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Rewriting the History of Ancient Greek Philosophy

By V. Tejera

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**** Description ****

"This study is of cardinal interest to all who wish to become aware of the larger ironies and confluences within the philosophic schools of the ancient world: how the words of the Presocratics, Plato, and Aristotle have been kidnapped by their commentators for the creation and maintenance of new orthodoxies that none of the original thinkers would have recognized as their own. For its semiotic savvy alone, as well as for its awareness of the oral-aural mindset overtaken by the new impact of the written word, this study amply repays both the lay reader and the scholar of the history of philosophy."

Andres Mata

Editor, "El Universal"

and Regional Director, Inter-American Press Association

This book examines what we can reliably know about Plato and the historical Socrates. It shows how pervasively the sources of information were biased by Pythagoreanism, Platonism, and Neoplatonism. It gives a source-critical account of how the climate of opinion in fourth-century Athens was captured by the Pythagoreans and how Speusippos's Academy also came to be pythagorized—adding definitional idealism to Pythagorean number idealism, and elevating Plato to a divine level that makes him into a coequal of Pythagoras, thus capturing Plato for Pythagoreanism. By showing how Plato's dialogues were dedramatized, dedialogized, and read or understood as if they were works expounding pythagorizing doctrine, Tejera has created a provocative reappraisal for scholars of ancient Greek philosophy.

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of Ancient
Greek Philosophy



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with Special Reference to the *Timaeus*," *American Journal of Philology* 110 (1989), pp. 50-72. See also V. Tejera, *The Return of the King*, chapter 3, "The Prelude to the *Timaeus* and the Atlantis-Story"; and a shorter version of this chapter in *Daimôn* (Univ. de Murcia) (Spring 1996), pp. 25-36. Cf. Selected Bibliography for further relevant titles by Chroust, Dunn, Festugière, Hoerber, Philip, Runia, and Solmsen.

20. Ast's belief was, in his own words, "Was die so fabelhaft klingende Erzählung selbst betrifft, so scheint sie keineswegs Erdichtung des Platons zu seyn, sondern sich auf eine mythische Sage zu stützen." (We are justified by the evidence in agreeing that the myth was not one that Plato invented.)

21. W.K.C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy*, vol. 5, p. 25.

22. W. Welliver, *Character, Plot and Thought in Plato's Timaeus-Critias* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1977).

23. See my "The Prelude to the *Timaeus* and the Atlantis-Story," and Chapter 14 of *Plato's Dialogue One by One*, 2nd ed., which is a nonabridged version of the same account.

24. Another case, perhaps, of too much information revealing itself to be disinformation?

25. The term found in Thucydides' *History* III.82.

26. *Isonomikê* = "devoted to equality under the law."

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The Academy Pythagorized: What We Can Know about the Intellectual Activities of the Pythagoreans

The wild verbal environment of the sentence in which Diogenes Laertius tells us (following Hermodorus) that, "aged 28 Plato withdrew to Megara to Euclides with some other Socratics," gives us every reason to distrust or disbelieve it. Preceded by the claim that he had been attached (*proseîche*) to both the Herakleitean philosopher Kratylos and his contradictor Hermogenes, it is followed by the claims that Plato "then went off to Cyrene to Theodoros the mathematician, and from thence to Italy to the Pythagoreans Philolaos and Eurytos; thence to Egypt for its prophets, whither it is said he was accompanied by Euripides." Now Kratylos, Hermogenes, and Theodoros are all *characters* whom we first meet in *Plato's dialogues*, and the association of Plato with Euripides is probably just a corollary of the culturally given, or folk association, of Socrates—a generation earlier—with the playwright.

Theodoros is the inferior mathematician who introduces Theaitetos to Socrates (Socp) in the *Theaitetos*—inferior because he does not get the proportionality right which Socrates discusses with him early in the interchange. Of the other two whom the folk tradition—in a cybernetically degraded echo of the dialogue—has elevated to the status of philosophers, Kratylos is the more aggressive and seems to be the older or more developed interlocutor. Now, while the name of a speaker in a dialogue may be that of some historical person whom it echoes or partially represents, we are not in this case able to find any-

one to match the name Kratylus—outside of Plato's dialogue or the mention of him in the Aristotelian-Peripatetic *Metaphysics*, and a derivative reference in the *Rhetoric*.

I say folk tradition because the extant, *unexamined surface* literary history of the Hellenistic age is—in the case of Plato and Socrates at least—indistinguishable from the *genre* and tradition of entertainment literature that had arisen in the third century B.C.¹ So what Plato can be seen to be “doing,” if we take the report literally, is visiting with people behind the names he has used in his literary constructions. Shades of Miguel de Unamuno, who was not above talking to the characters in his novels! Whether the evidence for the existential individuals whose names Plato may have borrowed is circular, reliable, or not reliable, the fact remains that what the dialogues give us are characterizations, some of which are more or less caricatures, some of which are more or less true to conventional opinion about their namesakes. So it is doubtful whether, outside of the dialogues, they are contributors to the history of Greek philosophy.

Now, we can know next to nothing about the development of Pythagorean science or lore before Archytas. But E. Frank plausibly suggests that the Academic generation of Speusippos and Xenocrates found it convenient to attribute their pythagorizing doctrines to ancient “philosophers” such as Pythagoras or Philolaos.² I would add that the doctrines they ascribe to Philolaos can be seen to be just what these Academics can be expected to have said in their mediation between their purely Pythagorean rivals and what they could get from propositionalizing de-dramatized material in Plato's dialogues.

Given an author with the conceptual control and artistic dominion that Plato had over the intellectual materials and communicative interactions in his dialogues, it is rather more probable—whether Plato and Philolaos ever met, and whatever the nature of Plato's contacts with Pythagoreanism—that Philolaos was influenced by Plato than the other way around.³ In fact, where the unexamined tradition, generated as it was by Pythagoreans and abetted by the Academy, wants us to believe that Plato came under the *doctrinal* influence of Pythagoreanism, the intellectual-historical fact is, rather, that the Pythagoreans adopted as their own those formulations, views, and proposals voiced by Plato's characters which it was in their interest to advance. And they did this by excerpting them from their interlocutory, non-propositional embedment in the dialogues.

A striking case, which I have fully contextualized elsewhere,⁴ is that in which Socrates' brilliant but gentle satire, in *Republic*, Book V, of Pythagorean courses of study not only rationalizes them amusingly, but improves on them to the degree that the next generation of Pythagoreans could not resist adopting “his” account as their literal “scientific” *program* from then on. More graphically and perversely, however, and just as systematically, the Pythagoreans metamorphosed—or got the Academy to do so—Plato's dialogues into the vehicle for a dogmatic orthodoxy compatible with their own idealism by completely de-dramatizing them, in symbiosis or argument with the Academy. They did this by abstracting from the interlocutory situations out of which the speakers' claims and arguments took their rise.

The more or less explicit, but limited, number-idealism of the Pythagoreans would no doubt have predisposed them to an acceptance of the broader idealism of Speusippos or his fellow Academics and followers. Now this idealism is one of the subjects most satirized, played with, applied, and improved upon by Socrates (Socp) in Plato's dialogue-series—no doubt because it was a much-discussed topic and found too much acceptance among his younger acquaintances. Other subjects or persistent thematic concerns, such as Sophistry or the theory of one-man rule, treated with equal brilliance and *similar dialogical irony*, show that the theory of ideas is only one most prominent thematic concern of the dialogue-series, *not the* matrix out of which the dialogues were generated.

So when Proclus (b. A.D. 410) says “there was a theory about ideas among the Pythagoreans also. And it is clear in the *Sophist* itself (248a), since the men-of-knowledge in Italy were called ‘friends of the forms.’” But the older and explicit hypothesizer of the ideas was Socrates,⁵ we see that he, too, is attributing to the *historical* Socrates (SocH) Academic or pythagorizing views that Plato is letting his *dramatic* character (Socp) handle for his (Plato's) own critical or satirical purposes. We see that, in identifying the historical Socrates with either Plato's or the undisambiguated Socrates (SocU), Proclus is also able to claim that “Socrates” was the inventor of the theory of ideas.

But this is a conclusion which (by denial of the consequent) refutes (more than merely re-ambiguates) the set of antecedent claims that led to it. For neither the ethical, inductive, cross-examining Socrates with

a will-to-clarity who operates in Plato's dialogues, nor the historical Socrates whose idealized image he probably is, was the originator of the theory of ideas. "He" is simply said or allowed to be so because, in order to preserve an identity separate from that of the Pythagorean sect, Academic Platonists had to be able to appeal to an authority as *honored* and as *inventive* as the Pythagoras whose inventions were not differentiable from the mathematical talent and plagiarizing creativity of the school whose creation he was, insofar as he is documentable. Hence the irresistible impulse, among the Academic Platonists, to compete with or surpass the Pythagoreans in terms that mediated between declared Pythagorean views and the official Platonism excerptible from the de-dramatized, propositionalized dialogues.

Here we must not neglect to ask: if Socrates was (as the postclassical tradition supposed and believed) the inventor of the theory of ideas, *and* he was "Plato's teacher," *then* why would he, Plato, have had to travel to Italy, as he is reported and believed (by Cicero, *De Republica* I.15-17) and others to have done, to learn the doctrines of the Pythagoreans?⁶ The question answers itself: the story of Plato's travels to Egypt, Italy, and Sicily is one of those telltale redundancies that inadvertently brand as *disinformation* the publicity campaign of which they are a part.

Now it is possible to persist in the claim that Pythagorean doctrines "influenced" Plato *even if* the dialogues that are by him never do more than dramatize them, putting them on exhibit for us by putting them in the mouths of speakers always other than himself. If we are doctrinalists, the problem then becomes, which of the views and arguments—exhibited over here in all their strengths and weaknesses, but over there jocularly applied or alluded to, at one time defended by Socrates (Socp) or an interlocutor, at another refuted? That there is no specifiable decision-procedure for deciding among what cannot be more than guesses, quickly emerges from the instability and methodological defenselessness of any guess, and from the history of the repeated reassertions and refutations of said guesses, as has been shown by E. Tigerstedt in his *Decline and Fall of the Neoplatonic Interpretation of Plato*.⁷

It turns out, on the contrary, that it is much easier to identify cases in which the "doctrinal influence" is that of some interlocutor's views (de-dramatized and propositionalized, of course), upon the Pythagorean or Academic who is claimed to have influenced—or to be

"following"—Plato. Such, for instance, is the case with Philolaos in connection with the *Timaeus* dialogue. Laertius cites a report received by Hermippus "that Plato the philosopher, when he was visiting Dionysios in Sicily, bought from the relatives of Philolaos [the one book written by Philolaos] . . . from which he copied the *Timaeus*" (VIII.85).

This obtaining of Philolaos's book by Plato is repeated by Cicero (*De Republica* I.16): "[Plato] spent a great deal of time with Archytas of Tarentum and Timaeus of Locri, and also got possession of Philolaos's notes; and as Pythagoras' reputation was then great in that country, he devoted himself entirely to that teacher's disciples and doctrines." Such was the climate of opinion that Cicero, who should have known better, is quite oblivious to the distance between Tarentum and Locri⁸ in saying that Plato was so much with both Archytas and Timaios, the character from his dialogue whom the Pythagorean propagandists locate in Locri. This is, again, a case of too much information showing itself to be disinformation. In the case of Archytas and his fragments, the heavy traces of Peripatetic Aristotelianism are so visible that we may discount the candidacy of this Pythagorean as an influence on Plato.⁹ Laertius does not tell us how Timaios's *On the Nature of the World and the Soul* got into Philolaos's book, although he does use the plural *biblia kai epigrammata* ("books and writings") in saying that Philolaos was the first to publish anything Pythagorean. We also must remember what was quite forgotten by the second half of the fourth century, that Philolaos flourished at a time prior to the arrival of full literacy, and so may *not himself* have left his thought in *written* form.

Now the treatise (said to have been found among Philolaos's notes) of the Locrian Timaios is easily identifiable as a product of Middle Platonism (2nd cent. A.D.) and easily seen to have been plagiarized from Plato's *Timaeus*.¹⁰ So what has happened is that a work plagiarized from a de-dramatized dialogue of Plato's is now believed, as a fact in the history of philosophy, to have "influenced" Plato on a dogmatizing, antidualogical understanding of his work. And we see why the fictional entity called Timaios had to be attached to someone with a historical existence such as Philolaos (c. 470-385 B.C.). And the Pythagorean Plato begins to look like a folk figure, because he consorts with characters who have become folk figures through the power of his own prose and the decline of learning in late

Antiquity. It was in the interaction between the Academy and the Pythagoreans that this *transformation*, or pythagorization, of Plato's image got its start. He is no longer the composer of dialogues that he had been in his lifetime; his personal (probably nondominant) aura is forgotten, his actual biography, inventiveness, and wit obliterated.

That this tergiverse intellectual behavior is paralleled in Aristotle's case as well tells us how radical and unalterable the mind-set was of the Pythagoreans and the Academy in relation to their antecedents, and how gullible and willing to be misinformed—as long as it was entertained or edited—the general public was. The writing ascribed to Ocellus Lucanus, which plagiarizes lengthy passages from Aristotle's *On Generation and Corruption*, was claimed by the Neoplatonist Syrianus (in *Metaphysica* 175.11) to be the original out of which Aristotle got his treatise.¹¹

The reason that gave rise to these forgeries was the basal Pythagorean and Neoplatonist assumption that "the truth about reality . . . was a revelation of the gods . . . to certain important figures, most notably Pythagoras who then brought [it] to humanity."¹² This Neoplatonist attitude toward Pythagoras and philosophy can be seen to go back, with its incitement to forgery, to the Peripatos and Speusippus's Academy.¹³ As the only well-known fifth-century Pythagorean who might have had contact with Plato because he is mentioned in the *Phaedo*, we can expect Philolaos to have been drafted for the purpose of giving Plato Pythagorean antecedents.

The story about the lesser-known Eurytos (who may have been of an age with Plato) is that being from Tarentum (or Croton, or Metapontum), he is coupled with Philolaos as a teacher of some of "the last of the Pythagoreans whom Aristoxenos in his time saw" (D. Laertius VIII.46), and listed as someone sought out by Plato in his travels (III.6). Apuleius (b. A.D. 125) then elevates him into a teacher of Plato's, identifying him as Eurytatos (*de Dogmate Platonis* I.3). Eventually lamblichus anachronistically promotes him into a personal auditor, along with Philolaos, of the aging (*presbytêi*) Pythagoras. But what we know of Eurytos is that he was an early fourth-century Italiote mentioned in the Aristotelian-Peripatetic corpus and pseudo-Theophrastus's *Metaphysics* for his numerology (1092b10) and for assigning shapes to numbers.

As a function or symptomatic expression of the nature of doctrinal orthodoxies, I have paused to tell Eurytos's story because it is a

phenomenon that has repeated itself in other times as well as our own: any individual philosopher of the prevailing orthodoxy gets more attention and mention than all non-members of the orthodoxy, no matter how inferior the quality of the orthodox work is later seen to be. One also wonders in all of this: if "the tradition" is so sure that Plato was influenced by named Pythagoreans, how come the latter have remained so shadowy and "the tradition's" knowledge of them so unsure?

As for "the Pythagorean Plato," namely, the Plato who knows so much (because his Socrates does) about Pythagorean intellectuality and about mathematics, what has to be said is that if we arbitrarily take Socrates (Socp) to be Plato's spokesman at *Republic* 431e8-10, and if we take him to be speaking literally instead of ironically and *fabulantly*, then the pythagorist tuning-theory (or theory of harmony) prophesied (*emantéuometha*) by Socp can be taken as a model for the most-to-be-desired or Ideal City (*malist'eiê kat'enchên politeia*) which the dialogue is putting on exhibit for our inspection.¹⁴ However, because Plato's Socrates knows how to appeal to Pythagorean harmonics in his critique and ironical improvement of the Pythagorean curriculum in a dialogue, that does not make Plato a Pythagorean any more than Major Barbara's or Undershaft's speeches make G. B. Shaw either a Salvationist or a capitalist ideologue.

The failures of source-criticism in classical studies, and the successes of the *genre* called entertainment literature, which took over Greek intellectual history in the third century B.C., combined to produce a very distorted picture of this history. The locution "took over" is apt because the surface history of Greek and Hellenistic literary production, when we first come to it, is not very different from—or corrective of—what the extant *secondary* sources tell us about the works themselves (which they had heard of but not read) and their context.¹⁵ We have already seen how distortive of the works left in their care Speusippus's Academy and Theophrastus's Peripatos were in their own *partisan* interests. The entertainment literature—of which most of the "sources" consist—about Socrates, Plato, and the Pythagoreans is not only all we have to work with, but is so randomly and fantastically distorting of the facts as to be only folklore. Yet folklore, as we know, has intellectual and historical effects.

In connection with the much-studied Pythagoreans, what is also missing, what we have not done explicitly enough, is to monitor the

Pythagoreans' systematic denaturing of the extant sources of information about classical Antiquity and its ideological effect upon the literary and historical texts and their transmission. I have done some of the needed work in the Prologue to the enlarged edition of *Plato's Dialogues One by One*: "What We Don't Know about Plato and Socrates," and in chapters of *The Return of the King*, which is about the socio-intellectual history of the arrival of Pythagoreanism in Athens and its penetration of the Academy and the Peripatos.¹⁶

Basically, it is not the case (for instance) that what Pythagoras "inaugurated" was "a new tradition in philosophy (*sic*)."¹⁷ It was, rather, a *cultic* mode of intellectual being and survival based on both a regulated rule of life and mathematico-numerological researches. The historiographic problem with histories that want "to understand . . . the spirit and doctrinal basis of [the Pythagorean] outlook,"¹⁸ an outlook that took its rise in the late sixth century and was scorned in the fifth, is that they have to do it on the basis of documents all of which—with a few disputed exceptions—date from *after* the turn of the fourth century! These documents make it difficult to disentangle neo-Pythagorean or Neoplatonist doctrines from the *undocumentable* beliefs of the sect in the sixth to fifth centuries because they are in fact *more constitutive* of what we think of as Pythagorean beliefs than records or continuations of them. Was not the motive for the Pythagorean forgeries, in the first place, to show that Pythagoreanism had anticipated the ideas of both Plato and Aristotle?

Here luckily we are not trying to clarify the precise nature of Pythagorean or Academic opinions, but rather trying to get a glimpse into the ways in which the idealisms of the Academy and the Pythagoreans obliterated the nondogmatic dialogism of Plato's dialogues and percolated heavily into the Peripatetic edition of Aristotle's *Nachlass*. We do this because the extant record of Pythagorean activity seems to show that it consisted mainly in the invention of a Pythagorean body of doctrines in the guise of a setting down of what earlier Pythagoreans (such as Archytas and Philolaos) are supposed to have said under the inspiration of Pythagoras himself.

I have rehearsed in several places both the de-dramatization of Plato's dialogues and the platonization of the Aristotelian treatises in Hellenistic Antiquity. We will now see that the history of Pythagoreanism can be more fully understood in connection with just this reception history of Plato and Aristotle.¹⁹ Since there is no way

of avoiding the bad news about this history, we recall the points made in Chapter 1, to the effect that we can very often not tell whether what we are reading in the Aristotelian-Peripatetic corpus is by Aristotle or Theophrastos or some other Peripatetic. And we have seen both that Theophrastos disqualifies himself (in his own words) as a reliable transmitter of previous views, and that he was mentioned in Simplicius's *Physica* as an "obfuscator of all who preceded him" (*apokripsai pentas tous pro auton*).

I begin by reiterating that what the Platonists and Pythagoreans had most in common, the theory of ideas, is no more the inclusive intellectual framework *out of which* the dialogues grew (though it is the matrix out of which "Platonism" grew) than are the theory of one-man rule (as in the *Politicus*) or the constitutional cycles through which the state is said to pass in the *Republic*. These are simply important parts of the materials, both literary and conceptual, *to which* Plato applies his formative talents. The minimum of necessary collateral information required to understand an Athenian author may not be limited, as the dogmatists limit it in the case of Plato, to only what the pythagorizing Academy wanted said about him when it appropriated him for their own uses—especially where the information seems questionable historically or is self-serving. The inclusive context should rather be, as with any author, all the socio-intellectual conditions and antecedents under which Plato's dialogues were produced and to which they were a response.

Viewed semiotically, the theory of ideas is no more an endogenic part of the *interpretant* of the dialogues than the practice of the Sophists is in dialogues other than the *Sophist*, *Politicus*, and *Euthydemus*. It is instead an *allothetic* interpretant, namely, a distraction from the relevant contextual conditions that in some way are determinative of the intellectual product. On the other hand, where the theory of ideas *is* the subject-matter of the dramatized conversation, there it naturally is an endogenic part of the interpretant, just as the notion of "the One" is in the last sections of the *Parmenides*.

Speusippos, who initiated the Academic reinterpretation of the dialogues, was himself an idealist whom Aristotle identifies as a pythagorizer (*N. Eth.* I.1096b8-9). He also seems to have collaborated with the Macedonian conquerors of the Athenian democracy. It is very relevant to Speusippos's interpretation of "Plato" that what the intellectual fashions wanted by the mid-fourth century was

prescriptive maxims and dogmatic answers, *not* Socratic questions, indirection, or irony. This change favored the Platonist's *elimination* of the extended, often subtle ironies of the dialogues. It also favored their *masking* of the intellectual open-endedness or "doctrinal" inconclusiveness of both the aporetic and monumental dialogues. Positive answers to questions left standing could always be gotten by a post-dialogical and *externalist* appeal to the theory of ideas—and this, even when the design of the dialogue itself may have been to sharpen the question *as a question* by dramatizing a better formulation of it than a Meno or a Hippias would have been capable of.

H. Cherniss has shown that doctrines said to be parts of the system of Plato's Platonism, whether written or "unwritten," are *all* traceable to his dialogues.²⁰ This is of great consequence in the support it gives to the thesis that the most natural and best way to read the dialogues is *dialogically*. I refer the reader to my essay on "How Compatible Are the Doctrinal and Dialogical Readings of Plato's Dialogues" for the negative answer to the question.²¹ Any reading that tries to be simultaneously doctrinal and dialogical will fail because it has to proceed on premises that contradict each other. So the questions to be raised that will complete our historiographic critique of the state-of-the-question in the history of Greek philosophy are: can a given number of the doctrines said to be Pythagorean be traced back to the dialogues, and if so, how literally; and how many other Pythagorean doctrines can be traced to previous thinkers other than Plato? I will then, finally, also offer a list of what can be called self-focusing devices, namely, locutions or exchanges in the dialogues that signal to the reader how (s)he should take what (s)he is reading. This list should serve to confirm the aptness of reading the dialogues dialogically. It then remains to work out the consequences of this realization for the history of Greek thought.

"PLATONISM" AND/OR "PYTHAGOREANISM"

The first book of the Aristotelian-Peripatetic *Metaphysics* offers a comparison between what it calls Plato's "treatises" (*pragmata*, *sic!*) and the opinions of the Pythagoreans (987a30ff.). As a treatise is not a dialogue, and Plato left us only dialogues, this must mean that the author has taken them to be treatises. This in turn allows him to claim that Plato was asserting doctrines. The converse is also true that those who claim that Plato had doctrines are implicitly treating the

dialogues as treatises. But, as has been amply²² shown by J. Arieti, G. Press, myself, and others, the dialogues do not deal in the assertion of opinions, but in the *dramatization* of doctrines and the arguments for them.

What the Peripatetic author of this passage is therefore referring to must be "Platonism," the system of doctrine *extracted* by Speusippos and his colleagues *from* the discussions *in* the dialogues. The author says that the "treatises" mostly followed (*akolouhoûs*) them²³ "but had peculiarities distinct from the philosophy of the Italians" (987a31). He is referring, then, either to extracts from Plato's dramatized dialogues or to treatises by Speusippos and other Academics. If the former is the case, he has confirmed our point that it was "Plato" who "influenced" the "Platonists" and pythagorizers, not the other way around. If he is referring to Platonist treatises by Academics, then again it is "Plato"—in the antidialogical meaning of "Plato"—who has "influenced" the Platonists and pythagorizers.

Just as Plato did not need, strictly speaking, to have had personal contacts with Gorgias and the older Sophists in order to dramatize their encounters with Socrates, so also, strictly speaking, did he *not* need to have had them with the Pythagoreans whose doctrines Socrates, so brilliantly improves upon and satirizes. But had Plato sought contact with them, the earliest this could have happened in Athens is with the refugee arrivals in the 380s of the fourth century B.C., when they would not only have been unknown, unsettled, and unorganized, but also *before* they had appealed to writing to spread their doctrines. And if the Pythagoreans in Athens did not systematically appeal to writing till the mid-fourth century, it is not likely that the Pythagoreans in Italy in the late fifth century had much to offer in writing that a traveler could come away with. We have seen, in any case, that good historiography does not allow us to conclude—or build upon the claim—that Plato traveled at all, given that the supposed evidence for this all comes from the genre of Hellenistic entertainment literature, and given that the "Plato" and "Socrates" that these sources have in reference had long been turned into folk figures. And, if the Socrates referred to by Proclus (in *Commentary on Plato's Parmenides* 128e)²⁴ is not a folk figure "but the older and explicit hypothesizer of the theory of ideas," then Plato would have had no need to go to Italy to know about them.²⁵

The Peripatetic voice in the *Metaphysics* then says "*ekeinon*

[Plato] accepted (*apodeksamenos*) this but held that the problem of definition was about things other than sensibles because these were always changing; and these other kinds of things he called 'ideas' (987b5f.). "Plato" (i.e., his Socrates^{sp}) did this—the Peripatetic is telling us—because "in his youth (*ek neou*) he [Plato] had been familiar (*synēthēs*) with Kratylus and the Herakleitean doctrines that all sensibles are ever in flux, and there is no knowledge of them possible."

The clue that gives the passage away is the mention of Kratylus in connection with the Herakleiteans. Neither the character nor a possible historical namesake is attested anywhere outside of Plato's dialogue or the *Metaphysics*' mention of him here, at Gamma 1010a7, and in the *Rhetoric* (III.xvi.1417b). So that, given the citational practices of the Academy, the Peripatos, and the Pythagoreans, it could well be just another case of a historical inference from a fictional construction. A narrative should draw upon characteristic emotion, the *Rhetoric* suggests: "'He went off glaring at me,' and, as Aeschines says of Kratylus . . . he hissed violently and violently shook his fists." But that Kratylus should recommend onomatopoeic speech and gesturing is to be expected from the view of natural naming rehearsed, among other views, in the *Kratylus* dialogue. In line with this, the *Metaphysics* identifies Kratylus as holding such an extreme view of flux that only *pointing to* what cannot be named was not a falsehood. Until we find independent evidence for the historical existence of a Herakleitean Kratylus, we may not safely put aside the suspicion that the story—in which the theory of ideas was a reaction against the thesis that naming is impossible—is another case of Speusippos's Academy retroactively ascribing to Plato a response and formulation that was actually its own.

The passages in Book I in which the voice that passes for "Aristotle" assimilates Plato to the Pythagoreans are suspect in several respects. In the first place, nowhere in the dialogues are questions raised in the way the question is raised here. Second, there is a typically doctrinalizing locution at 987b23f.: "Like (*paraplesios*) the Pythagoreans, he [Plato] said (*élege*). " For we know that Plato said nothing in his own voice. The illicit Hellenistic locution is repeated at 996a6f., where "the most difficult question" is brought up: "whether the one (*to hen*) and being (*to on*) as the Pythagoreans and Plato said" (*sic*!). The Pythagoreans may have said, but "Plato" has not said (and

cannot on the record have done so), unless by "Plato" we mean some speaker in a dialogue or some *lecturer* in the posthumous Academy or from the circle of pythagorizers interacting with the Academy.

That the agreement is alleged so unreservedly implies a general consensus about it in the audience; there is no need here to appeal to "unwritten doctrines," the syntagm that serves as a mask for views the Academy needed to impute to Plato but that it could not authenticate by reference to any propositionalized excerpt from the dialogues. This in turn means that the Platonists and Pythagoreans of the generations after Plato were in an amicable relation; but it is not incompatible with this friendliness that the agreement was more or less conspiratorially (so to speak) deliberate in the *first* generation of the posthumous Academy.

A misrepresentation of Plato's character which elevated him to the level of a mythicized Pythagoras would not be disputed outside the Academy if concerted enough within it; and a divinized Plato was a small price for the Pythagoreans to pay in return for a fashionable if quibbling acquiescence in their doctrines. But the visible wit, humor, and irony, the overall implicit detachment from doctrine of Plato's dialogue-constructions could only be evaded by being ignored or else by what we now call a brainwashing of whatever readership the dialogues might reach.

In a huge irony of history, what favored this evasion of Plato's writerly intellectual genius and the perceptible dramatic quality of his dialogues was the political and linguistic sea-change that overtook Greece in the second half of the fourth century. It put Plato's literary Greek beyond the reach of the Macedonian ruling class, and it allowed foreign or Macedonized intellectuals to become the majority in the Academy and the Peripatos.

SELF-FOCUSING DEVICES IN PLATO'S DIALOGUES

There are no *explicit* orientation-statements in the dialogues which tell us how we should read them. As stated in Chapter 3, such statements would be out of place, in addressing the reader in a nonexhibitive, nonpoetic way. Just so, one must not expect to be given stage directions (*as in* Shakespeare or Shaw) about the interactions and characterizations in a poem or dialogue once the action has started. But Plato's dialogues do contain overt or covert hints—self-focusing devices, as U. Eco calls them—about how the reader or interlocutor is

to take what will next be said.²⁶ Such hints, if they are to be reliable pointers to the *design* of the work, must be *internal* (endogenic) to it. They will override *externally* generated instructions about the work or its interpretation offered by unreliable or partisan *secondary* sources like Diogenes Laertius and the Hellenistic Pythagoreans. We will not grasp what the maker is doing with his utterance as a whole, if we have misperceived the nature of the interlocutory action as it unfolds.

Take the *Theaetetus* dialogue. That it wants to be taken *dramatically* is very clear from Euclides' words at 143b5-c in the narrative introduction: "Now Terpsion, I wrote the conversation down in my own way, I didn't represent Socrates narrating it to me, as he actually did, but as in conversation with those he was with." (Those he was with were Theodoros the geometrician and the young Theaetetos.) "And, in order not to bother with the matter between speeches in the writing, such as whenever Socrates spoke: 'I said' or 'I remarked,' or in the case of the interlocutor 'he agreed' or 'he disagreed,' I wrote in Socrates as himself talking with them and deleted the interruptions." Euclides has just told Terpsion that they should rest while his attendant reads to them the book he put together by repeatedly checking back with Socrates, about the conversation whenever he was in Athens. So the boy reads to them the record of the exchange that took place between Socrates and Theaetetos as dramatized by Terpsion. So that what we the readers get is the words of the two speakers to each other, as the fiction of the boy reading for his master quickly fades.

In the *Timaeus*, on the other hand, the eponymous main speaker lays it down about the speech he is giving that (29c9-d3) "we should be content if we can provide the likely (*eikōias*) accounts, remembering that both I speaking and you judging are only human; so that in these matters it befits us to accept the most likely story (*ton eikōta muthon*), seeking nothing further." Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages before the rediscovery of Aristotle's physics and cosmology nonetheless took the *Timaeus* literally, in spite of Timaios's disclaimer, as their textbook of physics. Strangely enough, modern Platonists and literalists, who do not take Timaios's *disclaimer* literally, *do* take literally his rather *incantatory* discourse—with suitable reverence even.

The self-focusing device in the *Protagoras* makes explicit the form that the argument between Socrates and Protagoras has taken, in the personified Argument's own words: "This present outcome of our

reasonings" (*hê arti ekxodos tôn logôn*, 361a3ff.) deserves "to be indicted and laughed at. . . . 'Oh Socrates and Protagoras, how strange you are,'" the Argument would say,

You [Socrates] on one hand, after having said at first that *aretê* cannot be taught, are pressing the opposite, striving to prove that all affairs are knowledge—justice, moderation, and courage—as the best way of making *aretê* look teachable; for, if excellence were other than knowledge . . . it wouldn't be. . . . Protagoras on the other hand, though at first he claimed that *aretê* was teachable, now seems eager for the opposite, suggesting it to be anything else rather than knowledge—thus making it less than teachable.

The personified Argument is telling the participants and auditors *within* the dialogue, as well as its readers, that what they have witnessed is the enactment or embodiment of an antilogism by Socrates and Protagoras in their very persons. Because neither of them has won the argument, the question of who won it is made irrelevant; and readers are free to enjoy the dialectical interaction between the two greatest intelligences in classical Athens, as well as the *mimêsis*, by the composer of the dialogue, of the mannerisms of the other Sophists in it.

It has always surprised me that the identity of the so-called Stranger in the *Sophist* and *Politicus* dialogues has remained uncategorized and uncertain for so long, when his verbal activity leaves no mistake as to what he is. Theodoros's guest (*xenos*) from Elea has in the *Sophist* already characterized, in his own way to be sure, the nature of that *disputatious* professional, the Eristic sophist. Theodoros, in the *Politicus*, expects him to go on to the definition of the politician (*politikós*) first and then, third, the philosopher. But, in defining the Eristic sophist, the foreign visitor (*xenos*) has come unmasked (to the reader) as a non-Eristic or *rhetorical* sophist with Pythagorean affiliations. And that he is a sophist—even if of another kind—is fully compatible with the wording of the opening of the *Politicus* (257a-b). Theodoros's word *metriôteros* for him implies just that, that he is "moderate" and "nondisputatious." In his decorousness, he is seen by his unintelligent host as "a real philosopher" (*mála . . . philosophon*).

Plato makes sure we perceive this unperceptiveness of Theodoros by having Socrates quickly pick up on the calculative mistake he makes in the proportionality he proposes among the sophist, the

politician, and the philosopher. Socrates, we remember, had already mocked Theodoros's estimation of his guest in the *Sophist* by calling him, with a *surplus* of enthusiasm to cover the irony, "a god . . . a higher power . . . come to oversee and refute us who are worthless in argument, a god of refutation" (216b). And here we also remember that Plato is said, in the Pythagorean "tradition," to have studied with this brilliant Theodoros whom his Socrates has corrected.

What else can we expect in a discourse on one-man rule from a rhetorical sophist with Pythagorean affiliations, but a sophistic *defense* of kingship—or of oligarchy—as the "*moderate*" (because in-between) alternative to kingship! As a discourse listened to by an alert and skeptical Socrates who loves Athens and matter-of-factly accepts its ancestral constitution, it is not to be mistaken as a plea for monarchy by Plato the composer. Yet that is how it is taken in the pythagorizing Platonist tradition of interpretation.

Consider, finally, the self-focusing devices in the *Republic*, with their broad (in both senses) architectonic implications. When Glaucon, the well-to-do Athenian gentleman and boy lover, objects, in *Republic* II, that "the true, healthy, and minimal city (*alathinê, hygiê, anankaiotatê polis*) is not fit for pigs to live in" (372d), because (he says) it lacks the amenities that minister to what Socrates calls our unnecessary appetites or artificial needs, Socrates becomes sardonic, and with new words and an ironic tone implies that if *that* is the kind of city he wants to examine, they must next look at the feverish or luxurious (*phlegmaînousa, truphôsê*) city. The need to survive of this kind of city makes the *guardian* class, and its training or education, the most important concern (*epistêmê, ergon, technê, epimeleia*, 374d–e) of the city-builder and justice-seeker. "Come then," Socrates says, "just as if we were making up (*muthologoumênes*) fables (*muthôi*) and had the leisure, let us educate these men in our discourse" (*lôgôi*, 376d9–e1). This clear announcement that what Socrates' auditors are now in for is an extended fabulation about the education of the guardians, who must become both philosophical (lovers of knowledge) and fiercely defensive of their city, is completely ignored by the Platonist reading which takes Socrates' discourse as a *programmatic* proposal for the *realization* of the Ideal State, as platonizing translators call it.

More, at 450d1–2, the plan for educating children is called "a wish-thought" (*euchê*); and the countercultural idea (at 456c2) of

assigning gymnastics and music to the wives of the guardians is ironically said to be natural, *not* "utopian" (*euchê*). More subtle perhaps, but just as overlooked, is the humor and satire of the specifically anti-Academic reference, at *Republic* 499c4ff., in which Socrates suggests (to pythagorizing ears that might believe it) that the solution to the problem of politics is to promote the full professors (the "philosophers" he is satirizing) to the rulership of the state. That the proposal is qualified as *not* one of those daydreams (*euchais*, c4–5) either, and *not* impossible though difficult (d5f.) emphasizes that it is meant for Academic ears at the same time that it is twisting them. Oligarchists, élitists, and Platonists have, however, never wanted to see the chiding and humor in these counter-Athenian proposals; which is also, by the way, why both ancient commentators and many modern readers have balked at, or been puzzled by, the idea of the community of wives.

In connection with the question of the implementation of the city Socrates' has fabled forth, we look at one or two more self-focusing passages which tell the reader—but not in so many words—that Socrates is drawing out the consequences for all to see of the pythagorizing state. This state is the *malist' eiê kai' euchên pôlis*—the most-to-be-wished-for-city, posited by oligarchists as a preferable alternative to the ancestral Athenian democracy.²⁷ In Book IX, Socrates concedes that "the city whose founding [we] have described in words (*têi en logois keimenêi*) . . . can be found nowhere on earth" (*ep'êi gês oudamou . . . autên einai*). "But perhaps," adds Socrates, "there is a pattern (*paradeigma*) laid up in heaven (*ouranôi*)! for him who looking, sees it, and can settle for it, or in it." At 501e what is ostensibly asserted is not a fact but a relationship of a hypothetical sort, namely, that *if* (*ei*) it could be realized, *then* "the polity that Socrates has fabled in words" (*hê politeia, hên muthologoumen lôgôi*), would be the *best* to follow. An attentive reader with literary competence has to conclude that what is offered by Socrates' extended discourse (after Book II) is a counter-utopia rather than a utopia or idealist political program. It is actually a development of the potential aspect and consequences of the counter-Athenian, antidemocratic, pythagorizing idea of the Ideal State.

That Plato was a conscious literary artist, the success of whose contructions is not accidental, can be gathered from Socrates' digression, in Book III, on the subject of the difference between narrating

things said or done and dramatizing them. In the former case, the reciter must speak in the third person, grammatically; in the latter, he will speak in the first person, in the person that is of the doer or undergoer. At 392c5-6, Socrates says he has "concluded the topic of tales [i.e., narrative content]. That of the diction (*lékxos*), I take it, is to be considered next." He continues:

Is not everything said by fabulists or poets a narration of past, present, or future events? Do they not proceed either by pure narration or by a narrative effected through *mimēsis* (*mimēseōs*), or by both? . . . In the first lines of the *Iliad*, . . . the poet himself is the speaker. . . . But what follows he delivers as if he himself were Chryses and tries . . . to make us feel that not Homer is the speaker, but the priest, an old man. . . . Shall we not then say that he assimilates thereby his own diction . . . to that of the person whom he announces as about to speak?

Socrates explains further, "but if the poet does not conceal himself, then his entire *poiēsis* [all of his poetry] would have been completed without reenactment (*mimēseōs*).⁹" He illustrates with a convincingly dull prose rehearsal of the comings-and-goings of Agamemnon, Chryses, and his daughter; and makes his point that the success of dramatic tragedies depends—quite oppositely—on the mimetic reenactment of their events. So, too, from the point of view of method, does the success of the dialogues in holding our interest depend upon Plato's dramatization of the communicative interactions. We do not forget, however, that without his intellectual mastery over the *conceptual* (and conceptualist) material in dispute among the interlocutors, the dramatizations might well become mired in abstractions. For it is the human but highly intellectual drama of the dialogues that keeps them from being the mere dialectical exercises that Arkesilaos thought they were and that today's logicalist readers still seem to think they are.

NOTES

1. See I. Düring, *Aristotle in the Ancient Biographical Tradition* (Göteborg: Studia Graeca et Latina Gothoburgensia 5, 1957) for the relevance of this phenomenon in Aristotle's case; and my *Plato's Dialogues One by One*, 2nd ed., "Prologue: What We Don't Know about Plato and Socrates," in the case of Plato and Socrates.

2. *Platon und die sogenannten Pythagoreer: Ein Kapitel aus der Geschichte des Griechischen Geistes* (1923; repr. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche

Buchgesellschaft, 1962), pp. 135ff. and 263ff.

3. Cf. C. A. Huffman, *Phileas of Croton: Pythagorean and Pre-socratic: A Commentary on the Fragments and Testimonia with Interpretative Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993). "Influenced by Plato," it is necessary to repeat, almost always means "accepting or taking over of some decontextualized (and 'anonymized') opinion advanced by a speaker in one of the dialogues"; it means going along with the *Platonism* that arose from the de-dramatization of the dialogues. Truly to have been "influenced by Plato" would be to have learned to *dialogize* the communicative interactions between disputants, namely, to set their claims in confrontation with each other in the voices of their proponents. It is probable that the unrecoverable Aristotle who wrote dialogues was influenced by Plato in this sense. The loss of Aristotle's dialogues must have been much facilitated by the doctrinal Platonism of the Peripatetics and the pythagorization of the Academy.

4. In *Plato's Dialogues One by One*, chapter 8.

5. *Proclus in Parmenidem* 128e; cf. 730ff. G. Morrow trans., *Proclus' Commentary on Plato's Parmenides* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1987), p. 106.

6. Cicero (*De Republica* 1.15-17): "Scipio: . . . true, Tubero; but I suppose you have heard that, after Socrates' death Plato went on journeys, first to Egypt for purposes of study, and later to Italy and Sicily in order to become acquainted with the discoveries of Pythagoras; and that he spent a great deal of time in the company of Archytas of Tarentum and Timaeus of Locri, and also got possession of Philolaus' notes. And, as Pythagoras' reputation was then great in that country, he devoted himself entirely to that teacher's disciples and doctrines."

7. (Helsinki: Societas Scientiarum Fennica, 1974); and *Interpreting Plato* (Helsinki: Almqvist and Wiksell, 1977).

8. In the heel and toe, respectively, of the Italian boot.

9. See H. Thesleff, ed., *The Pythagorean Texts of the Hellenistic Period* (Helsinki: Abo Akademi, 1965), pp. 2-48.

10. The prelude to which dialogue, it appears, was tampered with—probably by whoever inserted the Atlantis story into it. See my "The Prelude to the *Timaeus* and the Atlantis-Story" and the Bibliography.

11. *Ocellus Lucanus Text und Kommentar*, ed. R. Harder (Zürich: Weidmann, 1966). Syriacus, in *Metaphysica Commentaria* (*Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca*, VI.1), ed. W. Kroll (Berlin: 1902).

12. *Proclus' Commentary on Plato's Parmenides*, p. 20.

13. For the Peripatos, see above, "Aristotle versus the Peripatos"; for Speusippus's Academy, see *The Return of the King*, chapters 4-5. Chapter 1 of this work, "The Intellectual History of Democratic Athens," rehearses the story of the Pythagorean takeover of Athenian public opinion in the second half of the fourth century.

14. See E. G. McClain, *The Pythagorean Plato* (Boulder, Colo.: Great Eastern Book Co., 1978).
15. See A. Dihle, "Entertainment Literature, Factual Literature, and Historiography," chapter 14 of *A History of Greek Literature from Homer to the Hellenistic Period*, trans. C. Krojzl (New York: Routledge, 1994).
16. If we do not note that Pythagoreanism sought to be identified with the whole of "philosophy," and came, some time in the fourth century, to be taken as such by large sectors of the climate of opinion, there will be fourth-century locations whose precise meaning escapes us, and turns of phrase in the discourse of Plato's Socrates whose irony we will fail to catch.
17. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy*, vol. I, chapters 4-5.
18. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy*, p. 146.
19. In *The Return of the King*: chapter 1, "The Intellectual History of Democratic Athens"; chapter 5, "In Search of the Unplatonized, Pre-scholastic Aristotle"; and chapter 6, "The Reception History of Plato and Aristotle"; in *Plato's Dialogues One by One*, 2nd ed.: "Prologue: What We Don't Know about Plato and Socrates"; "Foreword: On Reading Plato Dialogically"; chapter 6, "Irony, Dialogue, and Dialectic"; in the first edition: "To the Reader"; chapters 6 and 7, "Interdialogical Interlude I on the Use of the Term 'Irony' in the Dialogues, and Interdialogical Interlude II, Dialogue and Dialectic." Part I of my *Two Metaphysical Naturalisms* does positively identify as Aristotle's those sections of the Aristotelian-Peripatetic *Metaphysics* that reflect his naturalism, by abstracting from locations and passages that are either platonizing or non-naturalist. Whether this procedure is circular (other than in the sense that abductive reasoning must be) or not, it allows me to refer to the Aristotle who wrote dialogues, loved old plays, and was a nature-inquirer without ambiguity.
20. *Aristotle's Criticism of Plato and the Academy* (1944; repr. New York: Russell, 1962).
21. In *Plato's Dialogues: The Dialogical Approach*, ed. R. Hart and V. Tejera (Lewiston, Maine: Edwin Mellen Press, 1996).
22. If only rather recently. J. Aricci, *Interpreting Plato: The Dialogues as Drama* (Lanham, Md: Rowman, Littlefield, 1991); G. Press, *Plato's Dialogues: New Studies and Interpretations* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman, Littlefield, 1993); V. Tejera, *Plato's Dialogues One by One*, 2nd ed. And among others: J. P. Hersbell, "On the Orality and Literacy of Plato's Dialogues," in *The Third Way*, ed. F. González (Lanham, Md.: Rowman, Littlefield, 1995); K. Robb, "Orality, Literacy, and the Dialogue Form," P. Christopher Smith, "Tensions in the *Phaedrus* Dialogue and Dialectic, Speech and Writing," and C. Griswold, "Irony, and the Dialogue Form in Plato's Dialogues," all in *Plato's Dialogues—The Dialogical Approach*, ed. R. Hart and V. Tejera (Lewiston, Maine: Edwin Mellen Press, 1997). Drew Hyland, *Finite and Transcendence in the Platonic Dialogues* (Binghamton, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 1995).

23. Namely, the Pythagoreans: the antecedent of *leitotês* is at 987a14.
24. Trans. G. Morrow and J. Dillon, p. 106.
25. Cf. my "Prologue: What We Don't Know about Plato and Socrates," in *Plato's Dialogues One by One*, 2nd ed.; and the "Introduction: On the Intellectual History of Democratic Athens," and chapter 6, "The Reception History of Plato and Aristotle," in *The Return of the King*.
26. U. Eco, *The Limits of Interpretation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990); and V. Tejera, "Eco, Peirce, and Interpretationism," *American Journal of Semiotics* 8 (1991), pp. 149-68.
27. The *malist eîê kat' euchês* state. It has not been noticed enough that the *Republic* uses this language ironically with some frequency; e.g., at *Rep.* III.399b5: *euchêi* = "prayer"; *Rep.* V.450d1: *euchê* = "wish-thought"; *Rep.* V.456b12: *oudê euchais* = "not utopian"; *Rep.* VII.540d2: *mê pantapasin . . . euchas* = "not altogether a wish-dream." The standard "Ideal State" takes the affective quality out of "the most desirable" or "most-to-be-wished-for" state. The wish-dream of the oligarchist minority became a reality some sixteen years after the defeat at Chaeronea (338 B.C.) when the Macedonizing Demadês enforced the oligarchic constitution of 322 B.C., reducing the franchise to 9,000 property owners.

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