

Two Dogmas of Platonism

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Contemporary platonism has been conditioned in large part by two dogmas. One is the belief in a fundamental cleavage between intelligible but invisible Platonic *forms* that are real and eternal, and perceptible *objects* whose confinement to spacetime constitutes an inferior existence and about which knowledge is impossible. The other dogma involves a kind of *reductionism*: the belief that Plato’s unhypothetical first principle of the all is identical to the form of the good. Both dogmas, I argue, are ill-founded.

‘Platonism’ in my title shows my hand: neither is a doctrine to which Plato unambiguously or consistently aligns the characters who carry the dialectical burdens in his dialogues. Neither is required by our principle of reading the dialogues charitably. Rather, they are mutually reinforcing doctrines that took shape over hundreds of years as the platonists we now call ‘neoplatonists’ reflected on the texts of Plato, Aristotle, and Plato’s Academic successors, painstakingly fashioning a coherent and completed theory from what Plato himself had left open-ended. Religious doctrine was added to the mix that, over time, calcified into two dogmas that together transformed Plato into a sort of prescient Christian whose transcendent form of the good was the cause of all things and for whom evil could only be a privation of that good itself.

Each dogma has been challenged individually, often with admirable rigor and thoroughness, but it remains no exaggeration to say that they remain *the* deep background assumptions across a whole variety of approaches to the interpretation of Plato. The dialogues make arduous demands on their readers, and the expedient of checking with Aristotle when the going gets tough has been much overused to deliver false clarity on issues Plato appears to have struggled with all his life. I have not the slightest prospect of turning back the tide, but I will have succeeded in my less ambitious project if I am able to highlight and supplement others’ efforts to destabilize the two dogmas. They are, after all, hypotheses—hypotheses of exactly the sort we use when engaged in dianoetic reasoning. Philosophers, as dialecticians, should do better than the dianoetic geometers of the *Republic* who take their figures and angles as axiomatic and “don’t think it necessary to give any account of them, either to themselves or to others, as if they were clear to everyone” (VI, 510c6–d1).¹

I. First Dogma: Plato’s Two Worlds

According to the two-worlds view of Plato’s philosophy with which I began, forms are transcendent, timeless, intelligible to us, exist independently of, and are causes of, sensible things; and the sensible things are spatiotemporal particulars and the objects of our beliefs—a radical notion of what Aristotle called ‘separation’ that has played a supportive role in landing Plato with the tag ‘dualist’.² Not to oversimplify: the supernatural vs. the natural. In what follows, I

¹ Translations of Plato (except as stipulated *ad hoc*) are from Cooper (ed.) 1997. Greek is quoted from the most recent editions of the Oxford Classical Texts.

² The starring role goes to the separation of *psychê* and body in the *Phaedo*.

have set aside the epistemological version of the two-worlds dogma on three grounds: (i) the arguments in the secondary literature for the epistemological and ontological versions have little overlap; (ii) the ontological version is the one more imbricated with the second dogma, the un-hypothetical first principle's identity with the form of the good; and (iii) the epistemological issue has been settled: Plato does not have a two-worlds epistemology (Smith 2000).³ I avoid the epistemological combat, however, with grave doubts that Plato would have distinguished ontology from epistemology so cleanly as we now aspire to isolate them, and I carry on in a rather messy way: that is, I do not expunge terms such as 'intelligible' or 'explanatory' because clarity of exposition would be beyond my powers without them.

There are good and bad reasons to hold that Plato had a two-worlds ontology. I begin with a highly influential reason that is, nevertheless, a bad one: translators with an admirable desire for clarity and a background assumption of two worlds have put starch into Plato's Greek. For example, at *Parmenides* 134d6, in what we call "the greatest difficulty argument": *παρ' ἡμῶν* ('among us') becomes in translations "to our world" (Fowler 1926) and "in our world" (Gill and Ryan 1997). Taking a more prominent example from the *Republic*, the Greek *τόπος* ('region', 'place') also becomes "world" in translations. With *τόπος*, however, the issue is also one of emphasis. At 509d2, introducing the little joke that helped to give rise to the phrase *Platonic heaven*, the good is ruler of the intelligible kind and place (*νοητοῦ γένους τε καὶ τόπου*).⁴ At VII, 517b4–5, applying the cave image to the divided line, Socrates speaks of the climb to the *νοητὸν τόπον*, the intelligible place. As he continues in lofty prose, he does not repeat *τόπος* at b8, *ἐν τῷ γνωστῷ*, or at c1, *ἐν τε ὁρατῷ*, or at c2, *ἐν τε νοητῷ*; but translators typically repeat or exaggerate *τόπος* as they proceed: hence *τόπος* at b5 permits the later "visible world" (Shorey 1935) and "intelligible world" (Grube 1974); "world of knowledge," "visible world," and "intelligible world" (Cornford 1941).⁵ The exception is Allan Bloom (1968) who translates *τόπος* as "place" and follows with "the knowable" (b8), "the visible" (c1), and "the intelligible" (c2). Another and more common strategy is to repeat 'realm', 'region', or 'domain' three additional times in its absence from the text (Lee 1987, Grube-Reeve 1992, Waterfield 1993, Griffith 2000, Reeve 2004, and Allen 2006). I will not quarrel with the translation strategy *per se*, but the effect over generations has been to produce a more spatial account than Plato wrote—and one that exaggerates the two worlds assumption beyond the evidence. Aristotle seems puzzled in the *Physics* (IV 4, 203a8) when he reports that Plato held the forms to be "nowhere," returning a few pages later to say that Plato "ought to tell us why the form and the numbers are not in place" (V

³ Certainly the issue has not been settled to everyone's satisfaction, but Nick Smith's offensive against a two-worlds epistemology for Plato has persuaded me that I should limit my current effort. He faults the conflation of Plato's two distinct senses of *ἐπιστήμη* (i.e., as a cognitive capacity, and as the cognitive state achieved through the actualization of that capacity), but even Smith (2000, 146n4) maintains that Plato held a two-worlds ontology.

⁴ I appreciate Holger Thesleff's reminding me that *ὑπερουράνιος τόπος* (*Phaedrus* 247c3) is also responsible.

⁵ A related point is made by Paul Shorey 1935 in his note to *Republic* 500d5, that "ἐκεῖ [there] is frequently used in Plato of the world of ideas. Cf. *Phaedrus* 250a, *Phaedo* 109e." Indeed, *ἐκεῖ* becomes shorthand for the intelligible world in Plotinus, but Plato uses forms of the term more than seven hundred times, and—except that he uses it as a euphemism for the dead at *Republic* 427b8 (LSJ)—it would be special pleading to translate it differently in the context of Platonic forms.

2, 209b33).⁶

On the value scale of reasons one might use to defend two worlds, the cumulative effect of intensifying translations ranks low—but the consequence of such translations is as powerful and widespread as it is subliminal—perhaps especially in the United States, where one’s Greek is likely to begin after one’s encounter with Plato. The effect is magnified by the observation that most people who study Plato, across the wide variety of academic disciplines, do not concentrate on his ontology.

Standing behind the translators are the editors of the Greek texts. A curiosity intimately related to the two-worlds view of Plato’s ontology came to light with the publication of the index of Plato manuscripts (Brumbaugh and Wells 1968, 5). The authors had noticed that, in a passage where Aristotle “elliptically quotes” from Plato’s *Parmenides*, Aristotle writes ἐν εἶναι (‘be one’) where Plato had written ἐνεῖναι (‘be in’).⁷ Both philosophers (or their scribes) would have written ENEINAI in majuscules; and it was only through the later editing of the manuscripts that decisions were made in context between ‘one’ and ‘in’. Standing behind the editors, however, were further uncertainties: stonemasons marked aspirates, but such notation was by no means regular for manuscripts.⁸ By Aristotle’s time, cases that were not already clear in context—certain instances of ενεῖναι, among others—irregularly received marginalia from scribes and copyists whose editors then made their own judgments of the copyists’ punctuation. But the earlier uncial codices, Brumbaugh and Wells emphasize, had no such aspirate marks or, at best, occasional indications of rough breathings. Their salient claim is that the philosophical preoccupations of editors appreciably determine the choice of ἐν or ἐν—‘in’ or ‘one’. In particular, “as the context of metaphysical concern has moved from transcendence as problematic to immanence,” they say, between the 11th c. “Tübingen manuscript and the [1956] Diès’ Budé text, editorial preferences have replaced *hen* by *en* in a statistically significant ... number of passages”: *three times* the standard deviation. Brumbaugh and Wells call for more research into the cases where metaphysical presuppositions may have biased our texts, but all of that is in the background.

Among contemporary philosophers, the argument that has contributed most in defense of attributing a two-worlds ontology to Plato is *not* an argument from Plato’s dialogues at all; it is Aristotle’s remarks about the *separation* of forms from sensibles. In her 1984 “Separation” and 1986 “Immanence,” Gail Fine scoured the Platonic corpus and concluded *inter alia*, “Plato never even says that forms are separate; it proves surprisingly difficult to uncover any commitment to separation; and commitment to it emerges in unexpected ways and in unexpected cases” (1984, 254). More specifically, she shows definitively that some widely held views of separation in

⁶ Translations of Aristotle’s *Physics* and *Politics* are from Barnes (ed.) 1984.

⁷ As luck and scholarship would have it, there is a typographical error: Brumbaugh and Wells cite “*Metaphysics Z* 1039b,” but the phrase does not appear there. The Ross 1924 edition offers four cases of ἐν εἶναι in Z (1028b4, 1031b12, 1037b24–25, and 1041b11). The entire matter is complicated by the fact that the authors do not identify which of the fourteen occurrences of ENEINAI in the *Parmenides* they have in mind; only two appear as ενεῖναι: 139a7 and 164e4.

⁸ Smyth (1920, §2a) says that, before the adoption of the Ionic alphabet in 403 BCE, an uppercase eta (H) denoted rough breathing and, from about 300 (§14), just the left half of the eta (Ϡ), from which the symbol for rough breathing (´) later developed.

Plato should be abandoned. Among them is Cornford's (1939, 74) false claim that "The separation (*χωρισμός*) of the forms is explicitly effected in the *Phaedo*." Another claim for which she finds insufficient warrant is that Plato is himself "committed to the views of the friends of the forms" (*Sophist* 248a4–5). She warns against reading *χωρίς* as indicating anything more than difference (1984, 274); and against reading *αὐτὸ καθ' αὐτό* as implying separation, even when forms exclude their opposites (277). She also points out that the various difficulties for the theory of forms raised in the *Parmenides* do not "involve the assumption that forms are separate" (275). All of these are important points, carefully argued from the texts themselves. Other of her reasonings and conclusions—not to mention her spade work on many Aristotelian passages—are crucial for the view of Plato's ontological position that I want to go some way towards establishing, so Fine's work will reemerge intermittently below.

First, however, I want to emphasize the crucial point on which I disagree with Fine and others, a persistent inference that I take to be invalid and at the root of much misunderstanding about Plato's ontology. Instances of it include Fine's assertion (1984, 252, 273) that "Aristotle says that Plato, but not Socrates, separated... forms or universals"; and Dan Devereux's (1994, 63) that, "According to Aristotle's terse report, Plato separated Forms from sensible particulars, and in doing so he departed from Socrates' view of the relationship between universals and their participants."⁹ W. D. Ross (1924, 161) had preceded them with, "Socrates is represented as ... not having taken the further step which 'the others' (i.e. Plato) took." All three cite *Metaphysics* M 4, 1078b30–32 where Aristotle says, "But Socrates did not posit the universals as separate [*χωριστὰ*], nor the definitions; these thinkers, however, regarded them as being about other things, separate [*ἐχώρισαν*] from sensible things, and called such things 'Ideas'."¹⁰ It is closely echoed by M 9, 1086b2–8, beginning "As we said earlier...." Here, however, Aristotle adds "the separation [*χωρίζειν*] of the universal from the individuals is the cause of the difficulties that arise with regard to the Ideas [*ιδέας*]. The exponents of the Ideas, however...." Again Aristotle leaves vague who those exponents are. I contend that there will have been more than one, and that it is unlikely that any two of them held exactly the same view.

Fine and Devereux are far from alone among contemporaries in making the inference from 'these thinkers' to Plato himself. Fine supplies "the Platonists" in parentheses in her translation, Devereux supplies Socrates' "successors"—both more than the Greek gives, and both less than implying Plato himself. Aristotle appears to be referring to the thinkers he has been discussing all along in M, the intellectual milieu of Plato's Academy, where a variety of views on numbers, forms, ideas, universals, et al. were being investigated, tested dialectically, and elaborated. Aristotle is most naturally read as including himself as an active participant in the disputes he discusses, especially when he uses first-person plurals.¹¹ What we have not is the justifica-

⁹ Devereux (1994, 72n19) has a great deal more to say about forms in the *Phaedo*, distinguishing *ιδέα* for perishable entities such as heat and cold that might be described as immanent, from *εἶδος* for imperishable forms, which he takes to be separate "beginning in the *Phaedo*." Devereux also discusses the *Parmenides*, but his account is strictly developmentalist.

¹⁰ Quotations from Aristotle's *Metaphysics* are from Apostle (tr.) 1966.

¹¹ He mentions Heraclitus, Democritus, and the Pythagoreans just before mentioning Socrates (1078b14–21), but the

tion for the inference from plurals to Plato in particular. M 4 and 5 have verbatim parallels in A, which treats presocratic philosophy; the move from the Pythagoreans and other presocratics to Aristotle's near present is, however, well marked.

When Aristotle criticizes a version of the forms incompatible with versions that Plato presents in one or more dialogues, the charge is sometimes brought that Aristotle gets Plato's views wrong, that he's a poor historian of philosophy—but Aristotle should be defended against that charge in this case. The injustice of it emerges from the fact that Aristotle, like Plato—or Theaetetus, Speusippus, Xenocrates, and others—was actively engaged in ontological research, the endeavor to determine the nature of what there is. As a part of that endeavor, Aristotle often mentions Plato by name in connection with one position or another,¹² so it is unreasonable to assume he demurs from using Plato's name in M 4 from some misplaced sense of delicacy. Aristotle says 'Plato' when he means Plato but often refers indifferently to his associates in the Academy who would not necessarily include Plato. Very much as Plato writes of "friends of the forms" (*Sophist* 248a4–5), when Aristotle writes, for example, of "believers in the Forms" or "exponents of the Ideas" (M 4, 1079a14–15; M 9, 1086b7–8), it is not because he sought a euphemism for Plato or for some dogged group in the grip of what they took to be Plato's last word on the subject. Philosophy was alive and well in Athens even after the death of Plato.

Stephen Halliwell (2006, 200) has made remarkable progress toward Aristotle's vindication, building on the "Fitzgerald canon,"¹³ according to which Aristotle was scrupulous in using ὁ Σωκράτης for the character in Plato's dialogues and Σωκράτης for the historical Socrates. At M 4, it is the character who did not separate the forms, suggesting at the very least that it has been wrong all along to give the passage the historical (rather than literary) interpretation it has almost ubiquitously received. No wonder we do not find Plato's Socrates separating the forms in the dialogues; on my view, Aristotle implies as much by speaking indifferently of those who did. Given that fact, one is hard-pressed to defend the view that Plato separated the forms if by 'forms' one means those discussed so variously in his dialogues. Halliwell goes further than Fitzgerald with a detailed study of what he refers to as Aristotle's favorable *obiter dictum* on Plato's authorial style (*Politics* II 6, 1265a10–3): Plato's Socratic dialogues "are elevated and possess elegance, originality, and a spirit of inquiry."¹⁴ The reason that such a comment on Plato's style should impress us is that, as Halliwell (2006, 202–3) puts it, Aristotle "went out of his way to discuss the *Republic* in a fashion which avoids equation of its ideas with the author's personal beliefs" and, despite more than twenty paraphrases of *Republic* and *Laws* in *Politics* II, "mani-

context precludes the possibility that 'these thinkers' refers to them.

¹² E.g., *Metaphysics* A 9, 992a20–22 and M 8, 1083a32. Halliwell 2006, 201 mentions four such instances from Aristotle's *Politics* where positions Plato himself held at the time the *Laws* was being written are specified: 1266b5, 1271b1, 1274b9, and 1293b1—quite apart from the positions taken by the Athenian in *Laws*.

¹³ He draws attention to the defense Ross 1924 mounts on behalf of Fitzgerald 1850. For details and further bibliography pro and con, see Halliwell 2006, 204n7.

¹⁴ The terms are unpacked to become "extraordinary flair, sophisticated stylishness, ground-breaking radicalism, and indefatigability in tracking philosophical problems." My insignificant disagreement with Halliwell's account is that I take Socrates to have been the protagonist in the early version of the *Laws* known to Aristotle before Plato's death, explaining Aristotle's odd remark here equating the Athenian with Socrates (see Nails and Thesleff 2003).

festes a marked inclination to argue dialectically with Plato's texts, treating their contents as material for serious philosophical debate but not primarily or predominantly as the expression of authorial tenets."¹⁵ Aristotle is at pains to keep distinct Plato's own doctrines from the views expressed by his characters Socrates and the Athenian guest. To put it another way, Aristotle never anywhere combines "Socrates-based paraphrase with direct criticism of Plato." When Aristotle attributes positions to Plato, as he does at 1266b5 and 1271b, he uses Plato's own name.¹⁶

A second text often mentioned in connection with M 4 poses different problems:

Plato, on the other hand, taking into account the *thought* of Socrates, came to the belief that, because sensible things are always in a state of flux, such inquiries were concerned with other things and not with the sensibles; for there can be no common definition of sensible things when these are always changing. He called things of this other sort 'Ideas' and believed that sensible things exist apart from Ideas and are named according to Ideas. For the many sensibles which have the same name exist by participating in the corresponding Forms. The only change he made was to use the name 'participation'; for the Pythagoreans say that things exist by imitating numbers, but Plato, changing the name, says that things exist by participating in the Forms. (*Metaph.* A 6, 987b4–13)

In this case, the claim that "sensible things exist apart from ideas" is supported by the comparatively weak *παρὰ* with the accusative: "sensible things exist besides ideas."¹⁷ If I am right that Aristotle deliberately avoids claiming that Plato was the unique separator of the forms, then I might also rescue Aristotle from Fine's (1984, 255) assertion that Aristotle "is misleading to suggest that the issue [of separation] is of explicit concern" to Socrates and Plato; "it is not one about which they argue or to which they call attention." In my view, Aristotle makes no such misleading suggestion; he writes of those philosophers, platonists, who did separate the forms and for whom separation was of explicit concern.

Even if Plato was one of those who separated the forms, however, the further difficulty is to determine just how radically one ought to take the separation. That is, does the distinction between forms and sensibles imply a two worlds ontology? Fine (1984, 254–64) is as concerned with fixing the meaning of 'separation' (*χωρισμός* and its cognates) in Aristotle as with discovering whether Plato's dialogues offer evidence of Plato's separating the forms. Among her conclusions on the former matter is that Aristotle usually means 'separation' in the sense that forms have the "capacity for independent existence" from sensibles: "To say that the form of *F* is separate is to say that it can exist without, independently of, *F* sensible particulars"—which I will refer to as 'ontological priority' (*Categories* 12, 14a30–31).¹⁸ There were other senses of 'separa-

¹⁵ The few possible exceptions are decisively disarmed (201–2).

¹⁶ In the first passage, Aristotle says, "Plato when writing the *Laws* thought that one should allow [variations in property] up to a certain point"; in the second that Plato was the author of the criticism of Sparta in the *Laws*. Both passages are discussed by Halliwell (2006, 201–2) who notes a further difficulty: translations where 'Plato' or 'Socrates' appears in English without its appearance in the Greek, showing at least that the translators did not appreciate the care with which Aristotle addressed citation (2006, 208n45).

¹⁷ In his discussion of A 6, 987b8, Ross mentions (in addition to M 4) the other passages where Aristotle connects Plato himself by name with forms, but not one attributes separation to Plato (*Metaph.* Z 2, 1028b19; A 3, 1070a18; *Phys.* IV 4, 203a8; and V 2, 209b33).

¹⁸ Fine 1984, 254 and 262; i.e., to what Aristotle says "does not reciprocate as to implication of existence": e.g., one is prior to two, but two is not prior to one. Translations of *Categories* are those of Ackrill 1963.

tion' at Aristotle's disposal.¹⁹ In the *Metaphysics*, where most of the action is, Aristotle distinguishes "separable in formula" from "separate without qualification" (τῷ λόγῳ χωριστόν from χωριστόν ἀπλῶς, H 1, 1042a29–31). Fine (1984, 256–57) correctly links the latter to ontological priority, but (a) it is not the formulation Aristotle uses in passages that refer unambiguously to Plato's forms, so I place his statement alongside the dearth of evidence that it applies uniquely or even primarily to Plato. (b) I concede that Aristotle was right to say at *Metaphysics* Δ 11, 1019a1–4 that "a distinction used by Plato," was that "some things can exist without the others, but not conversely." However, Plato makes central use of that distinction, so it carries no particular implication for forms and sensibles. Objects are ontologically prior to their reflections and shadows in the *Republic*'s divided line, for example. Our preferred alternative should be Terry Irwin's (1977, 254) view of separation as "non-reducibility," which he describes as "a legitimate conclusion from Plato's arguments" regarding Heraclitean flux: the forms "are not definable through sensible properties alone, and not identical with these properties, or with sensible objects as described by their sensible properties."²⁰

The A 6 passage is important for a second reason. Participation (μέθεξις) poses serious problems for any radical notion of separation.²¹ The Pythagoreans, with their copying or imitating of forms (μίμησις), suggest a physical separation that partaking or participating, with its connotations of mixing, lacks.²² Thus it may well be that Aristotle's fifth sense of priority (*Categories* 12, 14b10–13), "prior by nature" or reciprocation "as to implication of existence" is more suited to the relationship between Platonic forms and sensibles than the stronger ontological priority, with its requirement of independent existence.²³ Dorothea Frede has argued against a two-worlds ontology for Plato on just these grounds. In her discussion of the *Phaedo*, the dialogue many have rightly considered closest to making two worlds explicit, she says, "It can hardly have escaped his [Plato's] notice that health, strength, or tallness are properties of bodies and that the decision to postulate a separate world of the mind would eliminate such properties along with

¹⁹ I leave aside spatial separation, which Aristotle uses in physical contexts. Fine's notes (1984, 252–55) detail opinions from the secondary literature ranging from Ross's (1924, xliii) "to distinguish the universal from its particulars is in a sense to 'separate' it" to the strong notion of ontological priority according to which "for any property *F*, if *F* sensible particulars exist, the Form the *F* exists; and it is not the case that if the *F* exists, *F* sensible things exist" (Irwin 1977, 154).

²⁰ Fine also regards the non-reducibility thesis favorably, noting that it effectively disarms any empiricism that regards all properties as observable, or that would reduce descriptions of forms to descriptions of sensible properties.

²¹ Ross 1951, ch. 12 counted instances of μέθεξις as evidence for immanence. Frank Gonzales 1996, though addressing the epistemological version of two-worlds claims, likewise points to the role of Platonic participation in making two radically separate worlds implausible. Ironically, when LSJ gives the technical sense of μετέχω in Platonic philosophy as 'participate in', no paradigms are given from Plato (all four, including the passive form, μετέχονται, are from Aristotle's *Metaph.*).

²² Pythagorizing theories are included in Plato's ongoing search for the relations between forms and particulars, see *Studies in Plato's Two-level Model* (in Thesleff 2009, 383–506). The forms are frequently evoked with the language of paradigms (e.g., *Parmenides* 132d2, *Euthyphro* 6e6, *Theaetetus* 176e3, *Republic* 500e2, 540a9, and perhaps *Ti-maeus* 28a7–29b4). Cf. Sayre 1995, 84–89.

²³ Although pursuit of Aristotle's fifth sense of priority would pull me too far from my topic, I suspect that it is the priority closest to what characterizes Plato's forms and sensibles. The caveat is that they cannot be "simultaneous by nature" in Aristotle's sense (e.g., double and half) because forms and sensibles are non-efficient causes of one another's existence.

their material substrates” (1999, 195). Noting that the two-worlds interpretation had been propagated by neoplatonists, she adds (208–9), “Since Kant treated the Forms as pure concepts of the mind he also did not notice that Plato’s Forms are not static and inactive abstractions that hover above the physical world in ‘noble inactivity’, as Plato himself caricatures the theory of certain ‘friends of the Forms’ in the *Sophist* (248a).”

If priority by nature, i.e., reciprocity of implication of existence, is in fact an appropriate way to characterize the relationship between Plato’s forms and sensibles, then a perhaps surprising result is: no forms without sensibles. Recall Aristotle’s example: “if there is a man, the statement whereby we say that there is a man is true, and reciprocally—since if the statement whereby we say that there is a man is true, there is a man.” A formal account of a sensible object would involve the thing’s dimensions, its density, its weight at g, the wavelengths of light it reflects, all of which are among the truths about the object, whether expressed as statements or not. Were there no such sensible object, there would likewise be no such truths. Hard on the heels of this claim is a further controversial view, though it encroaches on the domain of epistemology: insofar as we are able to have knowledge of forms, we are able to make knowledgeable deductions from them, even about sensible objects.²⁴

To sum up, a two-worlds ontology implies a particularly strong sense of separation, not mere difference or distinction between sensibles and forms but forms’ independent existence. There is no text of Plato’s that argues for that strong sense of separation. Moreover, Aristotle’s arguments are not aimed at Plato himself but at such platonists as advocated independently existing forms. I would add what I have argued at length elsewhere (Nails 1995), that the late dialogues—those characterized by style markers unfamiliar in the remainder of the corpus (Thesleff 2009, 51–81, 139–41)—are Platonic, but probably not solely Plato’s. Other minds were hard at work by Plato’s last years, as in the Homeric and Aristotelian traditions, producing works from the “school” of Plato, as it were, and, after his death, those works became an accretion in Plato’s name by altogether different platonists. Thus the characterization of Platonic forms we are justified in making is that they are not reducible to sensibles, neither to objects in spacetime nor to sensible properties. As Hans-Georg Gadamer (1988, 260) put it so succinctly, “Plato was not a Platonist who taught two worlds.”²⁵

II. Second Dogma: The Identity of the Unhypothetical First Principle of the All and the Form of the Good

In this section, I focus on the divided line passage (*Rep.* VI, 509d6–511e5) for two reasons, one an unexpected absence, the other a unique presence. The form of the good (FOG) is absent from the divided line, though it plays an especially prominent role in the *Republic* both before and afterwards. Plato’s unhypothetical first principle of the all (UPA) is the pinnacle of the divided

²⁴ As Fine remarks (2003, 28), “even in the *Republic*, he rejects the [epistemological] Two Worlds Theory; he allows knowledge of and belief about forms.”

²⁵ Although he is explicit that he is glossing his 1978 *Die Idee des Guten zwischen Plato und Aristoteles* with this assertion, Gadamer steadfastly retains transcendence in that book’s account of Plato.

line passage (ἐπ’ ἀρχὴν ἀνυπόθετον (VI, 510b6–7); τοῦ ἀνυποθέτου ἐπὶ τὴν τοῦ παντὸς ἀρχὴν (511b5–6), but the term appears nowhere else in the corpus.²⁶ I will argue that the eclipse of the good by the UPA is deliberate, motivated by the shift from such human matters as psychology, education, and political theory, i.e., from a normative sense of good and bad, to the whole of reality. First I will amplify the question, then test the literature, then, finally, argue that and why the UPA must be more comprehensive than the FOG.

At *Republic* VI, 506d Socrates at first shies away from discussing the good itself, pleading the prospect of disgrace or ridicule, and gives his companions the choice of dropping the subject altogether or hearing his account of the offspring of the good, the sun. Just as light from the sun makes sight possible, the FOG is a necessary condition for intelligibility. At this point, Socrates presents some of the FOG’s most provocative characteristics: it “gives truth to the things known [the forms] and the power to know to the knower. And though it is the cause of knowledge and truth, it is also an object of knowledge” (508d10–e3). Further, “the good is not being [τὸ εἶναι τε καὶ τὴν οὐσίαν²⁷], but superior to it in rank and power” (509b7–9). However, the sun and the good go into hiding for the entire duration of the divided line; in the discussion of what is intelligible there, the highpoint is the unhypothetical first principle of the all.²⁸ The sun reappears in book VII (515e7) when the cave-dweller reaches the surface, and the good a page later (517b8) when Socrates describes the connection of the cave to the sun and the line.

Socrates may distinguish the UPA from the FOG a second time immediately after he suggests in book VII that Glaucon won’t be able to follow anymore.²⁹ The passage is the crucial one where Socrates amends his previous casual reference to the upper two segments of the divided line as ‘knowledge’, henceforth reserving ἐπιστήμη for the highest segment alone. He describes the dialectician’s progress to the “first principle itself” (533c9). When he then asks whether “the same applies to the good” (534b8), on one natural reading of the Greek, he is distinguishing the good from the unhypothetical first principle of the all.³⁰ How then are we to understand the relation between the FOG and the UPA?³¹

²⁶ Both the mathematician and the philosopher reason *from* hypotheses (ἐξ ὑποθέσεως, VI, 510b7), but only the philosopher reasons dialectically *to* the first principle itself (VII, 533c9), doing away with hypotheses.

²⁷ The Grube-Reeve translation of the expression into the single term ‘being’ is explained by Lloyd Gerson (2002, 106n39) as “a hendiadys on the basis of the following line ἐπέκεινα τῆς οὐσίας. Mistaking this for two distinct ‘facts’ about forms is what must have led some to think that the Good is completely beyond being.”

²⁸ There is another peculiarity in the divided line passage, contributing to its inexact fit in the *Republic*’s story. Despite a long build-up where believing and knowing are described as powers, *dunameis*, capacities analogous to the senses in that each apprehends its different object, in Socrates’ final summation in the line passage, objects cause affects, *pathēmata*, in the psyche: καὶ μοι ἐπὶ τοῖς τέτταρσι τμήμασι τέτταρα ταῦτα παθήματα ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ γιγνόμενα λαβέ, 511d6–8. I thank my Greek reading group for making an issue of this oddity.

²⁹ In the version of this paper presented at the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy, I insisted too strongly on this second instance. Doing so, however, gave rise to such a rich and promising alternative account of the UPA by Lee Franklin that I leave my original claim as his target.

³⁰ Lloyd Gerson suggests to me an alternative reading of the Greek: that ἀπὸ τῶν ἄλλων πάντων at 534b9 means that the good is to be distinguished—not from the UPA, as I claim—but from everything else, i.e., all other instances of οὐσία (as already suggested by 509b7–9).

³¹ Two further aspects of the one page between mentions of the UPA and the FOG call attention to its importance in context: (i) the imagery of mystery religion at 533d1 and (ii) Socrates’ reluctance to address the *ratios* between the objects of opinion and intellect “lest they involve us in arguments many times longer” at 534a5–8; I suspect that

Virtually everyone who has written on the issue, I concede, has opted for the identity thesis, and most make it appear uncontroversial. Setting aside those (Plotinus, Cornford) for whom the good is identical to the one or unity,³² and concentrating on the modern and contemporary scenes, consider the following examples. Shorey's (1935) note to VI, 510b7: "Ultimately, the ἀνυπόθετον is the Idea of the Good so far as we assume that idea to be attainable either in ethics or in physics."³³ Gerry Santas (1980, 399): "Plato ... calls the beginning point of dialectic, that is, the Good or knowledge of it, 'unhypothetical'." Gadamer (1986, 89–90): "The rendering of the good that Socrates gives (511b) makes unequivocally clear that here the good is interpreted as *tou pantos archê*, the 'starting point (principle) of everything.'" Fine (1990, 100): "Although Plato does not say so explicitly, this first principle is plainly the form of the good (or a definition of, and perhaps further propositions about, it)." Reg Allen 2006 simply footnotes "unhypothetical first principle" in his translation: "The Idea of the Good, VII 532a ff."³⁴ Terry Penner (2006, 250): The diagram of the divided line "shows Plato's representation of ... certain objects of geometry and a certain *un*-hypothetical first principle of everything (511b–d, 533c with 532a–b) which is *the Form of the Good* (517b–d, 532b) as intelligibles." Christopher Taylor (2008, 181): "... according to the image of the Divided Line, the principles of the mathematical sciences are themselves fully intelligible only when they are derived from the 'unhypothetical principle of everything' (501c–511d), which, in context, must be the Form of the Good. Thomas Johansen (2008, 464): "The real first principle, Socrates says, is provided by the form of the good. He refers to this principle as a principle 'of everything' (*hê tou pantos arkhê*, 511b7)." Hugh Benson (2011, 11): Mathematicians trained by the curriculum of *Republic* 7 "hand over their results to a higher discipline [dialectic], all the way up to the Form of the Good, the *unhypothetical archê*."

A few chinks in the armor have appeared, and I warmly embrace my allies.³⁵ Julia Annas (1981, 250–51) listed among "oddities" of the divided line, the absence of the form of the good, which she says "does not fit into the scheme of the Line very happily. It cannot be just one of the contents of EA [the highest area]; but if not, where can it go?" I will argue that the good is one of the contents of the highest level; it is the highest of an articulated hierarchy of forms, but calling it 'the good' is a nod to its role in the human context.

Plato is alluding to the infinite divisibility of the line.

³² David Sedley 2007, 270n21, replying to the view that the good is the one: "I do not believe that Plato would have written about 'the One itself' as a special object of arithmetic (VII, 524d–525a) if he had at the same time of writing identified something of that same name with the *unhypothetical* first principle whose study stands above all the mathematical sciences." Sedley's "at the same time of writing" carries weight: Sayre 2005 neatly ties together some strands of Aristotle's claims about Plato and some terminology from the *late* dialogues.

³³ Shorey adds, "To call the ἀνυπόθετον the Unconditioned or the Absolute introduces metaphysical associations foreign to the passage."

³⁴ Allen's note sends the reader to the final stage of the education of the guardians, VII, 532a5–b2, to confirm his laconic note.

³⁵ Gerhard Seel (2007, 170–71), citing Rafael Ferber 1989 and Santas 1980, says, "Some scholars have identified the Form of the Good with the non-hypothetical principle of all, reached by the dialectical method and grasped by reason itself (*autos ho logos*) (510b, 511b). This is doubtful." Seel, his target elsewhere, doesn't say why. See also Verity Harte (2008, 206–8), a brief but careful rejection of Platonic heaven.

Dirk C. Baltzly (1996, 1999) finds three additional unhypothetical principles in Plato, one each in *Parmenides*, *Theaetetus* and *Sophist*, where the denial of a self-refuting claim—e.g., There are no negative statements—marks an unhypothetical starting point. Admitting, however, that the procedure might not work for the form of the good, Baltzly calls the moves available on that topic “familiar from arguments concerning the existence of God,” and ultimately says of the identity thesis “yes and no” (1996, 157–58). What I should emphasize about Baltzly’s ingenious approach is that the “of everything” or “of the all” condition for the UPA of interest to us has dropped by the wayside and, because many statements are self-refuting, the status of the UPA at the top of the divided line is diminished.

Dominic Bailey rejects Baltzly’s three unhypothetical principles, considering them the result of *proofs*, but Bailey’s description of what counts as an unhypothetical principle is more like an axiom than like an ἀρχή: “In calling a principle unhypothetical ... [o]ne merely says that such a principle, unlike others, can be formulated in a way that is sufficient for knowing it immediately once it is so formulated” (2006, 110). By that description, even the mathematicians’ axioms would be unhypothetical ἀρχαί: “If equals are subtracted from equals, the remainders are equal” is self-evident if I understand the meanings of the terms ‘equal’, ‘subtract’ and ‘remainder’. But part of the point of the divided line is to distinguish the method of the mathematicians from that of the dialecticians, so we ought not to follow Bailey down that road.³⁶

Bailey prefers the view that Plato’s unhypothetical first principle is very nearly the same principle of non-contradiction (PNC) that Aristotle calls ἀνυπόθετον at *Metaphysics* Γ (3, 1005b14)—Aristotle’s only use of the term. That attractive option neatly differentiates the UPA from the FOG. One might then take Aristotle’s side against Plato’s contemporary interpreters, arguing that the PNC is the necessary condition for, and in that sense the cause of, all formal knowledge—knowledge of the forms—whatsoever. As an epistemological principle, the PNC is unimpeachable, but it is inadequate as a metaphysical principle, and the *Republic*’s divided line requires a metaphysical principle, one that governs not only human knowledge in propositional format but everything, including the existence of all the forms. The UPA, were it spelled out, would require the principles of noncontradiction and sufficient reason (PSR), both of which are stated and repeated in the dialogues.³⁷

Kenneth M. Sayre’s thoughtful essay, “Why the Good Is Not the Same as the Nonhypothetical *archê*,” is a sustained and systematic effort to show that the identity thesis fails.³⁸ Alt-

³⁶ Bailey addresses the difficulty that, since Plato had already stated the principle of non-contradiction (*Rep.* IV, 436b9–c2, *Slings*), it is odd that he would invoke it cloaked in the divided line passage (2006, 106–11). The oddity increases with Socrates’ repetition of the principle at 436e7–a1 (after which Socrates says that, to avoid taking a long time to address objections, they’ll hypothesize the correctness of the principle, 437a5), and again at 439b5–6. Bailey’s article examines a number of additional issues that are beyond my limited scope.

³⁷ Although I will return to this point in passing, it must remain a mere suggestion (because its defense is tangled in a dispute between Leibniz and Spinoza that could easily wag the dog if I now set out to demonstrate that Spinoza won). Franklin rightly emphasizes, however, that the sense of ‘cause’ implied by my appeal to the PNC and PSR is more narrow—more like necessary conditions—than the robust sense of ‘cause’ I use to argue that the UPA is the cause of *everything*; and I thank Rusty Jones for invoking Socrates’ bones and sinews as evidence that I cannot have it both ways. What’s the rest of a life for, if not to contemplate such matters?

³⁸ See Sayre 1995, 173–81. He adds to the list of those who take the identity thesis for granted Alasdair MacIntyre

though my own reasons for denying the identity are narrower than, and different from, Sayre's, both of us base our arguments on the dissimilar roles played by the UPA and the FOG in their contexts. Sayre holds that the UPA is an epistemological principle, and that the good is an ontological principle. The epistemological UPA enables the dialectician to extend the methods of the mathematician; it "sustains 'dependencies' (*echomenôn*: 511b8) or 'implications' to be traced out in the further development of dialectical knowledge" (1995, 174),³⁹ which the good, "a 'super Form' to be sure," cannot sustain. That is, an ontological principle cannot perform the epistemological function required by dialecticians in the divided line passage. But the epistemological principle, the UPA, cannot occupy the ontological role given to the good in the *Republic*. Sayre cites the passages at 508d10–e3, 509b7–9, quoted above, in support of his view.⁴⁰ It would be quibbling to complain that the knowledge and truth mentioned there are within the bailiwick of epistemology: my worries run deeper.

In the first place, I think it is a mistake to characterize Platonic forms as principles if by 'principles' we mean ἀρχαί as Plato uses that term.⁴¹ He uses ἰδέα and εἶδος indifferently of the forms, and sometimes uses γένος as well—all three in close proximity in *Parmenides* (129c), comparing them there to paradigms. But he does not describe forms as ἀρχαί, and it would only beg the question to cite, as the sole instance, the UPA of the very passage in dispute.⁴² Plato very often made use of the untechnical sense of ἀρχή as 'starting point' so, for example, Socrates says, "the beginning of any process is most important" (*Rep.* II, 377a12; cf. *Tim.* 29b2–3); and he uses it with the sense of 'elements' as well: each Platonic solid in the *Timaeus* has an ἀρχή of its own, for each is constructed from planes that can be further reduced to lines and points (53c–56c). *Timaeus*, however, seems to refer obliquely to the UPA at 48c2–6: "I cannot state 'the principle' or 'principles' of all things, or however else I think about them, for the simple reason that it is difficult to show clearly what my view is if I follow my present manner of exposition." In other words, the inductive and speculative method of that dialogue, aimed at producing likelihoods or probabilities, is distinct from the dialectical method required to reach the unhypothetical principle or principles of *all* things.⁴³ Now it may seem that I am demoting ἀρχαί altogether by mentioning the common and untechnical senses of the term. What makes the UPA unique is not only that it is unhypothetical but that it applies to everything. As I will show, the good does not.

My second worry is that Sayre's argument for the distinction between the UPA and the

1990, 251, Henry Teloh 1981, 144, and Richard Robinson 1953, 159–60.

³⁹ His view thus supports the position developed by Fine (2003, 28) that achieving knowledge of forms can then entail knowledge about sensibles.

⁴⁰ Sayre goes on to argue that the mathematicians of the line passage are not laying down propositions, and the UPA is not propositional either.

⁴¹ Αρχή is used over five hundred times in the corpus; other terms, e.g., λόγος, are sometimes translated 'principle'.

⁴² The contexts in which 'principles' substitutes for forms are Hellenistic Pythagorean works, and the vast secondary literature on the ἄγραφα δόγματα.

⁴³ The plural 'principles' with πάντων is tantalizing, though there is no mention of the unhypothetical to make it certain that Plato had the UPA in mind. I try unsuccessfully to avoid discussion of the *Timaeus* because I count it among the late dialogues subject to others' direct influence, because of its method, and because its subject is the visible world.

FOG requires a clear distinction between epistemology and ontology that is less than distinct in Plato. It is a worry that applies equally to my own claim that a full-fledged UPA would require both the PNC and the PSR. I don't mean anything particularly controversial here, just such issues as Gregory Vlastos raised long ago, for example:

'True' is a fairly common meaning of 'real' in spoken and written Greek. Thus Plato will say, 'to speak (or, think) the real (τὰ ὄντα λέγειν)' for 'to speak (or, think) the truth (τἀληθῆ λέγειν)'. Moreover, in Greek, as in English, the predicate, 'true', applying primarily to propositions, may also apply, derivatively, to things described by propositions—to objects, persons, stuffs, states, processes, dispositions, and the like." (1965, 2)

On the other hand, and I say this in a positive spirit, Sayre ultimately concludes that the UPA "of dialectic is none other than the interconnected field of eternal Forms—i.e., the totality of Forms in their natural relationships."⁴⁴ That is an ontological claim, describing an ontology independent of the method of any dialectician, independent of human epistemology altogether. Sayre's discussion of the sense in which the field of forms is unhypothetical bears this interpretation out: nothing would be left to the mind's surmise, to hypothesis, if the field of forms were grasped in its full interconnectedness.⁴⁵ We have already seen from 509b7–9 that the good is not identical to being, not identical to, as Sayre argues (correctly, in my view), the totality of forms; thus, if he is right, the good cannot be identical to the unhypothetical first principle of the all. What it means to say that the good is "superior in rank and power" to being is that the nature of the field of all forms depends on the good. To put the point differently, it is not by accident that there is order in the universe. As Plato says, sounding like a contemporary proponent of the principle of sufficient reason, "it is impossible for anything to come to be without a cause" (*Tim.* 28a5–6, c2–3). We humans apply the name 'good' to the cause of, or explanation for, the orderliness, the structure of the hierarchy of interconnected forms intelligible to us. However, as I will soon argue, this would have to be a non-moral sense of 'good' if it applies to a physical universe that existed before, and will exist after, human beings; and even a non-moral 'good' will prove inadequate if it cannot account for what is bad in the sense of destructive.

A final reason to hold on to the identity thesis has been that the good is the goal of the education program of book VII⁴⁶ where the good is said to be the highest μάθημα,⁴⁷ some scholars hold that Plato would not make the good the goal if there were a still higher goal of dialectic, the UPA. If Bailey is right that the UPA just is the principle of noncontradiction, then we might reply that the UPA is not an educational goal in the same sense as, say, the subject matter of geometry or harmonics; rather, the principle guarantees the truth of the subject matter and of every-

⁴⁴ He cites in support of his view *Phaedrus* 265e1–2, *Statesman* 262b–e, *Philebus* 17d and 18c–d, and *Sophist* 256e ff. (1995, 177–78).

⁴⁵ I paraphrase Sayre (1995, 180–81), changing the indicative to the subjunctive, because I suspect that grasping the field of forms in its entirety is tantamount to omniscience—not a human trait.

⁴⁶ See 518d1, 519c10, 526e2, 532a5–b2; cf. 517b8.

⁴⁷ Benson (2011, 27) says, "The image of the Line provides part of Plato's answer to the question "what is the greatest *mathêma* (μέγιστον μάθημα)?" which every philosopher-ruler must acquire. Socrates' initial answer to this question is straightforward: The greatest *mathêma* is the Form of the Good (ἡ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ ἰδέα, *Republic* VI, 505a2)."

thing else. The upward climb of the divided line would yield recognition and appreciation of the explanatory UPA. Another reply to the educational goal defense is an appeal to the subject matter of the *Republic* as a whole. As one passes from perceptions of objects to mathematical understanding of forms (or, as I would prefer to say, formulae, the formal structure of objects, as opposed to their perceptible qualities), to the one absolute principle, one moves for the first time out of the dialogue's normative subject matter (political theory, ethics, education, psychology) to mathematical objects and theoretical physics (the laws of nature, Penner 2003, 195), one reaches the philosophical pinnacle of the dialogue. If there is only one absolutely fundamental principle, then it must, and does for Plato, account for all the forms, not just the good ones. The normative good is required for, *but limited to*, human contexts such as the education of the guardians of the *polis*.⁴⁸

I would not deny that the good plays a unique role in the *Republic*: superior to being, the cause of both knowledge and power to know. It doesn't always have that role. For example, at *Parmenides* 134c1–8 the good, the beautiful, and all the other forms are addressed together, as are the good, bad, beautiful, ugly, and other pairs of forms at *Theaetetus* 186a9. The good and the beautiful are interchangeable at *Symposium* 204e1–2; and at *Phaedo* 100b5–6 Socrates *hypothesizes* the existence of the beautiful itself and the good itself. Nevertheless, a hierarchy of forms, with the good at the top, has much to recommend it: distinguishing reality from appearance, truth from falsity, necessity and permanence from contingency and ephemerality. In my view, the hierarchy implies that we correctly use the term 'good' of that which participates in the form of the good, the superordinate form that is the necessary condition for the structure and organization of chaos into intelligible order; that which accounts for the fact that entities, actions and events are understandable.⁴⁹ Such a role for the form of the good would explain the sense in which the good is superior to being, for being is only partly intelligible, and only partly good. Materialism would thereby be trounced because matter is unintelligible until it is formed, organized, systematized. The *Republic*, however, is a dialogue mostly about human topics, and what I have just described suggests that Plato's form of the good is anthropocentric. If Plato is reaching past human concerns with the divided line, as I contend that he is, he requires a new term for what applies to all of being, not merely to the part that humans find intelligible.

Against any causal role for negative forms, it is sometimes argued that the bad, the ugly, and the unjust are only absences of the good, the beautiful, and the just. Early platonists, and Christian neoplatonists culminating in Augustine, had theological reasons for making the bad a privation of the good rather than a form fully real and knowable. Nicholas White has argued that the age-old problem of evil seemed more tractable to Christians such as Augustine on the assumption that an absence of goodness is somehow more acceptable than the positive presence of badness. Platonists were happy to interpret the demiurge of *Timaeus* similarly, he says, though Plato had made the demiurge neither omnipotent nor omnibenevolent (2006, 365). The privation

⁴⁸ Penner (2003, 232) makes a similar point: "I do not deny that the Form of the Good embraces more than the human good, which presumably involves considering together the Form of the Good and the Form of the human being.

⁴⁹ Of course the good cannot be a mere efficient cause, for then it could not be both the cause and the object of knowledge.

view cannot be right for Plato because the texts do not allow it. Some forms, motion and rest, sameness and difference, hot and cold, and other such pairs, are extremes of continua. They might well be described as privations of one another, though neither need be considered negative. Other forms, however, are mutually exclusive, for example, life and death, the odd and the even,⁵⁰ finite and infinite. The good and the bad appear to be of the former sort, and particulars may easily participate in both: something might be good with respect to *x* while bad with respect to *y*. Moreover, there is a vast range of the neither-good-nor-bad (NGNB).⁵¹

I claim, as my contribution to the minority side in the controversy over the identity thesis, that the UPA and the FOG cannot be identical because Plato has a robust form of the bad, a form as intelligible as the others and yet—like the good—an anthropocentric form without application to the universe as a whole.⁵² As Socrates says at *Theaetetus* 176a5–7, “...it is not possible...that evil should be destroyed—for there must always be something opposed to the good...it must inevitably haunt human life, and prowl about this earth,” adding at 176e4–177a2, “My friend, there are two patterns set up in reality. One is divine and supremely happy; the other has nothing of God in it, and is the pattern of the deepest unhappiness.”

One sort of evidence that the good and the bad are related to one another along a continuum is that knowing the one entails knowing the other. Famously in the *Republic* (I, 334a) “the one who is most able to guard against disease is also most able to produce it unnoticed” and “a clever guardian ... is also a clever thief.” Why? Because knowledge of something implies knowledge of its opposite. Perhaps the clearest statement of this bivalence principle appears at *Phaedo* 97d1–5: “... it befitted a man to investigate only ... what is best. The same man must inevitably also know what is worse, for that is part of the same knowledge.” But there are a number of statements that assume the bivalence. For example, at *Crito* 44d where Socrates laments that the many cannot do great harm because, if they could, then they could also do great good. Temperance is knowledge of the good and the bad at *Charmides* 174b12–c3; at *Laches*

⁵⁰ While these are forms in *Phaedo* at 103d–104b, they are posits of mathematicians in the divided line. What the mathematicians posit may well be forms; the problem is the attitude of the mathematicians, hence Benson’s 2011 title, “The Problem is not Mathematics, but Mathematicians.”

⁵¹ Naomi Reshotko 2006 addresses this category in admirable detail. *Euthydemus* 281d2–e1: riches, health, power, honor, beauty, lineage, self-control, justice, and bravery have no value by themselves, but are good only if knowledge rather than ignorance controls them. *Meno* 87e–88a: whether strength, beauty, and health are beneficial or harmful depends on how they are used. *Lysis* 216d5–217a2: the friend “is neither bad nor good but becomes the friend of the good,” and only of the good; and (217a–b) the body is similar in being “neither good nor bad” though it welcomes medicine when it is sick. *Symposium* 202b1–2: Plato’s Socrates’ Diotima says, “Then don’t force whatever is not beautiful to be ugly, or whatever is not good to be bad.” Plato exhibits a healthy sense that ordinary things are made good or bad by how they are used. Beef is good for Polydamus, but bad for someone who is not in training for the pancration (*Republic* I, 338c7–9; cf. VI, 491d4–5, X, 609b1–2).

⁵² Abundant references in James L. Wood 2009 (opposing the views of Harold Cherniss, and committed to the identity theory [354]) show the dominance of the view that evil is derivative, and that humans cause it. Virtually all the accounts privilege the last group of Platonic dialogues. Cherniss (1954, 24), though arguing that there are several “sources of evil” in Plato, especially human souls, for which he finds evidence in the last group of dialogues, begins by asserting that “all the phenomenal world is always involved in what may be called ‘negative evil’, since it is a derogation of reality. However, “many such terms [for ‘evil’] have a positive content too and as such must refer to real entities among the ideas” (27), e.g. diseases and vices. Since he mentions *Republic* 476a, I count Cherniss as aware of negative forms.

199c6–d1, courage is “knowledge not just of the fearful and the hopeful, but ... knowledge of practically all goods and evils put together.” At *Republic* 3.409d8–e1: “a naturally virtuous person, when educated, will in time acquire knowledge of both virtue and vice.” If, by using the term ἐπιστήμη, Plato signals that he intends the objects of knowledge to be forms, then we are safe in taking both the good and the bad to be forms. We have already found evidence, however, that knowledge of forms enables one to have derivative knowledge as well, so we need a stronger argument.

Throughout the *Republic* itself, the good and its results are kept distinct from the bad and its results, crucial to my claim that the more comprehensive UPA must govern the *all* while the FOG governs only what is good:

II, 379b3 Nothing good is harmful. Ἀλλὰ μὴν οὐδὲν γε τῶν ἀγαθῶν βλαβερόν.

II, 379b15–16 The good isn’t the cause of all, then, but only of good ones; it isn’t the cause of bad ones.⁵³ Οὐκ ἄρα πάντων γε αἴτιον τὸ ἀγαθόν, ἀλλὰ τῶν μὲν εὖ ἐχόντων αἴτιον, τῶν δὲ κακῶν ἀναίτιον.

III, 391e1–2 We demonstrated that it is impossible for the gods to produce bad things.

ἐπεδείξαμεν γάρ που ὅτι ἐκ θεῶν κακὰ γίνεσθαι ἀδύνατον.

IV, 445c5–6 There is one form of virtue and an unlimited number of forms of vice. ἓν μὲν εἶναι εἶδος τῆς ἀρετῆς, ἅπειρα δὲ τῆς κακίας

V, 452d7–e1 This makes it clear that it’s foolish to think that anything besides the bad is ridiculous...or (putting it the other way around) it’s foolish to take seriously any standard of what is fine and beautiful other than the good. καὶ τοῦτο ἐνεδείξατο, ὅτι μάταιος ὃς γελοῖον ἄλλο τι ἡγεῖται ἢ τὸ κακόν, καὶ ὁ γελωτοποιεῖν ἐπιχειρῶν πρὸς ἄλλην τινὰ ὄψιν ἀποβλέπων ὡς γελοίου ἢ τὴν τοῦ ἄφρονός τε καὶ κακοῦ, καὶ καλοῦ αὖ σπουδάζει πρὸς ἄλλον τινὰ σκοπὸν στησάμενος ἢ τὸν τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ.

V, 476a5–8 Since the beautiful is opposite of the ugly, they are two... And since they are two, each is one? ... And the same account is true of the just and the unjust, the good and the bad, and all the forms.⁵⁴ Each of them is itself one, but because they manifest themselves everywhere in association with actions, bodies, and one another, each of them appears to be many. Ἐπειδὴ ἐστὶν ἐναντίον καλὸν αἰσχροῦ, δύο αὐτῶ εἶναι... Οὐκοῦν ἐπειδὴ δύο, καὶ ἓν ἐκάτερον; ... Καὶ περὶ δὴ δικαίου καὶ ἀδίκου καὶ ἀγαθοῦ καὶ κακοῦ καὶ πάντων τῶν εἰδῶν περὶ ὁ αὐτὸς λόγος, αὐτὸ μὲν ἓν ἕκαστον εἶναι, τῇ δὲ τῶν πράξεων καὶ

⁵³ Mark McPherran (2007, 216) provides the argument in which the clause appears:

In arguing for the first law (namely, that God is not the cause of all things, but only of the good things; whatever it is that causes bad things, that cause is not divine [380c6–10; 391e1–2]), we are told that (1) All gods are [entirely] good beings (379b1–2), (2) No [entirely] good beings are harmful (379b3–4), (3) All non-harmful things do no harm (379b5–8), (4) Things that do no harm do no evil, and so are not the causes of evil (379b9–10), (5) Good beings benefit other things, and so are the causes of good (379b11–14), (6) Thus, good beings are not the causes of all things, but only of good things and not evil things (379b15–c1), (7) Therefore, the gods are not the causes of everything but their actions produce the few good things and never the many bad things (379c2–8; 380b6–c3).

⁵⁴ At *Parmenides* 130c–d Socrates doubts there could be a form of “undignified and worthless” things—but Parmenides attributes it to his being young and inexperienced in dialectic.

- σωμάτων και ἀλλήλων κοινωνία πανταχοῦ φανταζόμενα πολλά φαίνεσθαι ἕκαστον.
- VI, 508d10–e2 What gives truth to the things known and the power to know to the knower is the form of the good. Τοῦτο τοίνυν τὸ τὴν ἀλήθειαν παρέχον τοῖς γινωσκομένοις καὶ τῷ γινώσκοντι τὴν δύναμιν ἀποδιδὸν τὴν τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ ἰδέαν φάθι εἶναι.
- VII, 517b9–c3 Once one has seen it [the FOG], however, one must conclude that it is the cause of all that is correct and beautiful in anything, that it produces both light and its source in the visible realm, and that in the intelligible realm it controls and provides truth and understanding. ὀφθεῖσα δὲ συλλογιστέα εἶναι ὡς ἄρα πᾶσι πάντων αὕτη ὀρθῶν τε καὶ καλῶν αἰτία, ἔν τε ὀρατῷ φῶς καὶ τὸν τούτου κύριον τεκοῦσα, ἔν τε νοητῷ αὕτη κυρία ἀλήθειαν καὶ νοῦν παρασχομένη,
- X, 608e4–7, 609b1–2: The bad is what destroys and corrupts, and the good is what preserves and benefits... And do you say that there is a good and a bad for everything? ... for the good would never destroy anything, nor would anything neither good nor bad. Τὸ μὲν ἀπολλύον καὶ διαφθεῖρον πᾶν τὸ κακὸν εἶναι, τὸ δὲ σῶζον καὶ ὠφελοῦν τὸ ἀγαθόν... Τί δέ; κακὸν ἐκάστω τι καὶ ἀγαθὸν λέγεις; ... —οὐ γὰρ τό γε ἀγαθὸν μὴ ποτέ τι ἀπολέσει, οὐδὲ αὖ τὸ μήτε κακὸν μήτε ἀγαθόν.

This robust and destructive role for the form of the bad cannot easily be reconciled with the claim that the good just *is* the UPA, for a more comprehensive principle is required if we are to have a cause for bad things, and for all those NGNB things made good or bad through their use.⁵⁵ We cannot dispense with a cause for bad things.

One means of rescuing the identity of the UPA and the FOG is to make a semantic move and follow it wherever the argument leads. Let us then stipulate that the UPA is identical to the FOG. Since the good that opposes the bad and makes NGNB things good cannot cause harm or destruction, but harm and destruction do exist, there must be something else that harms and destroys. The UPA is the first principle of *everything*, however, so the UPA is the first principle of whatever it is that harms and destroys. In that case the good to which the UPA is identical is a *non-moral, non-anthropocentric* good—welcome in theoretical physics and mathematics. What about biology? Consider the comment in *Timaeus* (89b4–7) that purging disease, except in dangerous cases, should be avoided because, “Every disease has a certain makeup that in a way resembles the natural makeup of living things. In fact, the constitution of such beings goes through an ordered series of stages throughout their life.”⁵⁶ Although we normally associate the non-moral good with instrumentalism (*x* is good for achieving *y*, regardless of the value of *y*), that approach cannot serve in the present context because an instrumental, non-moral good is not *unhypothetical*. Therefore, when we humans label the FOG’s resulting actions, bodies, and events ‘good’, the term is honorific, a mark of human pleasure and approval—like naming the son for the father. When we call its resulting actions, bodies, and events ‘bad’, we thereby register our

⁵⁵ *Laws* X, 896a–899a—if genuine (*pace* Nails-Thesleff 2003), and if Plato sought to present his own views through the Athenian (*pace* Nails 2000)—would support the view that Plato continued to view the good and the bad as actively opposed, self-moving forces.

⁵⁶ I am grateful to an anonymous referee for the *Proceedings* who brought this passage to my attention.

local displeasure—like saying “bad boy” instead of using the child’s name. The morality of elephants and aliens, not to mention *Streptococcus pneumoniae*, would have different and equally firm bases. Any proper foundation for human morality, in other words, would have to come from elsewhere. Yet the chief role of the FOG in the *Republic* was to ground the morality of the individual and the *polis*, so the nominal identity of the UPA and the FOG comes at a very high cost. As Baltzly found the available moves reminiscent of arguments for the existence of God, the moves available in this case suggest the problem of evil.

Plato doesn’t have that problem under my interpretation. Rather, he has an extra-strength form of the good that is superior to mere being and a necessary condition for the *formal* structure of being and knowing; he has a robust form of the bad to account for destruction; and he has a genuinely unhypothetical first principle of the all that includes both. Since good and bad are importantly, though not exclusively, anthropocentric, the UPA is able to promote both along with such forms as finite and infinite, sameness and difference, and motion and rest, that offer a better basis for physics and mathematics than such forms as justice and courage. I have argued here that the FOG and the UPA are not identical, but I have only suggested what the UPA might be. It is not the grand unified theory or the theory of everything sought by physicists, for there is nothing in the text to suggest an articulated theory: if *arché* is to retain its sense of ‘starting point’, then my best shot is that the UPA respects a single insight both ontological and epistemological that, from presocratic times, was regarded as necessary for being and thought, the principle of sufficient reason and the principle of noncontradiction.

Finally, although a great deal more needs to be said, I want to glance back to the first dogma, two-worlds, and tie it to what I have just said about the second. The preoccupations of the earliest platonists, and of neoplatonism over the centuries—transcendence, the problem of evil—have altered the way we read and interpret Plato’s texts. It is as difficult as it is noble to return to the texts without our encrusted presuppositions.⁵⁷

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