

Chapter Three

THE DIALECTIC OF THE FORM-MATTER MOTIVE IN THE PENULTIMATE STAGE OF DEVELOPMENT IN PLATO'S THOUGHT, AFTER THE CRISIS HAS BEEN SURMOUNTED

1. The Theory of Ideas in the *Philebus* and the Dialectical Theory of the Mixture of the Principles of Form and Matter

a. *The Dialectical Theory of the Mixture of the Principles of Form and Matter*

The *Philebus* once again takes up an early Socratic theme of inquiry, the question as to the highest good. It is thus no accident that the leading role in the discussion is once more entrusted to Socrates himself. The great crisis of the theory of ideas has now been surmounted. During this crisis the dialectical logic had been temporarily dissociated from the Socratic *idea* of the good as the divine form of origin, although as a presupposition this *idea* had never been abandoned. This had been done so that exclusive attention could be focused on the endeavor to break through, in a logical manner, the rigid Eleatic *chōrismos* between the world of *eidē* and the phenomenal world. Now this crisis has been left behind. The *idea* of the good and beautiful resumes its central position as origin in Plato's thought, and in conformity with the Socratic position it is set in relation to the visible cosmos. The new, logical dialectic has shown how this cosmos can be understood as an incarnation of the *eidē* in *hulē*.

Now the only thing that remains is to establish once again a sharp boundary between this *mixed* and *composite* world and the world of the pure *eidē* and to pose unambiguously, with the aid of the method of the new dialectic, the question as to the highest good for the former world, to which the human being as a composite being most certainly belongs.

The *Philebus*, therefore, has a direct connection with the dialectical problem that was formulated in the *Parmenides*: How can the unity of the *eidōs* as an ontic form become a plurality? The young Philebus had defended the hedonistic position of the post-Socratic Cyrenaic school, that pleasure is the highest good. In contrast, Socrates at first defended the view that the supreme good resides in knowledge or *phronēsis*. Now, as the discussion leader, Socrates undertakes an inquiry into the correctness of these two views. His partner in this is the young Protarchus, who for the

most part assumes the role of his friend Philebus in the dialogue. At the very outset, Socrates draws Protarchus's attention to the problem formulated above, this being present in both positions.

According to Socrates, neither pleasure nor knowledge can be appraised as the highest good without further consideration. There are numerous types of each of these which must first be properly distinguished from one another in a dialectical manner and then be once again synthetically combined into a unity. Only then will it become possible to determine which of the two deserves the title of the highest good, or if perhaps this honor must rather be conferred upon some third thing (what Socrates has in mind here is a harmonic combination or mixture of particular types of each).

b. The Number of Intermediate Links between the Unity of the Genus and the Apeiron

In this connection, Socrates once again takes issue in passing with the Eleatic conception of unity and plurality, which had already been combated in the *Parmenides* and the *Sophist*. Over against absolute unity and plurality, the Eleatics had placed the *apeiron* or unlimited. As a plurality that was utterly devoid of unity, the latter was inaccessible to logical thought and therefore had to be dismissed as absolute non-being. According to Plato's new dialectic, however, unity is joined to the *apeiron* by means of numerous intermediate links. That is to say, between the most comprehensive *eidōs*, which forms the genus proper, and the individual thing in the visible cosmos, whose individuality is not susceptible to further logical determination and thus constitutes an *apeiron* for logical definition, there lies a large number of formal types (species) that become increasingly specific and are arranged in a descending series under the genus. The logical tracking down of these species in accordance with the method of *diairesis* terminates in the definition (logos) of the earlier discussed *atomon eidōs*. If one is to obtain a correct logical definition, therefore, he must determine the precise number of these specific ontic forms that lie between the unity of the genus and the *apeiron* of the individual phenomenon.

This is the meaning of Socrates' obscure utterance in the *Philebus*, 16 C-E:

It was a gift of the gods to men, so it seems to me, flung down¹ by some Prometheus together with an exceedingly bright fire. And the ancients, who were better than ourselves and dwelt nearer the gods, handed it down to us as an oracle, that all things which are said always to *be* consist of a one and a many and therefore by nature combine in themselves limit (*πέρας*) and unlimitedness (*ἀπερίαν*). Since these things are so ordered, it is necessary, they said, that we therefore always assume one *idea* in every individual thing and search for it, for we shall find it con-

¹ *Translator*: The Greek has: "flung down from the gods."

tained therein; then, if we have laid hold of this, we must after the one [*idea*] look for two [*eidē*] – at least if they are present – or if not, for three or some other number; and we must again deal with each of these individually in the same manner, until it is seen that the original one is not only a one, a many, and unlimitedness, but is also a definite number. But we are not to apply the *idea* of the unlimited to the many before we have discerned the total number lying between the one and the unlimited. Only then may we abandon each individual thing, apart from all unities, to the unlimited and regard it as done with.¹

c. *The Use of the Term Idea Is Again Perfectly Consistent with the Dialectical Logic*

The use of the term *ιδέα* is here again perfectly consistent with the framework of the new dialectical logic. This dialectical *ιδέα* is a unity in plurality, but its unity is a metaphysical rather than a purely logical one. In spite of the fact that it belongs to the realm of the *eidē* and is thus transcendent in character, this unity has become a plurality in the visible world by way of the eidetic relations. And now, with the aid of the *diairetic* method of the dialectic, it must be gathered up from this plurality and combined again into a unity.

The dialectical *ιδέα* always retains the supersensible, intuitive character that belongs to the ontic form. Nevertheless, the synopsis takes place here on the basis of logical analysis and combination. It does not function here, as it still did in the *Republic*, independently of logical analysis and synthesis. Just as the *Republic* had apprehended all of the *eidē* in their concentric relation to their origin in the one divine *idea* of the good and the beautiful, the new dialectic grasps the plurality of sensible phenomena in their concentric relation to their dialectical genus; but it herein proceeds by way of the step-by-step method of *diairesis* and *synairesis*.²

1 *Philebus*, 16 C-E: Θεῶν μὲν εἰς ἀνθρώπους δόσις, ὡς γε καταφαίνεται ἐμοί, ποθὲν ἐκ θεῶν ἐρρίφη, διὰ τίνος Προμηθέως ἅμα φανοτάτῳ τινὶ πυρί. καὶ οἱ μὲν παλαιοί, κρείττονες ἡμῶν καὶ ἐγγυτέρω θεῶν οἰκοῦντες, ταύτην φήμην παρέδοσαν, ὡς ἐξ ἑνὸς μὲν καὶ ἐκ πολλῶν ὄντων τῶν ἀεὶ λεγομένων εἶναι, πέρας δὲ καὶ ἀπειρίαν ἐν αὐτοῖς ζύμφυτον ἐχόντων· δεῖν οὖν ἡμᾶς τούτων οὕτω διακεκοσμημένων ἀεὶ μίαν ἰδέαν περὶ παντὸς ἐκάστοτε θεμένους ζητεῖν· εὐρήσειν γὰρ ἐνοῦσαν. ἐὰν οὖν καταλάβωμεν, μετὰ μίαν δύο, εἴ πως εἰσί, σκοπεῖν, εἰ δὲ μή, τρεῖς ἢ τιν' ἄλλον ἀριθμὸν, καὶ τῶν ἐν ἐκείνων ἕκαστον πάλιν ἀσάυτως, μέχρι περ' ἂν τὸ κατ' ἀρχὰς ἐν μὴ ὅτι ἐν καὶ πολλὰ καὶ ἄπειρά ἐστι μόνον ἴδη τις, ἀλλὰ καὶ ὅποσα· τὴν δὲ τοῦ ἀπείρου ἰδέαν πρὸς τὸ πλῆθος μὴ προσφέρειν, πρὶν ἂν τις τὸν ἀριθμὸν αὐτοῦ πάντα κατίδη τὸν μεταξὺ τοῦ ἀπείρου τε καὶ τοῦ ἐνός· τότε δ' ἤδη τὸ ἐν ἕκαστον τῶν πάντων εἰς τὸ ἄπειρον μεθέντα χαίρειν ἐάν. (translation in text)

2 The logical preparation for the synopsis is formulated most clearly in *Philebus*, 18 A: ὥσπερ γὰρ ἐν ὀτιοῦν εἴ τις ποτε λάβοι, τούτον, ὡς φαμεν, οὐκ ἐπ' ἀπείρου φύσιν δεῖ βλέπειν εὐθύς ἀλλ' ἐπὶ τιν' ἀριθμὸν, οὕτω καὶ τὸναντίον ὅταν τις τὸ

The passage quoted above also makes clear that Plato did not wish to adhere in a doctrinaire fashion to the method of dichotomy (*diairesis*), the bipartite division of genus and species. Already in the *Statesman*, which was written after the *Sophist*,¹ he had acknowledged both that it is not always possible to divide into two and that a dismemberment into three or more lower formal types can at times prove necessary.² Nevertheless, the term *diairesis* is still retained in these latter cases.

Lastly, the passage speaks once again of an *idea* of the *apeiron*, which for Plato is in fact identical with *hulē* or matter in its eternal flux. According to him, individuality, insofar as this lies beyond the *atomon eidos*, the formal type that cannot be subdivided further, has its locus in this *apeiron*. In the *Parmenides*, the *apeiron* had been apprehended in the *idea* of the indivisible moment of change, while in the *Sophist* the *idea* of otherness served this same purpose. The *Philebus* makes a new attempt to logicize the *apeiron*, a point to which we shall soon return.

It has now become self-evident what the conclusion of the above-quoted passage means in saying that “we abandon each individual thing ... to the unlimited.” The dialectic must first ascertain the precise number of intermediate links lying between the genus and the individual thing from the visible comos that is subsumed under it. In this manner, it follows the *eidos* as it embodies itself in the *apeiron*, in its stepwise approach to individual phenomena all the way to the *atomon eidos*. Once this has been accomplished, the individuality that remains, which lies beyond the reach of all further formal limitation and therefore cannot be embraced by the *atomon eidos*, may be left to the *apeiron*. The task of logical definition is finished once it has analyzed all the eidetic formal links of a phenomenon and combined these into a unity in a single *idea*.

Socrates argues that the new, dialectical method must therefore be applied both to the diverse feelings of pleasure and to the various types of

ἄπειρον ἀναγκασθῆναι πρῶτον λαμβάνειν, μὴ ἐπὶ τὸ ἐν εὐθύς ἀλλ' ἐπ' ἀριθμὸν αὐτὴν πλῆθος ἕκαστον ἔχοντά τι κατανοεῖν, τελευτᾶν τ' ἐκ πάντων εἰς ἓν. (“Just as when someone has grasped any unity, as we said, he must not immediately turn his eyes to the nature of the unlimited, but to some number, so conversely, if someone were compelled to consider the unlimited first, he must not immediately turn his mind to the one, but again to a certain number, which in every case contains a plurality, and only come to the one last of all.”)

- 1 That the *Statesman* must have been written after the *Sophist* is evident from *Statesman* 284 B (the only place where Plato quotes his own words), where there is explicit reference to an argument from the *Sophist*.
- 2 *Statesman*, 287 B-C: Οἴσθ' οὖν ὅτι χαλεπὸν αὐτὰς τεμεῖν δίχα; ... Κατὰ μέλη τοίνυν αὐτὰς οἷον ἱερεῖον διαιρώμεθα, ἐπειδὴ δίχα ἀδυνατούμεν· δεῖ γὰρ εἰς τὸν ἐγγύτατα ὅτι μάλιστα τέμνειν ἀριθμὸν ἀεὶ. (“Do you know, then, that it is difficult to divide these [viz., the other offices in the state besides kingship] in two? ... Following their joints, therefore, we must dissect them like a sacrificial animal, since we cannot do it in two parts. For we must always, if possible, divide them into the next smallest number.”)

knowledge. At the outset he observes, however, that it may become evident that the supreme good for man lies in neither of these, but rather in some third thing that differs from both and that should be preferred to both.

Pleasure that is unaccompanied by understanding, knowledge, memory, judgment, or any other intellectual activity, befits an animal and is comparable to the life of a mollusc or an oyster. On the other hand a life endowed with thought, understanding, and memory, but devoid of all feelings of pleasure and pain can also not be considered good and felicitous for a person. It is only in the case of the deity, a being that is absolutely and purely formal in nature, that thought coincides with the absolute good. The human being, however, like everything else in the cosmos as the realm of what has come into being, has a mixed or composite nature, and for this very reason, the supreme good for a person can only be found in a mixed mode of life.

d. *The Distinction between the Realm of Pure or Absolute Being and the Realm of Being That Is a Mixture of Peras and Apeiron. The Four Genē (Genera) of the Latter*

The realm of pure, absolute, simple being is now sharply distinguished from the realm of mixed being. Socrates divides the latter into three *eidē* or genera, namely, that of the *peras* (the limited), that of the *apeiron*, and that of the unity that is a mixture of these two (*ἐξ ἀμφοῖν τουτοῖν ἔν τι ξυμμισγόμενον*). The fact that he indeed restricts this analysis of being solely to those things that have come into being and are found within the cosmos is clearly evident from his words in 23 C: “Let us divide all that *now exists in the universe* into two, or rather, if you will, into three parts.”¹ These three parts are *genē*. In their mixture, they are ontic forms of what has come into being, and this mixture requires an origin or active cause. As Protarchus puts it, summarizing Socrates’ exposition, “I see. It seems to me that you mean that, when these [*genē*] are mixed with one another, certain generations arise from every mixture of them.”² Socrates then hastens to add a fourth genus to the first three that he has mentioned, namely, the *cause of the mixture* (*τῆς ξυμμίξεως τούτων πρὸς ἄλληλα τὴν αἰτίαν*).³

1 *Philebus*, 23 C: Πάντα τὰ νῦν ὄντα ἐν τῷ παντὶ διχῆ διαλάβομεν, μᾶλλον δ', εἰ βούλει, τριχῆ. (translation in text)

2 *Ibid.*, 25 E: Μανθάνω φαίνει γὰρ μοι λέγειν, μιγνὺς ταῦτα, γενέσεις τινὰς ἐφ' ἐκάστων αὐτῶν συμβαίνειν. (translation in text)

3 *Ibid.*, 23 D: Τετάρτου μοι γένους αὖ προσδεῖν. ... Τῆς ξυμμίξεως τούτων πρὸς ἄλληλα τὴν αἰτίαν ὄρα, καὶ τίθει μοι πρὸς τρισὶν ἐκείνοις τέταρτον τοῦτο. (“I still need a fourth genus ... Consider the cause of the mixing of these with each other and add this as a fourth to these three.”) *Ibid.*, 27 b: Τὸ δὲ δὴ πάντα ταῦτα δημιουργοῦν λέγωμεν τέταρτον, τὴν αἰτίαν, ὡς ἰκανῶς ἕτερον ἐκείνων

e. *The New Dialectical Idea of the Unlimited. The Influence of Heraclitus' Conception of the Matter Principle*

Socrates now attempts to establish, first of all, that the dialectical *idea* of the *apeiron* is a multiple unity. Indeed, the entire dialectical correlation between unity and plurality that was set forth in the *Parmenides* serves as the foundation for this attempt. In this process, theoretical thought once again becomes entangled in the antinomy I described earlier, namely, that the *apeiron* as such resists every attempt to grasp it in the unity of an ontic form and is nothing less than the utter absence of form, measure, and limit. We have already determined, however, that the dialectical *idea* does not actually penetrate to the absolute nature of the ontic form and to the ever-flowing *hulē*. Instead, its role is simply to establish a correlation between these two antipodes. The *idea* that is intended to introduce unity into the infinite multiplicity of manifestations of the *apeiron* is the genetic, fluid relation of more and less, stronger and weaker, larger and smaller, and other contrasts that are in the class of the “more and less.”¹ Thus, for example, colder and hotter as such have no definite measure and limit. They are in a state of constant fluid progression and becoming, and as such they have no permanent being.² It is only number, as the manifestation of limit and measure, that brings the continuous flux of the “more and less” to rest and thereby grants it empirical (i.e., mixed) being.

On this point, the *Philebus* without question brings the *idea tou apeirou*

δηλωμένον; (“Shall we then not name that [power] which fashions all this, the cause, as a fourth [genus], something that has been adequately clarified in its distinctness from the others?”)

- 1 *Ibid.*, 24 E-25 A: Ὅπως ἂν ἡμῖν φαίνεται μᾶλλον τε καὶ ἥττον γιγνόμενα καὶ τὸ σφόδρα καὶ ἡρέμα δεχόμενα καὶ τὸ λίαν καὶ πάνθ' ὅσα τοιαῦτα, εἰς τὸ τοῦ ἀπείρου γένος ὡς εἰς ἓν δεῖ πάντα ταῦτα τιθέναι, κατὰ τὸν ἔμπροσθε λόγον, ὃν ἔφαμεν, ὅσα διέσπασται καὶ διέσχισται συναγαγόντας χρῆναι κατὰ δύναμιν μίαν ἐπισημαίνεσθαί τινα φύσιν, εἰ μέμνησαι. (“Whatever appears to us as becoming more or less, and admitting of terms like “strongly,” “slightly” [a very intense or mild degree], “excessively,” and all such things, we must subsume all of this under the genus of the unlimited as in one [*idea*]; this would conform to our previous argument, where, if you remember, we showed that one must combine all that is separated and divided asunder and, as far as possible, designate them with one nature.”)
- 2 *Ibid.*, 24 D: οὐ γὰρ ἔτι θερμότερον οὐδὲ ψυχρότερον ἤστην ἂν λαβόντε τὸ ποσὸν προχωρεῖ γὰρ καὶ οὐ μένει τό τε θερμότερον αἰεὶ καὶ τὸ ψυχρότερον ὡσαύτως, τὸ δὲ ποσὸν ἔσται καὶ προϊὼν ἐπαύσατο. (“For [hotter and colder], if they took on a definite degree, would no longer be hotter and colder. For “hotter” is in constantly progressing flux, and is not permanent, and likewise “colder”; but a definite degree has come to rest and has ceased flowing further.”) It may be noted that Plato here, apparently by design, uses the same term for “*apeiron*” that appears in the statement he ascribes to Heraclitus in the *Cratylus* (402 A): πάντα ῥεῖ (προχωρεῖ) καὶ οὐδὲν μένει (“everything is in constant flux; nothing has permanent being”).

into sharper relief than the *Parmenides* and the *Sophist* did. As we have seen, the *Parmenides* still identified the idea of the unlimited with the dialectical *idea* of change, which at that juncture contained within itself the *idea* of otherness (difference). The *Sophist*, for its part, identified it with the *idea* of otherness. The *Philebus* now attempts to capture in the *idea* of the unlimited itself the moment of eternal flux passing through opposite formal states, a notion that had been expressed most pregnantly in Heraclitus' conception of the matter principle. In the *Sophist*, the *idea* of otherness, even though it was identified with the *idea* of the unlimited, had to serve simultaneously as a synthesis between the unity of the ontic form and the unlimited. Now, we have already seen that the dialectical *idea* always possesses a correlative character. It is impossible, therefore, for an *idea* of the unlimited to be anything else than an *idea* of the *relative apeiron*. It cannot be an *idea* of absolute *hulē*, for the *Parmenides* has demonstrated that the latter can only lead the dialectical logic to the negation of all predicates.

f. *Plato's Dialectical Idea of the Unlimited and Aristotle's Conception of Matter as Potential Being (δυνάμει ὄν)*

In the new conception of this *idea* as well, the relationship to ontic form, measure and limit is obvious. For all things that admit of more or less, larger or smaller, stronger or weaker, etc., are susceptible to a limitation in degree and are thus oriented in principle to such a limitation in degree. For this reason Aristotle will later conceive *hulē* as *δυνάμει ὄν*, “potential being,” which can only be brought into actual existence through the ontic form (*μορφή*) and therefore can only be separated from the form *in abstracto*.

The fact, moreover, that the *idea* of otherness also continues to play an essential role in Plato's new conception of the *idea* of the *apeiron* is clearly evident from the immediately following description of what is involved in the *idea* of the *peras*.¹ According to Socrates, the latter, as a multiple unity, embraces all that is the opposite of the *apeiron*: in the first place, the equal and equality (*τὸ ἴσον καὶ ἰσότητα*), and then, the double, and everything that is a ratio of numbers or measures. In the *Parmenides* and the *Sophist*, the “other” (*τὸ θάτερον*) was always treated as the dialectical opposite of equality or identity, although to the degree that it partici-

¹ *Ibid.*, 25 A-B: Οὐκοῦν τὰ μὴ δεχόμενα ταῦτα, τούτων δὲ τάναντία πάντα δεχόμενα, πρῶτον μὲν τὸ ἴσον καὶ ἰσότητα, μετὰ δὲ τὸ ἴσον τὸ διπλάσιον καὶ πᾶν ὃ τί περ ἂν πρὸς ἀριθμὸν ἀριθμὸς ἢ μέτρον ἢ πρὸς μέτρον, ταῦτα ξύμπαντ' εἰς τὸ πέρασ ἀπολογιζόμενοι καλῶς ἂν δοκοῦμεν δρᾶν τοῦτο ... ; (“Then that which does not admit of these, but rather admits of the opposites of all this – in the first place, the equal and equality, and after the equal the double, and everything that is the ratio of a number to a number or of a measure to a measure – would we not seem to do well if we reckoned all this together to the *peras*”)

pated in being it nevertheless had to remain identical to itself.

Socrates then combines the plurality that is subsumed under the *idea* of the *peras* back into a unity by means of the genus of *law and order* (*νόμος καὶ τάξις*). In Heraclitean fashion, this is identified with the harmony of opposites in which the correlation of *peras* and *apeiron* is once again manifest.¹

g. *The Pure Eidos of the Peras and the Dialectical Idea of the Peras Are Not Identical*

It is characteristic of Plato's restricted conception of the dialectical *idea* in the *Philebus*, however, that soon after this (26 D) he denies any plurality to the pure, unmixed nature of the *peras* or form principle and that he represents it as a multiplicity only in the process of becoming.² At first sight, it appears somewhat rash to conclude from the first part of

1 *Ibid.*, 26 B-C: ὕβριν γάρ που καὶ ξύμπασαν πάντων πονηρίαν αὕτη καταδοῦσα ἡ θεός, ὧ καλὲ Φίληβε, πέρας οὐδέν οὔθ' ἡδονῶν οὔτε πλησμονῶν ἐνόν ἐν αὐτοῖς νόμον καὶ τάξιν πέρας ἔχοντ' ἔθετο· καὶ σὺ μὲν ἀποκναῖσαι ἔφησθ' αὐτήν, ἐγὼ δὲ τούναντίον ἀποσωῶσαι λέγω. ("For since this goddess perceived the wantonness and every sort of wickedness of all creatures, fair Philebus, and that there was among them no limit to pleasures and self-indulgence, she instituted law and order as things that contain limit. And you maintain that these are a vexation to them; but I say, in contrast, that they preserve them.")

2 *Ibid.*, 26 D: Καὶ μὴν τό γε πέρας οὔτε πόλλ' εἶχεν οὔτ' ἐδυσκολαίνομεν ὡς οὐκ ἦν ἐν φύσει. ("But the *peras* contained no plurality, nor did it make us suspicious that it was not one in the world of becoming.") The first part of this passage, in its striking contrast with 25 A-B (cited above) and 23 E (cited below), decisively refutes Léon Robin's notion (*Platon*; Paris: Librairie Felix Alcan, 1935, pp. 155-156) that, in his *Philebus*, Plato also includes the intelligible world of the *eidē* in its detachment from the process of becoming in the sphere of that which is mixed or composite. Robin supports this position by arguing that Plato used the same method in this dialogue as in the *Sophist*, where he was indeed concerned with demonstrating the intertwinement of the genera. "For the rest," Robin says, "if the domain of the mixed were exclusively the world of experience, it would be necessary to restrict to this world the two principles from whose union this mixture was produced. However, they clearly extend much further than this. The unlimited is in point of fact the same as the Other, which is the Platonic non-being; and the non-being of the Other is diffused, as is well known, among all of the essences. Moreover, we have learned from Aristotle that sensible things are not constituted in any other way than the intelligible things and that irrespective of its stage of existence, whether it be in the intelligible or in the sensible, there is no being at all that is not a mixture." There are several objections to this argument: 1. It proceeds from the assumption, which has proven to be incorrect, that the *Philebus* retains the exact position of the *Sophist* in regard to the theory of the *eidē*. Beginning with the *Philebus*, the *eidē* are conceived as *genē* (genera) only in their impure or mixed state. In the *Parmenides* and the *Sophist*, by contrast, the predominance of the logical dialectic threatened to become the complete undoing of the world of pure *eidē*. 2. Plato never conceives the genus of otherness as anything but an *idea* of the dialectical logic. As such, it is intended to

this passage, which Socrates leaves completely unexplained in its seeming flagrant contradiction to the former description of the *peras*, that Plato here does in fact again introduce the *eidos* as a simple and indivisible unity, thus reverting to this extent to the original conception of his theory of ideas. We shall discover in the sequel, however, that this passage does not stand alone in the *Philebus*, but is rather supported by later statements of Socrates.

It is crucial therefore to seek other evidence which will give us a more secure basis for forming a clear notion of what Plato could have meant at this stage of the development of his theory of ideas by the “simple and indivisible *peras*.” It is also important to obtain a clear notion of how he conceived the relationship between this pure *eidos* and the quantitative numbers (the main elements of the plurality subsumed under the genus of the *peras*).

*h. The Eidetic Numbers and the Mathematical Numbers.
The Eidos Number as Indivisible and Incommensurable
(ἀσύμβλητος)*

It can scarcely be doubted that we are here confronted with the typically Platonic conception of the so-called eidetic or ideal number in its contradistinction to the mathematical number. Although the general identification of *eidos* and ideal number belongs only to the final stage of the theory of ideas, which came to expression in Plato's unpublished lecture “On the Good” (*περὶ ἀγαθοῦ*), the recognition of eidetic numbers as the metaphysical, eidetic foundation of the mathematical or quantitative numbers is unmistakably present already in the *Phaedo*.¹ Ever since Léon Robin's groundbreaking book *La théorie platonicienne des idées et des nombres*,² which for the first time could make use of the monumental Greek Aristotle commentaries prepared by the Berlin Academy, it has been known that the account which Aristotle gives in his *Meta-*

bring the *eidē* into logical correlation; but the apprehension of the intrinsic nature of the pure *eidē* is precisely what is forbidden to it. A comparison of 26 D with 23 E and 25 A-B makes clear that the *Philebus* once again introduces a sharp distinction between the pure *eidē*, on the one hand, and the *eidē* in their incarnation in the *apeiron* as constant structural principles of the world of what has come into being, on the other hand, and that it also has no place for the *μηδὲν* in the world of the *eidē* in themselves. 3. It is precisely the world of the pure *eidē*, as this is once again conceived in the *Philebus*, that is left untouched by Aristotle's testimony. Instead, the latter relates only to the final stage of Plato's development, where the *eidē* are identified with the so-called ideal numbers. Robin himself, in the end, has to admit that all the examples which the *Philebus* gives of what is mixed refer exclusively to the empirical cosmos. In addition to all of this, in *Philebus* 23 C, the distinction between *peras* and *apeiron* is expressly restricted to the things “that now exist in the universe.”

1 *Phaedo* 96 D-97 B; 101 B-C.

2 Léon Robin, *La théorie platonicienne des idées et des nombres. Étude historique et critique* (Paris: F. Alcan, 1908).

physics (M 6, 1080 a 30-35) of the Platonic conception of the ideal number is incorrect. Its error lies in the fact that it creates the impression that the ideal number, like the mathematical, consists of units. Aristotle's view is incorrect in this regard, even though he acknowledges that the Platonic idea numbers differ from the mathematical numbers in being mutually independent.¹

In Plato's conception, the principal difference between these two domains of number is that the former are not aggregates and thus contain no plurality, and further, that there exists only one exemplar of each idea number.² In contrast to this, the mathematical number consists of units that are completely identical to one another and that exist only as objects of thought. Plato holds that both the mathematical and the ideal numbers are independent and separate from perceptible things. This view stands in sharp contrast to Aristotle's conception, which eliminates the ideal numbers and regards the mathematical numbers merely as an abstraction from perceptible things. According to Plato, however, the ideal numbers are genuine *eidē* and are not themselves quantities. In his view, their numerical character is based exclusively on the fact that they are positioned in a fixed, immutable, non-temporal sequence of earlier and later.³ The mathematical numbers (the numbers in themselves, *καθ' αὐτῶν*) then do not de-

1 Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, M 6, 1080 a 30-35: διὸ καὶ ὁ μὲν μαθηματικὸς ἀριθμεῖται μετὰ τὸ ἓν δύο πρὸς τῷ ἔμπροσθεν ἐνὶ ἄλλο ἓν, καὶ τὰ τρία πρὸς τοῖς δυοῖς τούτοις ἄλλο ἓν, καὶ ὁ λοιπὸς δὲ ὡσαύτως· οὗτος δὲ μετὰ τὸ ἓν δύο ἕτερα ἄνευ τοῦ ἐνὸς τοῦ πρώτου, καὶ ἡ τριάς ἄνευ τῆς δυάδος, ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ ὁ ἄλλος ἀριθμὸς. (“Therefore the mathematical numbers are counted as follows: after the one, two, i.e., in addition to the previous one another one, and three, in addition to these two existing ones another one, and the remaining numbers in like manner. With the others [viz., the idea numbers], however: after the one, two other ones without the first one, and the three without the two, and likewise also the other numbers.”)

2 As Robin says, “Each of these numbers [viz. the idea numbers], ... far from being a composite of units which can be formed in a variety of ways, and as often as one desires, is alone within its kind ...” According to Robin, Aristotle always assessed Plato's doctrine of the idea numbers “in terms of the teachings of Xenocrates” (à travers la doctrine de Xénocrate”). Xenocrates, one of Plato's own pupils, held that the idea numbers were identical to the mathematical numbers, and he thus diverged sharply from his teacher on this point. Cf. W. Vander Wielen, *De idee-getallen van Plato* (dissertation: Amsterdam, 1941), p. 51, and further, W.D. Ross, ed. *Aristotle's Metaphysics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924, 1953), X, I (Introduction) pp. lxxi-lxxvi. With regard to the idea numbers, Ross also observes (*loc. cit.*, lii): “From their nature as Ideas it follows that they are specifically distinct and incomparable, i.e., incapable of being stated as fractions one of another. Twoness is not half of fourness. Nor is a natural number [i.e., idea number] an aggregate of units.”

3 Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, M 6, 1080 b 11-14: Οἱ μὲν οὖν ἀμφοτέρους φασὶν εἶναι τοὺς ἀριθμούς, τὸν μὲν ἔχοντα τὸ πρότερον καὶ ὕστερον τὰς ιδέας, τὸν δὲ μαθηματικὸν παρὰ τὰς ιδέας καὶ τὰ αἰσθητά, καὶ χωριστοὺς ἀμφοτέρους τῶν αἰσθητῶν. (“Some then say that both kinds of number exist – on the one hand, the

rive their positional value in the series from the addition of new units, as Aristotle taught, but rather, as the *Phaedo* explains, solely from their *methexis* or participation in the idea numbers.¹

In this connection, we need not yet concern ourselves with Plato's conception of the so-called origin of these ideal numbers, since this evidently belongs to the final stage of development of the theory of ideas.² Indeed, it does not appear at all in Plato's dialogues. Our exclusive source of knowledge regarding this conception lies in Aristotle's writings and the testimony of the commentators on Plato and Aristotle.

i. *The Pure, Indivisible Peras Is Not a Genus of Mixed Being.
Stenzel's Unsuccessful Attempt to Derive the Eidetic
Numbers by the Method of Diairesis*

At this point we are interested only in the fact that Plato, ever since the *Phaedo*, has conceived the idea numbers as pure, indivisible, eternal ontic forms, which according to Aristotle's reliable testimony were put forward as mutually incommensurable (*ἀσύμβλητοι*) units.³ By itself

number that possesses the relation of earlier and later, the ideas, on the other hand, the mathematical number alongside the ideas and perceptible things – and that both are distinct from perceptible things.”) Concerning this passage and the seemingly conflicting statement in *Ethica Nicomachea*, A 4, cf. Vander Wielen, *op.cit.*, pp. 65 ff.

1 *Phaedo*, 101 B-C: ἐνὶ ἐνὸς προστεθέντος τὴν πρόσθεσιν αἰτίαν εἶναι τοῦ δύο γενέσθαι ἢ διασχισθέντος τὴν σχίσιν οὐκ εὐλαβοῖο ἂν λέγειν; καὶ μέγα ἂν βοῶντες, ὅτι οὐκ οἶσθ' ἄλλως πως ἕκαστον γινόμενον ἢ μετασχὸν τῆς ιδέας οὐσίας ἕκαστου οὐδ' ἂν μετάσχη, καὶ ἐν τούτοις οὐκ ἔχεις ἄλλην τινὰ αἰτίαν τοῦ δύο γενέσθαι ἀλλ' ἢ τὴν τῆς δυάδος μετάσχεσιν καὶ δεῖν τούτου μετασχεῖν τὰ μέλλοντα δύο ἔσεσθαι, καὶ μονάδος, ὃ ἂν μέλλῃ ἐν ἔσεσθαι, τὰς δὲ σχίσεις ταύτας καὶ προσθέσεις καὶ τὰς ἄλλας τὰς τοιαύτας κομψείας ἐφῆς ἂν χαίρειν, παρῆς ἀποκρίνασθαι τοῖς ἐναντοῦ σοφωτέροις. (“Would you not guard against saying that when one is added to one, the addition is the cause of the two's coming into being, or when one is divided, the division? And you would loudly proclaim that you know of no other way in which anything can come into being than by participation in the *idea* of the essence proper to each, and that in these cases you know no other cause of the two's coming into being than participation in twoness, and that whatever is to be two must participate therein, and whatever is to be one, in oneness. But you would dismiss these divisions and additions and the other niceties of this sort, leaving the answer to those wiser in this.”)

2 This is likewise the view of Ross, *loc.cit.*, p. xli, who in this connection also expressly mentions the *Philebus*.

3 This testimony is found in *Metaphysics*, M 8, 1083 a 31-36: εἰ δὲ ἐστὶ τὸ ἐν ἀρχῇ, ἀνάγκη μᾶλλον ὥσπερ Πλάτων ἔλεγεν ἔχειν τὰ περὶ τοὺς ἀριθμούς, καὶ εἶναι δυάδα πρώτην καὶ τριάδα, καὶ οὐ ἀσυμβλήτους εἶναι τοὺς ἀριθμούς πρὸς ἀλλήλους. (“If the one is a principle, it is rather necessary that things stand with the numbers as Plato said, and that there is an eidetic twoness and threeness and the numbers are not commensurable with one another.”) In translating *δυάδα πρώτην καὶ τριάδα* as “eidetic [ideal] twoness and threeness,” I follow Vander Wielen, *op.cit.*, p. 62. The reference here is naturally not to mathematical numbers.

this is enough to establish that, in the *Philebus*, the *peras* (in the sense of idea number) cannot belong to the realm of mixed being as this was expounded in the dialectical logic of the Eleatic trilogy. For we learned as early as the *Parmenides* that the "real one" can only be apprehended dialectically as a whole with parts. As a consequence, an indivisible ontic form that is not composed of units lies in the nature of the case beyond the reach of this dialectic.

Stenzel's attempt to generate the idea numbers by means of the *diairetic* method¹ stands condemned by this same consideration. The method of *diairesis* belongs only within the framework of a dialectical logical conception of the *eidos* that proceeds from the *genos*, as an encompassing whole with pairs of opposite parts that descend from it stepwise. Anything that is essentially indivisible permits of no *diairesis*.

If it is indeed the case that in the *Philebus* the pure *peras* is the idea number, it is immediately clear why it is placed in opposition to the *peras* as a genus dispersed in a plurality. *Peras* in this latter sense embraces the mathematical numbers, which the early Pythagoreans identified outright with the *peras* and which they, in contrast to Plato, did not conceive of as detached from perceptible things.² Only the mathematical numbers can comprise a plurality. The ideal numbers, on the contrary, are indivisible units, whose being is absolutely pure and unmixed in character.

This eidetic theory of numbers, which was developed most distinctly in the *Phaedo*, was never abandoned by Plato. Not until his lecture *On the Good* did he attempt to derive the ideal numbers, following the ideal unity, dialectically from a combination of *peras* and *apeiron* as constitutive principles, and his pupils who attended this lecture (one of whom was Aristotle) apparently took this to be a completely new theory. Plato had evidently not yet arrived at such a theory during the stage of his development when he wrote the *Philebus*.

In any case, according to this later dialogue, the ontic form of limit can be a dialectical plurality only in its incarnation in the *apeiron* (the ever-flowing *hulē*). The dialectical *idea* apprehends only the unity that has become a plurality, that is to say, the formal unity in its development in limitless matter. Further, as the *Parmenides* sought to demonstrate, this process gives rise to (mathematical) number in the fluid substrate of the *apeiron*. Still further, the dialectical *idea* apprehends this multiple-unity solely in the eidetic relations, which serve to express the constant structures of temporal reality.

Socrates expounds this clearly in *Philebus*, 25 D ff. He invites Protarchus to combine the *apeiron*, which had been gathered up into a single *idea* in the dialectical relation of the "more or less," with the genus of the *peras*. For, as he observes, even though they should have gathered the

¹ J. Stenzel, *Zahl und Gestalt bei Platon und Aristoteles*, 2nd edition, 1933, p. 31.

² In the *Parmenides*, the *peras* is conceived only as a dialectical *idea*, i.e., as the relation between unity and the intermediate plurality of the *apeiron*.

latter into a single *idea*, just as they did earlier with the *apeiron*, they did not do it. “Perhaps the result will also be the same now, however. For by combining these two the third genus [i.e., that of the mixture of the two] will also become clear.”¹ It is, however, only through the combination of *peras* and *apeiron* that they arrive at the single *idea* of the *peras* as a genus, this being the *idea* of law, order, or harmony in the contrasts of the “more or less.”²

From the above it is obvious that this genus cannot be identical to the *peras* as an indivisible unity lacking all plurality. Thus too it is evident why Socrates assigns the *peras* and the *apeiron* as genera exclusively to the realm of mixed being, the mode of being which belongs to the cosmos as a product of becoming.

j. *The Idea of Composite Being as a γένεσις εἰς οὐσίαν. The Teleological Element Is Once Again Introduced into the Definition of That Which Has Come into Being*

The third *idea*, that of being as a mixture or composition of *peras* and *apeiron*, is conceived, in addition, as a *γένεσις εἰς οὐσίαν*, that is, as a coming into being of something that *is*, as a result of a limiting of the *apeiron*. This limitation imparts measure to the *apeiron* and thereby brings its random flux to rest.³

1 *Philebus*, 25 D: Ἦν [viz., τοῦ πέρματος γένναν] καὶ νῦν δὴ, δέον ἡμᾶς, καθάπερ τὴν τοῦ ἀπειρου συνηγάγομεν εἰς ἓν, οὕτω καὶ τὴν τοῦ περατοειδοῦς συναγαγεῖν, οὐ συνηγάγομεν. ἀλλ’ ἴσως καὶ νῦν ταῦτόν δράσει· τούτων ἀμφοτέρων συνηγομένων καταφανῆς κάκεινῃ γενήσεται. (“That [viz., the genus of the limit] which we – although, just as we combined the genus of the unlimited into one, we should likewise now also have combined that of the limit – did not [yet] combine into it. But perhaps it will also perform the same service now. For by combining these two that third genus will also become clear.”)

2 The fact that this *ιδέα* too is indeed a dialectical multiple unity, and not, like the pure *eidos* of the *peras* (spoken of in *Philebus*, 26 D), a simple unity, is convincingly demonstrated by Socrates’ words in *Philebus*, 23 E: Πρῶτον μὲν δὴ τῶν τεττάρων τὰ τρία διελόμενοι, τὰ δύο τούτων πειρώμεθα πολλὰ ἐκάτερον ἐσχισμένον καὶ διεσπασμένον ἰδόντες, εἰς ἓν πάλιν ἐκάτερον συναγαγόντες νοῆσαι πῆ ποτ’ ἦν αὐτῶν ἓν καὶ πολλὰ ἐκάτερον. (“By first setting apart three of these four, then, let us attempt – since we see two of them [viz. the *peras* and the *apeiron*, see 24 A below] each dispersed and torn apart into a plurality – to comprehend, after we have gathered up each of the two back into one, to what extent each of them is one and many.”) *Ibid.*, 24 A: Λέγω τοίνυν τὰ δύο, ἃ προτίθεμαι, ταῦτ’ εἶναι ἄπερ νῦν δὴ, τὸ μὲν ἀπειρον, τὸ δὲ πέρμας ἔχον. (“I therefore say that the two [genera] that I propose are those of which I just spoke, viz., the unlimited and the limited.”) As is evident from 25 D above, the *πέρμας ἔχον* cannot be identical to the third genus. In spite of its unclear qualification, this must rather be the *peras* itself.

3 *Ibid.*, 26 D: ἀλλὰ τρίτον φάθι με λέγειν, ἓν τοῦτο τιθέντα τὸ τούτων ἐκγονον ἅπαν, γένεσιν εἰς οὐσίαν ἐκ τῶν μετὰ τοῦ πέρματος ἀπειρασμένων μέτρων. (“Say, however, that I admit a third [genus], in that I reckon all the offspring of these [viz., of *peras* and *apeiron*] as a unity, i.e., as a becoming that issues in being, result-

In this third *idea*, the correlation between form and matter immediately impresses itself on one. As a matter of fact, however, this correlation was already presupposed in the two other *ideai*. For, according to Plato, the mathematical number, which is subsumed under the *idea* of the *peras*, first arises through the combination of the ontic unity with the *apeiron*, and as the Pythagorean theory brought to light, it contains in itself both *peras* and *apeiron*.

The teleological element, which had temporarily dropped out of the picture during the crisis of the theory of *ideas* is now reintroduced into the conception of the cosmos as a product of becoming. This takes place, as a matter of course, because of the new understanding of mixed or composite being – as produced by the combination of form and matter, limitation and unlimitedness – in terms of a *genesis eis ousian*. For, in this manner, genesis or becoming is given a goal. As Socrates explains, “I thus maintain that it is for the sake of coming into being that all instruments and tools and all matter (*ύλη*) are provided to anyone; but that every instance of becoming takes place for the sake of another particular form of being (*άλλης ούσίας τινός ένεκα*), and the totality of coming into being for the sake of the totality of being.”¹ “If pleasure is thus an instance of becoming, it must of necessity come to be for the sake of some particular being.”² “But that which is the goal of what always comes to be for the sake of something else belongs in the class (*ένμοίρα*) of the good, while that which comes to be for the sake of something else, excellent friend, must be placed in another class.”³ It therefore follows from this that feelings of pleasure as such can never be something good.⁴

It is evident from the first statement quoted above that the conception of

ing from the relations of measure achieved with the aid of the *peras*.”) It is evident from *Philebus*, 27 a, that the *peras* can indeed act only by virtue of the “cause” (the divine *nous*) and is only the instrument of the latter in this activity. In itself, the *peras*, as a genus, has no active power. The text thus reads not *διά* but *μετά τού πέρατος*.

- 1 *Ibid.*, 54 b, C: Φημι δὴ γενέσεως μὲν ἔνεκα φάρμακά τε καὶ πάντ' ὄργανα καὶ πᾶσαν ὕλην παρατίθεσθαι πᾶσιν, ἐκάστην δὲ γένεσιν ἄλλην ἄλλης ούσίας τινός ἐκάστης ἔνεκα γίνεσθαι, ξύμπασαν δὲ γένεσιν ούσίας ἔνεκα γίνεσθαι ξυμπάσης. (translation in text)
- 2 *Ibid.*, 54 C: Οὐκοῦν ἡδονὴ γ' εἴπερ γένεσίς ἐστιν, ἔνεκά τινος ούσίας ἐξ ἀνάγκης γίγνιτ' ἄν (translation in text)
- 3 *Ibid.*, Τό γε μὴν οὐδ' ἔνεκα τὸ ἔνεκά του γιγνόμενον ἀεὶ γίγνιτ' ἄν, ἐν τῇ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ μοίρα ἐκεῖνό ἐστι· τὸ δὲ τινός ἔνεκα γιγνόμενον εἰς ἄλλην, ὃ ἄριστε, μοῖραν θετέον. (translation in text)
- 4 *Ibid.*, 54 D: Ἄρ' οὖν ἡδονὴ γ' εἴπερ γένεσίς ἐστιν, εἰς ἄλλην ἢ τὴν τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ μοῖραν αὐτὴν τιθέντες ὀρθῶς θήσομεν; (“Then if pleasure is a becoming, shall we be correct in placing it into a class other than that of the good?”) (Translation supplied by translator.)

mixed or composite being as a *genesis eis ousian*, which Aristotle would soon develop in his own manner in his theory of the relation between form and matter in composite being, is unambiguously oriented to the ground-motive of the religion of culture. The attempt is herein made to conceive *hulē* as material for a divine *δημιουργεῖν*, a divine form-giving activity, and in this way to surmount the antagonism between the principles of form and matter. In this process, the relation between the cosmos that has come into being and the formative power of the divine *nous* with its *idea* of the good and beautiful is placed as a matter of course in the hands of the new dialectic. At the same time, the *erōs* motive, developed in the *Symposium* and the *Phaedrus*, is able to receive a dialectical-logical elaboration.

k. *The New Dialectic's Physico-Teleological Proof for the Existence of God*

Theōria need no longer appeal solely to the religious synopsis when it proclaims the existence of a divine *nous* as the origin of all form in the cosmos. From now on it can establish its case on the purported dialectical proof for the deity. The so-called physico-teleological proof for God's existence would henceforth be a permanent picture in metaphysical theology, with the result that it would take a place of honor in what is called natural theology (*theologia naturalis*), particularly in scholastic thought.

2. The New Conception of the Soul as a Mixture of Form and Matter (a Product of Becoming)

It is of great importance to study how this teleological proof is carried out in the *Philebus*. This is the case, because as he elaborates it here Plato also sets forth his new conception of the soul. In the *Timaeus* this conception will be worked out more fully. The latter dialogue will also go further by determining the position of the soul in relation to both the world of the *eidē* and the world of phenomena. But it is in the *Philebus* that this new conception is set forth for the first time.

After Socrates has won Protarchus' acquiescence to his conclusion that pleasure as such belongs to the genus of the *apeiron* (the unlimited), he proceeds to take up the problem of assigning *nous*, understanding, and knowledge to one of the three remaining genera. Reacting to Protarchus' perplexity at his questioning, Socrates remarks: "Yet surely the answer is easy. For all the wise agree, thereby in reality exalting themselves highly, the *nous* is our ruler and that of heaven and earth, and perhaps they are right."¹ It is then agreed that over all things, and over that which is called the universe, there does not reign the power of irrational *Tuchē* (the an-

¹ *Ibid.*, 28 C: Ἀλλὰ μὴν ῥάδιον. πάντες γὰρ συμφωνοῦσιν οἱ σοφοί, ἑαυτοὺς ὄντως σεμνύοντες, ὡς νοῦς ἐστὶ βασιλεὺς ἡμῖν οὐρανοῦ τε καὶ γῆς. καὶ ἴσως εὖ λέγουσι. (translation in text)

cient, unpredictable *Anankē*), as a 'terribly clever man' (*δεινὸς ἀνὴρ*; the reference is probably to Democritus) had claimed, but that on the contrary, as their predecessors maintained, *nous* and a wondrous understanding orders and guides it.¹ Socrates thereupon takes note that the bodies of all living beings are by nature constituted from the four elements: fire, earth, air, and water. Each of these elements is present in our own bodies only in a scant and insignificant quantity and in an impure state, and possesses a power that is in no way proportionate to its nature. Protarchus need merely compare the small quantity of fire in the human body with the fire that is present in the world-body of the universe, which in its abundance, its beauty, and its enormous power is a cause of wonder. Rational consideration makes plain that our bodies are sustained and brought into existence by this world-body, and not the other way around. For imperfection cannot be the source of perfection.²

Observing that the human body has a soul, Socrates next asks whence it

- 1 *Ibid.*, 28 D: Πότερον, ὦ Πρώταρχε, τὰ ζῦμπαντα καὶ τόδε τὸ καλούμενον ὄλον ἐπιτροπεύειν φῶμεν τὴν τοῦ ἀλόγου καὶ εἰκῆ δύναμιν καὶ τὸ ὅπη ἔτυχεν, ἢ τάναντία, καθάπερ οἱ πρόσθεν ἡμῶν ἔλεγον, νοῦν καὶ φρόνησίν τινα θαυμαστήν συντάττουσαν διακυβερνᾶν; *Ibid.*, 28 E-29 A: Βούλει δῆτά τι καὶ ἡμεῖς τοῖς ἐμπροσθεν ὁμολογούμενον ζυμφήσωμεν, ὡς ταῦθ' οὕτως ἔχει, καὶ μὴ μόνον οἰώμεθα δεῖν τὰλλότρια ἄνευ κινδύνου λέγειν, ἀλλὰ καὶ συγκινδυνεύωμεν καὶ μετέχωμεν τοῦ ψόγου, ὅταν ἀνὴρ δεινὸς φῆ ταῦτα μὴ οὕτως ἀλλ' ἀτάκτως ἔχειν; ("Shall we say, dear Protarchus, that over all things, and that which is called the universe, there reigns the power of un-reason, randomness, and chance, or on the contrary, as our predecessors maintained, that *nous* and a wondrous understanding orders and guides it? ... Are you then willing that we also should assent to what was agreed by our predecessors, that this is the way all these things are [i.e., that they are governed by *nous*], and that we not only should think we must state a view of others without risk to ourselves, but should also share the risk and the blame with them when a terribly clever person asserts that things are not like this, but are rather devoid of order?")
- 2 *Ibid.*, 29 B-C: μικρόν τε τούτων ἕκαστον παρ' ἡμῖν ἔνεστι καὶ φαῦλον καὶ οὐδαμῆ οὐδαμῶς εἰλικρινές ὄν καὶ τὴν δύναμιν οὐκ ἀξίαν τῆς φύσεως ἔχον. ἐν ἐνὶ δὲ λαβῶν περὶ πάντων νόει ταῦτόν. οἶον πῦρ ἔστι μὲν που παρ' ἡμῖν, ἔστι δ' ἐν τῷ παντί. ... Οὐκοῦν μικρόν μὲν τι τὸ παρ' ἡμῖν καὶ ἀσθενές καὶ φαῦλον, τὸ δ' ἐν τῷ παντί πλήθει τε θαυμαστόν καὶ κάλλει καὶ πάσῃ δυνάμει τῇ περὶ τὸ πῦρ οὔση. ... τί δαί; τρέφεται καὶ γίγνεται ἐκ τούτου καὶ ἄρχεται τὸ τοῦ παντός πῦρ ὑπὸ τοῦ παρ' ἡμῖν πυρός, ἢ τὸναντίον ὑπ' ἐκείνου τὸ τ' ἐμὸν καὶ τὸ σὸν καὶ τὸ τῶν ἄλλων ζῶων ἅπαντ' ἴσχει ταῦτα; ("In us each of these elements is present only in a small quantity, an insignificant measure and a state that is in no way pure, and with a power that is not proportionate to its nature. If you observe this in one of them, think the same of all the others. How, for example, fire is in us [in our bodies] and is present in the universe. ... Is not that which is present in us small in quantity and weak and insignificant, but that which is in the universe wondrous in its vast quantity and its beauty, and in all the power that dwells within it? ... And further? Is the fire in the universe nourished by that in our body, does it arise from there and have its origin

could have gotten this if the body of the universe, which contains the same elements as ours and in a manner much fairer, were not endowed with a soul.¹ In the universe there is much that is unlimited, but with an adequate formal limitation (*peras*), and over this reigns an ‘exalted cause’ which orders and regulates the years, seasons, and months, and has every right to the names wisdom and *nous*.² Wisdom and thought cannot exist apart from soul, however, and it may therefore be said that “in the nature of Zeus a ruling soul and a ruling intelligence have come to be by virtue of the power of the cause, but in that of the other gods, other fair attributes which they are pleased to have attributed to them.”³ This statement obviously refers to the celestial gods (*θεοὶ οὐράνιοι*) or the celestial bodies conceived as ensouled. These, as members of the realm of becoming, must be clearly distinguished from the divine *nous* as demiurge.

If the divine *nous* or intelligence thus exercises dominion over the universe, it can be concluded that *nous* belongs to the fourth of the genera that compose mixed being, namely, the genus that has been designated the “cause.”⁴ Shortly thereafter, Socrates expresses himself more guardedly by saying “that *nous* is ‘akin’ to the cause and ‘approximately’ (*σχεδόν*) of the genus of the latter, while in contrast, pleasure is in itself unlimited and measureless, and of the genus that in itself and of itself neither has,

there, or on the contrary does mine, and yours, and that of all other living beings owe all of this to the former?”)

- 1 *Ibid.*, 30 A: Τὸ παρ’ ἡμῖν σῶμα ἄρ’ οὐ ψυχὴν φήσομεν ἔχειν; ... Πόθεν, ὦ φίλε Πρωταρχε, λαβόν, εἶπερ μὴ τό γε τοῦ παντός σῶμα ἐμψυχον ὄν ἐτύγχανε, ταυτὰ γ’ ἔχον τούτῳ καὶ ἔτι πάντα καλλίονα; (“Shall we not say that our body has a soul? ... From where, friend Protarchus, did it get this, if the body of the universe were not possessed of soul, since it has the same [elements] as our body and in a manner much fairer still?”)
- 2 *Ibid.*, 30 C: Οὐκοῦν εἰ μὴ τοῦτο, μετ’ ἐκείνου τοῦ λόγου ἂν ἐπόμενοι βέλτιον λέγοιμεν, ὡς ἔστιν, ἃ πολλάκις εἰρήκαμεν, ἀπειρόν τ’ ἐν τῷ παντὶ πολὺ καὶ πέρασ ἰκανόν, καὶ τις ἐπ’ αὐτοῖς αἰτία οὐ φαύλη κοσμοῦσά τε καὶ συντάττουσα ἐνιαυτούς τε καὶ ἄρας καὶ μῆνας, σοφία καὶ νοῦς λεγομένη δικαιοτάτ’ ἂν (translation largely in text).
- 3 *Ibid.*, 30 C-D: Σοφία μὴν καὶ νοῦς ἄνευ ψυχῆς οὐκ ἂν ποτε γενοίσθην. ... Οὐκοῦν ἐν μὲν τῇ τοῦ Διὸς ἐρεῖς φύσει βασιλικὴν μὲν ψυχὴν, βασιλικὸν δὲ νοῦν ἐγγίγνεσθαι διὰ τὴν τῆς αἰτίας δύναμιν, ἐν δ’ ἄλλοις ἄλλα καλὰ, καθ’ ὃ φίλον ἐκάστοις λέγεσθαι (translation in text) Just like the human soul, the soul of Zeus, the celestial god, has thus come into being through the power of a cause that originates in the highest divine *nous* as demiurge. See the following note.
- 4 *Ibid.*, 30 D-E: Τῇ δέ γ’ ἐμῇ ζητήσει πεπορικῶς ἀπόκρισιν, ὅτι νοῦς ἐστὶ γένους τοῦ πάντων αἰτίου λεχθέντος τῶν τεττάρων, ἃν ἦν ἡμῖν ἐν τούτῳ. (“It [the preceding argument] has also provided an answer to my question [viz., to which of the genera *nous* and understanding must be reckoned], viz., that *nous* belongs to that one of the four genera called the cause of all things, which for us constituted one of these.”)

nor will have, beginning, middle, or end.”¹ The first statement obviously has the pure, divine *nous* in mind, and the second, the human *nous*; for the former applies directly to *nous* as the ruler of the universe, while the latter refers to *nous* in its dialectical opposition to pleasure, something that is altogether absent in the deity.²

a. *The Human Anima Rationalis and the Rational World-Soul
Are Restricted to the Realm of Generated or Mixed Being*

In the above discussion, one is immediately struck by Plato's explicit acknowledgment that the human soul and the souls of the celestial gods belong to the realm of what has come into being. This implies that they are of necessity composite in nature and that their being has a mixed character. As a consequence, the soul is once and for all fundamentally distinguished from the world of pure ontic forms. Thus too, the latter, in their absolute and simple nature, can themselves no longer be conceived as active soul-forces, that is, as efficient causes, as had still been done in the *Sophist* and, implicitly, in the *Parmenides*. On the other hand, it is equally impossible to return to the conception of the soul presented in the *Phaedo*, where the rational soul was said to be akin to the world of pure *eidē* and was allowed to share in their unmoved and ungenerated nature. Plato has also broken here with the standpoint of the *Republic*, which ascribed a composite nature to the human soul exclusively in its union with the material body and reserved for the *anima rationalis* a pure state in which it could possess the simple character that had been granted to it in the *Phaedo*.

That the soul must be composite and mixed can be clearly seen in *Philebus*, 47 d to 51 a (beginning in chap. 29 and running into the first part of chap. 31), where Socrates undertakes an inquiry into the mixture of feelings of pleasure and pain that are displayed by the soul itself (*αὐτὴν τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτῆς*), independent of the material body. As examples of such feelings, he adduces anger, longing, sadness, fear, love, and jealousy. Socrates concludes by remarking – in connection with the mixed emotional state which the soul experiences during laments and both staged and real tragedies and comedies, for in every case these produce a mixture of

1 *Ibid.*, 31 A: ὅτι νοῦς μὲν αἰτίας ἦν ξυγγενῆς καὶ τούτου σχεδὸν τοῦ γένους, ἡδονὴ δ' ἄπειρός τ' αὐτῆ καὶ τοῦ μήτ' ἀρχὴν μήτε μέσα μήτε τέλος ἐν ἑαυτῷ ἀφ' ἑαυτοῦ ἔχοντος μὴδ' ἔξοντός ποτε γένους. (translation in text). We see here a reserve similar to that in the *Phaedo*, where Plato called the human thinking soul “akin” to the *eidē* without venturing to identify these completely.

2 *Ibid.*, 33 B: ΠΡΩ· Οὐκ οὐκ εἰκός γ' οὔτε χαίρειν <τοῦς> θεοὺς οὔτε τοῖναντίον. ΣΩ· Πάνυ μὲν οὖν οὐκ εἰκός· ἀσχημιον γοῦν αὐτῶν ἐκότερον γιγνόμενόν ἐστιν. (“*Protarchus*: It is therefore not likely that the gods experience either pleasure or its opposite. *Socrates*: It is not at all likely, of course, for each of the two proved to be formless.”)

feelings of pain and pleasure – that he is only giving these examples so that Protarchus may recognize “that both the body without the soul and the soul without the body, and likewise the two in their mutual association, are filled in their inner states with a feeling of pleasure that is mingled with feelings of pain.”¹

Thus, there are mixed feelings which belong to the soul in itself. Along with these, however, there are also pure, unmixed feelings of the soul, and in this category Socrates lists the aesthetic feelings of pleasure that are attached to beautiful colors, beautiful mathematical forms, harmonious sounds, most sensations of smell, and above all, the feelings that pertain to knowledge. These pure feelings are tied to measure and are called “true” and “beautiful.” Over against them, the intense feelings, which always have a mixed character, are classed in the genus of the *apeiron* and the measureless, which extends over both body and soul.

Since in the human *anima rationalis* everything depends on achieving a harmonious mixture between pure or true feelings and rational knowledge, which belong to different genera, it is abundantly clear that, in the *Philebus*, Plato no longer accepts the abstraction of an *anima rationalis* wholly absorbed in the activity of theoretical thought as an ethical-metaphysical ideal of philosophical *θεωρία*. This immediately follows from the new shift in Plato's anthropological notions. In the *Phaedo* and also the *Republic*, the Orphic-Pythagorean motif was predominant. Accordingly, earthly life was considered to be a fallen state and a contamination of the thinking soul. Even during its present existence, therefore, the thinking soul had to strive to die to the world of phenomena, in order to devote itself wholly in pure *theōria*, the mode of life proper to philosophy, wholly to the contemplation of the pure *eidē* and, ultimately, of the divine *idea* of the good and beautiful.

After he has once again established that the perfect good for a person can lie neither in pleasure alone nor in pure knowledge, Socrates argues in the *Philebus* that the path leading to the good can be discovered only if one has first ascertained the abode where man is at home. “Just as someone who is looking for a man, if he has first ascertained the house where he lives, would surely have a great advantage in finding him for whom he is looking.”²

The place where the human being is at home, to be sure, is not the world

1 *Ibid.*, 50 D: ὅτι καὶ σῶμα ἄνευ ψυχῆς καὶ ψυχὴ ἄνευ σώματος καὶ κοινῇ μετ' ἀλλήλων ἐν τοῖς παθήμασι μεστά ἐστί συγκεκραμένης ἡδονῆς λύπαις; (translation in text)

2 *Ibid.*, 61 A-B: Καθάπερ εἴ τις τιν' ἄνθρωπον ζητῶν τὴν οἴκησιν πρῶτον ὀρθῶς ἴν' οἰκεῖ πύθοιτ' αὐτοῦ, μέγα τι δῆπου πρὸς τὴν εὕρεσιν ἂν ἔχοι τοῦ ζητουμένου. (translation in text)

of pure *eidē*, as the *Phaedo* had taught; instead, it lies in the realm of mixed and generated being. This, however, does not prevent knowledge of the pure, unmixed *eidē* or ontic forms from occupying the highest rank among all the various kinds of knowledge, as the knowledge which is completely reliable and true.¹ Theoretical intuition of the eternally self-identical, intelligible world of being is thus again explicitly acknowledged as the foundation, also for the new dialectic. For it cannot be maintained, as Robin thinks, that Plato has in mind here only a system of relations apprehended in dialectical *ideai*, that is to say, ontic forms that are mingled with *hulē* and have thereby become a plurality. It is true that, just as in the *Republic*, abstract numerical theory and abstract geometry are here included in the category of true knowledge, since these are most nearly akin to knowledge of the pure *eidē*. Nevertheless, the bare fact that in the *Philebus* Plato restricts the knowledge of true being to that which remains forever self-identical, without the slightest admixture, and that he once again adduces the knowledge of “justice in itself” (*ὅτι ἑστὶ*) as an example of knowledge of the pure ontic forms, is of itself enough to show that he does not have in mind here first of all the new, dialectical logic developed in the Eleatic dialogues. In Plato's line of thought, “justice in itself” is not at all a dialectical relation, although it must be admitted that he also includes the dialectical relations as such among the constant *eidē*.

Theoretical knowledge of the pure *eidē*, according to the *Philebus*, occupies the most exalted place among all the sciences, but it can no longer be identified with the highest good for man. In order to “find the way home,” more is necessary than that intuitive knowledge embody itself, with the aid of dialectical logic, in a proper logical definition (*λόγον ἐπόμενον τῷ νοεῖν*) and that it descend from its sphere of purity to the uncertain phenomena of the visible cosmos, which, as things that have come into being, cannot become the objects of exact science;² for this knowledge must also be mingled with pure and true feelings of pleasure, if that

1 *Ibid.*, 58 A: τὴν γὰρ περὶ τὸ ὄν καὶ τὸ ὄντως καὶ τὸ κατὰ ταῦτόν ἀεὶ πεφυκὸς πάντως ἔγωγ' οἶμαι ἠγεῖσθαι ξύμπαντας, ὅσοις νοῦ καὶ σμικρὸν προσήρηται, μακρῶ ἀληθεστάτην εἶναι γνῶσιν. (“For the whole body of those who have even a grain of common sense hold, I believe, that the knowledge of what really *is*, of that which by nature always remains the same, is by far the truest knowledge.”) *Ibid.*, 59 C: Ὡς ἢ περὶ ἐκεῖνα ἔσθ' ἡμῖν τό τε βέβαιον καὶ τὸ καθαρὸν καὶ τἀληθές καὶ ὃ δὴ λέγομεν εἰλικρινές, περὶ τὰ ἀεὶ κατὰ ταῦτὰ ὡσαύτως ἀμικτότατα ἔχοντα, ἢ [δεύτερος] ἐκείνων ὅτι μάλιστ' ἐστὶ ξυγγενές. (“That, for us, knowledge which is reliable and pure and true and, as we say, unalloyed, refers to those things that always remain just so, in the same manner and without the slightest admixture, or to what is most akin to these.”)

2 There can be no *epistēmē* here, but only *ὀρθή δόξα*, correct, but always hypothetical, opinion, which can never lead to firmly established truth. It is evident here how Plato's fundamental dualism once again prevents him from attaining to the modern

mode of life is to be attained which for a human being constitutes the highest good. In this mixture, truth, proportion (*ξυμμετρία*), and beauty are necessary partners, and the second of these, right measure and proportion, is called the cause (*αίτία* – here this does *not* mean efficient cause) which lends the highest value to any mixture, since the absence of this is the ruin of both the mixture and its ingredients.¹ Socrates concludes this part of his argument as follows: “If we therefore are unable to track down the highest good in a single *idea*, by grasping it in three – namely, beauty, proportion, and truth – let us declare that in these [three], as in one, we with full justice seek the cause of the value of the mixture, and that by virtue of this the latter has become good.”²

The new dialectic thus apprehends the divine *idea* of the good, the absolute form of origin, in a tri-unity of *eidē* only in its limited manifestation within the cosmos. In their mixture together, these *eidē* not only constitute the supreme good for the composite life of a human being; they also embody the teleological norm for the entire cosmos. The actual reason why the good for composite or mixed being cannot be pure and absolute in nature resides in the fact that soul and body are conjoined, with the former in control of the latter, both in human existence and in the cosmos as a whole.³ One cannot imagine a clearer expression than this of the distance that lies between the anthropological conception of the *Phaedo* and the

conception of empirical science. See 59 B: *Οὐδ’ ἄρα νοῦς οὐδέ τις ἐπιστήμη περὶ αὐτά ἐστι τὸ ἀληθέστατον ἔχουσα.* (“Concerning these things there is then no reflection, no pure science, which contains that which fully corresponds to the truth.”) What Plato has in mind here is the knowledge of “nature” (*δόξα περὶ φύσεως*), the visible cosmos, which always involves the question of how the latter has come into being and what changes it undergoes and brings about (59 A). All of this has no bearing upon the conceptual division of phenomena into classes and species via the method of *diairesis* developed in the *Sophist* and the *Statesman*.

- 1 *Ibid.*, 64 D: *Καὶ μὴν καὶ ξυμπάσης γε μίξεως οὐ χαλεπὸν ἰδεῖν τὴν αἰτίαν δι’ ἣν ἢ παντὸς ἀξία γίγνεται ἢ τισιν ἢ τὸ παράπαν οὐδενός ... Ὅτι μέτρον καὶ τῆς ξυμμέτρου φύσεως μὴ τυχοῦσα ἢ τισιν καὶ ὁπωσοῦν ξύγκρασις πᾶσα ἐξ ἀνάγκης ἀπόλλυσι τὰ τε κεραννόμενα καὶ πρώτην ἑαυτήν.* (“And with every mixture it is not difficult to see the cause which lends to each of them the highest value or deprives it of all value ... That every mixture, whatever kind it be, if it does not share in the nature of right measure and proportion, necessarily destroys both its ingredients, and first of all itself.”)
- 2 *Ibid.*, 64 E-65 A: *Οὐκοῦν εἰ μὴ μὴ δυνάμεθ’ ἰδέα ἀγαθὸν θηρεῦσαι, σὺν τρισὶ λαβόντες, κάλλει καὶ ξυμμετρίᾳ καὶ ἀληθείᾳ, λέγωμεν ὡς τοῦτο οἶον ἐν ὀρθότατ’ ἂν αἰτιασάμεθα [ἂν] τῶν ἐν τῇ ξυμμίξει, καὶ διὰ τοῦθ’ ὡς ἀγαθὸν ὄν τοιαύτην αὐτὴν γεγονέναι.* (translation in text)
- 3 *Ibid.*, 64 B: *ἐμοὶ μὲν γὰρ καθαπερὶ κόσμος τις ἀσώματος ἄρξων καλῶς ἐμψύχου σώματος ὁ νῦν λόγος ἀπειργάσθαι φαίνεται.* (“For to me it appears that our argument has been carried out like an incorporeal order which rules in a fair manner over a body possessed of a soul.”)

Republic, on the one hand, and that of the *Philebus*, on the other hand.

b. *Causality as a Separate Genus*

We should take special note of the fact that the *Philebus* elevates causality, in the sense of efficient cause, to a separate genus that is brought within the reach of the new, dialectical logic. The *aitia*, as efficient causality,¹ is herein conceived as a rational formal cause (consistent with Socrates' thought and in connection with Anaxagoras' doctrine of *nous*) and is recognized exclusively as the cause of composite being.

c. *According to the Philebus, Neither the Pure Eidē nor Hulē Originates in the Divine Nous as Efficient Cause. The Scholastic Accommodation of This Platonic Conception (Later Adopted by Aristotle) to the Christian Creation Motive*

For this reason, in the view of the *Philebus*, neither the *eidē*, as pure ontic forms, nor *hulē* can be attributed to the divine *nous* acting as cause (*aitia*). The doctrine *ex nihilo nihil fit* (nothing can arise from nothing), which was the final outcome of Greek metaphysics in its subjection to the dialectical form-matter motive, permits of no exception even in the case of the divine demiurge. In the Aristotelian ontology as well, ontic form and matter are in themselves ungenerated.

Scholastic philosophy will later take over this conception, even though it is opposed to the Scriptural motive of creation. Combining Plato and Aristotle, it will attempt to accommodate it to the creation motive by placing it within the framework of the religious synthesis motive of nature and grace.

Because the efficient cause is sharply distinguished as a genetic *eidōs* from the *peras* and the *apeiron*, the conception of the other *eidē* as active soul-forces, which belonged to the crisis period of the theory of ideas, has been rendered superfluous. Insofar as there is yet mention of an *ἔκγονον* (offspring) that arises from the combination of *peras* and *apeiron*, these latter genera are expressly qualified as instruments of the *aitia* in its activity of bringing into being [compare the way the relevant Greek phrase is translated in note 1, and on page 261] (*τὸ δουλεῦον εἰς γένεσιν αἰτία*).² The *aitia*, in contrast, is called the demiurge.³ Only this causative

1 The fact that the *aitia* here indeed constitutes a *causa efficiens* is evident from 26 E: Οὐκοῦν ἢ τοῦ ποιούντος φύσις οὐδὲν πλὴν ὀνόματι τῆς αἰτίας διαφέρει, τὸ δὲ ποιῶν καὶ τὸ αἴτιον ὁρθῶς ἂν εἴη λεγόμενον ἔν; (“Then does not the nature of the agent differ only in name from the cause, and may not the agent and that which causes rightly be called one?”)

2 *Ibid.*, 27 A: Ἄλλο ἄρα καὶ οὐ ταῦτόν αἰτία τ' ἐστὶ καὶ τὸ δουλεῦον εἰς γένεσιν αἰτία. (“Therefore the cause and that which is subservient to it when it brings into being are different and not the same.”)

3 *Ibid.*, 27 A-B: Οὐκοῦν τὰ μὲν γιγνόμενα καὶ ἐξ ᾧ γίνεται πάντα τὰ τρία

genus is still conceived as an active soul-force, since it originates in the divine *nous*, which itself is borne by a divine soul as its vital principle.

Is this divine soul and the causative form-power of the *nous* identical to the world-soul? One might momentarily be tempted to think so, because Socrates says that the human body owes its origin to the world-body, and the human soul to the world-soul.

d. *The Nous Which Reigns over the Universe Is Not Identical to the Nous in the World-Soul*

The *Timaeus*, however – and its development of this point is based wholly on the *Philebus* – explicitly teaches that the universe, both in its body and in its rational soul, belongs to the realm of what has come into being and has its origin in the divine *δημιουργός*, the divine architect. Cornford and Stenzel, and others, are of the opinion that this demiurge is a purely mythological representation of the world-soul itself; but this is clearly refuted by the *Timaeus*'s description of the latter as something that is in fact itself mixed in nature and which therefore, according to the *Philebus*, requires a cause of its coming into being. The former dialogue also sheds light on the passage in the *Philebus* which says that the body and soul of man are derived only from the world-body and the world-soul. In our discussion of the *Timaeus*, we shall inevitably be brought back to these matters.

e. *The Philebus and the Timaeus Both Admit Only One Causality: That Which Originates in the Rational Soul*

In attributing the causality that brings the cosmos into being exclusively to the rational soul, the *Philebus* has taken over, in this regard, the position of the *Phaedrus*. In so doing, however, it simultaneously took on the *aporia* that I already mentioned in my discussion of the latter dialogue (where it remained completely unsolved), namely, the problem of how the ascription of causality exclusively to the rational soul comports with the primordial dualism between the motives of form and matter. Is it not necessary that *hulē* (the *apeiron* of the of the *Philebus*) be granted its own genus of causality if one indeed wishes to give a full account within the framework of the Greek ground-motive of the origin of the things that have come into being? The *Timaeus* will answer this question in the affirmative, and the single idea of causality will thereby be abandoned once more.

παρέσχετο ἡμῖν γένη; ... τὸ δὲ δὴ πάντα ταῦτα δημιουργοῦν λέγωμεν τέταρτον, τὴν αἰτίαν, ὡς ἰκανῶς ἕτερον ἐκείνων δεδηλωμένον; (“Then did not the things that have come to be, and that out of which everything comes to be [viz., *peras* and *apeiron*], furnish our three genera? ... Shall we therefore name the cause, that which [as demiurge] gives form to all these, as the fourth, something whose difference from the others has been adequately clarified?”)

f. Do the Philebus Genera Correspond to the Five Highest Eidē in the Sophist?

There is also a question as to the relationship between the four *genē* or dialectical *ideai* of the *Philebus* and the five highest *eidē* of the *Sophist*. Ever since antiquity, numerous attempts have been made to discover a direct connection between these two groups, and recently Léon Robin,¹ the noted French Plato scholar, and C. Ritter,² professor at Tübingen, and others, have made the same endeavor. It must be emphasized, however, that any attempt at this must come to terms with the new development that the *Philebus* introduced into Plato's theory of ideas. Apparently, neither Robin nor Ritter was cognizant of this.

We must observe at the outset that, without exception, the four *genē* of the *Philebus* are all dialectical *ideai* in the previously delineated sense. Among the five supreme ideas (*megista eidē*) of the *Sophist*, in contrast, motion and rest definitely lack this character, since they are mutually exclusive opposites. The comparison must therefore be confined to the *Sophist's* three dialectical *ideai* – individual being, otherness (*τὸ ἄτερον*), and sameness (*ταυτόν*) – and, as we have seen, all of these can in fact be regarded as dialectical functions of the all-embracing *idea* of being. The latter was defined in a general way as *dunamis* in both an active and a passive sense, that is, active power and the capacity to be acted upon.³ In the *Philebus*, the *genē* or dialectical *ideai* of the *peras* and the *apeiron* can likewise be regarded as dialectical functions of mixed or generated being, and they thus correspond respectively to the *ideai* of sameness and otherness in the *Sophist*. Robin maintains that the *peras* is the counterpart of the *Sophist's* active function of being and that the *apeiron* is the counterpart of the passive function. The *idea* of the cause as a function of mixed being, in turn, has a special correspondence to the active function of being in the *Sophist*.⁴

This construal contradicts the clear text of the *Philebus*, however. In this dialogue, the *peras* as such is nowhere called an active *dunamis* nor the *apeiron* a passive *dunamis* of mixed being. In *Philebus*, 27 A, the contrast that is made between the activity which by nature leads and controls (*ἡγείται μὲν τὸ ποιοῦν αἰεὶ κατὰ φύσιν*) and that which is passively acted upon and comes into being (*ποιούμενον γιγνόμενον*) applies only to the cause and that which this cause brings into being from the mixture of *peras* and the *apeiron*. Further, the *aitia* is sharply distinguished from that

1 Léon Robin, *Platon* (Paris: F. Alcan, 1935).

2 C. Ritter, *Die Kern-gedanken der platonischen Philosophie* (Munich, 1931), pp. 156 ff.

3 *Sophist*, 247 D-E.

4 Robin, *loc.cit.*

“which is subservient to it in the activity of bringing into being” (τὸ δουλεῦον εἰς γένεσιν αἰτία).

We have already observed that the *Philebus* represents both the *peras* and the *apeiron* in themselves merely as subordinate instruments of the *aitia* and that it does not conceive the *peras* as such as an active power.¹ Between the *Sophist* and the *Philebus* came the shift in Plato's conception of the *eidē*. In the *Philebus*, unlike the *Sophist*, the *eidē* can no longer be conceived as active soul-forces, since the *aitia* as an efficient cause has been sharply distinguished from the other genera and identified with the form-power (the *δημιουργεῖν*) of the divine *nous*.

This observation also contradicts Ritter's position. He too places the *Sophist's* general definition of being as *dunamis* at the foundation of the four genera of the *Philebus* and maintains that in the latter dialogue Plato ascribes active power to both *peras* and *apeiron* as constituents of reality.

The *Philebus*, in fact, speaks of yet a fifth genus. When Socrates has first enumerated the four genera, Protarchus asks: “Will you not in addition need yet a fifth which has the ability to separate (*διάκρισιν τινοῦ δυναμένου*)?” Socrates answers: “Possibly, but not, I think, at present. But should it appear necessary in any way, you will surely agree with me if I go in pursuit of a fifth.”² As the dialogue unfolds, this fifth genus indeed proves necessary, even though it is not explicitly mentioned as such. Once the need for a mixture of pleasure and knowledge has been established, Socrates asks which of these two components has a claim to the higher rank within the realm of mixed being. Shall all feelings of pleasure without exception, even the gross sensual desires and passions, be admitted into the mixed mode of life which merits the title of the highest good for the human being? This would be a mistake, because the diverse kinds of pleasure must first be distinguished and individually judged as to their ethical value. The various kinds of knowledge can indeed all be admitted; but here too a *διάκρισις*, a distinction according to value, is necessary. This *διάκρισις*, the correlative selection of the pleasures and types of knowledge permitted in the good, mixed mode of life, thus indeed seems to be added as a fifth genus of sorts to the four mentioned previously.

There is no possibility, however, of finding a counterpart for this fifth genus in the *Sophist*. Its introduction in the *Philebus* is rather the best proof of the distance that separates this dialogue from the *Parmenides* and

1 *Philebus*, 27 A: ΣΩ· Ἄρ' οὖν ἡγεῖται μὲν τὸ ποιοῦν αἰεὶ κατὰ φύσιν, τὸ δὲ ποιοῦμενον ἐπακολουθεῖ γιγνόμενον ἐκείνω; ΠΡΩ· Πάνυ γε. ΣΩ· Ἄλλο ἄρα καὶ οὐ ταῦτόν αἰτία τ' ἐστὶ καὶ τὸ δουλεῦον εἰς γένεσιν αἰτία. (“Socrates: Is not then that which acts by nature always leading, but that which is acted upon, as coming into being, [passively] following this? Protarchus: Most certainly. Socrates: Then also the cause and that which subserves the cause in bringing into being are different and not the same.”)

2 Ibid., 23 D-E: Τάχ' ἄν' οὐ μὴν οἶμαί γ' ἐν τῷ νῦν· ἐὰν δέ τι δέη, συγγνώσει πού μοι σὺ μεταδιώκοντι πέμπτον. (translation in text)

the *Sophist*, for it indicates that the effects of the *idea tou agathou* are felt within the logical dialectic itself. Over against this, during the period of crisis in the theory of ideas, it appeared that this *idea*, in its supralogical character, could exert no influence on the new logical dialectic itself, but instead remained in unreconciled tension with the latter. We have seen, however, that in the *Philebus* the *idea tou agathou* is directly manifest only in its dialectical expression within the genus of what is mixed. As a consequence, one observes on this point as well a great difference between this dialogue and the *Republic*.

All this does not mean that the genera established in the *Sophist* have lost their significance for the later dialogues. On the contrary, we shall encounter the dialectical *ideai* of being, otherness, and sameness again in the *Timaeus*. We shall also find the *eidē* of motion and rest there. These then will have to conform, however, to the framework of the genus of mixed being developed in the *Philebus*, in its stark difference from the pure being of the intelligible world of *eidē* and of the divine *idea* of the good and beautiful, which lights this intelligible world with its rays.