To Kostas Boudouris
for two decades of friendship

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Introduction

This book, like its predecessor *Cosmos as Art Object*, consists of a number of previously published articles on topics in classical Greek philosophy which I thought merited being collected into a single volume. Included are three pieces which originally appeared in Japanese, Russian and Brazilian journals, and are published for the first time in English.

The volume sets out to be a collection of articles; in no way is it structured to be read straight through from A to Z, as though it comprised a continuous argument.

Each item is meant to be a self-standing short study, with the inevitable duplications that this entails; in all such instances it is my hope that the occasional repetition will be accepted as making sense in the context of what the article/paper in question was setting out to do, and of who its intended readership/audience was. (Some of the pieces originated as papers read to academic audiences, as a certain directness of address will occasionally indicate).

Because the works of more than one philosopher are in question, a roughly historical sequence of the time at which these philosophers were writing has been followed. Exceptions are articles devoted to the discussion of any given philosopher, which for convenience's sake I have grouped together.

With minor changes, all articles appear as originally published.

I should like to thank the following for their kind permission to reprint particular items in the volume: the publisher and editor of *Ionia Publications*, Prof. K. Boudouris, for permission to reprint items (2), (7), and (9), which originally appeared in *Pythagorean Philosophy* (Athens 1992), pp. 153–164 and 171–181; in *Ionian Philosophy* (Athens 1989), pp. 114–122; in *The Philosophy of Socrates, 2: Elenchus, Ethics and Truth* (Athens 1990), pp. 93–98; and in *Greek Philosophy and Epistemology*, Vol. 1 (Athens 2001); *The Monist* for permission to reprint items (4) and (5) from Vols. 74 (1991), pp. 330–340 and 62 (1979), pp. 54–60; Oxford University Press for permission to reprint item (12) from *Psyche and Soma. Physicians and Metaphysicians on the Mind-Body Problem from Antiquity to Enlightenment*, eds. John P. Wright and Paul Potter (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), pp. 37–

55; The University of Calgary Press for permission to reprint item (1) from *Greek Tragedy and its Legacy: Essays Presented to D. J. Conacher*, eds. Martin Cropp, Elaine Fantham, and S. E. Scully (Calgary: University of Calgary Press 1984), pp. 259–266; *Revue de Philosophie Ancienne* for permission to reprint item (3) from Vol. 7.2 (1989), pp. 157–167; Springer Science and Business Media for permission to reprint item (8) from *Scepticism in the History of Philosophy*, ed. Richard H. Popkin (1996), pp. 27–36; *Oikoumene* (Prague) for permission to reprint items (10) and (19) from *The Phaedo of Plato*, eds. Aleš Havlíček and Filip Karfík (Prague: Oikoumene, 2001), pp. 357–367 and a forthcoming volume on the *Symposium*; and Ashgate Publications (Aldershot) for permission to reprint item (16) from *Uses and Abuses of the Classics: Western Interpretations of Greek Philosophy*, eds. Jorge J. E. García and Jiyuan Yu (2004).

Item (6) appears for the first time in English. It was originally published in Japanese in *Academic Proceedings of the St. Andrew's University Press*, Osaka, 1996, pp. 27–36; in Russian in *The Universe of Plato's Thought*, St. Petersburg University Press, 1997, pp. 49–63; and in Portuguese in the *Boletim do CPA*, Instituto de Filosofia e Ciências Humanas, Seto de Publicacões, Campinas, Brazil, 1997, pp. 23–29. It appears in English with the kind permission of the editors of the St. Andrew's University Press, Osaka.

Item (14), like item (6), also appears for the first time in English. It first saw the light of day as a lecture delivered in Italian at the Università degli Studi di Pisa, and is scheduled for publication in Volume 49 of *Studi Classici e Orientali* (Pisa). This English-language version of the original appears with the kind permission of the editors of the journal.

I should also like to take this opportunity to thank Anita di Giacomo for her stalwart work in reducing the various pieces in the volume to a common format, and Holger Drosdek, of Academia Verlag, for his excellent work on finalizing the text for printing.

T. M. Robinson,
Toronto, April 2008

1. Heraclitus, Plato, and Greek Poetry

In this paper I shall examine, from a particular point of view, the stance adopted by Heraclitus and Plato towards contemporary and antecedent Greek poetry (including drama). I shall argue in the first part that for both philosophers there existed a single, incontrovertible "account" *(logos)* of the real as a unity-amid-diversity, an account expressible in human terms *via* such *prophetai* as Heraclitus and Plato themselves, and mirroring, insofar as it could, the *logos* uttered by the real itself in its most rational guise. Poets, by contrast, (again including dramatists), are to be treated with caution to the degree that they utter *logoi* that *misdescribe* the real; and something more than caution is called for if they have further committed themselves to the sophistic, and specifically Protagorean premise, that there may be no objective reality amenable to univocal description. In the second part I shall suggest that the poets, the sophists and Socrates (though not Heraclitus or Plato) have more in common in their views on *poiesis* than is sometimes realized, and that those views continue to make excellent sense.

To begin with Heraclitus. In three famous fragments (1, 2, 50 DK) he talks of an "account" *(logos)* of things which "holds forever", of which (ordinary) people "prove forever uncomprehending, both before they have heard it and when once they have heard it". "All things", says Heraclitus, happen "in accordance with this account". Whose account is this? Minimally, that of Heraclitus himself; we have it from Aristotle (and later Sextus Empiricus) that fr. 1 came from the beginning of Heraclitus' book, and it was standard for Ionian prose-authors to refer at the outset to the "account" of things they would be putting forth in their book. Heraclitus' *logos* is a precise one: he "distinguish(es) each thing according to [its] real constitution, i.e., points out how it *is*". The account he offers is also, he says, "common" or "universal". The word is suggestive, hinting that the "account" is not just true at all times (a claim he has already made) but universal in its application. If the latter is true, it looks as though "law" might be a better translation than "account", and this is in fact the translation adopted by Marcovich.

A natural question any Greek would have posed at this juncture is: who/what is the ground of this universal "law" or "account"? Zeus perhaps? In a sense, Yes, replies Heraclitus; but it is more precisely describable as that "one thing, the only wise thing", that "is not and is willing to be called by the name Zeus" (32) and is "set apart from all" (108). This wise thing *(sophon)* it is that utters, *ab aeterno,* the *logos* (or complex of *logoi),* mirrored in the words of Heraclitus and other such *cognoscenti,* which both descriptively announces that "all things are one" (50), prescriptively enunciates that "divine" Law which underpins all human law (114), and ensures on pain of punishment (94) that "measured" change-amidst-stability which constitutes the real (31).

Most people fail to recognize in their precise articulations (fr. 1) the detail and structure of the laws of nature and conduct uttered by *to sophon*, says Heraclitus, including some of Greece's most distinguished poets. Elementary facts about the real, such as the unity of day and night, Hesiod, for example, failed to recognize, and in so doing misled a great number of people (57, 106). Homer, too, for all his wisdom, could get things wrong (56). The results of such ignorance are particularly pernicious in the case of poets, since they are in fact the teachers of large numbers of Greeks (57); so much so that, if Heraclitus had had his way, Homer would have been "ejected from the lists and thrashed, and similarly Archilochus" (42).

This is strong stuff, and leads naturally to questions of Heraclitus' expectations of poets. On this more later. Let us look for the moment at a later philosopher who is clearly influenced by Heraclitus, both in general philosophical stance and in his attitude to poetry, and who in turn will, I suggest, help us to understand more clearly the grounds for Heraclitus' fulminations. This is Plato, and in particular the Plato of the so-called "middle" dialogues, a time of conviction on his part that there is such a thing as the unequivocally real and that such reality is knowable. Such reality consists of the Forms – eternal existents transcending space-time *(Phdr.* 247c–e) and the ontological counterparts of some if not all general terms in language *(Resp.* 596a). Their existence, role and status we have on the word of Plato himself, and also their role as guarantor that the universe is, as its name (*to pan*) suggests, a basic unity underpinning diversity, not just a Democritean chaos. The crucial point of agreement with Heraclitus is, of course, on

the fact of the possibility of knowledge, not on its putative object. In this he and Heraclitus operate on a strikingly similar wavelength. At a human level, knowledge is attainable by certain insightful individuals (Heraclitus, Plato, the philosopher-rulers), whose statement *(logos)* of the way things are is a pale reflection of a cosmic statement of the same, uttered *ab aeterno* by *to sophon* (the world's rational and governing principle) (Heraclitus) or by the Demiurge (the world's rational and governing principle for Plato). At *Timaeus* 41a ff., the Demiurge is described as speaking (*legein*) to the astral gods before the formation of the world as we know it, and the *logos* he utters, like that of Heraclitus' *to sophon*, is both descriptive and normative; what the Demiurge says both describes the world and outlines what he calls the "Laws of Destiny". The Demiurge who utters the *logos* is also, it seems to me, a soul (on the principle, enunciated at *Tim.* 30b, that "*nous* cannot come to be present in anything apart from soul") and synonymous, almost certainly, with the "best soul" described later in *Laws* 10. So it comes as no surprise that the first creation of the Demiurge, that "intelligent" World Soul that will last forever (36e), expresses *its* intelligence too in *utterance (logos,* 37a ff.). The nature of the utterance is also unsurprising, at any rate to anyone acquainted with the epistemology of the *Republic.* When the object of the utterance is *to noeton*, i.e., the World of Forms, the utterance will be that of incontrovertible *nous* and *episteme*; when its object is the universe of sense, the utterance will consist merely of *pisteis* and *doxai,* though always "true" ones (37b).

The whole question of *logos* in Plato could be pursued much further, and I shall for the moment confine myself to two comments about it. First, he has it seems elaborated a system in which goodness and intelligence are manifest not least in *quality of utterance,* be it at the level of the Demiurge himself, World Soul, or the philosopher-ruler. Secondly, and perhaps more speculatively, access to an understanding of that "balanced tension" which is the universe of both Heraclitus and Plato is by a process that *involves logos* and *mirrors* the tension, and that process is of course *dialektike.* To put it differently, man achieves by process what *to sophon*/the Demiurge possesses eternally: for Heraclitus a knowledge of the plan whereby the Unity that is the universe operates (frs. 41, 50), for Plato that and at least a dim additional acquaintance with the Planner, that *demiourgos* and

father whom it is a hard task to find, as he puts it *(Tim.* 28c), "and having found impossible to declare to all mankind".

Within the framework of such a cosmo-theology and epistemology Plato (in the *Republic)* turns his gaze on Greek poetry and the arts generally. Not unpredictably, he is uncomfortable with much of what he finds. Greece's *mousikoi* are Greece's educators; *mousike* consists of *logoi;* and "there are two species of *logoi,* the one true, the other false" (376e). The objectively false is not to be discounted, in terms of educational value, if it "has some truth in it also", like some *mythoi* (but far from all) told to children (377a). But too much put out by *mythopoioi,* like Homer, Hesiod, Aeschylus and others, consists of *mythoi* with no claim to even residual truth-content. What they tell us about the gods, for example, is frequently a bold mis-statement of the case; so much so that Plato could point to a sizeable list of predecessors and contemporaries whose only solution to embarrassment in the matter lay in an unabashedly allegorical interpretation *(hyponoia)* of unacceptable passages.

But this is not the whole story. A statement by a *mythopoios,* to be educationally acceptable, must not only have basic truth-content, but truth-content of a sort likely to inculcate appropriate *aretai* in the heart of the listener or reader (377c and *passim).* Empedocles' principle remains basic: only a *mythos* which is *kalos* as well as true can perform the task of "moulding" the *psyche* of the young (377bc) into that *kallos psyches* which for Plato is the incontrovertible aim of all education.

The notion of *logos/mythos* as an inculcator of *arete* is of course a moral one, not an epistemological one, but the two are still closely conjoined; the statement of a (basically) true state of affairs (377a) concerning a morally uplifting subject is still a true, if narrowly focussed, statement. Which brings us back to the views of Heraclitus. Archilochus, we must assume, "deserved a thrashing" (fr. 42) not just for mis-describing the real, but for doing it in a way damaging to the inculcation of *arete,* particularly military *arete,* and likely to encourage lawlessness and *hybris*. In Heraclitus' words: "Better deaths win <for themselves> better destinies" (fr. 25); "gods and men honour those slain by Ares" (fr. 24); "the best choose one thing in place of all <other> things: ever-flowing glory among mortals. The majority, however, glut themselves, like cattle" (fr. 29); "one man <is the equivalent

of> ten thousand, provided he be *aristos"* (fr. 49); "War is father of all, and king of all. He renders some gods, others men; he makes some slaves, others free" (fr. 33); "there is a greater need to extinguish *hybris* than there is a blazing fire" (fr. 43); "the people must fight on behalf of the law as <they would> for <their> city wall" (fr. 44). As for Plato, it will be remembered that an educationally acceptable *logos* must be *kalos* as well as true *(Resp.* 377bc).

Archilochus is in no such tradition. "Listen to a *kakos logos*", he says at one point (fr. 179* Lasserre). Given that we have no context for the fragment, we cannot be sure of the nature of this *logos* or the exact species of its *kakotes* (possible translations of the phrase range from "a mean comment" to "a disgusting proposition"), but the *kakotes* of much else of what he wrote, as Heraclitus and Plato understood *kakotes,* is beyond question, e.g., "Some Saian is enjoying having my shield … but I saved my life" (fr. 5 West). To the Archilochean "I saved my life" *(psyche)* the undoubted Heraclitean/Platonic rejoinder would have been "Yes, and ruined your soul" *(psyche)*. The *logos* is *kakos* in an archetypal sense of the term: it lauds the basest form of *kakia,* cowardice. It is also *kakos* in Plato's more general sense; given the general operation of the Empedoclean Principle, the likelihood is that such a *logos* will generate in its listeners, especially its younger listeners, not *arete* but its antithesis. The same will be true of such classics of erotica as frs. 119 and 193 (West). Given his value-system, the author is indeed *apsychos* – but as far as Heraclitus and Plato are concerned, in a far deeper sense than he himself could ever have imagined.

Whether Archilochus actively set out to subvert the moral system supposedly found in the Homeric poems remains a matter of dispute. For Heraclitus, apparently, whatever their differences in emphasis and detail, Homer, Archilochus and others shared the common stigma of propounding value-systems either wholly or in part incompatible with that "divine <law>" which "holds sway to the extent it wishes, and suffices for all, and is still left over" (fr. 114); and so likewise thought Plato.

A more speculative matter is the relationship Plato discerned, or thought he discerned, between poetry (especially drama) and sophistry. We can assume that many thinking Athenians took such a relationship for granted, and that they formed the natural and apprecia-

tive audience for Aristophanes' attacks on such "sophistic" lines of Euripides as "My tongue swore ..." *(Hipp.* 612; cf. Aristoph. *Thesm.* 275, *Ran.* 101,1471). Given Plato's antipathy to sophists in general and some sophists in particular, it seems not unlikely that he himself would have felt at home in such an audience. But all that this, in itself, would show is that for Plato and others one dramatist in particular had been influenced by the sophists, and in particular by Protagoras. Did anyone, including Plato, ever go further and suggest a nexus between sophistry and poetry as such? On the face of it, No; yet there is one piece of evidence that might suggest it. We know of the common circulation, in the fifth and fourth centuries, of little manuals of eristic, which used as their archetype perhaps Protagoras' *Techne Eristikon,* and in one of those which has survived we see that Greek poetry as a whole, long antedating the sophists themselves, is seen as a source of the sort of truth that certain sophists are prepared to defend, at any rate *argumenti causa.*[1] Cleobulina, for example, is quoted to the following effect:

> "I saw a man of violence, a thief and a cheat,/
> and his violence was perfectly right" *(Dissoi Logoi* 3.11).

Likewise Aeschylus:

> "The god does not withhold himself from rightful deceit;/
> there are times when the god accepts that it is time for lies" (*ibid.*, 3.12).

The quotations serve as evidence that "to deceive…is just" (3.2). As for the view that "the same things are unacceptable and acceptable" (2.20), the following poetic evidence is adduced:

> "If you discern things in this way, you will find the other law/
> that holds for mortal men: there is nothing that is universally/
> either acceptable or unacceptable, but circumstances take hold of things/
> and make them unacceptable or, conversely, acceptable" (2.19).

Were Plato to have perused such a document, and at one time or another he quite possibly did, one can see it confirming his worst beliefs about both sophists and poets. Not only, it seems, do sophists (such as Protagoras) notoriously corrupt poets (such as Euripides), poets as such so grossly misdescribe reality as to serve as natural grist for the mills of sophists themselves. Such mutual corruption is also, it turns out, of the worst conceivable kind, since in the case of some sophists at any rate (notoriously Protagoras) and some poets (notoriously Euripides) a straight-forward misdescription of the real is not in

fact at issue: the very notion of trying to describe the real at all, *simpliciter,* is called into question. For Plato, as is well known, the natural inference from such a stance is that ugliest of phantasms, moral relativism *(Tht.* 172b), a consequence he must surely have attributed to that poet at any rate for whom the statement "My tongue swore …" was apparently underpinned by an ontological/moral commitment of which Protagoras himself would have been proud: "If one were smart (*sophos*),/one could argue both sides (*disson logon*) of any topic" (Eur. *Antiope* fr. 189). If Plato felt that infection to be particularly widespread among poets, we are looking at a further, and deeper, reason for his claims concerning the educational noxiousness of certain features of Greek poetry, claims which for many people continue to be such a discouraging feature of such dialogues as the *Republic* and *Laws*.

Whatever else may be said about the Heraclitean/Platonic view of the arts, and especially of poetry and drama, one thing is beyond dispute: like that of the rulers of a number of contemporary totalitarian states, it pays the arts the compliment of taking them seriously. And the reason for this is not far to seek. As teachers, in theory and often in fact, poets and dramatists constituted a major potential opposition to philosophers, especially those, it seems, of an idealist bent, and were rendered the compliment of constant attack by them not least because what was taken to be their *Lehre* and *Weltanschauung* had, for the majority of people, a very much greater descriptive and prescriptive plausibility than anything such philosophers were currently propounding. For the compliment one must no doubt be grateful. This can be done with a clear conscience, since fortunately a compliment is logically distinguishable from the rationale which underpins it. The rationale, however, it need hardly be pointed out, has been under attack for some time among philosophers and students of the arts not inclined to totalitarian political systems. The mimetic theory of art has been written off as possessing at best a minute grain of plausibility, and the Platonic ascription of the minimum level of "truth" to the arts has long been castigated as the product of a naive theory of truth and a misguided apprehension of the nature of the arts. There is *no* "truth" (about anything), say these critics, that any one of the arts supposedly "states", in verbal, plastic or any other form; and there is no absolute set of moral values that any one of the arts need expound,

let alone uphold. With such criticisms many will instinctively, and in my view rightly, agree, if not with the intemperate manner in which they are occasionally expressed. Some have looked to find extenuating circumstances in the "aristocratic ethos" of the two philosophers in question, but this fails to convince. A bare generation after Plato the aristocratic Aristotle propounded a political and artistic theory in which the arts were as integrated into civic life as they had in fact ever been.

Are we to conclude, then, that the supposed contest between *poiesis* and philosophy is in fact a pseudo-contest, confusedly set up by two philosophers who misunderstood some elementary things about art? This is a conclusion many would draw, and not without some justification. But a number of further points should be made.

First, while it was no doubt erroneous to think that the *logos* or *Lehre* of poets and artists should be such as either to restate or reflect in another medium the *logos* of a Heraclitus or philosopher-ruler, it is not necessarily correct to think that *Lehre* is wholly irrelevant to the artistic enterprise. With significant art the *Lehre* is real enough, but it is, among other things, the *Lehre* of ongoing challenge to the *logoi* of self-appointed *prophetai* of *to sophon* or *auto to agathon* or the like. The challenge may be verbal, or implicatory, or both. Euripides saw this with clarity; so did some of the sophists, as we have seen above. Notoriously, Plato *(Tht.* 161c ff.) read the *Antiope* doctrine as a claim that contradictory *logoi* are of equal truth-value, but there is no evidence for believing that Euripides or Protagoras or any other sophist or *poietes* wanted to say anything so foolish. To set up, and examine, contradictory (or supposedly contradictory) *logoi* is not only part of the sophistic and dramatic enterprise, it is also, ironically, the heart of the philosophical enterprise that is, in fact, *Socrates*' claim to fame, *dialektike*. Like the sophists (or, as some would have it, like other sophists), Socrates appears to have believed that the process of dialectic is justifiable in its own right, without commitment to the (Platonic) view that the "end" of the process would be an incontrovertibly true *logos* about some aspect of an unchanging reality. It is, many would agree, unfortunate that Plato went off on his own tangent here; barely a generation earlier, the sophists, Euripides and Socrates were quite remarkably agreed, and with good reason, on the intrinsic value of

ongoing challenge, including artistic challenge, to the philosophical enterprise.

Second, while it was no doubt, for the aforementioned reason, unacceptable for Heraclitus and Plato to have asked *poietai* to support a particular system of *arete* as the only one, and to use their art to inculcate and maintain such a system in their hearers, they could have legitimately told them to expect constraints upon that art in any society in which the moral standards of the majority were affronted by it. The point is a social and psychological, rather than a moral one, and has been faced by unpopular artists and philosophers both before and since Euripides withdrew in disgust to Macedon and Socrates drained the hemlock. *Arete,* in other words, does indeed count in the artistic and philosophical calculus; but the constraints it imposes are, as Socrates saw, civic, and not, as Plato thought, metaphysical.

Third, to return to a point touched on earlier, the strongest thing that can be said in favour of the Heraclitean/Platonic view of art is that it takes such art seriously. Given everything else, mostly negative, that can be said about such a view this may seem a small drop of wine in a large barrel of vinegar. The antithesis of their position, however, is no less unacceptable; a society in which the arts are viewed as irrelevant to the quality of life is *ou bioton anthropoi.* Again it is the sophists, Euripides and Socrates who point the way to that position of sensible, instinctive *mesotes* from which Heraclitus and Plato diverged and to which Aristotle happily returned. At the heart of the enterprise called *bios* lies (self)-examination *(exetasis),* an examination stimulated by the speeches of Medea and Jason, by the Melian Dialogue, by Socrates' interrogation of Euthyphro on piety or Protagoras on *arete,* and by the poet's throw-away line, "What do I care about that shield?" (Archilochus fr. 5.3 West). At this level *poiesis* and philosophy meet as equals, and for Socrates perhaps more than that. On his death-bed, searching for a phrase to sum up his idea of the philosophical enterprise, he called it, in a memorable and magnificent phrase, *megiste mousike (Phd.* 61a).

Note

1 See T. M. Robinson. *Contrasting Arguments. An Edition of the Dissoi Logoi* (Arno Press 1979). The treatise consists of nine sections, the opening five of which propound first an identity-thesis (e.g., "good

and evil are the same"; "truth and falsity are the same"), and then an apparently, though not necessarily contradictory counter-thesis (e.g., "good and evil are different"; "truth and falsity are different".) Thesis and counter-thesis are in all instances backed with a series of arguments in their support, and the reader is left to assess their quality. We are clearly looking at some sort of sophistic "workshop", though an exact account of it is difficult to put together, given the paucity of the evidence.

2. Methodology in the Reading of Heraclitus

What makes the study of Presocratic philosophical thinking unusually interesting is the fact that in many cases the thinking has to be established before it can be assessed, but often cannot be so established without some prior assessment of at any rate the general structure of the philosopher's thought. Whether the circularity of reasoning this appears to involve is vicious or merely methodological is one of a number of problems faced by the newcomer to this hazardous terrain. *Pari passu* with it come problems of distinguishing genuine utterances from instances of indirect speech; of distinguishing the varying degrees of value of such instances, if/when they have been established to one's satisfaction, in the understanding of the philosopher's thought; and of estimating whether the philosopher has any sort of recognisable system of thought, and if so what would count as evidence that the system has one particular set of contours rather than another. No better example of such a thinker exists than Heraclitus, the apparent complexity and obscurity of whose thinking has baffled commentators from the beginning. I say "apparent" because to assume complexity and obscurity from the outset may well be to add a pseudo-problem to a long list of real ones. Not the least of the features of a sound technique for investigating Heraclitus, if we can discover one, will be a device for deciding which if any of his statements are actually of limpid clarity, and as such undeserving of the over-subtle and ultimately misleading interpretations sometimes foisted upon them by well-meaning interpreters anxious to credit him with obscurity (read: greatness) in each and every utterance. Socrates for one found him perfectly intelligible in some parts at any rate of what he said.[1] Matters are further complicated by the variety and range of interpretations of Heraclitus from antiquity onwards proffered by those determined to find for themselves some sort of precursor; among many I might mention the Stoics in antiquity and more recently a number of Hegelian and Marxist interpreters. Any methodology for interpreting Heraclitus will have to include some assessment of the meta-question whether such "discoveries" of a Greek precursor, be it Heraclitus, Plato or Aristotle, are a comment on an apparently universal need for the security blanket provided by the thought that one's own ideas were once ap-

parently (and one should stress the word "apparently") shared by one of the world's indisputably great philosophers and are to that degree somehow legitimised, or whether they are simply a function of all meaningful interpretation of an earlier thinker that cannot and should not be avoided, but must at all times be treated with caution and scepticism, not least by the interpreters themselves. Finally, no attempt at establishing a methodology of interpretation can forgo comment, however brief, on Professor Kahn's challenging work on Heraclitus,[2] in which the whole question of methodology is brought to the fore and theories propounded which, while not new in other areas of text-criticism, were a decade ago very new indeed among interpreters of classical Greek texts.

For the rest of this paper I plan to outline what I myself take to be an acceptable set of principles of interpretation of Heraclitus, and then to offer an example of those principles in operation in the case of one or two well-known fragments or putative fragments.

We can begin with a large, and undoubtedly contentious assumption. Aristotle, it will be remembered, accused Heraclitus of flouting the principle of non-contradiction, quoting such fragments as 88 to substantiate his case. There are those who have agreed with Aristotle's assessment of the situation, but it seems to me doubtful if one can uphold it and still maintain that Heraclitus' thought remains amenable to any form of rational analysis. It is of course possible, and Aristotle may have believed this, that Heraclitus it is at base irrational, in which case no attempt at rational analysis will ever prove anything other than misguided. But is seems to me a fundamental axiom of interpretation that every thinker takes his own thinking to be understandable by somebody, even if that somebody is only himself, and to that degree he is in fact committed to the law of non-contradiction, whatever the possible drift of various statements in his writings. So my instinct is to follow Socrates in this matter against Aristotle; Delian divers may occasionally have to dive deep, and through waters that are often obscured, but there is a bottom to the dive, and many pearl-oysters there worth the diving for.

To claim that Heraclitus almost certainly did in fact adhere to the principle of non-contradiction is not to claim however that he *eo ipso* propounded a unified "doctrine" of some sort. It is merely to claim that whatever views on whatever topics he espoused, he is highly unlikely to have held that any view "A" and a putative view "not-A"

were at the same time in the same place and under the same formal circumstances both true. Whether the ensemble of his sayings further constitutes a doctrine of sorts remains a question for investigation.

How the question could possibly be resolved leads us into interesting terrain. Broadly speaking, two major methodological approaches seem feasible: either to assume that there is a system till evidence from the text emerges to suggest the contrary, or to assume that there is not a system till evidence from the text emerges to suggest the contrary. The former approach, not surprisingly, tends to be adopted by those who themselves have a clearly articulated philosophical system of their own, and the result in many cases, though certainly not all, is a tendency to find their own fair philosophical image in the pool. The latter approach tends to be adopted by those whose philosophical beliefs can be broadly characterised as empiricist, and by those who would probably be surprised to be told they adhere to any philosophical system at all, but who on investigation turn out in most cases to be of empiricist bent, in philology if not in expressed philosophy. Methodologically speaking, both positions are comprehensible, and both perhaps just a little extreme. A workable compromise would I think combine the assumption that, until it appears otherwise, Heraclitus has some coherent view of things to propound, however darkly, and the assumption that such views will most likely emerge by the application of, among other things, a number of well-tested philological techniques of a generally empirical nature. The compromise has in fact been accepted by a fair number of scholars in recent years, the differences in their interpretations resulting largely from the differing emphasis they place on the two assumptions in question and from their degree of willingness totally to forgo the yearning to find a philosophical precursor. Part and parcel of the compromise has been to treat with a good deal of caution the *testimonia* stemming from antiquity, especially those of Stoic provenance. A new and challenging questioning of some features of the compromise has been issued in recent years by Charles Kahn, with his emphasis on the notions of linguistic density, resonance and systematic ambiguity as major guides to interpretation, along with the concept of what, following others, he calls the "hermeneutical circle".[3] My own views on these matters, which I shall attempt to illustrate with a few examples, can be briefly stated. First and foremost, no single guiding principle of interpretation is ever likely to be satisfactory; at all times a battery of approaches to Heraclitus is called for: philoso-

unpacked as "one sub-class (X1) of X and one sub-class (Y1) of Y are one and the same". Once this is seen, the contents of fr. 63 become immediately relevant guides to interpretation; XI makes clear sense if understood as the sub-class of immortals constituted by *daimones,* and YI the sub-class of mortals constituted by heroes".

To summarize quickly what I have been trying to do. I have been stressing the time-honored value of word-in-context philology in the interpretation of Heraclitus, along with the value of a number of contemporary hermeneutical devices. Of these the one I have myself found most useful to date is that of linguistic density, perhaps because of its basic familiarity as a notion if not as a technical term. I have also found very valuable the concepts of resonance and systematic ambiguity, though this time the booby-traps surrounding them seem a little more thickly concentrated. In the final analysis old-style philology and contemporary hermeneutical techniques seem to me more complementary than contradictory, each serving, if used sensitively, as a valuable brake on the other . And one of the greatest merits of Kahn's work on Heraclitus, it seems to me, has been to compel us to confront this point. I am confident that in the long run Heraclitus scholarship will be the better for it.

Notes

1 Diog. Laert. 2.22 (DK 22. A4).

2 Charles H. Kahn, *The Art and Thought of Heraclitus,* Cambridge 1979.

3 *Op. cit.,* 89 ff.

4 T. M. Robinson. *Heraclitus. Fragments,* Toronto 1987, *ad* fr. 1.

5 Arist. *Rhet.* 5. 1407bll ff. (DK 22. A4).

6 Robinson, *ad* fr. 15.

7 *Op. cit.*, ad fr. 26.

8 *Op. cit.*, ad fr. 62.

genuine ascertainment is only of the real as a totality (*pan*, 8.5; cf. 8.22, 8.24), and that as such a totality it is "filled with" (*empleon*) what is real (8.24), suggest strongly that Parmenides is here repeating his point that such a totality is the object of ascertainment. In view of this the translation *"plenum"* seems to me to have a rather higher likelihood of being the right one, and I follow the lead of Untersteiner, *(Parmenide. Testimonianze e Frammenti,* Florence, 1958), Tarán *(ed. cit.),* Gallop *(ed. cit.)* and Couloubaritsis *(Mythe et Philosophie chez Parménide,* Brussels 1986) in adopting it.

9 It is a truism that Heraclitus believed in a *coincidentia oppositorum,* so much so that Aristotle accused him on three occasions of breaking the law of non-contradiction *(Physics* A2, 185b19 ff., *Topics* VIII 5, 159b30 ff., *Metaphysics* Gamma 7, 1012a24; though cf. *Metaphysics* Gamma 3, 1005b23, where Aristotle is apparently less sure the law is being broken). But this is far from obvious. Just as Parmenides at 2.7 offers us a device for rightly understanding what he means by words like *noos* and *noein* in his poem, so Heraclitus at fr. 88 lets us know that his apparent identity-claims are not to be taken literally. What on the surface looks like an instance of the breaking of one of the elementary rules of logic turns out to be on this occasion simply an assertion of self-identity throughout change. See Robinson, *op. cit.*, *ad loc.*

10 I say "genuine" to exclude knowledge-claims which turn out to be mistaken, and hence are in fact simply opinions.

11 Fr. 8.38–39.

12 In antiquity Clement, Plotinus and Proclus read the line as an identity-statement, and with Diels-Kranz, Vlastos (review of J. Zafiropoulo, *L'Ecole Eléate,* Paris, 1950, in *Gnomon* 25, 1953, 168), Kahn *(art. cit.,* 720 ff.) and others I follow their interpretation.

13 An alternate syntactical possibility would read: "for the same thing is there (or: is available) for ascertaining and for being", and this is the direction taken by several translators, including among the most recent Gallop *(ed. cit.*). But this translation seems to me to make less good sense than does the first one as a purported reason why the real, the knowable, and the pointable-to in words have been tightly conjoined in what appears to have been the poem's immediately antecedent sentence, i.e., fr. 2.7–3. See above, n. 7, *fin*. The interpretation of the sentence recently championed by Nestor-Luis Cordero ("Les deux

condition in a life beyond. Do any of these states have cosmic analogues? There is a case for saying they do.

While Heraclitus at no point refers specifically to the *psyche* of the cosmos, fragment 45 seems to be nonetheless an oblique reference to it:

> "One would never by journeying[13] discover the limits of soul, should one traverse every road – so deep a measure (*logos)* does it possess".

The same can be said of fragment 36, with its clear suggestion that surrounding us (and within us as breath) is that soul-stuff of the world which as air has its origins in water. This soul, so large in its extent, like Anaximander's *apeiron* or the *aer* of Anaximenes, that its limits can never be tracked down, is presumably rational as well as alive, in the way that human soul is thought by Heraclitus – and apparently *first* thought by Heraclitus[14] – to be rational and alive. But if this is the case, what is to prevent the possibility that it will *express* that rationality in some fashion analogous to our own way of doing so, that is, in some cosmic equivalent to speech?

A hint of this may possibly be found in a further level of interpretation of fragment 36 in terms of the immensity of soul's rational power as well as physical extent. It is a power no human can ever hope to measure, whatever techniques of investigation one brings to bear, "so profound *(bathys)*[15] *a logos* does it (soul) possess". At this level the term *logos* may well carry a connotation even closer than does "measure" to its focal meaning of "statement" or "account". And if it does, we are looking at a remarkable statement, by Heraclitus, in which he both affirms the existence of cosmic speech and comments on its nature.

The nature of *noos* ("coming to understanding") can now perhaps be clarified. Using as indispensable, though not fully trustworthy, tools of investigation the senses of sight and hearing in particular, the human soul *qua* rational comes eventually to learn the language of the soul of the real *qua* rational, and as a consequence to understand the account of its structure and operations that it never ceases to put forth, the way a stellar source uninterruptedly emits radio-waves. It is the communication of *psyche* with *psyche,* of like with like, and powerfully exemplifies what Empedocles will later canonize as a fundamental principle of the real.

understood to mean "anything that is real *is* – *qua* real – ungenerated", etc. But its weakness, as in the case of (b), is that at best a handful of the epithets ascribed to the real in fragment 8 can really be said to apply to it.

What of the "collective" possibilities? All have the common merit of taking into account the fact that the poem talks constantly of the real "in its totality" *(pan;* see, e.g., 8.5, 8.22, 8.24, 8.25, 8.43, 8.48). Individually, they are of varying degrees of plausibility. To take interpretation (d) first. With "all that is collectively p" (in the sense of "all that collectively exists in some qualified manner") as subject, we have the following: "all that collectively exists in some qualified manner *is* – *qua* reality *tout court* – ungenerated, etc." This interpretation clearly has more going for it than has interpretation (a). The *sum total* of things, *qua* reality *only,* can to the degree that it is simply *real* be with little difficulty seen as ungenerated *(ex nihilo nihil fit),* imperishable (by the converse of the preceding principle), whole (i.e., it is the totality of what is), unique, unchangeable/immovable, complete, continuous (i.e., entities *qua* entities – assuming for the moment that individual entities could in fact be distinguished within the real – will be separated from one another by further entities; there are no bits of blank nonentity in the real; cf. 8.23–25), "equal to itself" (i.e., there are no *degrees* of reality in the real; *qua* real, all entities are of equal "weight" and distribution, so to speak, within the whole), and "inviolable" (i.e., there is nothing – in the sense of no "reality" – "outside of" the real to disturb its quiescence *ab extra).* (I pass over for the moment the questions of the real's supposed "limitedness" and sphere-like nature.) The fifth interpretation is, like (d), superior to the earlier, distributive interpretation (i.e., [b] above). Understood as "the sum total of what is the case" the real could indeed with some ingenuity be described in the way Parmenides describes it in fragment 8. But it means taking a great deal of what Parmenides says in a highly figurative fashion, and this tack should it seems to me be adopted only when all else fails.

The sixth interpretation is surely the most plausible, possessing as it appears to do all the merits of the fourth without commitment to the dubious assumption that the unflagged *esti* might itself suggest anything other than the collective reality of things. With "all that is collectively real" as subject we have the following: "all that is collectively real *is* – *qua* real – ungenerated, etc." In answering the question,

to express statements of necessary interconnectedness in terms of apparent identity, and in one fragment (88) to clarify exactly what he was doing, just in case anyone was misunderstanding him. If I am right in this claim, there is a strong (and – in philosophical terms – potentially very fruitful) possibility that Parmenides is following the same line of thought, in hopes of producing the same arresting impression on *his* readers as Heraclitus had no doubt produced on his. The meaning of the sentence will in such a case be, not "to ascertain and to be real (existent etc.) are identical" but rather "to ascertain and to be real (existent etc.) are *necessarily interconnected*". This is again a point to which I shall be returning.

For the moment however I wish to turn to my translation of *noein* in terms of ascertainment. In so doing I am following von Fritz (who is in turn followed in large measure by Kahn, and more recently, though with a number of caveats, by Lesher), for whom the verb is very frequently if not indeed in the majority of extant instances a verb of *coming-to-know* in early Greek. In view of this I take it to be a sound hermeneutical principle always to test to see whether, in context, this is the more plausible interpretation of the verb before opting for the more vague translation "think". And applying such a principle, I find that the translation "ascertain" (i. e., come-to-know) is almost uniformly throughout the poem the one that makes excellent sense of Parmenides' argument, in a way that "think" does not. In the present case (fr. 3), Parmenides seems to be laying down as a firm logical/epistemological principle, before getting to the heart of his main argument, the fact that there is a necessary connection between my ascertaining that p and p, a point already foreshadowed at 2. 7–8 in the contrapositive statement "if x is real (existent etc.) it can come to be known)" (*gignoskein* and *noein* are in fact near-synonymous terms).

4. The point is re-iterated forcefully at 6.1. Again, as in fr. 3, Parmenides appears to express himself arrestingly in terms of what appears to be a sameness-statement; though once more I must concede that in grammatical terms the datival use of the infinitive cannot be discounted. So my first translation is "picking out and ascertaining must be what is real (exists etc.)", and my second – basing itself on the datival use of the infinitive – "what is there for picking out and ascertaining must be real (exist etc.)". As in the case of fr. 3, I interpret the

latter, having changed around, are the former, and the former, having changed around, are <back> again <to being> the latter”.

4. 6.1

(a) “Picking out and ascertaining must be what is real (exists/is there/is the case)”; or alternatively,

(b) “What is there for picking out and ascertaining must be real (exist/be there/be the case)”.

5. 6.1–2

“For it *is there* to *be* real (exist/be the case), whereas *nothing* is *not*”.

6. 8.5

“For it is real (exists/is there/is the case) now, altogether, *in its totality*”. Cf. 8.11, “thus it must either be real (exist/be there/be the case) *in its totality* or not at all”; 8.22, “nor is it divisible, since *in its totality* it is uniformly real (uniformly exists/is there/is the case)”; 8.24, “but it is *in its totality* full of what is real (of what exists/is there/is the case)”; and possibly also what has come to be known as “Cornford’s fragment”: “Such, changeless, is that for which *in its totality* the name is ‘to be real (exist/be there/be the case)’”.

7. 8.34

“Ascertaining <the real> and ascertaining *that* <the real> *is* <real> is one and the same <process>”.

8. 8.35–36

“For you will not find <an instance of> ascertainment <of the real> without <also finding> the real in <the proposition> in which <such ascertainment> has been affirmed”.

9. 8.52

“Listening to the deceptive ordering of my words”.

identity thesis in question were true; for example, "Being sick is bad for the sick and also good for them if what is good and what is bad are the same thing".

Chapter Two, on seemly and shameful, follows a similar pattern to Chapter One, as does Chapter Three, on just and unjust. As in Chapter One, the author has an easy time making out a case for the identity thesis, but in maintaining the difference thesis once again does little more than simply assert the (self-evident) contradiction it would entail were the identity thesis in question true. Chapter Four, on truth and falsehood, likewise offers a list of uncontroversial examples in support of the identity thesis, though this time, in his defence of the difference thesis, he bolsters the familiar charge of self-contradiction on the part of those maintaining the identity thesis by the interesting deployment of what looks like an early version of the Liar Paradox (4.6).

> "It is also said that the false statement is different from the true statement; as the name differs, so likewise does the reality. For if anyone were to ask those who say that the same statement is false and true which of the two their own statement is, if the reply were "false", it is clear that a true statement and a false statement are two different things, but if he were to reply "true" then this statement is also false".

Chapter Five is untitled, and the familiar phrase *dissoi logoi* is missing from it, but the basic structure of the treatise as seen so far is maintained: a conglomerate identity thesis is propounded, and then a refutation of it offered. The thesis in question consists of two parts:

a) people possessed of contrary properties may in fact act and speak identically (various common speech acts and activities of the sane and the demented, the wise and the ignorant are offered as examples; e. g., "The demented, the sane, the wise and the ignorant both say and do the same things. First of all they call things by the same name: "earth", "man", "horse", "fire", and everything else. And they do the same things: they sit, eat, drink, lie down, and so on, in the same way");

b) the same person/thing is himself/itself possessed of contrary properties. "The talent", he says, for example, "is heavier than the mina and lighter than two talents; the same thing then is both lighter and heavier". And "what exists (is the case) here [sc. in Greece] does not exist (is not the case) in Libya; nor does what exists (is what is the case) in Libya exist (turn out to be the case) in Cyprus .... Conse-

The *simpliciter/secundum quid* distinction employed in this argument is remarkable to come across two generations before the appearance of Aristotle's *Sophistical Refutations*, and suggests a philosophical expertise on the author's part far greater than is usually attributed to him. We also know, from Aristotle himself, that little manuals of sophistic arguments were in circulation in Athens and elsewhere in his day. Which opens up the intriguing possibility a) that one such manual was the *Dissoi Logoi*, b) that it was actually read by Socrates/Plato and Aristotle, and c) either that its use of features of the Liar Paradox influenced Socrates and Plato or that its use of the *simpliciter/secundum quid* distinction influenced Aristotle, or both. As in the earlier case of the origin of the doctrine of "presence", no evidence is unfortunately available either way, and the matter must once again be left in tantalizing doubt.

To return however from such speculation to the question at hand: can the author of the *Dissoi Logoi* be meaningfully described as a skeptic? The answer, it seems to me, must be "Yes", on two counts, though hardly in the technical sense of the term that Sextus would himself have recognized.

1. As far as the content of his beliefs is concerned, he is committed to the adducing of empirical evidence in areas where such evidence is either actually or potentially available. In the area of true and false propositions, by contrast, he seems more essentialist in his analysis. The total package might reasonably be described as one of moderate empiricism and moderate skepticism, in that empirical evidence, when adduced, will serve to dispel the skepticism that fueled the investigation, but not all problems, it seems, are deemed to be amenable to the adducing of such empirical evidence.

2. His methodology, by contrast – and here he draws directly on Protagoras – is uncompromisingly empirical, in that no investigation is deemed to have been properly conducted unless both sides of the question – and there always are two – have been aired.

Whether the above arguments alone would account for the work's invariably being found in Sextus Empiricus manuscripts is certainly open to question, given the broader and more searching range of Sextus' own brand of skepticism. But three further features of its style and contents may have served as suasions in favor of such a collocation.

(or, if one wishes, of the Socratic brand of the sophistic method) have been frequently pointed out. The short question-and-answer technique, for example, looks distinctive, though not necessarily something initiated by Socrates himself,[15] as is the famous Socratic irony (probably better translated, as by Richard Robinson, "slyness").[16] More important however is the orientation of all argument towards the search for a definition, and the use of the elenchus as a device for the unmasking of ignorance, even if enlightenment never replaces it. The same can be said for his use of what Aristotle called *epagoge*, and which in the case of Socrates seems to have meant a combination of analogical and inductive argument.

While these are undoubtedly salient features of the Socratic method, and were, if not invented by Socrates, very likely first exploited in detail by him, it is worth pausing a while to speculate about the origin of the essentialism which underlies them. The accepted wisdom is to say that Socrates' essentialism is a characteristic of his philosophy that radically distinguishes it from the prevalent sophistic nominalism. While this may be largely true, a brief passage in the contemporary *Dissoi Logoi* suggests that it may have not have been universally true. At D.L. 1.17, for example, the author disclaims any intention of trying to tell us *ti esti to agathon*, a phrase that would not have been in the least surprising on the lips of Socrates himself. And at 4.5 he writes: "It is clear, then, that the same statement is false when the false is present to it, and true when the true is present to it". In this instance we have in a single sentence – one explicitly described by the sophist-author as his own view (D.L. 4.2) – an apparent commitment both to essentialism and to a concomitant doctrine of *parousia* that are usually considered paradigmatic features of Socraticism.

One obvious explanation of all this is of course that our author is here wittingly or unwittingly influenced by – and purveying the views of – Socrates himself. This is an undoubted possibility, but only a possibility. For if the author really is genuinely inclined to essentialism, he presumably had some device for explaining the relationship of universal to particular. And who could then discount the possibility, given the presumptive dating of the treatise,[17] that he, and perhaps other sophists likewise inclined, were experimenting with *parousia*-type explanations of that relationship at much the same time as Socrates himself? And if this is true, how confident can we then remain either that

est disposition of things in the world is one involving activity (Aristotle is going to see the full force of this, as we shall find). And specifically a form of activity which involves the process, presumably an everlasting one, of coming to be aware/to appreciate/to know (*noein*) in what way things are best disposed. It will be for others, like Socrates very possibly and Plato quite certainly, to say "best disposed by reference to certain specifiable *tele*", but Diogenes is within an inch of saying it, and may indeed have said it (the tiny number of fragments we have of his views give us nothing like a complete picture of his philosophy).

Anaxagoras, for his part, opts for the word *Nous* to describe his principle of intelligence behind things, and we have already adverted to Socrates' misgivings about his failure to employ it as the basic explanatory factor for the way things are and work. It seems to me equally interesting that Socrates has no comment on Anaxagoras' use of the word *Nous* rather than *Noesis*, especially in view of the fact that this word can only have been chosen deliberately by Diogenes in contradistinction to the one used by Anaxagoras. One possible reason is perhaps that, at a commonsense level, *Nous* (though still, like *Noesis*, ultimately deriving from the "got it" verb *noein*) was more easily conceivable as a transcendental Intelligence not unanalogous to human intelligence, each being easily thinkable of as some sort of substance, since in this case the "active" content of the verb *noein* has faded from the picture. The use of *Noesis*, by contrast, continuing to stress as it does the *act* of ascertainment itself, in the way the verb *noein* does, may have been seen as a hard saying, leaving most people except perhaps proto-Hegelians wondering, The act of ascertainment of Whom or What?

Whatever the reason, Socrates, in the *Phaedo*, stresses a doctrine which in broad terms combines Anaxagoras' *Nous* and Diogenes' teleology. And that in itself, it seems to me, is the beginning of a fascinating story played out over the next two to three generations. Assuming, *argumenti causa*, the not wholly accepted view that from about the *Phaedo* and *Republic 2* onwards, the views of Socrates propounded in the dialogues, apart from those which clearly repeat views propounded in the so-called "aporetic" dialogues, are more likely to reflect the thinking of Plato than of Socrates, we see Plato making use of both Anaxagoras and Diogenes to enormous effect, with both *Nous* and *noesis* playing pivotal roles in his system.

the Form Beauty our philosopher has managed to produce only images (*eidola)* of virtue, because he has been in touch with only *eidola* of beauty, ranging from the beauty of the soul and possibly body of his boy-love to *kala epitedeumata* and the like. But once his gaze is fixed on unmediated Beauty, all need for *eidola,* and for the presence of a boy-love, vanishes, or so it seems.

Does this mean that the boy-love is jettisoned after all, even if only at the end of a possibly lengthy period of time? It is fairly easy to infer it from Diotima's final words on *eidola,* but Prof. Reeve does rightly in cautioning us not to assume it. He may well disappear *qua* boy-love but, if he has been well trained by his lover, he may have had a sound enough moral education to begin his own process of *paiderastein orthos* (211b). And any relationship with the former lover from that point on will be grounded on what was there from the beginning, *philia.* Or so one might surmise. But Plato, if not Socrates, seems to have thought differently.

It is here, I think, that we can start to see the Diotima speech as a programme for philosophical education that had much in it that appealed to Plato (and possibly, at least in part, to the historical Socrates). Because it has in it what seem to be the beginnings of the Theory of Forms, and an apparent distinction between philosophical and popular virtue. And the notion of the philosopher as pregnant will be also repeated in the *Republic.* But it is also apparently self-contained as a theory, in that it does not seem to need, or receive, the support of any doctrine of reminiscence. Once the *erastes* has contacted the Form Beauty he presumably leaves behind a boy-love who is himself pregnant with "*phronesis* and the rest of virtue", and the process of philosophy will continue on to another generation, and so on.

How, one might well ask, does the boy-love get impregnated with *phronesis* and the rest by a lover described in detail as a female principle? Here I can only surmise that Diotima is making an at any rate logical distinction between the lover *qua* lover and the lover *qua* educator of the boy-love, and is able to do so by a nice ambiguity in the words *tiktein* and *gennan. Qua* lover he is pregnant of virtue, and the boy's beauty of soul (and, optimally, body) stimulates him to bring to birth *(gennan, tiktein)* the foetus his soul is carrying. *Qua* educator of the boy-love, however he impregnates *(gennan,* 209b3) the soul of the

health, pseudo-health, or sickness, a good doctor being needed to cure the pseudo-health or sickness of the body, a good judge or legislator to cure the pseudo-health or sickness of the soul. The term he uses for those performing the latter service – *psychiatroi* ("healers of the *psyche*") – is a striking neologism, and has of course taken on a brand new life in our own time.

As for what constitutes the specific sickness of the soul, this, he says, is *vice*, whose cure will be brought about by repressing the *soul's* unsound desires in the way a sick body is cured by the reining in of *its* unsound desires. Sometimes, he says, this may involve drastic measures, such as cautery or surgery, the cautery or surgery for the soul consisting of the heaviest penalties of the *law*.

There are, I think, a number of interesting features about this view. The first is its apparent assumption of a parallelism between soul and body in structure and activities that *prima facie* runs counter to the asymmetry apparently involved in any theory of soul alone as being the real person. The second is its apparent assumption that *both* soul and body are characterized by "desires" of various types, so much so that it could be dubbed an early version of the "double-person" theory of the individual (by contrast with the "person with an instrument" theory). The third is the assumption, common also to the "person with an instrument" theory, that the soul is the ground of our moral/social/political activity. And the fourth is the notion that "repression" of certain desires of the soul is valuable therapy.

The *Gorgias* is, by common admission among scholars, a dialogue written very near the end of Plato's "Socratic" period, and it is possible that many of the above ideas are in fact his own or, if not that, at any rate adumbrations of his own. However this may be, in the *Phaedo*, written shortly after the *Gorgias* and at the beginning of Plato's so-called metaphysical period, we see, I think, the first clear instance of Plato *himself* grappling with the heritage of Socrates on the question of soul and body. The dramatic setting is Socrates' death-cell, during the last hours leading up to his drinking of the hemlock. Simmias and Cebes, Socrates' main interlocutors, are astonished at his cheerfulness in face of death, and equally astonished at his reason for such cheerfulness: that is, his conviction that his real self – his soul – will survive his bodily death and live on in the state of happiness that is the reward for a life of virtue. Under questioning, Socrates makes it

"Fall" or individual sin or both, and picking up on an idea first adumbrated in the Myth of Er (*Resp. 10*) that *we* are responsible for the life we are born into – "God is not to blame" – Plato argues that in the beginning the Demiurge created all souls equal. Though there is some small doubt about the detail of his argument,[21] he appears to say that the first generation of humans created by the Demiurge and his helper-gods was totally male. As they died off and were duly re-incarnated, those among them who had lived a "cowardly" and in more general terms morally unsatisfactory[22] life were reincarnated as women (!); those who had lived at various levels of *stupidity* were reincarnated as various types of bird or animal.

If the above implies what it appears to imply, Plato's researches into the nature of soul and body have led him into a description of the whole of the natural world as being in its various classes (including, it seems, among humans the entire class of women) different instances of what might be called "appropriate degradation" for the housing of the souls of males undergoing punishment of one form or another as described above. It is a bizarre and distressing twist on the theory of transmigration that I have been unable to track down to any clear source, Orphic, Pythagorean, Zoroastrian or Hindu, and hence *faute de mieux* tentatively posit as either Plato's own or possibly that of the renegade Pythagorean Philolaus, on whose (lost) works there is some reason for believing much of the *Timaeus* was based.

What began as a strong statement of the fairness of the Demiurge in regard to all humans has led Plato into very strange terrain, where the problems elicited may well have come to be perceived by him as being perhaps greater than those he thought he was solving. If a particular Serengeti lion is the reincarnation of a particular Masai warrior, does it possess both a lion-soul and the warrior's human soul or only a lion's soul or only the warrior's soul? All answers to the question create problems for one who believes, as any adherent of the doctrine of transmigration must, that a "good" life as a lion (whatever that can possibly mean) warrants a step up on the ladder of lives – to the level of, say, a woman, or a "bad" life as a lion warrants a step down, perhaps to the level of a squirrel or snail.

As for the overall notion of "appropriate degradation", in the case of women this seems to refer to features of both body *and* soul; they are, says Plato elsewhere in the dialogue, less physically strong[23] than

6 See, e. g., *Euthyd.* 295e4–5, *Charm.* 157a1-b1, *Crito* 47d3–4.

7 *Gorg.* 493a1–5.

8 T. M. Robinson, *Psychology,* p. 16

9 *Alc. 1*, 131a ff.

10 For discussion of the details, see T. M. Robinson, *Psychology,* p. 9.

11 *Ibid.,* pp. 4–5.

12 At *Tim.* 36d–e Plato talks of the world's body as being fitted by the Demiurge within its *soul*, not – as might have been expected – *vice versa*.

13 With the exception of the *Gorgias* and *Protagoras*, the dialogues in which myths figure prominently are commonly considered to be more overtly Platonic in content. Whether such myths were a feature of the conversations of the historical Socrates is very hard to know, but their presence in two major dialogues largely considered to be Socratic in content is to me a small suasion in favour of believing that they were.

14 The notion of the body as a (temporal) tomb for the soul implies at least the soul's greater *longevity* than body; and at *Meno* 86a8-b2 Socrates seems satisfied that the slave's supposed pre-knowledge of geometrical truths is in fact evidence for its immortality.

15 E. R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Berkeley 1951), p. 179.

16 See above, p. 122.

17 On this point see however below, p. 125.

18 *Resp.* 411e-412a.

19 In *Plato's Psychology* I have argued for the view that he inclined towards the Orphic view; for the counter-case see R. A. Shiner, "Soul in *Rep.* X, 611", *Apeiron* 6 (1972) 23–30.

20 T. M. Robinson, *Psychology,* pp. xiv–xv.

21 At 90e6–7 he writes in such a way as to suggest that the differentiation into male and female was instituted by the Demiurge at the very beginning; and the same might be said of an earlier passage at 41e-42a. But this seems to be a slip on Plato's part, running clean counter as it does to the general drift of the argument, in which all are given an equal chance at the beginning by the Demiurge (41e4). See also the evidence of 91d7 (*andron*, "males"), where he appears to be continuing a discussion of the various punishments meted out to erst-

when they have finally been destroyed (*anairousa*, 533c8) as assumptions, the future ruler is in a position to embark upon the ascent towards the Form of the Good itself. But the point to stress here is the dialectical process; at no juncture does Plato say that the scrutiny of hypotheses must *finish* before the future ruler is allowed to move on. And indeed it *could not* finish, if a necessary condition for knowledge in the strict sense is the apprehension of the Form of the Good. One hypothesis which must necessarily survive the process, as I have already mentioned, must surely be the assumption of the varying degrees of *goodness* of the various levels of the real.

As far as the first and second stages in the great ascent are concerned, the "process" which leads to the confidence and belief which is *pistis* will presumably be one of empirical observation and the formulation of theory about the contents of the cave-world (to use that Allegory for a moment) in the light of evidence available within the cave. In the case of stage one, that of *eikasia*, any process seems to be the very weak one of the ongoing naive acceptance of things at face value, without any sense of need to pursue the matter further.

In a quite different way, at the other end of the spectrum, the apprehension of the Form of the Good is apparently something involving no process in any sense at all. Instead, we are to imagine a soul that is in a state of suitable preparation for and expectation of the great event, and it comes as no surprise to find the author of the Seventh Letter talking about it as a happening of great suddenness, like the striking of a spark that catches fire. But we need not dwell on this account, which may not after all be Plato's. What Plato himself has to say is remarkable, despite his protestations about his inability to talk in detail on the matter. For the fact is that, in addition to his constant use of *opsis* throughout his account[3] he uses two further very powerful metaphors to describe the reaching of the final goal: *haphe* (touch)[4] and *mixis* (sexual intercourse). I just mention them now, but will return to them to conclude my discussion of the influence of some of the things I have been talking about on the later Plato and on subsequent philosophy.

When we look at the account as an ensemble, it is clear that Plato has, with perhaps one exception (his aberrant-looking use of the word *episteme* on a couple of occasions in a particular passage), combined with great linguistic care the ascent in terms of its processes and the

rationality and divine guidance. Such spinning is easily recognizable as what he had called in the *Timaeus* the movement of the Same, or, if you wish, movement along the plane of the Sidereal Equator. As for the movement of the Different, this too, while unmentioned in the *Statesman*, is easily reconcilable with what is being said, being as it is simply the counter-movement of the Ecliptic that the movement of the Sidereal Equator subsumes. At this stage of things the sun, moon and planets rise in the West and set in the East.

But the movement of World Soul, it soon becomes clear, is not rational because it is movement in a forward direction; its movement is rational because it is axial rather than rectilinear. The same World Soul, once the world has "wound" in a forward direction to the limit of its spin, is then driven, by the "inborn urge" (*symphytos epithymia*, 272e6) that has been allotted to it, or, as we might put it, under the force of its own stored momentum, to *unwind* again, and spin backwards, with the sun moon and planets now rising in the East and setting in the West, to its original state of inertia. At which point the Demiurge gives it another push, and the process begins again, everlastingly.

Each "unwinding" process, it should be added, involves a reversal of what we would call history, biological and otherwise; in Plato's description, creatures eventually grow not older but younger (270d-e), they become "diseased" and "broken apart", and also gradually smaller in size, such that they eventually "risk disappearing" altogether, while in hair-covered creatures the reversal of history manifests itself in a particularly dramatic way with the birth to them, not of normal young, but of creatures "already gray-haired" (273e). It is, in effect, the periodic "dying" of the universe, which is then restored to life (273d-e) by another push of the Demiurge in a "forward" direction.

What are we to make of all this? We need first to get clear that *each* of the world's spins, forward and backward, is in accord with the rationality of the Demiurge and that of World Soul; a counter-spinning motion is no more an indication of the presence of a supposedly irrational element in World Soul than is the movement of the Different (in the *Timaeus*) an indication of a supposedly irrational element in World Soul there either. As the *Phaedo* and *Republic* had made clear very early on, the presence of *epithymiai* in a soul is in no way an automatic indication of the presence of irrationality; its noetic

believing as I do that only the *details* of the world's formation are in doubt in the *Timaeus*; *that* it has come into being *(gegone)*, like all other physical objects (28), seems to me clear.

A more likely scenario, it seems to me, is that he thought, in the *Statesman* as well as in the *Timaeus*, that the world began as an act of Demiurgic formation, and this would at bottom account for the fact that it was only later on, when the first backward spin began, that, according to his argument, sexual reproduction started. And why exactly he might have argued this way becomes clear from a glance at the famous "belly-button controversy" engendered by the appearance of Gosse's *Omphalos* in 1857.[7] In this extraordinary book Philip Gosse asked the question whether Adam, in another text that appears to state unequivocally that the world was fashioned by a Maker, had a navel or not. If he did not, then there was reason for thinking that the first human was not in fact fully human; humans have navels. But if he did have a navel, he bore on his body the marks of a biological history he had never experienced, and in this sense his Maker was deceiving us.

As a devout Christian, but also a biologist who did not believe in evolution, Gosse was between a rock and a hard place; either solution to the question he had posed himself has its problems. He himself finished up opting for the view that Adam *had* a navel, arguing further that, if this is a reasonable thing to believe, there is no reason to doubt that, in similar fashion, God might also have filled the earth with fossils that represent a history of the *cosmos* that never took place. As for any question "Why?" that might be posed, we must console ourselves with the answer that the ways God wishes to test our faith are many, and this is just one of them.

Plato, it seems to me, faces a similar problem, but more plausibly opts for the very opposite conclusion to that drawn by Gosse. If at the beginning, he seems to be saying, the Demiurge fashioned the cosmos or a set of cosmoi, and also fashioned humans at that same beginning, then there is no reason to think those humans would be equipped with sexual organs, since such organs would suggest a biological history that they had never in fact had. Sexual differentiation, and with it the sexual generation of the race, would come *later on* in the process – a point made with clarity in both dialogues.

The details of this are obscure, but it is fully in accord with much else in Plato of an Orphic cast and so probably not to be dismissed too easily. In any case we can assume that Aristotle, as part of his reading of the whole dialogue, also read this passage, and I hypothesize that, as so often, he unconsciously took from it at least as much as he consciously rejected. For these disembodied intellects turn out to have been created in enormous numbers – numbers sufficient in fact to account for the manner of cognition of each and every human, past, present and future if it transpires that each such intellect plays the role of intellect3 in those humans. They are also, it turns out, remarkably like intellect3 in their activity. For their natural state, it would seem, is to be disembodied, and to live a life of unending cognition, a life unnaturally interrupted for a while by incarnation (*Tim.* 41b-42d). The natural state of any intellect3, likewise, is one of unending activity – the activity of cognition – and it too, it seems, has that state unnaturally interrupted for a period by incarnation (430a17–25).

Where Aristotle's own contribution to all this emerges is in the notion that intellect cannot be part of the self, on the presumptive grounds that the body-soul complex to which it is in any given instance attached is obliterated at death, and with it the thread of memory which gave that complex throughout life its individual personhood. So intellect as Plato had understood it (in Aristotle's scheme what he called the "passive" intellect) was not in fact immortal; indeed no part or aspect of what Plato understood as the human soul was immortal. If the concept of immortality has been preserved, it is at a price that Plato at any rate would, if his myths are to be taken seriously, almost certainly not have been prepared to pay.

If this understanding of the pedigree of intellect3 is correct, Aristotle stands in a tradition stretching back to Hesiod and no doubt beyond. In the writings of Hesiod[9] we meet for the first time in Greek thought the concept of the hero who after death is made into a demigod (*daimon*) and appointed a "guardian of mortal men". The sceptical Heraclitus demythologizes the whole notion, and asserts that our *daimon* is in fact our character (*ethos*, fr. 119 DK). How far Plato wished to demythologize is less clear, but the intellects other than the planetary gods which are the Demiurge's direct creation in the *Timaeus* look remarkably similar to Hesiod's *daimones* in terms of their intermediary status between the human soul and God, and the influ-

in itself but one complicated by its being parasitic upon a further problem, that of relating such an intellect to the Prime Mover.

12 The term "essentialism" is used here in its broadest sense, without argument as to the detailed nature of the breadth and scope of such essentialism. For a noteworthy attempt to distinguish Aristotelian from Quinean essentialism see N. P. White, "The Origins of Aristotle's Essentialism", *Review of Metaphysics* 26 (1972) 57–65.

13 Kurt von Fritz, "*Nous*, *Noein*, and their Derivatives in Pre-Socratic Philosophy", *Classical Philology* 40 (1945) 223–242 and 41 (1946) 12–34. For further useful work on the topic since then see J. H. Lesher, "Perceiving and knowing in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*", *Phronesis* 26 (1981) 2–24, and "Heraclitus' epistemological vocabulary", *Hermes* 111 (1983) 155–170.

14 T. M. Robinson, "Parmenides on Ascertainment of the Real", *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 4.4 (1975) 623–633.

(things are "disposed in the best possible way"), and to clearly link the two (*ibid*.).

If, like the Socrates of the *Phaedo*,[10] Aristotle had problems finding the teleology he sought for in the activities of the *nous* of Anaxagoras, he must undoubtedly have found it in the *noesis* (and with it, the teleological stance) of Diogenes. As for his description of the Prime Mover as *noesis noeseos* ("ascertainment of ascertainment", *Metaph*. 1074b34–35), it seems clear that he is consciously opting for the contribution of Diogenes to our understanding here, rather than that of Anaxagoras.

Turning to an earlier thinker, Xenophanes, we can now with much greater clarity see what he was after in claiming that his one supreme divinity "sees as a totality, *noei* as totality, and hears as a totality" (B24 DK). English-language translators have invariably translated *noei* here as "thinks",[11] as we saw them doing when they meet the same verb in Parmenides. But enough has now been said, thanks not least to the guidance provided by Aristotle, to suggest that this is not what Xenophanes would have had in mind at all. The supreme god, he is much more likely to be saying, "comes to know" as a totality, or "comes to be aware" as a totality. If there is any residual doubt that he means this, it is surely put to rest by the use of the other two verbs in the quotation, "see" and "hear", both of them verbs of perception and both of them in that regard, as Aristotle stressed, precisely analogous to a fundamental verb of cognitive achievement, *noein*.

What all this means, I think, is that, in getting Parmenides right on a fundamental epistemological point, Aristotle has allowed us to see what has long remained hidden, and that is an extraordinary dynamism in what one might call the cosmo-theology and epistemology of Xenophanes, Parmenides and Diogenes of Apollonia, a dynamism that Plato in turn builds upon in the *Republic*, where *noesis*, the fourth stage of cognition in the Line, represents the final stage of the mind's intellectual progress, in which the mind/soul comes to know/comes to be aware of the Forms, and where Plato in his turn employs three striking metaphors to describe it as the act of apprehension that it is: *opsis* ("catching sight of", 507b9 ff), *haphe* ("catching hold of", 490b3), and, dramatically, *mixis* ("copulating with", 490b5).[12] It is Plato's failsafe technique, analogous to the use of *heurein* and *mathein* that we

turns out to be the most efficient functioning of either one part of the soul/society or of all three parts in combination.

As has frequently been pointed out (most recently by Waterfield), this striking set of ideas fails, unfortunately, in a very significant way to deal with Thrasymachus' claim that *arete* is not necessarily good. What it appears to demonstrate, if it demonstrates anything, is that an efficient society might reasonably be described in terms of the sound functioning of its component parts, and that, *pari passu*, a human being operating at a level of optimal efficiency might reasonably be described in terms of the sound functioning of the "parts" of his/her psyche. But nothing has been said by Socrates to demonstrate that moral goodness (where in his grammar of goodness "goodness *for*" and "goodness *at*" are clearly pivotal senses of the term) and "moral efficiency" (*arete*) are one and the same. What Thrasymachus is attacking is the notion that *arete* is *intrinsically* good, not simply good in the sense of efficient at achieving certain specified goals in the intellectual/moral sphere.

Equally disconcerting is the stress on *arete* as being a state of balance within the organism (be that organism a society or a psyche.) While it can be, and has been argued that Socrates is talking here only of an indispensable condition for *arete*, leaving it open for us to assume that, like everyone else, he thinks of *arete* as being in fact intrinsically relational, it remains true that the overall impression left by a reading of the work is that it is for him dominantly if not exclusively a word indicating balance within an organism. If this is true, he risks being accused of winning his case by the invention of a language private unto himself.

On the positive side of the ledger is the well known and remarkable view that, given appropriate genetic background and education, women will be just as able as men to manage his Just Society. Since nothing is said on the matter either way, it is natural to infer from this that, for the Socrates/Plato of the *Republic*, the *arete* evinced by male and female guardians in such a society will be the same species of *arete*, in that what each of them, male and female, achieves is one and the same goal or *telos*. And for all we know that is precisely what the Socrates/Plato of the *Republic* thought. However this may be, in the *Timaeus* we appear to be looking at a view of *arete* in which gender *differentiation* rather than any putative gender sameness is paramount,

18. Aristotle, Empiricism, and the *Anthropinon Agathon*

In this paper I plan to look first at a concept immortalized by Aristotle in his *Ethics*, that of the so-called "good for man" (*anthropinon agathon*), even if what he had to say about it has been from the start and continues to be a matter of some dispute. I shall then pass on, in part 2, to some of the criticisms that have been levelled at the concept, and at concepts closely tied to it, from, roughly, the age of Galileo till our own day. Finally, in part 3, I shall discuss a number of reasons for thinking that, although many of the criticisms still seem sound enough to many philosophers, there are features of modern thinking that look like a remarkable return to major contentions of Aristotle, whatever the continuing disagreements.

History

If a good definition is characterized by, among other things, clarity and lack of ambiguity, then Aristotle's definition of what he calls the *anthropinon agathon*, often translated "the good for man" (*EN* 1097a15 ff), is for many interpreters only a doubtfully good one. The *anthropinon agathon*, he says, is "activity of soul in accordance with virtue, and if there are several, in accordance with the most excellent and most complete <of them>"(*EN* 1098a16-18). Is this a manner of life which is good *for* us, or a manner of life *at* which we (by contrast with say plants and animals) are uniquely or particularly good? Is it possibly both? Given that the word "virtue", *arete*, is also in classical Greek the word for efficiency (allowing Socrates to spend a lifetime comparing virtuous actions to the efficient practicing of various arts and crafts), one might guess here that the "good" in question is to be understood as what we, as human beings, are either uniquely good at or particularly good at doing.

This is certainly in line with the functionalism that pervades the *Ethics*, following upon a famous definition of function (*ergon*) that Aristotle draws gratefully from the *Republic*: the function of anything, says Socrates there, is that which it does, not simply well, but uniquely or best (353a10–11). The rest of the *Republic* then consists of an at-

rhythmic sounds" might also be put forward as a function, it will fail as the required explanation because the production of rhythmic sounds is not what the heart does uniquely or best. But in contemporary terms too, Aristotle's answer will be perfectly acceptable, though this time not in terms of some supposed *ousia* of the heart, but rather in terms of its perceived biological history. That is, in the words of de Sousa, the natural function of x will consist of those effects, "among all those produced in the past, which made the organ in question more fit, or more likely to get reproduced".[7]

If this agreement sounds too good to be true, it probably is, in the sense that with the great gain comes a significant loss too. Because, while concluding in simply empirical terms to the existence of function, and the very same notion of function at which Aristotle arrived by reference to a supposed *ousia*, the modern empiricist stops short of any notion that such a function is automatically productive of what is by definition *agathon*, a "good thing" or "good state of affairs". It may or may not, depending on circumstance. The classic example of one which was not, to quote de Sousa again, "is the Irish elk, in which the ever-larger antlers preferred by the females eventually became too gigantic to live with", leading to the extinction of the species.

But the loss seems to me relatively minor by contrast with what has been agreed upon. Because the concepts of functionalism, teleology, and, in the more specific terms of the present paper, the notion of the fulfilment of the specific function of man that will produce the *anthropinon agathon*, have now been given in recent times a new life and vigour which would only a short time ago have been rejected by many philosophers as impossible. While it remains true that empiricism will never in all circumstances fit an essentialist template, as we saw in the case of the Irish elk, in a very large number if not the great majority of cases it looks as though it will, and a "uniquely or best" explanation of function will turn out to coincide with one of perceived adaptation for reproduction.

A very good example of this is provided by the subject of this paper, the *anthropinon agathon*. The profoundest anti-essentialist, it seems to me, could well finish up agreeing with Aristotle, and on the purely empirical grounds of perceived biological history, that the function of man is indeed, in part, the operation of intelligence, in the sense that the effects of the operation of intelligence, "among all those

again pass over the details, merely mentioning that, in very broad terms, on this account the search for beauty begins in the world of the physical (which is called "matter"), rises next to Soul, and then to *Nous* (for which his term is "Angelic Mind"), and culminates in God, whom he calls, quoting Plato's *Parmenides* (137c–d), "the One". The beauty of the One, or God, he says, is the source of all other beauty, and "therefore the source of all love" (17).

He then concludes his discourse in a further, imagined address by Diotima to Socrates, and from it I shall select just one passage.

> " 'Thus the perfectly simple light of the One itself is infinite Beauty, because it is not soiled by the stains of Matter, as the beauty of the Body is, or changed by temporal progression, as the beauty of the soul is, or dissipated in multiplicity, as the beauty of *nous* is …. Similarly, light which is free from any body is infinite, for it shines of its own nature, without measure or limit, when it is not limited by anything else. Thus the light and beauty of God, which is utterly pure and free of all other things, may be called without the slightest question infinite beauty. But infinite beauty also requires immense love. Therefore I beg you, Socrates, to love all other things with a certain moderation and limit, but to love God with an infinite love, and let there be no moderation in divine love'.
>
> This is what Diotima said to Socrates". (18, *fin.*)

Well, hardly. The passage I have just quoted is in fact the end of a set of remarks that Benci, in concluding his own comments, *imagined* might have been made by Diotima to Socrates! (18, *init.*)

What I should like to do now is ask two questions, one relatively uncomplicated, the other a little more taxing. The first is: did Ficino's book prove influential in any significant way? If it did, this is certainly worth knowing, in terms of the history of Platonism if nothing else. And secondly, and more importantly, what can be made of Ficino's contribution, if any, to our understanding of Plato in general and the *Symposium* in particular?

That Ficino's book proved popular, especially among the *literati* and court circles of Europe, is beyond question. In Italy, books on love had been around, and eagerly read, since the thirteenth century, and among a constellation of great authors on the topic we find Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio, and in Ficino's own day, Pico and his nephew Gianfrancesco della Mirandola. It also helped that Ficino's patron, Lorenzo de' Medici, greatly admired the book, and used it for his commentary on his own love poetry.

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