
- ¹⁹¹ Plato, *Men.* 81b8–c4. Pindar fr. 133, Snell; Race 1997b:369.
- ¹⁹² D.L. 8.54–56.
- ¹⁹³ Porphyry, *Vit. Pyth.* 30 = DK 31B129; trans. Barnes 2001:161.
- ¹⁹⁴ Porphyry, *Vit. Pyth.* 30 = DK 31B129; trans. Barnes 2001:161.
- ¹⁹⁵ Hippolytus, *Haer.*, I iii 2 = DK 31B117; trans. Barnes 2001:157. McEvelley (2002:107) has noticed that each of the animal species may represent an Empedoclean element: earth (bush), water, (fish), air (bird).
- ¹⁹⁶ Aelian, *Nat. an.* XII 7 = DK 31B127; trans. Barnes 2001:157.
- ¹⁹⁷ McEvelley 2002:141–142.
- ¹⁹⁸ For the action of Love and Strife, see the fragments quoted by Barnes 2001:132–134, namely DK 31B16, B35, B86–87, B95, B71, B73, and B75. See also *Metaph.* 985a21–b3.
- ¹⁹⁹ *Metaph.* 985a5–9; trans. Barnes 1995:1558.
- ²⁰⁰ Ammonius, *Int.* 249.1–10 = DK 31B134; trans. Barnes 2001:140. On the Empedoclean sphere, see the fragments collected in Barnes 2001:140–141. For Greek reverence of the sphere, which will arise later in this study, see Guthrie 1962:351–354 and 1965:47.
- ²⁰¹ Plutarch, *Exil.* 607CE = DK 31B115.6; trans. Barnes 2001:113.
- ²⁰² Plutarch, *Exil.* 607CE = DK 31B115.6; trans. Barnes 2001:113.
- ²⁰³ Simplicius, *Cael.* 528.30–530.1 = DK 31B35; trans. Barnes 2001:133.
- ²⁰⁴ Hippolytus, *Haer.* 7.29.14–23; trans. Barnes 2001:115.
- ²⁰⁵ Plutarch, *Commentary on the Golden Verses* 24.2; trans. Barnes 2001:145.
- ²⁰⁶ Simplicius, *Phys.* 157.25–159.10 = DK 31B17.

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- ²⁰⁷ Simplicius, *Phys.* 157.25–159.10 = DK 31B17; trans. Barnes 2001:121.
- ²⁰⁸ Hippolytus, *Haer.* 7.29.14–23; trans. Barnes 2001:115.
- ²⁰⁹ Sextus Empiricus, *Math.* 9.127–129 = DK 31B137; trans. Barnes 2001:158.
- ²¹⁰ Hippolytus, *Haer.* 7.29.14–23; trans. Barnes 2001:115.
- ²¹¹ One of the most controversial questions of Empedoclean scholarship is whether Empedocles wrote two poems—*Peri Phuseōs* and *Katharmoi*—or one poem that went by these two names. Taking a position on this question is not our concern here, but discussions of it can be found in Inwood 2001:8–21 (favoring one poem) and Kingsley 1995:363–370 (favoring two).
- ²¹² Clement, *Strom.* 5.14.140.5 = DK 31B132; trans. Barnes 2001:117.
- ²¹³ “Princes” translates *promoi*. If not quite a *promos*, Empedocles was a political leader who prevented a tyranny in Agrigentum (D.L., 8.72). The isolation of certain stations as penultimate stages before immortalization recalls the Upaniṣads’ doctrine that members of the highest caste, the Brahmins, were most likely to escape reincarnation (McEvilley 2002:113). Both doctrines anticipate Plato’s belief, which we shall discuss below, that philosophers are the highest mortal stage before divinization.
- ²¹⁴ Clement, *Strom.* V xiv 122.3 = DK 31B147; trans. Barnes 2001:157.
- ²¹⁵ D.L. 8.69. For other references, see Kingsley 1995:233.
- ²¹⁶ For Greek purification by fire, see Kingsley 1995:252. For the volcano as a gateway to both the fiery underworld below and the fiery heavens above Kingsley 1995:50–53.
- ²¹⁷ Kingsley 1995:238, which cites the work of A. Dietrich.
- ²¹⁸ D.L., 8.62 = DK 31B112.
- ²¹⁹ For Homer’s portrait of the soul’s life after death, see *Od.* 11, otherwise known as the *Nekyia*, or Book of the Dead. Helpful commentaries on Homeric psychology and eschatology include Snell 1960, Claus 1981, and Bremmer 1983.
- ²²⁰ *Odyssey* 11.489–491; trans. Fagles 1996:265.
- ²²¹ D.L. 8.59 = DK 31B111; trans. Inwood 2001:219.
- ²²² *Ibid.*
- ²²³ See *Il.* 4.320–321, 9.445–446, *Od.* 13.59–60; cited and discussed by Kingsley 1995:222.
- ²²⁴ See O’Cleirigh and Barrell 2000:50–53 for the equation of immortality and divinity, as well as other unique features of the traditional Greek notion of *theos*. See also Kingsley 1995:222–223.
- ²²⁵ Burkert 1985:203–215, especially 205. For an opposing view of Dionysus, see Kerényi 1996.
- ²²⁶ Kingsley 1995:269.
- ²²⁷ Burkert 1985:211.
- ²²⁸ Kingsley 1995:274.
- ²²⁹ Kingsley 1995:225–226.
- ²³⁰ Kingsley 1995:253.
- ²³¹ *Pyth.* 3.61; trans. Race 1997a:251. “Do not seek to become Zeus,” he wrote in *Isthm.* 5.14; trans. Race 1997b:177. See also Euripides, *Alc.* 799 and Epicharmus B20, quoted by Aristotle at *Rhet.* 1394b25.
- ²³² *Alc.* 1072–1158
- ²³³ Kingsley 1995:276.
- ²³⁴ Kingsley 1995:253.
- ²³⁵ Kingsley 1995:264. For other discussions, see Graf 1993 and Burkert 1985:293.
- ²³⁶ Kingsley 1995:266, with citations.
- ²³⁷ *Supra* note 190.

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- ²³⁸ Burkert 1985:162.
- ²³⁹ Kingsley 1995:262, with citations.
- ²⁴⁰ Burkert 1985:289 cites three sources: *Hymn to Demeter* 280–282, Pindar fr. 137a, and Sophocles fr. 837 (Pearson-Radt).
- ²⁴¹ Graf 1993:239–240.
- ²⁴² 73–107, especially 102.
- ²⁴³ 948–954; trans. PLM.
- ²⁴⁴ Aristophanes’ *Frogs* (1032–1033) mentions Orpheus in connection with mystic rites and abstinence from slaughter. Plato mentions “a noisy throng of books by Musaeus and Orpheus” (*Resp.* 2.364e3).
- ²⁴⁵ Burkert 1985:297. The touchstone for this point is the coincidence of the Gutenberg bible and the Protestant Reformation.
- ²⁴⁶ D.L., 8.8; trans. Barnes 2001:29.
- ²⁴⁷ Herodotus, 2.81; trans. Waterfield 1998:126.
- ²⁴⁸ With an apt metaphor from geometry, Burkert describes them as three intersecting circles (1985:300). See also Cornford 1922:143 and Kahn 2001:20–22.
- ²⁴⁹ Kingsley 1995:262–272 discusses the complicated relationship between them.
- ²⁵⁰ And specifically the religion of the salvation cults, although Pythagoreans did not ignore the traditional gods. It was said that Pythagoras not only paid due deference to the traditional gods, but even that he was a descendant of Apollo (Isocrates, *Bus.* 28–29; trans. Barnes 2001:31). See Guthrie 1962:203.
- ²⁵¹ Iamblichus *Vit. Pyth.*, 137 = DK 45D2; trans. Cornford 1922:142.
- ²⁵² Although Empedocles preached chastity, Pythagoras was said to be married (D.L. 8.42). If nothing else, the claim about Pythagoras’ marriage indicates that later Pythagoreans were not celibate.
- ²⁵³ Although Empedocles preached vegetarianism, Burkert has argued that early Pythagoreans tailored their dietary restrictions in order not to conflict with civic religion and its public sacrifices (Kahn 2001:9, with citations). There was debate in late antiquity about the origins and meanings of Pythagorean food taboos (e.g., D.L. 8.12–13). For another discussion of these taboos, see Kingsley 1995:283–285.
- ²⁵⁴ Diogenes Laertius refers to Aristotle’s lost work *On the Pythagoreans* when he mentions their abstinence from beans. Even Aristotle was confused by their reasoning, entertaining several odd possibilities: “either they are like the testicles, or because they are like the gates of Hades,” etc. (D.L. 8.34). Elsewhere, though, Diogenes introduces another—if not also more plausible, at least more amusing—rationale: “they are flatulent and partake most of the breath of life” (D.L. 8.24). In this period the *psychē* was thought to be breath (see Claus 1981:61, citing *Il.* 22.467; see also D.L. 9.19), and so to eat a bean is to eat something ensouled, possibly one’s old friend. Kingsley 1995:283–285 argues that the purpose of the bean taboo was to keep sleep free from flatulent disturbance in order to enhance dreams and the widespread Greek practice of incubation as means to communion with the divine. Whatever the prohibition’s rationale, Empedocles heeded it: “Wretches, utter wretches, keep your hands from beans!” (Aulus Gellius, *Attic Nights* IV xi 1–13 = DK 31B141; trans. Barnes 2001:166.) For other, still more odd, prohibitions, see D.L., 8.17–20 and Iamblichus *Vit. Pyth.* 28.81–87.
- ²⁵⁵ Supra note 166.
- ²⁵⁶ Supra notes 116–120.

²⁵⁷ McEvelley 2002:101.

²⁵⁸ That Anaximenes posited infinite (or “limitless”) air is testified by Hippolytus and Olympiodorus. See Barnes 2001:24,26. The Pythagoreans adopted something like this view, believing that the world inhales the infinite fiery-air (*pneuma*) that surrounds it (*Phys.* 213b22–26). Huffman (2003) also discusses Fr. 201, which describes the universe as drawing in time, breath, and void from the unlimited (2.1). Guthrie (1962:469–473) sees echoes of this view in Heraclitus, calling it “a common notion of the universe” shared by most of the Presocratics.

²⁵⁹ Cicero, *Nat. d.* 1.10.26 = DK 13A10. Before Anaximenes, Thales had thought that “everything was full of gods” (*De an.*, 411a7–8; trans. Barnes 2001:12).

²⁶⁰ Aristotle, Fr. 201 = DK 44B17; trans. Huffman 1993:43.

²⁶¹ Sextus Empiricus, *Math.* 7.92; trans. Barnes 2001:178.

²⁶² Many scholars believe that this fusion of religion and mathematics was not likely a feature of early Pythagoreanism. “It is universally recognized,” writes Fritz Graf in the *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, “that scientific Pythagoreanism is a reform of its earlier, religious way ascribed to Hippasus of Metapontum around 450 B.C” (1284). One prominent dissenter from this putatively ‘universal’ consensus is Kahn 2001:37–38.

²⁶³ Not all Pythagoreans would maintain both aspects of this revolution. Sometime in the fifth century, according to later testimonies, a schism arose within their society (Iamblichus, *Vit. Pyth.* 81,82 = DK 18,2, 58C4; for a fuller account of the differences, see McKirahan 1994:89–93 and Guthrie 1962:191–193). On one hand, those calling themselves *akousmatikoi* dogmatically preserved the moral and religious sayings, or *akousmata*, attributed to Pythagoras himself. (The Greek verb *akouein* means ‘to hear,’ so that an *akousma* means ‘something heard,’ and *akousmata* is its plural form. An *akousmatikos* is thus someone eager to hear something, and *akousmatikoi* its plural form.) Those calling themselves *mathēmatikoi*, on the other hand, continued in the spirit of innovation and learning, or *mathēma*, they attributed to the founder. Although the *mathēmatikoi* accepted the legitimacy of their rivals, the *akousmatikoi* did not extend to theirs the same generosity. So long as the original synthesis of religion and philosophy persisted, however, the Pythagoreans urged more vigilant care of one’s soul, and especially of one’s thought, in ways that refashioned both fields.

²⁶⁴ Although apparently influenced by Pythagoreanism, the Eleatics would reject their dualism, proposing a most radical monism. Anaxagoras would exalt mind (*nous*), but would describe it as a type of pure matter. The Atomists seem to have agreed, predisposing Epicurus and his followers likewise to materialist monism. The Stoics would dispute many Epicurean views, but materialism was one tenet they shared.

²⁶⁵ After Socrates’ trial and execution, Plato visited Philolaus and other Pythagoreans in Italy—at least according to Diogenes Laertius (3.6). Indeed, Diogenes relates several letters between Plato and the famous Pythagorean, Archytas (8.79–81). The *Seventh Letter* confirms this intimacy, if indeed it is by Plato (*Ep.* 338c6; see Guthrie 1962:333–336). His heavy debt to their doctrines may therefore be traceable to a direct exposure. Yet he seems also to have received Pythagorean views indirectly. We shall find in his thought traces of many Presocratics—most of whom we have not had the space to discuss—but an examination of his dualism should begin with the Pythagoreanism already implicit in the philosophy of his first teacher and most important influence, Socrates himself.

²⁶⁶ E.g. *Nub.* 228–234.

²⁶⁷ Plato, *Theaet.* 174a4–5 = DK 11A9; trans McKirahan, in Curd 1995:9.

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- ²⁶⁸ *Nub.* 173; trans. P. Meineck, in Reeve 2002:98.
- ²⁶⁹ *Nub.* 160–164. The butt of this joke is more immediately Diogenes of Apollonia, who adopted both Anaximenes’ *archē* and his mechanism. See, e.g., D.L. 9.57 = DK 64A1.
- ²⁷⁰ *Nub.* 380; trans. Meineck, in Reeve 2002:112.
- ²⁷¹ Simplicius, *Phys.* 152.22–153.17 = DK 64B5; trans. McKirahan, in Curd 1995:94. See Guthrie 1962:129–130.
- ²⁷² *Nub.* 316–317; trans. Meineck, in Reeve 2002:107. “Thought,” said Diogenes, “is due to air that is pure and dry” (Theophrastus, *Sens.* 39–45 = DK 64A19; trans. McKirahan, in Curd 1995:96). Here Diogenes echoes the views attributed earlier to Heraclitus (Stobaeus, *Ecl.* 3.5.8 = DK 22B118). Both believed that inebriation moistened the soul (DK 22B117 and DK 64A19).
- ²⁷³ *Nub.* 229–230; trans. A. H. Sommerstein 1991:33
- ²⁷⁴ For a mockery of Prodicus in particular, see 666. For Sophistic rhetoric more generally, see the clash of the two *logoi*: 889–1103.
- ²⁷⁵ *Nub.* 642–643; trans. Meineck, in Reeve 2002:125.
- ²⁷⁶ *Nub.* 258; trans. P. Meineck, in Reeve 2002:104. Kenneth Dover discusses the specific rites to which these lines may be referring (1989:130–131). Cornford believed these references to be Orphic (1903:437, n. 2) and cites in this connection *Av.* 1555.
- ²⁷⁷ *Nub.* 140; trans. P. Meineck, in Reeve 2002:97.
- ²⁷⁸ Guthrie 1962:149–150 cites Iamblichus’ *Vit. Pyth.* 88 = DK 18,4.
- ²⁷⁹ *Apol.* 33b6–9; trans. Reeve 2002:49. The following interpretation of the *Apology* owes much to Reeve 1989.
- ²⁸⁰ *Apol.* 19b4–c1; trans. Reeve 2002:29.
- ²⁸¹ *Apol.* 19c5; trans. Reeve 2002:29.
- ²⁸² *Apol.* 19d7–20b6, 21d1–7; trans. Reeve 2002:30–31,33. Socrates’ confessions of ignorance are not unique to *Apology*; they can also be found in the following dialogues: *Euthyphr.* 5a3–c7, 15c11–16a4; *Charm.* 165b4–c2, 166c7–d6; *Lach.* 186b8–c5,d8–e3, 200e2–5; *Lys.* 212a4–7, 223b4–8; *Men.* 71a1–7, 80d1–4; *Hipp. maj.* 286c8–e2, 304d4–e5; *Gorg.* 506a3–4, 509a5; and *Symp.* 216d1–4. The list is comprehensive according to Irwin 1977:39.
- ²⁸³ *Apol.* 33a5. See also *Theaet.* 150b–151b.
- ²⁸⁴ *Prot.* 333a1–2,a6–7; trans. S. Lombardo and K. Bell, in Cooper 1997:766.
- ²⁸⁵ *Gorg.* 483b7–c3; trans. D. Zeyl, in Cooper 1997:827.
- ²⁸⁶ *Apol.* 20d7–8, 23a4–6, 23b1–3.
- ²⁸⁷ *Apol.* 30a5,33c4–6.
- ²⁸⁸ Cornford 1903:437.
- ²⁸⁹ *Soph.* 230d6–8; slightly rev. from trans. N. P. White, in Cooper 1997:251
- ²⁹⁰ *Apol.* 28e4–6; trans. Reeve 2002:43.
- ²⁹¹ *Apol.* 29e1–2,30b1–2; trans. Reeve 2002:45.
- ²⁹² The classic paper on the novelty of Socratic psychology is Burnet 1916. Important qualifications and challenges to Burnet’s view have been advanced by Claus 1981 and Solmsen 1983.
- ²⁹³ See, e.g., *Resp.* 2.377b–383c, *Leg.* 4.717a–b.
- ²⁹⁴ *Leg.* 10.908a7–909d2.
- ²⁹⁵ See, e.g., *Leg.* 5.738b–c,7.792d2–4.
- ²⁹⁶ His eschatological myths come at the end of three dialogues: *Gorg.*, *Phaed.*, and *Resp.*; *Phaedr.* 246a ff. narrates the ascent of the soul to the heavenly realm; *Timaeus* contributes a divine cosmogony.

²⁹⁷ *Resp.* 2.383c2–3; cf. *Resp.* 6.500c9–d1, 10.613a7–b1, *Phaedr.* 252e7–253a5, *Theaet.* 176a8–b3, 176b8–c3, *Tim.* 90b6–c6.

²⁹⁸ *Apol.* 23a6; trans. Reeve 2002:35.

²⁹⁹ *Gorg.* 509a5–7; trans. Zeyl, in Cooper 1997:853. Italics added.

³⁰⁰ *Crat.* 436c8–d2; see also *Resp.* 7.533c2–5.

³⁰¹ *Gorg.* 483b4–c1; trans. Zeyl, in Cooper 1997:827.

³⁰² *Resp.* 1.338c1–2; trans. Reeve, in Cooper 1997:983. Although this claim about the stronger appears at odds with Callicles' about the weak, by 'stronger' Thrasymachus means those who institute laws, the very people whom Callicles calls the weak.

³⁰³ Marx and Nietzsche proposed two different diagnoses of the traditional beliefs about justice in their own society, diagnoses that resembled the critiques of Thrasymachus and Callicles respectively. According to Marx, on the one hand, traditional beliefs about justice preserve the *status quo* of property relations and thus serve the advantage of the stronger. For Nietzsche, on the other, the naturally weak have fashioned traditional beliefs about justice and have promoted them through philosophy and religion in order to tame the naturally strong. In both cases, however, traditional beliefs about justice are a false ideology, whether preserved through 'false consciousness' or 'slave morality.'

³⁰⁴ C. D. C. Reeve first makes this point in Reeve 1988:10–16 and then again in Grube 1992:xiv–xvii.

³⁰⁵ *Men.* 82b–86c.

³⁰⁶ Kahn 2001:54.

³⁰⁷ *Men.* 80e3–5.

³⁰⁸ *Top.* 183b7–8.

³⁰⁹ *Metaph.* 987b1–2, *Part. an.* 642a28–31.

³¹⁰ *Metaph.* 987a32–b10, 1078b12–1079a4, 1086a37–b11. These citations of Aristotle concerning the difference between Socrates and Plato come from T. Irwin's fuller discussion of the subject in Irwin 1995:8–11.

³¹¹ Cooper 1997:xv.

³¹² For fuller discussions of the classification of Plato's dialogues, see Irwin 1995:11–13 and Cooper 1997:xii–xviii. There are three salient differences between these accounts. Generally, Irwin credits stylometry more than does Cooper. As a result, Irwin divides the corpus more finely, into four groups rather than three, and adopts the chronological labels ('early,' 'second,' 'third,' and 'latest') that Cooper uses more gingerly (preferring the categories 'Socratic,' 'second,' and 'latest,' with no chronological sequence implied between the first two). For the sake of simplicity, this chapter adopts Cooper's scheme. For an altogether different approach to the order of the Platonic corpus, see Annas 1999.

³¹³ By Cooper's reckoning, the dialogues of the second group include *Men.*, *Symp.*, *Phaed.*, *Resp.*, *Phaedr.*, *Parm.*, *Crat.*, and *Theaet.* (in no particular order). All of these will prove useful to us, as will passages from the late dialogues—*Tim.*, *Soph.*, *Pol.*, *Phileb.*, and *Leg.*

³¹⁴ We shall discuss Heraclitus, Parmenides, and Anaxagoras all-too-briefly below. Now, however, let us say that the Hippocratic theory of health as a balance of humors (see, e.g., *Nat. hom.*), which itself owes much to the Pythagoreans (especially Alcmaeon of Croton), corresponds neatly with the Platonic account of virtue as a harmony of soul-parts (*Resp.* 4.444d3–e3). As for the Sophists, they appear often as characters in the dialogues; and despite Plato's numerous criticisms of them, moreover, he even occasionally adopts their ideas. For instance, the Sophistic diagnosis of god as

the invention of a clever statesman (*Sisyphus*, DK 88B25) anticipates Plato's "noble lie" (*Resp.* 3.414b–416d), both of which bear a curious resemblance to the parade of shadows at the bottom of the Cave (*Resp.* 514b1–515a1).

³¹⁵ Socrates uses interrogative particles that suggest the correct answers—whether yes or no—to the slave. In the Greek, especially *oukoun* (83b3, e5; 85a1), but also in their contexts *ouchi* (83c3, 4; 85a5), *ē ou* (83d1), and *ouch* (83d2) suggest a positive answer, while *oud' ar'* suggests a negative. In English these particles are rendered by Grube (Cooper 1997) respectively as "is it not?" (suggested answer: it is) and "it cannot be, can it?" (suggested answer: it cannot).

³¹⁶ Conveniently, Socrates never notices that a parallel paradox of recollection arises alongside Meno's paradox of learning. After all, if memory is like an aviary, as Plato imagines in *Theaetetus* (197b–199c), and recollection is akin to seeking and finding within it a particular bird, then recollection should require that we already know what we seek. We cannot find a particular bird unless we already know what it looks like. When the object of our search is knowledge, however, knowing what we seek is already to possess it. Recollection therefore appears as impossible as learning. As Aristotle will later observe, neither are in fact impossible because both can proceed with only partial knowledge, whereas Meno's paradox assumes that they need total knowledge. Thus, for example, when I seek a particular bird in an aviary, I must know some things about it (e.g., what it looks like) but need not know others (e.g., where it is). "What is absurd," observed Aristotle, "is not that you should know in some sense what you are learning, but that you should know it in *this* sense, i.e., in the way and sense in which you are learning it" (*Post. an.* 71b7–9).

³¹⁷ The most succinct statement of this argument can be found in *Phaed.* 72e2–73b2, a fuller version follows this, 73b3–77a5.

³¹⁸ *Supra* note 191.

³¹⁹ *Men.* 81c5–d5; trans. Grube, in Cooper 1997:880.

³²⁰ *Ibid.*

³²¹ *Phaedr.* 249c3–4; trans. Nehamas and Woodruff, in Cooper 1997:527.

³²² *Phaedr.* 249c1–3; trans. Nehamas and Woodruff, in Cooper 1997:527.

³²³ *Phaedr.* 249d5–6; trans. Nehamas and Woodruff, in Cooper 1997:527. For a very similar account, see *Phaed.* 73b3–77a5. *Symposium* seems similar, inasmuch as the sight of bodily beauty ideally *provokes* one to contemplate higher beauties, arriving ultimately at Beauty itself. But the process of ascent in *Symposium* is not one of recollection, since the soul is said there to be mortal. *Resp.* 7.523a–524e discusses an altogether different way in which sense perception may provoke the contemplation of eternal realities: by creating illusions that convince the perceiver to distrust his perception and instead summon his reason.

³²⁴ *Phaedr.* 249b5–c1; trans. Nehamas and Woodruff, in Cooper 1997:527.

³²⁵ *Phaedr.* 250c4–5; trans. Nehamas and Woodruff, in Cooper 1997:528.

³²⁶ *Phaedr.* 250b8–c1; trans. Nehamas and Woodruff, in Cooper 1997:528.

³²⁷ *Phaedr.* 250c1–6; trans. Nehamas and Woodruff, in Cooper 1997:528.

³²⁸ Nehamas and Woodruff (1995:3, n. 8) provide a comprehensive list: "234d (Bacchic frenzy), 241e (possession by Nymphs), 244b and 248d–e (ecstasy of the oracles), 245a and 262d (possession by the Muses), and 250b–d (the ultimate vision after initiation into a cult)."

³²⁹ *Phaed.* 86c2–3; trans. Grube, in Cooper 1997:75.

³³⁰ *Phaed.* 92a6–c3.

³³¹ For the defense of recollection, see *Phaed.* 72e2–77a5. For the discussion of equality in particular, see 74a9–75d5.

³³² *Phaed.* 75c10–d2; trans. Grube, in Cooper 1997:66. The Greek being translated by ‘itself’ is the idiosyncratic *auto ho esti*, which can be translated more literally by ‘itself what it is.’ Plato gives three Greek names to these things themselves: *eidos*, *idea*, and *genos*. In *Parmenides*, e.g., Plato uses all three: *eidos* (129a1), *idea* (132c4), *genos* (134b7). (Full descriptions of *eidos* and *genos* can be found in Peters 1967:46–51, 72.) He uses these names interchangeably, although he favors the first two, which are forms of the Greek verb *eidō*, ‘to see’ or ‘to know.’ These etymological connections will prove important for our purposes, since the analogy between seeing and knowledge which will become paramount in a moment has already been forged at the level of language. In the meantime, though, we should note that the most common English translations of these Greek terms are ‘Form’ and ‘Idea,’ each of which preserves the notion of something seen or known.

³³³ See, e.g., Cicero’s *Top.* 4.14.

³³⁴ *Symp.* 210a1; trans. Nehamas and Woodruff, in Cooper 1997:493.

³³⁵ *Symp.* 211a1–2; trans. Nehamas and Woodruff, in Cooper 1997:493.

³³⁶ Simplicius, *Phys.* 145.1–146.25 = DK 28B8.5–6; slightly rev. Curd, trans. McKirahan, in Curd 1995:47. See also DK 28B8.3–4, and 8.42–43.

³³⁷ See fragments 50–83 in Curd 1995:35–38, and especially DK 22B88, and 22B126.

³³⁸ *Symp.* 211a2–4; trans. Nehamas and Woodruff, in Cooper 1997:493.

³³⁹ *Symp.* 211e1–3; trans. Nehamas and Woodruff, in Cooper 1997:494.

³⁴⁰ *Supra* note 327.

³⁴¹ *Phaedr.* 247c6–7; trans. Nehamas and Woodruff, in Cooper 1997:525.

³⁴² See *Parm.* 130e5–131a2, 132a1–4.

³⁴³ *Soph.* 248a7–13; trans. White, in Cooper 1997:269–270.

³⁴⁴ D.L. 8.6.

³⁴⁵ *Crat.* 440d7–e2. Aristotle himself confirms that Plato absorbed his Heracliteanism from Cratylus (*Metaph.* 987a32–34).

³⁴⁶ *Theaet.* 179e2–181b7.

³⁴⁷ *Crat.* 440a6–7; trans. Reeve, in Cooper 1997:155.

³⁴⁸ *Theaet.* 183a2–b5.

³⁴⁹ *Metaph.* 1010a12; trans. Ross, in Barnes 1995:1594.

³⁵⁰ *Phaed.* 79d1–4; trans. Grube, in Cooper 1997:70.

³⁵¹ *Supra* note 332.

³⁵² *Phaed.* 67b2; trans. Grube, in Cooper 1997:58. See also *Phaed.* 69c–d, in which Plato says that philosophers are the true Bacchants.

³⁵³ *Supra* note 181.

³⁵⁴ *Phaed.* 62b1–5, 81d9–e2, 82e1–2; see also 66b6, 66c6, 67a7, and 79c7–8.

³⁵⁵ *Phaed.* 80b1–5; trans. Grube, in Cooper 1997:70.

³⁵⁶ 58b5, 65e6, 66d8, 66e5, 67a5, 67a7, 67b2 (bis), 67c3, 67c5, 68b4, 69c1, 69c2, 69c6, 79d2, 80d6, 80e2, 81b1, 81d3, 82c1, 82d6, 83d9, 83e2, 108b4, 108c3, 109b7 (bis), 109d3, 110c2, 110e3, 111b6, 111d8, 114c1.

³⁵⁷ *Phaed.* 61d–62c. Indeed, the alacrity with which he drinks the hemlock lends his arguments their rhetorical force. Socrates’ *daimōn* was his guardian angel, as it were—warning him not to take certain actions. See, e.g., *Apol.* 31c8–d4 and Xenophon’s *Mem.* 1.1.4, where its operation is wider. For a brief discussion, see Peters 1967:33; for a longer one, see Reeve 1989:68–70.

³⁵⁸ *Phaed.* 64a4–6, 80e7–81a2.

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- ³⁵⁹ *Phaed.* 83a7–b2. Plato’s Greek is no less awkward than this translation, signaling an important technical point.
- ³⁶⁰ *Symp.* 210a–211d.
- ³⁶¹ *Resp.* 6.490a8–b1; trans. Reeve 2004:183.
- ³⁶² *Symp.* 211e4–212a2; trans. Nehamas and Woodruff, in Cooper 1997:494.
- ³⁶³ *Resp.* 6.490b2–4; trans. slightly rev. from Reeve 2004:183. Italics added. The Greek word faithfully translated by ‘grasps’ is *haptomai*.
- ³⁶⁴ Gerson 2003:129.
- ³⁶⁵ *Resp.* 6.490b5–8; trans. Reeve 2004:183. In the passive voice, the Greek verb (*mignumi*), here translated by ‘has intercourse,’ can mean something either social or sexual, like the English verb itself. The next few lines make it clear, however, that Plato intends the sexual meaning.
- ³⁶⁶ For the most famous comparison of philosophy to birth, see *Theaet.* 150b–151b, in which Socrates compares himself to a midwife.
- ³⁶⁷ *Symp.* 212a2–5; *Resp.* 6.490b5–6. See also *Resp.* 10.611e1–3.
- ³⁶⁸ *Soph.* 226d1–228e5. The best remedy for the first, he supposes, is admonition; for the second, it is the purifying effect of cross-examination—in other words, the *elenchos* (229e4–230e3).
- ³⁶⁹ 9.585b–e. This argument is one of several for the superiority of intellectual over other pleasures found between 9.583b and 9.586b.
- ³⁷⁰ According to Plato’s precise terminology, the pleasure gained is ‘true’ and should be included among those pleasures for which there is no painful anticipation, the ‘pure’ pleasures. See *Resp.* 9.583b, 584c.
- ³⁷¹ *Resp.* 9.586a4–6; trans. Reeve 2004:288.
- ³⁷² *Phaedr.* 247d3–4; trans. Nehamas and Woodruff, in Cooper 1997:525.
- ³⁷³ *Phaedr.* 247c1–2; trans. Nehamas and Woodruff, in Cooper 1997:525.
- ³⁷⁴ *Phaedr.* 247c7–8. See also *Phaedr.* 248b7–c1.
- ³⁷⁵ *Phaed.* 83a6–7; trans. Grube, in Cooper 1997:72.
- ³⁷⁶ *Phaed.* 83a4; trans. Grube, in Cooper 1997:72. See also 65b1–4, 65c5–7, and 79c2–8.
- ³⁷⁷ *Tim.* 47a1–2; trans. Zeyl, in Cooper 1997:1249.
- ³⁷⁸ For Upaniṣadic asceticism, supra note 166. For the absence of asceticism in Zoroastrian, supra note 107. For the Pythagorean variety, supra notes 252 to 254.
- ³⁷⁹ For Zoroastrian esteem of light, supra notes 89 and 98. For the parallel Pythagorean esteem, supra notes 87 and 88.
- ³⁸⁰ See Aristotle, *Metaph.* 986b22–26.
- ³⁸¹ *Tim.* 47a1–b2; trans. Zeyl, in Cooper 1997:1249–1250.
- ³⁸² *Resp.* 5.477a7, 478d6–7, 479d5.
- ³⁸³ *Resp.* 6.507b–509d.
- ³⁸⁴ *Resp.* 6.509b8–10; slightly rev. from trans. Reeve 2004:205.
- ³⁸⁵ *Resp.* 6.508a4–8; see also *Leg.* 10.899a7–b9.
- ³⁸⁶ *Resp.* 6.506e3–4; slightly rev. from trans. Reeve 2004:201; see also 507a3 and 508b12–13.
- ³⁸⁷ Herodotus 1.131 and 2.59; Notopoulos 1944a:165 cites the first.
- ³⁸⁸ These and many other such citations can be found in Notopoulos 1944a:165–167. These particular citations are from: *Il.* 3.277, *Op.* 267, *Ag.* 508, and *Oed. tyr.* 1425.
- ³⁸⁹ *Oed. tyr.* 660; trans. PLM.
- ³⁹⁰ Notopoulos 1944a:165.
- ³⁹¹ *Pyth.* 8:95–97; trans. Race 1997a:337.

³⁹² “It is natural,” writes Kahn (2001:55), to connect the Pythagoreanism of Plato’s second group of dialogues with his “two later trips to Syracuse in 367 and 361, which afforded him the opportunity for more intimate contacts with Archytas and the Pythagoreans of Tarentum.”

³⁹³ Aristotle, *De an.* 404b13–14 = DK 31B84; trans. PLM. For Empedocles’ similar “like-to-like” theory of thinking, see 31B107 (Theophrastus, *Sens.* 10); for his “like-to-like” theory of nutrition, see 31B90. Kingsley 1995:298 argues that this theory had special significance for Empedocles, which it may have, but the theory of perception according to which “like is naturally apprehended by like” was also used by Philolaus (supra note 261), and perhaps even Pythagoras (Aëtius, 4.13.9–10 (*Dox. gr.* 404) = DK 28A48). As for this particular formulation by Empedocles, something should be said about Empedocles’ Greek. We are accustomed to think of the four elements introduced by him as earth, water, air, and fire; but of the two Greek words roughly translated by ‘air,’ he uses not *aēr*—or mist, which Anaximenes chose for his first principle—but *aithēr*, which refers to the purer air of the heavens. The English derivative, ‘ether,’ is the best translation, as we have seen, especially as it conveys the connotation of purity. Anaxagoras called the *aithēr* ‘fine,’ *araios*, saying that it moved away from our location in the cosmos, where instead darkness and earth, wet and cold came to predominate (DK 59B15). Plato distinguishes *aēr* and *aithēr* at *Tim.* 58d1–3: “The same goes for air. There is the brightest kind, that we call ‘aether,’ and also the murkiest, ‘mist’ and ‘darkness’” (trans. Zeyl, in Cooper 1997:1261). For a sustained discussion of Empedocles’ *aithēr* and *aēr*, see Kingsley 1995:15–23, 24–35.

³⁹⁴ Aristotle, *Sens.* 437b32–438a2 = DK 31B84; trans. Barnes 1987:154.

³⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁹⁶ *Hamlet* 2.1.100–102.

³⁹⁷ Elaborating a creationist cosmogony, *Timaeus* helped Christian theologians develop a philosophical account of *Genesis*. Thanks to the late antique translation of Calcidius, furthermore, it was the only Platonic dialogue available in Latin—and even then only in part—until the twelfth century. Lesky 1996:536, Zeyl 2000:xiv.

³⁹⁸ *Tim.* 45b1–3; trans. Zeyl, in Cooper 1997:1248.

³⁹⁹ *Tim.* 45c7; trans. Zeyl, in Cooper 1997:1248.

⁴⁰⁰ *Tim.* 45b6–c2; trans. Zeyl, in Cooper 1997:1248.

⁴⁰¹ *Tim.* 40a2–4; trans. Zeyl, in Cooper 1997:1243.

⁴⁰² Supra note 379.

⁴⁰³ *Resp.* 3.415a–417b.

⁴⁰⁴ *Tim.* 69e1–3; trans. Zeyl, in Cooper 1997:1271. See also 69e–71e, and 72e–73a.

⁴⁰⁵ *Tim.* 92a4; trans. Zeyl, in Cooper 1997:1290.

⁴⁰⁶ *Tim.* 92a7; trans. Zeyl, in Cooper 1997:1290.

⁴⁰⁷ *Tim.* 90b1, *Resp.* 7.519a8–b5, 9.586a1–8; cf. *Resp.* 7.527b9–11, 533d1–4, *Phaedr.* 247b3–6.

Notopoulos 1944b analyzes Plato’s metaphors of *up and down*, correlating them with the use of his two other most important metaphors: *light and dark*, and *image and reality*.

⁴⁰⁸ *Tim.* 90a2–6; trans. Zeyl, in Cooper 1997:1288–1289.

⁴⁰⁹ And consequently, the sphere above all other solids. See, e.g., *Tim.* 33b2–7, or DK 31B134.

Aristotle explains some of his reasons for privileging the circle over the line at *Cael.* 269a17–23, a passage we shall discuss when we come to his cosmology.

⁴¹⁰ *Tim.* 47c2–4; trans. Zeyl, in Cooper 1997:1250.

⁴¹¹ *Leg.* 10.898a8–b2; trans. T. Saunders, in Cooper 1997:1554–5.

⁴¹² *Ibid.*

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- ⁴¹³ *Ibid.*
- ⁴¹⁴ *Tim.* 43a4–5; trans. Zeyl, in Cooper 1997:1246.
- ⁴¹⁵ *Tim.* 44b3–6; trans. Zeyl, in Cooper 1997:1247.
- ⁴¹⁶ *Ibid.*
- ⁴¹⁷ Speaking of astronomy and harmonics, Plato writes that “these two sciences are somehow akin, as the Pythagoreans say” (*Resp.* 7.530d6–10; trans. Reeve 2004:225). According to the Pythagoreans, the motions of the heavenly bodies produced a supreme harmony, the so-called harmony of the spheres. For similar praise of harmonics, see *Tim.* 47c4–e2. For the similarity of seeing and hearing, on account of the fineness of their media (air and fire, respectively), see *Tim.* 45b3–c7.
- ⁴¹⁸ See also *Resp.* 6.508a, *Leg.* 11.930e–931a. In *Leg.* 5.741b5–6, Plato also calls gods the lots by which property is distributed—a potent reminder of the mythological universe in which even he still operates.
- ⁴¹⁹ *Resp.* 7.530b3; trans. Reeve 2004:225.
- ⁴²⁰ At *Resp.* 7.528e–529c, he says this satisfaction would allow that someone pursues “higher studies” simply by “leaning his head back and studying ornaments on a ceiling.” At *Tim.* 91d6–e1, similarly, he says that the souls of “men who studied the heavenly bodies but in their naiveté believed that the most reliable proofs concerning them could be based upon visual observation” are, in their next life, reincarnated as birds. (Cooper 1997:1145 and 1290, respectively).
- ⁴²¹ *Resp.* 7.533b2–3; trans. Reeve 2004:228. For a brief summary of the philosopher’s intellectual ascent, see also *Theaet.* 173e1–174a2.
- ⁴²² *Resp.* 7.529c–530c.
- ⁴²³ *Resp.* 7.533c8–d1; trans. Reeve 2004:228.
- ⁴²⁴ *Resp.* 7.515b7, 517b2, 519d5.
- ⁴²⁵ *Supra* notes 181 and 353.
- ⁴²⁶ *Resp.* 7.514b8–515a1.
- ⁴²⁷ Cornford 1903:436, 439.
- ⁴²⁸ *Phaedr.* 250b1–c6. See also Notopoulos 1944a:238, especially n. 130.
- ⁴²⁹ *Resp.* 7.518c7–8; trans. Reeve 2004:212.
- ⁴³⁰ *Resp.* 7.517b–c; 7.531c–534e.
- ⁴³¹ *Resp.* 7.516a6–8; trans. Reeve 2004:209.
- ⁴³² *Resp.* 6.509d6–511e5.
- ⁴³³ *Resp.* 6.509d6–8; trans. Reeve 2004:204.
- ⁴³⁴ See Gerson 2003:180, n. 51.
- ⁴³⁵ *Resp.* 6.509d8–510a6, and 511d6–e4.
- ⁴³⁶ *Resp.* 6.510b3–511d5.
- ⁴³⁷ *Resp.* 6.510b3–5; trans. Reeve 2004:206. See also 6.510e1–511a1, and 511a5–7.
- ⁴³⁸ *Resp.* 6.510d7–8; trans. Reeve 2004:206.
- ⁴³⁹ *Resp.* 7.532a5–b2 and 533c7–e1.
- ⁴⁴⁰ Gerson 2003:82.
- ⁴⁴¹ Since color, for instance, is a so-called secondary quality, a quality that objects and their atoms produce in minds, but which objects themselves do not have, our knowledge of color cannot be the reception of the object’s own form, its primary qualities. The two figures who founded the representationalist tradition, according to Richard Rorty’s (1981) discussion and criticism of it, are Descartes, who introduces the metaphor of the mind as a mirror, and Locke, who portrays

- knowledge as accurate representations (or *ideas*) in the mirror. Rejecting ancient and medieval non-representationalist epistemologies, as well as the modern representationalist ones that are the target of his book, Rorty champions instead the post-modern, or ‘pragmatist,’ epistemologies he finds in the likes of Wittgenstein, Heidegger, and Dewey. See also Gerson 2003:81–82.
- ⁴⁴² Gerson 2003, ch. 2, adduces independent arguments for the plausibility of a non-representationalist epistemology. “One excellent reason for holding that knowledge is non-representational,” he writes, “is that knowledge is an infallible state” (2003:82). “If knowledge were representational,” he adds, “infallibility could in principle not be preserved because there would be no way of inferring from a representational state any objective state of affairs” (*ibid.*).
- ⁴⁴³ *De an.* 429a15–19; trans. PLM.
- ⁴⁴⁴ *De an.* 430a4–5. Gerson 2005:151 cites this passage along with five others that make the same point, 430a19–20, 430b25–26, 431a1, 431b17, 431b22–23. See also *Metaph.* 1072b20–23. To be precise, this identity must remain qualified so long as *nous* is embodied (Gerson 2005:157). “Unqualified identity,” writes Gerson, “is available only for that which is cognitively identical with that which is not other than it,” and this is true of disembodied *nous* alone (Gerson 2005:157).
- ⁴⁴⁵ *Supra* note 393. See McEvelley 2002:101.
- ⁴⁴⁶ *Phaed.* 78b4–84b4. Detailed analyses of this argument are available in Gerson 1986:352–355, Shields 2001:141–144, Bostock 2001:259, and Gerson 2003:79–88.
- ⁴⁴⁷ Gerson 2003:97.
- ⁴⁴⁸ *Resp.* 7.533a1–3; trans. Reeve 2004:228.
- ⁴⁴⁹ *Supra* notes 387 to 391.
- ⁴⁵⁰ *Symp.* 211b1; trans. Nehamas and Woodruff, in Cooper 1997:493.
- ⁴⁵¹ *Resp.* 6.511b6–7; trans. Reeve 2004:207.
- ⁴⁵² *Resp.* 6.509b6–8; slightly rev. from trans. Reeve 2004:205.
- ⁴⁵³ Gerson 2003:175.
- ⁴⁵⁴ *Parm.* 129d7–8. The Greek is *auta kath’ hauta*. For more on this idiom, *supra* note 332.
- ⁴⁵⁵ *Supra* notes 332 through 349.
- ⁴⁵⁶ *Resp.* 7.516b4–6; trans. Reeve 2004:210.
- ⁴⁵⁷ *Resp.* 6.506d7–8; trans. Reeve 2004:201.
- ⁴⁵⁸ Cooper 1977:155.
- ⁴⁵⁹ *Gorg.* 506e1–2; trans. Zeyl, in Cooper 1997:851.
- ⁴⁶⁰ *Supra* notes 116–120.
- ⁴⁶¹ *Tim.* 30a2–6; trans. Zeyl, in Cooper 1997:1236. Reeve 2003:49 additionally cites *Gorg.* 507e6–508a8, and *Phileb.* 66a6–7.
- ⁴⁶² Gerson 2003:176.
- ⁴⁶³ *Leg.* 896d10–e7.
- ⁴⁶⁴ Gerson 2003:176.
- ⁴⁶⁵ Gerson 2003:177.
- ⁴⁶⁶ *Supra* note 450.
- ⁴⁶⁷ Gerson 2003:175. Italics added.
- ⁴⁶⁸ Gerson 2003:177.
- ⁴⁶⁹ “The Form of the Good is virtually all of the other Forms,” writes Gerson, “roughly in the way that ‘white’ light is virtually all the colours of the rainbow or in the way that the algebraic formula of a circle is virtually a circle or in the way a function is virtually all of its arguments or in the

way the artist is virtually all of his creations” (2003:175). Two pages later he adds others examples. “The premisses of a valid deductive argument contain together virtually their conclusion. A properly functioning calculator contains virtually all the answers to the mathematical questions that its rules allow it to be asked,” and, most auspiciously, “an omniscient simple deity may be said to know virtually all that is knowable.”

⁴⁷⁰ *Resp.* 509b6–8; slightly rev. from trans. Reeve 2004:205.

⁴⁷¹ *Supra* note 432.

⁴⁷² *Phaed.* 98b7–c2.

⁴⁷³ *Resp.* 1.341d7–8, 342c1–2.

⁴⁷⁴ *Resp.* 10.601d4–5; slightly rev. from trans. Reeve 2004:305.

⁴⁷⁵ *Resp.* 10.601d5–6; trans. Reeve 2004:305. For instance, a pruning knife is something whose use is to prune; if it prunes well, it’s an excellent one (*Resp.* 1.353d9–354a2). Or, a horse-breeding action is something whose purpose is to produce good horses; if it succeeds, it’s a correct one (1.342c4). Finally, Plato argues, a human soul’s purpose is to live; if it lives well—however that may be specified—it’s a virtuous one (1.353d3–e12). The trick of the argument, needless to say, is the move from the uncontroversial ascription of use and purpose to artifacts, through their more questionable ascription to actions, to their ultimately dubious ascription to organisms. Other passages relevant to the Platonic conception of virtue include *Charm.* 161a8–9, *Euthyphr.* 6d9–e1, *Gorg.* 506d2–4, *Prot.* 332b4–6, and *Resp.* 1.353d9–354a2. For short discussions of the Greek notion of *aretē*, see Cooper 1997:980, n. 8, and Reeve 2004:329. MacIntyre 1984 (especially pp. 57–59 and chapter 12) provides a fuller explanation of the notion, not to mention a spirited defense of a renovated version of it.

⁴⁷⁶ *Resp.* 7.517b6–8; trans. Reeve 2004:211.

⁴⁷⁷ He adduces the ‘recollection’ argument of *Phaed.* (72e2–77a5). *Timaeus* sketches a related epistemological argument (51d3–5). In *Republic*, the point is made most forcefully at 5.475e–480a. Despite the confidence of these passages, Plato does have the Socrates of *Meno* (81d6–e2) reject the skeptical argument not because it is incoherent but because “it would make us idle ... whereas my argument makes them energetic and keen on the search.” Such reasoning appears to be moral rather than strictly epistemological. For other statements of Plato’s position on Forms, see *Resp.* 10.596a, *Phaed.* 103b–e, *Crat.* 389a–390a, and finally *Parm.* 129a–e, 130e–131a, and 132a,d.

⁴⁷⁸ *Eth. nic.* 1.1094a2–3 and *Metaph.* 982b5–8.

⁴⁷⁹ See *Euthyd.* 290b10–c6, as well as *Resp.* 6.511b3–e5, 7.531c9–535a2.

⁴⁸⁰ *Euthyd.* 290d1–3; see Reeve 2003:45.

⁴⁸¹ 5.473c11–e2; see also *Euthyd.* 282c5–d3 and *Crat.* 388d9–390d5.

⁴⁸² *Resp.* 7.532a5–533d1; see Reeve 2003:49. See also *Pol.* 287c10–d4.

⁴⁸³ *Resp.* 7.537c1–7; see Reeve 2003:51.

⁴⁸⁴ *Phaed.* 66a1–3; trans. Grube, in Cooper 1997:57.

⁴⁸⁵ *Resp.* 6.500c4–5; trans. Reeve 2004:194.

⁴⁸⁶ *Resp.* 6.500c9–d2; trans. Reeve 2004:194.

⁴⁸⁷ *Tim.* 90c2–3; trans. Zeyl, in Cooper 1997:1289. See also *Theaet.* 176b1–3.

⁴⁸⁸ *Resp.* 6.501b5–7; trans. Reeve 2004:195. See also *Soph.* 216b8–c1.

⁴⁸⁹ *Resp.* 7.540b6–c2; trans. Reeve 2004:236.

⁴⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹¹ *Ibid.*

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- ⁴⁹² *Phaed.* 83e1–3.
- ⁴⁹³ *Phaed.* 81a9; trans. Grube, in Cooper 1997:71. See also 108c3–5.
- ⁴⁹⁴ Supra note 224.
- ⁴⁹⁵ *Phaed.* 107c–114c.
- ⁴⁹⁶ *Phaed.* 111b1–c3; trans. Grube, in Cooper 1997:95.
- ⁴⁹⁷ *Soph.* 254a9–10; trans. White, in Cooper 1997:276.
- ⁴⁹⁸ As Dionysus’ mother, Semele, learned to her destruction (Euripides, *Bacch.* 1–12).
- ⁴⁹⁹ *Phaedr.* 248c3; trans. Nehamas and Woodruff, in Cooper 1997:526.
- ⁵⁰⁰ *Phaedr.* 248c5; trans. Nehamas and Woodruff, in Cooper 1997:526.
- ⁵⁰¹ Supra notes 189, 191 and 318, 196, 213, and 214.
- ⁵⁰² See, e.g., *Theaet.* 176e3–177a8, *Resp.* 6.498d1–4, and of course the Myth of Er, *Resp.* 10.614b–621b. Like Pindar’s eschatology (e.g., *Ol.* 2.56–60), Plato’s includes punishments for those who fail to live a good life. If a man wastes his life in impurity, the penalty is reincarnation as a woman; for a recidivist (who, despite his feminine incarnation, somehow retains a male soul), the penalty is still further incarnation as “some wild animal that resembled the wicked character he had acquired” (*Tim.* 42b5–c4).
- ⁵⁰³ *Tim.* 42b3–4; trans. Zeyl, in Cooper 1997:1245.
- ⁵⁰⁴ *Phaed.* 78c6–8; trans. Grube, in Cooper 1997:69. See also 78c10–d7.
- ⁵⁰⁵ *Phaed.* 79d1–7; trans. Grube, in Cooper 1997:70.
- ⁵⁰⁶ *Phaed.* 79a3–4; trans. Grube, in Cooper 1997:69.
- ⁵⁰⁷ *Phaed.* 82c3.
- ⁵⁰⁸ *Phaedr.* 245c8–9; trans. Nehamas and Woodruff, in Cooper 1997:524. See also *Leg.* 895e10–896a4. Aristotle also claimed that his predecessors assumed, “naturally enough, that what is in its own nature originative of movement must be among what is primordial” (*De an.* 405a2–405a4). He seems, thus, to have in mind Plato and the Academics.
- ⁵⁰⁹ *Phys.* Book 8.
- ⁵¹⁰ For the first stage in this argument, *Phaedr.* 245c5–246a2; for its full expression, *Leg.* 887c7–899d2.
- ⁵¹¹ *Phileb.* 35c6–7; trans. D. Frede, in Cooper 1997:424.
- ⁵¹² *Phileb.* 35d2–3; trans. D. Frede, in Cooper 1997:424.
- ⁵¹³ *Phaedr.* 253d7–8, and 254a4–5; slightly rev. from trans. Nehamas and Woodruff, in Cooper 1997:530–531.
- ⁵¹⁴ *Ibid.*
- ⁵¹⁵ See *Resp.* 9.588d3, 588c7.
- ⁵¹⁶ *Tim.* 69c5–72d3.
- ⁵¹⁷ To be precise, Plato there presents two arguments for the tripartition of the soul. The first is much weaker, however, depending heavily on his tripartite division of city (*Resp.* 4.434e3–436a3). We shall thus restrict ourselves to his second argument (4.436a8–441c7), which has great appeal, even today. Some recent examinations include Gerson 1986, Reeve 1988:118–140, F. Miller 1999, several papers collected in Wagner 2001 (Cooper, Shields, Smith, and Bobonich), Carone 2001, Bobonich 2002:219–257, and finally Gerson 2003:100–124.
- ⁵¹⁸ The Principle of Non-Contradiction (PNC) can be found at *Metaph.* 4.1005b11–33. Fred Miller (1999:92–93) distinguishes it from the Principle of Non-Opposition (PNO) by observing, essentially, that PNO precludes the simultaneous presence of *contraries*, whereas PNC precludes that of *contradictories*. Reeve offers a different view, writing that PNO “is simply the principle of

noncontradiction, formulated in terms of properties rather than propositions, and restricted to properties that are relational forms” (1988:119).

⁵¹⁹ *Resp.* 4.436b8–c1; trans. Reeve 2004:123.

⁵²⁰ *Resp.* 4.436c8–d2; for the more complex example of a spinning top, see 4.436d4–e6.

⁵²¹ *Akrasia* combines an alpha-privative with a nominal form of *kratos* (‘power,’ from which democracy or autocracy, e.g., are derived). Literally, then, it means ‘lacking power;’ more specifically, though, it means lacking the power to act upon one’s assessment of what is best. ‘Weakness of will’ is the most common translation, but it is anachronistic. The philosophical notion of ‘will’—which after Paul (Rom 7) becomes so important to Christian thinkers such as Augustine (*Lib.*)—emerged from the Hellenistic debate between Stoics and Epicureans about the freedom or determinism of human action (see Cicero’s *Fat.*, e.g., which summarizes this debate, though not always fairly). There are antecedents of this debate in Aristotle (*Int.* 9), and as far back as a speech of Gorgias (*Hel.*), but nothing quite like the will, in its modern sense, appears in their discussions. A better, but no less anachronistic translation of *akrasia*, is Freud’s concept ‘neurosis,’ which owes as much to Plato as it does to 19th century mechanics. To avoid anachronism, however, *akrasia* will remain transliterated and untranslated. For the inadequacy of other candidate translations, see Rorty 1980:283, n. 1.

⁵²² See *Prot.* 352a8–358d4, and *Men.* 77b6–78b2.

⁵²³ Socrates makes this belief most explicit at *Men.* 87c11–88d3.

⁵²⁴ Since this interpretation has been challenged by Carone 2001, the dissertation develops the point in more detail, taking heed of her contribution.

⁵²⁵ See, e.g., *Acut.* 15.

⁵²⁶ *Resp.* 4.439c5–7.

⁵²⁷ *Resp.* 4.439b3–6.

⁵²⁸ F. Miller 1999:90–91 thus speculates, plausibly, that the psychology of *Republic* is intermediate between that of *Phaedo* and that of *Phaedrus*.

⁵²⁹ To survey these criticisms, let alone to assess them, would take us too far afield. We may mention the most basic of them. Against Plato’s use of the Principle of Non-Opposition to divide the soul, for example, he tests it by physical examples, but then applies it to the soul, as if forgetting how often he has distinguished the soul from the physical world. If soul and body are as different as Plato so often insists, he should not accept this application as glibly as he does (*Resp.* 4.437a4–9).

⁵³⁰ *Resp.* 4.439d4–8; trans. Reeve 2004:127.

⁵³¹ *Resp.* 9.588c7–10; trans. Reeve 2004:292.

⁵³² This happens with the avarice of the oligarch (*Resp.* 8.554a5–8) and the lust of the tyrant (*Resp.* 9.572e4–573a2).

⁵³³ See, e.g., *Resp.* 8.559d9–10, which speaks of this part’s multicolored (*pantodapas*) pleasures, and 8.561a3–5, which describes individual appetites rising to prominence in it as if according to lot.

⁵³⁴ *Resp.* 9.586b3–4.

⁵³⁵ *Resp.* 10.602c4–603b2.

⁵³⁶ *Resp.* 4.437d2–439a2.

⁵³⁷ *Resp.* 4.439d4–8; trans. Reeve 2004:127. The Greek is *to logistikon*, which is related to *logos*. For an exhaustive list of meanings and citations, see Guthrie 1962:420–424. For another *logos* of *logos*, see Peters 1967:110–112.

⁵³⁸ *Symp.* 212a3–5; trans. Nehamas and Woodruff, in Cooper 1997:494.

⁵³⁹ *Tim.* 71a1–2; trans. Zeyl, in Cooper 1997:1272.

⁵⁴⁰ *Supra* notes 432 and 471.

⁵⁴¹ *Resp.* 9.590d3–4.

⁵⁴² *Tim.* 69c5–8.

⁵⁴³ *Resp.* 10.611d4–5; trans. Reeve 2004:316.

⁵⁴⁴ Gerson 2003:145.

⁵⁴⁵ *Supra* note 436.

⁵⁴⁶ *Resp.* 10.611c2–3; trans. Reeve 2004:316.

⁵⁴⁷ Gerson 2003:57.

⁵⁴⁸ *Supra* note 515.

⁵⁴⁹ Gerson 2003:123.

⁵⁵⁰ Gerson 2003:123.

⁵⁵¹ E.g., *Phaed.* 79c–e. *Supra* notes 534 and 535.

⁵⁵² *Supra* notes 451–452, 468 and 549.

⁵⁵³ *Supra* notes 486, and 499–503.

⁵⁵⁴ See, e.g., *Enn.* 5.1.1.

⁵⁵⁵ See, e.g., *Enchir.* 10–12.

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